Safety Activity Checkpoint

Camping

HIGH-ADVENTURE ACTIVITY: Trip or High-Adventure Approval Form Required

Council Approval: Required

Activity Permitted For: D B J C S A

Required: At least one adult who will be involved in planning the camping trip with the girls and will be accompanying them on their camping adventure must be trained in camping as required by GSNorCal. Visit GSNorCal’s Volunteer Training Portal for more information. Check out the Trip and Outdoor Advisor course.

About Camping

Camping, a great Girl Scout tradition, is one of the very first activities that Girl Scouts’ founder Juliette Gordon Low encouraged for girls. The key to an enjoyable camping experience is being prepared—by packing just enough gear, supplies, and weather-appropriate clothing. Girl Scouts advocate for the Leave No Trace method of camping, which involves leaving a campground the way it exists in nature, free of garbage and human impact.

You can add to the experience with a camp Kaper chart. Divide cooking duties and get creative about preplanning outdoor meals. Be ready with camp entertainment. Before you go camping, read about camping stories, songs, activities, and games.

Note: When planning activities to do while camping, remember that girls are never allowed to hunt, go on high altitude climbs, or ride all-terrain vehicles or motor bikes.

For travel camping—camping as you travel—note the additional safety precautions listed.
Learn More:
  • American Camp Association
  • Go Camping America
  • Leave No Trace

Camping with Daisies and Brownies
A Daisy troop may participate in an overnight camping experience if the girls are ready. Perhaps troops can begin with a backyard sleep out and progress to a “family camp-out” before the girls participate in a two-night overnight event. Troops might consider a stay in Yurts and cabins for a night on one of our GSNorCal properties instead of sleeping in tents on the ground. Daisies cannot participate in overnight camping trips longer than two nights.

A Daisy troop may participate in an overnight camping experience. Daisies who have completed kindergarten may independently participate at day camp and in resident camp experiences lasting up to three nights. Daisies who have completed first grade may independently participate in resident camp experiences lasting four or more nights.

Travel camping is not recommended for Daisies and Brownies.

Know where to camp when camping with Daisies and Brownies, which includes Girl Scout camps; public, private, state, and national parks; and sites deemed appropriate by local and state authorities.

Connect with Girl Scout of Northern California for site suggestions and for information on using a non-council-owned site. Search for campground locations please review the GSNorCal Approved Vendor List.

Include Girls with Disabilities
Communicate with girls of various abilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Learn more about adapting camping activities at Disabled Sports USA.

Safety Activity Checkpoints
Safe camping locations are Girl Scout camps; public, private, state, and national parks; and sites deemed appropriate by local and state authorities. Connect with Girl Scouts of Northern California for site suggestions and for information on using a non-council-owned sites. The campsite should be able to provide evidence of $1 million liability insurance and instructor certifications upon request.

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:
  • Outdoor program activities and leadership
  • Girls’ emotional responses to trips, including homesickness
  • Trip planning in a girl-led environment
  • Safety management
  • Program activities specific to the trip
  • Group dynamics and management
  • Outdoor cooking (if relevant)

Ensure that supervision of girls and adults for travel camping include at least two adults who are additionally trained, or have documented experience, in the following areas:
  • Participation in similar trips
  • Familiarity with the area in which the trip is conducted
  • Physical fitness and skills necessary to support the group
• Chosen mode(s) of transportation
• Site orientation
• Emergency procedures
• Minor maintenance for equipment and vehicles, as appropriate

If travel camping (using campsites as a means of accommodations), verify the following adult certifications and standards:

• For trips by small craft, one adult is currently certified as required by the safety activity checkpoints for the particular mode of transportation being used (canoe or kayak, for instance).
• For trips that involve swimming, one adult in attendance is currently certified in basic lifeguarding.
• Each driver of motorized transportation is at least 21 years old and holds a valid license appropriate to the vehicle.
• No adult drives more than six hours per day, with rest breaks every two hours.
• If a trailer is used, it complies with all state, local, and federal regulations for the areas of travel. The assigned driver is experienced in pulling a trailer. No girls or adult leaders ride in the trailer.
• No caravanning (cars following closely together, with the lead vehicle in charge) is allowed. Each driver must have information about route and destination in addition to the cell phone numbers of other drivers.
• Ensure that girl and adult participants receive information about first-aid procedures, emergency and rescue procedures, environmental awareness, and program plans for mode of travel and geographic area, as well as operational procedures (water purification, food preparation, camping equipment, sanitation, and food storage procedures).
• If travel camping for three or more nights, Regional Trips and Extended Troop Travel training is required.

Sleeping Arrangements
On trips where male volunteers are part of the group, it is not appropriate for them to sleep in the same space as girl members. Always support and maintain an all-girl atmosphere for sleeping quarters. Men may participate only when separate sleeping quarters and bathrooms are available for their use. In some circumstances, such public venues as a museum or mall overnight with hundreds of girls, this type of accommodation may not be possible. If this is the case, men do not supervise girls in the sleeping area of the event and the adult-volunteer-to-girl ratio is adjusted accordingly.

Always avoid having men sleep in the same space as girls and women. An exception is made for family members during events such as parent-daughter or family overnights where one family may sleep together in an area specifically designated to accommodate families. Also, please note the following:

• Each participant has her own bed. Parent/guardian permission must be obtained if girls are to share a bed.
• Girls and adults do not share a bed; however, GSNorCal makes exceptions for mothers and daughters.
• It is not mandatory that an adult sleep in the sleeping area (tent, cabin, or designated area) with the girls, but if an adult female does share the sleeping area, there should always be two unrelated adult females present.

If possible, men should have their own designated bathroom. If a unisex bathroom is used the door must have a working lock, or a system for notifying others that the bathroom is in use. This system should be reviewed and understood by all girls and adults.

Men should not have to walk through the girls’ sleeping area to get to the bathroom. When camping in tents or single room cabins, men must stay in a tent or a cabin that’s separate from the girls or women.
During family or “he and me” events (in which girls share sleeping accommodations with parent/guardian), ensure the sleeping details are clearly explained in a parent/guardian permission slip.

More than one family may use a tent or single-room cabin during these events only if both families agree.

In public venue overnights, such as museums or at malls, ask if there is a separate sleeping area and bathrooms for men. If no such area exists, designate an area out of the way or off to the side so that men are not sleeping alongside the girls.

For long-distance travel, men must have separate sleeping quarters and bathrooms away from girls. Each participant should have her own bed. If girls want to share a bed, they must obtain parent/guardian permission. Girls and adults may not share a bed, however, though GSNorCal may make exceptions for mothers and daughters.

For sites without electric lights and toilet facilities (otherwise known as primitive campsites):

- Choose and set up your campsite well before dark.
- Use a previously established campsite if available.
- Make sure the campsite is level, below tree line, and located at least 200 feet away from all water sources.
- Avoid fragile mountain meadows and areas with wet soil.
- Avoid camping under dead tree limbs.
- Use existing fire rings if a fire is necessary.
- If a latrine is not available, use individual cat holes—holes for human waste that are at least 200 feet away from the trail and known water sources—to dispose of human waste. Note: Cat holes are not permitted in some areas, so follow local sanitary codes or alternative instructions in those areas.
- Wash dishes and do personal bathing at least 200 feet away from water sources.
- Store food in a secure location away from tents and out of reach of animals.
- Where necessary, use a bear-proof container to store food or, if allowed or appropriate, hang food at least ten (10) feet off the ground from a rope that’s stretched between two trees. If the site is in bear country, check with local authorities for additional precautions.

**Prepare for Emergencies**

Prepare for emergencies. Ensure the presence of a waterproof first-aid kit and a first-aider with a current certificate in first aid, including adult and child CPR or CPR/AED, who is prepared to handle cases from extremes of temperature, such as, heat exhaustion, heat stroke, frostbite, cold exposure, and hypothermia, as well as sprains, fractures, and altitude sickness. If any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first aider with Wilderness First-Aid Training. When possible, a vehicle is available or an ambulance is on call at all times to transport an injured or sick person. See *Volunteer Essentials* for information about first-aid standards and training.

**Safety Gear**

- Clothing, including a rain jacket or poncho that can be layered and is appropriate for the weather
- Socks with sturdy shoes, hiking boots, or sneakers (no sandals, clogs, flip-flops, or bare feet)
- A sleeping bag that’s rated for the anticipated temperature
- A flashlight and other battery-powered lights for indoor use (no candles, kerosene lamps, portable cook stoves, heaters, or other open-flame devices are to be used inside tents)
• A first-aid kit
• Insect repellent
• A hat or bandana
• A hat, gloves, and thermal underwear for cool temperatures
• Flame-resistant tents or tarp (no plastic tents)
• A map and either a compass or a GPS
• Mosquito netting, where necessary
• Cooking supplies: pots, pans, utensils, mess kit, dunk bag, etc.
• A cooler for food storage
• Portable cook stoves and fuel whenever possible (to reduce the use of firewood)
• A flashlight or propane-fueled lantern (for outdoor use)
• A water purification kit

Girl Scouts of Northern California’s Approval Process for Camping
Camping is considered a high-adventure activity and must be pre-approved by the council.

• **Trip or High-Adventure Approval Form:** Submit the online [Trip or High-Adventure Approval Form](#) to council at least 4-6 weeks prior to your activity. Gather the following information to complete this form:
  - Confirmation that your chaperones are registered members of Girl Scouts of Northern California and have a current background check. Troop Leaders can find this information in their [Volunteer Toolkit](#).
  - Name of First Aider and a copy of their current CPR/First Aid certification card. Certification needs to be renewed every two years. If you are hiking or backpacking farther than 30 minutes from a medical facility, please have the information of the member, who is certified in Wilderness First Aid, accompanying your troop.
  - Confirm that the necessary online and in-person courses have been completed for this trip. You can find more information or register for these courses in your [Volunteer Learning Portal](#) in the section called Trip & Outdoor Advisor.
    - The **Camp Out course** is required for all camping trips that involve advanced outdoor cooking or camping trip with girls to a campground or other non-GSNorCal outdoor facility without indoor plumbing and electricity. Girls should have already had practice sleeping and cooking outdoors.
    - The **Extended Trips course** is required for troops traveling three (3) nights or more.
    - The **Backpacking course** is required before you take girls on an overnight backpacking adventure.

• **High-Adventure Approved Vendor List:** GSNorCal troops/groups must select a high-adventure vendor from the [High-Adventure Approved Vendor List](#), which consists of organizations that meet Girl Scouts safety and insurance requirements for the activity. For the safety of our members, before a troop uses a high-adventure site/vendor for a troop or service unit event, the council must approve the high-adventure site/vendor. This process is designed to ensure a safe experience and protect the council's and volunteer's legal interests.