



TRAIL MARKERS

2024 PHILMONT TREK TIPS

SHIP 1610

NEWS

2023 Crews

The 2023 season is well underway with all sorts of crew reports found on social media. This year, there is significant snow (12 ft) on the tall peaks, like Mt. Phillips and Baldy. This year, there are no fire restrictions, yet.

PROGRAM

Itinerary Selection Process

Philmont offers 34 itineraries, which take different routes, visit different staffed (program) camps, and have different levels of difficulty. Note that no more than two crews are assigned on each itinerary. Crews submit their requested itineraries by February 16 each year. On that date, at 9am MST, the computer begins picking crew numbers at random and assigns the highest ranked available itinerary. For example, if we requested itineraries 12, 4, 33, 27, 31, and 16 in that order, and the computer randomly draws our crew first, then we will get our most desired itinerary, #12. However, if we are not first draw, and two other crews before us picked #12, then we will be assigned #4, assuming #4 is available.

The "official" program selection process begins in January, and the deadline to submit our final itinerary request is February 16. We submit six (6) itinerary choices, in order of preference.

Sister Crews

Expeditions on a 12-Day trek (like us) have the option to request both crews be treated as sister crews, and they will receive the same itinerary assignment. Please be aware that sister crews must function as independent crews. They do not hike or camp together and members may not move between crews. Sister crews can do evening activities together and, potentially program activities in staffed camps.

Crews that have a sister crew need to select their top eight (8) itinerary choices. Recall that only two crews can take the same itinerary, so having a sister crew makes getting the itinerary preferred by BOTH crews more difficult.

If our expedition decides that the crews will take separate itineraries, then each crew can request itineraries that match their fitness, experience, and preferences. If the expedition decides to have sister crews, then everyone has to agree on the preferred



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itineraries.

Itinerary Difficulty

Philmont itineraries are classified as either *CHALLENGING*, *RUGGED*, *STRENUOUS*, or *SUPER STRENUOUS*. An itinerary falls into one of these categories because of several factors including mileage, elevation change, and number of dry camps. The itinerary guide provides all this information for the crews to use in their selection process.

Note that the mileages specified in the guide do not include distances from a camp or water source to your campsite, side hikes, service project, etc. You should add another 30% to account for all the mileage.

A "Challenging" itinerary will allow the crew more time for program. Ranging between 52 and 59 miles; 9 itineraries in this category.

A "Rugged" itinerary, although offering more physical challenge, is very enjoyable for a crew that has trained. Ranging between 60 and 63 miles, 9 itineraries in this category.

A "Strenuous" itinerary is a great experience for a crew of physically fit Scouts and capable adults. Ranging between 63 and 72 miles, 10 itineraries in this category.

A "Super Strenuous" is, by far, the most difficult and, for experienced and early rising Philmont crews, very rewarding! Ranging between 70 and 84 miles, 6 itineraries in this category.

PHYSICAL READINESS

Taking Care of your Feet

Your feet can either help you travel from camp to camp, or rapidly become the painful obstacle that interferes with you and the crew's fun. Taking good care before Philmont, and maintaining good care at Philmont will serve to make your feet happy.

Break In Your Feet - Before arriving at Philmont, you should condition your feet (also breaks in your shoes) by wearing them for at least an hour of hiking EVERY DAY. Your feet will grow tough where they need to be tough.

Boots - Be sure to pick boots that fit properly. Ideally, there should be plenty of room for your toes to splay (yes, your toes will widen), but plenty of snugness in the heel and ankle. Mid to high top boots are highly recommended by Philmont for ankle support on rocky, uneven trails. Boots should be well broken in before a Philmont trek. Waterproof boots are recommended by Philmont - keeping your feet dry is one of the biggest keys to a successful trek. Skipper is using trail runners instead, but he's been training with weight



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and distance every day to strengthen his ankles. The trail runners are not waterproof, but they drain and dry quickly.

Socks - Recommend padded merino wool, synthetic, or wool/synthetic blend socks that fit tightly on your foot. Bring several pairs. Rinse them out after hiking every day, then put on a dry pair. Cotton socks are totally inadequate because they absorb moisture, which aggravates blister formation. Skipper will be wearing Darn Tough brand socks.

Stream Crossing Shoes - It is highly recommended to bring camp shoes that can double as stream crossing shoes to prevent having to use hiking boots to cross knee-deep water. Old tennis shoes work great for camp/stream crossing shoes because they are lightweight, closed toed, can pack up small, and don't cost anything since you already have them and can easily recycle them at the end of the trek. After crossing a stream, tie the stream crossing shoes to the outside of your pack to let them dry off. They will be dry by the time you get to camp and it will be nice to let your feet flex and air out while wearing these shoes.

Blisters

- **Prevent:** Blisters are caused by the heat resulting from friction and rubbing between the shoe and the foot. Wearing well broken in boots and good fitting, clean hiking socks will prevent friction and blisters. Hikers should recognize a "hot spot" and take steps to treat them before they become blisters.
- **Recognize:** Blisters are areas of irritated and painful skin, where fluid and blood begins to collect and can be very painful.
- **Treatment:** If a blister forms, do not pop or drain it. Use moleskin to create a cushion to protect the blister by cutting a hole in the middle of the pad slightly larger than the blister. Place the moleskin over the affected area so that the blister is surrounded by the bandage but not covered. This will reduce the friction between the blister and the sock, preventing the blister from getting any larger. If the blister pops on its own, make sure that the area stays clean and covered and watch for signs of infection. Treat a "hot spot" right away; stop the group and apply some medical tape to the hot spot to eliminate friction on the skin.

THE PHILMONT WAY

Hiking Etiquette

You will come across many crews over the course of your trek; knowing how to properly interact with them will help make your trek much more enjoyable. Additionally, proper



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hiking etiquette within your crew will help mitigate unnecessary tension and stress between crew members.

- **Pace** - Your crew should choose a pace that keeps the crew together and allows the crew to hike for extended amounts of time without needing to stop and take a break. If one crew member is significantly slower than the rest of the crew, have them hike near the front of the crew so that they can easily communicate with the navigator/pace setter.
- **Spacing** - It is common for crew members to hike too close together at Philmont and as a result, crew members are not able to see the views and wildlife all around them. It is recommended that crew members are spaced out about 8-10 ft. to allow them to look around and enjoy the views as well as stop in time if the person in front of them were to suddenly stop on the trail. The reason why you do not want your crew to be too spaced out is that part of the crew may go the wrong way at a trail junction, causing a search and rescue operation because the group was not hiking together as a solidary crew.
- **Breaks** - Crews should take breaks when needed and anyone in the crew should feel comfortable calling for a break. There are two kinds of breaks: a five-minute or less break and a 20-minute or more break. The reason for the two different breaks is the lactic acid buildup that will occur in your muscles after resting for more than five minutes. Lactic acid will leave your muscles feeling sluggish and you will exert much more energy if you hike during lactic acid buildup. After 20 minutes, the lactic acid will dissipate, and your muscles will be able to move unrestricted. Additionally, make sure to never step on the critical edge of the trail, especially when taking breaks. The critical edge is the outside (or downhill) edge of the trail and stepping on it will weaken it and lead to the erosion of the trail.
- **Passing a Crew** - If you encounter another crew heading in the same direction you are hiking, take a five-minute break. If you approach them again, take another five-minute break. If you approach them a third time, ask if you may pass. If you do pass the other crew, do not stop for at least 45 minutes to prevent the two crews from leapfrogging one another.
- **Another Crew Passes You** - As stated earlier, a crew hiking behind you will probably ask if they can pass you. If they do, let them hike in front since you may not have seen them the other two times they approached you. Once passed, taking a five-minute break is a good idea just to give the two crews spacing.
- **Right of Way** - When two crews meet on a hill and are hiking opposite directions,



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the crew hiking uphill has the right of way and the crew hiking downhill should step off the trail allowing the other crew to pass. The reason for this is that it is harder to get your momentum going uphill than downhill.

- Pack Animals - Cavalcade crews or crews with a burro always have the right of way. Listen to the directions of the Horseman or Wrangler for which side of the trail to move to.
- Stream Crossings - Cross streams and bridges one person at a time. Unbuckle your hip belt and sternum strap so that if you fall in, you can quickly escape your pack and avoid drowning. The navigator should continue about 30 ft. up the trail and wait for the rest of the crew. When the last person crosses the stream, they should call out "All across" then the navigator will ask the question: "Is anybody not ready?" before hiking on.
- Trekking Poles - If you decide to use trekking poles on your trek, make sure to use rubber tips to save our trails from erosion. Trekking poles can reduce the impact on your knees by up to 25% while backpacking but we have found that trails erode much quicker when the sharp tip of the poles are exposed

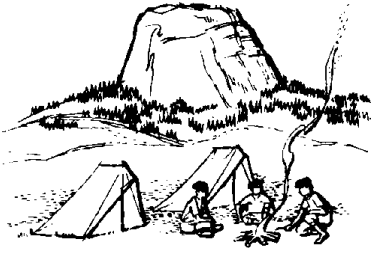
Here are a few things to remember about hiking:

- Advisors never lead the crew and usually hike toward the rear.
- Always hike single file.
- The Crew Chief may designate a "Break Master" to time the breaks with a watch.
- When going up difficult hills, use the "caterpillar" method of hiking.
- Anyone in the crew can call for a break whenever they need it.
- Do not hike on roads when a footpath or hiking trail is available.

LEADERSHIP

Wilderness First Aid

For years, Philmont has required two crew members be certified in Wilderness First Aid (WFA). This has resulted in a decrease of 15 to 20% in medical emergencies on the trail. Expanding on this success, in 2023 Philmont is recommending that four people in each crew, and in 2024 will require four people be trained. This is nothing new to Ship 1610. The normal activities we do, such as sailing around the Bay, inherently put us in a situation that medical help is delayed. Our goal is to train all the scouts and leaders. The



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certification must be renewed every two years. Many of you received your certification with us at the Scout Farm in November 2021. We intend to offer re-certification on November 11, 2023. This will be a one-day event and will be ALL hands on. If you are being certified for the first time, there is an 8-hour online training course that you will need to complete, at a nominal fee.