



# GSWISE Field Trip Guide

Going on field trips away from your troop's regular meeting space is an exciting way for Girl Scouts of all ages to enhance their Girl Scout experience, explore and learn new things about their community, practice new skills, and gain confidence. Participating in field trips also helps Girl Scouts develop real-world readiness for longer and farther Girl Scout travel experiences in the future.

This *GSWISE Field Trip Guide* is a useful tool for troops planning Girl Scout field trips. This resource is applicable for day-only outings and overnights lasting 1-2 nights within 100 miles of your troop's community. Where possible, form/resource hyperlinks and QR codes are available within this resource. If a link is not working, contact us at [customercare@gswise.org](mailto:customercare@gswise.org).

Refer to the *GSWISE Travel Guidelines* for more information about 1-2-night trips to a non-council owned site more than 100 miles away from the troop's community, extended trips of 3 or more nights, and international trips. Find this resource at [gswise.org>Members>Travel and Destinations>Troop Travel](https://gswise.org/Members/Travel-and-Destinations/Troop-Travel).

GSUSA offers a **Field Trip and Travel training** in *gsLearn*! This optional 20-minute training is suitable for all grade level Troop Volunteers. It highlights why field trips and travel are a valuable part of the Girl Scout experience. You'll learn about travel progression, how to involve girls in leading the planning process, get inspired with fun trip ideas, pick up helpful planning tips, and more! To access this training, log into *gsLearn* and search for **GSUSA Field Trip and Travel**.



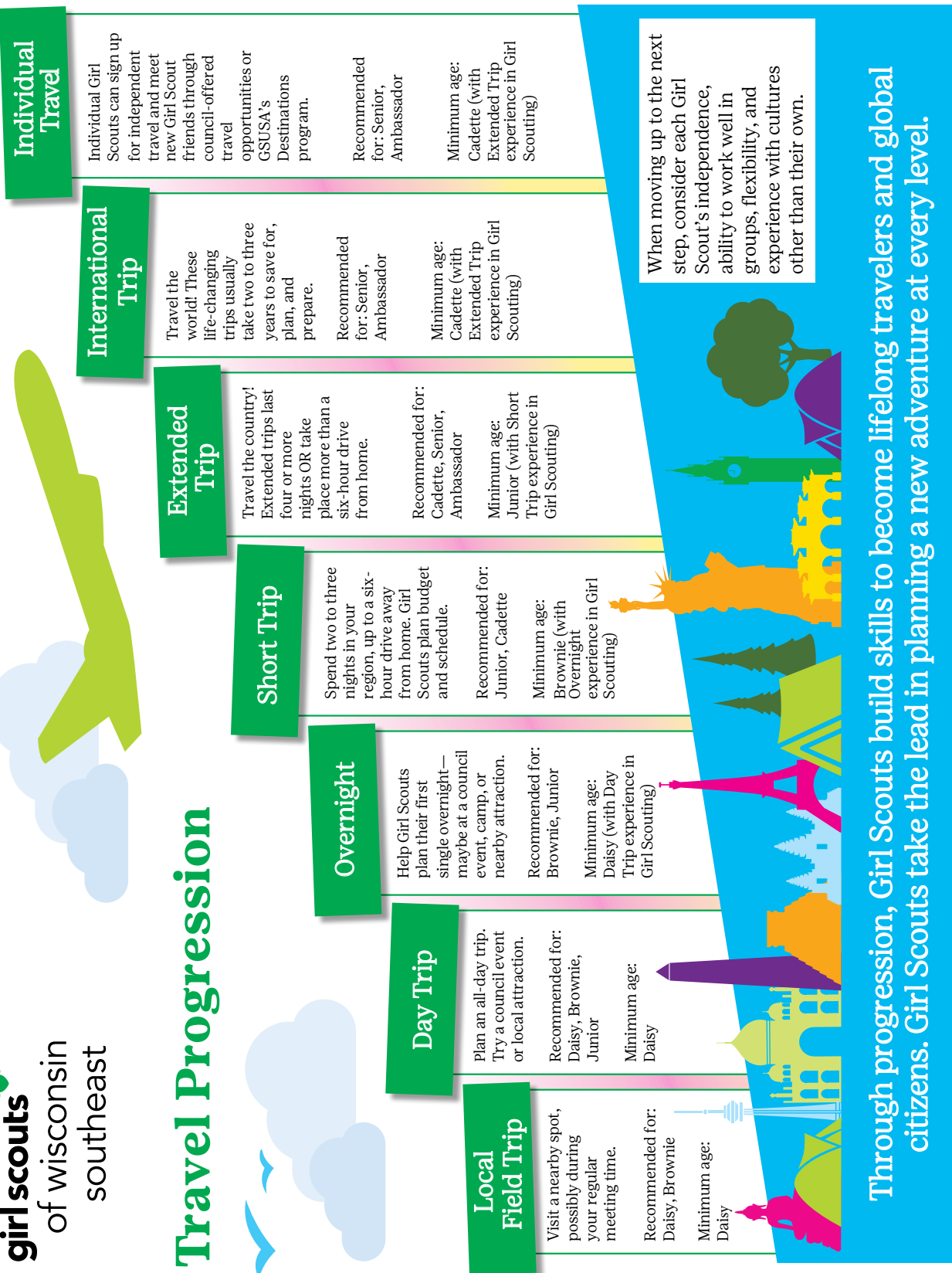
Questions about field trips or travel tripping?  
Contact us at 800-565-4475 or [customercare@gswise.org](mailto:customercare@gswise.org).

**girlscouts**   
of wisconsin  
southeast

# Travel Progression

## Travel Progression Starts with Local Field Trips

Participating in local day and overnight field trips is a Girl Scout's first step in their Girl Scout travel progression. Through this progression, Girl Scouts build skills to become lifelong travelers and global citizens. Using GSUSA's Travel Progression Chart below, determine what type of field trip your troop is ready for right now based on their previous experiences and grade level. Then, think about the types of field trips and travel experiences your troop might like to take over the next few years. Create your troop's multi-year plan to include a variety of field trips and travel experiences so they're ready for bigger trips as they get older.



## Where to go? What to do?

Once you know whether your troop's upcoming field trip is a day-only experience or a 1-2 night overnight, the next planning step may be to figure out where your troop wants to go or what they want to do. Create a girl-led experience by asking your Girl Scouts! Brainstorm a list of places they'd like to visit or activities that they'd like to do.

Need help coming up with ideas?

- Research what businesses or organizations are in your local or a nearby community that provide tours or program opportunities for Girl Scouts (museums, parks, theatre, nature centers, hiking trails, ice skating, fire or police stations, zoos, news stations, waterparks, camping, etc.).
- Are there any community events scheduled in your area?
- What businesses or places might your troop already be connected to through the parent/leaders in your troop (law firm, fulfillment center, college campus, etc.)?
- Or maybe your troop wants to do community service during their field trip?
- Find inspiration by thinking about places in your community that connect to a petal, badge, or other Girl Scout award your troop is working on or wants to earn.
- Attend a GSWISE council event. Check out upcoming events at [gswise.org](https://gswise.org) and log into **MyGS>Activities**, or view our current **Program Guide at [gswise.org](https://gswise.org)>Discover>Activities**, or check out our website calendar at [gswise.org](https://gswise.org)>Discover>Event Calendar.
- Visit one of GSWISE's Community Event Providers. These are community businesses that offer programming for Girl Scouts. Some Community Event Providers offer on-demand programming for troops, others offer large scale events for many groups at the same time, and some do both. View current opportunities at [gswise.org](https://gswise.org)>Discover>Community Events.
- Or maybe your troop is ready for their first overnight! Consider staying overnight (or spending the day) at one of our GSWISE council properties. Check out the variety of our property and lodging options at [gswise.org](https://gswise.org)>Camp & Outdoors>Troop Camping or view our **GSWISE Troop Camping Guide**.

Once you've brainstormed a list of activities or places with your troop, one of the hardest steps may be narrowing down all their fabulous ideas to a field trip everyone can agree on!

An idea for girl-led decision-making:

1. List all the options the troop brainstormed on a big sheet of poster paper.
2. As a group, have the Girl Scouts discuss each option. They could discuss the pros and cons or what they will like (or not like). Are there any trips they aren't 'ready' for?
3. After discussing all the options, give each Girl Scout five stickers and instruct them to place their stickers next to the field trips they are most excited about.
4. See which 2-3 field trips are the most popular and further explore those 2-3 options to narrow down the list to your troop's top pick.



## Planning Other Logistics

Now that you know where your troop wants to go, you can begin finalizing some of the next steps to ensure the field trip is feasible for your troop.

**Is the field trip within your troop's budget?** Consider any admission fees, meal or snack expenses, or other costs, and multiply those expenses by the number of people (Girl Scouts and chaperones) to figure out your total costs. Discuss with the troop if you can cover the field trip's total expenses with funds you already have in your troop treasury. If not, would it be reasonable to ask parents/guardians to pay for a portion of their Girl Scout's fee? Or should the troop consider a different location that is more affordable within your current budget?

**When will you go?** Determine what date and time your troop will go based on everyone's availability and preferences and the venue's operating hours.

**How will you travel to the location?** Will everyone meet there? Will you meet up at your regular troop meeting place and carpool to the field trip location together? Will you be using any public transportation?

**What will you bring?** Whether going on a day trip or an overnight, Girl Scouts can help determine how to dress and what they need to bring (E.g., refillable water bottle, personal snack, overnight supplies, etc.). Troop leaders should also determine what they need to bring for the group (E.g., first aid kit, permission slips, etc.)

**Who will chaperone?** When your troop participates in field trips outside of your regular troop meetings, you may need to provide additional chaperones to meet the Adult-to-Girl ratios for Girl Scout Outings/Activities/Camping. Determine the minimum number of chaperones required by reviewing the guidelines in the Safety Activity Checkpoints found at [gswise.org>Members>Volunteer Essentials>Creating a Safe Space](https://www.gswise.org/Members/Volunteer-Essentials/Creating-a-Safe-Space) and click on the *Safety Activity Checkpoints*.

Use the following guidelines to ensure **sleeping area safety** (where applicable):

- Sleepovers/overnights should **not take place on private property or in homes**.
- **Each participant should have their own bed.**
  - Parent/guardian permission must be obtained if Girl Scouts are to share a bed.
  - Girl Scouts can only share a bed with an adult if the adult is their parent/guardian.
- It is **not required that adults sleep in the sleeping area** (tent, cabin, hotel room, etc.) with the Girl Scouts. However, if an adult female does share the sleeping area, there should always be two unrelated adult females present.
- **Adult males are prohibited from sharing a communal sleeping space** (tent, hotel room, etc.) with any Girl Scout that is not their own daughter; men must have separate sleeping quarters and separate bathroom facilities.

# Forms and Documentation

Here's an at-a-glance list of the various forms and documentation you may need for field trips. Some forms and documentation the troop completes and submits to the council, while other forms and documentation the troop retains for themselves. Use the below chart as a checklist to determine what is needed for your field trip. Items are further explained following the chart.

Submit to Council	Troop Retains for Themselves
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Criminal Background Check for Adults</li><li>• Driver Record Checks</li><li>• Contracts – e.g., lodging (if applicable)</li><li>• Activity Approval Form (if applicable)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parent/Guardian Permission Form</li><li>• First Aid/CPR Certification</li><li>• Lifeguard Certification (if applicable)</li><li>• Health Histories</li><li>• Permission to Administer Medications (if applicable)</li></ul>

## Parent/Guardian Permission Forms

Anytime the troop is leaving their regular troop meeting space, the adult-in-charge must obtain Parent/Guardian Permission Forms for each Girl Scout. Find this form at [gswise.org>Members>Forms and Documents](https://gswise.org/Members/Forms%20and%20Documents) and search for 'Permission Form'.

## First Aid/CPR & Lifeguard Certifications

An adult with current **CPR and First Aid Certification** that has participated in a council approved training must be present on all field trips. A **certified lifeguard** must be present at any public or private swimming site (see Safety Activity Checkpoints for more lifeguard/water safety information.)

## Health Histories

Troop leaders should carry current **Health Histories** for Girl Scouts participating in the trip.

**Health exams** may be required when participating in physically demanding activities such as water sports, horseback riding, skiing, and backpacking trips, etc. Refer to Safety Activity Checkpoints for more details.



# Forms and Documentation

## Permission to Administer Medications

This form is helpful to obtain from parents/guardians for Girl Scouts that may need to take either prescription or over the counter medications that will be administered by adult volunteers during the field trip. Find this form at: <https://www.gswise.org/content/dam/gswise-redesign/documents/forms/Troop-Trip-permission-to-administer-medication.pdf> or scan the QR code.



## Criminal Background Checks

We can prioritize the safety of Girl Scouts and adult volunteers only when all adults participating in field trips complete the required criminal background check. To verify if adults chaperoning your troop's field trip have an approved criminal background check on file, or to initiate a criminal background check, contact 800-565-4475 or [customercare@gswise.org](mailto:customercare@gswise.org).

## Driver Record Check

All drivers for travel trips must have an approved driver record check on file with GSWISE. This applies to drivers operating their own personal vehicles and drivers operating a rental vehicle. Driver Record Checks were automatically completed for adult volunteers that have completed their most recent Criminal Background Check since March 22, 2024. Adult volunteers or other adults that have not previously completed a Criminal Background Check or completed their Criminal Background Check prior to March 22, 2024 must submit Driver Record Check forms to council at least two weeks prior to your trip to allow enough time for processing. Refer to Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints for additional details on transportation and driver requirements.

Find the Driver Record Check form at: <https://www.gswise.org/content/dam/gswise-redesign/documents/forms/GSWISE%20Driver%20Check%20Form%202022.pdf> or scan the QR code.



## Contracts & Agreements

A council-authorized signature is required on all contracts and agreements (e.g., site agreements, chartered bus rentals, etc.), even if there is no charge for the provided services. Council-authorized signature includes the Chief Financial Officer or other designee; adult volunteers and parents/guardians are not authorized to sign contracts or agreements related to Girl Scout activities. To obtain council-authorized signatures on contracts and agreements, submit the contract or agreement documentation to [customercare@gswise.org](mailto:customercare@gswise.org).

## Horseback Riding

If **horseback riding** is planned, refer to GSWISE's approved horse stable vendor list for up-to-date information on the council-approved horseback riding facilities. If you're planning to include horseback riding at a facility that has not been approved by GSWISE, please contact the council at 800-565-4475 or [customercare@gswise.org](mailto:customercare@gswise.org) for GSWISE to review and approve the vendor (this includes stables in other states).

# Forms and Documentation

## Activity Approval Form, Safety Activity Checkpoints, and Volunteer Essentials

In Girl Scouting, safety is a top priority. GSUSA's **Safety Activity Checkpoints** is a resource that provides general safety standards and specific guidelines for a variety of activities. GSUSA, GSWISE, and adult volunteers are responsible for seeing that all Girl Scout activities are planned and carried out in a manner that considers the health, safety, and general well-being of all participants in accordance with these standard safety guidelines.

In the *Introduction: Standard Safety Guidelines* section, adult volunteers and troop leaders will find GSUSA's general standard safety guidelines which apply to all Girl Scout activities. This section includes information on supervision, activity approvals, emergency action plans, appropriate behaviors, first aid, health histories, safety, transporting girls, and more. Please read and become familiar with all topics in this section, especially as they relate to field trips.

Adult volunteers and troop leaders should always review the individual activity's Safety Activity Checkpoints, which provide specific safety guidelines related to an individual activity (e.g., Swimming, Horseback Riding, Camping). The current Safety Activity Checkpoints document can be found at [gswise.org>Members>For Volunteers>Volunteer Essentials>Safety](https://gswise.org/Members/ForVolunteers/VolunteerEssentials/Safety).

According to GSUSA's Safety Activity Checkpoints, some activities require council approval. The activities that require council approval are listed below.

- Backpacking
- Pocket/Jack Knife Safety
- Climbing and Rappelling\*
- Ziplining\*
- Camping
- Challenge Courses\*
- Recreational Tree Climbing\*
- Downhill Skiing and Snowboarding
- Go-karts
- Hayrides
- Horseback Riding\*
- Indoor Skydiving
- Offshore Water/Large Passenger Vessels
- Canoeing
- Corcl Boats
- Kayaking
- Row Boating
- Standup Paddle Boarding
- Whitewater Rafting
- Sailing
- Scuba Diving
- Snorkeling
- Spelunking/Caving
- Surfing
- Swimming
- Tubing
- Waterskiing and Wakeboarding
- Windsurfing and Said Boarding
- 3-D Archery\*
- Air/BB Guns\*
- Archery
- Knife Throwing\*
- Muzzle Loading\*
- Pistol\*
- Rifle\*
- Shotgun/Trap/Skeet Shooting\*
- Slingshot
- Target Paintball\*
- Tomahawk/Hatchet Throwing
- Tethered Balloon Rides
- Tools-Hand and Power
- Travel Trips/Troop Travel\*\*

\*These activities will be approved after council confirms the facility where the activity takes place is a GSWISE approved vendor.

\*\* Travel Trips/Troop Travel refers to trips that are more than 100 miles from your community or three or more nights, and international travel.

To receive council approval for activities listed above, submit the Activity Approval Form annually or prior to Girl Scouts participating in these activities. Find this online form at: <https://gswise.jotform.com/213505791201043> or scan the QR code.



Volunteer Essentials is a key resource for Girl Scout volunteers. While Safety Activity Checkpoints focuses on safety guidance and parameters, Volunteer Essentials addresses an array of topics such as Engaging Girls and Families, Troop Management, Product Program, Troop Finances, and the Leader's Guide to Success. All Girl Scout volunteers should review, understand, and practice the principles and standards in Volunteer Essentials.



## During the Field Trip

**When not in a group, always use the buddy/truddy system.**

**Have a plan for responding to emergencies, a few examples include:**

- What will you do if someone gets lost or becomes separated from the group?
- What if someone becomes ill or needs first aid during the field trip?
- What will you do if inclement weather is forecasted, and your field trip is outdoors?

**If an accident/incident or emergency occurs during any Girl Scout activity, follow GSWISE procedures:**

1. Provide all possible care for the injured person and keep a responsible adult at the scene of the incident (move non-injured people away from the scene).
2. If necessary, call 911 for help (police, fire, EMS)
3. Call injured person's parent(s)/guardian(s) or emergency contact(s).
4. Report emergencies to GSWISE at 800-565-4475 (press 2 if after business hours).
5. Speak only to first responders or Girl Scout staff.
6. Do not speak to media. Refer requests to speak to media to council officials.
7. Complete and submit the Accident/Incident Report Form to council. Find this form at:  
<https://www.gswise.org/content/dam/gswise-redesign/documents/forms/Accident%20-%20Incident%20Report%20Form%20-%20Updated%20Dec%202024.pdf>



GSWISE offers *Troop Safety Basics* (available in gsLearn), which provides basic information on Safety Activity Checkpoints, First Aid and Emergencies, information on overnights, camping, and more.

## Field Trip Reflections

Before everyone goes home, take a few minutes at the end of your field trip to reflect with the Girl Scouts about their experience. Reflection helps Girl Scouts process the experience and develop personal growth. Below are some quick and easy prompts for Girl Scouts to reflect on their experiences. Girl Scouts could share their reflections by pairing up with another Girl Scout, writing it down, or sharing in group setting, or they can keep their reflection to themselves, etc.

- What was the best part about today's field trip?
- What is one new thing you learned today?
- What is something new you tried?
- Where do you want to go next?
- What do you want to do next?

## Share Your Story

Want us to showcase your field trip on our website, social media, or other online platforms? Share your story with us to celebrate your troop's experiences and inspire other Girl Scouts to participate in Girl Scout field trips. Find this online form using the QR code or go to <https://gswise.jotform.com/213556433091049>.

