

GIRL SCOUT GUIDE TO U.S. TRAVEL

From local day trips to coast-to-coast treks, learn how to explore the country with Girl Scouts!



TAKE OUR TRAVEL EXPERIENCE QUIZ!

START YOUR TRIP-PLANNING WORKSHEET!

HEAR FROM GIRLS WHO'VE BLAZED TRAILS FAR AND WIDE!

HOW TO GET STARTED

Use this guide to plan a three- to four-night trip in your region, or if you've already tackled something local, a longer trip anywhere in the United States! As you go through this guide, you'll learn if you're ready for more advanced travel and what you need to do to get started. With the right tools and plenty of planning, any Girl Scout can make her travel dreams come true!

HERE'S WHAT SOME GIRLS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT TRAVELING WITH GIRL SCOUTS

Isabella, age 13

"Almost everything we did on the trip was new to me. My first time on a plane, my first time on a horse, and my first time eating lots of new foods. I was scared of some things at first, but I am now more comfortable trying new things."

Maggie, age 12

"I learned that I have a passion for travel! This trip opened my eyes to what it is like to see new places and meet new people who might be different from me."

Kayla, age 10

"We all became even better friends on our trip. Even when things went wrong, like when our train was canceled, we worked together to make a new plan and just had so much fun together!"

Jennifer, Junior troop leader

"I love the opportunities that travel provides for Girl Scouts. By allowing them to be girl-led in their planning, preparations, and raising the funds that go along with travel, the girls gain something that a regular family vacation can't provide. Independence, wonder, and learning to accept differences and similarities are just a few. I know that in my family of five, a trip can be financially out of the question, but with the right tools, my Girl Scout will be able to make her dream a reality."

Amy, Cadette and Senior troop leader

"When your troop travels, you are not just giving them an opportunity to make lifetime memories, you are tapping into their inner project-planning, problem-solving, and adventure-seeking skills just waiting to be let loose. Allow enough time for them to dream, research, revise, and take flight! They will come back with a whole new perspective on their own sense of self-worth."



Girl Scout Travel Progression

Progression allows girls to learn the skills they need to become competent travelers, including how to plan and organize trips. Because when girls take the lead, the possibilities are endless.

LOCAL FIELD TRIPS

Get your travel feet wet! Walk to a nearby garden, or take a short ride to a firehouse or other local spot.

Keep it girl-led: girls choose the location.

DAY TRIPS

Take an all-day trip!

Keep it girl-led: girls choose the location and activity (perhaps working toward a badge) and make plans for lunch.

OVERNIGHTS

Start with one night, maybe at a camp or museum. Progress to a weekend trip in a nearby city or state park.

Keep it girl-led: girls plan the activity and meals, create travel games, and pack their own overnight bags.

REGIONAL TRIPS

Spend three to four nights away somewhere a few hours from home.

Keep it girl-led: girls plan key details of the trip, such as the activities, the budget, the route, and lodging.

(Extended trip insurance required.)

NATIONAL TRIPS

Travel the country! Trips often last a week or more. Girls should think beyond a typical vacation location and consider historical sites, museums, or national parks!

Keep it girl-led: girls lead the entire planning process and might add a community service or Take Action project.

(Extended trip insurance required.)

INTERNATIONAL TRIPS

Travel the world! These life-changing trips usually take one to three years to prepare. Consider visiting a WAGGGS World Centre!

Keep it girl-led: girls download the Global Travel Toolkit and plan their entire trip (including learning about the language, culture, passports and visas, exchange rates, etc.).

(Extended trip insurance required.)

INDEPENDENT TRAVEL

Older girls with national or international travel experience can travel nationally or internationally independently through council-offered travel opportunities or GSUSA's Destinations program. Check with your council, or visit the Girl Scout Destinations website!

Check with your council about age requirements. Girls should have experience at every level of the progression before moving on to the next level. For regional travel, girls must be Juniors or older. For national and international trips, girls must be Cadettes or older.

When moving up to each level of the progression, consider girls' independence, flexibility, decision-making skills, group skills, and cross-cultural skills.

Leaders

Traveling with Girl Scouts is unique because girls take the lead—during the planning *and* on the trip. This builds their skills, develops their confidence, and teaches them how to overcome challenges and practice collaboration. Girls are most likely to achieve these outcomes when they travel with the recommended girl/adult ratios (without too many adults on the trip.) Consider starting your travel experience by inviting parents/guardians to join local field trips and day trips. By the time girls are ready for a weekend trip—and definitely when it comes time for a regional or national trip—they should be ready to do the planning and make decisions. When too many adults participate, trips become less girl-led. Avoid having an excess of parents join your regional, national, and international trips. When girls have the chance to travel independently (with their troop leaders, of course!), there's no limit to what they can learn about themselves and achieve.

AM I READY FOR TRAVEL?

Take our quiz! Girls—ask your parent/guardian to complete their section. Keep track of your answers, and read your results on page 7.



FOR GIRLS

1. Do you like staying overnight at friends' houses?

- A. I sometimes get sad or lonely, so I tend to avoid sleepovers, or friends come to my house.
- B. I have sleepovers at my best friend's house sometimes. It's fun!
- C. I'm at a friend's house practically every weekend.

2. Have you attended Girl Scout camp?

- A. No, but I've thought about it.
- B. I went to day camp, and it was awesome! I want to go back for resident camp!
- C. I'm a veteran camper; I know all the songs!

3. Have you traveled outside your state?

- A. Nope, never left!
- B. I've visited another state before.
- C. I've been on several far-away vacations.

4. How well do you keep track of your stuff?

- A. If my head wasn't attached to my body, I'd lose it.
- B. My parent says it's a miracle I can find anything in my room, but I know exactly where everything is in the chaos.
- C. Everything is always organized and where it's supposed to be.

5. How well do you work on a team?

- A. OK, but I prefer to do things on my own.
- B. If my friend wants to do something different, I sometimes agree to it.
- C. I like deciding what to do as a group.



FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

- 1. Have you traveled long-distance with your girl?**
 - A. We did a road trip once.
 - B. We've taken a few vacations.
 - C. We regularly travel six or more hours away for vacation or to visit family.

- 2. How independent is your girl at home?**
 - A. I pick out her clothes, comb her hair, cut up her food...I'm very involved in her day-to-day.
 - B. I help with things like braiding her hair or picking out clothes that match, but she's capable of getting ready by herself.
 - C. She's completely independent.

- 3. Your girl's troop is getting ready for a weekend trip. What do you do?**
 - A. Insist on being a chaperone; I'm not sending my girl away from home with people who aren't her family.
 - B. Happily go with them if they need another adult.
 - C. Stay home—this is a chance for her to expand her horizons.

- 4. Are you prepared to go a couple days without seeing your girl?**
 - A. I don't think I'm ready for this. Maybe for one day, but not overnight.
 - B. I'm not sure, but I think I could.
 - C. Definitely—she stays with family and friends often enough.

- 5. How well does your girl adapt to new environments?**
 - A. She relies on me for help navigating a new place or situation.
 - B. She takes some time to feel comfortable but does OK.
 - C. She makes herself right at home!



FOR TROOP LEADERS

- 1. Have you chaperoned field trips to nearby locations, like the zoo, the library, or museums?**
 - A. No, and it sounds stressful.
 - B. No, but I would like to start.
 - C. Yes, we've been on all sorts of day trips and had a great time.
- 2. How would you describe your personal travel experience?**
 - A. I've never been outside my state.
 - B. I've been to a few vacation spots.
 - C. I've done a lot of traveling, and I'm excited to share that experience with my troop!
- 3. How well do your girls work together?**
 - A. They're all individual puzzle pieces, and we're still figuring out how to fit together.
 - B. They work together sometimes.
 - C. Our troop is a well-oiled machine.
- 4. Are the girls in your troop generally responsible for their own behavior?**
 - A. We're working on accountability, but we have far to go.
 - B. They mostly do well, with the occasional reminder.
 - C. Yes, and they're also good at calling one another out when they need to.
- 5. How much do your girls help with planning activities for your troop?**
 - A. I come up with everything on my own.
 - B. The girls give me ideas, and I do the actual planning.
 - C. The girls plan almost everything! I help with details, of course.

Mostly A

Your travel journey begins!

Girls—get used to staying away from home by having sleepovers with trusted friends and family.

Parents—help your girl plan a sleepover, and talk with her about the experience. Watch to see if she builds some confidence (e.g., from packing her own bag and feeling independent).

Troop leaders—organize a local field trip. Try a nearby park or library to start. If travel just isn't your thing, ask another volunteer to take the lead.

Mostly B

You're getting there!

Girls—talk with your troop leader about an out-of-town day trip, and offer to make some of the plans.

Parents—let your girl spend a day out of town with her Girl Scout troop without calling her to check in. Ask her how she's feeling afterward. Hopefully proud of her independence!

Troop leaders—start with an out-of-town day trip. Progressing to longer and farther-away trips helps girls develop the independence they need to reach their long-term trip goals and helps you learn how to manage travel—and all the unexpected things that can happen. Make sure to share your success with nervous parents to reassure them.

Mostly C

You're a travel superstar!

Girls—it sounds like you're ready to travel with your troop and experience new places and activities!

Parents—you're ready to let your daughter fly out of the nest (temporarily, of course!).

Troop leaders—it sounds like you're ready to try a longer trip, but remember to consider all aspects of the Girl Scout Travel Progression chart on page 3. Also consider how confident you feel dealing with emergencies that might come up, and ask an experienced volunteer to join you if you think you'll need a hand.

Leaders

As soon as you decide to start planning a trip, contact your council for information about travel requirements, such as pre-trip training and paperwork, and for additional resources and suggestions! Read *Volunteer Essentials* and check the *Safety Activity Checkpoints* to learn more about activities girls may want to participate in on their trip. Plan in advance if you're doing a high-risk or high-adventure activity, and find out what you'll need (e.g., a certified lifeguard for swimming).



Get Started with the Travel Planning Worksheet

Enjoy the journey as much as the destination! Planning your trip should be just as fun as the trip itself. You can have a great time working as a team to dream up your adventure and figure out how to bring it to life. Before you start, listen openly to everyone’s opinions, and create a plan for how you’ll make your final group decisions fairly. Once you have a trip in mind and you’ve captured some basic ideas on this worksheet, break up into teams to do more research on each topic.

If you’re a Girl Scout who is not part of a troop, you can still fill out the worksheet and travel! Simply plan with family or friends using the same prompts below.

<p>What kinds of things do you want to do? Hiking? Museums? Shows? Self-guided (free!) tours? Make a list, then circle your favorites as a group.</p> <p><i>Tip: Think about which badges and Journeys you’re interested in, and build those into your plans! You can do this any way you’d like, but some possible badge options include Junior Eco Camper and Cadette New Cuisines. Also, check Safety Activity Checkpoints to ensure the activity is approved and to check the requirements.</i></p>	
<p>Where do you want to go? Once you know what kinds of activities you want to do, look for places where you can do them. Research options within a few hours from your home. Ask family or friends for their suggestions.</p> <p><i>Tip: Have you thought about visiting the Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace in Savannah or Girl Scout headquarters in New York City? Or maybe you’d like to attend Girl Scouts’ national G.I.R.L. event?</i></p>	
<p>How can you include every girl who wants to come? Think about all the reasons a girl might NOT be able to go. What can you do to make the trip possible for every interested girl?</p>	
<p>When should you go? Talk to your fellow Girl Scouts and troop leaders about school and work vacation schedules, as well as plans they might already have. Think about the best season to visit for the activities you want to do. Remember: you may need to plan a year or two in advance if you’re going to earn money for your trip!</p>	
<p>How will you get there? Is there a bus or train? Do you have to fly? If you drive, how much will gas, tolls, and parking cost? How long will the drive take, and how many drivers will you need?</p>	

<p>What will you eat? Can you make your own breakfast or lunch to save money? Are there famous local foods you want to try? How will you accommodate girls with allergies or dietary restrictions?</p>	
<p>How much will your trip cost? Make a rough list of expenses that includes accommodations (e.g., hotel, campsite, etc.), transportation (e.g., train, gas, tolls, etc.), food for each day, and activities. Don't forget to budget for tips! What else will you need to account for cost-wise? Take the time to get a rough idea now; you can make a more detailed budget later.</p>	
<p>How will you earn money to pay for your trip? Through cookie and product sales? Are there other money-earning ideas you have? (Make sure to get these approved by your council first, and work together as a team so everyone has the same benefit). Do girls in your group have the ability to save individually through chores, jobs, or other means?</p>	
<p>How can you help out on the trip? What kinds of things will you need to do once you're traveling, and how can the work be shared among all the girls (e.g., meal planning, cooking, cleaning, etc.)?</p>	
<p>Will you do any community service activities on the trip or a Take Action project when you get home? How can you give back to the community on the trip or bring what you learned back home? Do you have ideas now, or will you think about possibilities while on your trip?</p>	

Leaders

Funds the girls earn should cover their costs and the ratio-required chaperones' costs, but NOT the cost of additional participants. If you do allow any additional participants, they should pay their own way.



Follow a Travel Timeline

You've decided to travel and filled out your Travel Planning Worksheet. What's next? The timeline! Try to plan your trip about one year ahead of time. You may be able to put a plan together faster, but a year (or more, depending on the type of trip) will give you plenty of time to plan, get trained (if your council requires training), and earn the money you need. Having extra time will also make the planning process more enjoyable and unrushed. Before you start, be sure to take the quiz earlier in this guide. Use the below timeline to check items off your to-do list, starting about a year before your trip.



One year out . . .

- Discuss everyone's previous travel experiences.
- Determine the purpose of your trip and what each person wants to get out of it.
- Choose a location.
- Start your budget, and put your money-earning plan into place (keep your product and cookie sale timeline in mind!).
- Start planning logistics.
- Start talking to parents/guardians about the trip.
- Leaders: the Review *Safety Activity Checkpoints*, council policies and procedures, and paperwork.



Nine months out . . .

- Research your location online.
- Build a travel itinerary (will you include community service?).
- Finalize your budget, and continue earning money.
- Conduct team-building games.
- Present a trip proposal at a meeting with families (girls can present).



Six months out . . .

- Research what the weather conditions may be like.
- Research the culture and local customs of your destination.
- Talk about health and fitness—what can you do to get physically ready?
- Create a group agreement that includes behavior expectations and guidelines for cell phone use.
- Leaders: Check your council's paperwork deadlines.



Three months out . . .

- Finalize your itinerary.
- Confirm all reservations and plans.
- Hold a final family meeting to ensure parents/guardians have all of the information about the trip.
- Leaders: Finalize your council's paperwork.



One month out . . .

- Finalize your packing list.
- Assign roles and tasks for the trip.
- Design a travel journal.
- Leaders: Collect all individual paperwork (health forms, permission slips, the signed group agreement, etc.).

During the trip . . .

- Journal about your experiences.
- Take photos (lots!).
- Reflect with your group daily—how are things going, and what have you learned?

After the trip . . .

- Reflect with your group.
- Take action (if you've planned a project for once you've returned home).



KEEP YOUR TRIP GIRL-LED!



Madison, age 11

“We learned how to make reservations. We made a plan for each day—what activities we were doing, how much time we had for each activity, and how much time we needed to get to our next stop.”

Maya, age 13

“I learned how to be a leader. First, we planned the trip. Then, on the trip, each of us had a job for the day. We got to be the navigator, tour guide, time-keeper, journalist, and chef, and the jobs changed every day.”

Gabriela, age 14

“After our trip, we had a meeting with my little sister’s troop. We showed them our pictures and how we made our budget and our schedule. We talked with them about where they might want to travel someday.”

Jordan, age 13

“We created a budget for our trip—hotel, flights, food, spending money, and emergency money. We figured out how much we needed to earn through cookie sales and other events and how long it would take to earn the money. Then we worked as a team to achieve our goal.”



What's Next?

You've finished your big trip, and you're ready for even bigger adventures? Level up! If you've tackled a four-night trip in your region, think about a cross-country journey. Or if you've already explored the country, consider an international trip! You could:

- Visit one of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts [World Centres](#)
- Attend an [international Girl Guiding or Girl Scouting event](#)
- Plan your own unique global adventure

Download the [Girl Scout Global Travel Toolkit](#) for help.

You can also travel as an individual—and see new places while making friends along the way! Some Girl Scout councils have special travel groups or offer trips to girls council-wide. And Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors are eligible to participate in [Girl Scout Destinations](#). These ultimate adventures bring together individual Girl Scouts from all across the Movement. With different trips every year and opportunities nationwide as well as across the globe, there's something amazing for every Girl Scout to experience!

Start Your Adventure Now!

Traveling with Girl Scouts is an experience unlike any other. Because **YOU** take the lead, choose what you want to explore, and make unforgettable memories—and have an amazing adventure while you do it!

Now that you've finished this guide, think about what you learned. Do you feel ready to travel? Do your parents seem ready to let you? What are you nervous about, and did you learn anything that can help with those feelings? What are you most excited about? And how will you make the planning process both fair and fun?

Leaders

Contact your council now to let staff know you're planning an extended trip and to find out what approvals and training you can get started on.



Taking a trip outside your hometown may sound ambitious, but if you plan ahead, take your time, and get all the girls in your group to contribute ideas and do the work, you can achieve your travel dreams together.

