



## GSGATL Domestic Cruise Travel Resource Guide

Is your troop interested in planning a domestic cruise? Will all the girls in the troop be in the at least the 6<sup>th</sup> grade at the time of the cruise (graduating 5<sup>th</sup> graders may be approved to cruise 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!

Planning 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) is not much different from planning a regular domestic travel adventure. There are however, many additional things that you must be aware of when participating in this type of travel due to the unique nature of the actual travel and shore opportunities that may be available.

**NOTE:** If you are planning on taking a more extensive cruise outside of the destinations described above, you should follow GSGATL International Travel Guidelines, found on our website.

### Basic requirements to consider when planning:

Troops must be actively participating in both the Council Product Programs, Treats & Keeps and Cookie Sales, 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 follow. Girls should be an active part of this discussion and the entire troop should have the opportunity to create the behavior agreement, make sure that parent 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 a domestic cruise – 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.

## 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 on a cruise ship or 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/>

## Basic Cruise Ship Information:

### 1. Are cruises all-inclusive?

No. Your cruise fare includes a lot, but you will have to pay extra for many amenities. Specialty restaurants, some coffee and ice cream bars, soft drinks, shore excursions, spa treatments and gratuities are generally not included. Luxury lines will include more, but even they are never completely all-inclusive.

### 2. Are all cruise ships alike?

Cruise ships come in a variety of sizes and personalities. Research carefully; on the internet, by asking friends and family who have cruised before and by talking to travel agents.

### 3. Is cruising like going to a resort?

These days, cruise ships do have all the comforts and luxuries that travelers associate with on-land resorts, as well as much of the glitz and glamour of big city destinations (including casinos and production shows). Rough seas can impact your itinerary, you must debark and reboard the ship at specified times and your cabin will typically be smaller than a hotel room (unless you book the highest level of suites). Be sure to check out the content and “rating” of the shows onboard. Most shows are generally geared to adult audiences.

#### 4. Will we get sick or seasick?

You may have read news articles about outbreaks of norovirus on cruise ships. Norovirus is a stomach bug that spreads easily in contained environments, such as hospitals and schools, as well as ships. You can stay healthy by washing your hands often and using the hand sanitizer lotion found in dining areas and by the ship's gangway. As for seasickness, most ships are so big and well stabilized that you can hardly tell you're moving, especially in the calm waters of the Caribbean. Radar helps big ships outrun hurricanes and other bad-weather patches, but if you do happen to pass through some rough water, any queasiness can usually be relieved by an over-the-counter medication.

#### 5. Can we stay in touch?

On most ships, you'll get CNN or some other cable news network on your in-room TV. You can make phone calls from the phone in your cabin, though it's prohibitively expensive. Your cell phone also can be used to make phone calls and send text messages. (Roaming charges apply.) Most ships have small Internet centers and shipboard Wi-Fi, so you can read email and surf the web. Some cruise lines are finding ways to optimize bandwidth to make it easier for cruisers to Skype and stream videos. Mobile apps also have been making headway. These apps allow cruisers to stay in touch with family and friends onboard by exchanging messages with other app users. Depending on the cruise line app, users may be able to check out daily activities, access social media sites, browse restaurant menus, submit reviews and view their onboard accounts.

#### 6. Will we need a passport?

For most domestic cruises you may not, especially if you stay on the ship and do not do any shore excursions. However, to be safe it is always good to have a passport available in case the ship gets diverted to another destination due to weather or other unforeseen problems. Leave a copy of the passport at home in case you lose it.

### Cruise Ship Safety Tips:

#### 1. Check the rating

The best reports come from the Vessel Sanitation Program of the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), which routinely inspects ships for cleanliness, repair, food preparation and storage, water quality, hygiene, pest management and many other things. Check out your ship's report card on the CDC website **before** you book your passage. It will let you know the results of the last inspection and exactly what grade the ship received.

#### 2. Be Aware of your surroundings

It is natural to let your guard down on vacation, especially on a cruise ship. You need to be aware of your surroundings on a ship just as you would in a big city.

- girls should always stay in groups of 3 or 4 if they need to separate from the group for any reason
- have an emergency communication plan for the group in case you get separated
- don't walk down darkened hallways
- keep your distance when tempers flare – other passengers may be drunk or just unable to get along for some reason. Don't try to mediate – report it to the Purser's Office or crewmember immediately
- don't accept drinks or food from strangers
- If your gut tells you something is wrong, it probably is. And don't keep it a secret, either; notify the Purser's Office the minute you suspect trouble.

#### 3. Use the ship's safe

Leave your valuables home! The lightweight safe in your cabin is fine for storing small everyday items like your address book and tip money, but never put anything in it that you can't afford to lose.

#### 4. Watch what you eat

There are many food choices and options when cruising! If you have allergies or food intolerances, be sure to check with the cruise line in advance to be sure they can be accommodated. Remember, you are on a moving ship, you may

not want to try too many new food options if you generally have a queasy stomach after trying new foods. Shipboard water is usually pretty good, but you should always insist on bottled water on shore. And make sure it is a *sealed* bottle.

## **5. Shore Excursions**

Be careful on your shore excursions. The cruise lines organize the shore trips because they are moneymakers for them; in return, you get some assurance of quality and security. While you may save some money by going it alone, of course, but beware. Make sure you negotiate any fares and fees upfront. Most cabbies are honest when the cards are on the table, but if you do not agree in advance, the sky will be the limit and you may find yourself in a police station for failure to pay the fare.

## **6. Report anything suspicious**

While the crew-to-guest ratio looks pretty low in the brochure, much of the crew actually works behind the scenes and is not permitted any guest interaction; moreover, many may not speak your language. Most of the senior crew will be looking out for guest safety, but they cannot be everywhere at once.

Ultimately, your safety is your own responsibility. Keep your eyes and ears open. If something looks odd to you, it probably is. Is there a creepy guy hanging outside the teen club? A man who is asking dozens of single ladies to dance? A couple that is fighting in public left and right? Take a walk to the Purser's Office and let the staff know.