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On Tour in Colorado

When your plane lands in Denver, you and your crew very likely will be itching to get to Philmont and into the splendor and excitement of the Magic Mountains. But first you will spend two days in Colorado. There are several reasons for the Colorado Tour. The primary one is to give you a couple of days to acclimatize to elevation and low humidity before arriving at Philmont. The second is to give your crew the opportunity for fun and team-building while you learn about the geography and history of the Old West. The magnificent chapel at the Air Force Academy, the heart-pounding excitement of Arkansas River whitewater, the incredible rock formations in the Garden of the Gods - [Blue Sky Adventures](#) has packed the tour with activities. And in the evening you will have the chance to relax on the beautiful Great Wolfe Lodge in Colorado Springs, with its view of Pikes Peak, indoor water park, fitness room, and more for you to enjoy. The following will help you and your crew get the most out of your time in Colorado.

- **Everything that you need for the Colorado Tour will fit in your Watchu Expedition tour (carry-on) bag.** Check the [checklist](#) for the bag, distributed at the June Advisor Briefing, and the [Tour Bags](#) video on the [Watchu Experience](#) Web site for tips on how to pack your tour bag. Your gear for the Colorado Tour should be independent of your backpack and trekking gear (except as noted below for whitewater rafting.) While you will have access to your backpack in Colorado, there should be no reason to get anything out of it. In fact, except for getting out your sleeping bag and during your Ranger equipment shakedown, there should be no reason to open it until you are dressing to hit the trail the morning of Day 2 at Philmont. Remember there will be 47 otherwise identical expedition tour bags on the bus - it's a good idea to invent a color tag, ribbon, or tape system to identify which tour bags belong to you and your crew. The tour bags with their contents for the Colorado Tour and homebound travel will be safely stored in a crew locker in Philmont's Base Camp while you are on the trail.
- **Special equipment or clothing is not needed for the whitewater rafting trip.** Items of Philmont trail clothes are suitable for the whitewater rafting trip. Booties will be provided to protect your feet. Hiking shorts and a T-shirt are

suitable, though some people wear a swimsuit. If it's cloudy and the crew member is on the "thin-blooded" side, a long sleeve poly shirt or light fleece would be appropriate. While the rafting outfitter will rent a spray jacket for about \$5 should it be an unlikely cold day, save your money - a wetsuit is sufficient. Of course, wearers of glasses or sunglasses will need a retainer to keep them on. A Watchu Mountain Outfitters bandana or the small camp towel is good enough to wipe down with after the rafting adventure, and even that probably is not needed on the typical dry day. All clothes worn on the river will dry quickly after the rafting trip, but have a couple of ziplock bags to separate damp items from the rest of your gear. **Reminder:** put any items of trail clothing you intend to use for whitewater rafting in your carry-on Tour Bag and not your backpack. **Note:** Wetsuits will be available (at no charge) and will be recommended if the water is colder than normal. Normally they are not needed and are an issue if the weather is hot - you will be uncomfortable most of the time!

- **The Watchu Sling Daypack** will allow you to easily carry your raingear at all times. You can also use it the second day in Colorado for the gear you will use while whitewater rafting.
- **All crew members are responsible for their own medicine**, both prescribed and over the counter. They must bring their own supply of over-the-counter medications such as Advil, Tylenol, Aspirin, Tums, Imodium A-D, Pepto-Bismo, vitamins, etc. Crew advisors should not dispense medicine of any kind. Medication is the responsibility of each crew member, their family, their doctor, and while at Philmont, the Philmont Medical Staff. A supply of medicine sufficient for the entire 15-day expedition should be carried in the Tour Bag. It is a good idea to have a duplicate supply of medicines in your backpack in case something happens to the tour bag primary supply. **Reminder:** All prescribed medicines must be presented to the Watchu Medical staff at the medical re-check. It is not uncommon to see crew members wasting precious Day 1-in-Base Camp time running back to Tent City because they forgot to bring their prescriptions to the Health Lodge.
- **Electronic entertainment devices are permitted on the Colorado Tour**, with restrictions - audio only and used with headphones so that the equipment does not invade any other crew member's acoustic, visual, or other space. This policy has been in place for several years now, with no problems because the rights of other crew members have been respected, and we are confident that will continue to be the case. However, two notes of caution:

First, there are plenty of opportunities to lose or otherwise be separated from the audio equipment. Alert all to the fact that they might want to think twice before bringing any expensive audio equipment on the journey - history tells us there will be losses. While the first reaction will be "someone stole my stuff!", often things are simply left behind.

Second, upon arriving at Philmont all audio equipment gets stored in your locker. Absolutely no audio equipment is allowed in the backcountry. While a Scout is trustworthy, things have been known to disappear out of the tents in Tent City.

- **While on tour in Colorado, protect your feet** - they will be your primary means of transportation for 12 days at Philmont! In the past, walking barefoot to the pool or other recreational activities has been a source of cuts and abrasions. Lightweight shoes will give your feet a rest from wearing your boots.
- **The third morning in Colorado, wear your Watchu T-shirt under your BSA uniform shirt.** This will allow you to quickly change from an official ("class A") uniform for traveling to an activity ("class B") uniform acceptable during the day after arrival at Philmont. Simply put the uniform shirt on again to be in your full official uniform for dinner, the religious services, and the Opening Campfire.
- **Completely vacate your room before breakfast.** Backpacks and travel bags should be placed in packlines near the bus. The bags will be watched while you eat.

Tip: If any one in your crew has trouble sleeping in a lighted room they should bring appropriate countermeasures, such as eye shades. During the Colorado tour there will be up to five Scouts assigned to each room at the Great Wolfe Lodge, sleeping two to a queen-sized bed (which is bigger than a two-man backpacking tent...) and a twin-size rollout. You know how it can be in a room with more than one Scout.

Your Advisor Feedback: On your return bus trip to the airport, the Watchu team asks that each advisor please complete the Watchu Feedback form your Tour Advisor will distribute, and collect when you are done. This data will be very important to us as we plan for next year's Watchu Experience. In addition, we would very much enjoy hearing from you when you return. How about sending us a few digital pictures? They might be included in next year's Watchu Mountain Adventure orientation program. Also, please send us a copy of your published newspaper articles. These stories are great to share with future crews. And consider becoming part of the Watchu staff - YOU now know the most up-to-date information about Philmont!

Advisor Question: Are crews expected to tip the bus driver and the tour guide?

Answer: The bus driver will be tipped by the tour operator and no additional tip is necessary. Tipping your tour guide is optional and certainly not "expected"; if you feel like you received exceptional service a tip will be appreciated. We suggest that the crew meet and discuss if they feel a tip is warranted. Advisors can use this as an

opportunity to talk to the youth about the concept of tipping, and if they think a tip for service above and beyond is in order. A tip need not be money - a crew T-shirt or similar item would be suitable recognition of the guide's efforts. Any tip should be presented by the youth Crew Leader (Crew Chief) on behalf of the entire crew.

Phil Fact: Raton Pass was the most dangerous stretch of the Santa Fe Trail. Wagons had to cover 20 miles of difficult terrain, with an ever-present danger of tumbling off the road into a ravine or creek. Sometimes, an all-day struggle to climb the pass would result in only 600 yards of progress. In the 1850's Richens Lacy "Uncle Dick" Wooten saw an opportunity to help the travelers on their journey and make a profit as well, building a passable road and charging to use it - \$1.50 per wagon and \$0.05 per head of livestock. Native Americans could use the road for free. Called a "turnpike," that refers to the fact that a "pike" (barrier) blocked the road until the fee was paid and the pike was turned to allow passage. Traders continued to use the Santa Fe Trail until 1880 when the railroad extended to Santa Fe. Today, the well-worn trail appears as a ribbon of green grass on the prairie where it has not been replaced by I-25. Watch for Uncle Dick's home on your right side shortly before you get to the top of the pass.

For opportunity!

'Uncle Dick' Wootton

Raton Pass, Colorado-New Mexico border