



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Local Girl Scouts Travel to the Galapagos,
Adventure Funded by Cookie Program Proceeds**



Northern or Southern Hemisphere? GSNYPENN travelers picked a side when standing at the Equatorial Line, marked by the red stripe on the ground in the photo.

Syracuse, N.Y. (August 29, 2024) – Youth members, adult volunteers, chaperones and staff from several counties across the [Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways](#) (GSNYPENN) Council footprint recently traveled to the Galapagos Islands as part of the council's travel program which equips Girl Scouts to change the world by allowing them to experience it.

The 43 travelers spent eight days this July immersed in Ecuador's culture, geography, plant and animal life, cuisine and unique experiences. GSNYPENN council staff began planning the trip with travel partner EF Tours in 2022. Some Girl Scouts traveled with caregivers and family members while others traveled as individuals under the guidance of trip chaperones. Many participants funded their adventure through Girl Scout Cookie Program earnings.

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“International travel is both priceless and integral to the Girl Scout Leadership Experience because it demonstrates to our youth members that they can do hard things and still have fun! I've been all over the world with Girl Scouts of all ages and they surprise me every trip. They become more confident in themselves and their ability to adapt to new situations and return braver and bolder than ever,” says Liz Schmidt, GSNYPENN’s Vice President of Property & Programs.

Girl Scouts become better global citizens through travel because they experience a unique appreciation of their place in the world and how to navigate it. That’s why buying Girl Scout Cookies and supporting local Girl Scouts through the program is so vital—every package of cookies they sell helps them experience life-changing adventures.

GSNYPENN’s travel group flew to Ecuador to begin their journey, meeting tour directors in the capital of Quito. Destinations included Quito, Baltra Island, Santa Cruz Island, Isabela Island, San Cristobal Island and Otavalo. They toured several historic sites in Quito, took an excursion to the Equatorial Line where they stood in both hemispheres, learned how the Incas determined the middle of the Earth at the Intiñan Museum, saw wild tortoises at a ranch in the Santa Cruz Highlands and visited a giant tortoise breeding center at the Charles Darwin Research Station.

They also enjoyed snorkeling with sea life, participated in a boat excursion to the Las Tintoreras Islet made entirely out of lava where they also explored lava tunnels, hiked Tortuga Bay and Tijeretas Hill, visited the Peguche Waterfall, relaxed at Playa de Los Alemanes and La Loberia beach, learned about natural history at the San Cristobal Interpretation Center and experienced the market town of Otavalo for a unique glimpse into traditional Andean culture and handcrafts.



GSNYPENN travelers and tour director, Jhayro, pose at Peguche Waterfall during their last day in Otavalo, Ecuador.

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“My favorite part of the trip was snorkeling at the Tintoreras Lava Islet on Isabela Island because I saw a lot of wildlife I’d never seen before,” says Sophia Polise, a Girl Scout Cadette from Horseheads, N.Y. “Traveling abroad impacted me positively. I experienced many new things and lifestyles and came home with a new appreciation for the world.”

“This was a once-in-a-lifetime trip with my daughter,” says Latrica Polise, Sophia’s mother. “Not only did we immerse ourselves in different cultures and experiences, but I was also able to see Sophia gain confidence and independence each day. She developed a great sense of cultural awareness and learned how to navigate change through being pushed out of her comfort zone.”



L-R: Mother-daughter pair Latrica and Sophia Polise from Horseheads, N.Y., found a renewed appreciation for other cultures and experiences during the trip

GSNYPENN travelers:

Girl Scouts

Madilyn Austin, Girl Scout Cadette, Brasher Falls, N.Y. (St. Lawrence County)
Aurora Campau, Girl Scout Cadette, Carthage, N.Y. (Jefferson County)
Angelina Centore, Girl Scout Senior, Syracuse, N.Y. (Onondaga County)
Elise Cruz, Girl Scout Cadette, Endwell, N.Y. (Broome County)
Mariana Cruz, Girl Scout Ambassador, Endwell, N.Y. (Broome County)
Sofia Davis, Girl Scout Senior, Manlius, N.Y. (Onondaga County)
Madeline Duffy, Girl Scout Cadette, Chittenango, N.Y. (Madison County)
Elanie Dussing, Girl Scout Senior, Syracuse, N.Y. (Onondaga County)
Apple Fedele, Girl Scout Cadette, Rome, N.Y. (Oneida County)
Sahana Gajendran, Girl Scout Cadette, Horseheads, N.Y. (Chemung County)
Alyssa Lessels, Girl Scout Senior, Vernon, N.Y. (Oneida County)
Shannon Loughlin, Girl Scout Ambassador, Cicero, N.Y. (Onondaga County)

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Sophie Nugent, Girl Scout Senior, Ogdensburg, N.Y. (St. Lawrence County)
Alexis Phillips, Girl Scout Ambassador, Cicero, N.Y. (Onondaga County)
Sophia Polise, Girl Scout Cadette, Horseheads, N.Y. (Chemung County)
Kendall Porter, Girl Scout Cadette, Addison, N.Y. (Steuben County)
Riley Smith, Girl Scout Ambassador, Vestal, N.Y. (Broome County)
Eleanor Snyder, Girl Scout Cadette, Endicott, N.Y. (Broome County)
Lilyana Thornton, Girl Scout Ambassador, Cayuga, N.Y. (Cayuga County)
Anastasia Utterback, Girl Scout Senior, Chemung, N.Y. (Chemung County)
Samantha Veley, Girl Scout Ambassador, Williamson, N.Y. (Wayne County)

Adult Volunteers & Chaperones

Jeanne Albanese, Syracuse, N.Y. (Onondaga County)
Alissa Austin, Brasher Falls, N.Y. (St. Lawrence County)
Carolyn Campau, Carthage, N.Y. (Jefferson County)
Luis Cruz, Endwell, N.Y. (Broome County)
Alison Cutry, Brasher Falls, N.Y. (St. Lawrence County)
Lynne Duffy, Chittenango, N.Y. (Madison County)
Becky Ferlo, Rome, N.Y. (Oneida County)
Raegan Grant, Brasher Falls, N.Y. (St. Lawrence County)
Cassandra Hertzler, Addison, N.Y. (Steuben County)
Heather Lessels, Vernon, N.Y. (Oneida County)
Christine Moulton, Brasher Falls, N.Y. (St. Lawrence County)
Mikeala Nugent, Ogdensburg, N.Y. (St. Lawrence County)
Amy Pfeifer, Liverpool, N.Y. (Onondaga County)
Latrica Polise, Horseheads, N.Y. (Chemung County)
Lisa Templar, North Rose, N.Y. (Wayne County)
Patricia Walker, Chemung, N.Y. (Chemung County)
Adrienne Whiteley, Syracuse, N.Y. (Onondaga County)
Hollyanne Young, Liverpool, N.Y. (Onondaga County)
Holly Zurenda-Cruz, Endwell, N.Y. (Broome County)

Council Staff

Liz Schmidt, Vice President of Property & Programs, Syracuse, N.Y. (Onondaga County)
Mandy Simons, Girl Experience Manager, Utica, N.Y. (Oneida County)
Serafina Sortino, Director of Programs, Utica, N.Y. (Oneida County)

GSNYPENN's Travel Program offers a robust experience for Girl Scouts that follows the national Girl Scout Travel Progression through day, weekend, and extended domestic trips and destinations abroad. Opportunities are available for every Girl Scout program level, budget and area of interest—plus, Girl Experience Credits (like cookie program earnings) can be applied to these trips to help defray costs for council members. To learn more, visit gsnypenn.org/travel.

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GSNYPENN serves Girl Scouts in grades K-12 across 26 counties: Allegany, Broome, Cayuga, Chemung, Chenango, Cortland, Delaware, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga, Ontario, Oswego, Otsego, St. Lawrence, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Tioga, Tompkins, Wayne and Yates in New York and Bradford and Tioga in Pennsylvania. Annual membership is just \$25; financial assistance is available. To start your Girl Scouts adventure, visit gsnypenn.org/join. To become an adult volunteer, learn more at gsnypenn.org/volunteer. To help make Girl Scouting possible in your community, visit gsnypenn.org/donate.

(All photos and graphics used with permission, courtesy of Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways)

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About Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways, Inc.

Girl Scouts is the preeminent leadership development organization for girls in grades K-12. Our extraordinary journey began in 1912 when our Movement was founded by Juliette Gordon “Daisy” Low. Today, we continue the Girl Scout mission of building girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. We offer every girl the chance to practice a lifetime of leadership, adventure and success. GSNYPENN is chartered by Girl Scouts of the USA to administer the Girl Scout program in 24 counties of New York and two in Pennsylvania. Learn more at gsnypenn.org.