

Summer 2021 Travel Guidelines

Date: April 20, 2021

Dear Troops and others interested

As the state reopens, we know many girls and troops are looking to resume all the activities we have come to enjoy in Girl Scouts. As a Council, we also want troops to resume a variety of activities; however, we also must encourage exercising precaution. This communication gives more guidance that can keep up with the ongoing changes recommended by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Public Health Departments. As always in Girl Scouts, safety is our number one priority; it has been difficult for all of us that during these times we have had to weigh mental safety against health safety. Girl Scouts of San Geronio does not want to be the roadblock to girls living the mission, promise and law; therefore, the following should allow parents and troop leaders to partner together to make informed decisions that meet the current health and safety standards. If these guidelines are not followed Girl Scout insurance may not cover activities that go against current guidance.

As always Girl Scout staff and volunteer leadership are here to help support troop leaders and girls as they navigate this new world. If you have questions, please email customercare@gssgc.org so you are directed to the best person to answer them and we can keep track of the questions we receive.

Below you will find the sections on the following:

- **Procedures** for Extended Troop Trips (based on distance or length)
- **Guidance** on who can travel, when and where
 - Website resources
- **Girl Scout Funds** extension on use for Girl Scouts bridging to Adult (young alum)
- **Guidance for shorter trips** including other types of activities that are not Extended Troop Trips but instead normal travel or trips.
- **Other Information**

Procedure

As girls and troops plan to travel, there are procedures that must be followed. These procedures and policies are in GSSGC Policy and Procedures, Safety Activity Checkpoints, and Volunteer Essentials. Please ensure you review these documents for full procedures and policy; however, as a reminder troops and groups that plan to travel must have an approved Extended Troop Trip Application (ETT) on file before spending any Girl Scout funds including deposits. The ETT Application has changed to the ETT Form. It is an online form on the gssgc.org website. It is now three parts and includes the application, as well as, the new intent to travel and the ability to update your plans. The ETT form must be submitted and approved prior to making deposits for a trip. In addition, the ETT form must be completed using the following timelines:

1. ASAP for Intent to Travel* - Submit at the time your troop decides to start saving money for travel
2. Two months in advance for ETT Application – For trips within the continental United States of three or more nights and/or exceeding 700 miles round trip.
3. Four months in advance for ETT Application – For trips outside the continental United States.
4. ASAP for Updates – Submit once troop knows they are making changes to dates, travel location or budget.

As a reminder, a final trip itinerary must be submitted at least 1 month in advance for Extended Troop Trips using the [Activity Approval Process Form](#); this form would also be used for any Council approval required for activities identified in Safety Activity Checkpoints before troops engage in the activity.

*The Intent to Travel part of the form is not an approval; it ensures Council is able to best support troops traveling.

Questions? Email customercare@gssgc.org so you are directed to the most appropriate staff or volunteer to answer your questions.

Guidance for Troop Trips

As we navigate our new reality and attempt to find a new normal in a time where we are truly, one-world related to our health, we want our troops to be able to make informed decisions with their parents. We are reopening as a country and Girl Scouts; however, not all of the health concerns have disappeared. It is our understanding by mid-summer that we will almost be back to normal operation; however, masks will still be recommended, as the virus is still active. The concern the program department would like to express is that when girls are sleeping at night in a shared space they cannot be masked and will be sharing both good and bad germs. Therefore, it is our recommendation that you consider as a troop how you want to travel and if you want to travel at all especially related to sleeping arrangements. Investigating the density of the sleeping space, (how many bodies/beds in how much square footage) and determining the ventilation, circulation and purification of the air within sleeping rooms might be helpful in decision making. In addition, at this time the Health Department guidance is that Girl Scout **heads must be at least 6 feet apart while sleeping.**

Our Council uses the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance and the US State Department advisories to determine the risks related to travel. We encourage troops to be informed consumers and suggest girls do their own research to determine if their troop is able to travel to where they want to go. The information below will help troops assess the risks of their travel plans. Council will still send an email confirmation (approval or denial) related to the submitted ETT. If a troop would like to have the decision reviewed based on updated guidance from these two experts they can do so by emailing customercare@gssgc.org with a subject line of ETT Review and include the new information for us to consider with a link to the website. As we all know, safety for travelers can change rapidly due to civil unrest and now pandemics, but we want to make sure our girls have the best experience possible and we need everyone to contribute to this. At the time of this writing the following was true, (visit the websites for the most up-to-date information):

The CDC guidance

The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is the national public health agency of the United States. It is a United States federal agency, under the Department of Health and Human Services. As the nation's health protection agency, CDC saves lives and protects people from health threats. To accomplish this mission, the CDC conducts critical science and provides health information that protects our nation against expensive and dangerous health threats, and responds when these arise. This includes the current pandemic.

- At the time of this writing, the CDC is recommending delaying travel until travelers are fully vaccinated. **This means our Council is not allowing domestic or international travel for those not yet vaccinated unless there is a request for an exception made by the parents to allow their girl to travel.** This exception is due to the vaccine being in Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) status, although we also recognize currently children cannot receive the vaccine and some parents may choose to not vaccinate their children.
- In addition to offering guidance, the CDC website has a variety of useful tools for travelers to make informed decisions. This includes information on their reasoning for their guidance and best practices for staying healthy related to a variety of health risks including Covid-19. Below is a couple pages from their website that troops should monitor while preparing for travel:
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-during-covid19.html> - states the CDC's recommendation and reasoning, as well as precautions to take
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-planner/index.html> - after entering your destination it will tell you what the state's current policies are related to masks, quarantining, etc.
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html> - overview page for the CDC on travel; has many other links of helpful information beyond the two shared above.

The US Department of State Advisories

The US Department of State (State Department) is the expert in the safety of travel to other countries for US citizens. They offer information on vaccinations, the need for visas, and anything to be aware of about traveling abroad. In addition, they issue Travel Advisory based on levels. For Girl Scouts to travel to a country, that country needs to be Level 1: Exercise Normal Precautions. The others are Level 2: Exercise increased caution, Level 3: Reconsider travel, Level 4: Do not Travel. They have a color-coded map or a list of countries to help travelers discover what they need to know about other countries before they arrive. In addition, they collect traveler information so that if something changes about the country you are visiting they will alert you and/or help you navigate to our closest embassy to offer assistance.

- At the time of writing, the US Department of State has only one country in Level 1; it is New Zealand. However, according to the state department New Zealand is enforcing border restrictions; allowing only citizens and residence to enter. **This means our Council is not allowing international travel at this time.**
- If troops want to be able to travel internationally as soon as possible, we recommend they monitor the US Department of State Advisories specific to their country of choice and send an email to customercare@gssgc.org with the subject line ETT Reconsideration once the borders for that country have been opened.
- Below are links to helpful pages on the US Department of State website:
 - travel.state.gov/TSGMap/ - a color-coded map of all the countries around the world and their current advisory level; once you click on a country you can click on more info to find the specific information on that country related to Covid-19 and any other reasons for their level. Note: Greenland and Svalbard are not consistently color-coded; one is a territory and the other is possibly an island of another country; regardless they both seem to follow that country's guidance.)
 - <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html/> - a list of all the countries; you can click on the country of interest and find their advisory.
 - <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel.html> - main page of the US Department of State (State Department); has many other links of helpful information beyond the ones shared above.
 - <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html> - where the state department placed their statement on Covid and our current policies related to entering our country (even for US citizens)

In addition to the above, when troops are traveling or participating in other activities inform parents in your troop's **Covid Safety Plan**. This will allow them to give informed consent on their daughter participating. This year we had over a half million Americas die from this disease and people are still getting sick and passing this along; most of which are asymptomatic. The good news is that people are not getting as sick and they are recovering. However, we want to encourage girls to be informed travelers and travelers of courage. For more information on what to include in the Covid Safety Plan review the documentation on that process found on the [Covid-19 Updates](#) page of the GSSGC website.

Use of Girl Scout Funds

The GSSGC board approved temporarily changing the policy to allow GSSGC Girl Scouts who graduated in 2020 and those who will graduate in 2021 to use their Girl Scout funds/credits until September 30, 2022.

This means although girls that have bridged to adults cannot raise additional funds through the cookie sale or other means, they can still take a troop trip or use their funds for appropriate Girl Scout activities. Funds must be used by September 30, 2022 and if using for troop travel all Girl Scout procedures and policy must be followed. This would include Girl Scout ratios (take your troop leaders with you) and registration status (participants must all be registered adult members at the time of the trip). This applies both to troop funds and use of cookie/nutty dough, etc. Once the troop bank account is spent and closed all final paperwork must be submitted.

Please see the **Graduating Senior Funds Guidelines** document for more information. It can be found on the [Covid-19 Updates](#) page or in the forms section of our website.

Questions? Email customercare@gssgc.org so you are directed to the most appropriate staff or volunteer to answer your questions.

Guidance for Shorter Trips

We know many of our members including our Council staff have been disappointed that our Girl Scout experience was changed. We have discovered new ways of work and really used the innovation skills we learned in Girl Scouts to create dynamic experiences for girls. If you have not participated in any on-line programming we highly recommend you check it out. It very much brings home that we are a Global Movement.

As we reopen, even if international or long-distant travel is not something your troops are comfortable with doing, we still encourage girls to spend a little of their travel money to do something local. Depending on the tier, this may be as simple as a day trip to Disneyland or maybe taking a weekend camping trip to San Diego. This will allow girls to gather and create fun experiences. Our guidance for troop meetings continue to be updated and apply to trips and other Girl Scout activities of any length as well. See the **Covid-19 In-Person Troop Meeting & Activity Guideline** documents found on our website on the [Covid-19 Updates](#) for details; to summarize the document girls must have an annual permission slip with Covid language signed by a parent, troops can only meet outside, everyone needs to be masked and following the current socially distance practices. In addition, troops must follow these guidelines for trips:

- Prior to June 15th troop members cannot carpool with unrelated family members. After June 15th, assuming the governor's plan continues as expected, girls/adults must be masked while traveling in vehicles that include people not in their family group.
- Have the signed annual permission slip with the Covid language and all the other paperwork we always require (permission slips, health forms, etc).
- Inform parents of the troop's **Covid Safety Plan**

No additional paperwork is required to be on file with Council unless the activity meets the guidelines that require the [Activity Approval Process](#) Form

Other – Bonus Section

Because we are talking about travel, we want to mention GSUSA has some excellent resources on travel; check out any of the following that you might find interesting:

- GSUSA general travel info - http://forgirls.girlscouts.org/travel/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/adult_guide_to_girl_scout_global_travel.pdf
- <http://forgirls.girlscouts.org/travel/>
 - On this page especially check out Destinations and Getaways that girls can do on their own
- GSSGC Travel is back! We have Council trips that are in the planning stages for the birthplace (Savannah), River Rafting, Catalina, London, Paris, Sweden, and more! If you would like to be involved in the planning, please email customercare@gssgc.org with travel planning in the subject line.

If you have any questions on anything, please email customercare@gssgc.org to be directed to the best staff or volunteer to answer those questions.