

Physically Fit for the Trail

Do you know there are only 131 days to go until first liftoff? That means you are well past the half way mark of training and crew development. How is your crew doing? Are you using the "Watchu 55 Training Plan" outlined in an earlier Watchu Gram (Physically Fit)? Probably the most important item to check now is the status of your crew's physical fitness.

First: Do you and all advisors know the health status of each crew member, both youth and adults? Are all Medical Records completed and in your hands? Does everyone meet the weight/height and blood pressure requirements?

Second: Does everyone understand the need to be working on their hydration - NOW? Are you and your crew "clear and copious"?

Third: We all know that one or two hard hikes a month are NOT good enough for Philmont. Is every person in the crew working daily to bring themselves to peak physical condition? What is the fitness plan for each member of your crew?

Many crews underestimate the need to address these individual and crew conditioning issues. They pay the price on the trail. If your crew is physically ready for the challenge of Philmont you have a 99% chance of having an extraordinary experience. If not, you have a 99% chance of having a poor experience. Or worse yet, no experience at all. Many an advisor has not made it past the first few days on the trail. With some work that will not be you.

Although, in general, Scouts and Venturers don't require as much work as Advisors to be ready, they are definitely not exempt. Most often youth in poor condition don't leave the trail, they just have a miserable time. They also cause you and the rest of the crew to have a miserable time. Save yourself lots of pain - make certain all members of your crew are working to get conditioned for the rigors of Philmont. Remember there are no "easy" Philmont itineraries - the lowest rating is "challenging."

Great Tip: An article entitled "[Fit for the Trail](#)" from the March-April 1997 edition of [Scouting Magazine](#) is in the [back issue archive](#) on their Web site (<http://www.scoutingmagazine.org/archives/index.html>). It gives a good summary of what you should have accomplished to this point and what you should be working on now. If you haven't started yet, it's not too late to catch up IF you begin immediately. But don't wait another minute!

Advisor Question: Does everything on the list of "Crew Equipment Issued at Philmont" need to be taken on the trail, or can some of it be left behind in Base Camp?

Answer: During the gear shakedown with your Philmont Ranger, he or she will suggest leaving specific items in Base Camp. Usually this includes one of the issued pots and a section of each collapsible pole for the dining fly, or all the poles if a crew member is using trekking poles that can serve double duty holding up the fly in camp.

Advisor Question: Do you have any suggestions on what type of phone to take into the backcountry?

Answer: Philmont has recently changed its policy on cell phones in the backcountry. While they are permitted, until 2010 crews were not encouraged to carry one. Philmont's recommendation has changed to a suggestion that crews carry two fully charged phones (using different providers) that should be kept off except in case of an emergency. Understand that cell phone coverage is very limited in the backcountry and likely will only be available at higher elevations. We are not aware of any one type being better than another, and thus have no specific suggestion.

Feedback from prior advisors: Yes, Philmont is expensive. However, when you talk to other advisors at Philmont, you will discover that Patriots' Path's outstanding [Colorado Tour](#) and travel arrangements are often hundreds of dollars less than the cost for similar (or even with fewer activities) tours offered by other Councils. And everything included in [Your Watchu Experience](#), such as second-to-none preparation and services like Wilderness First Aid training, is in addition to that! The entire Watchu team is committed to allowing you to participate in the life-changing experience called Philmont at the lowest possible cost, and the near unanimous consensus in the past has been the value received exceeded the fee charged.

Visit the [Watchu Mountain Outfitters Trading Post](#) online and at the March Briefing. They are well-stocked with a full selection of items, including the moisture-wicking backcountry T-Shirts, bandannas, and zipper-pull thermometers in addition to Base Camp T-shirts, baseball caps and the popular 'booney'-style hats, all with the official

WMO logo. Every purchase of merchandise helps to contain costs for all Patriots' Path contingent crews. Profits go directly into the Watchu program; strictly for the benefit of Watchu/Philmont participants. Items ordered at the January Briefing are now available for pickup at the Council office.

Phil Fact: The Santa Fe Trail runs through Philmont. There is a historical marker near the Seton Library, wagon ruts can still be seen just south of Philmont's Cattle Headquarters., and the Rayado settlement served the passing wagons. The Tooth of Time was an important milestone - when it was sighted, Santa Fe was only three weeks away. William Becknell established the route in 1821, was the first to travel it with wagons in 1822, and is credited as the "Father of the Santa Fe Trail." Philmont is working with various historical groups to both make the portion of the trail between Cimarron and Rayado more accessible and to provide interpretative information about it.

The skies are always star-lit along the Santa Fe Trail!

William Becknell

Missouri Trader