

Safety Activity Checkpoint Travel/Trips

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: A camping trip is considered a travel/trip. 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 [GS-Learn](#) for more information.

Note: Approval for international travel must often be obtained six months or more in advance of the trip.



About Travel/Trips

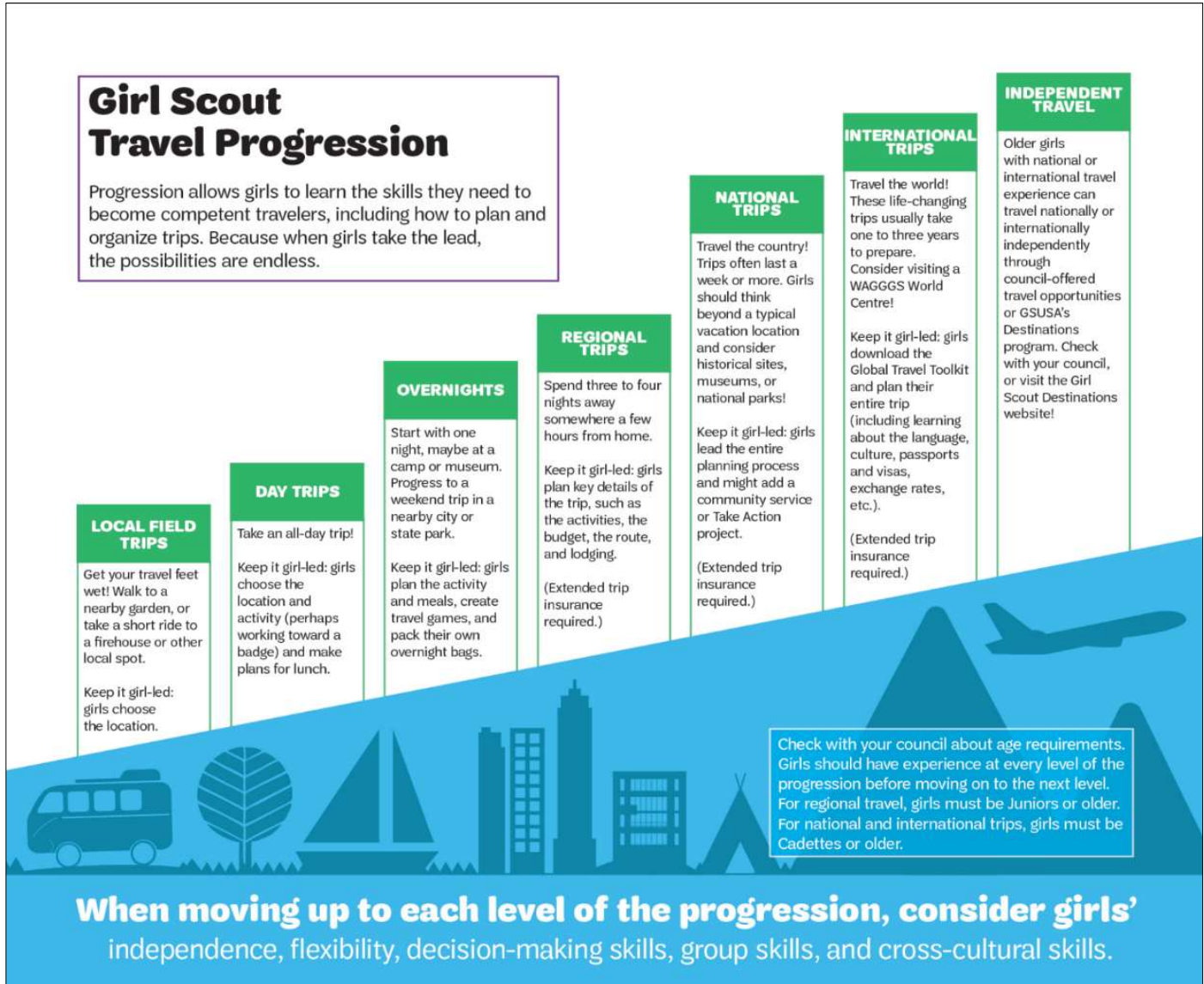
Some of the most memorable moments in a Girl Scout's life happen while taking trips. Travel offers a wealth of opportunities for girls to develop leadership, confidence, and practical life skills. The following information can help you and girls prepare for local, regional, or international travel.

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. 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 may also get together specifically for the purpose of traveling. Girls might join a trip with other girls from around our council, GSNorCal. Girl Scouts of the USA

also offers individual Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors the chance to travel independently and meet other Girl Scouts from across the country through the [GSUSA 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 Daises, 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. 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 trips longer than two nights.*

Brownie troops can participate in overnight events 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, or vacation rental 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 GSNorCal and visit the [GSUSA 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)

Be sure to check [GSNorCal's COVID Guidelines](#) before planning any regional, national, or international travel.

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. Effective October 1, 2023, any girl, sibling, adult or anyone who is not currently enrolled as a Girl Scout member, but who has registered to participate in a Girl Scout meeting, trip, or any other gathering is covered under Basic Mutual of Omaha Activity

Insurance. This insurance provides up to a specified maximum for medical expenses incurred as a result of an accident while participating in an approved, supervised Girl Scout activity.

This insurance coverage is not intended to diminish the need for, or replace existing, family health insurance. When \$140 in benefits has been paid under this plan for covered expenses, any subsequent benefits from the basic plan will be payable (up to the specified maximum) only for expenses incurred that aren't covered under another insurance policy. If there is no family insurance or healthcare program, a specified maximum of medical benefits is available under the basic plan. This plan does not cover illness/sickness.

WAGGGS World Centers or GSNorCal 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' [GSUSA 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](#)

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

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, physical injury to a girl or adult, missing girl, or sudden illness.

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.

Plan Transportation in Advance. When planning transportation, keep in mind that large 15-passenger vans have 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.

Taxis and ride-sharing services, including Uber and Lyft, may be used with these guidelines:

- A registered and background checked adult must ride in each vehicle with girls when multiple vehicles are being used.
- Girls should not ride alone without a registered and background checked adult accompanying them.
- Girl Scouts should never utilize the carpool feature (i.e. UberShare)
- It is strongly recommended that chaperoning adults riding in the car with girls activate the “Follow My Ride” feature in the ride-sharing company’s app for the duration of their ride in the locations where this feature is available.
 - In areas where the “Follow My Ride” feature is not available, send your in-town contact the name of the driver and your destination.
- Riders must wait for their ride in a safe place. For taxis, when possible, call (or ask your hotel to call) rather than hailing a cab from the street.
- Use a taxi stand at airports. Stand away from traffic while waiting for the taxi.
- For taxis: Check that the taxi is appropriately marked.
- For ride-sharing services, like Uber or Lyft, do not get into the vehicle if these checkpoints do not match:
 - Check that the vehicle’s license plate, make and model match what is shown in the app.
 - Compare the app’s photo with the driver. Ask for their name and be sure it matches the app.
 - Ask, “Who are you here to pick up?” They should have your first name, but no other info about you.
- If you feel uncomfortable for any reason, do not get in the vehicle.
 - If you become uncomfortable, end the ride.
 - Report your experience to the taxi service or ride-sharing app.
- Don’t share information about the group or where you are staying to any stranger.
- Each passenger must wear a seat belt. Enter and exit curbside.
- In foreign countries, consult a local expert about how to best call for taxis or rides. Reputable practices vary.

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 and Other Private Rentals are Now Permitted. Troops may stay at Airbnb and other private rental properties, such as VRBO or HomeAway, as long as parents/guardians sign the [Activity/Event Permission Form](#)

that includes a Waiver and Assumption of Risk and Indemnification for Private Property Rentals and Acknowledgement of Risks and Responsibilities Related to Private Rentals, including through short-term rental platforms. Girl Scouts may not stay at these private rentals unless their parents/guardians sign the form.

Involve girls in arrangements. Safe overnight outings include preparing girls to be away from home by involving them in planning, so they know what to expect. Men should not sleep in the same space as girls or women to promote a girl-led experience. 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.

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.

Make sure international permission slips are signed by both parents. Discuss with GSNorCal about having both parents sign the permission slip and notarizing it. This is recommended by the U.S. Customs Office and 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. Read the fine print carefully, as some situations (such as pandemics) may not be covered. Broad cancellation insurance is called "Cancel for any reason" (CFAR) and must be obtained immediately after the first booking. Discuss this option with your troop girls and parents as needed.

An activity Insurance plan is available for Girl Scouts members and non-members participating in extended activities (extending three nights or more) that covers illness/sickness and accident along with a plan for members and non-members traveling internationally that would like the added benefit of AXA Assistance-USA which offers Pre-Trip, Travel Assistance, Technical Assistance and Medical Assistance Services while out of the United States. These optional plans are secondary insurance that GSNorCal offers to cover participants taking part in any council-approved, supervised Girl Scout activity. You will be able to purchase this when you submit your trip or high-adventure approval form or utilizing the online enrollment form.

Plan for contingencies. Occasionally, things will not go as planned. Budget for extra money on hand as a contingency fund for when unexpected changes come up, for example: a cancelled accommodation, a train is missed, or an illness requires quarantine or recuperation.

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
- Ensure at least 1 adult has completed the [Trip & Outdoor Advisor Course](#)
- If the trip is international, leader must have international travel experience

Adult and Family Member Sleeping Arrangements. Generally, adults and non-registered children, e.g., siblings, etc., should not sleep in tents or the same area, such as, a hotel room, with the girls. If the girls are not ready to sleep without an adult in their tents, cabin, or hotel rooms, it is recommended that the troop plan a simpler trip with indoor dormitory-style sleeping.

If adults are sleeping in the same general 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.

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 make note of the following:

- Each participant must have 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.
- In the case of transgender or transitioning girl members or adult members, sleeping arrangements should reflect their identified gender, (i.e. transgender males should have separate sleeping quarters and bathrooms for their use).

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/guardians, 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 has increased requirements compared to domestic travel.

Register your trip with the U.S. government's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, 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, and that they visit their doctor to discuss their travel health requirements and any vaccinations or medications necessary.

Become aware of any quarantine, vaccine, or screening requirements for return to the U.S., as well as what is required for entry into destination countries. This information will help greatly when deciding upon a destination.

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 the required [Activity and Event permission form](#).
- 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. Failure to follow this direction will result in lack of support from the US State Department if something were to go wrong.
- 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 GSNorCal’s Risk Management Team 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 GSNorCal and get approval from a legal perspective, from in-house legal or outside legal counsel.
 - Confirm that you have senior management approval within GSNorCal 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.

Girl Scouts of Northern California's Approval Process for Travel and Trip

Trip and Travel 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 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.