

Philmont Trek Hints

1. Get Sectional maps at the Philmont store. They are more accurate than the overall map.
2. June is a better time for a track. Less rain and the staff is fresh and more enthusiastic. More rain in Aug.
3. Register for a minimal number of boys and add on more boys later before trek. You cannot get your money back but you can add on more.
4. Label everything. Drinking bottles, socks underwear, sleeping pads hats. Many members have the same brand of items. Clothes get confused during washing or on the clothes lines. Bring a sharpie marker to label things as you go through the trek.
5. Make sure your tent is dry. Put seam sealer on the sewed seams in order to be absolutely sure it does not leak. Even in a new tent! Then when there are thunder storms coming in your town, set up your tent at home in the yard, and put dry newspaper in it. Look in it after a heavy rain storm and see if it is dry. Your tent must not leak in heavy down pours. And remember... two or three in a tent... no one alone in a tent if at all possible since there is not much room in some campsites.
6. Use different colored water bottles or put duct tape around one, to make a distinction between the two. You will then know which one had juice in it or which one had been treated with iodine or not.
7. Put fresh batteries in your camera. Many a person has had the battery in the camera for 6 months and the battery goes dead on the trek. Especially if it is an odd battery.
8. Take enough film for 150 pictures. Even if you are not a picture taker, you will want to take more than you think. The better cameras take better pictures than the disposable ones. You can put hundreds of pictures on digital cameras with out allot of film roles. I usually shoot 600 pictures.
9. If the camera or flashlight needs AA batteries, find the photo-e titanium batteries that lasts 5 times longer. It really does last 5 times longer and you have to carry less batteries. Keep your camera with you at all times and available in your pocket. Picture opportunities came up fast and you do not have time to get into your backpack.
10. Bring 2 different spices and salt and pepper. I like "Cajun mix" and "magic chef". Put all these things in containers with a sprinkle top with holes and a screw on lid to keep dry. I prefer used Adolf Meat Tenderizer jars. They are light and water proof. One of each kind will be enough for the whole crew for the whole trek. The salt and pepper you get from Philmont does not have a lid and they leak everywhere.
11. Gators are cheaper (\$10) in the commissary in the back country. More expensive in the base camp store. But they may be out in the back country. I like gators and use them allot. In light rain I use the top of my rain suit with gators for

my legs and ankles. Get very high quality durable rain gear. Walk around in a down pour at home to test your rain suit.

12. Bring a light plastic handle, single blade, lock back knife. You do not need the heavy metal multi-use knives that have 14 tools. If you want you can bring one small light backpackers pliers per crew but you probably won't need it. I recommend the tiny Red Cross knife with blade, and scissors. You do not need a big heavy knife at Philmont.
13. Bring only 2 or 3 compasses for the whole crew. Everyone does not need to bring one.
14. Also bring a 1 small can opener for cans of fruit that you can get at the commissaries.
15. I recommend 2 or 3 sets of socks (inner liner and outer wool) and 2 or 3 underwear. These are in areas of more sweat and more friction. You actually could get by with only 2 T-shirts (plus the other heavy garments listed in the personal gear). I bring one pair of shorts and one long pants that have zippered legs that can be converted into shorts. You can wear one set and wash and dry the second set. Change socks and underwear every day even if you cannot wash them.
16. You need two or three 1-liter Nalgene bottles for water. I recommend 3 even if you do not fill the third. There will be days you will need 3 bottles. Do not use other more breakable bottles. You can buy the Philmont Nalgene since they make cool souvenirs later. The Platypus water containers with the tube are fine if you prefer. I do not recommend them because if you drink all your water early and urinate it out, now you are short on water the last half of the hike. Or you may not be drinking enough water but the adults cannot tell how much you are drinking. If you have Nalgene bottles, you can hold them up and every one knows if you are drinking enough. Plus if you stop for the water break and every one gets their bottles out, then you look around at the scenery that you came to see anyway. You will also need to carry water for your dry camp. Bring two 6 liter Platypus containers. They are light, fold up flat, and stand up when full. Take turns carrying them full of water by rotating who carries them every so many steps or time. Also you can put the container of water on a hiking stick and two boys carry it better.
17. Consider carrying a stool with a back to sit on. The "seat" where you sit on the ground with a back is still not good for your back.. You will have to sit at every campsite and many programs. Get the light aluminum tubing fold up stools with a back that you get at K-mart and such. The heavy ones from the camping stores are too heavy. You should find one that weights about 1 lb.



18.

19. Bring more ziplocks than you think you will need. I recommend ten small, 20 one gallon, and 8 two gallon for a minimum. They are light and do not take much room. Also bring a few large black trash bags. Put everything in your backpack in ziplocks.
20. Double bag your sleeping bag if the bag will be on the outside of your pack. Put the sleeping bag in the stuff bag and then put the second bag over it facing the opposite direction. That way water cannot get into your sleeping bag.
21. Bring 2 fifty foot nylon cords for the crew. There are many uses like clothes lines, holding up tents, etc. You will need one for the dining fly. I like the kind that has reflective strips in the cord so you can see it at night with your flash light.
22. You will need at least 8 extra tent stakes other than for your tents. The dining fly that Philmont gives you does not come with stakes. You will need a minimum of 6 for it. If the ground is too rocky and you cannot put the stake in the ground all the way, put the stake into the ground as far as possible and then put a large rock on the string up against the stake. That will hold it.
23. Bring more money than you think for the commissary in the back country. They sell a lot of stuff at the commissaries, especially fuel.
24. A day pack like the school packs for a side hike is suggested. They tend to hurt your back especially if you carry water in it. You might think of using one of the scout's backpack and empty it out in the tent for side hikes. Put the boys' gear in it and take turns carrying the backpack.
25. If your backpack is not big enough to carry the full amount of gear and food, you can hang the day pack off the back of your backpack and put more gear into it. Get as large a backpack as you can fit on your body. You will need a lot of room for crew gear.
26. Take the 5 bear bags that Philmont gives you. They are light weight and you can use spare ones to put dishes on it to dry after washing.
27. Take 1 role of toilet paper per 2 crew members. They will give you as many as you want. It is light weight and you have spares if some get wet. Keep the toilet paper rolls in ziplocks all the time.
28. I recommend hiking sticks for adults and out of shape boys. They are great. You can get the kind that telescope and are compact.
29. If there are some crew members that use walking sticks, use two of them for dining fly poles and you will not have to carry poles for fly that Philmont gives you.
30. You will need 3 pots with lids for cooking. Philmont will tell you 2 pots but some food does not mix (especially mashed potatoes and meat sauce). Use the two largest pots they give you and a third smaller pot that they have or one of your own that fits inside theirs. Cook the food separate and not all in the same pot like they will tell you. It will taste better. I like to take one big pot that Philmont gives you plus

the two largest pots in the kit of titanium pots that you get at the camping stores.



31. As you see above, use Turkey Roasting Bags to cook in. It works great and you have a whole lot less clean up. Take 3 large ones for each day on the trail. See: [Turkey Bags](#) Then you have a large pot of hot water to wash dishes in. And if you only have a spoon and large plastic up, then you wash less dishes.
32. Bring two whisper-lite stoves. Bring three small bottles of gas. Do not light the stove until you have the water ready and you will not waste as much fuel.
33. Take the whisper-lite stove repair kit that has a wrench and wire to clean the jet. Put them in a small hard plastic bottle with some cotton to cushion them. You will need to clean the jets sometimes. Teach a boy and adult on each crew how to disassemble the stove and clean it.
34. Use a light weight plastic spoon and a light weight plastic bowl (or Frisbee). They sell a light small blue colored bowl at Philmont that is very good. And take a light plastic cup which is half the weight as the metal sierra cups which spill easily. Actually I only take a plastic double wall 8 oz glass and one spoon and no bowl. I eat out of the cup and clean it by drinking liquids out of it after the food. You do not really need a handle and sure don't need to hang it on your belt.
35. You only need 4 of the iodine bottles. If you have 4 bottles which will last you the whole trek, you will need to treat some canteens the night before and some the morning you leave. Less weight with fewer bottles.
36. Take the extra bear rope they will give you. It has many other uses. You can use it for a clothes line, hoist a smaller boy up to untangle the rope on the bear cable, and to hang food up at the commissary. If you pick up your food and then go for a conservation project, you can hang that food up and then retrieve it afterward. Learn how to tie a repelling harness out of rope. Many a bear rope gets tangled on the cable and you can haul a boy up with the second bear rope to untangle the first rope.
37. Ask for fresh fruit at the back country commissaries. They have fresh apples or oranges only if you ask.
38. Eat the heavier meals first. Also you can open the packs of food by cutting a small hole in the corner and empty out heavy food or Gatorade packs that you will not eat and turn the extra food back into the commissary swap box. Then tape up the bag with duct tape. You can get rid of a lot of weight that way.
39. Decide which meal you will be eating for lunch. That way the person carrying it will know who has it and they can put it at the top of their pack and be prepared to

- get it out for lunch. The boy who carries the lunch should carry slightly more weight because he will carry less weight after eating. He should also carry the trash from lunch after compacting it.
40. Always put covers on back packs when leaving because rain can come up even when clear in the morning.
 41. If most are leaving the campsite and having one person stay in camp to guard it, you are smart to hang the food since that person may fall asleep and let the minibears (squirrels) get into the food.
 42. When the crew arrives at a camp site, the sequence of jobs must be done every time: (a). Put up dining fly (b). Put crew gear under dining fly. (c). Put up tents
 43. Crew chief should keep a small pad of paper and pen to make notes at check in and at staff camps.
 44. During rainy season, consider doing the program the next morning and hiking to your next destination in the afternoon, especially if there is no program at the next camp.
 45. To setup and take down tents in the rain, have 4 boys hold the dining fly up over the boys that are working with the tent. That way the tent is dry inside when it gets set up.
 46. When there are stuff bags on the outside of the backpack that have a cord dangling, stuff the cord inside the edge of the bag so it will not get caught on a limb while hiking.
 47. If running low on fuel, clean dishes in cold water and soap, and when boiling water for the next meal, dip the dishes into the hot water to sterilize them right before eating.
 48. Before the evening of a dry camp, consider cooking the dinner with water at noon at a camp with water. Then hiking to the dry camp with water and eat the dry lunch that night at the dry camp. That way you do not have to carry as much water. You will get to the dry camp late but there is usually no program at the dry camps.
 49. Do not believe the rangers and staff on how long it takes to hike somewhere. They are in good shape and can hike fast with one or two people.
 50. Do not believe the signs at the trail junctions because you need to practice making trail decisions with map and compass and also the signs could have been turned.
 51. Take turns among the boys as to who is leader with map and compass each day.
 52. When checking directions of the hike by map and compass, the sequence of who make decisions should be this. (a) The day's map and compass leader should make a decision as to the direction to go with out interference. (b) Then the crew leader verifies and makes a decision as to where to go. (c) Then an adult verifies the direction. That way each person can get experience reading the map at each level of expertise.
 53. I think two of the toughest hikes are from French Henry up to Copper Park and from Clear Creak Camp up to Mount Phillips with a pack on.

54. Hot showers are at Cimmeroncito, Phillips Junction, and Ponil. Cold shower at Beaubien.
55. If you go to Trail Peak to see the airplane, go past the tree with the plaque over the ridge down to the other side of the mountain to a clearing. Fantastic view toward the Tooth.
56. Keep an adult in the back to prevent stragglers. Always stay together. Be a team and keep everyone together, even if some can hike faster. Put the slower one in front. Try the "caterpillar" type of hiking especially going uphill. And absolutely stay together. Everyone should stay in eyesight.
57. Keep 4 feet between you and the next hiker so that you can glance up and see the scenery you came to see. If you are 1 foot behind the next one, you will only see your feet and if he stops you will bang into him.
58. When crossing a creek, you should yell clear when over so the next can cross. The front boys should move ahead so that all have room to cross and stop and wait on everyone. The last person should yell something different like "tally-ho" so that the front person knows all are across and they can continue hiking again.
59. Have one person each morning put all the crew gear and food in equal piles by weight (not volume). You could put less weight in 1 or 2 piles if there are 1 or 2 very small framed boys. Picking the piles by the members of the crew could be done in several ways. (a) mad rush (b) rotate alphabetically and begin with a different letter each day (c) reward the boys who did better jobs or volunteered for extra duty or helped their fellow scouts when needed. (d) or any other fair system you can devise that could make it fun.
60. When home, have all members of the trek make double prints of their pictures. Each member keeps one copy and gives the other to one designated person. He scans all the pictures plus gets all digital pictures and gives a CD of them to each person. He then puts the pictures into an album or makes a DVD movie for the boys and the troop.
61. Use LED flashlites. They are light and last for weeks on one set of batteries. I ran one continuously for 1 week and finally got tired of it and turned it off. You won't even need extra batteries. The double A flashlights are heavy and only will last 4-6 hours of continuous burning. Get the head lamp with three LED light bulbs. You need a lot of hands free light.
62. Take about 3 feet of Duct tape wound around a pencil or doweling so it is smaller size. You can use it for everything from patching holes in tents, broken shoes, or for mole skin.
63. It is OK to take a GPS but the scouts still need to learn compass and map.
64. Take the tour of the Villa Philmonte and if you have time ask to see the small "museum" there that is up stairs and has lots of old pictures and a video. It is great.
65. Be sure to go to the closing campfire... and get a front row seat if possible. It is better than the opening one.
66. Get the treks from last year and pick the trek that the boys want to go on. I have the boys pick what activities they want to do and which mountains (Phillips, Baldy, or Tooth/Time). Then pick the four treks that best fits the desires of the

boys. Then have them rank which of those four treks that they like best to least and find which one most of the boys want. It is hard for the 6 to 10 boys pick out one from the 50 or so treks. Narrow their options by finding out what activities they want. Also I do not recommend the super strenuous except for 16-18 yr olds that want an endurance test. The distance is not the main idea of Philmont but the experience of backpacking. You need to have a first, second, and third choices ready for when they send the cards in Feb or March asking for your choices. Get last years book of treks and send it your choices IMMEDIATELY. Like the next morning. If any of the treks that your boys picked has changed dramatically from last year, then you will have to get together. But the sooner you send it in the more likely you will get your first choice of treks.

67. Learn the Philmont hymn by singing it over and over in the car as you travel. Get the song and the music without words and put in on tape or CD. Put the songs with and without words over and over on the music so you can practice singing it with words and with the music. The music is at my web site.
68. Most important is getting into shape before you go to Philmont. Endurance is important and you can get that through riding bikes and hiking. You will usually hike for 4-6 hours at Philmont. But the best thing to get into shape is climbing stairs. I climb 21 flights (I do 7 at my work three times up and down) 4-5 times a week. Then the last month I do it with a 40+ lb pack. I do not use hand rails and when going down stairs you should lower yourself to the step instead of "plopping" had down on the step. Use your muscles to lower yourself to the step. I can get on Stairmaster and tread mills all day and not break a sweat but trust me climbing stairs is a work out. Try doing a tread mill or hiking down the road for so many minutes and then try doing the same minutes climbing stairs.... you will be surprised how much more work it is climbing. There is very little flat land at Philmont. Most hiking there is more like climbing stairs. And the 21 flights of stairs is only 300 ft in altitude and at Philmont there will be many days you will climb 1000 feet in altitude. Get in shape and you should come back from Philmont saying: "Oh that was easy." because you were in condition. If you get blisters, then you did not hike enough in those boots at home before coming to Philmont. PLEASE GET PREPARED.
69. Not only do you need to be prepared physically but also mentally. We have an older scoutmaster who has been several times to Philmont decide if the boy is mentally ready. If the boy is not cooperative, helpful, and willing to pitch in and be a team member, then don't let him go. We have had several boys be denied twice until they were mature enough to handle the strenuous trip in the backcountry. Don't be afraid to tell a boy that he needs another 2 yrs of "growth" before going. If you take a trouble maker with you, then you are stuck out there with them and they can ruin the experience of 11 other people who spent months and a lot of money preparing for this experience. Don't let one boy ruin it for all. And keep telling the boys that it is up to their attitude in order to have fun. The boy (or adult) can choose to the miserable or choose to have fun. Look at the situation as a challenge and have a good frame of mind. I use the comparison of the running back in football or the pitcher/catcher of the ball team. All the boys want to be the person who carries

the team and does not complain about doing more "work" than the others. So if the boys complain about carrying more weight or doing more than the others, look at it as being the most important person carrying the load and doing more for the team than the others. Be proud that you helped your team mates by carrying some of his gear when you see him struggling. It is fun and rewarding to see the group of boys come together and start help each other out on the trail and in camp. It will usually take a few days for this to happen so encourage them but don't push it. They will start becoming a team soon. Also please adults stay back and try to be as invisible as possible. You are on vacation. Keep them from burning down the forest, keep them together and not get lost; but otherwise let the boys do it all and you sit back and watch them. Take pictures. But don't run the show for them. If they cannot get it together fast enough in the morning and miss the program that afternoon, then they will start moving faster without you yelling at them to get going.