

## Guidelines for planning international experiences in partnership with overseas Guides and Scouts.

Meeting with other Guides and Scouts from around the world is often the highlight of an international trip, and some of these contacts can last a lifetime. The aim of this document is to give you some guidance on things to think about, which will help you get the most from your contact with your overseas Guiding and Scouting friends.

Please ensure that you refer to these Girlguiding publications to help you plan other aspects of your trip:

- *The Guiding Manual* - rules, guidelines, forms and qualifications needed
- *Going away with...* - practical advice on all aspects of residential experiences, including international trips
- *Camps and Holiday Scheme* - syllabus and record book for the qualifications you will need
- The Senior Section Permit - travelling abroad module - available from The Senior Section website or your International Adviser.

GAINING (Getting Away Internationally IN Guiding) trainings give you all you need to know about leading a guiding trip abroad - look out for one in your area, or your International Adviser will arrange one, if there is enough demand.

Your County/Country/Region International Adviser will also be able to help, so please ask for advice early on.

Please also consult guides such as the *Lonely Planet* or *Rough Guide* series, as well as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website for up-to-date information on the countries you wish to visit ([www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)).

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## Types of contact

There are many types of partnership which can be considered. Below are a few examples.

- A unit camp overseas, a meeting with an overseas unit for an activity day/week.
- A one-way visit overseas, or hosted in the UK.
- An international camp followed by home hospitality (see the website for details of international camps).
- A two-way exchange visit over two years.
- Twinned units with a long-term relationship.
- Twin town exchanges.
- A community development or service project.
- Multi-lateral exchanges with more than two countries taking part.

Contact can be for a small part of a trip only, and it is often a good idea to start small, and then build up into something more challenging once you have established good working relationships with your opposite numbers.

Many exchanges or links can begin with a personal link, a contact made during an international camp in this country, or an invitation to a camp or international event overseas. Once a link is established then events could take place each year and each unit can alternate between being the host and being hosted. Personal relationships generally mean that the partnership will last longer and make communication easier.

An exchange should be enjoyable and fun while enabling the participants to have the opportunity to experience another culture and see how guiding works in another country.

## Finding a partner

A partner for an exchange can be found through a variety of sources both within Girlguiding and through other means. Below are a few examples.

- Making contacts at International events and keeping in touch.
- Exploiting existing UK County, Country or Region links such as Girlguiding's partnership with Russia, or Girlguiding Scotland's partnership with Ghana.
- Talking to guiding and non-guiding Friends in other countries.
- Using pen pal links via the International Post Box.
- Using twin town connection.
- Contacting external organisations such as the Scouts, youth organisations, Commonwealth Youth Exchange ([www.cyec.org.uk](http://www.cyec.org.uk)).

If you are looking for short-term contacts while overseas, or a long-term partnership for your unit, District, Division, or County, your International Adviser will help and if necessary involve the International Commissioner, who is in contact with Guides around the world.

Below are some things to consider.

- Some countries may find it hard to cooperate with the UK, for a variety of reasons, including the difficulty in obtaining visas.
- Is the location chosen suitable for your experience and the age and maturity of your girls? Remember that you must complete a G/P form and obtain permission before starting to plan.
- Take time to establish good relationships and contacts.
- Common interests and a common desire to have a partnership are required.
- Share as much information as possible about the people involved and their expectations.
- Ensure that your young members are involved in the decision.
- Be aware that some countries have mixed membership - boys and girls - and are likely to want all members to be involved. If the boys are Scouts, you may like to consider a joint exchange with your local Scouts.
- Take advice from those who have visited the country and know the people and customs of the area - your International Adviser can help here by putting you in contact with Leaders with suitable experience.

### Choosing the event

What type of event do you wish to have? Below are some things to consider.

- Discuss the options with your partner unit - consider more than one option if at all possible. Know what you do not wish to consider, and where you can be flexible before you start discussions.
- **There should be a strong desire to live and share something together.**
- Joint service or community projects can add a lot to a trip. Make sure that all participants are involved in the choice of project, implementation and evaluation, and that the project is of real sustainable value.
- Be realistic - it's better to do something small at first and then think bigger.
- Make sure that what you agree on meets the needs of both parties - you all need to be enthusiastic.
- What time of year will suit all involved? Consider climate (monsoon seasons/hurricanes), school times and religious festivals.
- Do you want to offer and receive home hospitality, or would you prefer to camp or stay together as a group? Refer to the *Safe From Harm: Good Practice for Adults in Guiding* card.
- How much do you want to spend - on travel and the event itself? Bear in mind that you may need to pay for the expenses of your hosts - you will need to agree a suitable arrangement that fits their situation.
- Is this a guiding experience, rather than a holiday?

### Funding

Once the source and type of exchange has been considered, it may be possible to seek external funding. This may lead you to think about a

different type of exchange, depending on funding available to the participants and the group as a whole. Grants may be available from:

- the National Lottery [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk) and [www.awardsforall.org.uk](http://www.awardsforall.org.uk)
- Council of Europe [www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)
- Youth for Europe [www.youthforeuope.org](http://www.youthforeuope.org)
- Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council [www.cyec.org.uk](http://www.cyec.org.uk)
- charities such as Rotary International (<http://www.rotary-ribi.org/>), Lions International ([www.lions.org.uk](http://www.lions.org.uk)), Soroptimist International (<http://www.soroptimist-gbi.org>), Women's Institute ([www.womens-institute.org.uk](http://www.womens-institute.org.uk)) and so on
- local companies
- the local authority
- local volunteer bureaux.

Information can be found in the *Grants & Charitable Trusts* book at a local library or accessed via a local authority website.

Girlguiding grants may also be available from the Trefoil Guild, County, Country/Region, or from CHQ if you are working on Module 12 of the Camps and Holidays Scheme for the trip. Go to [www.girlguiding.org.uk/international](http://www.girlguiding.org.uk/international) for details. There are ideas for fundraising on the Girlguiding International fundraising page.

#### **What can you fund-raise for?**

- ✓ Resources
- ✓ Training
- ✓ Administration
- ✓ Transport
- ✓ Some personal kit, particularly needed for the trip (not general clothes and so on)
- ✓ Healthcare: inoculations, first-aid kit
- ✓ Disadvantaged young people
- ✓ Young people with disabilities
- ✓ Inclusion of all young people

#### **Planning with your partner**

- Make sure that the objectives of any project are clearly defined - they must be clear and comprehensive.
- Choose your leadership team carefully and make sure they each know their responsibilities.
- Give activities priority.
- Carry out a full risk assessment and consider the health and safety of all participants.
- Check for any laws or local rules in the country. Do any authorities need to approve formally?

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- Plan a budget and ensure that everyone knows and agrees which costs they are responsible for - always have a contingency amount. Sometimes it is best for our members to cover costs of the visitors in this country, and the hosts in their country - this evens out the differences in the cost of living - but be sensitive to the financial situation of your partners.
- Involve all participants in as much planning as is appropriate for their age group.
- Take account of cultural diversity and the interests of young people.
- Provide the necessary training for the Leaders and young people, for example GAINING training for Leaders.
- Plan to evaluate the project or trip together, and set an end date for an ongoing partnership or project.
- You may need to assist your partners in obtaining visas for visits to the UK. Your International Adviser will have details of how to do this.

### **Communications**

- Involve all participants as much as possible.
- Use email and the Internet where possible, but a visit will really help.
- Keep copies of all correspondence.
- Find a person who will be responsible for communication on each side, and ensure that information is sent to all relevant parties, including parents.
- Get some media coverage - contact your local radio and newspapers, but make sure that the images portrayed are positive and reflect Girlguiding and your partners in a positive and modern way.
- If you manage to obtain sponsorship or funding, ensure that you keep in touch with the funder, and carry out any necessary actions promptly.

### **During the event**

- Prepare the first two days of the visit carefully, bearing in mind cultural and language differences, with games and activities to break the ice and discovering cultures, but allowing time to recover from the journey.
- Be informal and adaptable - the whole point of being overseas is that it's not the UK!
- Give the young people the opportunity to express their opinion - involve them fully.
- Remember the Five Essentials - Guiding and Scouting everywhere use these methods even if they have a different name.
- Ensure all activities are acceptable in the local environment.
- All should accept and respect cultural and religious observances of the partners - especially where it concerns dress, alcohol and appropriate quiet.

### **After the event**

- Remember to thank all involved - on both sides of the partnership.
- Evaluate the event with your participants and partner group.

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- Send in any reports/accounts to your sponsors.
- Encourage others to try something similar if you have a good experience.
- Plan your next trip!