

Planning a Trek!

(Presentation given by Tom Youngblood at Commissioner College, March 2004)

I. Why do a trek?

- Helps keep older boys present and motivated
- Challenges and inspires both youth and adults
- Grows better leaders and builds better units

II. Planning ahead for success -- The “Big Four”

1. Itinerary Selection
2. Crew Training
3. Outdoor Training
4. Survey Input

III. Trek Components:

Crew-----Logistics-----Paperwork

IV. Match the adventure to the group

- Set challenging, but realistic goals
- Set physical standards, pay particular attention to the adults!

V. Crew Concept

I. Crew size

- can range from 4-12 people, 5-8 is ideal
- may be dictated by the backcountry management area's rules

2. BSA's leadership Policy

- One advisor 21, second advisor at least 18
- co-ed crews; at least one male and one female, both 21 or older
- three advisors recommended

3. The crew leader *leads*

- organizes the crew, may have Ass't and QM
- develops the duty roster

- seeks consensus from the crew, but makes the decisions
4. The crew advisor *advises*
 - with the crew leader, develops the training program for backcountry skills and building crew unity
 - should only step in when there is a health or safety issue
 - daily “one-on-one” with the crew leader
 5. Build crew unity also with logos they design, t-shirts, yells, maybe flags...

VI. Shakedown

- Develop crew dynamics and unity, teach skills, and build physical and emotional stamina
- Train at home prior to shakedowns, then practice what you have learned in the backcountry
- Build in duration and difficulty
- Insist on full participation right from the start

VII. Equipment

1. Use crew/individual equipment checklists
 - work with your outfitter - planes, equipment, shuttles, times, dates, prices
 - check all gear, esp. personal gear before ever going out
 - learn to do with minimum, think multi-purpose
2. Teach safe operation of all crew equipment
 - stoves, water purification/pumps, bear bags

VIII. Food

Develop tasty, easy to prepare, high-energy meals

- Good food feeds good crew morale
- Teach proper food handling, prep, and disposal
- Try out trek foods during training to identify likes/dislikes, and determine amounts needed
- Use a detailed food buying list

IX. Trail Guides and maps

1. Check with backcountry management area for latest maps and guides
2. Be sure to carry at least two sets of maps

- waterproof
 - put emergency/accident form on the back
3. Rotate crew navigator (Navi-guesser) daily
 - responsible for preparing time-control plan
 - briefs the entire crew before hitting the trail
 - navigates for crew and makes decisions with crew input, guidance from advisor

X. Trek Plan

Written document that includes:

- Goals of the trek
- Transportation and route to the trail head
- Time control plan for the trek
- Required permits
- Crew members including any special qualifications
- First aid and personal medication requirements
- Personal and crew equipment and food
- Specialized training requirements
- Emergency phone numbers
- Bailout plan
- Is more than a tour permit!
- Is shared with the parents
- Is left with one responsible adult at home who is designated the Emergency contact person who is available to be called by the adult advisors on the trip or by parents at home

XI. Transportation Plan

1. Start early - plane tickets, van rentals, etc.
2. Weigh options - time, expense, etc. against car, van, plane, etc.
3. If going by car
 - limited to no more than 10 hours per day of driving
 - recommend having two adults per vehicle to drive
 - cars should be mechanically checked and safe
4. Consider for overnight lodging

- Military bases
- BSA family camps
- Federal, State, and local parks
- Youth hostels
- Churches
- YMCA's

5. Be sure to thank your hosts when you get home

XII. Trek Budget

Developed by the advisors and shared with the crew's parents and committee

- Transportation
- Lodging
- Meals enroute and on the trail
- Use Fees
- Insurance
- Equipment purchase or rental
- side trips and tours
- crew shirts
- contingency

XIII. Permits

National (or local) BSA tour permit required

Backcountry permits required for most land management areas

•define the size of group, camping locations, food storage procedures, emergency POCs

- Requires early coordination with backcountry management agencies

XIV. Medicals

- High adventure activities require class III physicals completed within 12 months preceding activity
- Advisors must be aware of all existing preconditions and medications for all crew members

XV. Consent Forms

1. Develop a consent form specifically designed to cover the activity
 - include a duration, locations, and expected activities
 - have permission or not to administer OTC drugs
2. Carry copies of all medicals, insurance forms, and consent forms with you at all times (Training and Trek)

XVI. Other things to consider

1. Activity Briefing/Open House
2. Parents and crew meetings
 - An early parent's meeting helps "get everyone on the same page"
3. Fund raising activities
4. Communications (Newsletter, Email, etc.)
5. Social Activities
6. Crew photography (co-op)
7. Crew log

XVII. Timeline

1. Start 9 months or more ahead:
2. Family Commitment
 - Meeting with youth and parents
 - Bring important school and family dates
 - Set shakedown expectations and schedule
 - Payment schedule and penalties
 - Fundraising and scholarship availability
 - Communication - put it in writing!

XVIII. Reality Check

1. When is a scout ready for a high-adventure trek?
 - Desire and commitment
 - Physical and emotional readiness
 - Maturity
 - will they eat the food and drink the water?

- can they self medicate?
- will they practice personal hygiene?
- can they work within the patrol method?

2. Dealing with problems

Now...or later?

- physically or emotionally unable crew members will ruin the experience for the whole crew

3. Advisor issues

Sorting out roles

- lead advisor
- Navi-guesser advisor
- medical advisor
- other roles?

Working out differences

- Don't fool yourselves, you aren't fooling the scouts
- a long trek is a long time

Physical readiness

- Hiking pace and hiker separation
- hiking pace and hypothermia
- the physical form (especially Philmont's)
- challenges (weight restrictions, BP, Asthma, Orthopedic problems)
- diet and exercise

XIX. Certifications

First aid

- ARC Standard & CPR (minimum)
- Wilderness First Aid WFA, SOLO)

<http://www.soloschools.com/home.html>

Leave No Trace - <http://www.lnt.org/>

Specialized training:

1. Safe Swim Defense
2. Safety Afloat
3. Climb on safely

4. Trek safety

The training can be done in about 40 minutes. A Trek Safety flier, No. 20-125 and a Trek Safety Training Outline, No. 20-129 Order from the National Distribution Center in Charlotte, NC. Uses the following points:

- Qualified Supervision
- Keep Fit
- Plan Ahead
- Gear Up
- Communicate Clearly and Completely
- Monitor Conditions
- Discipline

5. Youth Protection Training (mandatory for advisors)

6. Back Country Outdoor Leader Skills

This course is aimed at all adults working with older youth regardless of program (Venture Patrol, Varsity Scout, Venturing Crew, or Explorer Post). Back Country Outdoor Leader Skills is offered by the Council Training Committee as an optional follow-on to the basic course, Introduction to Outdoor Leader Skills. Its goal is to provide adult leaders with an overview of such topics as:

- * Working With Older Youth
- * Risk Management
- * Wilderness First Aid
- * Leave No Trace
- * Terrain Awareness
- * Cooking & Clean-up
- * Personal Hygiene
- * Resources
- * Equipment Needs
- * Equipment Maintenance
- * On the Trail Tips
- * Teambuilding & Leadership Development

XX. Topics to review with the committee after a trek:

1. Personal challenges?
2. What worked?
3. What didn't?
4. Personal challenges?
5. What worked?
6. What didn't work?
7. What will I do next time?

Links and Resources

The "Philmont Advisor's Guide"

Seldon Ball's Philmont pages

<http://w4.lns.cornell.edu/~seb/philmont.html>

<http://www.lns.cornell.edu/~seb/high-adventure.html>

Philmont listservers & bulletin boards

<http://www.philmont.com> (unOfficial site)

<http://www.usscouts.org/lists/index.asp>

<http://www.philmont.com>

<http://w4.lns>.

Philmont Gear List

(Compiled by Tom Youngblood, SM Troop 122)

- Pack
- Pack Cover or several large garbage bags
- Sleeping Bag (rated to 25 - 40 degrees)
- Ground Pad (3/4)
- Chair***
- Tent* (or the you can use the PhilTents, they hold up well)
- Pillow*** (Inflatable or Stuffable ONLY)
- Day Pack*
- Ground Cloth* a.k.a tarp - to put under tent.
- Walking Stick*** - Very helpful
- Boots - sturdy, worn in, waterproofed several times
- Wool Socks - 3 pairs
- PolyPro Liners - 3 pairs
- Cool Max T-Shirts - 2 or 3 (no Cotton whatsoever)
- Shorts - 2 pairs (No denim, nylon works good)
- Long Pants - 1 pair (No Jeans! If they get wet once, they will be wet for the rest of the trip, making your pack all the more heavier, so stick with the CoolMax or thinner type material)
- Underwear - 3 pairs (at least)
- Long-Sleeved Shirt or fleece shirt - 1
- Light Sleep Clothes - 1 pair (Keep in sleeping bag, probably along the lines of a t-shirt and some running shorts)
- Jacket - Windbreaker or the like (Can use Rain Suit Jacket)

- Camp Shoes or Water Shoes (to wear at camp)
- Rain Suit (No cheap ponchos - always expect lots of rain)
- Hat w/ Brim (I don't suppose there are too many hats that don't have brims but you'll probably want one that goes all the way around)
- Sunglasses***
- Bandana/s
- Bowl
- Cup
- Spoon (Won't need a fork) "If you need a fork, you cooked it wrong."
- Pocket Knife*** (Small)
- Compass
- SMALL Flashlight (w/ new bulb)
- Extra Batteries** (Probably 2 for your flashlight and 2 for your camera)
- Whistle
- AT LEAST 3 Liters of Water in at least 3 Bottles (If you happen to be doing a trek where the last day you come down the Tooth of Time, there is no water for about the last 10 miles and you will find your self more or less in the middle of the desert, so you are going to want every ounce of water you can get, anyone who has done it can relate)
- Tooth Brush & Paste**
- Camp Soap** (No bar soap, I believe though, that they do supply all the camp suds needed)
- Small Backpacking Towel**
- Extra 1 Gallon ZipLoc Bags (Several)
- Extra Garbage Bags (Heavy Duty)
- Personal Bag to go in Bear Bag
- Money*** (In small bills)

- Stocking Hat***
- Watch*** (You'll probably want at least 1 per crew so you can stay on schedule)
- Working Gloves***
- Journal***
- Camera and Film*
- Check that tent has all its stakes (If taking your own)
- If you're using a Philmont tent, you need to take 10 ground stakes.

*Can be shared w/ buddy

** Bear Bag Item

*** Optional

The entire weight of my Coleman Exponent Pack loaded with this stuff is about 25 lbs. This includes the things that I wore so it is actually a couple of pounds less.

If you're looking for a site that has everything you could possibly think of about Philmont, check out [Selden's List of Philmont Web Pages](#)