# National/International Trip Guide

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National/International Trips
Travel can be an exciting learning opportunity for girls. A Girl Scout travel opportunity is a way of enriching ongoing Girl Scout Leadership Experiences. The trip ideally will enhance activities and learning already taking place in the troop. One of the critical elements of a Girl Scout trip is that girls do the planning with the guidance of and in partnership with troop/group adults. The process of planning the trip – budgeting, researching logistics, making choices about where to go and what to do, actually making the arrangements and reservations – can provide as great a learning opportunity for girls as the trip itself. Please be sure to allow the girls this opportunity for learning and growth.

The first concern for any trip is that the planning is comprehensive enough to assure that the girls are safe and have an opportunity to learn from the experience. It is also very important that GSUSA and Girl Scouts of the Colonial Coast policies, standards and procedures for an extended trip are followed.

National Trip Description
Any trip that is longer than one night outside the Council region, OR any trip that is six nights or more within the Council region. The Girl Scouts of the Colonial Coast’s extended overnight regions include: Alabama, Delaware, Washington D.C., Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. Steer clear of trips girls might take with their families and consider those that offer some educational component – this often means no Disney and no cruises; instead, incorporate some incredible cities, historic sites and museums around the country.

International Trip Description
Travel around the world often requires one or two years of preparation. When girls show an interest in traveling abroad, complete an Intent to Plan a National/International Trip and submit to your service unit program consultant. Visiting one of the four World Centers is a great place to start, but also consider traveling with worldwide service organizations. Recently, girls have traveled to rural Costa Rica to volunteer at an elementary school and to Mexico to volunteer with Habitat for Humanity.

Adult Learning
The trip and travel planning learning opportunity is called Out and About. This online training covers the guidelines for basic trip and travel planning with girls. Register at ebiz.gscccc.org.
Trip planning is a girl-led process.
- Work with girls to find answers to the listed questions.
- For younger girls, reword the questions so that they have a limited number of choices. Two or three options are ideal. Offer only those options that are attainable for their grade level.
- Older girls can research the possibilities. Show them how to check Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints to determine if an activity or location is feasible.

The Planning Process
Whether the trip is a discovery hike or a cross-country trek, the basic planning steps are the same. The details may get more involved for more complex trips. Every trip should have an immediate purpose.

Work with the girls in your troop/group to answer these questions when starting to plan a trip:
1. Where are we going?
2. Why are we going?
3. When are we going?
4. Who is going?
5. How will we get there?
6. How much will it cost?
7. Will everyone be able to go?
8. What applications and approvals are needed?
9. How should we get ready?
10. What should we take?
11. What safety factors must we consider?
12. What will we do along the way and once we get there?
13. What will we do after the trip?
14. Are there any local customs that we should learn about or be aware of?

My Notes:

Planning Tips
- Have a back-up plan, and a back-up, back-up plan!
- Consider renting a house, staying in a hostel or camping at the local Girl Scout council property.
- Matching t-shirts, hats or bandannas make counting heads easier in the right environment.
- I.D. bracelets or “dog tags” bearing the girls’ names and the trip chaperones’ contact information are a great safety tool and make a fun souvenir from your trip.
- Practice packing for your trip at a meeting.
- Have a taste test of local cuisine before you arrive.
- Consider alternate forms of transportation. Train travel can add to the experience!
- Plan for the best; prepare for the worst.
**National/International Trip Procedures**

Follow applicable program standards and activity checkpoints outlined in *Volunteer Essentials* and *Safety Activity Checkpoints*.

As soon as you start planning, submit an Intent to Plan a National/International Trip Form to your service unit program consultant.

- For national trips within our borders, submit a Trip Approval Form at least **two months** prior to the trip, preferably earlier.
- For international trips out of the country, submit a Trip Approval Form **one year** prior to the trip.

If your trip involves an adult training pre-travel trip, email customercare@gscce.org with date, accommodation and contact information.

Submit a detailed budget of the trip with the application to assure that:

- Expenses are appropriate and reasonable and the trip is affordable to all troop/group members.
- Money raised by the girls will be spent on the girls and not on extra adults and tagalongs.
- Money will be evenly distributed among the girls attending, not based on how much they sold in the product programs.

Provide a detailed itinerary of the trip including:

- Dates and times.
- Route to be traveled and activities and places to be visited.
- Addresses and phone numbers of all major stops and overnight accommodations.

**Planning**

**RESEARCH:** Have girls go online to research the trip. Plenty of trip planning and travel websites are available to give girls current information. Request brochures from places the girls would like to visit. Get information such as days/hours of operation, costs, weather, and safety tips.

**WEATHER:** Think about how the weather can affect the trip. Do you need to make alternate plans? What do you need to pack?

**YOUTH HOSTELS:** Girl Scout groups of all ages are eligible to stay in youth hostels in the U.S. and abroad. Groups of 10 or more can get free membership with the American Youth Hostels. If your group size is under 10, individuals under 18 can get free memberships. Visit the American Youth Hostels website for more information at www.hiyah.org.

**RESERVATIONS:** Make flight, rental car, activity and accommodation reservations early. Get all reservations confirmed in writing. Confirm arrangements again at least one week before the trip.

**PERMISSION SLIPS:** A permission slip is required for travel of any length. If you are traveling out of the country with girls who are not your own children, collect a signed and notarized International Travel Permission for Minors Form from caregivers.

**ATTIRE:** Think about appropriate attire for the trip. Are there places/times you want to all be in uniform or dressed alike (matching t-shirts, hats or jackets)?

**KEEP CAREGIVERS INFORMED:** Have a caregiver meeting where you discuss trip plans, money, who is going, appropriate behavior and emergency contact procedures.

**MAKE A PACKING LIST:** Work with the girls to come up with a packing list so girls know what to bring.

**BE FLEXIBLE:** Don’t get locked into the trip/itinerary. Allow yourselves the opportunity to change plans, especially if conditions and the people in the group warrant a change in plans.

**NEED HELP?:** If you need help with planning, contact your service unit program consultant or Council staff.

**PASSPORTS:** For international trips, all travelers must have a current passport. This can take time to obtain, so make sure to discuss this with caregivers and traveling adults in advance.
**Transportation**

For transportation you may want to consider options such as using private cars, renting a van or using public transportation. Each one means different considerations. Refer to *Volunteer Essentials* for information regarding transportation. If you charter a bus, you may be asked to sign a contract or agreement. Any contract/agreement is to be referred to the Council office and signed by the council executive officer. Fifteen passenger vans are not allowed.

**DRIVING:**

- Review and sign the Driver for a Girl Scout Activity Application.
- The trip leader must confirm:
  - Proof of insurance for each vehicle (insurance card or certificates of insurance).
  - Valid driver’s license for each driver.
- Use vehicles that are large enough to provide seats and seat belts for each person and can adequately handle all luggage and gear. Check localities on requirements for booster seats. Fifteen passenger vans are not allowed.
- Provide a first aid kit for each vehicle (see *Volunteer Essentials*) along with appropriate, completed forms, maps/directions, itinerary and other related information.
- Provide drivers with a way to contact the trip leader.
- Keep in mind the following non-negotiable points regarding private transportation (see *Volunteer Essentials*):
  - Even though written agreements are always required when renting or chartering transportation, you are not authorized to sign an agreement or contract, except for rental car agreements, even if there is no cost associated with the rental. Rental/chartering agreements are to be signed by the Council chief executive officer.
  - If renting a car, read all rental agreements to be sure you comply with their terms and avoid surprises. Note the minimum age of drivers (often 25), as well as the maximum age (often under 70). Be sure the car is adequately insured, knowing who is responsible for damage to or the loss of the vehicle itself. Also, ensure you have a paper trail, with evidence that the vehicle rental is Girl Scout-related.

**Activities**

**SAFETY ACTIVITY CHECKPOINTS** Review applicable checkpoints for standards of the activities you plan to do on the trip.

**CERTIFICATE OF INSURANCE:** It is common business practice to request or issue certificates of insurance to other businesses or organizations as proof of insurance.

A current certificate of insurance for the activity provider/facility is to be on file with the Council before girls may participate in any activities that pose physical danger. See the Certificate of Insurance Request and FAQ Form for a list of activities that require a certificate of insurance and to view a list of facilities with current certificates of insurance on file with the Council.

If your group wants to use a facility that is not on the list, either:

- Ask the facility to have a certificate of insurance issued to the Girl Scout Council of the Colonial Coast; or
- Complete the Certificate of Insurance Request and FAQ Form to request a certificate. Submit the form to the Council Finance department at least two weeks prior to the date needed.
- The easiest way to acquire a certificate of insurance is to call the business and ask them to email or fax it to you. When you receive a certificate of insurance, attach it to your extended trip application when you submit it for approval.

**SWIMMING AND WATER SPORTS:** Note that you are to have certified lifeguards on duty and trained swim-watchers present for ANY swimming activities (see Safety Activity Checkpoints for water activities). Swim-watcher training is available as an online course. Register at [ebiz.gsccc.org](http://ebiz.gsccc.org).

**LIABILITY WAIVERS:** Do not sign waivers of liability with respect to any phase of the trip, including such things as transportation, lodging or programming. Caregivers are not to be asked to sign any participant liability waiver without Council approval. Refer all contracts, liability waivers or hold-harmless agreements to the Council chief executive officer (see *Volunteer Essentials*).

**CAMPING:** If camping, an adult accompanying the troop/group is to have completed *Outdoor II: Basic Troop Overnight Camping*. Register at [ebiz.gsccc.org](http://ebiz.gsccc.org).
Fun activities can be the cornerstone of a great trip!

- Check with the local visitors’ bureau for unique activities in the area that you are visiting.
- Always check Safety Activity Checkpoints before committing to an activity.
- If the girls decide on a high adventure activity, make sure to have an alternate activity for those girls who are not ready for that level of adventure.

Adults as Partners

- Adults are needed on extended trips, but be sure that those attending understand that the trip is for the girls.
- Be sure that all adults traveling are registered Girl Scout members. Remember, dads can be registered Girl Scouts too!

Adult Supervision

Provide the appropriate number of trained adult leadership to accompany group:

- All participants (girls and adults) of an extended group trip are currently registered Girl Scout members.
- Minimally, two adults accompany the group (see Volunteer Essentials, adult-to-girl ratios).
- At least one adult is currently certified in first aid and CPR (at a level appropriate to the age of all trip participants).
- At least one adult has completed all steps of new leader training AND all of the following:

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Adults accompanying the girls have demonstrated:

- Maturity of judgment.
- Ability to act prudently in an emergency situation.
- Appropriate personal behavior standards to serve as role models.
- Ability to plan and execute the trip and all particulars in partnership with the girls (including finances, arrangements, travel, guiding girl planning and other aspects).
- Willingness to adhere to GSUSA and GSCCC policies, standards and guidelines.
- Successful experience working with girls of the age group attending the trip.
- Willingness to supervise both the group and individual girls.

Health

HEALTH HISTORY FORMS: Acquire a completed Health Examination Form and Girl/Adult Health History Form for each trip participant (girls and adults) and keep forms on hand during the trip. Health examinations for other purposes that are within 24 months of the last day of the trip may be used, provided a copy of the examination is attached to a completed Girl/Adult Health History Form (Volunteer Essentials).

FIRST AID KIT: Carry a first aid kit for the group. You can buy a Girl Scout first aid kit, buy a commercial kit or you and the girls can assemble a kit yourselves. The Red Cross offers a list of potential items in its Anatomy of a First Aid Kit. (Note: The Red Cross’s suggested list includes aspirin, which you can give to girls with written caregiver permission). You can also customize a kit to cover your specific needs, including flares, treatments for frostbite or snake bites, and the like. In addition to standard materials, all kits are to contain a GSCCC Emergency Procedures Card (describes the steps to take in an emergency and includes important phone numbers), Girl Scout activity insurance forms, caregiver permission slips, and health histories.

Money

- Early in the planning process, make sure that everyone is in agreement about how funds are to be handled.
- Consider setting up a payment plan for girls. Paying a little each month is often easier for families to fit into their budgets.
- Product program funds, if being used on a trip, must be evenly distributed among girls participating, not based on how much they earned individually.

Money Handling

It’s a good idea for the group to think about, discuss and decide how money, reservations, deposits, girl payments to the troop/group (if any), refunds, etc., will be handled BEFORE money is ever collected. Doing so can head-off problems before they have a chance to occur.
The following questions are to be addressed by the group before money is collected. Regardless of what the group decides to do, it is important for girls, caregivers and the group leadership to understand and agree to the procedures and to put them in writing for all.

- How will we pay for the trip?
- Will group money-earning activities pay for the trip? Will individual participants (girls and adults) pay for the trip? Will it be a combination of these methods? Other methods?
- How will money be handled before the trip?
  - Where will money be kept? Troop/group account? Separate account?
  - Who has access to the money?
  - What records need to be kept? By who? How can others see and review them?
- How will we handle individual payments for the trip?
- Will we set up a payment schedule?
- What if a group member can’t afford the trip?
- What if a group member falls behind in making individual payments?
- What expenses will be group expenses and what will be personal expenses?
- Will we give refunds of individual money paid towards the trip? If yes, under what circumstances?
  - What if someone backs out of the trip?
  - What if they quit the group?
  - What is they move away or get sick and can’t go?
  - What if having less people makes us lose a group rate?
  - When do we give the refund? Right away or after the trip and bills have been paid?
- How will money be handled during the trip?
- Will more than one person carry funds?
  - Will we carry cash, traveler’s checks and/or credit cards?
  - How will we track out expenses during the trip?
- How will we handle the need for emergency funds?
- What will we do with any money left over after the trip?

**BUDGET:** Develop a realistic budget while keeping in mind as you make your plans that the trip needs to be affordable to each girl in the group. Will the group treasury be able to pay for the trip? Will parents and girls be asked to provide expense money? If so, how much? It is highly recommended that decisions about handling extended trip funds are made before the trip.

**EMERGENCY FUND:** Provide an emergency fund (this amount may vary depending on trip length, nature and destination). There are different methods to access the emergency fund. Consider budgeting the money as part of the trip and it goes back into the group treasury if not used. Another option is that girls may each provide a share with the knowledge the money will be returned to her if it is not used.

**MONEY-earning ACTIVITIES:** “Group money-earning” refers to activities organized by the group (not by the Council) that are planned and carried out by girls (in partnership with adults) and that earn money for the group. Groups are to participate in both Council-sponsored product program activities before participating in any group money-earning activity. For details and scenarios of money-earning activities, and to determine Council approval, refer to the Money-Earning Guidelines.

Any plans for money-earning activities are to follow GSxCCC policies and procedures. For policies and standards affecting money-earning activities, see Volunteer Essentials.

**DEPOSITS:** In order to safeguard group funds, do not commit group funds to non-refundable deposits until trip is approved.

**Safety**

**EMERGENCY CONTACTS:** Arrange for an emergency contact person not attending the trip, and provide her/him with a list of all participants and their addresses; caregivers’ names, home, work and emergency contact phone numbers; trip itinerary; and a way to contact the trip leader.

**KEEP CAREGIVERS INFORMED:** Provide caregivers with a written copy of the itinerary and emergency contact person’s information. Arrange for a caregiver meeting prior to the trip to provide caregivers with all necessary information including housing and transportation arrangements, leadership of the group, and an opportunity to ask questions.
**KNOW THE LOCATION OF EMERGENCY SERVICES:** Acquire information regarding the location of hospital and emergency facilities available. Collect a signed Caregiver Permission for Trip/Camp Activity Form for each girl before the trip and keep forms on hand during the trip.

**EMERGENCY PROCEDURES CARD:** All traveling adults are to review and carry a GSCCC Emergency Procedures Card. Follow Council procedure in the event of an emergency, injury or incident/accident, and complete and submit a First Aid Treatment Record and/or Incident/Accident Report.

**THE BUDDY SYSTEM:** The buddy system is vital to extended travel, but in the event that someone gets separated from the group, ensure that they know what to do and who to contact. Consider giving each girl a card with her name, major medical conditions, troop/group number, leader’s name and phone number, and the troop/group emergency contact’s phone number. Girls should be asked to keep this card with them at all times during the trip.

**Safety First**
- Set up an emergency contact system by utilizing a phone tree for those caregivers not traveling with the group.
- Review [Volunteer Essentials](#) and [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) carefully as you plan your trip. The online version is searchable – a feature that makes looking up activities a breeze!
- Make sure that a Council staff representative and a non-traveling family member has a copy of your itinerary.

**Insurance**

**PURCHASE ADDITIONAL INSURANCE:** Arrange for Mutual of Omaha insurance for trips lasting more than two nights (three nights on legal holiday weekends). The GSUSA member basic accident insurance does not cover a trip of this length (see [Volunteer Essentials](#)). Orders for insurance are to be placed and paid at least **two weeks** before the trip. Use the Insurance Order Form for Girl Scout Activities to order insurance.

If you are unsure as to which insurance plan you wish to purchase, use the following as a guide:

**Summary of Girl Scout Insurance**

A printable basic coverage brochure from Mutual of Omaha with a summary of Girl Scout insurance (see Insurance – Council Guide) are available on the Council website.

**PLAN 1:** Girl Scout Activity Accident Insurance Basic Coverage
- Provided to every registered girl and adult.
- Effective when registration materials are received at the Council office.
- Covers approved, supervised Girl Scout activities lasting two nights or less (three nights on a federal holiday).
- Pays the first $125 of medical bills related to an accident, then becomes secondary to any other insurance coverage the individual may have.
- Pays up to $15,000 of bills incurred within a 52-week period after the accident.

**PLAN 2:** Accident Insurance
- Same features as Plan 1.
- Used for registered girls and adults when activity length exceeds two nights (three nights over a federal holiday).
- Used for non-registered participants in a Girl Scout activity.
- Used for members participating as tagalongs when with a group other than their own.
- Premium: $0.11 a day for each participant.

**PLAN 3E:** Accident and Sickness Insurance for Extended Events
- Plan 1 benefits plus $10,000 of Sickness Medical Expense Benefit and $1,500 of Returned Transportation Benefit.
- Pays the first $125 of medical bills related to an accident or illness; becomes secondary to any other insurance coverage the individual may have.
- Premium: $0.29 a day for each participant.

**PLAN 3P:** Accident and Sickness Insurance for Extended Events
- Same as Plan 3E without the non-duplicating provision. Therefore, the insurance pays without regard to what other insurance might be paying.
- Premium: $0.70 a day for each participant.
PLAN 3PI: Accident and Sickness Insurance for International Trips

- Same as Plan 3P and adds international return travel expense and travel assistance.
- Premium: $1.17 a day for each participant.

**Code of Conduct**
Remember, when you travel as Girl Scouts, you represent the Girl Scout Movement. Review the Code of Conduct so that girls know what behavior is expected of them.

**Behavior**

**CODE OF CONDUCT:** Discuss appropriate behavior before the trip, not during or after a problem. Ask caregivers how their child handles stress, fears, etc. Caregivers should also be asked how they handle behavior issues at home. Follow the advice of caregivers when these situations arise.

It can be very helpful to have each girl and her caregiver(s) sign a participant behavior agreement that refers back to the GSCCC Code of Conduct. The girls and adults could work together to develop a behavior agreement. Submit a copy of any agreement with the trip request.

**PASSPORTS AND TRAVEL ADVISORIES:** For the most current information and travel advisories, visit the U.S. State Department website at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) and click “U.S. Passports & International Travel”.

Previous travel policies required that girls must be 14 years old to travel internationally with Girl Scouts. This policy has been revised and girls younger than 14 can travel internationally at the discretion of the Council. A Council staff representative will confer with the trip leader to determine if the girl is mature enough to participate in an international travel experience.

**After Your Trip**
All trip participants (girls and adults) are to complete a National/International Trip Troop Evaluation and email to the Council at customercare@gsccc.org.

Submit a National/International Trip Report after the trip.

Girls and adults may make plans to share the trip with other groups and the community as a whole.

**International Trips**

**GLOBAL TRAVEL TOOLKIT:** Trips out of the U.S.A. require additional considerations and preparation. The Global Travel Toolkit from GSUSA will help girls and adults prepare for international travel.


**Share What You Learned**
Arrange to present information from your trip to your service unit. Girls and other leaders can benefit from your experience. Share what you loved about the trip and don’t be afraid to share what you would have done differently.
Resources - available on the GSCCC website’s Forms page at:


- Caregiver Permission for Trip/Camp Activity
- Certificate of Insurance Request and FAQ
- Code of Conduct
- Driver for a Girl Scout Activity Application
- Emergency Procedures Card
- Extended Trip Participant Agreement
- First Aid Treatment Record
- Girl/Adult Health History
- Incident/Accident Report
- Insurance – Basic Coverage Brochure
- Insurance Order Form for Girl Scout Activities
- Intent to Plan a National/International Trip
- International Travel Permission for Minors
- Money-Earning Guidelines
- National/International Trip Report
- National/International Trip Troop Evaluation
- Safety Activity Checkpoints: Travel/Trips
- Trip Approval Form
- Volunteer Essentials