



**PHILMONT PLANNING GUIDE
CREW 824, CHESAPEAKE, VIRGINIA**

Table of Contents

Deciding to Go to Philmont	4
Why Go?	4
Trek Options	4
Before You Sign Up	4
Signing Up – the Lottery	5
Group Size and Age Requirements	5

Recruiting a Full Crew	6
Budgeting for the Trip and Payments	6
Youth Crew Leaders	7
Choosing the Trek Itinerary	7
Travel Planning	8
Planning the Trip	8
Pre-Trek Itinerary Options	8
Airline Flights	11
Ground Transportation	12
Hotels	12
Getting Ready to Go	12
Training for the Trip	12
Crew Equipment Needed	13
Personal Equipment Needed	14
What Not to Bring	14
What Philmont Issues	15
Food Issuance	15
Getting Crew Shirts.....	15
Trading Post	16
Medical Information	16
Adult Training Required	17
Tour and Activity Plan	17
Roster	17
Pre-Trek Travel	17
Your Trek	17
Getting to Philmont	17
Arrival and Check-in Experience	17
Your Ranger	18
Leaving for the Trail.....	20

On the Trek20
Food at Philmont20
Hiking Tips20
The Call of Nature21
Back to Base Camp22
Awards to Earn23
Departure Experience23
Back to the Airport23
Things to Know23

DECIDING TO GO TO PHILMONT

Why go?

Philmont is the ultimate high adventure experience for Scouts and Venturers. The combination of mountain hiking, exceptional camp staff and programs, and the opportunity to develop leadership skills in a unique Scouting environment, make this the BSA high adventure program not to be missed.

Trek Options

Philmont offers two principal treks available to Venturing crews and Scout troops: 12-day and 7-day treks. The 7-day trek was introduced in 2012, and may seem attractive because it permits a crew to take the trip while requiring the adults to leave work behind for only a week. However, this planning guide focuses on the experiences available with a 12-day trek, for the following reasons:

- The longer trek gives the youth in the crew a better chance to get their act together and function in their varied leadership roles.
- The shorter trek just doesn't give you much time: the first and last days are taken up with arrival and departure, and two more days are spent learning basic skills from your assigned ranger, so the trek really leaves the crew on its own in the backcountry for less than 4 full days.
- One reason to do the trek is to complete the miles for the 50-miler award.
- Philmont is as much about the quality activities at the staffed camps as it is about the hiking. It's hard to get much variety of experiences on a short trek.

Before You Sign Up

Get your crew interested in the program. Philmont provides numerous videos on their website and on YouTube, and the 2011 and 2014 crews from Troop 824 have lots of pictures available. Take the following steps:

- Send an email to the youth and parents announcing an upcoming meeting presentation
- Send a similar email to the troop, offering possible slots to troop members who meet the age requirements
- Conduct the presentation
- Send a follow-up email to parent and youth asking for those who are committed to going, or who may be interested
- Determine whether you have enough for one or more crews

- Confirm the signup date for the Philmont lottery, which takes place in the fall two years before your trek (for example, November 2015 for a summer 2017 trek).

Signing Up – the Lottery

Each fall, Philmont assigns spots for two summers hence in an online lottery. The format of the lottery has varied from year to year, but in fall 2014 signup took place in November, with lottery winners to be notified in December 2014. In 2014, there were no assigned weeks during which crews from different BSA geographic regions were to sign up, as in the past.

The lottery entry process is simple: an online registration form and the chance to register for various trek starting dates. Because picking a trek that spans July 4 gives the adults a little bit of a break on taking vacation days, I have tended to rank 10-15 starting dates that include that holiday as part of the trip. August dates have the potential to interfere with school sports and earlier school start dates for private school students.

It is possible that a unit will fail to get a lottery slot, but Philmont maintains a waiting list, and spaces open up throughout the year prior to the trek. Crew 824 failed to get slots in the 2013 lottery for summer 2015, but was eventually offered in late summer 2014 two crews on one of the dates we had originally requested. (However, by that point, the crew had decided to go to Sea Base in 2015).

If picked in the lottery, the crew must send Philmont a deposit of \$100 per person by the end of January. However, deposits are required only for the minimum number of persons per crew (7 for one crew and 14 for two crews), so there is time for more crew recruiting and to allow folks to make their final decision to go to Philmont.

Group Size and Age Requirements

A Philmont crew may be as small as 7 or as large as 12, so a two-crew reservation can accommodate 14-24 youth and adults. Philmont charges on a per-person basis, so there is no financial downside to having a crew smaller than the maximum. Each crew must meet the two deep adult requirement. A co-ed crew must have co-ed adult leadership (21+).

Each crew must have at least as many youth as adults, with no more than 4 adults per crew.

The minimum age requirement for Philmont is age 14, or 13 and completed 8th grade.

Recruiting a Full Crew

My philosophy about planning a high adventure trip is from “Field of Dreams”: “If You Build It, They Will Come.” You can sign up for the lottery before you know whether you will be able to fill one or two crews, and make the crew number decision when the deposit becomes due. You can keep building the crew or crews literally until the last minute (subject to the cost of booking a last-minute flight). If you have more than 12 participants, book two crews (assuming you have two adults for each).

As the “buzz” about your trip builds, continue to promote the opportunity to your crew and the troop. If you need to fill your crew with a few more Venturers or Scouts, consider publicizing the openings at District roundtables, on the District website’s camping page, and at VOA (Venturing Officer’s Association) meetings.

My son and I attended Sea Base as add-ons to another troop’s crew, and we included a youth from another unit in our 2011 Philmont crew. Both experiences were great. Having a youth who needs to be integrated into the crew can be a positive experience.

Budgeting for the Trip and Payments

The 2016 cost of a 12-day trek at Philmont is \$870 (compared to \$725 in 2011).

That fee pays for the equipment issued to the crew, all food while on base (first lunch on base through departure day breakfast), and the cost of the ranger, who remains with you until the third day.

I would factor in about \$400-500 for flights, about \$150 each for the van and gas, and \$300-400 each for pre Philmont excursions, lodging/camping/meals for the pre-Philmont days, and perhaps \$40 for Philmont crew shirts. Each person will want to bring some money for trading post items.

Philmont’s payment schedule is as follows:

- A deposit of \$100 per person (based on minimum crew size) is due January 30 the calendar year before the trek.
- A second payment of \$385 is due October 1 of the calendar year before the trek.
- The balance of \$385 is due by March 1 of the year of the trek.

I generally recommend that units send in the minimum amounts required for minimum crew size, to allow for possible cancellations (health, loss of interest, financial situations, military transfers). In 2011, we paid for our 12th person at the time of arrival.

Philmont makes up to one scholarship per crew (generally about \$300) available on the basis of need. The application deadline is December 31 prior to the trek, and additional information is available through the website.

Youth Crew Leaders

Each crew will elect its own youth leaders:

- A crew leader. This person needs organizational skills. He or she will be the youth that helps with the arrival day sign in, and who signs the crew in at each camp, food distribution location, etc. This election should be held several months prior to departure in order to allow this person to provide leadership on at least one work-up hike.
- A chaplain's aide. Leads the evening "thorns/rozes" discussions, mealtime prayers, and works with the crew to earn the Duty to God patch.
- Wilderness Guia. The Leave No Trace leader for the crew.

Choosing the Trek Itinerary

Each year, Philmont publishes a trek itinerary book that details all the treks available to the crew. The youth in the crew should decide (with guidance) their top choices for a trek they will enjoy, and may want to consider the following factors:

- Total hiking mileage. Longer hiking days may interfere with full enjoyment of the various activities available. Hiking distances for a 12 day trek range from just over 50 miles to more than 100 miles. In 2011, we chose a trek of a bit less than 60 miles.
- Desired activities. The youth should choose which activities they're most interested in.
- Possible layover days. Two days in one campsite is a luxury. It won't necessarily mean downtime – the day will be busy, but may provide a needed respite for tired feet. We had a layover at Cimarroncito, which had showers, a place to wash clothes, a rock gym and rock climbing. We also completed our trail service on our layover day.
- Showers. The itinerary book marks camps with shower facilities. Beware that these are not always heated (especially in a summer where there is high forest fire risk and wood fires to heat the water may be banned).
- Desired mountains to climb. Other than the Tooth of Time (see below), the best known mountains may be Mt. Phillips and Baldy Mountain.

- Finishing on the Tooth of Time. This is the Philmont landmark, and quite a few treks climb the Tooth (a challenging rock scramble) on the last day of hiking. The trail down to base camp from there is a frustrating several hours of switchbacks, but the view is magnificent, and somehow, hiking back into base camp beats an anticlimactic bus ride.

The trek guide for each year is made available in March, but your crew can rank likely treks based on the prior year trek guide, because changes are minimal. Once the guide becomes available, the crew should rank their top choices, and one of the adult advisors should be prepared to enter the trek choices online. You will be permitted to enter five choices, and then another five if none of those is available. Keep in mind that there are many more treks available each day than there are crews headed out each day, and that two crews per trek per day are permitted, so there is an excellent chance your crew will get one of its top choices.

The 2014 trek guide is here:

<http://www.philmontscout ranch.org/filestore/philmont/pdf/2014ItineraryGuide.pdf>

TRAVEL PLANNING

Planning the Trip

Philmont is about three hours northeast of Albuquerque, about a two hour drive from Taos, and about four or so hours from Denver. As noted below, this guide focuses on options involving travel into and out of Albuquerque.

Pre-Trek Itinerary Options

Flying into the airport and leaving directly for Philmont is a possibility, but not the ideal option. For many Venturers/Scouts, this trip to the west will be a new experience, and taking two or three days after landing to work your way to Philmont will open up the chance for teambuilding, to see cultural and natural wonders, and to get acclimated to a higher altitude than we experience in Virginia.

Thus, the decision points are:

- Whether to fly into Colorado or New Mexico.
- Whether to engage in pre-trek activities.
- Whether to travel on your own, or use an outfitter such as Blue Sky Adventures.

http://www.blueskyadventures.net/Philmont_Tours.html

If you are comfortable planning a multi-step itinerary, I recommend self-planning. You can maintain your own schedule, travel with your own crew (as opposed to combining with the other crews necessary to fill a bus), and likely save money by not involving an intermediary/driver, etc.

This guide focuses on a self-planned New Mexico pre-trek experience, but flying into Denver is also popular, and some of the typical activities for units that do that include:

- Colorado Rockies baseball game
- Rocky Mountain National park for a workup hike
- Gardens of the Gods
- Air Force Academy
- Mesa Verde
- Pikes Peak
- Whitewater rafting

New Mexico also offers a number of adventures:

- Bandelier National Monument, with cliff dwellings, petroglyphs and other aspects of ancient culture, as well as a number of hikes.
<http://www.nps.gov/band/index.htm>
- Santa Fe, the oldest state capital in the US, with great food, a nice cathedral, and markets



- Taos and the Kit Carson Museum
- Taos Pueblo



- Whitewater rafting. We took a class 4+ trip with Far Flung outfitters north of Taos, through the Taos Box (about \$130 per person for the day in 2011).
<http://www.farflung.com/>
- Hiking the dunes at Great Sand Dunes National Park in southern Colorado. These dunes are multiple times taller than Jockey's Ridge on the Outer Banks, and the combination of heat, altitude and the difficulty of hiking uphill in sand made it a challenging workup/acclimation hike.
<http://www.nps.gov/grsa/index.htm>



Our 2011 itinerary included:

- Day 1: morning flight to Albuquerque, stop at REI for cooking stove fuel and other supplies, visit Santa Fe, eat in Santa Fe, go to hotel in Taos
- Day 2: whitewater rafting in Taos, drive to Great Sand Dunes, evening hike, camp at national park campground
- Day 3: Hike Great sand Dunes, travel back to Taos, visit Pueblo, great dinner, stay in same hotel
- Day 4: Head out early for Philmont

Airline Flights

Book in advance to get better fares. In 2011, we maintained a fare alert on Kayak, and booked in September for the following July, when airfares from Newport News to Albuquerque actually fell under \$300. \$400-500 may be a more reasonable expected range, and remember to check Southwest Airlines, which is not available on the airfare search engines.

Generally, the airlines will allow you to book nine passengers on one itinerary. In addition, if one of your crew has airline status or an airline credit card that entitles him or her to free checked luggage, you may be able to save \$50 per person by using that status.

From Norfolk, you may be able to find flights on each of the major airlines, and consider both Newport News and even Richmond for possible cost savings.

Ground Transportation

For these kinds of Scouting treks, I tend to favor renting 12 or 15 passenger vans from a secondary rental company. A 15 passenger van, after adding luggage, can generally hold 10-12 people. However, given the bulk of backpacks needed for Philmont, keep in mind that the van will be extraordinarily cramped (you will use all the areas under the seats, and an entire seating row, for gear). 15 passenger vans have minimal storage space behind the rear seat.

In 2011, we utilized (on the recommendation of friends who had been to Philmont) a Rent-a-Wreck location near the Albuquerque airport, and for fifteen days of rental, paid about \$1100 (leaving the van unused at Philmont for 10 days). That location appears to have closed, and I am still investigating other reasonably priced alternatives.

Hotels

On the 2011 trek, we spent the arrival night and the night before in Taos at a Comfort Suites that offered two beds plus a sofa bed, so that our crew of 12 fit into three rooms. My preference on high adventure treks is to choose these “suite style” moderately priced hotels.

That hotel appears to have converted to the Sagebrush Inn & Suites, but a spot check in November 2104 yielded a room rate of about \$129/night for July 2015, including breakfast, which amounts to less than \$30/night per person.

Other alternatives include:

- National Forest camping in Carson National Forest:
<http://www.fs.usda.gov/activity/carson/recreation/camping-cabins/?recid=44054&actid=29>
- Camping at Bandelier National Monument (\$35/night for a group site for a minimum of 10, reservations through recreation.gov):
<http://www.nps.gov/band/planyourvisit/ponderosa-group-campground.htm>
- Camping at Great Sand Dunes national Park in southern Colorado (individual or group sites, \$40-\$80 per crew):
<http://www.nps.gov/grsa/planyourvisit/campgrounds.htm>

GETTING READY TO GO

Training for the Trip

Each crew should ensure that all crew members are fit for strenuous hiking, and participate in work up hikes. Some crews have their members attend a mini-Philmont (a spring

break AT trip or High Knoll at Blue Ridge Scout Reservation, for example). At minimum, the crew should plan strenuous AT hikes in both the fall and spring preceding their trek, and demand participation by the crew members.

Two strenuous AT hikes that work well as Philmont preparation include:

- The Three Ridges area just north of the Tye River on the AT, which can be done as a two night loop hike starting at either Reed's Gap or the Tye River, using the blue-blazed Mau-Har trail to complete a loop.
- The Priest, the ascent of which begins just south of the Tye River.

Both these hikes involve significant gains of altitude over relatively short distances, and are good east coast proxies for the more difficult hiking moments at Philmont.

Crew Equipment Needed

The equipment the crew needs to bring includes the following:

- Sewing kit
- Tent Stakes - 10 per person (there is some rocky ground)
- 2-3 collapsible 2.5 gallon water containers
- 2-3 backpacking stoves, with fuel
- Duct tape
- Spices if desired for cooking
- Waterproof ground cloth per tent
- Nylon cord 3 x 50 ft x 1/8"
- 2-3 water purifiers/filters
- Sunscreen SPF 25+ (several tubes)
- Insect spray (non-aerosol)
- Carabiner (for oops bag)
- Multi-tool
- Trowel/shovel
- First aid kit

The crew first aid kit should include the following items:

25 Assorted Band-Aids	Antihistamines (Benadryl)
Medicated foot powder	Steroid cream
Ziploc bag or small biohazard bag	Anaphylaxis kit (if needed)
Moleskin/molefoam/blister kit	Throat lozenges
Gauze pads—4" x 4"	Scissors

Adhesive tape—1" x 15'
4" elastic bandage
Antibiotic ointment
Disposable alcohol wipes
Triangular bandage

Tweezers
Non-latex gloves
CPR Barrier device
Antacids
Acetaminophen
Ibuprofen tablets

Personal Equipment Needed

The materials supplied to the crew by Philmont will detail a personal packing list, and so in this guide, I just want to emphasize the importance of several items:

- Rain jacket and rain pants. I carried the old lightweight BSA yellow issue, but these are not a luxury. Rainstorms tend to be brief but intense. You won't be carrying many clothes, so keep them dry.
- Pack cover. Ditto – not optional.
- Good hat. A broad brimmed hat like a Tilley hat is helpful. There's a lot of sun.
- Sunscreen. Essential.
- Enough water containers. Plan to drink one liter per hour, which argues for a camelbak bladder and a couple of one liter bottles. Preserve one bottle for use as a "smellable" drinking container (for mixing Gatorade, etc.).
- Lightweight camp shoes (you will want to get the boots off occasionally)
- Liner socks. Minimize blisters
- Moleskin, in addition to what's in the crew first aid kit.
- Gold Bond powder for foot care.
- A fleece hat and gloves (in early July, we bottomed out below 40 degrees a couple of nights above 10,000 feet)
- Synthetic clothing. No cotton, except in a fleece. Wool is OK for socks.
- Instant coffee/teabags. If you need it, you bring it.
- Tents. No one gets their own tent. Adults tend to sleep with their own kids, but everyone is two to a tent.

What Not to Bring

You will be carrying up to four days of food and your share of crew equipment. Don't overpack. Here's what not to bring:

- Too many clothes. Seriously, two pairs of underwear and two sets of hiking clothes are enough. I used old diaper pins to pin washed clothes to my pack for drying.

- A pocketknife. Two per crew should suffice.
- A razor. You won't need it, and you want people to know you've been out there for 10 days.
- Deodorant. Attracts bears, and you'll all smell awful, so get over it.
- Oven bags. See further below. No longer allowed at Philmont.

What Philmont Issues

Philmont issues a lot of equipment, which must be divided among the crew:

- Nylon dining fly
- 2 collapsible poles for dining fly
- 2 person tents with poles for those who would rather use Philmont's rather than their own (you provide the stakes!)
- A trail chef kit with two pots and a frying pan, with lids, and an extra dishwashing pot
- A large spoon and spatula
- Plastic trash bags
- Hot pot tongs
- Salt/pepper
- Scrub pads, dishwashing soap and hand sanitizer
- Bear bags
- Micropur water purification tablets
- Nylon rope
- Plastic strainer & rubber scraper
- Toilet paper (periodically resupplied, but often needs to be rationed – important to keep dry)

Food Issuance

Your trek will have two food resupply days, so that at any time, you are carrying a maximum of four days of food. The first food allotment will be issued on arrival day.

Getting Crew Shirts

Most Philmont crews buy personalized wicking hiking shirts. We acquired ours locally at Sports Connection, and were able to get an embroidered Philmont logo. We chose green threads on tan shirts, and got compliments at Philmont for choosing earth tones rather than neon shirts that kind of make the ridges at Philmont less attractive. The shirts were around \$20 each.

Here was our logo (the one on the right):



Trading Post

Tooth of Time Traders, the Philmont trading post, is a world-class outdoors store. We ordered a lot of items (neckerchiefs, bolos, belts, belt buckles) in advance. Leather tooled belts and Philmont buckles are a traditional purchase item for most Philmont travelers.

The online store is located here:

<http://www.toothoftimetraders.com/>

One luxury item I'd recommend as a back-saver, especially for adults, is a Crazy Creek Philmont chair. At this off-season writing, it doesn't appear on the website, but it is available every summer, and is essential for mealtimes, etc. It attaches easily to the back of a backpack with a carabiner.

In 2011, I traveled with a number of small Ziploc bags with spices, but I now use a GSI spice missile, which will hold 6 different spices. See here:

<http://www.toothoftimetraders.com/Spice-Missile-by-GIS/PABAIDCKNKMGEJH/Product>

Medical Information

Each person must have and bring a current (within 12 months) completed BSA Health Form, including Parts A, B and C. Make sure the form is signed by the physician, and include a copy of the insurance card.

Philmont strictly applies BSA's standard high adventure weight limits.

Adult Training Required

The following training requirements apply to each crew:

- Every adult with current Youth Protection Training (both the Scouting and Venturing modules)
- At least two adults with Wilderness First Aid (new requirement for 2015, previously one per crew)
- At least two adults per crew with CPR training

Evidence of these training requirements should be printed and brought with you for check-in. For Philmont purposes, “adult” is 21 or older.

Tour and Activity Plan

A BSA Tour and Activity Plan must be completed online at myscouting and brought with you for check-in.

Roster

Your final crew roster is submitted on arrival.

Pre-Trek Travel

Details of our pre-trek experience are above. We had three drivers to the airport, and two of us had airline luggage privileges either through airline status or a credit card (all the reservations were booked with one of those two people on the itinerary). Generally, large duffel bags were sufficient to hold individual backpacks, as well as clothing for travel and the pre-trek days. We flew through Atlanta, all wore BSA uniforms in transit, and we stayed together as a group, or used the buddy system, in airports and otherwise while traveling.

YOUR TREK

Getting to Philmont

The drive to Philmont from Taos is less than two hours traveling east in US 64 (yes, the same road that ends in Manteo), and it makes sense to arrive there by 10 or 11 in order to minimize rushing around on a very busy check-in day.

Arrival and Check-In Experience

The arrival day can be arduous, and involves many steps.

- Check-in and tent assignment. If you get there early enough, you will be able to look at a map and request base camp tents (6 for the 12 of you) as near to a shower house and/or the parking lot where your gear is, as possible. The youth crew leader – not the adult – does the checking in.
- Meeting the ranger. Meet your ranger and grab your first lunch (and say the Philmont Grace for the first time)
- The paperwork meeting. The crew leader and one adult advisor need to go over all paperwork, and the itinerary, with Philmont staff. Final roster gets turned in, final payment made, and all training checked off. The staff highlights fire conditions, water conditions, places where water will need to be carried, etc. The crew leader gets instructions on how to check in for activities and staffed camps.
- Medical check-in. Everyone heads to the health area to have their medical forms checked. Medical inhalers need to be brought to this check-in. All questions get resolved, but it can be time-consuming.
- Equipment checkout. The crew checks out its gear, and with the ranger's help, makes sure everything is in good condition, and that the original issuance of meals is complete.
- Shakedown. The ranger checks everyone's gear to make sure weight is being minimized. Rangers have little tolerance for luxury items, but in the end, that's an individual choice.
- Chapel. Every day at Philmont, there are Protestant, Catholic, LDS and Jewish services. These tend to be inspiring, and they by definition consist of both outgoing and incoming (smelly, unshaven) crews.
- Taking the crew photo. This may be postponed until the following morning, just before departure.
- Dinner
- Welcome program. A little bit of Philmont history and appreciation in a campfire setting.

Your Ranger

Your ranger will be an experienced (often in a second season at Philmont after working a more menial job the prior summer) hiker and college student. It is the ranger's job to make sure that the crew can travel safely on its own after a couple of days of training. The ranger will focus on:

- LNT skills
- How to set up camp

- Water purification
- Use of the “toilet” facilities
- Setting up the dining/equipment fly
- Cooking skills
- Cleanup
- Bear safety
- Use of bear bags
- Use of the sumps
- Hiking safety (unbuckling when crossing water, for example)

The ranger has a lot to teach, and the first night or two may be late. You depart on your hike the morning of your second day, and the ranger leaves you two days later (and hikes back to base camp and starts over again with another crew).

Rangers may have their own preferences that don’t match yours. For example, ours was unfamiliar with UV water purifiers, and really didn’t want us to use anything other than the Micropur tablets (which require waiting time before the water is drinkable).



Leaving for the Trail

You will depart for your hiking departure point on the morning of the second day, sometime after breakfast. Typically, you will be transported by school bus to your departure point.

On the Trek

The variety of staffed programs is so large that it's hard to describe a "typical trek." Here are a few things to know:

- Take advantage of every program opportunity. Get on the trail early.
- Participate in all evening programs/skit competitions.
- Conduct a "roses/thorns" session every evening.
- Teach leadership lessons – leading and following.
- Let the youth lead. This is their adventure, and your vacation.
- Utilize the patrol method. It worked for B-P, and it's ideal at Philmont.

Food at Philmont

There are several things to know about food at Philmont:

- Menus are generally available in advance on the Philmont website.
- The daily meal allotment is high calorie and extremely high in sodium content.
- The meals are numbered: lunch 2, for example, is the lunch on the 2nd, 12th and 22nd of the month. This means that you will repeat a couple of meals on your final day.
- You will likely have just one cooked breakfast, and no cooked lunches.
- You will get the best of the trail foods being offered by all the leading makers of high energy hiking and outdoors products.
- You will get sick of breakfast bars, dense fruit bars, etc. A breakfast might average 5 items, and by the middle of the trek, you will likely leave several items in the "swap boxes" located at most staffed camps.
- You will not lose weight at Philmont if you eat everything they provide.

Hiking Tips

A few hiking tips:

- Choose a navigator each day, and allow that person to lead, along with the crew leader.

- Put your slowest hiker third in line – close enough to the front to slow down the pace, but not at the front where there will be no incentive to speed up.
- Keep everyone in view at all times. Don't tolerate hikers who can't bear to wait for the slower hikers.
- Let the youth lead, including down the wrong path. A five mile wrong turn can be a great story and a leadership lesson.
- Take frequent "toasting" breaks to force everyone to drink.
- Agree on a schedule for hiking breaks and stick to it (for example, 20 minutes followed by a five minute rest break). Don't shame hikers who are counting on the breaks by making them insist on them.
- Keep packs on during all short breaks.
- Most hiking days at Philmont, with short to moderate mileage treks, will actually be shorter than a typical weekend hiking day on the AT. In 11 days on the trail in 2011, we had only three days of 8 or more miles.

The Call of Nature

Opportunities for addressing core bodily functions take one of several forms:

- Red Roof Inns. Standard latrines with walls and roofs. Few and far between in the backcountry. Male Scouts/Venturers are asked not to urinate in these because it makes them harder to maintain.



- Pilot/Bombardier and Pilot/Copilot. The picture below is the pilot/bombardier variety (back to back as opposed to side by side).



Back to Base Camp

Enjoy the final few miles back to base camp. Everyone is tired, and water may need to be rationed (Tooth Ridge is dry), but the scenery and anticipation are great. Consider hiking the last mile or two in silence to let everyone contemplate their experience and the challenges they have overcome.

Philmont does take mailed packages, and one mother was kind enough to send us a large box of Oreos. Of course, we'd had those for lunch a couple of times, so that may not have been the optimal choice for a care package.



Awards to Earn

You will have the chance to earn these awards represented by patches:

- The Philmont arrowhead patch, which has the pocket loop. Everyone will earn this, and it is not possible to buy extras.
- The standard Duty to God religious award patch available at BSA High Adventure programs, which typically requires attendance at the arrival and departure services and prayers at mealtime and other activities.
- Wilderness Pledge patch, earned under the leadership of the crew's Wilderness Guide.

The last two patches are purchased at the trading post; the first is part of the Philmont fee.

Departure Experience

You will check in your equipment on the afternoon you hike back into base camp, be assigned a new set of tents for the last night, and given a chance to attend Mass and other religious services as a departing crew. Leaving Philmont to eat off base is highly discouraged, and dinner is provided that evening in the dining hall. Most crews probably grab ice cream, and spend time at the trading post. There is an evening departure program across the road, and your crew should conduct a final thorns/roses program in which each participant reflects on their experience.

As part of the sign-in process, the crew will be issued their Philmont arrowhead patches, which I recommend be distributed as the final crew action that evening.

I recommend packing your vehicle to the extent possible the evening before departure. There is minimal sign-out paperwork that morning for the crew leader and advisor, and you can hit the road for the approximately three hour drive back to Albuquerque as soon as everyone has grabbed breakfast.

Back to the Airport

Flights from Albuquerque back to the east coast tend to leave in the 1-2 pm Mountain Time frame, getting in late evening in Norfolk or Newport News, so departure from Philmont by around 8 am is important. At Albuquerque, you will encounter more arriving Scouts, and you will be distinguishable as having come off the trail by facial growth, etc. There will be plenty of places for lunch at the airport. Plan to have one or two adults return the van while the others check in.

Things to Know

A few other miscellaneous useful tidbits:

- Cell phone service is minimal except at very high altitudes (the Tooth of Time, Mt. Phillips). Batteries are heavy to carry and drain quickly, and at most staff camps in 2011, the staff was very reluctant to allow even adults to recharge.
- Philmont no longer allows the use of turkey/oven bags for cooking, because although they save a lot of cleanup time, the accumulation of thousands of bags is an environmental and wildlife concern.
- Try to include a musical program and a mine-based program in your itinerary (or go to Cypher's, which has both).
- You will likely have the chance to have your boots branded at some point during the trek.
- The BSA 50-miler award requires 50 miles of hiking and 10 hours of trail service. You will be required to do three of those hours at Philmont, but will need to schedule the other hours at home.
- Your crew number is a blend of your arrival date (705 = July 5), and a crew number and letter.
- If your itinerary includes fishing, you will need to purchase New Mexico fishing licenses at the camp where you fish.

Prepared by Jim Wheaton, Crew 824
November 2014
Eagle Patrol, Wood Badge Course S7-596-13