

3-8 Months Prior to Trip

Cross-cultural exchange is the foundation of the Girl Scout travel experience. Remember the Discover, Connect, and Take Action outcomes listed at the beginning of this guide? If you review them, you'll notice the majority of the indicators (what girls say) result from cross-cultural interaction. This exchange is one of the features that sets the Girl Scout travel experience apart from other trips a girl may take. As girls get ready for cross-cultural exchange, they'll discover things about themselves and connect with other people and places as well as their own families, communities, and culture. Cross-cultural exchange can also set the stage for Take Action projects inspired by a girl's first-hand experience.

Culture Quest

It's pretty hard to go on a trip and not experience some of the local culture, but cultural exchange is more than that. It's sharing your culture and being open to understanding other cultures. Communicate with the people you meet and you've got a cross-cultural exchange. Cultural exchange might not be that easy to understand, but is a good place to start with girls in defining what culture means.

Open a discussion with girls:
Say something like: "Everyone has a culture. It shapes how we see the world, ourselves, and others. What is culture?"

Ask girls to come up with a definition. They may find it easier to list aspects of culture than come up with a full definition. Some elements of culture:

- Culture has to do with values and beliefs.
- Culture involves customs and traditions.
- Culture is collective, shared by a group.
- Everyone has a culture.
- Culture is learned.
- Culture influences and shapes behavior.
- Culture is transmitted from generation to generation.
- Culture is often unconscious; people are sometimes not aware of how their behaviors and attitudes have been shaped by their culture.
- People in all cultures have common needs.



Next, provide the following definition:
Culture is a system of beliefs, values, and assumptions about life that guide behavior and are shared by a group of people. It includes customs, language, and material artifacts. These are transmitted from generation to generation, rarely with explicit instructions.

Continued...



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Use the following questions to focus discussion on the role culture plays in forming our behaviors and beliefs:

- How do you think you learned your culture?
- How do you think your culture has shaped you?
How has it influenced your values, preferences, and beliefs?
- Despite the differences in culture in our group, what are some things that everyone has in common?
- How does culture shape the way we see ourselves, others, and the world?

Take as much time as needed for girls to discuss culture. When ready, girls should move on to defining their own culture and values by taking the “Get to Know You” quiz in *The Girl Scout Travel Log*. To understand another culture, girls first have to understand their own. While some of their responses may be very personal, encourage girls to share them with the group and ask follow-up questions. This will make for good cultural exchange practice.



Discuss It!

Guide girls by asking:
How would a girl from the culture you'll be visiting answer the “Get to Know You” quiz found in *The Girl Scout Travel Log* on page 5?

Coach Girls Through:

- Defining their own culture
- Exploring the culture they'll be visiting
- Understanding culture shock and knowing how to deal with it

Your To-Do's:

- Submit an Intent to Travel form to GSUSA (see appendix) so GSUSA can report on where girls travel and connect more girls globally.
- Review and follow council policies and procedures on travel.
- Continue to strengthen group team-building.
- Keep girls' families updated on plans.

More about Culture

See the Culture Quest section, pages 22-23 in *Exploration: The Girl Scout Guide to Global Travel* for more on defining culture.

Progress

18-24
Months

12-16
Months

8-12
Months

**3-8
Months**

6-8
Weeks

4-6
Weeks

On Your
Trip


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Cross-Cultural Exchange

The Culture Quest Challenge in *The Girl Scout Travel Log* is the perfect activity to encourage girls to explore the culture they'll be visiting while promoting cross-cultural exchange. (In this activity, girls are asked to write about aspects of the culture they'll be visiting. It gives them a chance to really think about how much they know and might want to learn. On page 22 of *Exploration: The Girl Scout Guide to Global Travel*, the Culture Quest activity instructs girls to distinguish between visible and less discernible features of the culture they'll soon be experiencing first-hand.)

While this is an activity girls do individually, use group meeting time to discuss girls' progress. Each time you meet, ask girls:

- Has anyone found out anything surprising?
- Has someone learned about a facet of culture important for everyone to know about?
- Are you having any challenges in finding information?

 This culture scavenger hunt should take a good amount of time for girls to complete. When they're done, celebrate their success with a culture party that incorporates aspects of culture they've learned about such as music, food, and festivals.

Invite a Seasoned Traveler

Invite someone who has traveled to the country of your destination to be a guest speaker at one of your meetings. Ideally, this person would have lived there for an extended period (greater than three months). They can share photos and answer questions about the culture, food, etc.

Discuss It!

Once girls have completed the Culture Quest Challenge, guide them by asking:

- Which culture characteristics are similar to your own?
- Which culture characteristics are most different?
- How will knowing more about the culture help you on your trip?

Share these tips to prepare girls for a culture exchange:

Meet people from other cultures and countries.

Practice basic phrases in given language (if applicable to trip).

Know about the customs and culture you'll be visiting.

Try a new way of doing something.

Learn how the country you're visiting views the United States.



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Culture Shock

No matter how much you and the girls prepare, everyone will experience some degree of culture shock. The best way to deal with it is to understand that it's a normal occurrence. Help girls get acquainted with culture shock so they know what to expect and how to deal with it.

Culture shock usually occurs in four stages:

- 01** Euphoria is the beginning stage. It is based on the excitement that builds while planning a trip and starting a new adventure with friends. Everything is new and different and wonderful. You enjoy taking it all in and being in a new, exciting place.
- 02** Anxiety (nervousness, stress) develops in unfamiliar settings. Language difficulties, unfamiliar behaviors, and new surroundings can cause frustration, anger, and sleeplessness.
- 03** Rejection of the new culture occurs when you find yourself thinking things in the host country are "wrong" and "backwards." You may start to withdraw from the local community, preferring to surround yourself with other Americans. You may feel the impulse to call a family member or friend back home, even in the middle of the night. Things you thought were interesting and different now become annoying and frustrating.
- 04** Adjustment is when things begin to come together. You recognize there are pros and cons to every culture. You try and take things as they come and learn to appreciate the differences. You may even take on some of the new culture's behaviors and attitudes.

Possible Signs of Culture Shock

- Sadness
- Homesickness
- Loneliness
- Sleeping too much/too little
- Anger
- Irritability
- Resentment
- Sense of helplessness

In Ward Off Culture Shock, ask girls to brainstorm ways to bring each tip to life. This way, when girls recognize the signs of culture shock within each other, they'll know how to handle them.

Ward Off Culture Shock

- Be open-minded and receptive.
- Find humor. When does laughing not make you feel better?
- Be flexible. It's not the end of the world if things don't go exactly as planned.
- Communicate your feelings and concerns. Talking it out always helps and lets others know what's going on with you.
- Accept that things may be unclear. Don't judge because you don't understand.
- Have positive, realistic expectations about where you're going and what you'll be doing.
- Express warmth, empathy, and respect for others.
- Ask questions. If someone responds to what you say or do in an unexpected way, inquire about that response. It can lead to an opportunity for cultural exchange.

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