

Chapter 6: Taking Trips and Hosting Events

Some of the most memorable moments in a Girl Scout's life happen while attending special events and taking trips. This chapter helps you prepare girls to attend local or regional events, plan for and take trips of any scope and duration, and even begin to plan an event of their own creation.

Every time a group meets at a time and location different from the regular group meeting, you must use a permission form—even if the girls are responsible for getting to that location on their own. Permission forms give parents the “who, what, when, where, and why,” so they can decide whether their daughter can participate in an event or go on a trip. The Lakes and Pines Parent or Guardian Permission Form #3803 permits you to include the girl in the activity and also provides you with up-to-date emergency contact information. Download a copy at www.gslakesandpines.org or contact any Girl Scout office.

Be sure to discuss all the following with the girls 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 accidentally separated from the group
- 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

Travel Security and Safety Tips

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 is at the door, call the front desk to confirm.
- Don't shout out 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, for that matter, in an airport or train 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 cell 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 without stopping 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.
- Also contact the front desk to clear out any minibars or refrigerators in girls' rooms, to ensure that inappropriate movies are not accessible through TVs, and to disallow any long-distance calls from being placed from girls' rooms. Alert the hotel management that underage girls are staying in the hotel, and ask them to contact you if any girls are out of their rooms after bedtime.

Taking Trips with Girls

Girls love trips. And Girl Scouts is a great place for them to learn how to plan and take trips, because travel is built on a progression activities—that is, one activity leads to the next. Girl Scout Daisies, for example, can begin with a discovery walk. As girls grow in their travel skills and experience and can better manage the planning process, they progress to longer trips. Here are some examples of the progression of events and trips:

- **Short trips to points of interest in the neighborhood (Daisies and older):** A walk to the nearby garden or a short ride by car or public transportation to the firehouse or courthouse
- **Day trip (Brownies and older):** An all-day visit to the point of historical or natural interest (bringing their own lunch) or a day-long trip to a nearby city (stopping at a restaurant for a meal)
- **Overnight trips (Brownies and older):** One (or, possibly two) nights away to a state or national park, historic city, or nearby city for sightseeing, staying in a hotel, motel, or campground
- **Extended overnight trips (Juniors and older):** Three or four nights camping or a stay in a hotel, motel, or hostel within a girls' home region (for example, New England, the Upper Midwest, and so on)
- **National trips (Cadettes and older):** Travel anywhere in the country, often lasting a week or more
- **International trips (Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors):** Travel around the world, often requiring one or two years of preparation; when girls show an interest in traveling abroad, complete the Lakes and Pines Troop Trip Application available in the forms section of this guide to get permission to plan the trip and download the Global Travel Toolkit, which is available at www.girlscouts.org/program/gs_central/travel.

Of course, local trips that last a day or less aren't only for Daisies. On the contrary: Short, local outings are an opportunity for girls of all grade levels to spend time with other Girl Scouts for all sorts of reasons. Girls may volunteer as a group to work with Habitat for Humanity on successive Saturdays to help build a house for a family, attend a council program, or they may get together for a long bike ride on a greenway or bike trail and end with a picnic lunch.

The World Centers

Four lodges are available in England, Mexico, Switzerland, and India for use by Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, each with hostel- or dormitory-style accommodations. These centers are operated by WAGGGS (World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts) and offer low-cost accommodations and special programs. They are also a great way to meet Girl Guides and Girl Scouts from around the world. Visit www.wagggs.org for more information.

Taking trips is an ideal way to offer girls leadership opportunities. This is why ideas for field trips, camping trips, and retreats are sewn into the journey books! The three processes discussed in Chapter 3 (girl-led, learning by doing, and cooperative learning) work beautifully as girls lead their own trip-planning, cooperatively plan every aspect of the trip, and learn through their travels what works and what doesn't. In the same way, the three leadership keys stretch girls as they spend weeks, months, or even years group-planning a trip, which may include an extensive take action component.

Given how much opportunity exists for girls to grow in their leadership skills by traveling with other Girl Scouts, travel is one of the Girl Scout pathways discussed in Chapter 1. Although some girls who are in a group (for example, a troop of Cadettes) may decide to travel together, a pathway also exists for girls who are not otherwise involved in Girl Scouts—or who are involved in one or more pathways but want to do additional traveling with other girls—to get together specifically for the purpose of traveling locally, regionally, and even internationally.

To ensure that any travel you do with girls infuses the GSLE at every opportunity, limit your role to facilitating the girls' brainstorming and planning—but never doing the work for them. Allow the girls to lead, allow them to learn collaboratively, and let them learn by doing (and by making mistakes). All the while, however, provide ideas and insight, ask tough questions when you have to, and support all their decisions with enthusiasm and encouragement!

Tips for Girls Traveling Alone

If a Girl Scout Senior or Ambassador will be traveling alone, 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, also discuss the possibility of booking a non-stop flight to make her trip that much 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 high-end cell phones and iPods) that are attractive to pickpockets.

Facilitating Girl-Led Trip Planning

Whether the trip is a day hike or a cross-country trek, basic steps of trip planning are essentially the same. It's true that as the destination gets farther, more complex, or is of greater duration, the details become richer and more complex, but planning every trip—from a day-long event to an international trek—starts by asking the following:

- What do we hope to experience?
- Who will we want to talk to and meet? What will you ask?
- Where are we interested in going?
- When are we all available to go?
- Will everyone in our group be able to go?
- Are there physical barriers that cannot be accommodated?
- What are visiting hours and the need for advance reservations?
- What are our options for getting there?
- What's the least this trip could cost? What's the most?
- What can we do now to get ourselves ready?
- How will we earn the money?
- What's the availability of drinking water, restrooms, and eating places?
- Where is emergency help available?
- What safety factors must we consider?
- What will we do as we travel?
- What will we do when we get there?
- What will we do when we return home?

As girls answer these questions, they begin the trip-planning process. In time, girls begin to make specific arrangements, attend to a myriad of details, create a budget and handle money, and accept responsibility for their personal conduct and safety. And later, after they've returned from a successful event or trip, girls also have the chance to evaluate their experiences and share them with others.

Travel Checklist

If your group is thinking about travel, consider first whether the girls are mature enough to handle the trip. In determining a group's readiness for travel, assess the group's:

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| Ability to be away from their parents and their home | Ability to adapt to unfamiliar surroundings and situations |
| Ability to make decisions well and easily | Previous cross-cultural experiences |
| Ability to get along with each other and handle challenges | Ability to work well as a team |
| Skills and interests | Language skills (where applicable) |

Obtaining Council Permission for Trips

Before any trip, no matter how short, complete and submit the Lakes and Pines Troop Trip Application found in the forms section of this document. It will ask you to submit:

- Detailed itinerary
- Specific activities involved
- Location and type of premises to be used
- Inclusive dates and times
- Numbers of girls who will be participating (parental permissions must be obtained)
- Numbers of adults participating, their gender, and their roles
- Participants' skill levels, if applicable
- Consultants or resource people who will be involved
- Other groups or organizations that will be involved
- Planned safety precautions
- Any specialized equipment that will be used
- Mode of transportation
- Required agreements or contracts (for example, hiring a bus, use of premises)

Transporting Girls

Transportation decisions are an important aspect to any event or trip planning, and your greatest concern is *always* safety. If you or the girls are arranging group transportation, whether for a day trip or for a much longer travel event, consider the basics of both private and public transit (which is preferred).

Public Transportation

Public transportation includes trains, subways, buses, ferries, and airlines. Public transportation is regulated, which makes it preferable to chartered vehicles, but this mode of transportation is not without challenges. The biggest challenge with any public transportation is staying together as a group, so be sure everyone has directions and a map, and always designate a meet-up area if anyone gets separated. Girls also need to stay vigilant for criminals, both those who might do them bodily harm and those who are interested in stealing their money, jewelry, and electronic devices. But as long as you prepare them for their exciting journeys on public transportation, and they'll have an adventure they'll remember for years!

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. Anyone who is driving a vehicle with more than 12 passengers contact the Director of Outdoor Program for specific council instructions. Please keep in mind the following non-negotiable points regarding private transportation:

- Even though written agreements are always required when renting or charting, you are *not* authorized to sign an agreement or contract. Such an agreement must instead be signed by the person designated by the Lakes and Pines Director of Finance.
- Check with the Lakes and Pines Director of Finance to make sure you are following accepted practices when using private transportation; this ensures both you and your council are protected by liability insurance in the event of an accident.

When driving a car, RV, or camper (and please do not ever transport girls in flatbed or panel trucks, in the bed of a pickup, or in a camper-trailer!), take the following precautions and ask any other drivers (and all drivers must be adults—girls should not be transporting other girls!) to do the same:

- 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.
- Wear seat belt at all times, and insist passengers do the same; keep girls under 12 in the back seats to avoid injury from an airbag deploying.
- Follow all the established rules of the road in your state (following the speed limit, keeping a two-car-length between you and the car ahead of you, not talking or texting on a cell phone, driving with your headlights on, and so on).
- Avoid driving for extended periods at night, when tired, or taking medication that makes you drowsy.
- Plan rest stops every few hours; if driving with others, prearrange stopping places along the way.
- If the car is rented, be sure the car is adequately insured.

Alternately, girls need to adhere to the following when riding in vehicles. You may want to create a contract listing the following that girls sign before leaving on any trip. Girls will:

- Follow all rules and instructions for this trip.
- Keep seat belts fastened at all times.
- Don't argue, yell, or throw things.
- Play games or listen to music *quietly* with other passengers.
- Stay with the group during stops.
- Alert the driver to a missing buddy, an obstacle, or an open door or trunk.

Hosting an Event

Girls may decide they're ready to host an event for other Girl Scouts, for members of your community, or for national or international attendees—chiefly as one of the take action outcomes of elevating and inspiring others. Ideas for girl-led events with family, friends, and community experts are also available in the journey guides!

This section gives you a brief overview but does not substitute for the expertise of your council staff, which means that if girls in your group are interested in hosting an event, work closely with Lakes and Pines staff, first to obtain permission and second, to ensure that the girls have covered every aspect of event planning.

As with any other activity, be sure girls are leading the event-planning, instead of sitting by passively while you or another adult plans the event. To get girls started, ask them to think about the following:

- What sort of event do we have in mind?
- Who is our intended audience?
- Does the audience have to be invited, or can anyone come?
- What's our main topic or focus?
- What's our objective—what do we hope to accomplish at the end of the day?
- Will one or more speakers need to be invited? If so, who? How do we find speakers?
- Where will the event take place?
- Is there a charge for this venue?
- Is the venue large enough to accommodate the audience?
- Do we have to obtain permission to use this venue? If so, from whom?
- Are there adequate facilities for the audience? If not, how much will extra port-a-pots cost and how many do we need?
- Is there adequate parking or a drop-off point for girls?
- Do we need tables? chairs? podiums? microphones? speakers?
- What sort of entertainment will be provide?
- Will we provide or sell refreshments? If so, what kinds?
- How many chaperones will we need? Who will we ask?
- What emergency care do we need to plan for? Is the event large enough that local police and fire departments need to be notified?
- Do we need to purchase additional insurance for non-Girl Scouts?
- How will we advertise the event?
- What decorations will we use?
- Will we give away any keepsakes?
- Will we charge for the event?
- Who will set up the event?
- Who will clean up after the event?
- How will we determine whether the event was a success?

Getting Back Together After Your Trip or Event

After your event or trip, take time to reminisce, tell stories, and share photos. Also plan some formal debriefing time with the girls for the following:

- Clean up and return borrowed or rented equipment.
- Write thank-you notes to people who helped along the way.
- Post photos and captions on your council's Web site.
- Evaluate the trip or event by discussing what was worthwhile and what the group would change or eliminate.
- Brainstorm ways to share the experience with others (especially younger Girl Scouts or school groups).
- Brainstorm ways to make the event better or bigger next year—or decide that one year was enough!
- Discuss potential take-action projects that could come from this trip or event.
- Encourage girls to keep in touch with friends made along the way.