

Philmont Trek 14 July 22- August 2, 2009

Day -1

Departed Cedar Falls, Iowa 2:30 p.m. Pictures were taken before we left. An easy drive to Fort Madison, Iowa – nearly all 4 lane. About a 3 hour drive. Lots of places to eat as you enter Fort Madison. Check in at the train station was very easy. We waited for the train, it was 30 minutes late (guess that's not bad for Amtrak). They were aware of our group and used the storage car for all of our gear. Learning – the storage car is not water tight. It rained on the trip down and any gear on the floor got wet (not a bi deal as it dried fast), but next time put all gear on the pallets. Initially, they didn't have seats assigned for us, but reserved space for us in the lounge car. This worked well. We left about 7:30 and arrive in Kansas City near 11 p.m. We were then given seats back in the main cars. Glad I packed a blanket and pillow. Slept most of the night, the seats are ok for sleeping. Next time, could bring DVD player or laptop as they have plenty of outlets by the seats and in the lounge car.

Day 0

We had stocked up on food from the food bank prior to the trip and everyone had plenty of breakfast bars, poptarts, etc to eat.

As soon as you exit the tunnel, you have about 10 minutes until you arrive at Raton. We arrived at 10:50 – 20 minutes early! The bus from Philmont was waiting for us. Quickly loaded our gear into the bus. The bus driver stopped at a grouping of fast food places for us to eat lunch. Had about 45 minutes to eat. It was about a 45 minute drive to Philmont. Lots of nice scenery along the way. As soon as we unloaded our gear at Philmont, the Crew Leader and lead advisor go to the Welcome center to check in. Very easy process, tents were assigned and we moved our gear to the “Trail-Bound” tents.

The rest of the day was downtime. Some of us took the bus into Cimarron. Nice shops to look through. Don't miss the Soda Fountain - really good malts. It also has just about anything you can think of with a Woodbadge animal on it.

Returned to camp, toured the grounds to learn where everything is. Visited the Tooth of Time Traders (trading post). The best trading post of the three High Adventure stores. You can find just about anything you may have forgotten, plus stuff you didn't even know you needed.

Supper at 5:00 p.m.

Went to 7 p.m. Chapel – raining so it was held inside.

Downtime until lights out.

Advisors, don't miss the Advisors Lounge. A good place to talk to those heading out and a chance to pick up tips from those who just returned.

Our crew really liked coming in a day early. More time to relax, tomorrow will be very busy. It also gave us a little time to adjust to the altitude. We came from 680 ft and base camp is 6750. One day is not enough, but it helps.

Day 1

Up early, 5:30 to shower. Breakfast is at 6:30. The food at base camp is consistently good, and plenty of it.

8:15 We met our ranger at the welcome center.

8:30 Registration – only the Crew Leader and Lead Advisor need be here. This is very easy if you have all of your paperwork done ahead of time. Paid the remainder of bills – extra day of camping and bus fees.

9:00 Logistics – Lead advisor and Crew Leader. Lots of information gone over very quickly. Take lots of notes (we both wrote as fast as we could). They go over your trek. We were told they couldn't reserve the horses at Clarks Fork for us, we will have to get there early and hope a crew doesn't show up. They also go over water sources along your trek – take lots of notes here – will need to return to review this.

10:15 Medical center. Again this is quick and easy if everything is filled in on the physical forms and you have copies of all insurance cards. This should be checked at the last group meeting before leaving.

11:00 Lunch

12:00 Back at our tents. Gear shake down. We had down one prior to leaving, so there were no real surprises hear.

1:00 Services – picked up dining fly, pots, sump supplies. We also picked up food. Depending upon your trek, this may be a few days of lots of days. We had food for 5 days – everyone had 8 bags of food to add to their pack. This is a lot of food – be prepared for it. We were shocked by the amount of food we had to carry! We also were issued bear bags and bear ropes.

1:45 Back at the tents to pack up the packs with all of the gear.

2:30 Back to supplies to fill the white gas. 10 cents per ounce. The 2 containers were \$5.50 to fill. You can refill gas at the food pick up stations on the trail, so 2 tanks of gas is plenty.

3:00 Security - get keys for storage bins.

5:00 Supper

5:45 Meetings for Crew Leader, Chaplains Aid and Lead Advisor. They leave promptly, so get there on time. The advisor meeting was okay, if you've done any reading and planning, you probably will not learn anything

new here. The scouts thought the Crew Leader and Chaplains Aid meetings were helpful.

7:00 Protestant service. Must attend one service for the Duty to God award.

8:30 Opening Campfire. This is worth going to, but nothing special. Gives the history of the area and some of the things that you will see.

Day 2

Up at 5:30 – everyone showers.

6:30 breakfast

7:00 back at the tents. Final packing. Fill all nalgens and camelbacks.

Everyone should have 4 liters of water.

Clean out the tents, put gear you are not taking with you into the lockers and valuables into the safe at registration.

9:00 Meet at welcome center with everything you are taking.

9:30 the bus leaves.

10:00 Arrived Rayado Turnaround

Toured the Kit Carson museum and gift shop. Saw a musical show.

Most fun was tomahawk throwing.

12:00 lunch – the first bagged meal from the packs.

1:00 went over map reading – very fast, would have liked more detail for the scouts. Those who knew orienteering were fine, those who were weak, were lost.

1:30 Started hiking – rain started immediately.

We had 3 stream crossings, not really good crossing areas, got wet feet.

3:40 Stopped at Zastro. They offer an orienteering course there. We had the scouts do the course. This was a good choice as they had fun with it, and it helped the ones who were weak.

6:00 Arrived at Rayado River, set up camp, put up bear bags, set up dining fly. Started supper at 7:30 and ate at 8. This took more time as it was our first night to set up camp – the Philmont way, and learn how to cook their food.

8:30 clean up

9:30 lights out.

Day 3

Up at 6:00

Camp torn down and ready to leave at 7:45. It takes more time than you expect to tear down camp until you get a system in place.

7:45 Hiked to Abeau

8:15 Breakfast at Abreau. The scouts liked the rootbeer at the cantina. If we had arrived earlier, they could have milked a goat.

9:00 Started hiking toward Uracca. This is a difficult hike to have early in the trek. Very steep areas with about an 1800 foot elevation change.

Ron started having trouble breathing south of Toothache springs. We were needing to stop every 5 minutes. Don't think he was taking in enough fluid. After several stops, we kept a log of our situation. 1 Advisor and 7 scouts took packs up to Toothache springs. 4 scouts returned without packs to help Ron up to toothache springs. 1 advisor and 3 scouts left their packs, brought the information, water, raingear and went over Uracca Mesa to Uracca Camp to get help. The trail up to Uracca Mesa is difficult, steep and lots of loose rock. Returned with medical team. Ron was taken to basecamp. The rest of our crew continued onto Uracca Camp. One advisor suffered an ankle injury heading back up (he had been the advisor to go to camp to get help). Once you reach the top of Uracca Mesa, it is an easy hike to camp. Amazing view from the top of the mesa.

4:00 arrived at uracca camp. Did porch talk and taken to our camp site. Put up bear bags.

5:00 Advisors set up camp and cooked while the scouts did the challenge events. While this goes against what Philmont states the advisors should do, we felt it was not their fault we arrived in camp late and they needed to have fun at the challenge events that night.

6:00 Scouts return from challenge events – pretty much a Low COPE course, but they had fun. We ate. 2 other advisors started to show signs of altitude sickness. One was just queasy, the other was worse.

7:00 Advisor coffee – don't miss these.

8:00 Campfire – very good, lots of good ghost stories.

8:30 one advisor started throwing up and headed to the camp lodge. She stayed there all night.

9:30 lights out

Day 4

Up at 6:00

7:00 Camp is torn down and we are ready to leave. This is the day our ranger leaves us. She goes over a few last minute teachings.

Our advisor is not feeling any better up at the camp. We wait until 9 to get a final report that base camp wants her sent down. The other advisor is feeling better.

9:15 left camp.

We had talked with the staff the night before about our route. There were 2 options, one going through Lovers Leap and the other through Crater Lake. Staff recommended Crater Lake. We were told they were the same distance and the trails through Lovers Leap were in bad shape.

Started raining about 3 p.m. when we reached Crater Lake. Could have done Spar climbing, but didn't have time. This route was 4 miles longer. We were later told by other crews that the trails through Lovers Leap were in very good shape.

Lesson Learned – don't always believe the staff, talk with advisors at advisors coffee who have come by the trails you will be taking.

4:00 Arrived at Miners Park. Did porch talk. We had hoped to do our conservation project the next day, but they had no staff available. They did get us signed up for the conservation project at Cimerroncito. Boys also signed up to climb at 10 am the next day.

Kept raining, so we used the dining fly as a cover as each tent was set up underneath the fly. This kept the tent dry until the rain fly was attached. Also allowed everyone to put their gear into the tent and keep it dry.

4:30 some of the scouts headed to the showers. Others washed clothes.

6:00 Supper – Beef Stroganoff – really good!

8:00 Campfire. Lots of fun – don't miss this one.

Jada Day awesome camp staff. She helped get our conservation project scheduled and set up time in the morning for the scouts to climb and rappel.

9:30 lights out

Day 5

Late morning, we slept in to 7:30. 8:00 Breakfast and then the boys tore down camp.

9:00 the scouts left to go to the climbing area, about 45 minutes outside of camp (luckily this is the direction we are heading).

The advisors head for the showers. Upon returning, we see that Michelle has returned from basecamp and is feeling much better.

9:45 the advisors leave camp to go watch the boys climb.

10:30 arrive at climbing site. This is a great site to climb. Be sure to drop your packs at the fork in the road, don't carry them up the hill. At the fork, you still have about 10 minutes to the climbing area.

11:00 finished climbing and started hiking to Black Mountain.

11:30 Arrived North Fork Uracca. Stopped by a stream for lunch. This is a great place for lunch.

12:00 Continued hiking.

12:30 Started raining – huge cold drops. It continued to rain off and on the rest of the day. Advisor reinjured his ankle on a stream crossing. We had read about the number of stream crossings and counted. Counting stream crossings and bridges, we had **49** stream crossings!

3:30 Arrived at Black Mountain, still raining. The welcoming staff was probably the least helpful of any staff camp. We listened to the porch talk and were taken to out camp site.

4:00 Bear bags were put up. Again, due to time lost, we sent the scouts to do the blacksmithing program. The advisors set up camp and went to the program. The blacksmithing program is very good and not to be missed. So this program first as it takes longer than shooting.

4:30 Advisors warm up in the cabin by the fire while the scouts do blacksmithing.

5:00 Returned to camp. Because of the rain, we ate the next days lunch. Everyone is cold and wet.

6:00 Crawled into sleeping bag to warm up and get out of wet clothes.

8:00 everyone was in bed.

Unfortunately our clothes worn today are wet and those washed yesterday, still have not dried. Nobody has dry clothes to put on for the next day. Not a pleasant thought.

Day 6

6:30 up, beautiful sunny day, this brightens everyone spirits

7:00 started heating water. Will do last night's supper this morning.

8:00 Boys head down to shoot Black Powder rifles.

We hang out all of the wet clothes on a clothes line to dry. It is sunny enough, some of the clothes should dry. Yesterdays clothes are damp, but not soaked.

9:30 done shooting and back to eat.

10:30 Camp is down and we are ready to leave. A really nice hike to Beaubien.

11:45 Arrived at Beaubien.

This is the prettiest camp the we go through. Would have been nice to stay here (thought for next trek). They have many programs here, but we didn't have time to take advantage of them. Just ate lunch and left.

12:30 Left for Phillips Junction and our next food pick up. A nice easy hike.

1:30 Arrived Phillips Junction. They have swap boxes – worth looking through. After picking up your meals, make sure you have all you are supposed to have. Also go through the food and leave anything you know you won't eat. Keep the Gatorade – everyone needs at least one packet a day with their water.

My ankle was hurting worse and had the medic look at it. This took more time.

3:00 Finally done with medic, ankle wrapped and taped, I think I can continue. Nice hike to Commanche Camp.

4:30 Arrive at Commanche Camp. Nobody is there, we have our choice of camp sites. This is much further off the trail than it looks on the map.

5:30 camp set up, bear bags up and water heating. The crew is working together well as a team.

6:00 Supper. We take the meals out of order. The Mexican meal has a lot of weight to it with tortillas, etc. This is excellent, the favorite to date.

7:00 Campfire

9:30 Lights out

Day 7

Rained during the night. Wet tents to put away (not the first or last time).

6:15 up

For some reason, the boys were slow moving this morning.

8:00 Camp packed up and ready to leave. We had discussed the route options the night before. We could take the long way up over Mount Phillips and risk bad weather. Or we could hike directly up to Commanche Peak Camp, and if weather permits, drop our packs and hike a short distance back to Mount Phillips. We decide to take the safer route and go back to Mount Phillips if weather allows.

9:00 Found a nice area along the creek for breakfast. We use this break to filter water as the next camp is dry.

10:30 We discuss whether to cook supper here with water or eat lunch and supper at camp (even though it is dry). We decide to hike on.

11:00 we continue hiking until we reach the beginning of the stream. Our sister crew is here cooking supper. We filter water and top off everything. We have a 6 liter and 2 liter extra bag that is filled.

11:30 Hiking up the Mountain we get into some steep areas, the weather gets very dark and it starts to rain. Good thing for really good pack rain covers (**do NOT skimp on cheap ones**)

12:15 We arrive at Commanche Peak Camp. The sky looks very ominous – dark like rain could come again at any minute. The scouts really show their stuff here. We have camp set up in 20 minutes. All tents set up, dining fly up and bear bags up!

12:45 blue sky and sunny. We have lunch. We put up clothes lines to dry all of the wet clothes and gear.

3:00 Most everything is dry. We are considering hiking over to Mount Phillips. Suddenly, dark clouds come over the mountain and it hails, followed by a torrential rain.

We find out later our sister crew had just arrived at camp and were huddled under the dining fly when the hail started. They didn't have time to set up tents.

4:00 Blue sky again. The scouts decide they will stay at camp and enjoy the downtime rather than hike to Mount Phillips. We are only 500 feet below the peak (11,300 vs 11,800)

6:00 Ate our second lunch today due to a lack of water. We will have 2 suppers tomorrow when we have a water source.

8:00 Another good campfire. This is our third and much appreciated. Philmont strongly encourage you to have campfires where you have fire rings as a way to burn up small brush.

9:00 lights out

Day 8

6:15 up, sunny blue skies

6:45 breakfast. The boys are back in synch and moving faster.

7:30 Camp is packed up and we are ready to go.

We get to the north side of Commanche Peak Camp and find beautiful overlooks. Each one better than the previous. A very nice downhill hike to Sawmill. This day goes very fast.

11:00 Arrive at Sawmill. They have the Million Dollar View from their porch. WOW!!!

Nice porch talk.

11:30 the Advisors talked and decided that we would cook while the boys did the 30.06 reloading program. At this lower altitude, it didn't take long for the water to boil, unlike at some other higher sites.

12:00 Lunch while our sister crew did the reloading.

12:30 Scouts and some advisors headed to the shooting range. They loved shooting the 30.06. You have the 3 rounds you loaded, plus you can buy an additional 3 rounds. I think everyone did.

2:00 return from range. Spent time at Sawmill. Horseshoes, and just sitting around. Nice downtime. Spend as much time here as you want. Lower Sawmill camp is an unstaffed camp with no activities there. All activities are at Sawmill.

2 advisors talked with the medic about ankle and foot problems. Chili was an awesome medic to work with!

4:15 left for Lower Sawmill. This is about a 2 mile hike. We topped off all of the water we could, as there is no water at lower Sawmill.

5:00 Arrived at Lower Sawmill Set up camp in light rain. The rain stopped and we had a beautiful night. Had our second supper of the day. Be very aware of the cherry blast. This caused a continual line and handoff of the important papers.

7:30 Beautiful sunset.

8:00 As always, we do a Thorns, Roses and buds. This is really important to help the crew work together as a team.

I am very impressed with the job that our Chaplains Aide is doing. Besides reading the daily devotions, he has selected other New Testament readings that go with the devotions. I know that I am biased, as he's my son, but he is doing a great job. Our Crew Leader is doing a good job, but finding out that leadership is not always fun or easy. The crew has really gelled together and is working well as a team and pulling together.

Day 9

6:30 up to blue sky. It rained again during the night, so the tents are wet.

7:00 Oatmeal, hot chocolate and bars for breakfast.

8:00 Camp is down and we are ready to leave.

8:30 Very short, easy hike to Ute Gulch to resupply food. At the fork, we dropped packs. 2 advisors and 4 scouts hiked up to Ute Gulch for food and the rest stayed back and relaxed. To our surprise, we are allowed to exchange 1 supper for an extra lunch (this will come in handy for our dry day at Tooth Ridge Camp).

11:00 We meet back up with the rest of the crew.

11:15 Very short walk to Cimarroncito. We check in at the porch. We have lunch and then wait around until our 2 p.m. Service Project time.

2:00 we listen to the Service Project talk and learn about what we will be doing and the equipment we will use. Half of the crew is working on a new trail. We will help clean a meadow.

5:00 Finished with the service project. We are looking forward to warm showers, but the group before us used all of the hot water. We take very short cold showers. At least it still removes a few layers of dirt.

5:30 Leave for Hunting Lodge

5:50 Arrive at Hunting Lodge. Very short porch talk and then taken to our camp site. The scouts work very fast and camp is set up in about 20 minutes.

6:20 Supper is ready and it tastes really good! We used turkey bags for cooking tonight. We heated the water needed in the medium pot, two turkey bags (one inside the other, just incase) were placed in the large cold pot and the freeze dried food placed in the bags. The hot water was added to the mix in the turkey bags, stirred carefully and let sit. The only cleanup was spoons and your dishes – this made cleanup much easier. I have read about using the turkey bags in the large pot with hot water around the bag. Our approach worked well and seemed easier.

7:00 Advisors coffee – they have homemade biscuits! What a treat! Again good discussion with other advisors. We hear horror stories of groups not working together as a team. Makes appreciate our group even more.

8:30 We discuss options for the next day. We can take the tour of the hunting lodge or leave early to get to Clarks Fork early and be first in line for the horses if a group doesn't show up. The scouts vote for the horses.

9:00 Lights out

Day 10

6:00 up

7:15 Camp torn down and we are off. This looks to be a short easy hike.

8:00 Arrive at Clarks Fork. We send 2 scouts to the horses to get on the waiting list. Not much is stirring at the barn. They were told to come back at 9:00.

8:15 ate breakfast

8:45 We are back at the horse barn waiting. We are first on the list.

9:02 One crew doesn't show up and we are on the horses!

9:30 Everyone is saddled up. This is a nice 1 hour ride. For those who are very good riders, it probably is boring as you are in a long line of horses. For those of us who have ridden very little, it was very nice.

11:00 Hot showers. Also a chance to do laundry. The clothes certainly needed it. Very sunny and warm, we hung out the clothes to dry.

12:00 Lunch. We stayed by the shower house as our clothes were hanging there and had lunch. It worked out well.

1:00 Packed up our packs and hiked to Upper Clarks Fork and set up camp (about 30 minutes). We filled every water container we had before we left. At our camp site, we dumped water into the large and medium pots for the night.

1:30 Hiked back to Clarks Fork for the evening. The boys did horseshoes, lassoing, and branding. Lots of fun and not to be missed.

3:00 don't miss the Pro-bar challenge. Enough said, but don't miss it.

5:00 Chuck Wagon Dinner. This is a don't miss item. Great food. 2 scouts help cook and 2 help clean, but it is easy work.

7:00 Advisors coffee – again don't miss.

7:30 We topped off our large water containers again and headed back to camp. There is a campfire here, but the boys decided they did not want to stay for the campfire. We went back to our camp and had our own campfire.

9:00 Lights out.

The next 2 days are dry days with no place to get water, but with our conservation ideas, we look to be in good shape. In the past, there has been water at Schaefer's Pass, it is dry this year. Once you leave Clarks Fork, there are not even any small streams for water.

Day 11

6:00 beautiful clear day.

7:00 Camp is down and we are eating breakfast. Oatmeal, hot chocolate, oatmeal bar

7:30 Ready to leave. A very steep climb to start

7:45 Michelle realized her camera was back at camp. We stopped and 2 scout ran back to camp and retrieved it.

8:00 Hiking again. While there are many options for dealing with steep terrain, we found we did better with a 2 minute break every 200 feet of altitude gained. Some groups preferred stopping for 5 minutes or the 15 minute breaks. We found those just didn't work for us. We were much better off stopping to catch our breath, get some water and get moving.

9:30 we had gained about 1800 feet in less than 2 miles but were at the top of Schaefers Peak. Our strategy worked as we passed 5 crews along this trail.

10:30 reached the fork for tooth of time. There is a large area to drop packs here to hike up to the tooth. We kept going, get camp set up and come back. It doesn't look far, but was another 30 minutes.

The trail on top of Tooth Ridge is scary if you are not prepared. There are areas with a good trail, and then 500-600 feet of nothing but boulders. This pattern repeats itself many times. When you get to the boulder fields, there is no trail; you just have to pick your way.

11:00 Reached Tooth Ridge Camp. We were the first ones there and had our pick of camp sites. Without a doubt, #10 is the best! A nice rock area to sit and eat/ play cards, a flat spot for tents, a close bear line, and a million dollar view off the cliffs wit your own PTB. There also are large rocks next to it that our scouts loved climbing.

5:00 Supper

6:00 hiked to Tooth of Time. The trail goes up about the first third, then it is all rock and boulders with no trail the rest of the way up. The scouts made it to the top and said the view was amazing. The 3 advisors did not. One didn't want to, 1 had a bad foot and one a bad ankle. This is not an easy climb.

7:30 Campfire

9:00 Lights out

Day 12

4:45 up to see the sunrise. We had a perfect view from the rocks next to our campsite, so we didn't go to the Tooth to see the sunrise. What a beautiful view.

6:00 Sunrise

6:30 breakfast

7:45 Camp is torn down and we are ready to go.

This is a nearly 6 mile hike. It has many Pointless ups and downs and many switchbacks with a very shallow grade to it. You can see base camp many times without getting any closer to it.

10:00 Made it to the "You Made It" sign. Many pictures here. Everyone felt relieved to be at base camp.

10:10 Arrived at welcome center to check in. Crew Leader given check in list and tent assignments. Many places to go and things to do.

10:20 logistics

10:25 Registration – get the locked up packets, patches, keys to lockers

10:30 supplies – turn in dining fly, pots, etc

10:35 I took back the fuel while the scouts finished up at supplies. Found a crew just getting ready to leave, gave them our fuel. We started out with 53 oz, refilled at Phillips Junction with 33 oz, never filled at Ute junction and ended with 33 oz. We used far less fuel than I expected and yet cooked every breakfast and supper.

10:45 Emptied lockers and took gear back to tents.

11:00 Signed off at the rentals area. We had none, but must stop here anyway.

11:10 Security turned in keys for lockers and checked lost and found

11:20 Showers

12:15 Lunch

1:00 Laundry the clothes really needed it. While the clothes were washing, we headed to the trading post. Our Chaplains Aide filled out the paperwork for the Duty to God award and we picked up the patches.

3:00 Big storm – it hails at base camp! If you leave your tent, be sure to close the Velcro on the inside and outside. Those who didn't ended up with a wet tent and wet gear inside the tent.

5:45 Supper

7:00 Went to the Jewish Temple. We had been told what a great speaker he was and they were correct. It was interesting, as out of over 100 attending, only 6 were Jewish (this is correct as they needed more than 10 Jewish people for part of the service and couldn't do it as they didn't have enough). Great talk. Don't miss!

8:15 Met by the dining hall to go to the closing campfire. This is much better than the opening campfire. Another don'tmiss!

10:00 went to Advisors Lounge after the campfire. Hot chocolate and talked with other advisors – both those returning and those getting ready to go out.

11:00 Lights out

Day 13

5:45 up to go shower

7:00 Breakfast

8:15 all gear out of tents and up in a tent by the welcome center.

9:30 tour of Villa Philmonte. This is another don't miss item. The boys enjoyed it as much as the adults did.

11:15 visited the museum, also worth seeing.

12:00 lunch

Downtime.

3:00 Bus to Raton train station

Unlike the ride to Philmont, this bus does not stop anywhere for a meal, even when asked. There were 2 buses with over 70 people going to the train station. We were dropped off at the train station. There is very little downtown for food. However, Pizza Hut will deliver pizza to the train station.

The Boy Scout Museum is just down the street from the train station and is worth checking out.

Our train was an hour late due to weather conditions.

Everyone slept really well on the train ride home.