

T418's 2015 Philmont Crew had the time of our lives and can happily say WAMI! (We All Made It). We hope others from T418 will follow. We want to share some lessons we learned to help you prepare and enjoy your future trip to Philmont.

We summarize our lessons learned below in sections on Trek Selection, Preparation, Training, Gear, At Basecamp and On The Trail. We've also included links to those information sources we found most useful in getting ready at the end of this write up.

Trek Selection

We worked hard on trek selection. Each of the boys selected their top 3 and then we had a meeting to build consensus of the top 5 from the boy's selections. We also had a list of next 5 in case we didn't get any of the top 5 list. In the end we got our number 1 choice and everybody enjoyed activities they were looking forward to.

Our Trek was Trek 17, which was considered a Rugged grade choice. By plan the Trek was 71 miles. By actual measurement we believe we did between 80 and 100 miles. Even with that mileage we had plenty of time for activities as well as time for play and relaxation. A shorter Trek might offer too much downtime while a longer Trek, graded above Rugged, might be too much for crew members who don't have a lot of backpacking experience.

Preparation

Must Reads for Philmont Advisors

(Start reading early, even if you are not the main trip advisor: one year before is suggested.)

Philmont Guidebook to Adventure

<http://philmontscoutranch.org/Camping/GuidebooktoAdventure.aspx>

Read this guide one year before your trek, reread six months before your trek, and reread one month before your trek.

Philmont Advisor's Guide

<http://www.bacphilmont.org/pag.html>

Advisors: Read this "unofficial" guide at least one year before your trek and reread 6 months before. Provides helpful hints and opinions.

Once your trek is assigned become familiar with the locations. There is a Philmont trail guide available in the Tooth of Time trading store.

CPR Certification is required for all that attend and Wilderness First Aid is required for 2 adult leaders but recommended for all. We decided as a group to attend the Simon Kenton council Wilderness First Aid course. During this course you can obtain your Wilderness First Aid and CPR certification. We also coordinated with Simon Kenton to have Mary Conway teach the CPR certification course during a troop meeting. During the first 2 days at Philmont, We had a refresher course with our Ranger on Wilderness First Aid. Having the training gave us a confidence bonus and, logically made the training with the Ranger a little more boring but a lot quicker.

REI Compass Course is Optional. A couple of our Crew took the course. It was worth a confidence boost on the trail. We would highly recommend that all attending Philmont have some type of orientation training. This training can be passed along from those who have attended.

Helpful Websites

Trek Preparation - Philmont

<http://philmontscoutranch.org/TrekPreparation.aspx>

This is a must for at least one main advisor to read.

MAJOR HINT: This Webpage is Very Useful!

Click ***What to Bring*** - This is the Philmont packing list. If one clicks on an equipment item, it hyperlinks to recommended gear, brand and type. These are very good recommendations and will help you plan and budget for gear. In addition to talking to experienced staff at REI, Outdoor Source, this site can be extremely helpful.

Click ***Shakedown Guide*** - This instructs basic skills used at Philmont. Your Philmont guide will teach all of this in the first two days of the trek. However, start practicing these skills at shakedowns. Crew Leader should become versed, and have crew members assigned to one duty and be able to instruct others as they practice during shakedowns. PDF is available to pass out.

Click ***Philmont Videos*** - these are very short videos about basic Philmont skills in the backcountry.

Albert's Gear Philmont Guide - Troop 629

http://www.troop629.org/Adventure/philmont_gear.htm

Helpful listing of a troop's recommendation for Philmont gear. Let crew members see this website at least one year before the trek to help them plan for gear purchases.

REI

www.rei.com

REI has experienced staff. Some employees worked at Philmont. Ask questions and get answers, that's what they are paid to do. They offer useful classes, in particular **Map & Compass**. It is recommended that a couple advisors take this class. The REI website has helpful **videos** and **articles**. Get membership and ask when the big sales will be.

Outdoor Gear Lab

www.outdoorgearlab.com

If you want more opinions about comparison on gear, visit this site. They put the latest gear to the test and show comparisons. This site also has helpful articles about gear, layering systems, how to choose the right gear, etc. Extremely helpful site for more experienced trekkers.

Philmont Trek Hints

www.rogerknapp.com/download/philmont_hints.htm

Christmas and Birthdays

Have the Philmont ***What to Bring*** list in mind for special holidays, especially for Christmas and Birthdays! Tell your family, what you need: Nalgene

water bottles, water bladder, gloves, hat, wide brim hat, socks, compass, etc. All of this gear adds up. Be specific. Have people keep receipts or have a gift receipt so you can take something back if you get duplicate items.

Compass

Suunto 3-M

Has a key system to set declination.

Hiking Boots

Purchase boots at REI, Outdoor Source, etc., i.e. good quality boots fitted by knowledgeable people. Do not risk misery for two weeks. Break them in before the trek.

Things Not on the Philmont List but Bring Anyway!

The Secret Ingredient – Tabasco Sauce

The crew should bring a couple bottles of tabasco sauce with you along the trek. You'll know why when you are there.

Toe Clippers

Have at least one person bring toe clippers.

Small First Aid Kit & Moleskin

Each person bring a small personal first aid kit with a packet of moleskin.

Deck of Playing Cards

We found that a deck of playing cards lifted the mood of the crew.

Gear

Weigh everything and look to keep the pack under 30 pounds leaving Columbus. Lighter if possible. Once you are issued Crew gear at Philmont and add 5 liters of water you'll add 12 – 17 pounds to that weight.

We have provided a spreadsheet with the costs we encountered. Carefully

consider everything you bring. Only carry those things you'll need. Purchase gear with its weight in mind.

Talk as a Crew early on regarding Crew gear and shared gear. Tents are shared at Philmont. Two to three stoves are all that is needed as the crew cooks family style.

Philmont issues some personal gear (backpacks and tents) and Crew gear. For personal gear renting from Philmont might be a good cost saving choice.

Philmont's gear is heavy. We purchased a dining fly rather than use the

You WILL wear your rain gear often. Gore-Tex shells work well in keeping the rain off. At altitude however they condensate heavily inside. Consider a more breathable rain jacket. Most of our crew liked sock liners and an outer wool sock. Foot care is critical. Make sure you pack enough socks. S

A couple of us wish we had brought a better camera. A phone camera works but will be difficult to keep charged through the time in the backcountry. One crew member took a Canon Powershot camera with three charged battery packs.

One week before we left for Philmont, our crew met at the church with our full gear packed. We opened everything up and went through the Philmont checklist to confirm everything was packed. We also compared gear to make sure we had everything we needed.

For travelling with gear, we would recommend you purchase a large hockey bag. You can purchase used ones at Play It Again Sports. Most large hockey bags will fit your gear. You can also bring a light duffel bag with other items you may want to use before and after Philmont. All crews are issued 2 lockers at base camp to store items they are not taking on trail.

Training

Train heavier than you think you'll carry. You will carry from 10 – 15 pounds of weight over your personal gear once food and crew gear is issued at base camp. Training with that weight plus a little extra is recommended.

Train on the Hoover stairs and other Ohio-based locations with steep climbs.

Good Places to Prepare for Hills

Great Seal State Park, Chillicothe

Hoover Reservoir Dam - Stairs, Westerville

Include some back-to-back training days.

Train with the boots you plan on wearing.

Schedule 2-3 weekends “Shakedown hikes” in which you can practice the Philmont way of camping. Coordinate to pack meals that Philmont issues. There are great resources on the Philmont Website for how to prepare for these weekends:

http://philmontscoutranch.org/Resources/~/link.aspx?_id=BC2692644C4841E2A3AEDCCC65A5CEDB&z=z

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Meet as a Crew 3-4 times during the year to plan your trip. Here are some of the agenda items discussed during our meetings:

- Assigning someone to be in charge of travel arrangements
 - There are multiple ways to get to Philmont. Our crew enjoyed flying into Albuquerque and taking a train to Roton. At Roton, we stayed overnight in a hotel and had the Philmont bus pick

us up in the morning. On the way back, we took the train back to Albuquerque and stayed in a hotel. It was nice to take a shower, sleep in a comfortable bed and have a nice meal before departing the next day.

- Other options we heard from others:
 - Fly to Colorado Springs, staying at United States Air Force Academy and taking bus to Philmont
 - Taking bus/shuttle from airport to Philmont
 - Coordinating to stay at Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque
 - Coordinate to stay at Kit Carson Motel or St James Hotel which is less than 5 miles from Philmont.
- We assigned a Philmont Method to each scout to take responsibility of training the group. At one of the meetings, each scout made a presentation on what we needed to know as a group and what resources and equipment we needed to bring. Some of those tasks included:
 - Water Purification
 - Bear Bags
 - Fires/Camp Stoves
 - Camping Sites – Bermuda Triangle
 - Wilderness Guia
 - Hiking
 - Gear
- Patrol leader positions. These were voted by the scouts. These are very important roles and selection of the right person is critical in having a successful trip.
 - Crew Leader
 - Wilderness Guia
 - Chaplain
- We planned out our shakedown events and training. We assigned a scout to lead the group in identifying training that is needed and coordinate group events.
 - During winter/colder months, we met at an Office with stair wells in which we climbed stairs and did cardio exercises in between climbs. At times we would bring packs to climb
 - We met at Hoover Dam and climbed stairs for an hour

- We scheduled times to meet at local parks to hike as a group
- We scheduled 3 weekends to do shakedown hikes. Find cool places to go that provide good elevation and to provide a reward to scouts to explore new places you would normally not go as a Troop.
- We discussed logistics and coordination of payments and applications needed to be submitted to Philmont.
 - Identify and Adult leader to take on the logistics role to ensure proper timing and deadlines.
- We bonded as a group and shared our interests in what we wanted to accomplish out of Philmont.

Shipping Camp Stoves

ATTENTION: Make sure you read the procedure for **shipping cooking stoves and empty fuel canisters**. Allow for ample time to ship: **2 weeks**. See special instructions in Philmont Guidebook to Adventure and Philmont Advisor's Guide. Wash empty fuel canisters and let air dry overnight. Wrap in newspaper. Write expedition number on all sides of shipping box. On the shipping label, see Philmont instructions: **Hint:** Include names of ALL advisors and crew leader. Place in the box, return shipping label and return postage.

At Basecamp

You will purchase your maps at Tooth of Time Traders when you arrive at basecamp.

The crew leader and crew advisor will go to Logistics to have the trek marked on one of the trail maps. With that map in hand everyone should become familiar with the route and the locations before leaving camp.

On the Trail

At most locations (except leave no trace and trail camps) there are swap boxes where food that Scouts don't want to eat or carry is left behind. Make it a point to grab the proteins and the fats left in the box. A full Philmont days' worth of food is about 3000 calories. You'll want more.

Replenish water whenever you can. Water is the key to helping with altitude and lots of health matters that could impact you on your journey.