



# Play in the Park

## The Girl Scout Ranger Program



*A Step-by-Step Guide to Helping Your Girl Scouts Explore the Outdoors, Culture, and Heritage Through the National Park Service*

**In this guide, you'll learn all about the Girl Scout Ranger Program, planning a trip with your Girl Scouts to one (or two or three!) of the more than 400 national parks across the U.S., earning cool Girl Scout badges and completing Journeys while adventuring outdoors, learning and making the world a better place through nature and service, and so much more.**

**And in addition to any badge or Journey requirements girls complete, the National Park Service will award Girl Scouts the Girl Scout Ranger certificate and/or a patch for participation—yes, please!**

## **Not a Girl Scout Volunteer? Learn About Us!**

We're 2.7 million strong—1.9 million girls and 800,000 adults who believe girls can change the world.

It began **over 100 years ago** with one woman, Girl Scouts' founder **Juliette Gordon "Daisy" Low**, who believed in the power of every girl. She organized the first Girl Scout troop on March 12, 1912, in Savannah, Georgia, and every year since, we've made her vision a reality, helping girls discover their strengths, passions, and talents.

Today we continue the Girl Scout mission of building girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. We're the preeminent leadership development organization for girls. And with programs for girls from coast to coast and across the globe, Girl Scouts offers every girl a chance to do something amazing.

## **Our Mission**

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

## **Our Motto**

Be prepared.

## **Girl Scout Grade Levels**

Daisy: grades K–1, Brownie: grades 2–3, Junior: grades 4–5, Cadette: grades 6–8, Senior: grades 9–10, Ambassador: grades 11–12

## **Our Traditions**

### **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.



## About the National Park Service

The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world. For over 100 years, the National Park Service has been taking care of our natural and cultural resources—and not just in parks! There are places for Girl Scouts to explore in nature and in urban areas, including historic sites, memorials, monuments, and more.

[Read more about the history](#) of our national parks!

# Getting Started with the Girl Scout Ranger Program: A Step-by-Step Guide for Girl Scout Volunteers

## 1. Find a site.

Visit [nps.gov/findapark](https://nps.gov/findapark) to find a park in your state or anywhere in the country!

- Have your Girl Scouts use the NPS [online map](#) to search by state for a nearby national park. If you have older girls who are ready for a travel adventure, they can search the entire U.S. for the park that sparks their interest!

Not located near a national park? Consider a visit to your own community's parks, museums, and historic sites. You may be surprised at how many are right in your own backyard!

And if you can't visit a national park right now, rest assured you have other options. Check to see if the park you're interested in offers a "virtual tour" for your girls to experience. (Look on the park's website under "Photos and Multimedia" or [NPS University on iTunes](#).)

- Make a list of some sites to potentially visit, then narrow it down to a few places to research.

## 2. Learn about the site.

Ask your Girl Scouts to explore the park's website to learn about its history; the natural, cultural, or historical resources it protects; and the activities it offers, such as hiking, biking, wildlife watching, and guided interpretive tours.

- To learn about the specific activities a park offers, check out the calendar under "Plan Your Visit." There, girls will also find practical info like directions, hours, reservation specs, places to eat—and where to sleep, if you're planning an overnight trip!
- To learn about animals you might encounter at a park, check out Girl Scouts' [Spotlight on Wildlife: U.S. National Parks](#) map!



## More Opportunities with the NPS

The National Park Service is uniquely positioned to help millions of young Americans reconnect with our natural resources and cultural heritage. Offering seasonal work and internships for students, and full-time permanent careers, the NPS puts thousands of young people to work in the great outdoors and inspires the next generation of conservation leaders.

There are internships and future careers with the National Park Service waiting for your Girl Scouts!

### Get the full scoop:

- Invite a national park ranger to your Girl Scout troop meeting or visit them to find out how they work to protect and manage national parks.
- Learn about **all the ways girls can get involved with the National Park Service.**
- Get inspired by learning about **what park rangers do.**
- Check out **National Park Service jobs for students.**

### 3. Brainstorm activities.

Ask the girls to think about activities that interest them. Many of the parks describe on their website the interpretive and educational programs they offer to the public, along with various volunteer opportunities; think about how these can enhance girls' Journeys or meet badge requirements. Make a list of ideas for possible activities.

✔ Many national parks offer field trips, guided tours, and other fun activities that require reservations. In some cases, there's a self-guided tour option at flexible times!

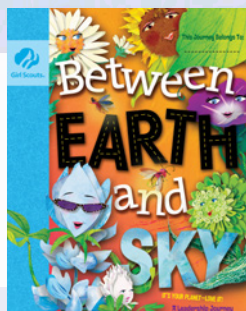
**TIP:** *Even if reservations for a program aren't mentioned on the park's website, it's always a good idea to call ahead, especially if you have a group of 10 or more.*

✔ In addition to activities listed on the park's website, you may find service opportunities of interest to your girls. Visit [volunteer.gov](http://volunteer.gov) to locate existing volunteer opportunities in national parks!

✔ Ask the girls to think about the badges or Journeys they're working on this year—or that they want to earn next year. Are there things they can learn at the NPS site that can help them out? Here are some examples:

**DAISIES:** It's Your Planet—Love It!  
*Between Earth and Sky Journey*

Ask a park ranger to teach "Leave No Trace" lessons on a nature walk based on colors or shapes.



**BROWNIES:** Hiker badge

Get off the beaten path on a ranger-guided hike!

**JUNIORS:** Digital Photographer badge

Snap some city shots at a national historic site or monument, or some seaside scenes at a national seashore.



**CADETTES:** It's Your Story—Tell It!  
*MEdia Journey*

Create a publicity campaign or PSA about the park.

**SENIORS:** Adventurer badge

Plan your own journey to two different national parks that girls choose!



**AMBASSADORS:** It's Your Planet—Love It!  
*Justice Journey*

Interview a park ranger about environmental issues impacting the park. Think about a [Take Action project](#) that might help!

### Volunteering at Parks

Did you know that youth account for more than 40 percent of National Park Service volunteers and that Girl Scouts contribute thousands of hours of service annually to the NPS? Volunteers of any age who serve more than 250 hours in one year are eligible for a FREE annual public lands pass—go to [volunteer.gov](http://volunteer.gov) for more information!

Looking for more volunteer opportunities? Visit [volunteer.gov](http://volunteer.gov)!

## 4. Get in touch.

Refer to the “Contact Us” link in the left corner of the park’s website and email or call the park. Let them know you’re interested in participating in the Girl Scout Ranger Program and would like to talk with the person who coordinates the program for the park.

- ✔ Be prepared to share such info with the park representative as the number of participating Girl Scouts and their ages and skill levels, and the estimated time commitment for the project.
- ✔ Ask the rep for the inside scoop on opportunities you read about, as well as any additional activities that might be available to girls. These could include volunteer service projects, career programs, special events and programs for youth, or nature conservation activities.

## 5. Coordinate and plan with the park.

Work together with the NPS representative to plan your visit or project. The rep can suggest ideas for activities and work with you and the girls to ensure your visit/project is fun and informative, and help everyone gain a better understanding of our national parks and the many natural, cultural, and historical resources they protect!



### *Service vs. Take Action: What’s the Difference?*

**Service** makes the world better for some people right now. For example, cleaning up hiking trails helps people enjoy parks at the present time. Picking up trash helps animals and people enjoy their environment at this moment. Providing clothing and toiletries to people who have suffered a disaster helps them get through a difficult event currently. These acts of kindness are important ways to help some people—right now.

**Take Action** projects, including those associated with **Girl Scout Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards**, address the root cause of an issue and offer sustainable, longer-lasting solutions. Leaders of these projects strive to make the world a better place for more people for a longer period of time. For example, a Girl Scout Brownie troop might help plan and create an accessible trail at a national park, and a Girl Scout Senior might develop a curriculum for ongoing educational programs to teach younger children about the history of a national monument.

Sometimes, **service** and **action** naturally blend to form one sustainable effort.



## 6. Think about some key dates throughout the year!

### 🌊 FEBRUARY 🌊

World Thinking Day, February 22, celebrating the birthdays of Girl Guide/Girl Scout founder Robert, Lord Baden-Powell (1857–1941) and World Chief Guide Olave, Lady Baden-Powell (1889–1977)

### 🌊 MARCH 🌊

Girl Scouts' birthday, March 12, commemorating the day in 1912 when Juliette Gordon Low officially registered the organization's first 18 girl members in Savannah, Georgia  
Women's History Month

### 🌊 APRIL 🌊

National Park Week  
Environmental Education Week  
National Volunteer Week  
Earth Day, April 22  
Girl Scout Leader's Day, April 22, honoring the volunteers who lead and mentor our girls

### 🌊 MAY 🌊

Kids to Parks Day, May 21  
National BioBlitz event(s)

### 🌊 JUNE 🌊

Great Outdoors Month  
National Trails Day

### 🌊 AUGUST 🌊

National Park Service birthday

### 🌊 SEPTEMBER 🌊

National Public Lands Day



## Destinations

Girl Scouts sponsors national travel opportunities for girls ages 11 and older through **Destinations**. With different trips every year, there's something amazing for every girl to experience—and many of the trips are to our national parks! **Check out these great opportunities** and learn how Girl Scouts can make friends from all over the country as they discover new things and make lifelong memories in national parks.

## 7. Have fun, be safe, and Leave No Trace!

Once all the logistics are in place, go get your fun on with the Girl Scout Ranger Program!

**Safety first:** Troop leaders, be sure to familiarize yourself with your council's Safety Activity Checkpoints for each activity you'll be doing, and ask NPS site staff about their guidelines for keeping visitors safe!

**Leave No Trace:** Visiting a national park is a great opportunity to teach your girls how to enjoy the outdoors responsibly. Teach them [the seven principles of Leave No Trace](#):

1. Know before you go.
2. Choose the right path.
3. Trash your trash.
4. Leave what you find.
5. Be careful with fire.
6. Respect wildlife.
7. Be kind to other visitors.

**Leave No Trace** is an outdoor ethics program that teaches people of all ages how to enjoy the outdoors responsibly. **Learn more**, including how you can practice the seven principles during your visits to National Park Service sites.

## Certificate or Patch

National Park Service staff will award girls with a Girl Scout Ranger certificate once they complete a five-hour program activity, and with a Girl Scout Ranger patch after a ten-hour activity. Girls can even complete the program by visiting more than one national park—just use our [Girl Scout Ranger Activity Log](#) to track your hours! For more info, talk to your contact at the park.





## Tell Us About It:

### Share what you did with NPS and Girl Scouts of the USA!

Encourage girls to share their NPS site experience by [sending an email with a photo](#).

Post photos of your park experience on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, with the hashtag [#gsoutdoors!](#)

Prompt girls to submit any Take Action projects completed at NPS sites to GSUSA's [Map It! Girls Changing the World](#).

## Volunteer Recognition

**George and Helen Hartzog Awards for Outstanding Volunteer Service:** The George and Helen Hartzog Award recognizes individuals and groups for outstanding volunteer service in national parks. Next time your troop or individual Girl Scout volunteers at a national park, be sure to inquire about the award and nomination process!

## Optional Take Action Project:

You may want to use what you learn at National Park Service sites to develop Take Action projects in your community. This is a great option, especially if you're visiting a smaller NPS site that may not have need for your project, or a site that's too far from your hometown to accommodate multiple return visits.

Get inspired by some [Take Action projects Girl Scouts are doing all over the country!](#)

## Learn more about the [Girl Scout Ranger Program](#).

