



Your Complete Guide to

# Getting Outdoors

with

**girlscouts**   
of western new york



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## Girl Scout Mission

Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.

## Girl Scout Promise

On my honor, I will try:  
To serve God and my country,  
To help people at all times,  
And to live by the Girl Scout Law.

## Girl Scout Law

I will do my best to be  
honest and fair,  
friendly and helpful,  
considerate and caring,  
courageous and strong, and  
responsible for what I say and do,  
and to  
respect myself and others,  
respect authority,  
use resources wisely,  
make the world a better place, and  
be a sister to every Girl Scout.

## Please Note

This guide is intended to be used as an online resource.  
If you choose to print it, please understand that you may miss important content updates over time.  
Printing also disables the web links to related online content.

## Letter from the CEO

Dear Girl Scout Leaders,

Learning outdoor skills had a tremendous impact on me, as I know it did for so many. One of the biggest moments that built my confidence was when I was part of a 10-day all-female canoe trip in northern Ontario, and I truly believed that after that trip I could do anything! At Girl Scouts of WNY, I'm committed to helping girls and adult members have positive outdoor adventures. No matter what your own personal comfort level or experience with outdoor programs is, we are here to support you to get started with providing this amazing opportunity for girls. We know they will never forget it. Experts agree that spending time outdoors is extremely beneficial for girls. On pages [4](#) & [5](#) you will find a lot of great data on the importance of these experiences.

Camping and learning outdoor skills is a quintessential part of Girl Scouting. Juliette Low first led girls into the Georgia woods in 1912 and we

are proud to continue the important tradition today. As you will discover while reading this guide, GSWNY is committed to offering girls a wide-range of opportunities to experience the outdoors. You'll find events that range from every experience and comfort level. Whether you're ready for your first hike or you want to test your skills during a week-long primitive camping trip, we're excited to support you on your journey!

For many girls, their outdoor progression begins at Girl Scout camp. We're lucky to have four beautiful properties located throughout Western New York. We strive to create spaces that our girls will thrive in. In 2020, we began working with Landscape Architect firm, Pashek MTR, to develop a comprehensive Master Plan for our four camp properties. The plan provides a clear path to address current maintenance concerns as well as create new and exciting activities and amenities.

Pashek MTR held town hall meetings with volunteers, researched national trends, preformed in-depth property assessments and most importantly listened to the voices of our girls. In the beginning of 2022 the plan will be complete, and we will begin to make girls' dreams a reality. We can't wait to share the plans with you!

We know that getting girls outdoors starts with you! Our aim is to continually find ways to better support our incredible volunteers. Planning outdoor excursions can be overwhelming, and our hope is that this guide will help you easily find all of the tools you need. We greatly appreciate everything you do for our girls and hope to see you outside soon!



Alison Wilcox  
CEO, Girl Scouts of WNY



## Section 1: Why Outdoors?



In 2019, Girl Scouts of the USA released a study of our National Outdoor Outcomes to further explain the importance of this connection. We've highlighted some of the info here. To see the full report and footnotes, [click here](#).

### Four Ways Girl Scouts Builds Girl Leaders in the Outdoors

Guided by supportive adults and peers, Girl Scouts discover the wonders of nature, experience the thrill of adventure, and challenge themselves and one another to reach new heights. These experiences hone their outdoor and leadership skills, inspire them to take action to protect the environment, and reinforce friendships to last a lifetime. When girls participate in Girl Scouts' outdoor programming, they benefit in important ways:

- **Outdoor Competence:** Girls learn to engage safely and responsibly in a range of outdoor activities.
- **Outdoor Interest:** Girls develop a love of nature and an interest in the natural world.
- **Outdoor Confidence:** Girls gain confidence in their ability to take on new challenges and learn from and succeed in them.
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Girls come to understand how their behaviors impact the environment and what they can do to protect the natural world.



## Why do these outcomes matter?

Outdoor interest and confidence lay the foundation for a life of outdoor engagement, and spending time in the tranquility of nature has well-established implications for a person's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical health and formation of values. For example, studies show that:

- Exposure to greenspaces restores people's attention and improves cognitive functioning.<sup>1</sup>
- Spending time outdoors reduces people's cortisol, a stress-inducing hormone,<sup>2</sup> and lowers blood pressure.<sup>3</sup>
- Learning new skills in nature increases people's self-confidence.<sup>4</sup>
- Outdoor recreational experiences in early childhood strongly and positively influence people's environmental attitudes,<sup>5</sup> values,<sup>6</sup> and behaviors,<sup>7</sup> with experiences like hiking and camping cultivating a sense of responsibility for nature.<sup>8</sup>



## The Girl Scout Difference

Girl Scouts provides girls with unparalleled opportunities to develop the skills, courage, confidence, and appreciation of the natural world that set them up to become the leaders of tomorrow.

The research bears it out. As reported in *More Than S'mores: Successes and Surprises in Girl Scouts' Outdoor Experiences*, girls engage in outdoor activities through Girl Scouts that they wouldn't otherwise have access to, providing them with valuable first-time experiences in, for example, overnight camping and high-adventure pursuits like backpacking and kayaking. Girl Scouts lets girls participate in outdoor activities on a regular basis, and they do—even more than non-Girl Scouts who are also highly engaged. This is significant because frequency of participation in outdoor activities is found to positively correlate with the expression of challenge-seeking and problem-solving skills.<sup>9</sup>

It gets even better: the benefits girls gain from their outdoor adventures in Girl Scouts extend into adulthood. As detailed in *From Girl Scout Camp to RealWorld Champ! How Girl Scouting in the Great Outdoors Builds Female Leaders*, many camp counselors who attended Girl Scout camps as girls report developing life skills and attributes at camp that continue to help them today, including an appreciation for diversity, the ability to persevere, and a willingness to try new things. Notably, counselors who are Girl Scout camp alums are more likely to attribute these benefits to their camp experience than are present-day counselors who attended non-Girl Scout camps growing up.<sup>10</sup>



## Section 2: Council-Sponsored Year-Round Programs

### Types of Programming

Girl Scouts of Western New York offers a wide variety of outdoor experiences led by seasoned staff, committed volunteers, and outdoor professionals.

- **Day Programs:** These programs introduce girls to new outdoor skills and generally last a few hours. They often align directly with the National Outdoor Badges and are a great opportunity for less experienced girls. Some examples include snowshoeing in a park, outdoor-inspired art activities, hiking, and more.
- **Virtual Programs:** Throughout the pandemic, we were able to reach girls through virtual offerings. We found that the virtual format can be really effective for introducing specific skills and we will continue to offer these programs. Girls sign up for a specific skill and receive a package in the mail with the items needed for their virtual meet up (generally an hour-long). An example of a virtual program is knot tying: girls receive paracord, a fun patch, and a knot-tying booklet in the mail prior to their virtual meeting.
- **Overnights:** Our council hosts a variety of themed overnight experiences. This is a great option for girls that are ready to take the next step in their own outdoor progression and spend the night away from home. This is also a great option for troops who aren't quite ready to plan their own night away. An example of this program is Camp After Dark: girls learn about the night sky and participate in activities such as crafts, s'mores, and a guided night hike.
- **Vendor Partners:** We frequently partner with outdoor professionals to provide unique experiences. Our partners meet our National Safety Standard and local GSWNY requirements. Examples include climbing wall gyms, whitewater rafting, gear shop tutorials, and more.
- **Advanced Outdoor Programs:** On [this page](#), you will find full descriptions of our Advanced Outdoor Programs. These programs build upon specific skills and offer the girls the opportunity to continuously advance those skills.



# FAQs

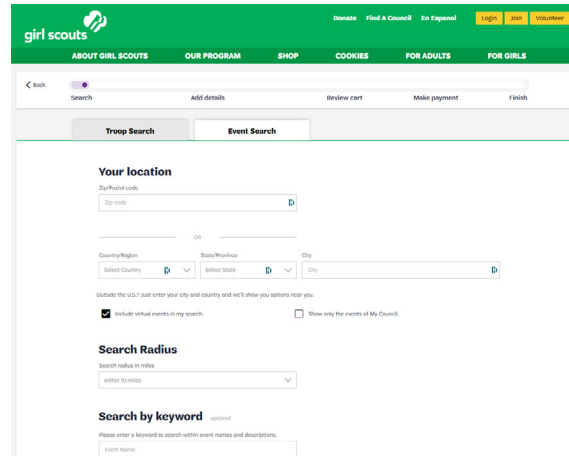
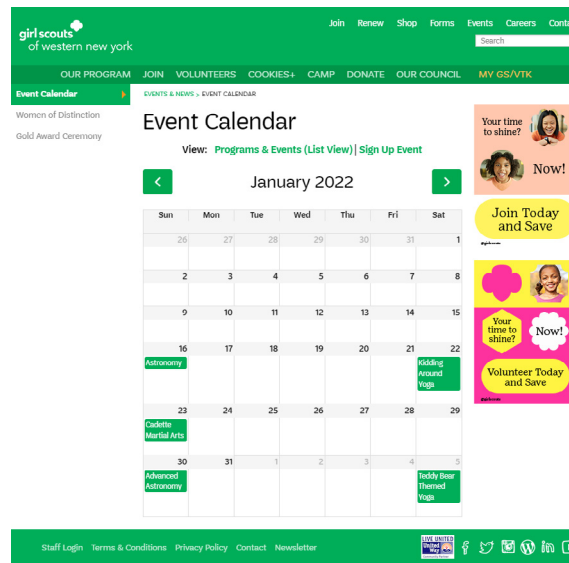
## How do I find and register for upcoming programs?

Events are found at [mygs.girlscouts.org](https://mygs.girlscouts.org). You can search for events by location or by other filters such as grade level or type of program (outdoor, STEM, etc.).

When you find an event you wish to register for, login to your Girl Scout account. This is intended to be a one-stop shop for your Girl Scout membership and activities. Aside from registering for programs, this is also where you can renew your membership annually, change account information, and more.

If you experience any issues while attempting to register for programs or performing other account-related activities, please contact Customer Care at [customercare@gswny.org](mailto:customercare@gswny.org) or 1-888-837-6410.

Upcoming programs will also appear on our [events calendar](#) on our website as they become available, and we will also often advertise them in our emails to members.

A screenshot of the Girl Scouts website's search interface. The header is green with the Girl Scouts logo and navigation links: ABOUT GIRL SCOUTS, OUR PROGRAM, SHOP, COOKIES, FOR ADULTS, FOR GIRLS. Below the header is a search bar with a magnifying glass icon and a dropdown menu. The main content area has a 'Trop Search' and 'Event Search' tab. The 'Event Search' tab is active, showing a 'Your location' section with a 'Zip/Postal code' field, a 'Country/Region' dropdown, a 'State/Province' dropdown, and a 'City' dropdown. There are also checkboxes for 'Include virtual events in my search' and 'Show only the events of My Council'. Below this is a 'Search Radius' section with a 'Search radius in miles' dropdown set to 'within 10 miles'. At the bottom is a 'Search by keyword' section with a text input field and a 'Search' button.A screenshot of the Girl Scouts of Western New York Event Calendar. The header is green with the Girl Scouts logo and navigation links: JOIN, RENEW, SHOP, FORMS, EVENTS, CAREERS, CONTACT. Below the header is a green bar with 'OUR PROGRAM', 'JOIN', 'VOLUNTEERS', 'COOKIES+', 'CAMP', 'DONATE', 'OUR COUNCIL', and 'MY GS/NTK'. The main content area is titled 'Event Calendar' and shows a calendar for January 2022. The calendar has columns for Sun, Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, and Sat. Events are listed in green boxes: 'Autism Awareness' on Jan 16, 'Caden's Martial Arts' on Jan 23, 'Advanced Autism Awareness' on Jan 30, 'Rising Around Yoga' on Jan 22, and 'Teddy Bear Themed Yoga' on Jan 29. To the right of the calendar are three promotional banners: 'Your time to shine? Now!', 'Join Today and Save', and 'Your time to shine? Now! Volunteer Today and Save'. The footer is green with links: Staff Login, Terms & Conditions, Privacy Policy, Contact, Newsletter, and social media icons.

FAQs continue next page



## FAQs Continued

### What are Drop-Off vs. Non Drop-Off Programs?

MOST of our outdoor programs are run as Non Drop-Off Programs. Utilizing outdoor spaces allows us to open our programs up to more girls and leaders, giving even more people a chance to participate in the fun. However, this also means we are limited in the number of volunteers available to simply supervise young participants as they move around the property in addition to the volunteers needed to run the activities. There are a few programs that we offer that ARE considered Drop-Off Programs. These are our Advanced Camping programs with very small participant numbers.

### What does the participant level indicate?

Always check to make sure the program is being offered for your specific level in Girl Scouts. When planning these programs, we utilize the [Safety Activity Checkpoints guidelines](#) to determine which levels are appropriate for the activities we are providing. Some activities such as archery specify that nobody below second-year Brownies may participate in this activity. Other such restrictions help to determine the level that the program is offered to, so it is important to read the description carefully.

### What is the average length of programs?

- **Day Programs** are typically offered from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and may or may not include a meal. Please read program descriptions carefully for this info.
- **Overnight Programs** are typically 24 hours from Saturday 11 a.m. to Sunday 11 a.m., unless otherwise specified, and include meals.
- **Weekend Programs** begin at 7 p.m. on Friday and run until 10 a.m. on Sunday. These weekend programs will include a snack Friday evening and all other meals.
- **Virtual Programs** will typically be 1 hour in length and will be done on Zoom at around 6:30 p.m. to hopefully accommodate most ages.

### What's the difference between badges vs. fun patches?

Some of our programs are built around Girl Scout badges and we have done our best to include all levels of that type of badge. Please note that there are some badge types that do not span all levels or the requirements of the higher levels are too involved to complete in one day which is why you may not see a badge program offered for your level. Many (but not all) of our other programs that are NOT badge programs will include a fun patch. These patches serve as a reminder of the activity or event, but are not GSUSA badges and should be placed on the back of any uniform worn.

*FAQs continue next page*



## FAQs Continued

### What is the Advanced Outdoor Program Progression (formerly OATS)?

The below progressions are designed to help participants build skills in each area. The areas of hiking/backpacking, paddling, and camping are meant to be completed in order with each subsequent level building on the previous one.

The Outdoor Skills progression is a fun, instructional progression that leads to the annual GSWNY Skills & Chills competition (typically offered at the end of September). There is no pre-requisite for any of the three levels in this progression other than age or Girl Scout Level. For instance, Senior Girl Scouts (grades 9-10) interested in trying Skills & Chills for the first time are more than welcome to join in without having participated in either Tents Up or Ready, Set, Camp. For more detailed information about these programs, be sure to thoroughly read the program descriptions in [gsEvents](#).



Area of Interest	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<b>Outdoor Skills</b>	Tents Up	Ready, Set, Camp	Skills & Chills	
<b>Hiking/ Backpacking</b>	Trail Adventurer I	Trail Adventurer II	Trail Adventurer III	Trail Adventurer IV
<b>Paddling</b>	Paddle Explorer I	Paddle Explorer II	Paddle Explorer III	Paddle Explorer IV
<b>Camping</b>	Conquer Camping I	Conquer II	Intermediate Winter Camping	Advanced Winter Camping

## Section 3: Summer Camp

During the summer, GSWNY offers girls a variety of ways to experience the outdoors. Girl Scout camps are open to every girl in grades K-12. Girl Scouting values inclusiveness and does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, national origin, or physical or developmental disability. Girls attending Girl Scout summer camp must register as members of Girl Scouts of the USA. Our camps are ACA (American Camp Association) accredited and meet local, state and federal guidelines. Financial aid is available for all of our programs.

### How to register:

Our annual camp catalogs are generally released in January. There are opportunities to save money by registering early and we also provide financial assistance to those in need. GSWNY uses the CampDoc system for registration. The link opens each year when the programs are released. [Click here for more information on our summer camp programs.](#)

Once you've registered for summer camp, you'll find additional resources in our website's Summer Camp section including summer camp FAQs, information packets, and more.

### Day Camp at Piperwood:

Girls of all ages can embrace their inner go-getter, innovator, risk-taker, and leadership skills at day camp. Our day camp program offers classic camp activities including crafts, games, and campfires. Bus transportation is available for an additional fee. Day Camp is open to all girls grades K-10.

### Volunteer-led Day Camp at Windy Meadows:

This is a volunteer-driven day camp program run by committed and experienced volunteers. The program generally runs for three weeks. Day Camp is open to all girls grades K-12.

### Resident Camp (Sleepaway) at Camp Seven Hills and Camp Timbercrest:

All resident camp programs offer swimming, boating, outdoor cooking, crafts, archery, games, horseback riding, hiking, outdoor skills, and other activities to enjoy. Resident camp is a great opportunity for girls to make friends and gain independent living and leadership skills in a fun outdoor atmosphere with caring adult role models. Spend a few days or a few weeks playing outside, sitting by a campfire under the stars, learning, growing, and loving the adventure at Camp Seven Hills and Camp Timbercrest! Resident Camps are open to all girls grades 1-12.

### Troop Camp Adventure:

Although most of our summer programs are geared towards individual girl experiences, we also offer troop experiences. This adventure gives troops the opportunity to experience a taste of summer camp as a group.

## Section 4: Troop and Family-Led Outdoor Programming

In this section you will find resources for troops and families to get outdoors on their own.

**From Girl Scouts of the USA for all Girl Scouts nationwide:**

### Girl Scouts of the USA Outdoor Badges

Using the [badge finder](#) you'll be able to explore **over 50 outdoor badges** that Girl Scouts has to offer. You can even filter your view by choosing "outdoor" in the topic option.

#### Outdoor Badge Examples



**Daisy: Math in  
Nature**



**Brownie: Eco Friend**



**Junior: Eco Camper**

### Girl Scouts of the USA Tree Promise

Join our mission to protect the planet from the effects of climate change. With the Elliott Wildlife Values Project and American Forests GSUSA is launching a bold tree planting and conservation initiative. Girl Scouts is setting out to plant five million trees across the country in five years, and to protect and honor new and existing trees. Not only is this great for wildlife, it will also help ease the effects of climate change. Girls can earn a patch for their participation.





## From Girl Scouts of Western New York for our members:

### Applying for Off-site Camping

Looking to take your girls camping offsite (not on our four GSWNY camp properties)? No problem! Just be sure to plan ahead and complete the linked application.

### **GSWNY Mileage Patches**

GSWNY highly encourages our girls to go out and take a hike! It doesn't require much gear and there are tons of green spaces throughout the Western New York area to explore. Keep track of your mileage and then order your patches. There are 5, 10, 50 and 100 mileage patches. Other mileages may be available upon request. Order yours by emailing [customercare@gswny.org](mailto:customercare@gswny.org) or contacting a GSWNY shop directly.



### Western New York Hiking Challenge

Outside Chronicles has developed a robust Hiking Challenge. The challenge helps Western New Yorkers explore a wide range of outdoor spaces. GSWNY has teamed up with Outside Chronicles to provide girls with a special rate. See details and register on their site.

### GSWNY's WNY Hiking Challenge Rocker Patch

Take it to the next level and add a rocker patch. Once you've completed the Western New York Hiking Challenge, use the reflection below for your Girl Scout level/grade level to think about this challenge. Email your name, grade level, and answers to [outdoor@gswny.org](mailto:outdoor@gswny.org). Once you have received confirmation of completion from the Outdoor Department, you can use this verification to purchase the rocker patch from our GSWNY shops. Rocker patches are .96 cents each. Reflections questions can be found on our website.



## Section 5: Property Rentals

GSWNY owns and maintains nearly 2000 acres of wooded land. Each of our properties has their own unique characteristics, facilities, and activities.

**Leave it better than you found it:** Renting a facility on our properties is very similar to renting a vacation home. It's important that you work with your girls to clean as you go and leave the space better than you found it. Our Property Managers work hard to keep the facilities and activities well-maintained, but we do not have cleaning staff. Kaper charts are an important tradition in Girl Scouting that can help you and your troop organize chores during your stay and teach your girls responsibility.

Rentals take place through a system called DoubleKnot. [Click here](#) for more information.

### Camp Properties

#### Camp Seven Hills

(Lakeside) 10299 Savage Rd.  
Holland, NY 14080

(Goodyear) 10150 Olean Road (Rt 16)  
Holland, NY 14080

#### Camp Piperwood

2222 Turk Hill Rd., Fairport, NY 14450

#### Camp Windy Meadows

5000 Cambria Rd., Lockport, NY 14094

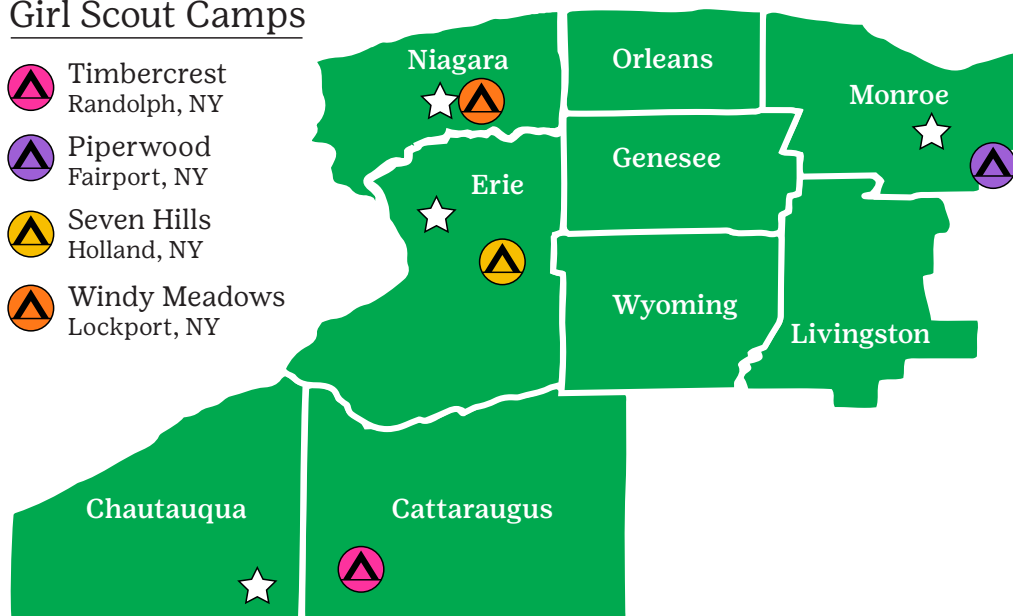
#### Camp Timbercrest

11169 Moore Rd., Randolph, NY 14772

☆ Girl Scout Office

#### Girl Scout Camps

-  Timbercrest  
Randolph, NY
-  Piperwood  
Fairport, NY
-  Seven Hills  
Holland, NY
-  Windy Meadows  
Lockport, NY



# Troop Camping in 7 Easy Steps for Troop Leaders

1. Visit the [DoubleKnot reservation system](#) and reserve your site, dates, etc. Full payment is due at the time of reservation in Doubleknot, so have your troop debit card handy!
2. Complete the Travel Roster for your troop ([Excel file – click to download](#)).
3. Confirm your group meets safety ratio and First Aid/CPR requirements.
  - After completing your roster, confirm that your group has the proper girl-to-adult ratio based on [Volunteer Essentials](#) and the [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#). Additionally, troops are required to provide at least one First Aid/CPR certified adult when camping on a troop camping trip.
4. Confirm with council that all adults have completed background checks and are an approved volunteer.
  - Any adult who is fulfilling the girl-adult ratio and will be working directly with the girls must fulfill the requirements to be an approved adult which includes a background check and Girl Scout membership.
5. To enhance your troop's camping experience, consider attending in-person adult training session. See next page for details.
6. Confirm specially trained staff for optional activities, if necessary.
  - Some activities at camp (swimming, archery, boating, ropes course, etc.) require specially trained facilitators in order for troops to participate. Troops/Service Units provide their own certified lifeguards, archery, and boating instructors - GSWNY must receive a copy of that individual's current certification. If you need assistance in securing a certified facilitator, please e-mail [erin.johnson@gswny.org](mailto:erin.johnson@gswny.org).
  - Reconfirm that you are adhering to the Safety Activity Checkpoints (see Step 5) for your chosen optional activities. Reach out to council if you need additional assistance or information about optional activities.
7. Work with your girls to plan your adventure.
  - Find out what your girls want to do when they're camping: hiking, nature observation, outdoor challenges? Use their ideas to drive programming.
  - Check out the Outdoor badges and Journeys for your level in [the VTK/your MyGS Girl Scout account](#).





## Section 6: Outdoor Resources for Troop Leaders

### Troop Camping Training

Please note that there is no required outdoor training to take your girls outdoors and/or to visit our properties, however, we have additional resources should you need them.

- **Videos:** Our website features tutorial videos on a variety of subjects including developing outdoors skills, taking the Girl Scout Journeys outside, planning your first campout, campsite set-up, cooking outdoors, Leave No Trace principles, outdoor songs and games, and fire-building.
- **In-Person Adult Trainings:** Throughout the year, we offer adult training opportunities such as archery certification, small watercraft certification, and much more. These opportunities can be [found on gsEvents](#) as they are available.

### SUCOs (Service Unit Camp Out)

Leaders can reserve a camp to arrange their own volunteer-run, mini day camp program for their service unit for up to four days. This is a great way to provide exciting and engaging day camp activities for Service Units who want to experience day camp with friends and others they know. Availability of SUCO Day Camps are as follows:

- **July-August:** Camp Windy Meadows and/or Camp Seven Hills – Lakeside
- **Year Round:** Off-council camp sites can be used with council approval
- **Sept-Oct & May-June:** Any camp property

### [I Camped, I Conquered fun patch](#)

Ready to explore all of our properties? GSWNY offers a fun patch for troops who visit and help maintain each of our four camp properties.

### [Equipment Rentals and Facilitators](#)

Troops and groups can pay a fee to use GSWNY's equipment. This gear is available for fun use, but also to ensure safety during camping. Rental options include tents, sleeping pads, snow shoes, outdoor cooking gear, and more.

Rental options include tents, sleeping pads, snowshoes, outdoor cooking gear, kayaks, canoes, archery kits and more. Archery and water sports required certified instructors/facilitators. Please reach out to [erin.johnson@gswny.org](mailto:erin.johnson@gswny.org) if you need assistance in securing a certified individual.

### [Ropes Course Adventures](#)

Troops and Service Units can request ropes course facilitators and programming.

### [Readiness Quizzes](#)

Not sure if your girls are ready for an overnight experience? Our Readiness Quizzes can help you and your families navigate your outdoor experiences.

# Master List of Document Links

## National Resources

[GSUSA study of National Outdoor Outcomes full report](#)

[Event Registration and Search \(mygs.girlscouts.org\)](https://mygs.girlscouts.org)

[GSUSA Badge Finder](#)

[GSUSA Tree Promise](#)

## WNY Member Resources

[Volunteer Essentials](#)

[Safety Activity Checkpoints guidelines](#)

[GSWNY Events Calendar](#)

[GSWNY Summer Camp Programs](#)

[GSWNY Property Rentals](#)

[GSWNY Application for Off-Site Camping](#)

[Western New York Hiking Challenge](#)

[GSWNY's WNY Hiking Challenge Rocker Patch Reflections Questions](#)

[DoubleKnot Reservation System](#)

[Troop Travel Roster \(Excel File Download\)](#)

[VTK/your MyGS Girl Scout account](#)

[Troop Camp Training Videos](#)

[I Camped, I Conquered fun patch](#)

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[Ropes Course Adventures](#)

[Readiness Quizzes](#)

We can't  
wait to see  
you out  
there!



Want to browse the  
Outdoor & Camp pages  
of our site? Start at:  
[gswny.org/outdoors](https://gswny.org/outdoors)