



Travel / Trips

Council Approval: Required for overnight trips

Activity Permitted For: D B J C S A

Note: *Approval for international travel must often be obtained a year or more in advance of the trip.*

About Travel/Trips

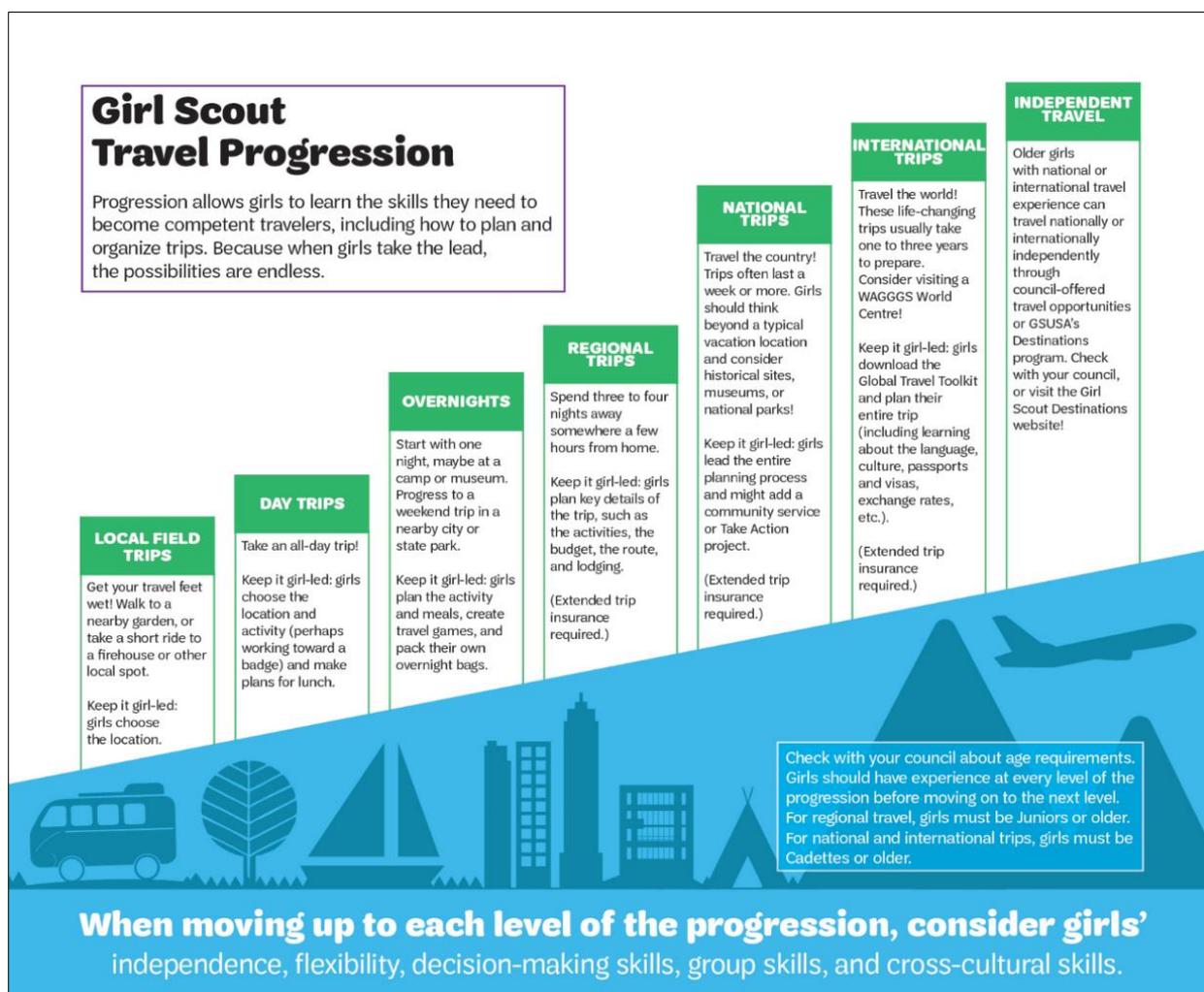
Some of the most memorable moments in a Girl Scout's life happen while taking trips. Travel offers a wealth of opportunities for girls to develop leadership, confidence, and practical life skills. The following information can help you and girls prepare for local, regional, or international travel.

Girl Scouts is a great place for girls to learn how to plan and take exciting trips, because travel is built on a progression of activities—one activity leads to the next. Daisies can begin with a discovery walk. As girls grow in their travel skills and can better manage the planning process, they progress to longer trips—even international ones!

For Daisies, this could mean a day trip to an arboretum as part of the Journey they are working on. For Seniors or Ambassadors, it might mean whitewater rafting in Costa Rica or exploring the Our Chalet World Center in Switzerland. Please see the [Girl Scout Guide to U.S. Travel](#).

Although many troops decide to travel together, Girl Scouts might join a trip with other girls from around their council, or form a new troop with other girls who like to travel. Girl Scouts of the USA offers individual Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors the chance to travel independently and meet other Girl Scouts from across the country through the Destinations program.

The recommended progression of trips and travel for Girl Scouts are:



Local Field Trips (Daisies and older): A walk to a nearby garden or a short ride by car or public transportation to a firehouse or courthouse is a great first step for Daisies. Keep it girl-led: girls can choose the location!

Day trip (Daisies and older): An all-day visit to a point of historical or natural interest (bringing their own lunch) or a daylong trip to a nearby city (stopping at a restaurant for a meal) allows younger girls to select locations and do much of the trip-planning, while never being too far from home. Keep it girl-led: girls can choose the location and an activity (maybe a badge activity?) and help make plans for lunch.

Note: Full-day trips may be very challenging for Daisies, especially for kindergarteners who have not experienced short trips. Make sure girls take some short trips before they progress to a full day trip.

Overnight & Weekend Trips (Daisies and older): A trip of one—or possibly two—nights away could start with one night camping or staying at a Girl Scout property and progress to a visit to a state or national park, or nearby city for sightseeing, staying in a hotel, motel, or campground—or even an overnight at a large museum! These short trips are just long enough to get girls

excited about travel, but not long enough to generate homesickness. Keep it girl-led: girls plan the activity and meals, create travel games, and pack their own bags.

Note: A Daisy troop may participate in an overnight experience if the girls are ready. Brownie troops can participate up to two nights. For camp this differs: girls who have completed kindergarten may independently participate at day camp and in resident camp experiences lasting up to three nights. Girls who have completed first grade may independently participate in resident camp experiences lasting four or more nights.

Regional Trips (Juniors and older): Three or four nights camping or staying in a hotel, motel, or hostel within the girls' home region take girls up to a few hours away from home. Keep it girl-led: girls plan key details of the trip such as activities, the budget, the route, and lodging.

National trips (Cadettes and older): Travel anywhere in the country can often last a week or more. Try to steer clear of ordinary recreational trips girls might take with their families and consider those that offer some educational component—such as incredible cities, historic sites, and museums around the country. Perhaps the girls want to plan a trip to some national parks as part of the Girl Scout Ranger program. Keep it girl-led: girls lead the entire planning process and might plan to add a community service or Take Action project.

International trips (Cadettes and older): Travel around the world can require one to three years of preparation. Ensure passports, documentation, visas, and customs requirements are in order well in advance of your trip. International trips are available to Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors, but only to those who have successfully participated in a progression of overnight and extended trips within Girl Scouting. Keep it girl-led: girls download the [Global Travel Toolkit](#), and plan their entire trip – including learning about language, culture, passports & visas, exchange rates, etc.

Independent Travel (Cadettes and older): Older girls who already have national or international travel experience can travel independently through council-offered travel opportunities or GSUSA's Destinations program. For opportunities, check with your council and visit the [Destinations website](#).

When thinking about progression, consider things like girls':

- Ability to be away from parents and their homes
- Ability to adapt to unfamiliar surroundings and situations
- Ability to make decisions for themselves and the good of the group well and easily
- Ability to get along with each other and handle challenges
- Previous cross-cultural experiences, skills, interests, and language skills (where applicable)

Non-Girl Scouts. If you plan to include non-Girl Scouts on your trip, such as siblings, they should also be the same appropriate grade level in progression with travel experience. For example, an eight-year-old sibling of a Senior should not participate in an international trip. And remember, you will have to purchase supplemental insurance for nonmembers.

WAGGGS World Centers or your Girl Scout council may have additional or different guidelines regarding age requirements for international travel.

Learn More:

- [WAGGGS World Centers](#)
- [Girl Scout Guide to U.S. Travel](#)
- [International events through Girl Scouts](#)
- Girl Scouts' [Destinations program](#)
- U.S. passports and international travel: [U.S. Department of State](#)
- Travelers' health (vaccines, medicine, advice): [Centers for Disease Control](#)
- [Girl Scout Global Travel Toolkit](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Communicate with girls of various abilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. A great reference for learning about travelling with disabilities is the [Open Doors](#) organization.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Plan Transportation in Advance. When planning transportation, keep in mind that large 15-passenger vans had been flagged as unsafe by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and should therefore be avoided. If the van is being used professionally by a commercial shuttle service, this is acceptable. For chartered buses or rented vehicles always verify safety credentials and commercial driving licenses, check the availability of seatbelts and request a certificate of insurance showing a minimum of \$1 million in auto liability coverage.

Choose accommodations wisely. Girl Scout groups may stay in a variety of overnight accommodations. Evaluate all options with a view to safety, cost, amenities, distance to planned sights or transportation, parking, and insurance. Consider:

- Girl Scout [camps](#) and facilities, or [WAGGGS World Centers](#).
- National, state, or local campgrounds, many of which offer cabins to rent. Try [reserveamerica.com](#).
- Hostels. [HI USA](#) offers Girl Scout-ready hostels in the U.S.
- Hotels. Consider suites and adjoining rooms to enhance supervision.

Airbnb, VRBO and HomeAway. These are permitted however because these are privately owned properties, it can be difficult to qualify safety and credibility. For these reasons, additional steps for Airbnb, VRBO and Homeaway are required. Confirm the following ahead of time:

- The rental is for exclusive use of the home. No other renters will have access to the home during the rental period.
- The space has smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors, and fire extinguishers (these are noted as amenities on booking sites).
- The home and host have substantial, positive visitor reviews. Don't book places with negative, few or no reviews. Look for superhost status on Airbnb.

- The liability insurance from the host covers premises for commercial use, with a minimum of \$1,000,000 General Liability insurance.
- Check the host's profile or identity verification. You may be asked to do the same, as a renter.
- The local host or manager contact info is available for immediate needs. Share this information with an in-town contact (a person not on the trip).
- Check state laws to see if Airbnb, VRBO and Homeaway are mandated to meet hotel laws and standards so that you know there is an extra layer of protection.

Check accommodations on arrival. No matter what housing you book, inspect premises with the group immediately on arrival. Let the front desk or host know if you find any deficiencies. Maintain a budget margin so that you can move to another location if you find a property unsafe. Here are several points to check upon arrival:

- All points of entry are secure and lockable.
- Stairs or fire escapes are identified and shown to girls
- Evacuation routes are clear and known to all.
- Basic safety systems are in place (as appropriate to the building and jurisdiction such as a fire extinguisher and smoke alarm).
- Location of local emergency services and how to reach them.
- Confirm any communication services (mobile carrier, wifi) are running and reliable.

Try to make sure international permission slips are signed by both parents. Discuss with your council about having both parents sign the permission slip and notarizing it. This is recommended by the U.S. Customs & Border Protection, and is strongly suggested as a best practice.

Take the insurance. When booking flights, consider cancellation insurance which primarily covers the cost for airfare in the event a trip is cancelled due to illness. Discuss this option with your council as it could be costly.

For trips longer than two nights, inquire with your council about accident activity insurance. You must enroll and purchase a specific policy from Mutual of Omaha to cover trips longer than two nights; trips longer than two nights are *not covered* on the basic plan.

When planning to travel internationally, discuss liability insurance and accident activity insurance for it with your council. You'll want to ensure that your council's liability policy does not have any specific exceptions or exclusion for international travel. For accident activity insurance, you must enroll and purchase a specific policy from Mutual of Omaha to cover international trips; international trips are not covered on the basic plan.

Verify leader/instructor knowledge, experience, judgment, and maturity. Ensure that at least one adult is trained or possesses knowledge, skills, and experience in the following areas:

- First aid
- Travel progression and readiness, including homesickness
- Trip planning in a girl-led environment
- Safety management
- Program activities specific to the trip
- Group dynamics and management

- Supervision of girls and adults
- If the trip is international, leader must have international travel experience

Sleeping Arrangements. See *Safety Standards and Guidelines at the beginning of Safety Activity Checkpoints*.

Avoid having men sleep in the same space as girls and women. Girls have a clear and separate bathroom facility from men. Adults are not required to sleep in the same space (e.g. hotel room) as girls; if they do, there should be at least two non-related female adults in the room. During family or parent-daughter overnights, one family unit may sleep in the same sleeping quarters in designated program areas. When parents are staffing an event, daughters should remain in sleeping quarters with other girls rather than in staff areas.

Prepare a pre-trip orientation. Make sure girls have a detailed itinerary, but do not post the itinerary on a publicly accessible website where others may be able to see it. Ensure that girl and adult participants, and girls' parents, receive information about health, first-aid and emergency procedures, plans for transportation and any geographic detail such as the terrain or environment. Also share basic operational procedures (e.g. using the buddy system at all times) and behavior expectations. You may want to work with your girls to create a group behavior contract, and have girls sign it. Another suggestion is to create a personal emergency action plan that each girl can write out herself and keep with her. Make sure to discuss topics like:

- Who her buddy is—and how the buddy system works
- What to do if she is separated from the group, whether by accident or due to a crime
- What to do if she loses something significant: money, passport, luggage
- What to do if emergency help is needed
- How to perform basic first-aid procedures
- How to deal with a large crowd, if applicable
- What positive behaviors are expected of her and the consequences to self or others by not living up to those behaviors

International Travel. International travel involves increased travel precautions and requirements compared to domestic travel. The following Safety Checkpoints apply to International Travel:

- Register your trip with the U.S. government's [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) so that you will get updates about safety, and that the State Department knows where you are traveling.
- Read on the [Centers for Disease and Control Prevention](#) website about health concerns for the country. Make sure girls and parents/guardians review this information. Every participant travelling internationally should visit their doctor to discuss their travel health requirements and any vaccinations or medications necessary.
- Confirm the travel advisory level for the country via the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs. Note that the State Department now classifies travel advisories with travel alert levels as follows:
 - Level 1 - Exercise Normal Precautions
 - Level 2 - Exercise Increased Precautions
 - Level 3 - Reconsider Travel

- Level 4 - Do Not Travel
- Confirm that both girls and their parents/guardians have the advisory information and are aware of the travel alert level in the region you plan to visit. This can be reflected on a permission slip if your council chooses to handle it that way.
- Read information about safety issues and concerns carefully. Pay attention to the in-country travel alerts for the particular region you are interested in. For example, a certain country may be classified as a Level 2, but a particular state or region within that Level 2 country may be categorized as Level 3.
- Check the travel alert status periodically in the months/weeks/days leading up to your trip for any changes. For situations where there is a travel alert Level 1 or Level 2, take normal safety precautions to safeguard girls.
- Travel Alert 4. When the travel alert Level is 4 (“do not travel”), girls are not to travel to a location under any circumstances.
- Travel Alert 3. For situations where the travel alert is a 3 (“reconsider travel”), there are several steps that should be taken before moving forward:
 - Strongly consider selecting a different location.
 - If interest is high, have a conversation with your local safety or risk representative to fully understand the specific risk factors in play.
 - Contact the host destination facility and ask if they’re aware of the travel alert level and what extra security measures are in place, if any.
 - Inform girls and parents/guardians and determine if there is still a compelling interest to travel to this location, considering the travel alert level.
 - Get parents’/guardians’ explicit approval to travel to the location, in light of specific risk, in writing.
 - Have a conversation with your council and get approval from a legal perspective, from in-house legal or outside legal counsel.
 - Confirm that you have senior management approval within your council prior to moving forward with your plans.

Finally, when travelling, be sure to follow the safety checkpoints for specific activities you plan to do on your trip.