

Camp Culture Guide



girl scouts 
arizona cactus-pine

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The Camp Culture Guide is intended to set expectations for campers, camp staff, and families ahead of their time at camp. Together, we can create a welcoming and inclusive environment that celebrates who we are as individuals. To help us all come to camp informed and empowered, we've included the following content in the Camp Culture Guide:

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Introduction

Camp is a place where everyone should feel comfortable being their authentic self. As the youth mental health crisis grows increasingly prevalent, GSACPC dedicates ourselves to making all Girl Scouts feel seen, heard, and respected. In the space of camp, this culture is especially empowering. Our campers develop the confidence to love who they are, feel valued, and experience the warmth and kindness of peers and mentors. This document is not intended to be political or serve any agenda aside from empowering our Girl Scouts and caring for their overall well-being, mental, emotional, and physical health. The Camp Culture Guide intends to help all campers and staff feel valued and respected at camp.

How does the Camp Culture Guide affect me and my camper?

At Girl Scout Camp, we all commit to actively building a sense of belonging for all our community members.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Racial Justice (DEIRJ) Policy

The Girl Scout Movement was founded to help all girls reach their full potential and to create a safe place for girls to foster their individual growth, character, self-sufficiency, and leadership. Girl Scouts–Arizona Cactus-Pine Council (GSACPC) values these founding principles and is committed to upholding them.

GSACPC will not deny membership into the organization because of race, color, ethnicity, religious or spiritual beliefs, age, national origin, socioeconomic status, documentation status, disability, gender identity or sexual orientation.

GSACPC stands in alignment with Girl Scouts of the USA as an anti-racist organization, and we are committed to diversity, equity, inclusion, and racial justice as they are fundamental to achieving our mission. We believe that every girl should have an opportunity to thrive, and every individual should have an opportunity to contribute.

Our organization strives to foster an inclusive and welcoming environment where diverse perspectives are valued, systemic barriers are dismantled, and racial equity is actively pursued. We reject all forms of discrimination, bias, and unfair treatment, particularly those rooted in systemic racism. Through education, awareness, advocacy, and accountable actions, we work towards creating a just and equitable society where girls of courage, confidence, and character can make the world a better place.

Section 1: Disabilities, Neurodivergence, Exceptionalities, and Accessibility

What accommodations are available?

We are here to support your Girl Scout and create the best environment for your child during their camp experience. We don't know what we don't know, so share specific needs with us to help create that environment! Our Senior Outdoor Program Manager and Camp Directors work directly with families to identify accommodations that can be made to meet the needs of every camper, focusing on their strengths, gifts, and assets. We are dedicated to meeting each child's needs without excluding or stigmatizing anyone for their differences.

What is an accommodation?

Accommodations are modifications or adjustments made for an individual with a disability or specific needs on an as-needed basis.

We strive to be an inclusive community - one that provides equitable access for all, including those who require additional physical, mental, social, dietary, or emotional support. Providing access is our ultimate goal, and we use a combination of accommodations and accessibility to create a culture of inclusion.

What is the camp environment like?

GSACPC offers four camp locations. Each camp has a special and unique personality created by its specific location, facilities, activities, and camp staff. Two of our camps are in Prescott, one in Payson, and one in South Phoenix. Our three northern camps are rustic environments, and while some parts of the camp are ADA-accessible, not all are. Our camp in South Phoenix is considered an urban environment and most of the property is ADA-accessible, though not all areas are accessible.

In addition to the physical environment, camp is often busy, bright, and loud. At times, it may be overwhelming for kids who are neurodivergent or have sensory issues. We will gladly talk through what to expect at camp with you and your child and can discuss accommodations to set them up for success.

If you have any questions or concerns about the accessibility of our camp properties due to your camper's physical, mental, social, or emotional needs, please contact the Senior Outdoor Program Manager or the respective Camp Director.

Section 2: Spirituality and Faith

What if religious topics come up at camp?

Campers and staff are welcome to express themselves in ways that respect our camp community. For some, religion may be a big part of their personal identity. All personal identities are welcomed and celebrated at camp. While we invite every camper and staff member to respectfully share their feelings about the world around them, religion is only discussed at camp if the topic comes up organically by campers.

Staff are trained to supervise these conversations between campers and ensure they remain respectful. It is an expectation of everyone in the camp community to respect one another. Respecting one another's beliefs means allowing them to believe what they do without judgement. It does not mean someone else needs to adjust their lifestyle or beliefs to align with someone else's.

We accommodate various spiritual needs while at camp. Some examples of religious accommodations include specific dietary requirements and private places for prayer. We will work one-on-one with families in these circumstances.

What are GSACPC's guidelines for respecting one another at camp?

We embrace the goodness in humanity and recognize that differences make us stronger as a community. It's okay to disagree- however, diminishing another's values is not accepted at our camps. Invalidating one's experience or identity causes harm, which is not conducive to a positive community culture. Regardless of a camper's belief system, we do not tolerate superiority or hate speech. This includes but is not limited to: passing any judgement about another's religious or spiritual beliefs and/or using personal beliefs as a reason to exclude or bully one another.

Section 3: Identity

Who will be at camp?

We welcome Girl Scouts from all walks of life at our camps. We center the voices and experiences of girls and women and welcome all campers and staff who find the female space affirming.

Are GSACPC camps for girls only?

We are committed to serving all Girl Scouts. Our camps are staffed with youth development professionals and counselors of various identities who are committed to the Girl Scout experience.

Camp is a space where identities and pronouns are respected. Children should not have to keep their identity a secret to retain a place in our program and movement. Campers are grouped in living units by age and not by identity.

We are committed to providing brave spaces that empower girls. GSACPC does not enroll cisgender boys at our council-run camps. If a child is recognized by the family and school/community as a girl and lives culturally as a girl, they are welcomed at Girl Scout Camp.

Who can attend family camp?

Girl Scout Family Camp allows girls to experience camp alongside family members of all genders, including cisgender boys. Family members attending camp must be in second grade or above. Families stay in individual cabins but share restroom spaces with other families in the unit.

Will camp staff ask my camper to share their pronouns?

No. However, campers may share if they choose to do so freely. Camp staff may ask your camper if they have a preferred name and what it is, and they are welcome to share their pronouns if they are comfortable doing so. As with everything at camp, sharing pronouns is a personal decision; campers who prefer not to share will not be encouraged to do so by staff. Counselors may choose to share their pronouns with groups. We ask campers and staff to respect and utilize the specified pronouns of other campers and staff members or refer to them by name.

Are all the camp staff women?

No. We encourage all qualified applicants to apply for camp positions. Girl Scouts-Arizona Cactus-Pine Council provides equal employment opportunities (EEO) to all employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, marital status, amnesty, or status as a covered veteran in accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws. Our staff reflect a spectrum of identities and have a wide range of lived experiences. It is important to us that our staff reflect the diverse groups of campers we serve. We enforce strict guidance for Unit Camp Counselors to ensure all campers have privacy when using bathrooms, showering, and changing clothes.

What about bathrooms, showers, bunks, etc.?

Bathrooms and Showers: Privacy is an essential and fundamental right of everyone at camp. This includes toilet stalls, changing areas, and showers. Staff members have separate spaces to shower and restroom stalls that are not shared with campers. At no point are bathrooms utilized by staff and campers at the same time. Campers and staff members can also utilize lockable bathroom stalls as private changing spaces.

Bunks: There is only one body per bed at camp. Beds are considered private spaces that are not shared with others. Campers have separate sleeping spaces from staff members. If a camper needs the attention of a staff member during the night, they will have access to the staff member's bungee/sleeping area.

Staff Quarters: Camp staff do not sleep in the same cabins as the campers. Staff do sleep within the unit but do so in their own, separate cabins.

Swimsuit Policy: For the emotional safety and equity of all our campers, our swimsuit policy includes both a top and a bottom covering for all campers and staff members, regardless of gender identity. Some examples of this may include a rash-guard and boardshorts, a bathing suit top and bottom (navels do not need to be covered, but chests do), one-piece swimsuits, or some combination of these. This policy is also extended to the camp staff.

What if gender identity topics are raised at camp?

If questions or issues about gender identity arise organically among campers, staff are trained to address the questions or issues with respect and in an age-appropriate manner. We do not discuss camper or staff bodies, sexual orientation, or sex assigned at birth.

Section 4: Sexual Orientation

Sometimes, families and campers may be confused about how gender identity and sexual orientation differ. It's important that this is clear to all because gender identity is a topic that may come up at camp, and sexual orientation is a topic we do not discuss.

Gender identity is not outwardly visible to others. It is a personal feeling and may align with or differ from the sex assigned at birth. We believe gender identity should always be respected.

Sexual orientation is a private matter for girls and their families to address. Girl Scouts has established standards that do not permit the advocacy or promotion of a personal lifestyle or sexual orientation. Adults working with girls must adhere to these standards.

What if sexual orientation topics come up at camp?

There is no need to "out" or discuss a camper's (or staff member's) sexual orientation, and we do not initiate or participate in discussions about sexual orientation or sexuality at camp. Questions and conversations often arise organically at camp about "crushes" or attraction, and we are respectful and non-judgmental regarding everyone's romantic and sexual orientations.

Although sexual orientation can be a part of someone's identity, conversations surrounding romantic intimacy are not appropriate at camp, and staff is trained to intervene in these instances where these issues arise with respect and in an age-appropriate manner.

Section 5: Race and Ethnic Diversity

How does GSACPC practice anti-racism?

For over 110 years, Girl Scouts have been catalysts for change, promoting equitable outcomes for all members as they strive to make the world a better place. GSACPC strives to promote equity within our communities by creating welcoming and inclusive spaces.

GSACPC has made a continued commitment to becoming an antiracist organization. Systemic racism is everywhere and affects everyone, including our campers, and requires care and commitment to dismantle.

For any questions, please refer to GSACPC's DEIRJ policy located within the introduction section of this document.

Section 6: Technology and Camp Culture

Promoting Girl Scout safety at our camps is our top priority, including digital safety. Technology provides access to many sites, people, and resources that may not be appropriate or safe for our campers. Due to the inability to control access to potential online harm, we ask that caregivers send their campers to camp without technology. Cellphones and other connective devices not used as assistive or medical devices will be held in the office for safekeeping until check-out.

Thank You

Thank you for taking the time to read our Camp Culture Guide and discuss it with your camper. We sincerely hope this document reflects a community that you and your camper are excited about being a part of. We look forward to seeing your camper at camp this summer.

