

December 2013
Ledgerwood, Markowitz,
Turnbull

Philmont Trek 2013 Notes & Recommendations for future treks

Attendees

Scouts (ages): Jason Ballard (16), Peter Turnbull (16), Ethan Markowitz (15), Sage Ledgerwood (turned 15 on the trip), Aadit Narayanaswamy (15), Max Henkel-Wallace (15), Rick Wytmar (15)

Adults: David Markowitz, Eric Ledgerwood, Steve Turnbull

In addition to the above, scout Jack Tarlton & ASM John Tarlton were scheduled to join the trek and participated in the crew meetings and training regimen. Jack unfortunately suffered appendicitis just days before our departure, and both Jack and his dad stayed back.

Key Tasks & Timeline

- *Register for the Philmont lottery* in November two years prior to trek. More info here: <http://philmontscoutranch.org/Camping/TrekPlanning/HowToReserve.aspx>
- *Start recruiting crew*, in the fall, nine months prior to the trek.
- *Make travel, lodging, and logistics arrangements* starting in January prior to the trek.
- Hold monthly crew meetings to team build, choose leaders, and itinerary, starting in December or January prior to trek.
- *Apply for Philmont itinerary* in March/April.
- *Conduct two or three full pack shakedown hikes*, including possible overnighter, in the spring prior to the trek.

Below is a list of our calendar dates for planning meetings and shakedown hikes.

<u>Date</u>	<u>To do</u>
- Jan 27	First session, about Philmont, reqs
- Feb 24	Guest Speaker / Itinerary Selection
- Mar 23-24	Shakedown hike 1.0 / Crew Lead / flight selection
- Apr 4	Submit Itinerary Selection
- Apr 21	Ultralight packing / shirt design
- May 26	Pack / gear check / med forms
- June 30	Final prep
- July 7	Shakedown hike 2.0

Most of the scouts on our crew had blisters and hot spots at the end of our first shakedown hike because of poor fitting or inadequate hiking shoes and socks. The first shakedown hike is the recommended way to identify these issues. If someone needs boots, better to find out back home than backcountry. Our second shakedown went much more smoothly with no foot troubles.

Overview of trip

With travel to/from Philmont, the trip will last 13 days

- Day 1: Travel to Albuquerque or Denver, stay overnight in local accommodations
 - Day 2: Depart early for Philmont, run through check-in activities, stay overnight at base camp
 - Day 3: Depart base camp for first day hiking, camp in backcountry. Note: assigned ranger will accompany your crew for first two days and evenings.
 - Day 4-12: Hiking in backcountry, final day return to base camp, stay overnight at base camp.
- In total, there are 11 hiking days and 10 nights out on the trail.
- Day 13: Early rise, return to Albuquerque or Denver, fly home

Itinerary 22 - Campsites and Program Activities

DAY	CAMP	PROGRAM	FOOD PICKUP
0	Albuquerque	Marriott via Blue Sky Adventures	
1	BASE	Opening Campfire	
2	Bent	Ranger Training	Camping HQ
3	Baldy Skyline	Hike Over Wilson Mesa; Trail Camp	
4	Black Horse	Trail Camp, Conservation	
5	Black Horse	Side Hike Baldy Mountain, Gold Mining & Panning, Blacksmithing @ French Henry	Baldy Town
6	HEAD OF DEAN	Black Powder Rifles @ Miranda; Tomahawk Throwing Challenge Events	
7	Visto Grande	Trail Camp	
8 s	CLARKS FORK	Hike via Hidden Valley & Window Rock, Visit Demonstration Forest; Western Lore, Branding, Chuckwagon Dinner, Cowboy Campfire	Ute Gulch
9 s	MINERS PARK	Morning Horse Rides, Side Hike Tooth of Time	
10	Aguila	Morning Rock Climbing & Rappelling	
11 s	ZASTROW	Cantina @ Abreu; Land Navigation, Geocaching, Rededication to Scouting, Dutch Oven Dessert	
12	BASE	Hike to Rayado Turnaround, Tour Kit Carson Museum; Awards Campfire	

Crew composition

- Can not accommodate all who might be interested, so compose crew by invitation to most senior, deserving, and capable scouts. Also keep in mind group chemistry, as a two week trek could be challenging with boys that don't get on well.
- For our crew, we put a lot of emphasis on hiking and backpacking experience, and plumbed the Troopmaster records to compile a ranked list of boys' hiking and backpacking experience. We were looking for scouts who clearly enjoyed hiking, as evidenced by their hiking mile totals and

participation in optional hikes such as RoB. We also looked for scouts with backpacking experience, including multi-day trips.

Itinerary selection

Use the Markowitz methodology, described here, but let the boys make the final decision. David created a spreadsheet that allowed each scout to rank his top ten program activities, his preferred mileage, and his desired peaks. The individual preferences were aggregated to arrive at a group preference.

Our recommendations:

Highly recommend summitting both Mt. Baldy and Tooth of Time

Distance - 81 miles worked well for us

Favorite activities:

Black powder rifle shooting

Spar pole climbing

Blacksmithing

Cantina

Trade-off between distance and activities

Recommendations heeded from prior trek (Jon Mewes, lead):

Skip the burro packing.

Skip the Indian petroglyphs

Ground transportation/first night lodging/logistics

- Blue Sky Adventures is the company to use

- Choice of Albuquerque or Denver. Flights to Denver are more plentiful and a little cheaper, but drive from Albuquerque to Philmont is 1-2 hours shorter than from Denver, and slightly cheaper when booked through Blue Sky. We chose Albuquerque.

Gear: the necessary, the recommended, the leave-at-home

- Waterproof pack covers a must (garbage bags won't cut it)

- Lightweight folding camp chairs highly, highly recommended

- Minimum of 4L of water capacity per person required

- White gas stoves strongly recommended

- Water filters unneeded; leave at home. There are potable water sources at a number of locations along your route, and water purification tablets are provided by Philmont for treating other water. The Katadyn Micropur tabs add little to no taste whatsoever and the color doesn't change the water.

- Pots and pans are provided by Philmont, as is all food; you can leave your cooking gear at home.

- Adhere to the Philmont packing list. Your ranger will check each of your crew members' packs in base camp, and missing equipment/gear will need to be purchased at the camp trading post.

Adult advisor requirements

- At least one adult advisor must have completed Wilderness First Aid and CPR. Would recommend that every adult complete WFA. Will be required to show WFA, CPR, and YPT certification cards during check-in at Philmont.

Other recommendations

- Take a tour of Villa Philmonte. Very interesting and very popular. Reservations needed. Call for reservation upon arrival at basecamp.

- Bring a small gift for your ranger! On the second and final night our ranger was with us on the trail, she pulled out two pound cakes as gift to our crew. It appears to be customary that if a ranger likes a crew then they produce some goody or other goodbye gift. In retrospect, we wished that we had had something to give our ranger as thanks for her time. In the end, after the trip was over we sent her an Amazon gift certificate and our thanks.

- Focus on pack weight! Even with relatively light equipment, your pack with food and water can tip over 50 lbs. Look hard at every item in your pack. Consider investing in selected ultralight gear.

- Have custom crew t-shirts made in advance of trip. Can do this either through Philmont trading post or outside company. Have one or two extra made, so that one can be donated to the dining hall.

- Each crew is required to have a Crew Chief, a Chaplain's Aide, and a Wilderness Guide (i.e. Leave No Trace guide). You'll want to elect/determine these positions in the spring in advance of arriving at Philmont.

- Skills to practice before arriving at Philmont:

- Make sure every member of the crew is adept at orienting a map -- your ranger will review this skill prior to hitting the trail. UTM's are used extensively throughout Philmont.

- Practice with the white gas stoves

- Have a former Philmont camper (or staffer) come to one of your monthly crew meetings and talk about Philmont. We were lucky to get a former staffer, a former student of Eric Ledgerwood's, to come talk to the boys, and his descriptions of Philmont really made it real and got the boys excited.

- Let the boys choose their itinerary. This is a great first team-building exercise, and also gives them ownership of the most important aspect of their Philmont experience. David facilitated the process as described above, but the boys owned the process and were completely and unanimously bought into the itinerary selected.

- Ship ahead items that can not travel on the plane, namely stoves and fuel bottles. See the Philmont website for suggestions and instructions. If your crew has a member with food allergies or restrictions, then you may want to ship replacement food ahead as well.

Stoves and cooking

- White gas stoves are highly recommended

- work better at altitude and in cold weather

- Philmont provides white gas throughout backcountry, whereas availability of canisters for canister stoves is spottier and not guaranteed in the backcountry, forcing you to carry all the canisters you will need for the 11 days on the trail. Despite this, we brought one JetBoil canister

stove as a backup.

Weather

- "Monsoon season" from mid-July through August, when area gets most rain. Very dry up until that point. Afternoon thunderstorms common and a factor when summitting Mt. Baldy or Tooth of Time; plan early starts on summit days. Come prepared for rain. Waterproof pack covers are a must, as are rain shells and rain pants. Small waterproof stuff sacks are also highly recommended to keep clothes and other items dry in your packs.

Wildlife

Philmont has bears, estimated at one per square mile, and the ranch goes to great lengths to ensure that no bear becomes a problem bear. Your ranger at Philmont will spend time instructing your crew how to handle, dispose, and store food properly. There is a long list of "smellables," including such non-food items as sunscreen and lip balm, that must be hung in bear bags every evening, as well as any other time your crew is away from your food. Your ranger will spend a good bit of time training your crew how to set up your camp around a "bear-muda" triangle, how to clean up after meals, and how to hang your bear bags.

Philmont also has prolific ground squirrels, affectionately known as "mini-bears." These are actually a bigger nuisance. More than one scout forgot about the nuts or trail mix they had left in the pockets of their backpack waist-belts, and woke up in the morning to find that the mini-bears had chewed through the pockets to get to the food.

Budget/Estimated Cost

Our trek in 2013 cost approximately \$1420 per person, including fees for Philmont, and travel and logistics. The total broke down as follows:

Philmont	\$770
Airfare (Southwest)	354
Ground transportation/lodging (Blue Sky)	260
Other (t-shirts, Philmont maps, ranger gift, post-trip pizza party/slideshow)	<u>38</u>
Total	1422