

## Outings, Trips, and Travel Planning

A Girl Scout trip is an opportunity for girls to have fun, to experience adventure, and to enrich their ongoing Girl Scout program. Sometimes a trip is the culmination of a progression of activities that the girls are already engaged in.

A Girl Scout trip is defined as any time a troop has an activity at a location other than the regularly scheduled meeting place. If the troop will start and end at the regular meeting location, but will walk to a local park or other destination, this activity is not defined as a trip.

[Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) and the guidelines in Volunteer Essentials should be consulted when planning a trip of any length. Care should be taken to determine if troops are ready to participate in troop travel and trips.

### Step 1: Planning & Logistics

#### Adult Learning Courses for Trips & Travel

GSNorCal offers a variety of training opportunities for you to prepare for a safe and fun travel and outdoor experience with your Girl Scouts. Before venturing outdoors, volunteers are required to have the knowledge and experience to lead a safe and positive travel and outdoor experience. Training requirements for Trip and Outdoor advisors can be found on our [Volunteer Learning Portal \(training.gsnorcal.org\)](https://training.gsnorcal.org). Below is a list of our Trip and Outdoor Courses. All Trip and Outdoor Course training is built on progression and prerequisite courses are required. View the [Trip and Outdoor Advisor](#) course page in your Volunteer Learning Portal for detailed information.

#### **Trip & Outdoor Basics (online course)**

Required before you leave the meeting location for a local field trip, day trip, or longer trip.

#### **Cook In (online course)**

Required before girls use knives or prepare a snack or meal indoors. Learn the skills you'll need to teach girls how to plan, budget, shop, and prepare their own meal.

#### **Camp Out (online course)**

This course will prepare you to teach girls the fundamentals for simple outdoor cooking, including various outdoor cooking techniques, campsite setup, dishwashing, and safe food handling guidelines. After this course, your troop will be able to practice basic outdoor cooking techniques such as no cook, one-pot, simple stick cooking, and solar cooking.

#### **Camp Out – AKA: Troop Camping Certification (in-person course)**

This course is required if your troop will either cook OR sleep outdoors (or in shelters without electricity or indoor plumbing). At least one troop adult who will assist girls in planning, budgeting, and organizing the troop camping experience and who will accompany girls on the camping

adventure to make sure the trip is both safe and fun must take this course. The course is offered in-person or experienced campers may take the Troop Camping Equivalency as a challenge to the Camp Out Certification Course.

### **Sleep In (online course)**

Required before planning an indoor overnight at an indoor facility with indoor plumbing and electricity. Learn the skills you'll need to guide girls as they plan, budget, prepare, and pack for their indoor overnight experience.

### **Sleep Out (online course)**

This course is required before your troop plans to sleep outdoors at a location close to home in a sleeping bag, tent, cabin, yurt, or platform tent sleeping under the stars, in a backyard, or at a GSNorCal property with access to indoor electricity and plumbing. Girls should already have had practice sleeping indoors.

### **Campfire (online course)**

Required before you have an outdoor campfire with girls. Learn the skills you'll need to guide girls to build, light, and manage a campfire with safety in mind.

### **Backpacking Certification (in-person course)**

Required before you plan an overnight backpacking trip with girls. Learn the skills you'll need to guide girls to plan, budget, shop, and prepare for their overnight backpacking trip.

### **Regional Travel (online course)**

This course is required before **Junior and older troops** can plan and prepare for a regional trip for up to 4 nights in nearby states (California, Oregon, and Nevada) sleeping in hotels, motels, or hostels. If you will be cooking, camping, or backpacking, at least one adult must also take the additional required courses for these activities. Girls should have experienced local travel and overnights before taking longer regional trips.

### **Extended Travel Training (ETT) (in-person course)**

When planning trips lasting 3 nights or more, and/or out of state and international trips, the Extended Travel Training course is required of at least one adult who will attend the outing and who is involved in the planning process for the trip. This course should be completed prior to starting the planning process or at least 6 months before the trip. It is highly recommended that older girls take this course as well to help facilitate the girl-planning aspects of the trip.

### **Planning Resources**

Additional resources for planning and preparing your trip or outdoor adventure can be found on the [Travel Resources](#) page in the [Volunteer Learning Portal \(training.gsnorcal.org\)](https://training.gsnorcal.org).

## **Planning with Safety in Mind**

**For tips on girl planning and preparation, along with assessing group readiness:**

[PROGRAM: Outings, Trips & Travel](#)

[PROGRAM: Travel Readiness \(Progression\)](#)

**For planning international trips:**

[PROGRAM: Global Travel Toolkit](#)

## **For travel opportunities:**

[PROGRAM: Girl Scout Travel Opportunities](#)

### **Safety Guidelines**

Follow minimum adult-to-girl ratios for events, outings, and trips [[SAFETY-WISE: Adult-to-Girl Supervision Ratios](#)]

Review the Safety-Wise chapter in Volunteer Essentials (this chapter) and any applicable Safety Activity Checkpoints, and establish adult supervision plan

### **Create Emergency Plan**

- Brainstorm safety rules and precautions with the girls, such as, establishing boundaries, use of buddy system, plan for what to do if lost, etc.
- Help the girls to create an emergency plan. Bring this plan on your trip. The emergency plan should include the communication protocol:
  - Who is going to call the at-home contact to let them know the group is okay?
  - Who are the contacts for emergency and non-emergency local law enforcement?
  - Who is then going to call the travelers' emergency contacts?
  - Who is going to call GSNorCal in case of an emergency?
- Troop leaders should also ensure that girls know WHO is responsible for them, especially if it is a big trip. They should also know how to handle crowded situations and what to do in case they get lost or are in an accident. Perhaps test out these plans by having the girls spend a day in a local city, making sure they can navigate to meeting places and feel comfortable in public spaces, and even to learn how heavy their bags are!
- In the event of an emergency, everyone should stick to the plan. Gathering participants is the #1 priority. Once the group is gathered, call the emergency contact person to communicate the status of the group.

### **For International Travel**

For international trips, include in-country contacts (e.g., number for the U.S. embassy, American Express, Red Cross) and a "lost plan" for each location you visit in case any troop members become separated. Register your troop with the U.S. State Department and provide them with a list of names and the troop's itinerary.

Before the troop decides to travel, the first thing you should do is check the U.S. State Department website for any travel warnings or advisories, and read the individual country descriptions. These might reference certain areas to avoid within a certain country, and always include tips on how to stay safe. ([travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/alertswarnings.html](https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/alertswarnings.html))

A few weeks before the trip, register the troop's itinerary with the U.S. State Department. If the troop is registered, the U.S. Embassy will know that you are in the country. In case any incident occurs, the U.S. Embassy will take active steps to locate your troop. Your troop will also get updates about any security concerns in your destination. [State Department Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(step.state.gov/step/\)](https://step.state.gov/step/)

If your troop would like to connect with a WAGGGS member troop where you are visiting, you can submit the [GSUSA Intent to Travel Form](https://girlscoutsusa.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_5dlynji6EziK4Rv) ([girlscoutsusa.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_5dlynji6EziK4Rv](https://girlscoutsusa.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_5dlynji6EziK4Rv))

## **Budgeting & Money**

The Girl Scout Product Program is the nation's leading business and financial literacy program for girls and it can make a huge difference when financing a troop's travel dreams. Travel adventures cost more than a day trip, but this offers girls the opportunity to learn some financial skills that will serve them well throughout their lives while working towards an amazing goal. Girls learn:

- Budgeting
- Goal setting
- Marketing
- Customer relations
- Good business practices

Since the money belongs to the troop, the girls should make the decisions for the trip with guidance from the adults. The girls' travel experience will be much more enriched if they are involved in planning the trip.

### **Create a Budget**

Create a detailed and realistic budget with the girls. Include amounts for any:

- Registration fees
- Transportation
- Parking
- Gas
- Food
- Tips
- Insurance
- Lodging
- Recreation/entertainment
- Admission fees
- Taxes
- Fees for:
  - Travel documents
  - Vaccinations
  - Postage
  - Duplication of materials
  - Souvenirs
  - Emergency funds.

Help the girls define personal and troop expenses. For extended trips, the [Girl Scout Guide to Global Travel Booklet](#) has different templates to help the girls think of all the possible expenses so that they can determine the cost of their trip. Once you have an idea of how much the trip is going to cost, help the girls to figure out how much they need. Use the [Trip & Outdoor Budget Planning Tool](#) to assist you and the girls in your troop with planning and budgeting for your trip or outdoor adventure.

Determine whether the Cadette or older girls have product program rewards money that they want to use on this trip. With input from families, the girls should decide how much will be paid by the troop and the amount each girl/family can contribute. Girl Scout trips should be affordable to all the girls in the troop. Discuss travel plans, budgeting and money-earning projects with families before finalizing plans.

What's left after the girls/family contribution is the amount needed to raise through money-earning projects. Establish a troop goal. How much will the group need to earn together? [[MONEY: Money-Earning Projects - Approval Required](#)]

### **For Extended or More Costly Trips**

Have the girls discuss and make decisions in advance, including:

- How to pay bills that occur before, during, and after the trip.
- Shall the troop pay all or any part of the costs for adult chaperones to attend the trip? How many adults? Which ones? Could these adults help with the money-earning projects to help defray their expenses? The troop cannot go on the trip without qualified adult chaperones, so this might be considered an expense to the troop. Travel Tip: When selecting adults for a trip, define the needs of the trip first. For example, does the trip require a lifeguard, or an adult who has taken Extended Travel Training, and/or Troop Camping Certification? Select adults that can fulfill the needs of the trip. (Note that it would not be acceptable to use troop funds to pay for "extra" adults who were not needed as part of the adult-to-girl ratios).
- What percentage of money should be held to cover regular troop expenses besides the trip?
- Not all families can afford to spend the same amount for activities. Will there be some money set aside for financial aid? How could a confidential system be set in place to allow girls to apply for the funds?
- How should it be handled if a new girl joins the troop just prior to the trip? How would the troop help make it possible for her to attend?
- What will the money be used for if plans for the trip fall through?

All troop money legally belongs to GSNorCal to be used by the troop to pay for their Girl Scout activities. Everyone should understand if they leave the troop, the money is not their personal property. Under no circumstances would an individual take any portion of the money with her to use for non-Girl Scout purposes. The IRS has issued an advisory that non-profit organizations may NOT track individual "trip accounts". Per the IRS, "a section 501(c)(3) organization must not be organized or operated for the benefit of private interests. No part of the net earnings of a section 501(c)(3) organization may inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual." The IRS took the position that using the money raised in various fundraising activities to further the Scouting program was in accordance with their exempt purpose, but the creation of a reserve fund for individual girls within a troop (i.e., earmarked accounts) is not allowed.

Set up a troop travel bank account to be overseen by two people who work together as the designated adults. Have the two people together be responsible for troop funds and keep a daily account of expenditures. Likewise, all funds should not be held by just one person at any time during the trip.

## Money-Earning Projects

Not all trips involve money-earning projects, but if yours does:

- GSUSA and GSNorCal policies and guidelines must be followed.
- You must obtain council approval for all money-earning projects and follow safety standards. [The Money-Earning Application Form](#) is available on the council website at: [www.GSNorCal.org/money-earning](http://www.GSNorCal.org/money-earning)

## Soliciting Funds

Check with the Fund Development Department before soliciting funds from local organizations, foundations, or businesses. Encourage girls to present travel plans to potential contributors—but leave the “ask” to adults. In other words, let the girls share their excitement about their goals, but let the adults ask for donations. Asking for money or materials or services is considered fundraising by the IRS and Girl Scout policies, and for many reasons (legal and otherwise), adults are the only people who can raise money for Girl Scouts.

## Chaperones

To determine how many volunteer chaperones the girls will need with them on the trip, see the adult-to-girl ratios. [[SAFETY-WISE: Adult-to-Girl Supervision Ratios](#)] As you ask for chaperones, be sure to look for ones who are committed to:

- 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, e.g., not drinking alcohol on the trip, not leaving the girls alone, etc.
- Supporting and reinforcing the team agreement
- Handling pressure and stress by modeling flexibility and a sense of humor
- Creating an experience for and with girls
- Getting fit (appropriate to the trip)
- Becoming a registered Girl Scout member
- Have a cleared background check with GSNorCal
- Complete the [Troop Chaperone](#) course in the [Volunteer Learning Portal \(training.gsnorcal.org\)](http://training.gsnorcal.org)

Be sure every chaperone reviews and follows the [Girl Scout Safety Guidelines](#), and understands rules and expectations of their role for the trip, that will ensure that the focus of the trip will always be on the girl experience.

Be sure the chaperones each understand their responsibilities and which girls they are responsible for, and ensure that the girls also know which chaperone they report to. Specify who is responsible for contacting the emergency contact person in case of any emergency situation. Be sure that everyone understands that the chaperones are responsible for the girls' safety, and not the tour director.

For info, resources, and training: [training.gsnorcal.org](http://training.gsnorcal.org).



## Transporting Girls

How parents/guardians decide to transport girls between their homes and Girl Scout meeting places is each their individual decision and responsibility.

For planned Girl Scout field trips and other activities—outside the normal meeting time and/or place—in which a troop will be transported in private vehicles:

- Every driver must be an approved background checked adult volunteer at least 21 years old, and have a good driving record, a valid license, and a registered/insured vehicle.
- Girls never drive other girls.
- If a troop is traveling in one vehicle, there must be at least two unrelated, background checked adult volunteers in the vehicle, one of which is female, and the girl-to-adult ratios must be followed. One or both adults must qualify as a troop driver following the standards below. [\[SAFETY: Adult-to-Girl Supervision Ratios\]](#)
- Likewise, if a troop is traveling in more than one vehicle, the entire group must consist of at least two unrelated, background checked adult volunteers, one of whom is female, and the adult-to-girl ratios must be followed. [\[SAFETY: Adult-to-Girl Supervision Ratios\]](#) Care should be taken so that a single car (with a single adult driver) has at least two girls, and is not separated from the troop for an extended length of time. A male volunteer may act as a driver, but must never have one girl in the car alone, except for his own daughter. All drivers must qualify as troop drivers following the standards below.

### California Car Seat Laws

Current laws regarding car safety seats for children must be followed. Children must be in a belt-positioning booster seat until they are at least 8 years old or 4 feet 9 inches tall. In addition, children under 12 must be in a rear seat (may not ride in a front seat because of air bags).

### Vehicles

GSNorCal encourages troops to transport girls in family-sized vehicles which are familiar to the drivers. Vans designed to carry 15 or more passengers are NOT approved to transport Girl Scouts in our council.

### Private Transportation

Private transportation includes private passenger vehicles, rental cars, privately owned or rented recreational vehicles and campers, chartered buses, chartered boats, and chartered flights. Each driver of motorized private transportation must be at least 21 years old and hold a valid operator's license appropriate to the vehicle. State laws must be followed even if they are more stringent than the guidelines here.

### Drivers

It is the responsibility of the troop leader to ensure that drivers have a valid driver's license and proof of insurance. Use the [Troop Driver Form](#), available on the council website. [www.GSNorCal.org/forms](http://www.GSNorCal.org/forms). This form should be updated annually.

When driving a vehicle to transport Girl Scouts, take the following precautions and ask any other drivers to do the same. The troop leader should familiarize drivers with guidelines for acting in this

capacity and ask them to take the online [Troop Driver](https://training.gsnorcal.org) course on the [Volunteer Learning Portal \(training.gsnorcal.org\)](https://training.gsnorcal.org).

Each driver of motorized private transportation must:

- Ensure all drivers are volunteers at least 21 years old.
- Hold a valid driver's/operator's license appropriate to the vehicle being driven.
- Carry the minimum insurance required by the [California Responsibility Law](#).
- Must be registered members and complete the adult background check as required by the council.
- A male volunteer may act as a driver, but must never have one girl in the car alone, except for his own daughter.
- Keep directions and a road map in the car, along with a first aid kit and a flashlight.
- Check your lights, signals, tires, windshield wipers, horns, and fluid levels before each trip and check them periodically on long trips.
- Load gear appropriately. Heavy objects and luggage can affect vehicles stability and handling. Avoid overloading, especially on the top or back of any vehicle.
- Keep all necessary papers up to date, such as your driver's license, vehicle registration, any state or local inspections, insurance coverage, and the like.
- Wear your seat belt at all times, and insist that all passengers do the same.
- Keep girls under 12 in the back seats. Use car seats and boosters as required in California.
- Never transport girls in flatbed or panel trucks, in the bed of a pickup, or in a camper-trailer. Girls must always wear seat belts and be in a seat intended for passengers.
- Follow all established rules of the road in California or the state in which you are traveling in:
  - Follow the speed limit
  - Keeping a two-car length between you and the car ahead of you
  - Do not talk or text on a mobile phone or other personal electronic devices
  - Do not use ear buds or headphones
  - Have your headlights on when your windshield wipers are on
- Avoid driving when tired, taking medication that makes you drowsy, or for extended periods at night.
- Know what to do in case of breakdown or accident. It is smart to have reflectors, a flashlight, a few tools, and a good spare tire.
- Take time to familiarize yourself with any new or rented vehicle.
- Plan rest stops every few hours. If driving with others, prearrange stopping places along the way. When planning longer trips, arrange for relief drivers.
- Never travel in caravans (having drivers follow behind one another). This can result in an increased chance of accidents if drivers hurry through a light to stay together, or make unsafe lane changes to follow. Instead, every driver should know where they are going and where any rest stops will be taken.
- Girls may not transport other girls.

Information and training for drivers is available on the [Volunteer Learning Portal \(training.gsnorcal.org\)](https://training.gsnorcal.org).



## **Rented or Chartered Commercial Vehicles**

Even though written agreements are always required when chartering a vehicle, you are not authorized to sign an agreement even if there is no cost associated with the charter. Such an agreement must instead be signed by the council staff person designated by GSNorCal. [[MONEY: Contracts & Certificates of Insurance](#)]

## **Rental Vehicles**

Troops, Service Units, or volunteer run programs can rent vehicles using Girl Scout funds as long as it is to transport girls or equipment for Girl Scout programming. GSNorCal no longer requires prior approval for those renting vehicles, but does require that all adults driving a rental vehicle to transport girls must be background screened and registered as a troop driver. *GSNorCal does not offer rental vehicles, discounts and will not be held liable for any rental vehicle incidents.* It is recommended that when an adult rents a vehicle that you purchase the additional rental insurance coverage or make sure that your personal coverage will be sufficient. Rental vehicles are to be treated as personal vehicles when used for Girl Scouting activity.

## **Commercial Buses**

Troops, Service Units or Volunteer Run Camps wishing to lease commercial buses must also have GSNorCal Risk Management Team sign all contracts and agreements on their behalf.

**Troops, service units, and committees are NOT legal entities, and therefore, cannot legally enter into contracts.** [Click for more info about having council staff review and sign your contract, facility agreement, use permit, or memorandum of understanding \(MOU\), or to request a Certificate of Insurance \[Money: Contracts & Certificates of Insurance\]](#)

All vehicles traveling on public roads should be equipped with:

- First-aid kits
- Emergency-warning reflectors
- Fire extinguishers
- A mobile phone or some other kind of communication device

Commercial bus companies must:

- Be approved by GSNorCal listed on the [Approved Vendors List](#).
- Provide a certificate of insurance with evidence of general liability and automobile liability for the vehicle (minimum of \$1 million) and evidence of collision/comprehensive insurance for the vehicle.
- Provide evidence of workers' compensation insurance for the driver.
- Provide a copy of their last CHP safety inspection.
- Ensure relief-driver availability (if driving hours indicate).
- Show that drivers are approved by the state to carry children.
- Show that drivers are part of the statewide program that monitors driving records.
- Provide seating and storage capacities, as well as working bathroom availability for long trips.
- Carry emergency equipment.
- Provide documentation of safety-check procedures, including frequency of safety checks.

**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.
  - 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 not 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.

### **Rental or Purchase Policy for Storage Units & Trailers**

GSNorCal supports the rental of storage units and/or purchase of storage units and storage trailers by Service Units and Volunteer Run Camps in the name of GSNorCal for the use of storing program supplies and product sales property. These units should never be used to store personal property.

Contracts and Agreements are to be signed by the key holders of the units/trailers with a minimum of two unrelated signers for each unit/trailer. In the case of moving storage units, such as trailers that are purchased in the name of GSNorCal, it is the responsibility of the Service Unit or Volunteer Run Camp to uphold maintenance and vehicle registration tags for the unit. The storage of the vehicles is the responsibility of the Service Unit or Volunteer Run Camp. Service Units or Volunteer Run Camp must annually submit copies of their registration and insurance to GSNorCal’s Senior Property Director.

GSNorCal will cover liability insurance on all storage vehicles and units as long as the property is owned and utilized in the name of GSNorCal. Liability insurance will renew annually when contracts or registrations are renewed with facilities or the State of California Department of Motor Vehicles. Liability insurance does not cover theft, or in the case of trailers, collision. These extra insurances should be purchased by the Service Unit or Volunteer Run Camp in charge of the unit. If the

Service Unit or Volunteer Run Camp fails to maintain the vehicle registration and upkeep of vehicles, GSNorCal reserves the right to remove the unit from the possession of the Service Unit or Volunteer Run Camps. No trailer should ever be used without up-to-date registration tags, collision insurance and GSNorCal liability insurance.

## Additional Insurance

Additional insurance (beyond basic coverage included in Girl Scout membership) must be purchased for:

- an event where unregistered people are participating
- any Girl Scout activity, event or trip lasting 3 nights or more
- for trips out of state or any other trip where sickness could occur
- where one or more participants does not have personal family insurance (or where personal insurance may not be honored)
- any trip out of the country

[[SAFETY-WISE: Girl Scout Activity Insurance](#)]

Consider buying travel insurance in case of flight cancellation, delays, or date changes. This kind of insurance is an added cost, but if the group ends up having to cancel a trip the insurance may be able to reimburse them for flights and other costs incurred. Additional insurance purchased through GSNorCal does not cover these special circumstances and can be purchased through independent insurance carriers.

Any registered or unregistered participant who does not have personal insurance may purchase insurance for the duration of the Girl Scout event/activity through GSNorCal.

## Destination Logistics

All contracts or signed agreements must be signed by an authorized council staff member. Troops and service units are not legal entities, and may not legally enter into contracts. Please allow at least two weeks prior to the date you need the signed agreement for your request to be processed.

All reservations should be made in advance. Do not post the exact itinerary on a public website where it could be viewed by anyone. Instead create a closed network, such as a closed Facebook group.

**Troops, service units, and committees are NOT legal entities, and therefore, cannot legally enter into contracts.** [Click for more info about having council staff review and sign your contract, facility agreement, use permit, or memorandum of understanding \(MOU\), or to request a Certificate of Insurance \[Money: Contracts & Certificates of Insurance\]](#)

## Prepare the Girls

The girls should spend time learning or practicing any needed skills (such as dressing for the weather, fire or knife safety, using specialized equipment, etc.) before the trip.

Girls should develop a Behavioral Contract that guides appropriate behavior at events, outings, and trips. Be sure all girls understand the rules and expectations, along with consequences for breaking the rules.

If the group will be staying in a hotel, everyone should know where the emergency exits are, and always lock the door. Travelers should not mention their room number in front of strangers.

Online training is available to help trip and outdoor advisors with tips on getting girls involved in planning and preparing girls for certain activities and outings. [Volunteer Learning Portal \(training.gsnorcal.org\)](https://training.gsnorcal.org)

For International Trips: Have the girls find out if they need a VISA or any special immunizations to enter that country, and whether there are health concerns. Check the Center for Disease Control website: [wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list](https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list)

## Staying Safe During the Trip

Be sure to discuss the following items with the girls and their parents before you leave on any trip (you may also want to put this information in writing and have girls sign it):

- Who her buddy is—and how the buddy system works
- 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
- What to do in the event of a crime and how to report it
- 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 behaviors you expect and what consequences exist for not living up to those behaviors

## Tips for Girls Traveling Alone

If a Girl Scout Cadette, Senior, or Ambassador will be traveling alone during any part of a trip, use the opportunity to help her feel comfortable with and capable of being on her own. Always talk first with her parents to assess her maturity and ability to handle herself, and have them complete an emergency form. If she is flying, discuss the possibility of booking a nonstop flight to make her trip less stressful, and ask parents to contact the airline, which will make special arrangements for any 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 smartphones & iPads) that are attractive to pickpockets.

## Step 2: Communicate with Troop Adults

### Communication with Families

All families should have itineraries, a copy of the emergency plan, and contact information for the trip's emergency contact person.

## Permission & Health History Forms

Permission forms must always be used when:

- Activities are held in a different place than regularly scheduled meetings OR
- Activities are held on a different day or time than regularly scheduled meetings OR
- Activities are considered high adventure [[SAFETY-WISE: High Adventure Activities](#)]

Use the appropriate permission form(s) as needed for the trip/activity to communicate plans to the parents/guardians. [[SAFETY-WISE: Be Prepared, Carry Forms with You](#)]

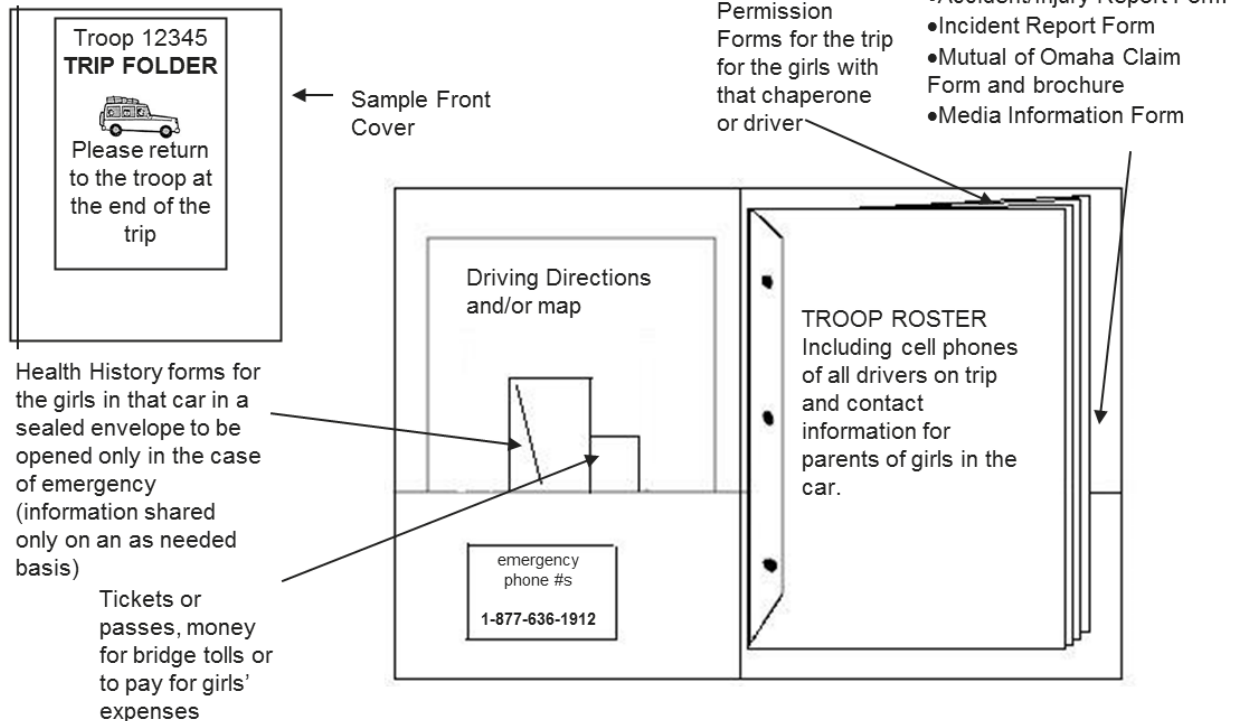
Girl and Adult Health History Forms must be signed and re-dated by a parent/guardian within two months of an overnight activity. Health History with Physical Exam Forms are needed for girls and adults for any trip lasting 3 nights or more or for strenuous or physically demanding activities. The required health examination by a professional health care provider must have been within the previous 24 months. Camp and school physicals are accepted. *It's important to note that adults also need a health history form for overnight events.*

## Trip Folders

All drivers or adult chaperones should carry a folder containing:

- Permission forms ([Annual Permission](#) & [Activity/Event Permission Form](#))
- [Health History forms](#) (in a sealed envelope) for all girls/adults/participants they are responsible for
- Driving Directions/Maps
- [Trip Roster](#)
- Itinerary
- Pertinent Emergency Contact Information
- [Council Emergency Card](#)
- [Mutual of Omaha Claim form](#)
- [Accident/Injury Report form](#)
- [Incident Report form](#)
- [Media Information Sheet](#)
- [Troop Driver Form](#) and Vehicle Assignment, if the group will be driving

Drivers or chaperones should carry a trip folder on any trip in case of any accident or other emergency, along with a first aid kit.



## Troop Emergency Contact Person

A troop emergency contact person must be established for every trip. Having an emergency contact person allows chaperones to focus on keeping everyone together, safe, and calm while the emergency contact handles communication with families. This person would act as a "point person" in case of any emergency on the trip or an emergency or natural disaster at home while the troop is away. The troop emergency contact person must be a person who will NOT attend the trip, and should know:

- Which girls and adults are present on the trip
- Where the troop is going
- Dates and times of the trip
- Where and when the group will return
- Contact information for the adults present on the trip
- Contact information for service unit leadership
- Contact information for all families
- How to activate the GSNorCal Emergency Management Plan



### Step 3: GSNorCal Approval

It is recommended that troops spend two years planning and preparing for a major trip. Encourage girls to gather the needed information to submit the [Trip or High Adventure Approval Form](#) themselves. ([www.GSNorCal.org/forms](http://www.GSNorCal.org/forms))

Type of Trip/Event	Approval process and timeline for submitting the <a href="#">Trip or High Adventure Approval Form</a>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trip is less than 60 miles from your regular meeting place, under 6 hours in duration, and not high adventure [<a href="#">SAFETY-WISE: High Adventure Activities</a>]</li> <li>Council-sponsored activities in the Program Guide</li> <li>Activities where girls walk or ride their own bicycles as part of their regularly scheduled meetings</li> <li>Service unit activities and overnights</li> </ul>	The Trip or High Adventure Approval Form is not required.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trip is farther than 60 miles from your regular meeting place and longer than 6 hours in duration but not high adventure</li> <li>Any overnight trip not hosted by a Service Unit</li> </ul>	The <a href="#">Trip or High Adventure Approval Form</a> must be submitted to GSNorCal. Travel plans require approval from the council at least 2 weeks prior to the trip.
Event/trip of any length includes a high adventure activity	The <a href="#">Trip or High Adventure Approval Form</a> must be submitted to GSNorCal. Travel plans require approval from the council at least 4-6 weeks prior to the trip.
Trip is 3 nights or more	The <a href="#">Trip or High Adventure Approval Form</a> must be submitted to GSNorCal. Travel plans require approval from the council at least 6-12 weeks prior to the trip.

Type of Trip/Event	Approval process and timeline for submitting the <a href="#">Trip or High Adventure Approval Form</a>
International trip	<p>The <a href="#">Trip or High Adventure Approval Form</a> must be submitted to GSNorCal. Travel plans require approval from the council at least 6 months prior to the trip.</p> <p>It is recommended that troops spend 2 years planning and preparing for a major trip. Encourage girls to gather the needed information to submit the <a href="#">Trip or High Adventure Approval Form</a> themselves.</p>

Contact the Risk Management team at [travel@gsnorcal.org](mailto:travel@gsnorcal.org) if you have any questions.

## Step 4: Go on Trip – Have Fun

### What to Bring

Before discussing what girls should bring, it's a great idea to discuss what they shouldn't bring. Girls should not bring valuable items, e.g., expensive electronics, jewelry, etc., on any kind of trip. The items could become lost or damaged, and more importantly, could make the girls a target when out in public.

### First Aid Kit

Never give any medication, including over-the-counter medications, to a girl without a parent/guardian's written permission. For extended trips, include items such as Benadryl, Tylenol, anti-diarrhea medicine, medicines for stomach upset and motion sickness. Parents/guardians must indicate on the health forms which over-the-counter medications girls are permitted to take.

- *Prescription Medications for Girls:* Unless a girl has a physician or parental note to carry her own medications, adults are responsible to keep medication for girls. This authorization may be needed in situations where home hospitality is given and the girl is away from the first aider. Personal medications to be administered in case of emergency include bee sting kits, asthma inhalers, epinephrine injectors, diabetic medication, diabetic insulin and syringes, etc. (Girls need a physician's note to keep the medication with her at all times.)
- *Permission Forms:* [Annual Permission Forms](#), [Activity and Event Permission Forms](#), or [Permission to Travel with Minor](#) (for international trips), [Health History Forms for Girls](#), [Adult Health History Forms](#) for overnight trips, and [Girl Health History with Physical Forms](#), [Adult Health History Form with Physical](#) (for trips of 3 nights or more)
- *For International Trips:* A copy of her Health History Form with Physical Exam and insurance information, and any medication she must carry with her (e.g., asthma inhaler, diabetic medication, insulin syringes, or epinephrine injectors.)
- Emergency Plans and [Council Emergency Cards](#)
- All drivers/adult chaperones carry Trip Folders

**For international trips:**

- Girls and adults should check with their mobile service provider to see what service is available in all the countries they will be traveling to and through, including airports, etc.
- Make sure to gather an international customer service phone number from your provider to call for assistance, (a non-800 number).
- Girls and adults might consider buying a local chip in the country or region of travel to use in their mobile devices while on their trip.
- Make sure all electronic devices have established lock combinations.
- Girls and adults carry citizenship documents and copies, or documentation of legal status and copies, to reenter the United States. It's also a good idea to have electronic copies scanned and emailed so they can be accessed from a computer. Additionally, adults should carry copies of each traveler's passport.
- Girls and adults should carry itineraries with the address and contact information for every part of the trip, including the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate to each trip location. Adults should carry copies of reservations and confirmations. Each person should have a map.
- Each girl who is carrying her own medication (e.g., asthma inhaler, insulin and syringes, or epinephrine injectors) should carry a copy of her own [Health History Form with Physical Exam](#) and insurance information.
- To minimize risk, when traveling overseas, travelers should not wear nametags or monogrammed shirts. Uniforms are definitely appropriate at World Centers and WAGGGS events, however, uniforms are not recommended for other travel. It can be each troops's decision whether or not to wear matching or Girl Scout clothing, but right now, in our current environment, it is recommended that they do not. Some groups decide to wear the same color to find each other in a crowd. In this case, solid colors – even green! – will work.

**For extended trips, girls bring:**

- A copy of her Health History Form with Physical Exam and insurance information
- A copy of the group itinerary with all contact numbers
- Personal medications to be administered in case of emergency, such as bee sting kits, asthma inhalers, etc. (Girls need a physician's note to keep the medication with her at all times.)

**Staying Safe**

Follow GSNorCal safety guidelines in Volunteer Essentials (this chapter) and in the Safety Activity Checkpoints. In case of emergency, follow emergency plan.

**ID Bracelet or Dog Tag for Extended Trips**

An ID bracelet (or dog tag) is required for each person with the following information:

- Girl or Adult Name
- Girl Scouts of Northern California
- GSNorCal Emergency Phone Number 1 (877) 636-1912 (include country code for international travelers)

These can be made at a pet store, military surplus store, or ordered online.

## **Safety Tips for Hotels, Motels, Hostels, or Dormitories**

Share these safety tips with girls before you leave on any trip that involves a stay at a hotel, motel, hostel, or dormitory:

- 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 the 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 on your bedside table, along with a small bag with your room key, wallet, passport, and mobile phone. Take the flashlight and bag with you 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 on TVs and does not 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.

## **Other Reminders**

- Let the girls problem solve when things don't go according to plan.
- Take lots of pictures, share with families.
- Have girls write thank you notes to the drivers, adult chaperones, and tour guides, as appropriate.