

Adventurous Activities Abroad



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This factsheet is sponsored by Acorn Adventure, a company which has provided safe but exciting adventure holidays for schools, Scout and other youth groups for many years. The factsheet is also available in the Activities section as FS120085. Both factsheets are identical in content.

Adventurous Activities Abroad

Adventurous Activities as covered by Policy, Organisation and Rules of The Scout Association Chapter 9 are an integral part of the Scouting programme. There will be many times when parties of Members will wish to take part in these Activities whilst abroad. The chance to try activities in a new and exotic location should be attractive to the participant and carried out in as safe a manner as possible, remembering that The Association's rules are applicable except where legislation in the country to be visited has stronger rules in place. Advice is available from your Assistant County/Area Commissioners Activities and International.

Doing it yourself

This must be the easiest option with regard to The Scout Association Rules. All activities which are subject to Air, Hillwalking, Off Road Cycling, Climbing and Abseiling, Cave and Mine or Water Authorisation continue to be so controlled when

you go abroad. You should talk through your plans with the appropriate County/Area Activity Adviser or Assessor and the Commissioner who has issued your current Authorisation. They can then possibly arrange for your Authorisation to be extended to cover your activities abroad.

For instance, a person holding an Authorisation for hillwalking in summer conditions in the United Kingdom should be capable of leading or leading and supervising similar activities in other parts of the world. The difference will often be of scale and climate rather than the actual terrain. Equally, a person holding a Water Authorisation should be capable of carrying out activities to a similar level on foreign water (see POR Rule 9.44 for guidance on Classification of Water Abroad).

Activities at Kandersteg

In May 1998, we issued advice to all involved in the approval of visits to Kandersteg International Scout Centre and Switzerland in general i.e. Assistant County/Area Commissioners Activities and International and hence to County/Area and District Mountain Advisers and to County/Area Hillwalking Activity Assessors. The following is an updated version of our advice:

With the current management team, it is considered that the instructional staff at the Centre have the knowledge and experience to provide an Alpine High Adventure Programme and to supervise this programme to the satisfaction of The Scout Association.

If United Kingdom Scout Members make use of this programme then a United Kingdom Leader accompanies the group. Such a leader would be in a support function to the Kandersteg International Scout Centre Hike Leader and need not be Authorised for the activity.

The Scout Information Centre

Gilwell Park Chingford London E4 7QW Tel + 44 (0)20 8433 7100 Fax + 44 (0)20 8433 7103 email info.centre@scout.org.uk www.scoutbase.org.uk

Separately, if a Scout Association party wishes to be Authorised for hillwalking in Switzerland, the following advice is offered:

- *Parties should not require formal Authorisation for expeditions on the yellow way marked routes (Wanderweg) as these are never far from habitation and do not come within the scope of the Hillwalking Authorisation Scheme.*
- *An Authorised person permitted to lead or lead and supervise terrain two hillwalking throughout England and Wales under summer conditions should have the necessary experience to cope with red and white waymarked routes (Bergweg) under summer conditions assuming that a simple knowledge of scrambling is evident. A confidence rope should be carried.*
- *Note that some new signs on the waymarked routes use the term Bergwanderweg. These should be treated as Bergweg.*

Regardless of whether or not a Kandersteg International Scout Centre Hike Leader accompanies a party, the maximum number in each party is 7 (including the designated party leader), in accordance with the POR rule 9.32 adopted by the Committee of the Council in 2000 (but note Rule 9.32d for whom a second authorised leader can be additional to the party size of 7). We have worked with the management team of Kandersteg International Scout Centre to ensure that the various opportunities available within the Alpine High Adventure programme are conducted in accordance with The Scout Association's rules.

Buying into a Package Holiday

These notes refer specifically to the situation where the company supplying the package is based in the United Kingdom. When a package is put together by a foreign operator you should refer to the next section, "using professional instructors on the spot".

Undoubtedly from the Leader's point of view this is the easiest option logistically. When professional instructors are used in the United Kingdom they are required to be qualified to the level recommended by the National Governing Body (Royal Yachting Association, British Canoe Union,

Mountain Leader Training Board, etc). The same is not true for operators providing packages overseas but many United Kingdom companies maintain these high standards.

Before the Leader in charge actually signs on the dotted line they should ask for and receive a statement from the company concerned that they use Activity Instructors, who are competent to the standard recommended by the United Kingdom National Governing Bodies. This can be by holding a UK qualification, a local qualification or by in-house training by the package company to the required standard. Where an in-house or local qualification is used the Leader concerned should seek assurances that the qualifications are checked on a regular basis by a technical adviser qualified to the United Kingdom governing body requirements. Your ACC/AAC (Activities) should be able to advise as to what it is that you need to be asking for.

Leaders must remember that they cannot "hand over" responsibility to such instructors. Leaders are advised that they must monitor the activity closely and be prepared to stop it if the instructors appear to be employing questionable methods. Leaders must be present during all such activities.

Using Professional Instructors on the spot

Potentially this is the most difficult option. The Leader in charge should check that the Instructors are competent and have had training in the specific activity. In the majority of Western European countries mountain guides can prove their accreditation with documentary evidence. In France the 'Ecole de Voile' Centres operate to a similar standard to that of the Royal Yachting Association Training Establishments. Your ACC/AAC (Activities) may be able to advise you of what is required in any particular situation, otherwise you should refer to the Activities Office at Gilwell Park. In other circumstances the position is less clear and Leaders are advised that they must monitor the activity closely and be prepared to stop if the instructors appear to be employing questionable methods. Leaders must be present during all such activities.

Using Instructors Supplied by another Scout Association

In many of the Western European countries The Scout Associations have a degree of control of water activities similar to that in the United Kingdom. This is particularly true of the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden. Other adventurous activities have, at best, controls that resemble those of the United Kingdom Scout Association many years ago and a degree of caution must be taken.

Leaders concerned must check that any Instructors have a degree of competency in the activity and that it is being carried out in a safe and sensible manner. Once again the Leader must be prepared to challenge poor or unsafe methods. This should be done with sensitivity in order to raise standards rather than tempers. This is especially important when carrying out activities with Scouts from the host country.

There are a number of Scout operated training centres of which Kandersteg International Scout Centre is the best known. It is however impossible for the United Kingdom Scout Association to vet each centre. Normally the quality and competence of the staff at such a centre will be higher than that of the average Leader from the area.

Acorn Adventure is a provider of safe activity holidays abroad and in the UK. They operate from sites in France, Spain and Italy and in the UK from the Lake District to Snowdonia. More than 25 different activities are provided overall and many Scout Activity Badges can be undertaken whilst on holiday.

Acorn Adventure only use Activity Instructors who hold qualifications recommended by United Kingdom Governing Bodies. This is a requirement of The Scout Association when engaging in adventurous activities with commercial providers. To request your free 2004 Acorn Adventure brochure, simply telephone 01384 446040, fax 01384 373818 or email scouts@acornadventure.co.uk ensuring you quote 'Scouts Offer'.

