

Girl Scouts of the USA, New York
TRAVEL TIPS
SWITZERLAND AND OUR CHALET

www.ourchalet.ch/

Here are some basic guidelines about traveling to Switzerland and the European continent. Although Our Chalet may be the main destination, there are many additional options, including International Youth Hostelling facilities and programs in Switzerland and other European countries available through GSUSA's affiliation with Hostelling International.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS FOR SWITZERLAND

A valid passport, good for a minimum of two months after departure, is required for entry into Switzerland. No visa is necessary for U.S. citizens.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

Girls and adults must bring a medical form, signed by a physician, certifying good health and containing a record of required immunizations. The GSUSA Standard Health Examination forms for international travel should be used. Immunization against tetanus is recommended.

INSURANCE

Additional mandatory international health and accident insurance is required and forms can be picked up at your Girl Scout council or through Mutual of Omaha's Web site <<http://www.mutualofomaha.com/gsusa/index.htm>> (International Plan 3PI).

LANGUAGE

English may be spoken by the Swiss, but German, French, and Italian are official languages. It is a good idea to learn some survival words in each language.

CURRENCY NOTICE

The Swiss franc is the standard currency in Switzerland. Travelers should carry travelers checks and change some of them into Swiss francs before arriving at Our Chalet. Adelboden has banks where this exchange can be made. Before leaving home, you may want to purchase some travelers checks in Swiss francs for ease of cashing while in Switzerland. Surrounding European countries use the Euro for standard currency.

WEATHER

Weather in Switzerland varies by altitude and Our Chalet is at 4,000 feet. That means evenings can be chilly, even in summer. Be prepared for anything. Summer months are June, July, August, and early September. Weather is given in degrees of Celsius, not Fahrenheit, and altitude in meters, so brush up on your metrics.

HINTS FOR GIRL SCOUT TRAVELERS

The Girl Scout uniform (dress or camp) is appropriate for travel and streetwear, unless there are significant political issues affecting Americans. Pants are acceptable. Head-covering is appropriate for cathedrals. (See International Travel Alert for more on dress.)

OUR CHALET

Mailing Address:

Center Manager
Our Chalet
3715 Adelboden
Switzerland

Telephone: (011) (41) 33 673-12 26

Fax: (011) (41) 33 673 20 82

E-mail: info@ourchalet.ch

Web site: <http://www.ourchalet.ch>

GENERAL INFORMATION

The village of Adelboden is 1300 meters, or about 4000 feet, above sea level. Mountains surround the Chalet which is a 30 minute walk from the village. Whether you come to Our Chalet in the summer or winter, the program is based on the out-of-doors. The main program in summer is hiking and exploring the mountains. In winter and over Easter, skiing is the main activity, and guided skiing is available from the Our Chalet staff to familiarize you with the mountains. All programs will be organized according to the abilities of guests. To benefit most from a stay at Our Chalet, you should be physically fit and keen to explore the beautiful surroundings. There is no minimum age for a guest staying at Our Chalet.

OUR CHALET SYMBOL

The symbol is a drawing of the Chalet building.



ACCOMMODATIONS AT OUR CHALET

Actual room assignments will be made by the office staff. Rooms available include single, double, triple, 5-bed room, and attic.

Charges are per day and include board, lodging, heating, and bath/showers. A small tourist tax will be added. Blankets, linen, and towels are provided. If a stay is for less than four nights, an extra charge of three Swiss francs is made unless bedding (sheets or sleeping bag) and towels are brought.

All payments during your stay must be made in Swiss francs. They accept cash, travelers checks in Swiss francs, E.C. cards, and the following credit cards: VISA and Mastercard. There is an administration charge for credit card payments.

CAMPING ACCOMMODATIONS

In addition to the accommodations at Our Chalet, there are two camping areas:

Squirrel House (indoor camping): Equipped for 10 persons. Has running water, a two-plate electric cooker, refrigerator, pots, pans, cutlery, and dishes. Double-decker bunks for six, extra rubber mattresses for four, each with three blankets, pillow, and sleeping sack.

Primitive Campsite (tent camping): Equipped for 20 persons. Has four tents, groundsheets, rubber mattresses, and one blanket per person, pots, pans, cutlery and dishes, refrigerator. Bring your own sleeping bag.

For inclement weather, the campsite has a small chalet with running water and a two-plate electric cooker (an outdoor fireplace is also available). The lower half can be used for storage of food and equipment and for meals; the upper half for sleeping and storage.

The cost of Squirrel House and the equipped campsite is currently 14.00 Swiss francs, inclusive of wood, electricity, and tourist tax. Hot showers and baths are available by arrangement for the current rate in Swiss francs.

RESERVATIONS

Reservations can now be made online by directly accessing Our Chalet's Web site <<http://www.ourchalet.org/>> or by writing directly to

Bookings Manager, Our Chalet
3715 Adelboden, Switzerland
or e-mail: info@ourchalet.ch
or fax: (011) (41) 33 673 20 82.

In the summer, **individual groups should not number more than 15** unless the group would like to stay at the campsite. At all other times, there is no minimum number. No group larger than 20 can be accommodated at the campsite. All correspondence requiring an answer from Our Chalet should be accompanied by International Reply Coupons (for an answer by airmail) which can be obtained from your post office.

Upon receipt of confirmation of reservations, send registration fees to Our Chalet.

REGISTRATION FEES (non-refundable)

A registration fee must be sent to Our Chalet, via international money order, after reservations have been confirmed. Our Chalet will advise you of the amount. The international money order should be made out for the total number of girls and adults making reservations together at Our Chalet.

See Our Chalet's Web site <<http://www.ourchalet.org/>> for upcoming program sessions, current rates and reservations. However, if you do not have access to the Internet please contact your council or Membership, Program and Diversity Services, GSUSA, 420 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10018-2798, by completing "Intent to Travel Form A" included in this packet and also available in *Safety-Wise*.

TRAVEL TO OUR CHALET

The station for Adelboden is Frutigen (Lotschberg line). All trains from Basel, Zurich, and Geneva have connections at Bern for Frutigen. A regular bus service runs from the Frutigen station to Adelboden. In both Adelboden and Frutigen, there are shops, churches, and medical facilities.

Ask the bus driver to put you and your luggage down at "Oey" below the village of Adelboden. Follow the signpost to Our Chalet. You cross the river, follow the road to the left, and walk uphill for 15-20 minutes. The road up to Our Chalet is a narrow winding one, and although private cars are allowed to drive up, no buses are allowed.

If arrangements are made in advance with the Center Manager, luggage can be carried back and forth from the bus stop at "Oey" to Our Chalet upon your arrival and departure. The charge is five Swiss francs round-trip. The Center Manager will need to know your time of arrival to provide this service.

WHAT TO BRING

Although GSUSA does not require ownership of a uniform for membership, when participating in an event or session, Girl Scout visitors may be expected to wear an official Girl Scout uniform or "camp uniform." If a Girl Scout is not using a sash or vest, we suggest that she wear an official GSUSA uniform T-shirt or Polo shirt with tan pants or skirt, along with her Girl Scout pins. Sports clothes worn at Our Chalet should be neat and in good condition.

Visitors should plan to bring the following types of clothing for the times indicated:

Summer: Hiking clothes and boots during the day. In the evening, blouse and pants or skirts can be worn.

Winter: Ski clothes during the day.

Evenings: Throughout the year, uniform or uniform blouse with pants, plus sweater or warm jacket (because of the altitude, evenings and nights can be cold, even in summer).

The following list contains the minimum amount of clothing and equipment required by Our Chalet:

- One pair walking boots with profile rubber soles (summer)*
- Skis and ski boots (winter)*
- Shoes suitable for walks to the village and on paths
- Thick woolen socks
- One pair lighter shoes or sandals
- Plastic raincoat and wind breaker jacket
- Blouses
- Pants
- Cardigan and sweater
- Underwear
- Toiletries
- Sleepwear
- Sunglasses

*Walking boots may be rented at Our Chalet. Skis and boots can be rented from local shops. Also available at Our Chalet: hair dryer, iron, facilities for washing clothes by hand and machine upon agreement with staff.

PREPARATION FOR A STAY AT OUR CHALET

Our Chalet is an activity center and girls and their leaders should plan to take full advantage of the wonderful hiking or skiing possibilities offered. Plan to see only one or two spots in Europe before arriving at Our Chalet and after leaving. Sessions at Our Chalet are too physically demanding to be coupled with extended touring to other places. Save that for another trip. If you are planning to tour extensively in and around Switzerland and other parts of Europe, it is possible to make a day visit to Our Chalet by staying in Adelboden overnight.

In preparation for this trip try to do lots of walking, jogging, running, hiking, and/or bicycle riding for at least a month before you come to the Chalet. Those who are physically prepared enjoy the altitude, the activities, and the surroundings at Our Chalet.

Read up on Switzerland, its people, history, and culture, so you can appreciate and understand what you will see. Talk to someone with ample travel experience in the Swiss Alps who can tell you what to expect in customs, foods, weather, etc. Learn enough German so you can understand signs and directions and ask simple but necessary questions in central Switzerland.

Be prepared to enjoy a variety of different foods. Sample some of the famous Swiss cheese in advance. Try recipes common to European countries, so you can become familiar with different tasting foods and enjoy the change.

Learn about Girl Guiding in countries in Europe from **Trefoil Round the World**. The best experiences at Our Chalet are often the times spent with the Girl Guides who arrive from all over Europe. Knowing one of the European languages will make it possible to make friends with more Girl Guides.

There are some shops in the mountain village of Adelboden which girls may visit. However, shopping should be incidental to the opportunities to explore the mountains and to become friends with Girl Guides visiting Our Chalet.

If traveling with a group, learn to use the patrol system effectively before leaving for Our Chalet. Groups will be expected to work together daily to take care of tasks at Our Chalet, as you do at Girl Scout camps. Experience has shown that the girls from the United States who benefit most from Our Chalet are 16 years or older. Girls younger than 15 should have ample travel experiences prior to a Chalet visit. No matter what age, Girl Scouts who are able to adapt easily to new environments, people, customs, and foods, and are knowledgeable about what they are seeing and why they are visiting a World Center, will have an enjoyable time.

EVENING ACTIVITIES

Each group should come prepared to share an evening program; e.g., teach songs, show slides/crafts/foods representative of their part of the USA. Our Chalet has a guitar, but groups are encouraged to bring musical instruments. Our Chalet also has a cassette/CD player, slide projector, and VCR.

A DAY VISIT TO OUR CHALET

It is possible to visit the Chalet during the daytime. During the summer from the beginning of June until the beginning of October and in winter from Christmas until after Easter, Our Chalet welcomes all visitors for tours 9:30 a.m.-12 noon and 2-5 p.m. **Please note** that Our Chalet is **closed during May and November** for cleaning. It is also closed on **specific Saturdays**. See the online schedule for the exact dates.

On a tour of Our Chalet, one of the volunteer staff members will show you around, tell you about Our Chalet, and open the shop where you can buy postcards and souvenirs. The tour will last approximately one-half hour to one hour and afterwards you are welcome to walk around on the Chalet estate. With over 5,000 visitors coming for tours in a summer, it is not possible to invite day visitors to take part in the Chalet program.

Our Chalet is unable to provide hot food for day visitors. However, cold drinks, ice cream, and chocolate may be purchased in the shop. Visitors are always welcome to eat their own packed lunch outside on the estate if the weather is good or inside if it is raining.

