

Setting up Camp

Nothing better than pulling into a beautiful mountain camp after a tough hike. Reaching camp is always an exciting and welcome event. The crew spirit soars. It will be your home for another night in the fantastic New Mexican backcountry.

If you have arrived at a staffed camp for the night, the crew makes a pack line near the staff cabin (look for the flagpole in front) and takes a break. The Crew Chief checks-in with a member of the camp staff, who usually will be on the porch of the staff cabin, and normally invites the crew up for an orientation and maybe a drink (keep your cups readily accessible in your pack!) A staff member will then take you and your crew to your assigned site for the night, pointing out the location of the latrine as well as the bear bag cables, the sump, and fire ring (cooking area) - your BEARmuda Triangle!

If you are staying at a trail (un-staffed) camp you will usually find a campsite map attached to a tree or post along the trail as you enter the camp. The new trail camp maps are GPS accurate. The map will identify all facilities at that camp - the camp sites (which are numbered - there will be a corresponding small wooden marker with the site number on a tree near the fire ring), the bear bag cables, latrines and the water sources. If you are the first crew in, you get your pick. Otherwise you pick from what is vacant.

Don't blindly pick the most convenient site, something Scouts might want to do after a long day on the trail - train the Crew Chief to have the crew look for the BEST site. For example, at Devils Wash Basin there are some spectacular sites hidden from view as you enter that few people ever discover. Behind site #6 there is a rock ledge overlooking the beautiful Ute Valley. From the ledge you get one of the best morning views Philmont has to offer. Spectacular! You can see the entire panorama from the Tooth of Time to Baldy Mountain. Get up early, sit on the ledge, and see the morning sun dance through the Magic Mountains.

Other considerations:

- Are you one of the first crews arriving at the camp? Especially for camps on a number of treks and thus with more crews staying there, selecting a more central site leaves the outlying ones for late-arriving crews.
- Do you have a very early start tomorrow? Selecting a site at the opposite end of the camp means that you can be on your way without hiking past other crews who may be sleeping in.
- Sites in close proximity to the bear bags or latrines see some traffic to those facilities, and sometimes are "overused."

Once the crew is in its site, all crew equipment and smellables are extracted from the packs. Then the Crew Campsite Setup Dance (CCSD) begins. For experienced crews the CCSD time is usually well under half an hour. First item up is the crew tarp (dining fly), within the BEARmuda Triangle and usually close to the fire ring. With practice, six Scouts can put this up in two minutes flat. All non-smellable crew equipment is placed under the tarp: stoves, toilet paper, pots, fuel containers, etc.

The rest of the crew is simultaneously putting up the bear bags. The bags are loaded with the crew's food and all crew and personal smellables. The bags are hoisted up on the bear bag cables. This usually takes four persons, and should include one advisor. Sometimes these bags can get very heavy; especially just after collecting four days of food at a commissary pickup. In those cases it may take a few more crew members to get the bags up.

Now the crew is ready to set up the tents - personal items wait until all the crew ones have been taken care of. Each pair of tent mates sets up their own tent. In great crews, when the "quick" finish they jump right in to help the others. Tents are grouped together 50 feet or so outside the BEARmuda triangle. Do not set them up in a circle which could trap and frighten a curious bear - a nice arrangement is two groups of three tents each, side by side. The groups should be reasonably compact, and never with a lone tent separated from the others. With practice and attention to the task at hand, the whole crew camp site setup will be completed quickly and then is the time for fun - program, side hike, food, or relaxation.

When morning comes and it is time to pack up and leave, the above tasks are completed in reverse order. Individual tents down first, personal equipment packed, bear bags down, and finally tarp down and all crew stuff and food packed. As each crew member finishes packing, the packs are placed in Philmont-style pack line. When all the packs are stacked the Crew Chief knows the crew is ready to go, and asks "Is anyone NOT ready?" Don't forget the final task - police your camp site and the BEARmuda triangle! Guarantee nothing is left behind except a beautiful campsite.

IMPORTANT: This whole show belongs to the Scouts and is led by the Crew Chief. Advisors are a silent resource, always watching out for health and safety issues. When the Crew Chief needs your help, he will ask. How about practicing the setup dance on your next outing? Bring your stop watch!

Note: The entire camp setup can be accomplished with only four knots: the larks head (tarp and bear bags), two half hitches (tarp, tent, and bear bags), the bowline (tent and tarp), and the taut-line hitch (tent and tarp). Everyone in the crew should know these important camping knots.

Tip: Have you checked out the [Training Videos](#) page of the [Watchu Experience](#) Web site? There in the [On the Trail](#) section you will find a video demonstrating how to hang your [bear bags](#) as well as other camp site topics like [fire rings](#), [sumps](#), and [pack lines](#). In the [Equipment](#) section there are videos on how to setup Philmont [dining flys](#) and [tents](#).

Advisor Question: Why do they call it a dining fly if we are not expected to eat under it?

Answer: Why do you think you are not expected to eat under the dining fly? Yes, when the weather is nice, there is no need to gather under the fly. However when it is raining and lightning is not a concern, the dining fly is the very best place to be. It also serves to keep the weather off your crew gear that may be stashed under it at night.

Tip: If someone in your crew uses trekking poles, leave the poles issued by Philmont in your locker and use the trekking poles to support the dining fly instead; again, a multiple use to save weight.

Advisor Question: With the cold weather at night, the question of what goes into the tents at Philmont resurfaced. We have heard a variety of opinions. With an occasional cold night, people may need to supplement their sleeping clothes with additional layers such as long underwear, a fleece top, stocking cap and wool socks. What about a "pee bottle" for the adults?

Answer: The short answer is ONLY what you need to sleep goes in the tent, since tents and the contents should not be used for any reason other than sleeping.

Obviously, what you need includes a sleeping bag (and its stuff sack), a sleeping pad, and sleeping clothes (shirt and shorts) not worn at any other time, though suitable to be seen in if you are outside the tent at night. These are the "Sleeping" items in the "Your Personal Equipment" list in the *Guidebook to Adventure*. Many people store the sleeping clothes in the sleeping bag stuff sack so that they are never used elsewhere.

However, the practical answer is longer, and less precise. You must have footwear to put on to leave the tent - that should be in a closed plastic bag just outside of the tent. You must have light - a flashlight in the bag outside. Some medical conditions require equipment to be readily available - asthma inhalers, for instance. Your Ranger will instruct on what to do in such situations - in the recent past, that has been to put the item inside the boots in the bag outside, covered by "smelly socks" uncontaminated by food.

Then further considerations. Cold nights at elevation might require the long underwear and the stocking cap from the Clothing Layers B and C of the equipment list in your *Guidebook*. As neither of these are likely to be contaminated by food, they are acceptable in the tent (except, of course, if they are KNOWN to be food contaminated.) Socks used on the trail should not be worn in the sleeping bag and an EXTRA pair for sleeping is normally not carried. However if you are a cold sleeper with a light sleeping bag you might want to include a pair as part of your sleeping clothes.

Most people want a pillow for a comfortable night's sleep. A small backpacking pillow is a good choice. Those looking to shave weight might consider a stuff-able pillow, but the question

then is "What to stuff in it?" Trail clothes should never be used. An item such as a fleece top, only if it is known to be clean and uncontaminated by food, would be acceptable. Clearly this option requires a fair amount of care and responsibility.

Rain is typically an afternoon event, and normally rain gear is stowed overnight in one's pack. If it is raining when it is time to turn in, or you expect rain, rain gear can be put in the plastic bag with footwear.

If one normally drinks water during the night, a water bottle that has NEVER contained anything but water can be left just outside the tent. Should you need to make a midnight run for relief you must leave the tent. No portable restrooms allowed at Philmont.

Phil Fact: The Reverend F.J. Tolby was a Methodist minister who served churches in Elizabethtown and Cimarron. He was murdered on September 14, 1875, during the Colfax County War between squatters on the land and the new Dutch owners of the Maxwell Land Grant Company. He is buried in the Cimarron cemetery.

Tolby Peak rises against an azure sky!

Reverend F.J. Tolby

Elizabethtown and Cimarron, New Mexico Territory