

## It's Not Just a Hike

Why do Scouts and Scouters develop such a strong bond with Philmont? Just talk with anyone who has hiked the Philmont trails and you will find Philmont has been a "life-altering experience," one they take with them for the rest of their lives. It changes the way we think about ourselves. What is this bond all about? Be assured, a Philmont trek is not "just a hike."

Yes, no matter the trek itinerary you choose, it will be physically difficult. Certainly that is part of it. And no matter which itinerary you choose, it will be a visually beautiful experience ... never to be forgotten wild life, mountains, valleys, vistas, backcountry streams, and meadows. Certainly that is part of it. But the Philmont experience is much more.

What makes the Philmont experience unique is the backcountry program. It is based on the spirit and environment created by nature and the people who populated the Cimarron country in days long ago. Scouts have the opportunity to go back in time and experience blacksmithing, gold mining, rock climbing, mountain men rendezvous, western lore, railroading, mountain livin', black powder shooting, logging operations, Anglo homesteading, Native American life, Hispanic homesteading, fishing, mountain biking, wilderness medicine, historic campfires and much more. As your crew hikes the backcountry from camp to camp you will find yourself part of another time - northern New Mexico and the Old West in the 1800s. The experience is spiritual, physical, emotional, and one-of-a-kind.

But there is a rub. The youth members of your crew will have the opportunity to choose one of some 35 backcountry itineraries. The more aggressive the itinerary selected, the less opportunity for program. If the crew selects a trek that requires hiking from sunup to sundown, there will be little time for program. Besides, your crew will be so physically spent most will have little interest in anything other than a good meal and early bed once they get to camp.

So how does this work? The online *Philmont TREKS 2020 Itinerary Guidebook* provides a detailed description of the 35 possible itineraries. The degree of difficulty, available program, schedule, and hiking plan for each trek itinerary will be clearly specified.

The agenda for the January Briefing includes "[Selecting a Great Trek](#)". This material will give your crew a good idea of what to expect. We will have more to say about trek selection in future Watchu Grams. Don't worry, we will be there to counsel and coach you and your crew on appropriate choices should you need some extra help. Remember,

in the end, the youth make the choice - not the advisors. And that "there are no bad treks!"

Begin coaching your crew now using the material in these messages and on the [Watchu Experience](#) Web site, [www.watchu.org](http://www.watchu.org). Help them understand that Philmont is more than "just a hike." It is about team work, physical struggle, nature at its best, fantastic fun, and especially exciting backcountry program. Stress the need to select an itinerary with a "crew appropriate" balance between "available program" and "degree of difficulty". A general rule: first time trekkers should opt for lots of program (low-numbered itineraries). The most strenuous treks (itineraries with high numbers) are better suited to crews of older Scouts, 16- or 17-years old, especially ones who have previous Philmont experience.

Philmont has changed the procedures for making your online trek selection; going to a month-long window for inputting your itinerary preferences rather than the rolling, more arrival dates opening up every half hour process of the past few years. Hopefully, this new process will eliminate stress that the prior one caused.

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**Days to Departure:** Have you noticed the "countdown box" on the Watchu Web site [Home page](#)? There are now well under 200 days to departure for all PPC expeditions!

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**Philmont Medical Forms** - Philmont uses all four parts of the National BSA Annual Health and Medical Record, which was recently completely revised - the new form is in both English and Spanish and so is easily identified as the most current. The [Medical Form](#) is on-line on the [Quick Links](#) and other pages of the [Watchu Experience](#) Web site. Also, in the lower right hand corner of the Camping and Operations page of Philmont's Web site (<http://philmontscoutranch.org/Camping.aspx>) are links to the forms on the National BSA Web site. The on-line PDF can be completed and printed, but not saved - make sure you have all the information needed before starting. Please have at least one advisor from your crew print a copy of the [Medical Form Tips](#) (even if it is not updated to the new version) and bring it to the Briefing for reference during the discussion of the form.

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**Expedition Openings:** Philmont has instituted a recognition process for all crews with 12 members. We expect all our crews to qualify for this recognition. If you don't have a full crew of 12, set the entire crew into recruiting mode. It's not too late to get your crew up to Philmont size. Philmont crews of 12 work best - guaranteed. Even if

your crew is full, at present there are expedition openings which can be filled by either youth or adults. Every unused crew slot costs each contingent member, as many costs are fixed and are divided by the actual number of participants. And an unfortunate fact is that we know there will be additional openings as the days of departure draw nearer. Let's not let these precious allocations go unfilled. Share the adventure by inviting others to a part of it.

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**Reminder:** The January Advisor Briefing is the deadline to turn in your [Order Form](#) to make sure you and your crew members get the gear you want, as well as to qualify for the Hikers Dozen discount (buy 11, get 1 free) on any item.

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**New Mexico statehood** - January 6 is the anniversary of New Mexico being admitted to the Union as the 47<sup>th</sup> state in 1912. With Arizona the following month, the conversion of territories within the continental United States to states was complete.

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**Phil Fact:** Originally built as a brewery in 1854, in 1875 Henry Schwenk acquired the property across the street from Lambert's Inn (now the St. James Hotel) in Cimarron and opened a competing establishment.

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For life and opportunity!

*Henry Schwenk*

Schwenk's Gambling House and Saloon, Cimarron, New Mexico Territory