



GSGATL Global (International) Travel Resource Guide

Is your troop thinking globally about travel? Will all the girls in the troop be in the at least the 8th grade at the time of the cruise (graduating 7th graders may be approved to travel during the summer of transition, contact council before making any final preparations or expending any funds). If so, use this guide to begin planning an awesome and wonderful adventure! Please note that before actively beginning planning for a global adventure with a troop, the troop leader is required to complete the Globe Trotting with Girls for Leaders. This basic class, along with information found in this guide will help to ensure that the troop is on the correct path towards gaining approval for travel.

Participating as a Girl Scout in a global adventure requires several years of planning and money earning. The benefits of international travel are many and the experiences will be something the girls carry throughout their lives. Girl Scouts have been traveling globally for many years and the single most important factor in a successful outcome for these trips has been advance planning by the girls. Girls can begin discussing global travel as early as the Junior program level, refining their plans and earning money to fund the troop as they progress to older program levels.

NOTE: If you are planning on taking a domestic cruise (the destination must be a US Territory -the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands, and associated territorial waters) or the Bahama's) please follow GSGATL Domestic Cruise Travel Guidelines, found on our website.

Basic requirements to consider when planning:

Troops must be actively participating in both the annual Council Product Programs, Treats & Keeps and Cookie Sale, and be participating in the Annual Fund campaign (as defined in Volunteer Essentials) to be eligible for approval of this type of travel and/or additional money earning activities to fund travel.

Girls should have:

- previously experienced multiple different types of trips with their troop before planning to take a domestic cruise. These trips should include short and long day trips and, at minimum, several two night or longer overnights at camp or in other locations
- progressed to the level of actively planning, budgeting and earning funds for all of their proposed activities
- demonstrated the emotional and behavioral maturity to be away from home
- discuss, create and agree on troop behavioral policies – including consequences if not followed. Girls should be an active part of this discussion and the entire troop should have the opportunity to create the behavior agreement. Suggestions for things that should be considered for a behavior agreement can be found later in this document. Make sure that parents are aware and on-board with the agreement.
- discuss, create and agree on troop financial policies – including: how funds will be earned; how troop funds will be spent; what happens if someone leaves the troop before the big trip?; what happens if someone new joins the troop? Be sure to consult Volunteer Essentials for information and suggestions and to pay particular

attention to Volunteer Policy 30, Money Earning, when considering troop or group money earning projects. Make sure that parents are aware and on-board with the agreement.

Before Taking any trip or travel:

- The troop leader and/or other approved adults must have successfully completed required trainings before taking trips including, GSGATL 103, Trips & Overnights (online) and for international travel – Globe Trotting with Girls for Leaders. Globe Trotting with Girls for Leaders is an introduction to international travel with girls that will provide you with resources to share with the troop and parents so you can start planning your globe-trotting adventure.
- The leader(s) and other approved adults must be aware of their basic responsibilities as listed in the Volunteer Position Description appropriate to their role, and have completed all required basic training that may be attached to that position.
- For High Risk Activities the leader and or other responsible adults must have completed and or hold the required certifications or specialty training, and for public venues, ensure that they are pre-approved in writing by GSGATL before participating in the activity (such as whitewater rafting, horse or aquatic related activities, etc.)
- Additionally, the leader(s) and other approved adults must be aware of any special activity requirements as listed in this document, other Safety Activity Checkpoints and *Volunteer Essentials*.

***CAUTION – For High Risk Activities Designated for Girls Ages 12 & Older:** You must get written pre-approval from GSGATL for girls ages 12 and older who will operate motorized vehicles, such as go-carts and personal watercraft; use firearms; take trips on waterways that are highly changeable or uncontrollable; experience simulated skydiving and zero-gravity rooms; or fly in noncommercial aircraft, such as small private planes, helicopters, sailplanes, untethered hot air balloons, and blimps. Additionally parents must sign permission forms specifically listed these activities.

Warning: The following activities are never allowed for any girl: potentially uncontrolled free-falling (bungee jumping, hang gliding, parachuting, parasailing, and outdoor trampolines); creating extreme variations of approved activities (such as high-altitude climbing and aerial tricks on bicycles, skis, snowboards, skateboards, water-skis, and wakeboards); hunting; shooting a projectile at another person; riding all-terrain vehicles and motor bikes; and taking watercraft trips in Class V or higher.

Before Taking an International Troop/Group Trip:

- At least 18 – 24 months in advance of planned departure:
 - leaders/advisors must take the training class Globe Trotting with Girls – For leaders
 - leaders/advisor should submit a Travel Approval Form along with short letters from at least three girls detailing previous trips the troop has taken together including how the girls were involved with the planning, financing and execution of the trips. It is helpful if they also share learning experiences with each one that. Once this information is received by the council office and reviewed, the person submitting the form will be notified of the status of the request and what additional information or documents may be needed. **Note:** Do not make any final plans or reservations nor expend any troop funds until you have received permission from the council to continue planning.
 - **If traveling with EF Tours, Explorica Tours or any other tour company, you still must notify the council of intent to travel and you still must obtain permission for travel before departing in order to qualify as a council approved trip. Failure to do so could result in personal liability in the event of accident or**

other incident. Additionally, if the council is unaware you are traveling; we cannot offer support as needed before or during your trip.

- Discuss how the troop will fund the trip. The troop must be actively participating in both Council Product Programs, Treats & Keeps and selling Girl Scout Cookies before they may use any other method to earn money.
- Hold meeting with girls and parents to discuss plans and ensure that everyone is onboard
- At least 12 – 16 months in advance of planned departure:
 - Begin to refine your itinerary and budget
 - Obtain passports for all participants – waiting until the last minute only adds additional stress
 - Hold meeting with girls and parents to discuss plans and ensure that everyone is onboard
- At least 6 months in advance of departure:
 - adults and girls planning on taking the trip must take Globe Trotting with Girls – for Chaperones, Leaders & Girls
- At least two months in advance of departure:
 - Finalize itinerary
 - Update council paperwork (if you have not already done so)
 - Purchase activity insurance from Mutual of Omaha
 - Hold meeting with girls and parents to discuss plans and ensure that everyone is on board
- The week before you leave:
 - Hold a meeting with girls and parents to answer any final questions, share emergency information, double check that all paperwork is finalized, etc.

Travel Accommodations on Trips:

The safety and security of the girls and adults attending Girl Scout trips is always a top priority. Part of the planning process should include working with the girls and adult chaperones regarding appropriate behaviors when traveling, and especially when staying somewhere overnight. Remember that parents/guardians must be involved in decisions about sleeping arrangements. They must agree to the plan for accommodations and sleeping arrangements prior to the trip.

When staying overnight in public accommodations such as commercial campgrounds, condos and hotels, troops leaders should discuss with girls the appropriate way to travel (always in pairs – preferably in groups of four) and the group should set and agree to the parameters regarding answering phones, opening doors, etc. If at all possible, accommodations should be sought that allow for each participant to have their own bed or sleeping area (a place to set up a bed roll or sleeping bag – be sure you do not exceed the recommended capacity of the room).

When traveling to a foreign country and staying in a hotel room (which you may do as you are traveling to the port of departure), it is generally not financially feasible for troops to rent enough rooms to have two adults in each room. Here are some suggestions for Girl Scout troops when staying at a hotel or traveling on a cruise ship:

- Request that all rooms are on an interior hallway and that they are all close together.
- Request that you have adjoining rooms whenever they are available – this allows you to leave the door between the rooms open at all times.
- When possible rent a suite which gives you two double beds and a pull-out bed, so you can have four girls in a room (two in each bed) and a female adult on the pull-out.
- For older girl troops who have traveled extensively, you may have girls in some rooms and adults in another other with no co-mingling. Whenever possible ask for the rooms to be in a block (for example if you have four rooms they are all on the same hall and facing each other).

- For mother/daughter trips where there is a mom with each girl, you can have a mom and daughter share a bed in regular double rooms with two double beds.

Travel Safety and Security Tips:

According to FBI statistics, Atlanta ranks among the top 14 cities in the United States for domestic minor sex trafficking. Approximately 300 girls across Atlanta are lured into trafficking every month. It is the fastest-growing business of organized crime and the third-largest criminal enterprise in the world. It is not just an international problem; the United States has its own homegrown problem of interstate sex trafficking of minors. The average age at which girls first become victims is 11 to 14. Traffickers represent every social, ethnic, and racial group. Traffickers are not only men—women run many established rings. They have an especially easy time establishing trust with young girls. Stay safe and be alert to sex trafficking/child exploitation predators locally and abroad:

- Be wary of people (male and female) who seem over friendly or overly interested in you or your group.
- Be cautious when you meet new people, and do not share your location or phone number.
- If you find yourself in uncomfortable surroundings, try to act like you know what you are doing and where you are going; seek help from local authorities in a well-lit place.
- Exercise good judgment about what sorts of places to frequent during the day and at night, and avoid being on the street at late hours more than necessary.
- Research host-country laws before traveling.
- Research and know where local authority offices are; relative to where you are staying.
- Never keep all of your documents and money in one place or one suitcase.
- Keep extra copies of passports and identification in a safe and separate location. Be discrete in displaying passports.

For more information visit the Web sites for the <http://www.missingkids.org/home>, the Human Smuggling and Trafficking Center <https://www.ice.gov/human-smuggling-trafficking-center>, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) <https://www.fbi.gov/>

Tips and Tools to Help Guide Planning

Get Familiar with the destination

Research online and read guidebooks about your destination. It is important to understand the culture, food, and business practices. For example, if you are going to Argentina, traditionally, businesses are open from 8am to noon. They take a siesta for three to four hours before opening their doors again.

So if you are unfamiliar and happen to be in a town where all doors are closed for lunch, you will be disappointed. What if you need local currency and all the banks and money exchange bureaus are closed, and your bus is leaving for the next town?

Look beyond the site seeing options and digest the current information about entry and exit requirements, the safety climate, road conditions and special circumstances, all found in Country Specific Information from the U.S. State Department. In Egypt, for example, “the Embassy has received increasing reports over the last several months of foreigners being sexually groped in taxis and public places.” Additionally, it notes “unescorted women are vulnerable to sexual harassment and verbal abuse.” Knowing this gender-specific warning beforehand is important to any young girl on a work-abroad or exchange trip. Also, check the State Department’s Travel Warning list, which is collated with the Country Specific Information. Current countries listed include: Mexico, Philippines and Haiti.

Learn the Language

Although most service providers in the world speak English, knowing the local language can give a teen a slight edge when it comes to safety. Imagine if you could understand the conversation between two locals and their intentions.

Saying “please” and “thank you” go a long way no matter where kids visit, but being able to ask for directions if lost, and communicating “help” to emergency workers really can make a difference. Learn basic language phrases. That’s the best advice from the Peace Corps. They should know. They believe proficiency of language and connecting to the local community are what help most when on an extended stay to another country. Exchange students, work and study abroad, gap year travelers, and volunteer workers are better prepared for emergencies when they have integrated into the community. When cell phone lines are jammed and every road is blocked, local friends know the lay of the land and can help find medical assistance and transportation options faster.

Don’t go to deserted areas and always travel with buddies

Walking in a quiet alley or swimming in the ocean alone are not wise choices even if you want to get away from it all. In general the group should always stay together, however often when visiting tourist attractions or even in local shopping areas it is easy for the group to divide. Girls should always travel in groups of no less than three and ideally with an adult if possible. Make sure that you have an emergency plan in case the group is separated.

Keep all expensive belongings at home and dress appropriately

Consider what you will bring when you travel. Travel light and keep it simple. Leave all your expensive designer bags, shoes and clothes at home. Wear simple but stylish without attracting attention. Pack a day bag for the flights with personal necessities and a change of clothes.

In many European countries it may be socially acceptable to wear little or no clothing at all at beaches. Be sure to research the beach locations you plan to visit to be familiar with the local norm. Modest swimwear and casual clothing at the pool or beach is a safer bet while traveling.

Keep Make copies of your passport and important documents

Make several copies of your passport, license, health insurance cards and other important documents such as your Health History and Authorizations to Travel. A copy of each should be left at home and the group leader should keep a copy with her at all times in a safe place.

Keeping your money safe

In many foreign countries, Americans are viewed as wealthy and are the frequent targets of pickpocketing. The FBI advised against wearing any jewelry that looks expensive or carrying your belongings in a bag without a zipper. Even avoiding clothing that implies you're American, such as U.S. sports jerseys, is a good idea – blending in as much as possible will lower your risk of being eyed by a thief.

Investing in a money belt to wear underneath your clothing can be extremely convenient and is a great way to protect your belongings as well. On crowded trains where a lot of stealing occurs, you won't have to worry about keeping a constant eye on your bag.

Do not leave valuables unattended or place all your money and passport in your bag. Keep your belongings in a safe deposit at the hotel and wear a money belt. It is safer to place important documents, credit cards and cash in the money belt. If you must carry a backpack, carry it on the front of your body rather than the back and consider placing a lock on it. Placing a lock on the zipper will make it harder for pick pockets and may avert disaster!

If you plan to use debit or credit cards on your trip, before you even leave for your adventure overseas, don't forget to call your bank and let them know you'll be traveling overseas – a lot of banks will cancel your card if they see it's being used in a different country when they're not informed that you've left. There are also banks located overseas that partner with banks in the U.S. that'll charge you less for withdrawing money at ATMs. Bank of America, for example, has partnered with Barclay's in England.

Don't drink alcohol

In Germany, legal drinking age is 16. For countries like Spain, Belgium and Austria, 16 year olds are allowed to purchase alcohol. Most countries' legal drinking age is 18. If girls are 18, they are at a legal age to drink in almost all the countries in Europe, Caribbean Islands, Central and South America. Girls should discuss this prior to traveling and regardless of their age make it part of their behavioral contract not to drink or purchase alcohol while traveling on the troop trip.

Safety & medical care while abroad

Pack an emergency kit with multivitamins, essential oils for nausea, motion sickness, diarrhea, headache, sores, aches, insect bites and more. Bring fever reducing over-the-counter medication too. Be sure to have parents approve the use of these for each girl or have the girls bring their own.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggested that student travelers read up on the do's and don'ts of traveling abroad through the Center for Global Education website <http://globaled.us/> There's also a list of specific countries and the current health risks there on the CDC's Travelers' Health website <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>

The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program <https://step.state.gov/step/> allows the Department of State to assist you quickly if necessary. Enrollment is fast and simple and can be extremely beneficial to young students living in an unfamiliar place.

Doctors/Hospitals Abroad <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/go/travel-agents/doctors.html> is another useful site that directs travelers to health care resources in the country they'll be living in if you ever need to locate a doctor during your trip, according to the CDC.

Review all health insurance policies, buy travel and medevac insurance

According to the State Department website, most U.S. based health insurance policies do not extend benefits overseas. Additionally, Medicaid and Medicare do not cover expenses incurred abroad. That means if a child falls ill or is injured abroad, the majority of expenses will be paid out of pocket, and those costs can skyrocket when the monetary unit is a foreign currency like the Euro. Also, most people are unaware of medical evacuation (medevac) insurance, according to a 2006 study by the U.S Travel Insurance Association. Travel insurance will allow reimbursement for most missed flights, especially if the high-priced versions are purchased, which cover "Acts of God," like the eruption of a volcano or a tsunami event. Medevac insurance covers medical treatment and hospitalization, as well as the option to be flown home if needed. Most parents don't realize what happens when an injured traveler cannot complete the trip. If the child cannot sit up in a plane for the duration of an international flight, often the whole row of seats must be purchased to accommodate a gurney. And of course, patients cannot negotiate a gurney by themselves, so a medical escort is then required, and that escort will need a ride back home too after transporting the patient home. These are some of the many reasons why a typical medical evacuation, without the insurance, can cost from \$50,000 to \$100,000 depending on the country of origin.

Visit the doctor at least six weeks before departure

Children are more likely to become ill during international travel than adults. That's according to a new study in the journal, *Pediatrics*. Additionally, children require hospitalization more often than adults. Yet, the study found, children are less likely to receive pre-travel medical advice. "Parents should take kids for an exam at least six weeks before departure," says Dr. Gordon Theisz, of Family Medicine in Falls Church. "Not only should required vaccinations be discussed, but also availability of medications for pre-existing conditions, and health conditions in the country to be visited." The Center for Disease Control and Prevention Web site contains extensive health information for over 200 destinations.

Additional tips from the State Department website include: be sure to travel with prescriptions in the original container clearly marked; bring an extra pair of eyeglasses (and the prescription); and travelers going abroad with a preexisting medical problem should carry a letter from the attending physician, describing the medical condition and any medications, including the generic names of prescribed drugs.

Register online with the U.S. Embassy in the country you will visit

Many Americans don't register, according to former State Department spokesman Ian Kelly. Registration works both ways. If a political protest or natural disaster is looming, the Embassy can contact travelers via the registration data for evacuation and emergency notification, and if travelers need Embassy services to assist with an ill or injured child, Embassy workers can help faster and communicate with loved ones at home when the traveler is already in the system.

Assemble U.S. and overseas phone number before you travel

If tragedy strikes, know who to call – both in the destination country, and here at home for concerned relatives. The Country Specific Information sheet will include the local number for the U.S. Embassy and family members in the U.S. can call, (202) 647-5225, in case of emergency involving a U.S. citizen.

Ensure at least two alternate forms of communication and financial access

Some cell phone will work while traveling abroad. Check with the provider before departure to verify the international calling plan. Then make sure to purchase an international calling card for back up. The same goes for credit cards and cash access. Traveler's checks are still useful worldwide, but credit cards and debit cards are important contingency items. Children should not carry large amounts of money and should be allowed to use an ATM for cash withdrawals if needed. A new trend for parents is to open a joint bank account with the child before travel. Both account holders may be issued a debit card which works like a credit card, even in overseas locations. This setup allows parents to track expenses online and provides the opportunity to add funds quickly in case of emergency.

Behavior & financial conduct agreements

As soon as the troop begins planning the big trip overseas, they should discuss how they will finance the trip and agree in advance how they will handle troop funds that have been earned by the girls for troop activities, including the trip.

Additionally, they should create and agree on acceptable behaviors, behaviors that are unacceptable and the consequences. Parents/guardians should be aware of these agreements and both girls and parents/guardians should sign agreement.