**Philmont**

**Lessons Learned by Troop 375**

**For Parents and Youth in the Future**

(last updated October 2023)

Philmont’s website provides a great deal of information, as do the required reading guides that they hand out to the crews early on. These include the required packing list, the required crew first aid kit contents, and other information. It touches on just about anything of concern (dietary restrictions, fishing licenses and so on). Read these thoroughly. It is **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** that you reach out to former scouts/adults who have completed this high adventure. They will provide critical information/advice to make your high adventure an easier and memorable experience!

Early Planning: Have as early as possible an initial meeting to discuss team personnel roles, and have someone who has been to Philmont before attend to answer questions. At least one of the Troop’s backpacks should be shown so that people have an idea of the size that is needed. Identify the crew equipment that needs to be brought and who will be responsible for it. Adults (at least one per crew) will need to have CPR and Wilderness First Aid training, so it is important to plan ahead on getting these certifications. There are other required trainings, but these are less difficult to obtain (being Scout-leader specific). Doing this early also allows spreading out the purchase of needed gear (particularly important if there are multiple family members attending).

The group should agree early on the travel dates, whether they are flying, taking the train, or driving (flying will get you to Colorado earlier and allow you to spend time there to acclimate), and the route of travel. Reservations for hotels, or transportation from Dayton to Colorado Springs/Denver/Cimarron, NM, should be made early. The group should also agree early on whether there will be a crew t-shirt and if so what its design will be.

**Physicality**: The group should also be understanding the physical tasks that are required for this—carrying heavy packs for long distances (30–50-pound packs, up to approx. 15 miles per day, and with lots of elevation changes), proper gear, how to treat food/water, and how to pack their backpack to minimize weight and optimize space. It should not be a first major outdoor experience for younger scouts or adults—though not impossible, it is considered High Adventure for a reason. It is **highly recommended** that several gear shakedowns and prep hikes with all gear in backpacks be completed to ensure that everyone is physically fit, get used to the amount of weight you will carry, and get you mentally prepared for the adventure you are about to partake!

**Gear**: The gear list should be followed closely. There is personal gear and crew gear. The Troop itself has at least one Crew First Aid Kit that is reasonably stocked (it needs to be reviewed and certain items likely replaced). Once at Philmont, you will also get tents, food, and cooking gear which will need to be separated and carried by each participant.

Everyone should go through gear checks and hike with their backpacks before attending the high adventure. This will ensure only proper, necessary gear is taken and properly fit.

From experience, a roll of athletic tape (the linen or cotton type is best), sock liners, Blister powder (eg. Blister Shield) are highly recommended. Trekking poles are recommended as well. Be sure to have a fairly new pair of hiking boots that are broken in (10-20 miles of hiking). Perhaps even shoe glue to repair boots. The trading posts are limited on trail and are usually out of high use items. Plan on bringing enough Motrin, athletic tape, and blister care for multiple people for multiple days.

**Cell phones**: Don’t bring them except for use as a camera (and consider getting an older cell phone you can lose). There is some cell coverage at base and none on the trail. Obviously you can bring a cell phone for the travel up and back.

**Logistics**: You first have to determine your arrival date and departure date and work backwards from there. They need you to arrive between 10:00 and 12:00 PM on your arrival to Philmont. The drive from Colorado Spring to Cimarron is approximately 3 hours. If you arrive before lunch time, you can get lunch in the dining hall. The welcome center and tent city is the last set of buildings on the right (Scout museum will be on the left). You will want to arrive in Colorado a day or two early to get acclimated to the altitude. Most groups fly into Colorado Springs and then spend 1-2 days in the area.

Colorado Springs. We used the following hotel for 2023: Hampton Inn, 1307 Republic Drive, Colorado Spring, CO, 80921

It was close to the AF Academy where we were able to do a driving/walking tour. The next day we went to Garden of the Gods and Pikes Peak. This definitely helped us get used to the altitude.

You will also need a rental car to drive to/from airport to Philmont. Rental vans are a lot cheaper if rented Off airport property. Would need 2 adults to go get vehicles and drive back to airport. Enterprise, 803 W Colorado Ave. 18 minutes or 12 miles from airport. Booked through USAA. Reserved 2 minivans. $781.66 each.

**Spending money**: everyone should be ready to spend money at the Trading Post. They are serious in the guidebook about people spending about $100 there. Remember money for the meals on the way to/from including any days spent in Colorado before hand.

**What goes in the Backpack?**

The Philmont packing list includes quite a lot of things for each individual, but it is important to know that these cover three different parts of the trip. The first is simply the travel to/from Philmont. The second is what you need to use at the base camp (for Philmont base). The third is what you actually need to have while out on the trek.  Where this creates confusion is in the two sets of clothing — two pairs of base layer, two pairs of long pants, and so on. You will *wear* one set when you leave camp, and the other is in your backpack.

You’ll find, then, that the backpack needs to contain roughly the following:

\*Sleeping bag

\*Sleeping pad

\*Packable pillow

\*Pair camp shoes (put the socks for these inside the shoes)

\*Spare long sleeve shirt, spare pair socks, spare pair of underwear, spare pair of long pants (put this into a stuff sack—you don’t want them loose)

\*Lightweight Fleece Jacket

\*Bandana/Camp Towel

\*Toothbrush/travel toothpaste (in plastic bag or stuff sack)

\*Mess kit (you only need a utensil, a bowl, and perhaps a cup if you plan on drinking coffee or hot chocolate)

\*Headlamp

Prepare to wear on the trail the first day:

\*Shirt/socks/underwear/long pants

\*Raincoat (available to access in pack)

\*Hat

\*Boots

\*Belt

\*Buff

\*Water bottle (attached to your belt with *sturdy* D ring carabiner clip; consider a Nalgene Neoprene sleeve or a knotted paracord bottle lanyard — do *not* attach by the lid’s retention plastic as it *will* break)

Oddities:

\*Shower will be limited on trail. If you are lucky you will get 1-2 showers (At most!) while on trail.

\*those with prescription glasses will want a sturdy glasses case. Be prepared to wear sunglasses all the time on the trail.

\*Those bringing a camera should think carefully about how they’ll carry it. Some have had waterproof cameras they tucked into a pocket in the jacket. Some have brought old smart phones and used them just as cameras to take pictures at the camp sites.

\*A small notepad or memo book and a golf pencil will allow you to record information about your trek while underway, and make notes (in pencil) on the maps to record your progress.

\*A small ziplock bag of spices (including seasonings packets from pizza boxes, spare sauce packets from Taco Bell, and so on) are fun to have to season breakfast and dinner. They will pack coffee if you ask, but you can bring single-servings instant ones for a little trail magic.

\*Duck Tape: take an old credit card or piece of plastic from a credit card offer, and run some duct tape around that. Put in plastic bag. About four feet should help for minor repairs. Some will wrap it around water bottles. But you *do* want to have some.

\*Crocks work great around camp and in shower houses. They are light weight and easy to carry on a backpack. (This would be your camp shoes)

The other things are travel or for when you get back (like the shower shoes, bathing towel and the toiletries bag). You can change into the spare set of clothes you lugged around after your shower.

Crews have brought extra paracord to rig clotheslines to dry clothes, socks and hats. Crews have even succeeded in bringing tiny collapsible chairs, such as those by Helinox or Trekology.

**First/second Day:** You will get your gear, some logistical instruction, paperwork, and base camp tent assignments. You will be assigned a Ranger that will be with you for several days. The Ranger will be meeting with the Unit leader and Adult Leader for preparations on the trail. You will have a shakedown with your Ranger. This is when you will identify things that are needed and may not be needed. The Ranger maybe suggesting that you buy items at the Tooth of Time Traders Store. You will get on trail after a night in tent city. Depending on your trek you may hike out from base camp or be bussed to a trailhead.

**Last Day:** After returning, you return your gear. Any food will be thrown out, so remember to take things with you – you paid for it. Clean your pots thoroughly the night before you return, or they’ll make you do it at Base Camp. After that are showers, and you can change into the *spare* clothes you had. After your return (depending on time) and dinner the Trading Post will be open. Special patches can be purchased then. In the evening you have a chance to brand items with the official brand. Nalgene bottles, leather wallets, and sturdy caps are often used. A special campfire ceremony will be held during the evening to recollect your experience.