

# Take your Scouts abroad...

## Top Tips & Great Ideas



Hiking in the mountains or sightseeing in Europe's great cities? Water sports on the Med or journeying through new cultures, crafts and communities? There are endless possibilities...



Have you considered staying at a Scout centre in another country? From Scout castles to Scout islands, there are lots of different places to choose from. [www.scout.org/wtsie](http://www.scout.org/wtsie)

**Check [globetrekker.scouts.org.uk](http://globetrekker.scouts.org.uk) to find out where others have been and what they thought**

**In this resource you will find a collection of top tips and great ideas from leaders experienced in organising visits abroad. We hope you find them useful...**

### Planning

- Consider sending a "Reccy Party" to check things out - is everything as good as it looked on the internet? Check the campsite, sort out activities, find out about local medical services, supermarkets, transport etc. When you meet with suppliers in person they will feel more comfortable about working with you and are much more likely to do a deal.
- Involve Scouts as much as possible in the planning, particularly those 16+. The activities can count towards various awards. Put together a planning wall or flip chart with milestones and tasks to help engage the young people.
- Use Facebook with Explorers, Network & leaders. Most have internet facility on their phones and enjoy how immediate this communication channel is.

### Budgeting... and saving money

- Plan in a contingency - traditionally 10%, but we'd plan 20% now, due to the volatility in exchange rates over the last few years.
- Expect the exchange rate to change between announcing the camp and travelling. The Swiss Franc plunged from 1.6 to 1.1 to the pound in 2011. Have a plan for if this happens – be ready to ask participants for extra money (make them aware from the start that this might happen), or ask your Group Executive committee to underwrite the trip.
- If you see the exchange rate going in the wrong direction, pay for things immediately if you can. If you're not sure, you can always pay for half and then see what happens.
- Negotiate with every supplier. A lot of commercial providers overseas aren't used to negotiating, but you'll often be successful, especially if you're bringing a large group of people to them mid-week. It shouldn't be hard to knock 10% off, but we've managed to get 75% off rafting by making the operator an offer (we literally said, we've got £xx - what can you do?).
- Visiting cities, hikes, visiting sights such as waterfalls/viewpoints/lakes can be free and excellent days out.
- If you have any young people who can't afford to go, apply to the UKHQ international fund – see factsheet BP260006
- Unity, UK Scouting's insurance provider provides an excellent and helpful service. It is possible to save money by shopping around for insurance, but check and check again that you will be covered for everything you might need, including emergencies.

**Questions? Need help? Want to speak a leader experienced in organising visits abroad?**

Contact us on  
[international@surrey-scouts.org.uk](mailto:international@surrey-scouts.org.uk)



## Getting there

- Maximise your time on the ground by going Sat to Sun. Early flights out and late flights back work well (and ease the stress when you are packing up!), although midweek flights can be cheaper.
- You can save some money by going by coach, but when you fly you normally arrive fresher.
- Put everyone into travel groups of 5 – 10 people. The leader of each group can then manage a small number of people through the airport, onto the plane, through passport control and onto trains etc. It means things are quick and you're never worrying if you've lost someone.
- Some Scouts won't have flown before, and might be nervous. Ask to be made aware of first time flyers, so you can support them (sit them next to a leader, and so on).
- On easyJet, get to the gate early and ask if you can get on the plane first (say that it'll mean you can sit everyone together and keep control of the Scouts = better for everyone). 90% of the time they've let us do this, although when they haven't, it hasn't really mattered. If flying on an airline where you get allocated seats – speak to them in advance to see if you can all be sat together.
- For Europe, low cost airlines such as easyJet usually provide the best price, but you'll need to pay the full fare when you book. Don't think you'll get any better service or value by paying more for any one airline over another.
- With BA, Swiss, SAS etc you'll get a group rate, pay a low deposit and then pay the rest shortly before you go. Remember that fuel surcharge and taxes can go up at any point until you pay.
- For long haul, it's often worth engaging a travel agent eg Bales Worldwide, Trailfinders or STA Travel to get the best price. You can negotiate a bit on the price as they are making commission.
- It's always worth asking airlines to price match - we got Virgin to match BA, which worked out more conveniently for us.
- Keep copies of important travel (and other!) documents – passports, EHIC cards etc. You will need to check everyone has them anyway, and having copies will help if dealing with an issue.
- Budget airlines charge a lot for luggage and Scouts carrying bags on public transport can be difficult. You may want to send a van out instead.



## Getting around

- Compare costs and go with whichever internal transport option works best for you. You might be surprised how some options are cheap in some countries.
- Trains are comfortable and often good value. Some countries offer travel passes which can be cost effective. Contact the national rail company and find out if they do group discounts, or half fare cards.
- For Switzerland, the Swiss Travel Centre in London can provide special rates on train transfers from the airport to KISC.
- We rented a coach for two weeks in Norway, and it was really good value. The same goes for Austria. It can be a good idea to rent minivans too. Look up local rental companies as well as the big ones.

***Most Explorers will not want to travel in uniform and by the return journey it will be screwed up anyway - organise a camp hoody all the same colour with logo. You then have a ready-made uniform to identify everybody, that members will wear and will be a souvenir of the trip when back home.***

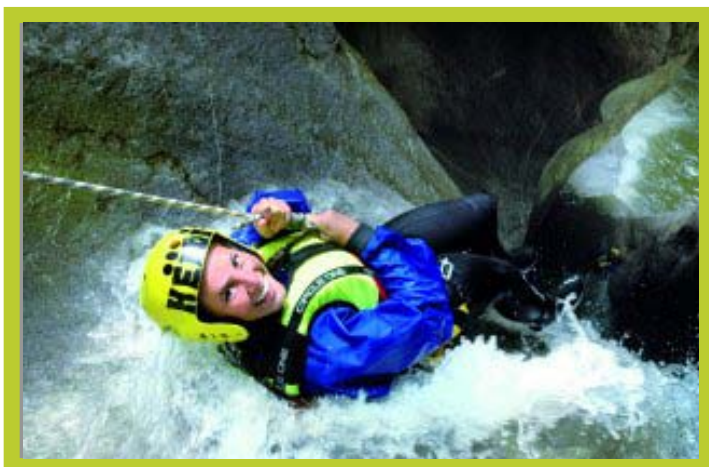
# What will you do at summer camp this year?

## Where to stay...

- Find out what facilities Scouting has locally - not just campsites, but halls, houses and lodges.
- Find out if there are any hostels locally – both official HI ones and backpacker hostels. These are often high standard and can be quite cheap.
- In some countries booking hotel rooms and putting four people in each can be remarkably cost effective. In North America, they usually have big rooms with two big double beds - just make sure Scouts have sleeping bags.
- Camping is always a cheap option, and you can usually search online and find what you're looking for. Sometimes you can rent cabins or caravans on campsites, which can make life really easy.

## ...and what to do

- Search online for any groups who have been where you're going and contact them to see what they did, with whom, and what they paid.
- Mix outdoor/adventurous activities with sight-seeing, treasure hunts around local villages/towns, social activities with local Scouts etc. For some Scouts this will be their first visit to another country - make sure they experience the excitement of discovering another country and culture.
- Ask what qualifications instructors have and then check if these are adequate according to Scout rules – the county activities team or the Scout Information Centre may be able to help if unsure.
- Remember, UK rules supersede any local rules and off limits activities are still off limits abroad, even if local Scouts can do these activities.
- If acceptable activities are organised by local Scouts it is fine to participate under their rules, but you must keep a close eye on things and be prepared to pull your Scouts out if you are unhappy.
- If you are going to KISC, take a look at the helpful 'UK Scouts and activities at Kandersteg' factsheet.



## Eating – in and out!

- Shopping at supermarkets is usually the cheapest option, but check what cooking facilities you will have. In Europe food is usually more expensive than the UK. In the rest of the world it's a similar price / cheaper.
- Look online at what is cheap and what is expensive. It's sometimes worth taking some items to extend your budget; we've asked Scouts to bring cereal in the past. Eat what the locals eat and your budget will go further.
- Mix catering for yourselves with eating out. Restaurants offering group menus or associated to group accommodation tend to be cheaper and more Scout friendly.
- BBQs can be a popular and a relatively low cost way of providing a good meal.
- We ask Scouts to bring money to buy food on the journeys out and back. Nobody has ever complained about this, and it takes a load of hassle out of trying to cater on the move.

## ...and paying!

Check whether you will be expected to pay for things with cash or by card – it varies around the world.



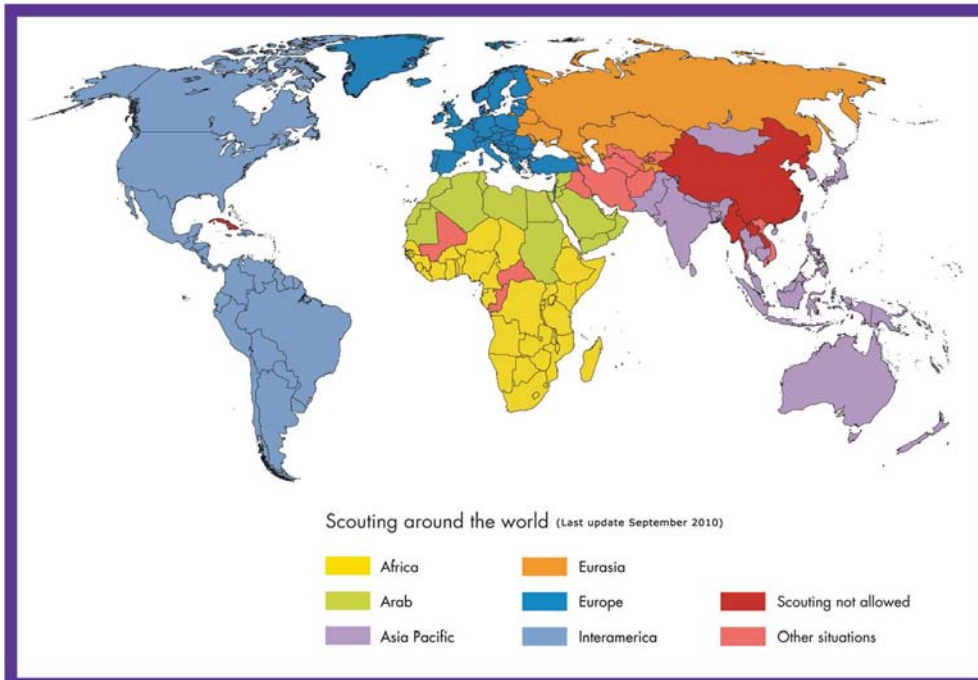


## Meet the locals...

- Search online for local Scout contacts and get in touch early so they can help as best they can (although it's still worth getting in touch at the last minute).
- Ask local contacts to recommend where to go, which activities to do, and where to stay.
- We've been fortunate enough to have local scouts host us either in their homes or in their halls for free. We've also had them provide transport and activities, again for free.
- Local leaders might be able to get you some money can't buy things too – Scouts in Seattle arranged for us to go on the flight simulators at Boeing Field.
- There are Scout camps and facilities in surprisingly convenient places. Did you know that Scouting runs an upmarket hotel in the centre of Hong Kong, where Scouts get a special rate?
- Local leaders will also know where Scouts get great discounts.
- Don't underestimate how respected Scouts are around the world, and many countries also have a lot of respect for the British. They will expect you to be very organised – so make sure you are.
- Best of all, local Scouts will want to meet you. They might even find you exotic. When they found out we were in town in Haines in Alaska, the local Scouts hosted a beach BBQ for us and we spent the evening with them around a fire – one of the best experiences of the camp.

## ...but don't forget the folks back home

Parents need lots of information – give updates during the planning, and make sure you have a plan for communicating with home during the trip. For many parents it will be the first time their child will be in a different country than they are. Set realistic expectations though, as it's not always easy to get mobile comms working and it can get very expensive (make sure your phone has roaming enabled). Twitter can be a good choice. Maybe one of the parents speaks the language of the country you are visiting?



*Don't forget to plan in some troop/unit meetings themed around your trip and the country, culture & activities you will experience for before you go!*

**With thanks to leaders from:**

1<sup>st</sup> Hershams  
1<sup>st</sup> Bookham  
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2<sup>nd</sup> New Haw