Chapter 8: Field Trips and 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—that is, one activity leads to the next. Girl Scout Daisies, for example, can begin with a discovery walk. As girls grow in their travel skills and experience and can better manage the planning process, they progress to longer trips. Trips should have a purpose and involve girl planning with volunteer guidance.

### Travel Preparedness

If your group is thinking about travel, consider first whether the girls are mature enough to handle the trip. Determine a group's readiness for travel by assessing the girls':

- Ability to be away from their parents and their homes
- Ability to adapt to unfamiliar surroundings and situations
- Ability to make decisions well and easily
- Ability to get along with each other and handle challenges
- Ability to work well as a team
- Interest in adopting new skills, interests, and language skills (where applicable)

### Trip Progression

Below are examples of different types of Girl Scout trips, listed in order of appropriate progression. Remember, it is not how amazing the trip itself is, but how amazing the girls are, to lead the planning for the trip!

**Girl Scout Daisies and Up**

- **Short trips to local points of interest:** A walk to the nearby garden or a short ride by car or public transportation to the firehouse or courthouse is a great first step for Daisies.

**Girl Scout Brownies and Up**

- **Day trips:** An all-day visit to a point of historical or natural interest (bringing their own lunch) or a day-long trip to a nearby city where you stop at a restaurant for a meal. This allows younger girls to choose location and do much of the planning, while never being too far from home.
- **Overnight trips:** One or possibly two nights away to a Girl Scout camp site, nearby state or national park, historic city, or nearby city for sightseeing, staying in a hotel, motel, or campground. These short trips are just long enough to whet their appetites but not long enough to generate homesickness.

**Girl Scout Juniors and Up**

- **Extended overnight trips:** Lasting over three nights. These include: camping or a stay in a hotel, motel, or hostel within the Mid-Atlantic region.

**Girl Scout Cadette, Senior, and Ambassadors**

- **National trips:** Travel anywhere in the country, often lasting three days or more. Encourage girls to consider trips that offer unique or educational components such as historic sites, museums, or rich cultural experiences around the country rather than recreational trips they would take with their families.
- **International trips:** Travel around the world often requires one or two years of preparation. Visiting one of the four World Centers is a great place to start as is traveling worldwide to do service. To learn about the four World Centers, visit [http://www.girlscouts.org/en/about-girl-scouts/global/world-centers.html](http://www.girlscouts.org/en/about-girl-scouts/global/world-centers.html)
- **GSUSA Getaway:** Prepackaged travel opportunities located in different cities around the country are good opportunities for troops traveling for the first time. For more information go to the GSUSA website: [http://forgirls.girlscouts.org/travel/take-a-trip/getaways/](http://forgirls.girlscouts.org/travel/take-a-trip/getaways/)
- **GSUSA Destinations:** Special coordinated Girl Scout activities that take place outside the troop (i.e. for individual girls). Travel can be a national or international experience. For more information, go to the GSUSA website: [http://forgirls.girlscouts.org/travel/take-a-trip/destinations](http://forgirls.girlscouts.org/travel/take-a-trip/destinations)
Letting Girls Lead in Travel

To ensure that any travel you do with girls infuses the Girl Scout Leadership Experience at every opportunity, limit your role to facilitating the girls’ brainstorming and planning—but never by doing the work for them. Allow the girls to lead, learn collaboratively, and learn by doing (and by making mistakes). All the while, provide ideas and insight, ask tough questions when needed, and support all their decisions with enthusiasm and encouragement!

It’s true that as the locale gets farther away, the itinerary more complex, and the trip of greater duration, the details become richer and more complex, but planning every trip—from a day-long event to an international trek—starts by asking the following:

- What do we hope to experience?
- Who will we want to talk to and meet? What will we ask?
- Where are we interested in going?
- When are we all available to go?
- Will everyone in our group be able to go?
- Are there physical barriers that cannot be accommodated?
- What are visiting hours and the need for advance reservations?
- What are our options for getting there?
- What’s the least and most this trip could cost?
- What can we do now to get ourselves ready?
- How will we earn the money?
- What is the availability of drinking water, restrooms and eating places?
- Where is emergency help available?
- What safety factors must we consider?
- What will we do as we travel?
- What will we do when we get there?

Girl-Adult Partnership

As you can see from the graph, in Girl Scouts girls are always growing more confident and competent. As your girls get older, your role as the leader or advisor decreases, and their role increases. Specifically with planning programming and taking trips, this chart can be a useful guideline for working with your girls.
Family Role in Travel
Troop travel provides an amazing opportunity for girls to dream, plan, and experience something that they can't with any other organization. Girls experience personal growth by planning their own trip, making decisions as a group, bonding with other girls and gaining the independence that comes from traveling without family members. To ensure it is truly a Girl Scout trip, troops should limit the number of adults to the required girl to volunteer ratio for the trip.

Families may consider Girl Scout travel as a way to bond with their child. Please remember that all troop travel must comply with Girl Scout approval processes and guidelines. Even when families pay for themselves, the trip is still a Girl Scout function; families and tagalongs attending a Girl Scout trip must follow all Girl Scout principles and guidelines. It is not appropriate for anyone below the Cadette age level to attend an international trip or a trip more than 5 nights.

Council Approval
Council recommends volunteers take Domestic or International Travel training to help them guide their girls in planning short or long trips. Depending on the destination and duration of the trip, approval may be required. Forms needed for trip approval can be found on the chart below.

Trips with no approval required from the service unit or from Council:
- Trips during regular meeting times
- Day trips
- Overnights of 1-3 nights
- Camping on Council or non-Council properties

Council Approval Forms for Field Trips & Travel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Trip</th>
<th>Forms Needed</th>
<th>When to submit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An event lasting 4 or more nights</td>
<td>Troop Overnight &amp; Travel Approval Form, Extended Activity Insurance</td>
<td>A minimum of 4-6 weeks before a trip lasting 4 or more nights and international travel plus Extended Activity Insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel outside the continental US</td>
<td>Troop Overnight &amp; Travel Approval Form, Extended Activity Insurance</td>
<td>A minimum of 4-6 weeks before a trip lasting 4 or more nights and international travel plus Extended Activity Insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using a vendor that is not pre-approved</td>
<td>STOP! Contact the vendor at least 4 weeks before you go to request a Certificate of Insurance so they can be added to our approved vendor list. Note: If travelling internationally and unable to obtain a certificate of insurance for High Adventure Activities, it is important that you ensure vendor adheres to ALL Safety Activity Checkpoints that pertain to the activity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Field Trip and Travel Packet**

When a troop leaves its meeting space, a leader is responsible for gaining parental permission (see Chapter 2) and assembling a field trip and travel packet. This chart below specifies items to be included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>What it Does</th>
<th>Where Located</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girl Health History and Medical Authorization</td>
<td>Provides medical history and authorizes medical treatment in the event of an emergency.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.gscnc.org/forms">www.gscnc.org/forms</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures for Accidents and Emergencies</td>
<td>Tells you what to do in the event of an emergency.</td>
<td>Page 100 of Volunteer Essentials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance Claim Form</td>
<td>Needed when emergency medical care is given for filing claim.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.gscnc.org/forms">www.gscnc.org/forms</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: At least one packet must be assembled although duplicate packets may be provided for additional drivers.*

**Procedures for Girl Scout Field Trips and Travel**

Be sure to discuss the following safety items with your girls and their parents before you leave on any trip and consider putting this information into writing so it is on hand for everyone on the trip.

**General Safety Checklist**

- Drivers must follow Nation’s Capital transportation guidelines as outlined in Chapter 9
- All drivers have the information and directions needed to get to the event
  
  *Please no caravanning, as it is a safety risk and increases the chance of people getting lost*
- At least one accompanying adult volunteer must have completed Basic Leadership training
- At least one participating adult volunteer has completed camping or troop travel training, if applicable
- At least one participating adult volunteer has first aid training, if applicable
- Where appropriate, certified lifeguards must be present
- The trip must meet recommended ratios of girls and volunteers for trip, adhere to safety activity checkpoints and hotel and security safety tips

**Tips for Girls Traveling Alone**

If a Girl Scout Cadette, Senior, or Ambassador will be traveling alone during any part of a trip, help her feel comfortable with the plan. Talk with her parents to assess her ability to handle herself. If she is flying, discuss the possibility of booking a nonstop flight to decrease stress and ask parents to contact the airline and make special arrangements for an unaccompanied minor. With the girl herself, develop a trip plan, discuss hotel security and safety, and talk about avoiding excess communication with strangers, not wearing a nametag, and avoiding exposing money or other items (such as electronics) that are attractive to pickpockets.
The Buddy System
The buddy system is a safety practice that groups two or three girls of equal ability together to watch over each other in an activity or during a trip. Under this system, each pair/trio is responsible for: staying with her buddy at all times, warning her buddy of danger, giving her buddy immediate assistance if it is safe to do so, calling or going for help when the situation warrants it. Before a trip, have girls discuss the following with their buddy:

- What to do if she is separated from the group, whether by accident or because of a crime
- What to do if she loses something significant: money, passport, luggage
- How to report a crime
- 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 to do in the event of a crime
- What behaviors you expect—and what consequences exist for not living up to those behaviors

Involving Chaperones
To determine how many volunteer chaperones the girls will need, see the volunteer-to-girl ratios on page 15. As you ask for chaperones, have them review and agree to follow the Girl Scout Safety Guidelines on page 21 and commit to the following list:

- Being a positive role model
- Respecting all girls and adults equally, with no preferential treatment
- Creating a safe space for girls
- Prioritizing the safety of all girls
- Supporting and reinforcing a group agreement
- Handling pressure and stress by modeling flexibility and a sense of humor
- Creating an experience for and with girls
- Getting physically fit (appropriate to the trip)

Staying in a Hotel, Motel, Hostel, or Dorm
Share these safety tips with girls before you leave on any trip involving a stay at a hotel, motel, hostel, dorm:

- Always lock the door behind you, using the deadbolt, and the chain or anchor.
- Do not open the door for strangers; if hotel staff claims to be at the door, call front desk to confirm.
- Don’t mention or display your room number when in the presence of strangers.
- Never leave jewelry, cameras, electronics, cash, or credit cards in your room.
- Never leave luggage unattended in the hotel lobby (or in an airport or train or bus station).
- When arriving at the hotel, locate emergency exits.
- Keep a small flashlight and bag with your room key, wallet, passport, and cell phone on your bedside table that you can take if you have to leave the room in an emergency.
- If a fire alarm goes off, get out as quickly as possible. Don’t stop to pack your suitcase. Before leaving your room, feel the door; if it is warm, do not open it. Stay in your room and stuff towels around the door. Call the hotel operator immediately. If the door is cool, proceed slowly out the door, looking for flames or smoke. Repeat these instructions for any door you encounter.
- Contact the front desk to make sure girls’ rooms are cleared of any minibars or refrigerators. Also be sure the hotel doesn’t provide access to inappropriate movies or allow long-distance calls. Alert the hotel management that underage girls are staying in the hotel, and ask them to contact you if any girls are seen out of their rooms after bedtime.
**Cruises**

Cruises have become a popular choice for Girl Scout troop travel in the past 10 years. A cruise provides an opportunity for troops to explore new destinations in a cost-effective way as food and transportation from port to port is included. Cruises from major cruise lines like Disney, Royal Caribbean and Carnival do not need a certificate of insurance for troops to travel. Further, for all international trips including cruises, troops do not need to obtain certificates of insurance for shore excursions purchased through the cruise line. Troop leaders must adhere to all Safety Activity Checkpoints for shore excursions and any onboard activity such as pools, rock climbing walls, hot tubs, etc. Very few cruise lines provide lifeguards, and it may be necessary for troops to bring their own lifeguard to enjoy water activities.

All custodial parents must approve girls’ travel outside the country on cruises. Most cruise lines will provide a form that must be signed and notarized for minors traveling without a parent. Finally, cruises are like moving cities and have the same issues as all locales where large groups of people are centered. Girls should always be chaperoned and never “roam” the ship alone.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From the Birthplace of Girl Scouting to the World Centers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace in Savannah, Georgia, is a fantastic place for Girl Scout Juniors and older to visit. Reservations and Council approval are required to take a group of girls to visit the birthplace, and most educational opportunities are booked at least a year in advance, so book early! Families and individuals, however, do not need to reserve a tour in advance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, four lodges are available in England, Mexico, Switzerland, and India for use by Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, each with hostel or dormitory-style accommodations. The world centers are operated by WAGGGS (World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts) and offer low-cost accommodations and special programs. They are also a great way to meet Girl Guides and Girl Scouts from around the world.