

Philmont Tips and Tricks

Adapted from a Presentation by Karl Honegger, 2009 Ranger

1. Come to Philmont like you know nothing about it. For the sake of the “newbies”, let them experience the magic.
2. Set an example, be respectful of everyone.
3. Respect back country staff especially. They work nine days straight without most of the creature comforts and on their days off, may have to hike many miles just to get into base camp.
4. Don't leave trash on staff cabin front porches.
5. Go to all the activities you can. Skipping activities just insults the staff.
6. Get to base camp early (8 AM is best). Even better, camp in the area the night before. The earlier you show up, the earlier you get onto the trail the next day and the more of Philmont you can experience (see Tip #16).
7. Ensure everyone gets plenty of sleep the night before your adventure starts.
8. Have your chaplain's aid already assigned. That person should lead a daily devotional EVERY day!
9. Show up in uniform for your group picture. Can be Class A, trek tee shirt, or whatever. Everyone should look like they belong to that group and are part of the team.
10. The crew leader should introduce himself and then each person of the crew to the Ranger. From the point of meeting the Ranger, the crew leader is now in charge of EVERYTHING.
11. Have an activity for the Scouts to do while spending time waiting during the first day. Sleeping is not an activity.
12. Have all required paperwork (tour permit, health forms, completed roster and talent release, and copies of first aid/CPR certifications) in one folder and have it with the advisor.
13. Prescription medications should stay with the participant during check-in, including Epi-pens and inhalers.
14. Try to go to health checks right after logistics. If not, try to do the group photo. Only go to food and equipment after you are done with logistics, health check and photo.
15. Do not allow Scouts to wander and be sure to walk from place to place as quickly as possible.
16. Depending on when you are complete with your base camp duties or your departure bus time the next day, arrange a tour at the Villa Philmonte or try to spend time at the Kit Carson and/or Seton museums.
17. Go to chapel services. Try another faith, see what it is about.

18. Respect your Ranger and butt out of the Ranger's business (adults especially). He or she knows what they are doing, so don't question them in front of the group. There is a reason, and they will explain it to you one-on-one if you want.
19. Make sure the crew leader understands that the Ranger works through them, so the Ranger may tell them something they need to then re-tell to the crew. The Ranger doesn't tell everyone everything at the same time.
20. Don't bring extra food, the Philmont meals are more than enough and there are swap boxes on the way. Food usually takes up ½ of pack size and weight when leaving base camp.
21. Leave desserts behind, they generally aren't worth the weight and can be messy to prepare.
22. Never complain about the food and the crew leader needs to make sure each person eats enough at each meal. If they are losing energy or hungry, then they aren't eating enough.
23. Cook and eat the heaviest meals first, not in numeric order.
24. Even if you have an even number of Scouts, offer to carry the Ranger's food. It's a nice gesture, even if they don't accept it.
25. Leave behind the condiments bag, most treks never use it. Hot pickle relish or mayo is never appetizing. If someone wants to use something, have them take what they want and carry it personally.
26. Plan ahead for special dietary needs. Food can be staged in the backcountry, but you need to be prepared!
27. Only bring the two large pots, spatula and large spoon.
28. Write your name on everything.
29. Philmont tents and dining flys are heavy, you can save weight by bringing your own.
30. Don't bring a hammock.
31. Philmont is not the place to learn simple backpacking practices.
32. Follow the Ranger's lead on cooking procedures.
33. Don't don your backpack by flipping it over your head. Too many accidents happen this way.
34. Have a duty roster.
35. Keep your crew together on the trail.
36. Be careful with trekking poles. Rubber tips are the best because the metal ones scar the rocks on the trail/
37. Philmont provides everything you need for water purification. Filters are usually not worth the extra weight.
38. When getting to your campsite: hang bear bags, put dishes by sump, put up dining fly and then set up tents.
39. Eight hints to building and maintaining a great crew:

- a. Spend quality time together before the trek: pizza, bowling or just hanging out.
 - b. Hone your backcountry skills so you are on autopilot when you hit your campsite.
 - c. Get out of camp early.
 - d. Everyone must be able to read a map and use a compass.
 - e. Be in top physical and emotional shape (including adults).
 - f. Keep communications open and honest with at least daily Roses, Buds and Thorns. Hold daily devotional services.
 - g. It's all about youth leadership....adults are along for the ride.
 - h. Understand the crew comes first and everything is everyone's job.
40. Nearly all bad treks have one common thread: bad expedition behavior. Rules are important and should be developed and covered ahead of time so there are no surprises. Some good ones:
- a. Get the heck out of bed. Sleeping in is for home, not at Philmont.
 - b. Do not be overly cheerful before breakfast. Many youth (and adults!) are not morning people.
 - c. Do not complain about anything, ever. Bad moods are contagious.
 - d. Learn to cook at least one thing right.
 - e. Either wash your hair, or don't remove your hat, ever. You can't trust someone who "looks like an escapee from a mental ward" and that could shake your team's confidence in your judgment.
 - f. Do not ever ask if someone has seen your stuff. It's a rookie mistake to lose or misplace something.
 - g. Never ask where you are. Either ask to see the map, or wait for the navigator to tell you.
 - h. Always carry MORE than your fair share.
 - i. Do not get sunburned! Biggest rookie mistake of all.
 - j. Do not get killed.
41. All expedition behavior flows from one principle: always think of your team first. You are only one cog in the machine and if you have something to prove, then Philmont isn't for you.