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Crew 630-J1: Life-changing Journey

How have you spent your summer, perhaps reading books, swimming, or playing sports? On June 28th crew 630-J1 embarked from Newark Liberty International Airport on a life-changing journey to Philmont Scout Ranch in Cimarron, New Mexico. The crew consisted of eight scouts and four adults from Troop 236 in Long Valley, each of which who have been preparing for this trek for over a year. In order to successfully traverse the rigorous 69-mile trek participants must be prepared for physical as well as mental challenges along the trail.

The whole trip lasted a total of fourteen days, including two days at Colorado Springs and twelve days at the Philmont Scout Ranch. Crews attending Philmont have the option to choose their trek. Treks are listed as numbers from one to thirty-five, as one being the least difficult and thirty-five being the most challenging. Crew 630-J1 selected trek 18 to balance time hiking with activities at each site.

The first two days were set in Colorado Springs where the crew stayed at the University of Colorado's dormitories acclimating to the significant altitude difference. While in Colorado Springs their itinerary consisted of visiting an Olympic Training Center, touring the Red Rocks, and rafting down the Arkansas River on class three and four rapids. On the evening of the second day, the crew had a farewell ice cream social as their last taste of real food.

The next day the scouts were up and ready to go at the crack of dawn to board their bus for a 3 hour long drive from Colorado Springs to Philmont. The crew arrived at the scout ranch around 10 a.m. giving plenty of time to check in and get squared away with logistics and their tent site. The crew spent their first day obtaining their crew gear, meeting their Ranger, and enjoying all that Base Camp had to offer.

As the fourth day began the scouts were on the trail around mid morning to avoid the afternoon heat wave. Throughout the trek the crew did everything from horseback riding to tomahawk throwing to rock climbing the sandstone cliffs of the northern section of the scout ranch. Other activities included shooting .50 Cal black powder and .30-06 rifles, branding, and homesteading. If the scouts happen to be staying at a staffed campsite at night they could sit in at the campfire and listen to music and skits played by the staff.

The peak of the scouts' trek was on top of the 11,721 ft. Mt. Phillips. On their journey up Mt. Phillips, the scouts encountered a hailstorm that quickly shifted into a fierce thunderstorm. About half way up the crew was forced to step off the trail and wait out the bad weather under a tarp. Once the storm subsided the drenched crew continued on their journey. The view atop Mt. Phillips was spectacular.

As the scouts returned from their 69-mile twelve-day trek they were covered in dirt from head to toe. Back at camp the scouts had the opportunity of taking well-needed showers and cleaning up before they returned home.

"The crew worked very well together and definitely knew all of their scouting and outdoorsmen skills. It was a great opportunity, experience and privilege to return to Philmont and lead such an incredible crew," said crew leader Ryan Stone.

The advisers and scouts who embarked on this life-changing journey were John Schommer, Paula Masiello, Rich Walczuk, Tim Gary, Ryan Stone, Sam Walczuk, Jeff Gary, Michael Schommer, Nick Masiello, Brian Degen, Anirudh Krishnan, and John-Craig Borman.

The members of crew 630-J1 enjoyed their time spent in Philmont whether it is on the trail looking out at the unrealistic views or doing the activities at each camp.



To the Top of Trail Peak (From left to right starting at the top: Tim Garry, Sam Walczuk, Ryan Stone, Jeff Garry, John-Craig Borman, Nick Masiello, John Schommer, Rich Walczuk, Paula Masiello, Anirudh Krishnan, Brian Degen, and Michael Schommer)