

Information for leaders



Here's some additional information to help you confidently plan a public transport trip with your group. There are activities for girls in our Get on Board challenge pack.

Planning resources

Train travel

Information about how to plan a journey and buy tickets can be found on the dedicated [Girlguiding Scotland page](#) on the ScotRail website. There is a helpful checklist for leaders planning to take girls on public transport [here](#).

19th Motherwell Guides and Rangers have also made [this handy video](#) full of tips and tricks.

Bus travel

Young people who are under 22 living in Scotland get free bus travel. Under 5s are automatically eligible for this.

5-21 year olds need a National Entitlement Card and must carry this card with them on their bus journey.

5-11 year olds get a photo-less NEC card which they can use until the day before their 12th birthday, and then need to reapply for a photo card. You can then choose between a normal NEC card or the Young Scot NEC card which gives access to Young Scot membership rewards and discounts, and is also a PASS accredited form of ID which is useful for proof of age.

Parents or guardians must apply on behalf of 5-15 year olds, but young people who are 16-21 years old can apply themselves, and you can help young people in your units apply for cards.

There are a few bus services that aren't included in the scheme, such as cross-border services and sightseeing buses. You can use this scheme on long distance coaches within Scotland.

You apply in different ways depending on your local authority –you can find out how to apply on the [Scottish Government website](#) or via [Young Scot](#). If you've lost your card, you can apply for a new one on [Get your NEC](#).

Some bus companies have shared top tips for using their services with us. This information is correct as of November 2025.

Bus company	Where in Scotland do you cover?	When boarding your bus what do passengers ask for?	For a multiple journey trip, what do passengers do?	How can passengers pay?	How can you track a journey?	Anything else useful to know?
Lothian Buses	Edinburgh, East Lothian, West Lothian	Ask for a single ticket	Buy multiple single tickets throughout the day. You'll be charged the next day and the cost will be capped at the cost of an all day ticket (within Edinburgh)	You can use contactless card payments or buy e-tickets on our app	There's a journey planning tool on our website and app	If you're planning on taking a lot of journeys over multiple days, you can buy a weekly, 4-weekly or annual Ridacard for cheaper travel.
First Bus	Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, West Dunbartonshire, East Dunbartonshire, Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire	Let the driver know your ticket type and destination	Buy an all-day ticket for one day, or a multi-day, weekly or monthly ticket for bigger discounts if you plan to travel regularly	You can use contactless card payments or cash – if using cash, needs to be exact fare, unless using the airport 500 service. You can also buy e-tickets on our app	There's a journey planning tool on our website and app	Group tickets are available

Bus company	Where in Scotland do you cover?	When boarding your bus what do passengers ask for?	For a multiple journey trip, what do passengers do?	How can passengers pay?	How can you track a journey?	Anything else useful to know?
West Coast Motors / Borders Buses	West coast of Scotland – including islands, Glasgow, Scottish Borders, East Lothian, Midlothian, Edinburgh and Berwickshire	Let the driver know your ticket type and destination	Buy an all-day ticket or a multi-day ticket through our app, or multiple single tickets on board	You can use contactless card payments or cash – if using cash, needs to be exact fare. You can also buy e-tickets on our app	Using our apps or websites: West Coast Motors Borders Buses	
Garelochhead Coaches	Helensburgh	Let the driver know your ticket type and destination	Buy an all-zones day ticket	You can use contactless card payments or cash – if using cash, needs to be exact fare	Use the mytrip app or bustimes.org	If you're using service 302 in a group, please give them advance notice
Ember	All across Scotland: Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee, Aberdeen, Inverness, Thurso, Fort William and soon to be more!	Ask for a single ticket to a specific destination or purchase a ticket in advance	Buy multiple single tickets or a return ticket	Contactless or prebooked tickets	www.ember.to	One person can buy all the tickets and then send them to the other passengers (as a message, into an apple wallet, etc). If you're buying tickets for concessions, that's easy too. Tickets must be booked at least 10 minutes prior to the bus leaving so the bus knows to call at this stop. Tickets can be changed to a new time for free

Bus company	Where in Scotland do you cover?	When boarding your bus what do passengers ask for?	For a multiple journey trip, what do passengers do?	How can passengers pay?	How can you track a journey?	Anything else useful to know?
Scottish CityLink	Scotland wide	Ask for a ticket to a specific destination	You can buy a return ticket or a connecting ticket if you are making a multistage journey	You can use contactless card payments or cash (with change available). You can prebook tickets on our app or website	www.citylink.co.uk or using our app	It's best to prebook for long distance journeys to guarantee a space
McGill's Bus Group (McGill's Buses, Midland Bluebird, Xplore Dundee)	Inverclyde, Renfrewshire, Greater Glasgow, Stirling, Falkirk, Dundee	Ask for a ticket to a specific destination	Buy a day saver ticket	You can use contactless card payments or cash. You can prebook tickets on our app or website	Using our mobile apps (McGill's , Midland Bluebird or Xplore Dundee)	Group Saver tickets are available to cover groups of up to 5 adults
Stagecoach	Across Scotland	Ask for a ticket to a specific destination	Buy a day rider ticket	You can use contactless card payments or cash (with change available). You can prebook tickets on our app or website	Using the Stagecoach app	
Whitelaws Coaches	South Lanarkshire	Ask for a ticket to a specific destination	Buy a return or Zonecard one day ticket	You can use contactless card payments or cash (with change available). You can prebook tickets on our app or website	Through Traveline Scotland 'live' tracking either via website or Traveline Scotland app	

Ferries

Scotland has 2 ferry providers – Calmac for most routes and NorthLink for sailings to Orkney and Shetland from Aberdeen or Stromness to Scrabster.

Calmac

Young people aged 5–15 travel at half the adult fare, and under 5s travel for free. All vehicles and pets require a ticket. Concessions are available for islanders in certain areas – varying according to your location and the local authority area you are travelling in or to.

Larger ferries have children's play areas available.

There are 2 types of routes – bookable routes where tickets must be bought in advance, and 'turn up and go' routes where you can book on the day or buy an open ticket without a specific sailing time. More information can be found [here](#).

You can buy '10 journey' tickets for any 'turn up and go' route, which allows you to take 10 journeys within the season that you purchase them.

You can buy a 'multiple journey' ticket for both bookable and 'turn up and go' routes if you want to travel to more than 1 island.

If you'd like a priority seat or need some assistance from staff when you travel, you can add this to your booking or contact Calmac on 0800 066 5000 or assistanceteam@calmac.co.uk and they'll be happy to help.

NorthLink for sailings to Orkney and Shetland from Aberdeen or Stromness to Scrabster

Young people aged 5–15 travel at a child's fare, and under 5s travel for free. 'Kids go free' is a promotion which enables children to travel for free with a family ticket where the group has booked a cabin and a car. Senior citizens (aged 60 years+), those in full-time education and passengers with a disability receive a 10% discount on passenger and vehicle fares. Residents of the Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland who have a National Entitlement Card and qualify for free bus travel under the concessionary travel scheme can also get 2 free return ferry journeys to the mainland each year.

There are free activities on board for children such as activity sheets, colouring pencils and treasure hunts, and you can pick these up at reception without prebooking.

Use the [NorthLink Ferries website](#) or app to book, phone or book in any NorthLink office or port.

Glasgow subway

There are paper tickets available in any subway station, and they are currently working on bringing in contactless payments. You can buy a single, return or all-day ticket. Under 5s travel free, and a child ticket is for young people aged 5–16. More information can be found on the [SPT website](#).

Edinburgh tram

Tram tickets must be bought ahead of time or you will have to pay a flat fee of £10 onboard. You can buy tickets in the following ways:

- ticket machines on the platforms: pay by coins or card
- [mobile app](#): pre-purchase your tickets and activate before you board
- [website](#): pre-purchase your tickets and display your ticket on your phone
- [Tap On, Tap Off](#): use your contactless-enabled card or device to pay for an adult single fare.

Child's tickets are available for young people aged 5–15, and up to 3 infants can travel for free with each paying customer.

There is an automatic 10% discount on orders of 10 or more tickets bought through the website.

Zonecard

With a ZoneCard ticket loaded onto a smartcard, you can travel by ScotRail, bus and Subway across the west of Scotland. Find out more on the [ZoneCard website](#).

Risk assessments

Pre-populated risk assessments including safety hints and tips are available on [our website](#). You will need to complete a risk assessment for the rest of your activity.

Remember that the journey is part of the adventure!

Thank you!

Thank you to everyone who helped us make this pack! 19th Motherwell Guide and Ranger unit, our focus group of Girlguiding Scotland volunteers, 6VT, ScotRail, CPT Scotland, Lothian Buses, CityLink, Ember Bus, Garelochhead Coaches, First Bus, West Coast Motors, Borders Buses, McGill's Bus Group, Stagecoach, Whitelaws Coaches, and NorthLink Ferries.