

SUGGESTIONS FOR TRAVELING OVERSEAS WITH BOY SCOUTS AND VENTURERS

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While many of these suggestions will be useful for any group of Scouts or Venturers traveling overseas, they are directed towards travel to Europe. Europe is an excellent destination. Air fares from the U.S. to Europe are cheaper than to other parts of the world, health and sanitation standards in Europe are similar to those in the U.S., even in non-English speaking countries in Europe it is usually not difficult to find someone who speaks English, and, unlike South America, Africa, Australia, and New Zealand, summers in Europe are the same months as summers in the U.S. and therefore their national camps and jamborees occur during U.S. summer school vacations. The term "Scout" as used in these suggestions includes both Boy Scouts and Venturers.

1. Begin planning your trip early. Two years before your proposed trip is not too early to start. Involve your Scouts in the planning as much as possible.
2. Work through the International Department of the Boy Scouts of America. They will give you useful advice, help keep you on track, and inform you of the proper procedure for requesting an official invitation to an international Scouting event. If your council has an International Representative, that person can also help.
3. Decide early in your planning how large your group will be. A patrol-sized group of six to ten Scouts usually works best. This makes it easy to keep track of everyone while you are touring, doesn't overwhelm a host troop with the size of your group, and means that you will be able to eat as a group in most restaurants.
4. Set minimum and maximum age requirements for youth participants. To participate in a World Scout Jamboree, a Scout or Venturer must be at least 14 years old but not yet 18 years old on the date of the jamboree. To participate in a BSA National Scout Jamboree, a Scout must be at least 12 years old, or an 11 year old who has completed the 6th grade, but have not reached his 18th birthday on the date of the jamboree. I suggest that a minimum age requirement for a participant in a troop overseas trip be placed between those two, that a participant be at least 13 years old or a 12 year old who has completed the 7th grade but not yet 18 years old at the beginning of the trip. If your trip includes Venturers, you need to decide if Venturers who are 18 or older can be youth participants. Sometimes that decision will be made for you by the event you plan to participate in.
5. Secure adequate adult leadership. Two adults over 21 is an absolute minimum. A third adult leader, either over 21 or between 18 and 21, can be a big help. On a coed trip, one male and one female adult are required and two male and two female adults are strongly recommended. However, you should not have more adults than necessary. Make sure you select adult leaders who are qualified, understand and accept the responsibilities they will have on the trip, and will be positive role models for the Scouts.

6. Screen your potential participants carefully. Make sure that they have the physical stamina, emotional maturity, and openness to new ways of doing things that are essential to being part of a group on an overseas trip and that they will be positive representatives of the Boy Scouts of American and of their state and country. Besides observing them at meetings and on campouts, find out how extensively they have traveled, any dietary restrictions they have, what medications they are on, and any possible side effects of those medications. If a Scout takes regular medication, you must be confident that he will remember to take this medicine while on the trip without relying on others to remind him. If you have problems with a Scout overseas, you can't just call his parents and have them come and get him.
7. Decide how long you plan to spend on your trip and the approximate dates. The maximum length of your trip will be determined by the time that your adult leaders are willing and able to commit. You should plan for an absolute minimum of 16 to 17 days (two weeks plus a weekend). Three weeks plus a weekend or longer would be much better. Our Troop 180 trips to Europe in 1994 and 1999 were each over five weeks long, and our 2003 Crew 180 Europe trip was over four weeks long. Our 2009 trip to Scotland, England, and Denmark, and our 2010 trip to Slovakia, Austria, and Hungary were each a little over 3 weeks long. Compared to the cost of airfare to and from Europe, the additional cost of adding extra days to our trip was not great. For many Scouts and leaders, a trip to Europe is a once in a lifetime experience. That experience should last as long as your schedules allow.
8. Decide where you want to go. One factor in determining your destination will be the dates and locations of national jamborees and national camps that will be held in different countries the summer you plan to travel. When selecting a jamboree, be sure to check the age range for youth participants. In some countries, "Scout age" ends at 14 or 15 and a jamboree for "Scout age" participants is not a good fit.

There are two ways to find information about these events. One is to go to a page on the world Scouting web site where jamboree organizers submit event information, <http://www.scout.org/events> Scroll down to see the events. They appear in the order they were submitted, so scroll all the way through. The other is to go to the web sites of National Scout Organizations (NSOs) in countries you would like to visit and see if any of them has posted information about an upcoming jamboree. Go to <http://www.scout.org/nso/> for links to web sites of NSOs.

The fee to participate in a European jamboree is often significantly less than for a North American jamboree, and there are usually many large camps in different parts of Europe each summer with few American contingents participating in any of them. At both the Blue Summer Danish National Jamboree in 2009 and the urSPRUNG Austrian Jubilee Jamboree in 2010, our Troop/Crew 180 contingent was the only American contingent there. We were celebrities. At the Danish Jamboree, Princess Benedikte, the queen's sister, visited our campsite because we were the "American contingent."

9. Another option is for your group to spend time at a European Scout Center. Go to "Where to Stay in Europe" at <http://www.scout.org/node/20623> for information on over 200 European Scout centers organized by country. Many of them offer very interesting programs, and there are usually Scouts from several different countries in camp doing the same activities your Scouts would be doing.
10. Be sure to visit <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country.html>, the U.S. State Department's International Travel web page. Scroll down to links for Country Specific Information for each country you are considering visiting and check the Travel Alerts and Travel Warnings. Also check the British government's "Travel Advice by County" at <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice> and the Canadian government's "Travel Advice and Advisories" at <http://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>.

11. There is information for UK Scouts traveling abroad which very useful for US troops and crews as well at <http://scouts.org.uk/supportresources/search/?cat=52.181> Both the “Thinking of going abroad” and “Globe Trekker” sections are very useful.
12. If you will be attending a national jamboree or national camp, make arrangements with the Scout association that is hosting the camp you will attend for a home stay with one of their troops. They will usually be glad to do this. The opportunity to live with Scouts of another country has been a highlight of the trip for our Scouts every time we have traveled. If hosting arrangements are made early enough, your Scouts will be able to correspond with their host Scouts before the trip. (We have many Scouts sending email messages to each other or connecting on Facebook who would never have written letters.)
13. If possible, try to arrange to camp at the national camp as a combined troop with the same host troop. This will cement many friendships. If you can arrange to borrow tents from them and have your Scouts and Venturers join with their patrols for cooking meals, you can avoid the need to bring group camping equipment with you. If your host troop has separate tents for boys and girls, it can be a great experience for your Scouts and Venturers to be in the same tents with host Scouts. In some European Scout associations, it is common for all the boys and girls in a patrol to be in the same tent. If that is the case, you will need separate tents for your contingent to comply with BSA Youth Protection Guidelines.
14. Request that your host troop provide you, each of your Scouts, and each host family, with a list showing each of your Scouts and leaders and the name, address, and phone number of the family they will be staying with. Get this list when you are met by the host troop if not before. This is essential in case of emergency.
15. Make an overall outline of your schedule. Perhaps you will be participating in a national camp that begins on a Tuesday and ends on the Thursday of the following week. A possible outline for a trip lasting three weeks plus a weekend is:
 - Day 1 - Saturday - Depart for Europe
 - Day 2 - Sunday - Arrive in Europe. Begin sightseeing.
 - Day 7 - Friday - Arrive in the afternoon at the home town of your host troop. Begin home stays.
 - Day 11 - Tuesday - Travel with your host troop to the National Camp
 - Day 20 - Thursday - Return to homes of host Scouts for rest and laundry
 - Day 21 - Friday - Sightseeing or home stays
 - Day 22 or 23 - Saturday or Sunday - Return flight home
16. At this point, you should consider what airport(s) in Europe you are could fly to and what airport(s) you could fly home from. Sometimes you can make arrangements to fly to one city in Europe and fly home from a different city. This expands your sightseeing options. It is worthwhile to check different air travel options online at sites like www.kayak.com, www.travelocity.com, www.orbitz.com, www.webjet.com, www.expedia.com, www.cheapoair.com, www.travelhub.com/airfares/intl.html, www.cheapflights.com, www.hotwire.com, and www.travelzoo.com. Also check the web site of the airport you plan to fly from. They might show other options there.
17. There are now several low cost airlines flying within Europe. One option you might consider is to fly on one airline between the US and Ireland or England and then take one or more of these airlines the rest

of the way to and from your destination. A few examples are www.flybmi.com, www.easyjet.com, www.gofly.com, www.ryanair.com, www.aerlingus.com, www.monarch.co.uk, www.norwegian.com, www.germanwings.com/en/index.shtml, and www.meridiana.it/en/index.aspx. There is a list and discussion of these airlines at [http://wikitravel.org/en/Discount airlines in Europe](http://wikitravel.org/en/Discount_airlines_in_Europe). However, if you do consider that option, make sure you check on the baggage fees of the European airlines. The major international airlines still allow each passenger on a transatlantic flight one free checked bag weighing up to 50 pounds, a free carry-on bag, and a free personal item. That is more than enough for your contingent unless you plan to bring group camping equipment with you. If you change planes as part of a transatlantic ticket, that free allowance continues from your departure airport to your destination airport. On the low cost airlines, the weight and size limits are lower and there is usually a significant fee. If you plan to fly in and out of London on different airlines, make sure that the flights use the same London Airport. London has four airports, Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, and City, and they are not close to each other.

18. Once you have determined the location of the camp you will be participating in, the approximate number of days you have available for sightseeing, and your options for the locations of your arrival and departure in Europe, you should start selecting the places you will visit during your sightseeing time. We have found that it works better to spend at least a few days in each place we visit than to do an "If It's Tuesday, This Must Be Belgium" kind of tour. For a first trip overseas for your troop, I would suggest just visiting one or two countries. There will still be plenty of things to see and you won't have to work with many different currencies and different languages.
19. After you have decided on the countries you will visit, purchase several up-to-date budget travel guidebooks for those countries. A good place to see what is available is www.amazon.com. Search for "travel guide budget" and the name of a country you plan to visit. As you look at the search results, the publication date is shown right after the name and author of the book. That lets you know which guidebooks are up-to-date. Once you decide on the books you want, purchase them either at a local bookstore or an online store. As you decide which attractions you will visit in different cities, consult those guidebooks to find the days and hours each is open and the admission charge. Many major museums in Europe are closed on Mondays, so you will need to plan accordingly.
20. Mass transit in Europe is excellent. I recommend that you plan to use trains for your long distance travel and buses, trams, and subways for local transportation. An online travel agency that deals specifically with train travel in Europe is RailEurope at www.raileurope.com. Even if you don't purchase tickets from them, their web site can be very helpful. Begin with their Europe map and guide at www.raileurope.com/europe-travel-guide. It shows you where trains go and has links to information about different countries. If you will be traveling in continental Europe as opposed to the United Kingdom, the Eurail web site also has information that can be very helpful in planning your rail travel. Go to www.eurail.com/planning/railway-map and download the up-to-date Eurail rail map of Europe to see where trains go. The benefit of the Eurail web page is that, if you scroll down, there are links there to rail maps for different countries and to average travel times. The average travel times are important. You should try to avoid an itinerary that requires you to spend most of a day on the train. Scouts become bored and it wastes sightseeing time. Select either destinations that are closer together or destinations that are far enough apart that you can use an overnight train. Scouts do not get a normal amount of sleep on an overnight train, but a trip to Europe is probably the only opportunity they will have to sleep in a couchette (a sleeping car with compartments that have six bunks, three on each side) in a train. It is an experience they will enjoy talking about later. Once you have selected a route,

go to www.eurail.com/planning/timetables or to www.raileurope.com for links to train timetables. These links will help you select the exact train you want to be on. When entering information to search a timetable, remember that Europeans list, in order, day, month, year, not month, day, year, as we do, and that the timetables use a 24 hour clock so 6:00 PM is 18:00. Your search results will show: Station (There are a number of different train stations in most major European cities), Date, Time, Duration, and Changes (the number of times you change trains). You will want to select train trips with the shortest duration and the fewest train changes. However, some high speed trains are expensive, so you need to check that as well. Scroll down www.eurail.com/planning/timetables for other useful information. The United Kingdom National Rail web site is www.nationalrail.co.uk

21. Trains used to be the only good option for long distance travel. However, the low cost European airlines discussed above now sometimes offer a good alternative. You need to consider the baggage charges of the airline and the extra time and cost to get to and from the airport, but air travel is worth considering. On our 2009 trip to England, Scotland, and Denmark, we took the train from London to Edinburgh but then flew from Edinburgh to London, London to Aalborg, Denmark, and Aalborg to Copenhagen. Still another option, if you will be near a coastline, is to take a passenger ferry. As one example, overnight ferries from Stockholm, Sweden, to Helsinki or Turku, Finland, or Tallinn, Estonia, offer cabins with four bunks and a cruise ship atmosphere for a lower cost than airfare. The breakfast buffet is usually reasonably priced and a good way to start the day. Just like airports, ferry terminals are often a considerable distance from the center of town. There are usually, but not always, buses available.
22. Once you have outlined your itinerary and have an idea of where you would like to spend each night, you should start looking for overnight accommodations. Possibilities include:
 - a. Home Stays with Scouts - This is ideal but will probably only be possible to arrange with your host troop. As you participate in a national camp and make friends with Scout leaders from other countries, be sure to get their names and postal and email addresses for your files. If you plan to visit their home city sometime in the future, they will probably be glad to arrange home stays.
 - b. Scout Houses - In many countries in Europe, Scout groups own the buildings they meet in and those buildings have kitchen and toilet facilities. Visiting groups can often make arrangements to spread their sleeping bags out on the floor and use one of these buildings for overnight stays at a nominal charge. If you plan to visit a city in the country where you will be attending a national camp, the host Scout association might help you find one of these Scout houses.
 - c. A Scout Camp - Earlier, in discussing places that offered opportunities to interact with European Scouts and do interesting program activities, I mentioned the Scout centers in "Where to Stay in Europe" at www.scout.org/node/20623 These camps are also good possibilities for places to stay while you are sightseeing. Many have bunkhouse type facilities so you don't need tents. We stayed at Pfadfinderdorf Zellhof north of Salzburg, Austria, and at Scout Center Esperanto Domo just east of Rijeka, Croatia, and had great experiences.
 - d. Youth Hostels - There is an excellent system of Youth Hostels in Europe. As a Boy Scout troop, your group qualifies for a free group membership in American Youth Hostels/Hostelling International (<http://hiusa.org/>). Their online group membership application is at www.hiayh.net/hiusassa/hiusamemssagroup.wizstep1 Your budget travel guidebooks will suggest hostels to contact. Make your reservations and confirm them as soon as possible, as

some hostels fill early for the summer months. If you have reservations at a hostel, make sure you carry your group's AYH/HL membership card with you. The hostel staff is likely to ask for it.

- e. Hotels - If you have no other options, a hotel is a possibility. Use a guidebook for suggestions. Check web sites like www.hotels.com to find low priced hotels, make reservations, and pay for your rooms before you leave on your trip. Some hostels and hotels include breakfast in the price. Remember to follow Youth Protection Guidelines in assigning youth and adults to rooms.

- 23. As you secure your overnight accommodations, have each place you will stay supply you with at least one name and phone number where parents can call in an emergency and leave a message with someone who speaks English for their son to call home. Email contacts can be useful as well.
- 24. As soon as you have finalized your itinerary and the makeup of your group, purchase your plane and train tickets and make deposits on your overnight accommodations. For train transportation, if you have at least 10 Scouts and leaders in your group, it is very convenient to purchase one second class group train ticket for your entire trip from your travel agent. RailEurope discusses these at www.raileurope.com/group-travel/group-travel.html This group ticket is carried by the leader and shows the route that you will travel. It does not require that you take any specific train. For us, this has always been much cheaper than buying rail passes.

Before you purchase train tickets, check prices on the web sites of the national railroads in the countries you will be in. Sometimes, there is a significant savings from purchasing tickets there. For an international trip, check the national railroad in the country the train departs from. For some national railroads, you will be able to print your tickets. For others, you will receive a code that you can use to obtain your tickets at the train station you depart from. Some links I have used:

Austria - <https://ticketing.oebb.at/inet/pub/en/ticket>

Hungary - <http://elvira.mav-start.hu/elvira.dll/xslvzs/index?language=2>

Switzerland - <http://www.sbb.ch/en/home.html>

United Kingdom - www.nationalrail.co.uk

On some European trains, when you purchase a ticket, the ticket shows your assigned seat. However, on many European trains, a ticket does not guarantee you a seat. For that, you need a seat reservation. It is helpful to read www.eurail.com/planning/train-seat-reservations/when-reservations-are-needed Seat reservations are not available for short trips. Sometimes it is useful to have the flexibility to opt for an earlier or later train than you originally planned on, but in most cases you will select the train that you definitely want to be on. You should purchase seat reservations for as many of these train trips as you can when you purchase your train tickets. You also need to purchase reservations for couchettes for overnight trips. Smoking is not permitted on any trains in Great Britain, Denmark, Ireland, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, Hungary, Spain, Turkey, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Norway, Sweden, or Poland. In other countries, you should reserve seats on a non-smoking car.

As soon as you receive your tickets from your travel agent, look them over carefully. If your train ticket between two cities specifies that travel must be via certain other cities or towns, make sure that the route that is specified is the route you plan to take. This is especially important if travel is in more than one country. If the route you take has more kilometers of travel in any country than the route that is specified on your tickets, the conductors in that country will impose an additional charge.

When you arrive at a train station, you should read the signs in the main part of the station to determine which track your train departs from and then go to the waiting area next to that track. There should be an information board there with a diagram of each train that departs from that track showing the cars, their destinations, and their numbers. If you have seat reservations, look for where your car is located on the train and where along the track you should wait to board. Trains will often split with different sections going to different destinations so, even if you don't have seat reservations, you should make sure you board a car that is going to your desired destination.

25. As you do your planning, you should begin with a preliminary budget and then fill in the actual numbers as you learn them. Our budgets have had the following components:

AIRFARE - Consult the web or your travel agent

DEPARTURE TAXES – Some countries have separate departure taxes of \$15 to \$20 per person. Consult your travel agent to determine whether there is a tax and if it is included in the ticket price

TRAIN TICKET, RESERVATIONS AND COUCHETTES - Consult the web or your travel agent

LOCAL TRANSPORTATION - bus, subway, tram, etc.

LODGING

ADMISSIONS - Decide where you want to go and consult a guidebook.

FOOD for the days you are not in camp or home stays - Estimate how much you expect to spend per person each day and multiply by the number of days.

CAMP FEE for the national camp or jamboree you will attend

IDENTITY ITEMS - T shirts, patches, neckerchiefs, etc. that you order for everyone in your contingent

GIFTS for host troops and their Scouts

MISCELLANEOUS (postage, phone calls, guidebooks, etc.)

CONTINGENCY FUND

26. Some cities like Copenhagen have cards you can purchase that provide for free admission to most of the tourist sites and unlimited use of mass transit in the city and the surrounding countryside for a specific number of days. These are worthwhile, even if they don't save you money, just for the time they will save in buying tickets.
27. Estimate your budget items on the high side. It is much better to have money left over than to run out of money. Money left over at the end of the trip can be refunded, donated to the World Friendship Fund, or placed in a troop hosting fund to be used when the troops that host you in Europe pay return visits to your troop in the United States.
28. Make sure that your Scouts realize that the idea that "Everyone in Europe speaks English" is a myth. They should try to learn at least a few phrases in the language of the country they are visiting including "Do you speak English?" and "Thank you" and expect that Scouts and leaders in their host troop will

often talk with each other in their native language. In Denmark, where we have been hosted, Scouts begin English in school in the fifth grade (the same age as our sixth grade). This means that older Scouts were much better at English than younger ones.

29. Be sure you allow plenty of time for camping with your host troop, either at a large camp or at their summer camp site, and for home hospitality. Some groups are so eager to do as much sightseeing as possible that they shortchange those parts of the trip. This is a real mistake. After returning home from a trip like this, Scouts will invariably say that home hospitality and camping with Scouts from another country were the highlights of their trip.
30. Don't overschedule your sightseeing. Make sure to allow plenty of time for meals and shopping. Try to vary your sightseeing from day to day. Scouts will get tired of castles and cathedrals day after day. Each evening, have your Scouts review the plan for the next day and the timing of the activities.
31. Plan on about one restaurant meal a day. We would usually purchase breakfast and lunch supplies and eat the evening meal in a restaurant. There were days, however, when it worked out better to eat both lunch and dinner in a restaurant. Tear out and carry with you of the sections of the guidebooks you purchased for your planning for the cities you plan to visit. This will help you select interesting, low cost restaurants. If you have contacts with local Scouts, ask them to suggest restaurants you might want to try. Be sure that potential participants understand that food in other countries will be different than typical American food and they will have to adjust.
32. When allowing time for shopping, specify that Scouts must stay in at least buddy pairs and must return to a certain location at a specific time. This has worked well for us.
33. Include all camp fees, meals, transportation, lodging, and admissions in your group budget. Collect this money from the Scouts before you leave and have one of your adults act as your group treasurer and pay all those expenses. When in restaurants, look over the menu then specify the maximum amount Scouts are able to spend. Have your group treasurer pay the entire bill at once.
34. There are four options for making purchases in Europe.
 - a. Local Money Obtained from an Automatic Teller Machine (ATM) - For a small charge (e.g. \$1), you can use your American ATM card or debit card to obtain cash in local currency in many European countries. This is convenient, lessens the need to carry cash and traveler's checks, and gives you a good exchange rate. These machines are not commonly called ATMs in Europe. A more typical name is a Bankomat. If you describe what you are looking for, someone will usually be able to direct you to one. You will often spot them on your own. In most European countries, they are as common as ATMs in the USA. Some US banks limit your ATM or debit card withdrawals to the local equivalent of \$200 each day. If you plan for one of your adult leaders to use their card to withdraw local money for group expenditures, that person should contact their financial institution before they leave and request that the limit be raised for the period of the trip. The financial institution is usually happy to do that. Some European ATMs now ask whether you want to be charged for your withdrawal in local currency or in U.S. dollars. It is usually better to select local currency and have your U.S. financial institution do the currency conversion. They will typically give you a better exchange rate. On a November, 2013, trip to Japan, I discovered that most ATMs there only work for ATM cards from Japanese banks. American ATM cards only work at ATMs in 7-11 stores and some post offices there.

- b. Credit Cards - MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted in Europe. Credit card purchases have the advantages that you don't have to handle the local money and you receive the best exchange rate. (Some U.S. banks add a surcharge of several % to credit card purchases that are made in other countries, while other banks with "no annual fee" credit cards do not. You should select a credit card that does not impose this surcharge.) However, in recent years, a problem has developed in using American credit cards for some European purchases. European credit cards have PINs that people enter when they make purchases like we have for debit cards. Some European establishments will not accept a credit card that does not have a PIN. Since American credit cards are not issued with PINs, they are not usable there. If you plan to use a credit card for a purchase in Europe, make sure you have a backup plan.
 - c. Debit Cards - American debit cards have PINs, so they are more acceptable at some European establishments than American credit cards, and they can also be used for ATM withdrawals.
 - d. Local Currency Obtained by Changing U.S. Currency - Carrying large amounts of cash brings with it the possibility of loss or theft. About \$200 in \$20 bills, however, might be a good idea. There is often no commission when you change currency but the exchange rate is not as good as ATM withdrawals.
35. Before you leave on your trip, every member of your contingent who plans to use an ATM card, credit card, or debit card while on your trip should inform the institution that issued their card what countries they will visit and when they will be in each country. This prevents the institution from red flagging a transaction in another country as the possible use of a stolen credit card.
36. Unlike U.S. paper money, most European currency is different sizes and colors depending on the denomination. Make sure your Scouts understand that.
37. 17 of the 27 member countries of the European Union (EU) now use the euro (€) as their money. You can use leftover euros from one of those countries in another one you visit later. However, a number of EU members do not use the euro, most notably the British who still use the pound (£), so you could still end up visiting countries that use different money. Try not to change more money than you will need in a country. The bank makes money when they change dollars into local money and again when they change back to dollars, so you don't get back as much as you started with. Before you leave a country (or, in the case of the euro, before you leave the last euro-area country), spend any coins that you don't want to save as souvenirs. Coins can rarely be changed in other countries.
38. Use a web site like the Cheat Sheet for Travelers at www.oanda.com/convert/cheatsheet to print currency conversion charts for your Scouts and leaders for all the countries you will be visiting.
39. Often the most difficult place to obtain local money is at a jamboree. Make sure you have an adequate supply of local money before you arrive.
40. A passport is an official government document that certifies one's identity and citizenship and permits a citizen to travel abroad. To travel to Europe, your Scouts and leaders will all need to have current United States passports. A United States passport obtained when you are 16 or older is valid for 10 years. A United States passport obtained when you are 15 or younger is valid for 5 years. If a trip participant already has a passport, make sure it is valid for at least 6 months after the end of your trip.

Make sure that your Scouts and leaders who need passports apply for passports as early as possible. See <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english.html> for information on obtaining a U.S. passport.

41. A visa is an official authorization appended to a passport that permits entry into and travel within a particular country or region. Most countries do not require U.S. citizens to obtain a visa to enter their country. Go to <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country.html> and enter the name of each country you plan to visit to learn if any of them require visas and/or immunizations of U.S. citizens and obtain additional information about visiting those countries. If any countries you plan to visit require visas of U.S. citizens, you must obtain those visas before you leave on your trip. You must have valid passports before you can obtain visas. Make sure you allow plenty of time for this process. .
42. Each participant should make three photocopies of the page of the passport that includes the passport number, expiration date, and photo, along with photocopies of any visas. One copy should be turned in to the trip leaders before the departure date, one copy should be left with the participant's family, and one copy should be carried on the trip by the participant. One leader should carry all passports in a locked briefcase. When going through passport control and customs, one adult should go through first and another adult should go through last. The adult going through last should hand the passports to the participants as they go through and the adult going through first should collect the passports as participants complete the processing.
43. You should carry with you a parental permission form for each Scout, signed by his parent(s), giving their permission for him to accompany you out of the country and listing the countries you will be visiting. If one parent is traveling with you as an adult leader, the form should be signed by the other parent. It is highly recommended that this form be notarized. The Canadian government's web page on "Consent letter for children travelling abroad" at <http://travel.gc.ca/travelling/children/consent-letter> states "We strongly recommend that children travelling abroad carry a consent letter proving they have permission to travel from every person with the legal right to make major decisions on their behalf, if that person is not accompanying the children on the trip. For example, children travelling alone, with groups or with only one custodial parent should travel with a consent letter." There are links there to sample letters.
44. Make sure that you have a completed BSA Health and Medical Record Form, Parts A, B, and C, for each participant in your trip with the emergency treatment authorization section filled in and signed. Have an adult leader carry a set of copies of completed health and medical record forms for all the participants. Also have the participants carry copies of their own health and medical record forms. If you are participating in a jamboree or national camp that asks you to turn in health forms for participants, bring an additional set of completed forms for that purpose.
45. It is important to make sure that every Scout and leader is covered by health insurance while they are outside the United States and that your trip leaders have the information on how to use that insurance. <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/go/health.html> which is the US State Department's web page on "Your Health Abroad" states, "Before going abroad, learn what medical services your health insurance will cover overseas. If your health insurance policy provides coverage outside the United States, REMEMBER to carry both your insurance policy identity card as proof of such insurance and a claim form. Although many health insurance companies will pay "customary and reasonable" hospital costs abroad, very few will pay for your medical evacuation back to the United States. Medical evacuation can easily cost \$10,000 and up, depending on your location and medical condition." Parents of trip participants should be made aware of this information. For a State Department list of companies

that offer health insurance and medical evacuation insurance for travel to other countries, go to <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/go/health/providers.html> For our overseas trips, we ask each Scout who is covered by his parents' family plan to give us a photocopy of his parents' insurance card and to carry another photocopy of that card with him. The BlueCare Worldwide brochure at <http://www.bluecardworldwide.com/downloads/bluecardworldwidebrochure-english.pdf> explains how to use their insurance while you are overseas. We print copies and carry them with us.. We ask each Scout and adult in a non-Blue Cross Blue Shield plan to provide us with similar information.. If your unit is covered by insurance, you should carry information about that insurance and claim forms with you as well. If you will be participating in a jamboree or national camp, make sure that you understand the arrangements for treatment of illness and injury at the camp and the insurance coverage there.

46. Consider having your Scouts purchase International Student Identity Cards, which cost \$25 and can be purchased on the campuses of most major colleges and universities. They are useful in securing student discounts at some sightseeing stops, provide basic travel insurance, and give the Scouts another photo ID. The \$99 Premium Level and \$199 Explorer Level provide more travel insurance than the \$25 Basic Level. There is information on International Student Identity Cards at www.myisic.com/ and on their insurance options at <http://www.myisic.com/insurance/>
47. If your group is planning to participate in swimming and/or boating while on your trip, make sure that the swimming ability level of your Scouts and leaders has been checked and you have a list of those ability levels signed by a qualified individual. Also make sure that you will satisfy all requirements of Safe Swim Defense and Safely Afloat.
48. While on the trip, have the group leader carry a small lockable briefcase containing all passports, train and airline tickets, parental permission forms, health forms, health insurance information, swimming ability group designations, and phone numbers where each Scout's parents can be reached in case of emergency each day of your trip. Have your second adult carry photocopies of all that material.
49. Consult www.cdc.gov/travel/ for the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control about immunizations and health concerns for the areas you plan to visit.
50. Check the budget travel guidebooks to see if there are problems with drinking water in areas you plan to visit. If there are, make sure your Scouts use bottled or purified water for activities like brushing teeth as well as for drinking. In such situations, you should bring a small hand pump water filter with you.
51. Be aware that many Scout groups in Europe have boys and girls camping together and that beer is often available, even in Scout camps, to anyone over a specified age. Smoking and drinking ages are typically much lower in Europe than in the U.S. In Germany, for example, the smoking age is 14 and the drinking age is 16. Your Scouts might encounter smoking and drinking in their host families and host troops at ages at which such behavior would be unacceptable in the U.S. Make sure you establish rules of conduct for those situations and give some thought to the action you might take if one of those rules is violated by one or more of your Scouts. For our overseas trips, we ask each Scout to turn in with his initial deposit an application form signed by the Scout and his parents on which a list of our key behavioral expectations is followed by the statement, "I agree to abide by all the rules of behavior established for this trip. I understand that a serious violation of these rules might result in the decision to send me home and that, in such a situation, it would be the responsibility of my family to pay the additional expense of that trip home and to arrange for adult supervision during that trip."

52. Try to arrange to borrow or rent tents and cooking equipment for the camp you will participate in. Their weight and size make them difficult to carry with you.
53. Check with the airline for maximum sizes for the duffel bags and carry-on bags. Our Scouts have found duffel bags with wheels very useful (some would say a necessity!) when walking back and forth between train stations and our overnight accommodations. Wheels are not indestructible, so these bags should be carried up and down stairs in train stations. Some prefer to use backpacks. Large school backpacks or similar bags can be used as carry-ons.
54. Select a bright color of electrical tape and wrap pieces of it around handles of all your bags so you can identify them quickly at baggage claim areas of airport terminals.
55. Work with your Scouts and leaders in filling out immigration and customs forms on airplanes. Each country's form is different, so make sure that one of your leaders reads each form carefully and advises the rest of the group how to fill it out. If an arrival and departure are "in transit," make sure all your Scouts and leaders check that box and have the ticket for the next flight ready if it is requested. On our return to the U.S. in 2002, our flight from Curacao arrived in Trinidad at 11:00 PM and departed for Puerto Rico at 7:00 AM the next morning. That was considered "in transit" and, as a result, we did not have to pay the approximately \$17 per person Trinidad & Tobago departure tax.
56. Be prepared for possible flight delays and cancellations. We have had overseas flights to Europe delayed so long that we missed connecting flights. We had confirmed reservations and seat assignments on a flight from San Juan, Puerto Rico, to Port of Spain, Trinidad, and, at the last minute, were told that because of "weight restriction" about ¼ of the confirmed seats on the flight including half of our 12 seats could not be filled. In such situations, if at all possible, keep your group together. Be emphatic with the airline representative about the need to do this. In Puerto Rico, they ended up sending all 12 of us to Barbados that evening and on to Trinidad the next morning. If the airline representative tells you that your group absolutely must be split up to get to your destination, make sure there is at least one adult with each subgroup. Carry with you contact phone numbers and email addresses for the groups that will be meeting you and/or the places where you will be staying for each stop on your trip so you can notify them about any delay as soon as it occurs.
57. Select group identity clothing (full official BSA uniforms, group polo shirts, and/or group T shirts) for your trip and require that all participants bring at least a specified number of each type of group identity clothing. Then, each evening, determine what the group will be wearing the following day and make sure that everyone is aware of the decision. Group identity clothing presents a positive image to the public, help you keep track of Scouts, and assists you in getting group rates at places you visit. For group T shirts and polo shirts, a bright color like red is very helpful in keeping track of your group in a crowd. It is important that you require everyone to bring at least one official BSA uniform. At a minimum, we wear our uniforms at flag ceremonies in camp, during times our host Scouts are in their uniforms, and while going through immigration and customs when traveling from country to country. European Scout groups usually travel in T shirts and their group neckerchief. We have done that on days we have not been concerned about keeping track of our group in a crowd or when we have been touring with a host Scout group. It is important that everyone in your contingent has a neckerchief with them that they can use for that purpose.

58. Suggest that Scouts bring along badges for swapping and as friendship gifts, but tell them not to expect European badges to be as large or as elaborate as American ones. One badge that is very popular with European Scouts is the American flag badge worn on our Scout uniform (#S00103). Patches from past council events that are often discounted at Scout shops are good trading items. European Scouts wear neckerchiefs a lot. If you have troop neckerchiefs, take some along as gifts or to exchange.
59. Group identity items like trip patches or T shirts make you visible and are great for trading or gifts.
60. Carry gifts with you for your host troops. We have presented host troops with American flags that we purchased through our U.S. Representative's or Senator's office. That way we could present each troop with a certificate stating that the flag was flown over the U.S. Capitol especially for their troop. These flags should be ordered at least 3 months in advance of your trip. To accompany the flag and for presentation to other groups that were helpful to us, we used the CSP plaque (#S17535) from the BSA catalog. This allows you to add your council strip and have the plaque engraved "THANKS FROM TROOP ____." The plaques are small and light enough that it is no problem to carry them with you.
61. Be sure to take your troop flag and a U.S. flag with you to display in your campsite. Your state flag and historical American flags can make your campsite more attractive. If you will be sharing your campsite with a host troop, ask them what size national flag they will be flying at the campsite and bring a comparable size U.S. flag. This can be the flag you present them at the end of the camp. Flags flown over the U.S. Capitol are available in 3' x 5', 4' x 6', and 5' x 8' sizes.
62. Especially if you are participating in a national camp, take display items about your city, state, and region. The National Geographic Society sells plastic coated maps of the U.S. and of different regions of the U.S. at very reasonable prices. These maps make good campsite display items. Your state travel bureau will probably help with other items.
63. If you have arranged for home stays, each Scout and leader should take a small thank you gift for each host family. The best host family gifts are representative of the area you come from and made in the USA. To avoid a situation in which Scouts who are staying with the same host family brought the same gift, each Scout should take different host family gifts. In addition to gifts, travel brochures with lots of pictures are good items for Scouts to take for their host families.
64. Make sure that Scouts and their parents have written copies of what each Scout needs to bring. The list that we give to each Scout participating in one of our trips follows. (This list was for all-boy trips in which we wore our uniforms every day while touring. If you have a coed group and/or will be wearing contingent polo shirts and T shirts during some of your travel days, the list should be adjusted accordingly.)

PAPERWORK YOU MUST BRING WITH YOU TO THE AIRPORT

PASSPORT – Bring your passport plus a photocopy of the page of the passport that includes the passport number, expiration date, and photo, along with photocopies of any visas.

MEDICAL FORM – Bring your copy of your medical form with up-to-date information on your medical condition and signatures authorizing emergency treatment.

MEDICAL INSURANCE INFORMATION – Bring the original or a photocopy of your health insurance card, an international claim form, and information on the procedures that should be followed if you need to use the insurance in Europe

COPIES OF THE PRESCRIPTIONS FOR ANY MEDICATIONS YOU NEED

A LIST OF PHONE NUMBERS WE SHOULD CALL IN CASE OF EMERGENCY (If your parents will be traveling, include the dates they will be at each number.)

YOUR COPY OF THE TRIP ITINERARY

WHEN WE MEET AT THE AIRPORT, YOU SHOULD:

BE WEARING A FULL OFFICIAL BOY SCOUT UNIFORM. (A T shirt under your Scout uniform shirt is recommended. That way, you can take off your uniform shirt while on the plane. We will follow the same procedure on trains.)

HAVE EVERYTHING ON THE EQUIPMENT LIST THAT YOU ARE NOT WEARING PACKED INTO A CARRY-ON BACKPACK AND A DUFFEL BAG. Your carry-on backpack should contain everything you want on the plane plus enough to survive on for a day or two. Your duffel bag will be checked as luggage. You must leave enough room in it to carry a U.S. flag or other group items.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT LIST FOR SCOUT TRIP TO EUROPE

SCOUT UNIFORMS AND OTHER CLOTHING

3 OFFICIAL BSA SHORT SLEEVE SCOUT SHIRTS WITH CORRECT BADGES SEWN IN THE PROPER PLACES.

TWO SHIRTS SHOULD HAVE THE NATIONAL CAMP BADGE SEWN ABOVE THE RIGHT POCKET.

2 PAIRS OFFICIAL BSA SCOUT SHORTS

1 PAIR OFFICIAL BSA LONG PANTS

1 OFFICIAL BSA SCOUT BELT

1 OFFICIAL BSA BASEBALL STYLE CAP

5 PAIRS OFFICIAL BSA SOCKS, KHAKI WITH RED TOPS

YOUR TROOP NECKERCHIEF

NECKERCHIEF SLIDE

NON SCOUT SHIRTS AND SHORTS FOR TIME WITH HOST FAMILIES AND IN CAMP

AT LEAST 4 T SHIRTS - Ones that represent the BSA, Scout camps, your city or state, or local universities are recommended. T shirts are often traded at jamborees, so you might bring ones you would like to trade. T shirts that show cigarette or beer ads, foul language, or non-Scoutlike activities are prohibited.

2 PAIRS COMFORTABLE WALKING SHOES	AT LEAST 4 PAIRS OF UNDERPANTS
A JACKET	POSSIBLY A PAIR OF THONGS OR MOCCASINS
A SWEATSHIRT (See T shirt rules above.)	RAIN COAT/RAIN SUIT/PONCHO

(You should use a laundry marker to place your name on all your clothing.)

PERSONAL ITEMS

SOAP, WASHCLOTH, AND FACE TOWEL TOOTHPASTE AND TOOTHBRUSH

SHAMPOO (SMALL SIZE) DEODORANT COMB

PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION IN CORRECTLY LABELED CONTAINER

SWIM SUIT BEACH TOWEL SUNGLASSES SUNSCREEN

SLEEPING BAG	SLEEPING PAD
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GROUND CLOTH	PAJAMAS/SLEEPWEAR
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PEN/PENCIL/NOTEBOOK	KNIFE, FORK, SPOON, PLATE, BOWL, CUP
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PERSONAL FIRST AID KIT	SEWING KIT
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SCOUT KNIFE (Not in carry-on)	WATCH
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CANTEEN OR WATER BOTTLE	CAMERA WITH EXTRA FILM
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TOILET PAPER	DIRTY/WET CLOTHES BAGS
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DUFFEL BAG LOCK	FANNY PACK
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FLASHLIGHT WITH EXTRA BATTERIES	GIFTS FOR HOST FAMILIES
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SMALL CALCULATOR TO CONVERT PRICES TO U.S. DOLLARS

BADGES, NECKERCHIEFS, SLIDES, T SHIRTS, ETC. FOR TRADING

AN EXTRA PAIR OF GLASSES IF YOU WEAR GLASSES

NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF PEOPLE YOU WANT TO WRITE, PERHAPS ON MAILING LABELS

- 65. Before you leave, give each Scout two copies of your itinerary including all train departure times and flight times and all emergency phone numbers. They should carry one copy with them and leave one with their family.
- 66. Have each Scout and leader complete a personal information sheet and send copies of these sheets to each Scout group you will be staying with as email attachments. The forms that we have used are:

SCOUT/VENTURING EUROPE TRIP ADULT INFORMATION SHEET

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TELEPHONE _____

EMAIL _____

DATE OF BIRTH _____

M ___ F ___ RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE _____

THINGS YOU LIKE ABOUT SCOUTING _____

YOUR OCCUPATION _____

OTHER THINGS YOU LIKE TO DO SUCH AS SPORTS, MUSIC, AND HOBBIES _____

LANGUAGES YOU SPEAK _____

ARE THERE FOODS YOU CANNOT EAT FOR MEDICAL OR RELIGIOUS REASONS? _____

DO YOU HAVE ALLERGIES TO PETS, ETC.? _____

WHAT THINGS DO YOU WANT TO SEE AND DO ON YOUR TRIP? _____

SCOUT/VENTURING EUROPE TRIP YOUTH INFORMATION SHEET

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TELEPHONE _____

EMAIL _____

DATE OF BIRTH _____

M ___ F ___ RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE _____

THINGS YOU LIKE ABOUT SCOUTING _____

SCHOOL SUBJECTS YOU ENJOY _____

OTHER THINGS YOU LIKE TO DO SUCH AS SPORTS, MUSIC, AND HOBBIES

LANGUAGES YOU SPEAK _____

ARE THERE FOODS YOU CANNOT EAT FOR MEDICAL OR RELIGIOUS REASONS?

DO YOU HAVE ALLERGIES TO PETS, ETC.? _____

IS THERE ANOTHER MEMBER OF YOUR GROUP YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE WITH DURING A HOME

STAY? _____

WOULD IT BE OK TO BE WITH A HOST FAMILY BY YOURSELF? _____

WHAT THINGS DO YOU WANT TO SEE AND DO ON YOUR TRIP? _____

67. Be aware that some other Scout Associations do not have the same safety standards as BSA in areas such as swimming, boating, use of helmets when bicycling and climbing, and methods of transporting Scouts. If host troops will be planning activities for your group and transporting your Scouts, make sure that they understand before they begin their planning that your group must follow BSA safety rules while on your trip. For information on these rules, refer them to the sections of the BSA GUIDE TO SAFE SCOUTING on:
Aquatics Safety at www.scouting.org/scoutsourc/HealthandSafety/GSS/gss02.aspx
Sports and Activities at www.scouting.org/scoutsourc/HealthandSafety/GSS/gss08.aspx
Transportation at www.scouting.org/scoutsourc/HealthandSafety/GSS/gss11.aspx
68. Hold one or more adult-leader-only meetings before your trip and define the responsibilities each adult leader will have at those meetings. It is strongly recommended that the adult in charge and the group treasurer be different people.
69. Make sure that adult leaders understand that BSA rules regarding alcohol and tobacco use at www.scouting.org/scoutsourc/HealthandSafety/GSS/gss04.aspx apply on BSA trips to other countries as well as in the US. Because your entire trip is a BSA activity, and having adult leaders who smoke find “smoking areas located away from all participants” every time they want a cigarette is unrealistic, the best solution is probably to establish a no smoking rule for all participants, adults as well as youth, while on the trip. Adults should understand that they will be in uniform more than the Scouts while on the trip and should make sure that the other clothes they take are appropriate for a Scouting trip.
70. Public restrooms are much more common in large European cities than they are in the U.S. Public water fountains, however, are very rare. In many places you have to pay to use the public restrooms and some were not as clean as we would have liked. While doing walking tours of large cities, we would sometimes stop for a soft drink at a McDonalds or other American fast food restaurant and then use the free restrooms there. (In some countries there is a charge to use the restrooms even at McDonalds.) Toilet paper should probably be carried in your day packs.
71. Emphasize to your Scouts that they must use the buddy system at all times, even when they are just going to a public restroom, and that they must check with an adult leader and make sure that it is OK that they leave the group and the leader knows where they are going before they leave the group.
72. Your contingent members will probably want to take items that need to be plugged in. They should be aware that other countries use a variety of different shape electric prongs and most European countries are on 220 volts instead of 110. They will need an adapter and possibly a converter. The “Electricity in Europe” video at <http://video.about.com/goeurope/Electricity-in-Europe-Basics.htm> is helpful.
73. Be sure that Scouts and their parents are aware of the time difference between Europe and your home state so that phone calls can be placed at appropriate times. If participants plan to bring cell phones, they should learn how to use them in the countries you will be visiting and the cost. If they expect to use the phone of their host family, they should investigate the possibility of purchasing prepaid phone cards that work in that country. Major U.S. long distance companies have access numbers that can be used in some countries in combination with a credit card to save money on long distance phone calls.

74. Establish a policy before you depart on the use of items like smart phones, tablets, CD players, and electronic games, etc. You might decide to allow their use only on planes, trains, and buses, and in Scout houses. If you will be camping jointly with a troop from another country, make sure that your policy concerning these items is consistent with the policy that your host troop has established for their Scouts. European jamborees often have very limited facilities for recharging these devices.
75. Make sure that all Scouts and leaders planning to participate in the trip understand that this is a low cost trip with the opportunity to experience much more than a normal tourist because of Scouting contacts, but that accommodations will, at times, be primitive and that local host trips might not have the kind of organization or detailed advance schedule that some members of the group would like.
76. Make sure that Scouts and their parents understand that if a Scout has to return home early because of an accident, illness, or emergency at home, a plan must be developed for his trip home that takes into account the needs of the Scout and his family, the needs of the rest of the touring group, and BSA Youth Protection Guidelines, and that all costs of that return trip home are their responsibility..
77. Make sure that one of your adults has an email account that is accessible through the Internet. Then, while on your trip, have that person send email reports on your trip to families of participants, families of other troop members, and your council office.
78. Be sure to keep your local newspaper informed about your trip.
79. Make sure that your Tour and Activity Plan application is filled out correctly and submitted with plenty of time to spare. When you apply for your Tour and Activity Plan, also apply for an International Letter of Introduction, which is carried by individual Scouts and Scouters and by Scout groups when traveling to other countries. If you are participating in a national jamboree or national camp, check with International Department BSA to find out if an invitation from the host Scout association for your group to participate in the camp also needs to be sent to them.
80. The Internal Revenue Service publication 17 "Your Federal Income Tax", in discussing the deductibility of travel expenses incurred while serving as a volunteer youth leader in Chapter 24, states:

The deduction for travel expenses will not be denied simply because you enjoyed providing services to the charitable organization. Even if you enjoy the trip, you can take a charitable contribution deduction for your travel expenses if you are on duty in a genuine and substantial sense throughout the trip. However, if you have only nominal duties, or if for significant parts of the trip you do not have any duties, you cannot deduct your travel expenses.

Example 1. You are a troop leader for a tax-exempt youth group and take the group on a camping trip. You are responsible for overseeing the setup of the camp and for providing the adult supervision for the other activities during the entire trip. You participate in the activities of the group and really enjoy your time with them. You oversee the breaking of the camp and you transport the group home. You can deduct your travel expenses.

It is recommended that your unit treasurer send a receipt to the adult leaders on your trip stating the fee that was paid, explaining that the adult leader was on duty throughout the trip and that his or her participation was necessary for the success of the trip.