

# Hiking Boot Guidelines

Picking the right boot for Philmont can be one of the most important decisions you will make. Nothing is more miserable and painful than a long backpacking trip with boots that do not fit correctly or provide support. There are no specific rules on what boot you should choose but here are a few guidelines that should serve you well.

1. Buy your boots at an outfitter that specializes in camping and hiking equipment. Places like REI, Campmor, and Ramsey Outdoors come to mind. They have staff that can help guide you into boots that fit properly.
2. Some newer boots are being made with a combination of leather and synthetic materials to cut down on weight and usually take less time to break in. These boots are an excellent choice for most. Should you need extra support, look for full-grain leather boots. They provide maximum support and durability.
3. High-top boots provide the best ankle support when backpacking. Low-top hiking shoes and boots might work for some people but are better suited for day hikes. The vast majority of Philmont participants wear high-tops.
4. Fewer seams in the boot mean fewer places for water to leak in.
5. A pair of boots that weighs more than 4 pounds probably weighs too much.
6. Don't choose a boot because of looks or price but based on fit. If it does not fit properly you are wasting your money. Always try on boots with the inner and outer socks you plan to use on the trail. Most outfitters have socks to loan for this purpose. Be sure to wear the boots around in the store to check for feel. With the boot unlaced, push your foot to the front of the boot and then see if you can get two fingers in the boot behind your heel. All boots should have a little room for you foot to move but not too much. Check out the [Boots and Socks](#) video in the [Equipment](#) section of the [Training Videos](#) page of the [Watchu Experience](#) Web site ([www.watchu.org](http://www.watchu.org)) for additional pointers on selecting the best fit for your feet.
7. After choosing your boot, wear them in your home for several days to be absolutely sure they fit well. Most stores will take them back if not worn outside.
8. When lacing, kick your heel back against the heel of the boot so that when laced your toes have plenty of room for those tough downhill trails.
9. Finally, waterproof your boots using the manufacturer's instructions and start

walking in them to complete the break-in process. All-leather boots can take a month or two of regular use to be fully broken in. See [Waterproofing Your Boots](#) in the [Equipment](#) section of the [Training Videos](#) page of the [Watchu Experience](#) Web site ([www.watchu.org](http://www.watchu.org)) for an example of how to care for your boots.

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**Tip:** Check into [www.localhikes.com](http://www.localhikes.com) for some ideas on super adventures right near home - enter your zip code for a list of hikes within 100 miles, or use the "advanced search" to further narrow down the results.

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**Phil Fact:** Charles Bent was the first governor of the New Mexico Territory after it became a part of the United States and a friend of Carlos Beaubien. He was assassinated during the Taos Revolt of 1847.

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I want to hike the canyon floor once more,

*Charles Bent*

Taos, New Mexico Territory