

Safety Activity Checkpoint

Camping

HIGH-ADVENTURE ACTIVITY: Trip or High-Adventure Approval Form Required
First-Aider 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 Girl Scouts and will be accompanying them on their camping adventure must complete the “Camp Out” course as required by GSNorCal. Visit [GSNorCal’s Training Section](#) of the website for more information.

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](#)
- [ACA Coronavirus Safety at Camp](#)

Coronavirus Safety at Camp

The health and safety of Girl Scouts at camp has always been and continues more than ever to be our highest priority. All the health and safety precautions taken to keep girls healthy and safe have never been more important as the world returns to what is likely the new normal, after months of shelter in place in most communities.

As with any Girl Scout activity, adults and girls should be very mindful to abide by the guidance that has been issued by the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) for integrating back into regular life, which is to practice the basics:

The American Camp Association has provided an excellent source of guidance at: [COVID-19 Resource Center for Camps](#). Adults and girls should learn and follow the guidance set forth here by the American Camp Association. Informative and helpful topic-specific links from the [COVID-19 Resource Center for Camps](#) are here:

[Health and Wellness](#)
[Ways to Promote a Child's Resilience](#)

GSNorCal continues to support troop leaders, event directors, and camp directors to use their judgment in establishing protective measures based on planned activities, current local conditions, and local requirements that might exist.

GSNorCal values inclusion and recognizes that some members of our community are at greater risk than others and may need enhanced safety measures to be safe. We will work with our members, and where possible, identify appropriate modifications and alterations that will not increase the risk of COVID-19 exposure for Girl Scout participants.

It is important to note that if individuals are feeling ill or have tested positive for COVID-19, they should stay away from in-person meetings or gatherings.

Implement practices that minimize potential for communicable disease once camp is in session:

- Wear a mask and have girls wear a mask.
- Practice social distancing and proper spacing between campers.
- Encourage appropriate hand washing and/or hand sanitizing at regular intervals throughout the day. This assumes adequate wash basins and/or sanitizing pumps are at key locations.
- Cough/sneeze “into your sleeve.” Covering coughs/sneezes with one’s hands is no longer desired behavior; bury coughs/sneezes in one’s shoulder. Note: view “[Why Don’t We Do It in Our Sleeves?](#)” on YouTube.
- Remind everyone to keep their hands away from their faces.
- Make it a camp rule that personal supplies – hairbrushes, pillows, caps, contact lens solutions, make-up, etc. belong to the owner and should not be shared with others.
- Make it regular practice that one drinks only from one’s personal drinking cup or water bottle, no sharing, even “to be nice.”
- Increase the social distance between people, especially in dining rooms.

- Sleep head-to-toe rather than nose-to-nose – in bunks, tents & so forth. Go for the greatest distance between sleeping heads.
- Direct Health Center staff to isolate people with any symptoms of illness until communicable illness can be ruled out.
- For resident camps: maintain distance, ideally six feet, between beds and sleep head-to-toe (top bunk has the person’s head at one end, the bottom bunk has the person’s head at the other end). Utilize universal precautions – for and by everyone. *See the ACA Operating Guidance for specific recommendations by state. [State Operating Guidance for Summer 2021 | American Camp Association \(acacamps.org\)](#)
- Instruct staff to direct campers complaining of gastro-intestinal upset to the Health Center for assessment. Do not wait for kids to throw up!
- Make certain that food service staff know and implement safe food handling practices, i.e. ServSafe
- Avoid being indoors. Move all program activities to the outdoors and only go inside when absolutely necessary. Ensure increased ventilation in any indoor spaces that must be used.
- When food service personnel have questionable symptoms, especially those associated with the gastro-intestinal tract, keep them away from food preparation until appropriately improved.

When girls share sleeping structures, consider the following to lower the risk of any and all contagious illness spreading through the group:

- Sleeping structures (tents, cabins, dormitories, etc.) must be well ventilated with open windows or other ventilation systems in use.
- Campers must practice distancing as much as possible (sleeping head to foot in ground tents, cots or sleeping mats separated in buildings, etc.)

Camping with Daisies and Brownies

A Daisy troop may participate in an overnight camping experience if the girls are ready. Troops may want to try a backyard sleep out and progress to a “family camp-out” before the girls participate in an overnight event. Troops might consider a stay in yurts and/or cabins for a night on one of our GSNorCal properties as a first step towards sleeping in tents. *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 Scouts of Northern California for site suggestions and for information on using a non-council-owned site. Before searching for campground locations, please review the [GSNorCal Approved Vendor List](#).

Making Activities Accessible

In order to make your activity accessible to girls of all abilities, it's important to communicate with all girl attendees and their caregivers to learn about and accommodate their varied support needs. For resources and information on accessible sport and adventure activities, visit [Move United](#).

Equity

In addition to physical and social-emotional disabilities, consider the history, culture, and past experiences of the girls in your troop that could affect a girl's ability to equally participate in an activity. Work with girls and families to understand how an activity is perceived. Ensure that all girls and their families feel comfortable that they have access to whatever is needed to fully participate, such as the proper equipment, prior experiences, and skills needed to enjoy the activity.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Standard Safety Guidelines. Refer to the “Standard Safety Guidelines” in the *Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints* which apply to all Girl Scout gatherings and activities. When the adult-to-girl ratio, or other safety parameters, are stricter for a specific activity than in the Standard Safety Guidelines, always follow the stricter parameters in the activity chapter.

COVID-19 Guidelines. Review the “Coronavirus Safety in Girl Scouts” section in the *Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints* under the “Standard Safety Guidelines” section and be certain to consult with [GSNorCal's specific COVID-19 guidance](#). When applicable, always call ahead to the vendor, property or facility involved to check for their COVID-19 safety requirements as you prepare to take girls for this activity.

Emergency Action Plan (EAP). Review and document your Emergency Action Plan (EAP) ahead of time before taking girls out for this activity. Think through scenarios of what can go wrong such as an accident, breakdown, physical injury to a girl or adult, missing girl, or illness.

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 non-council-owned sites.

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)

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 [GSNorCal's Training Section](#) of the website. The **Camp Out Course** is required for all camping trips that involve advanced outdoor cooking or camping trips with girls to a campground or other non-GSNorCal outdoor facility for longer than 1 night without indoor plumbing and electricity. Girls should have already had practice sleeping and cooking outdoors.

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).

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 [GSNorCal's Training Section](#) of the website. The **Extended Trips course** is required for troops traveling three (3) nights or more.

Sleeping Arrangements

Generally, adults should not be sleeping in tents or the same area, such as a hotel room, with the girls. If the girls are not ready to be sleeping without an adult in their tents, shelters, or hotel rooms, it is recommended that the troop plan a simpler trip with indoor dormitory-style sleeping. If adults will be sleeping in the same area with the girls, more than one unrelated adult should be sleeping with more than one unrelated girl. No adult should be alone with any girl, unless she is her or his own child.

To clarify: a troop leader, her mother, and another unrelated female adult could sleep in a dormitory style room with more than one girl in the group.

One adult should not sleep in a tent or a hotel room with girls unless they are all her/his own daughters. If an adult must sleep in the same area with girls, there must be more than one unrelated adult with the group of girls.

Adult Background Check Requirements

Any adult who will be included as a chaperone in the adult-to-girl ratio in an overnight activity or any Girl Scout event must be registered and have completed the volunteer background check (fingerprinting) process. <https://www.applicantservices.com/GSNorCal>

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 is stretched between two trees. If the site is in bear country, check with local authorities for additional precautions.

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 caused by extremes of temperature, such as heat exhaustion, heat stroke, frostbite, cold exposure, and hypothermia, as well as sprains, fractures, and altitude sickness. Ensure that emergency transportation is available. 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 certification. See ***Volunteer Essentials*** for information about first-aid standards and training. The designated adult should have a working cell phone for emergencies. Consider bringing walkie-talkies with you for areas that do not have cell phone service. [[SAFETYWISE: First Aid & First Aiders](#)]

Safety Gear

Camping requires various equipment dependent on the length of trip, location, and weather. This might include (assess for your specific trip):

- 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 stove and fuel, whenever possible (to reduce the use of firewood; please note firewood burning restrictions applied in certain City/County/State jurisdictions)
- 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, have a current background check, completed the troop chaperone course and troop driver course (if transporting girls), and completed the [California State Mandated Reporter Training](#). 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 [MyGS Account - GSLearn](#) in the section called Trip & Outdoor Advisor.
 - The **Trip & Outdoor Advisor Course** is required for all overnight and [high-adventure activities](#).
 - 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 for longer than 1 night 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 **Girl Scout Small Craft Safety Training** is required before you take girls on a small craft water 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.
- **Troop Family Camping:** GSNorCal troops who are planning family camping with parents/guardians and siblings or other non-registered attendees, must still complete all of the above along with filling out the [Adult Health History Form](#) or [Minor Health History Form](#) for all attendees. Parents/Guardians must fill out the [Event/Activity Permission Form](#) for all minors regardless if Girl Scouts or non-member sibling. Plan 2 Insurance must be purchased to cover any participants who are not registered with Girl Scouts. All adults should adhere to the Girl Scout Promise and Law and [GSNorCal's Volunteer Policy](#). Never use illegal drugs. Don't consume alcohol, smoke, vape, or use foul language in the presence of girls.