

Hello! My name is Georgie and I'm a ranger leader in Stockport. I've been in Girlguiding for 15 years and have recently been selected to be a leader on the 2025 Conservation trip with Girlguiding North West England!

Sustainability is becoming a bigger priority for Guiding and our participants and we wanted to reflect that in the opportunities we are offering them. We all know that recycling and reducing waste is an easy way for everyone to get involved in sustainability and doing their bit to help with climate change which many units are fabulous at. There are badges on badges our girls have worked hard to complete that have helped them learn about recycling, renewable energy, our carbon footprint and how important our planet is to protect. We now want to put this knowledge and passion to use on a bigger scale.

Sustainability and conservation work is extremely important to me as I was a participant on the Madagascar trip that went in the summer of 2023 where we worked with the charity SEED to carry out biodiversity surveys of lemurs and herpetofauna. This was to monitor regeneration of the populations as 93% of the wildlife is endemic and under threat of losing their habitats. Working and living in the rainforest and interacting with people in the local communities really put an emphasis on how fragile ecosystems are and how vital it is for us to work towards sustainability, which is why I was so interested in being involved in the 2025 trips. I think it's amazing that our young participants want to be so involved in conservation and volunteering but now they have an opportunity to make a bigger, more positive impact than ever before.

The North West region trips typically have 4 themes, ICE (International Community Experience), Community, Culture and Conservation. However, this year all 4 trips are working towards a common goal, Journey to zero.

Journey to zero is all about travelling sustainably and reducing our carbon footprint and impact on the environment. We are aiming to reduce and offset our carbon as much as possible by being more conscious of our consumption, travel plans and activities during the whole process of the trip. This started with how we selected our destinations.

As guiding is girl-lead we wanted the participants to be as involved as possible, making destination suggestions and voting on their favourite ideas while keeping in mind how we would travel to those countries and what opportunities we may have while there to offset the carbon we have produced. After a month of research, debating and planning, our destinations have been selected! Our ICE team is off to Croatia, Community to India, Culture to South Korea and the Conservation team is heading to Costa Rica!

Journey to zero is a really important goal for the entire Costa Rica team as we are all passionate about the environment and hold the theme of conservation dear to our hearts. While we are in Costa Rica we are going to volunteer at an animal sanctuary working to help facilitate the recovery of injured birds and sloths so they can be released. The girls have also planned the second half of our itinerary to include exploring national parks, visiting the mangroves and potentially a bit of ziplining thrown in there. In addition to this we are brainstorming ways to offset our carbon to build it into our schedule such as beach cleans, tree planting as well as being mindful of the accommodation we stay in and the transport we take.

We also know our Journey to Zero starts now and is a goal we want to be working towards throughout this whole process so we are making our briefing weekends more sustainable by camping and using less energy, eating vegetarian meals, car sharing to reduce emissions and coming up with ways to fundraise sustainably. The biggest theme for our fundraising is that we are trying to not create any more waste so stalls like teddy tombolas where we use donated stuffed animals, selling items of clothes we don't want, badge sewing and non uniform days. The list is endless. One of our most recent ideas was to get our uniform second hand so I have been collecting hoodies in the same colour so we can make our uniform and not produce more clothing waste.

There are plenty of ways all our trips are working on reducing our carbon including simply getting friends and families involved or educating and encouraging the people around us. As we all know every little helps and we hope to see you joining us reducing your carbon in your everyday life and while you're travelling!