

Notes for Crew Members

Before Departure

Make sure you've done all the required readings and watched the required videos on the Cavalcade page of the troop's website. <https://jpltroop509.org/cavalcade/cavalcade.html>

You can get a preview of your trek by downloading free Google Earth Pro and then dragging onto the icon the spatial data .kmz file on the Cavalcade page of the troop's website.

Amtrak allows two checked bags up to 50 lbs and 75 linear inches (L+W+H), two carry-on bags up to 50 lbs and 28x22x14 inches each, and one personal item up to 25 lbs and 14x11x7 inches. These rules are not strictly enforced so don't worry if you somewhat exceed them in any way.

You might try shopping at a dollar store to see if they have any items you need. Good for plastic bowls and sporks, thin gloves, mesh bag, other stuff.

There is a tradition at Philmont that after finishing your trek, you throw your boots on top of the Philmont sign at base camp. If you want to do this, bring an old pair of boots to Philmont for this purpose (leave them in the locker while you are on the trail).

Starting a week before departure, keep an eye on the 10-day weather forecasts for Cimarron, NM, particularly the high temperatures and precipitation.

Bookmark www.amtrak.com/track-your-train.html on your phone before you leave.

Train

At the train station you don't check your bags at a counter. Instead, you carry your bags to the train. There is also no TSA, or any type of ID check.

The seat layout is two seats, aisle, two seats. Electric outlets are at each seat. The seats are wide with lots of leg room, they recline, and they have a leg rest. You'll be able to sleep somewhat close to horizontal.

If you are given the opportunity to choose your seat, avoid sitting near the doors between cars, as the doors make a lot of noise each time they open and close when people pass through. Also avoid sitting near the stairwell in the middle of each car, as people go downstairs to use the bathroom. If you are lucky enough to be in the last car of the train, try to sit at the very back of that last car.

Soon after the train leaves Union Station, the conductor will come by checking tickets and put a marker above your seat indicating your destination. Once that has been done, you are free to leave your seat to go to the bathroom or lounge car or whatever.

It's okay to use your phone on the train, but be considerate, as you should be spending time with the other scouts, not staring at your phone. You'll have a cell signal near train stations, but probably no cell signal during the long periods between stations.

When you do have a cell signal, you can access a map with your train's location by going to www.amtrak.com/track-your-train.html (which you previously bookmarked).

You may leave your seat, but scouts must travel with a buddy – no solo excursions allowed.

The lounge car will be about three cars forward of your car. The lounge car has panoramic windows, comfortable seats facing out, and tables where you can eat or play cards or board games. You can remain in the lounge car as long as you want (with a buddy).

If you bring your own food or drink, you can eat and drink either at your seat or in the lounge car.

On the lower floor of the lounge car is a cafe open to all. Here's the menu:

BREAKFAST		SNACKS	
Sausage, Egg & Cheese <i>breakfast sandwich</i>	6.50	Cheese & Cracker Tray	7.00
Bacon & Cheese Omelet Cups	4.50	Fresh Vegetable Crudités <i>with a hummus dip</i> ®	6.00
Streusel Coffee Cake	4.00	Wonderful Pistachios <i>roasted & salted</i> ®	5.00
Blueberry Muffin	4.00	Sabra Roasted Red Pepper Hummus®	4.50
Kodiak Maple Oatmeal	3.75	<i>with pretzel crisps</i>	
Bagel with Cream Cheese	3.00	Hippeas <i>vegan chickpea puffs</i> ®	4.00
		Sandy's Amazing Cookie <i>chocolate chunk</i>	3.50
		Chewy Marshmallow Bar	3.50
		M&M's, Twix, Snickers or Skittles	3.50
		Haribo Gummy Bears	3.50
		Miss Vickie's Chips, Pretzels or Doritos	3.00
		Smartfood Popcorn <i>white cheddar</i>	3.00
LUNCH & DINNER SANDWICHES		BEVERAGES NON-ALCOHOLIC	
Turkey & Cheddar <i>on multigrain sub roll</i>	9.00	Smart Water	4.00
Ham, Swiss & Honey Mustard <i>on pretzel roll</i>	9.00	Body Armor <i>fruit punch</i>	4.00
		Iced Tea	4.00
SALADS		S. Pellegrino Sparkling Water	3.50
Asian Noodle Bowl®	9.00	Orange or Apple Juice	3.00
<i>fresh vegetables, spicy-sweet plum dressing</i>		Coffee <i>regular or decaf</i>	3.00
Fresh Greek Salad	9.00	Starbucks Teavana Hot Tea	3.00
		Hot Chocolate	3.00
		Coke, Diet Coke or Coke Zero	3.00
		Sprite, Ginger Ale	3.00
		Bottled Water	3.00
		Milk 1%	2.00
HOT SELECTIONS			
Angus Cheeseburger	8.00		
Deluxe Stromboli	7.50		
<i>Italian sausage, pepperoni, onions, peppers, three cheeses</i>			
Vegan BBQ Burger®	7.50		
White Cheddar Mac & Cheese	7.50		
Classic Grilled Cheese	6.00		
Hebrew National All-Beef Hot Dog	5.50		
Cup of Noodles	3.50		

The next car forward of the lounge car is the dining car. Priority for eating in the dining car goes to passengers in sleepers, who make reservations. Any space left over is made available to those in seats. Listen to an announcement about the dining car being open to all. Breakfast choices include French toast, omelet, scrambled eggs, quesadilla and continental. Lunch choices include Caesar salad, grilled cheese, cheeseburger, Beyond burger, patty melt and chili bowl. Dinner choices include steak, chicken, salmon, and pasta, and the dinners include drink, appetizer and dessert.

The train arrives in Albuquerque around 11 am and spends at least 25 minutes there (even if it arrives late), so there's enough time to run into the station to buy some food, but be quick and do it with a buddy and make sure others remaining on the train know what you are doing.

A Philmont bus will pick you up at Raton. You are supposed to arrive at 4:22 pm, but the train is often late. The bus monitors the train status, and will be waiting for you no matter how late the train arrives. The bus will take you a few miles away in Raton where you can buy dinner from a choice of fast food restaurants. After dinner you'll be taken to Philmont base camp and dropped off at the Welcome Center.

Base Camp

The adults have to show photo ID on arrival at the Welcome Center.

You'll be sleeping the first three nights in platform tents, two cots per tent. There's no electricity in the tents. Any food you have needs to go in nearby bear-resistant storage lockers.

It's important that for meals your crew is timely in lining up in front of the dining hall. Get there at least five minutes early, ideally with the whole crew traveling and arriving together - look sharp!

There is a store at base camp that sells outdoors equipment. Another store sells sundries, including ice cream cones.

The security office (only adults allowed inside) near the Welcome Center has the lost and found, outlets to charge phones, and a place where departing crews leave partially used fuel canisters.

When the crew goes to the medical office on Day 1, bring your prescription medications with you, in their original containers, not expired. A medical staffer will call each person in one-by-one and go over your medical forms. If the forms indicate you have prescription medications, you'll need to show them the medications. After you've completed medical check, it's okay to put your prescription medications in a Ziploc bag instead of carrying the bottles, so long as you know which pill is which, maybe with a slip of paper in the bag identifying the pills.

At the medical office, if you look like you might be close to the maximum weight for your height, you'll be weighed.

All adults will get their blood pressure checked at the medical office.

The morning before you start on your trek, all your stuff that isn't going with you on the trail will go into a crew locker, where it will remain until you get back. This includes your scout uniform and the clean underwear and socks you plan to wear home, plus your towel, soap, shampoo and sandals for taking a shower when you get back to base camp, and any food, games or reading material you have brought for the train ride home.

Food

Dinners on the trail are hot, and cooked communally in a single pot. All you need is a bowl and spoon, nothing else. Lunches are cold. Breakfasts are mostly cold, but a few are hot.

The Philmont menu is high in calories and sodium, to replace what you'll be losing while riding and hiking. If you eat everything you should neither gain nor lose weight. You'll find it difficult to eat everything because it's a lot. If you'd like to lose weight, this is a good time to do it, by eating only what you feel like eating.

Each staffed camp has a cabin with a porch, and on the porch will be a swap box. Any food you have that you don't want, put it in the swap box. If there's food in the swap box you want, take it.

Philmont's food is packaged for two people, so if you have an odd number of people in your crew you'll have extra food at each meal. Any uneaten food has to be carried to the next staffed camp, where it can be left in the swap box. When cooking dinner, be careful to not make more than will be eaten, because whatever is uneaten will now be hydrated and heavy, and the crew will have to put that uneaten food in a Ziploc bag and hike with it until it can be disposed at the next staffed camp.

Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink water. The goal is to never be thirsty, which you can achieve by drinking water before you get thirsty. You want to proactively hydrate your body so that it never gets dehydrated. If you're thirsty, you've waited too long to drink.

On the trail, nearly all of the water you'll drink will come from faucets at staffed camps. This water is clean and can be drunk straight from the tap. You have one trail camp, where the water is from a stream, and you'll need to purify it before drinking. Philmont's purification tablets are Micropur, one tablet per liter, and require that you wait 30 minutes before you can drink. These tablets leave a slight taste.

You need to bring a cup only if you plan to drink a hot beverage - hot chocolate, hot cider, hot tea or hot coffee. If not, you don't need a cup, your water bottles are sufficient.

Everyone should have one water bottle designated for mixing powdered Gatorade. Mark that water bottle before you leave with a permanent felt tip marker, and don't use any other water bottle for Gatorade. Any water bottle used for Gatorade becomes a smellable and goes in the bear bags at night.

Before each meal, the crew's chaplain aide will lead the crew in saying the Philmont grace. Any other crew members who lead grace at least once, earn the Duty to God patch.

On the Trail

The crew is led and run by the scouts. The adults don't make any decisions, or even volunteer their opinions, unless it is a matter of health or safety. The horseman and wrangler watch to make sure the horses are healthy and being ridden properly. They don't take care of the horses or tack the horses or pack the horses, you do. They also don't camp with you, the crew is on its own while camping.

The key to a successful Cavalcade trek is getting up early, even in the dark, and breaking camp quickly so that you're on the trail by 8 am. Don't dawdle. Move fast and be efficient. Work as a team.

The horseman and wrangler will come to your campsite in the morning with the pack horses. They expect you to be ready to pack the pack horses and feed and tack the riding horses. Don't make them wait.

You want to arrive at your destination by noon, or by the early afternoon at the latest. There's often rain or thunderstorms mid-afternoon, which won't be fun if you are still on the trail. Break camp early!

Keeping a positive attitude is important. Cavalcade isn't easy, there will be discomfort, hard work and physical and mental challenges. Stay positive.

Take a little cash with you on the trail, in small bills, as there will be opportunities to buy stuff, including root beer.

It is important that you pay attention to your feet and take action before a tight fit becomes a blister. The crew has a foot care kit, with tape to protect a toe being rubbed, and cream to reduce friction. If a blister develops, cut a piece of moleskin in the shape of a donut with your blister centered in the middle to protect the blister from touching anything.

Upon arrival at each staffed camp, you'll be given a porch talk by a staff member that includes local history and the activities available at the camp.

The latrines at staffed camps have walls and a roof. These are called "red roofs" due to the color of the roofs, like the Red Roof Inn hotel chain. The latrines at trail camps have no walls, but are located a distance away from campsites for privacy.

Use the latrines only to poop, not to pee. You aren't supposed to pee in a latrine because the uric acid in urine makes poop smell, and it also slows the decomposition of the poop. You should pee on large rocks, not on plants, since urine is acidic and can harm plants. Ask your ranger about the Bristol stool scale (or look it up yourself).

You probably won't experience a bear at Philmont, but you'll see lots of mini-bears (chipmunks). If you leave food in your tent, the mini-bears will gnaw through your tent to get to the food. Put all food and other smellables in the bear bags.

All your stuff should be in Ziploc bags, organized by function. Then you won't be looking for an item among many other items, but only looking for a bag among several other bags.

It is imperative that your sleeping bag stay dry. Put it in a plastic bag each morning before packing it away.

There is no perfect rain gear. If truly waterproof, it isn't breathable and you'll sweat profusely. If breathable, it will eventually leak if the rain continues long and hard enough.

When you arrive at your campsite each day, you'll immediately change out of your riding boots and into your hiking shoes, for comfort. When you wake up in the morning your hiking shoes will be outside your tent door and you'll wear the hiking shoes until it's time to start riding.

You'll learn to set up your campsite using the bearmuda triangle guidelines. The three points of the triangle are tents, bear bags and washing sump. Each campsite has a sump and a bear bag hanging line, so once you identify where these are located, site your tents as appropriate.

Camp fires may or may not be permitted during your trek, it all depends on how wet it has been. The county makes the determination, not Philmont. You'll be told at base camp whether camp fires are allowed.

Each night before going to sleep, the crew will do roses, thorns and buds: what you really liked that day, what was tough that day, and what you're looking forward to tomorrow.

No smellables are allowed in tents. That includes food, hiking clothes, sunscreen, lip balm and water bottles that have had Gatorade in them.

Before bed, you'll change into gym shorts and a t-shirt, both used exclusively for sleeping and thus are not smellables.

Don't change in your tent, since this would require that you bring your smelly hiking clothes into

the tent, a no-no. To change into or out of your sleeping clothes, walk far enough from the campsite so that you have privacy, and change there.

At night, stoves, pots and riding boots go under the dining fly. Water-only water bottles go in the fire ring. Your hiking clothes go in your stuff sack, and your stuff sack leans against a tree at least 10 ft away from tents. Your toothbrush and toothpaste and washed eating bowl and spoon will go in the oops bag up with the bear bags.

In the morning, the first thing you do before exiting your tent is to stuff your sleeping bag and roll your sleeping pad, then take down and roll your tent. Don't leave your tent to go do something else before taking care of your sleeping bag, pad and tent. Striking your tent is the first order of the day.

Lightning position is sitting on your butt with your feet tucked next to your butt so that you contact the ground in only one place. Philmont used to teach it as sitting on your haunches like a baseball catcher so as to minimize your contact with the ground, but lightning could then go up one leg and down the other, so now they want you to have only one point of contact with the ground, and to remain low. You have to remain in lightning position for 30 minutes after the lightning has passed, which is a long time and will be uncomfortable.

A "hastie" is when staff are summoned to quickly go assist a crew. Hopefully not something you'll experience.

Scouts can take their cell phone on the trail, but only to use as a camera, or maybe if you've downloaded an app for identifying wildlife or plants. Phones are not for playing games. Adults should bring their phone, for safety purposes. Keep your phone off when not using it, since you will not be able to re-charge it for 11 days.

It's best when riding or hiking to keep your camera in a readily accessible place, so you can quickly whip it out and take a picture, ideally with one hand. A carrying case on the belt works well.

Returning Home

When you arrive back at base camp, you'll return all the Philmont equipment, get your stored stuff out of the locker, go to your assigned platform tents in the homebound area, and take a nice hot shower using the sandals, towel, soap and shampoo that you left in the locker. After your shower, put on your scout uniform, which you'll continue to wear until you get home.

If anyone brought old boots to throw on top of the Philmont sign, the best time to do it is the morning of your last day, shortly before you get on the bus to go to the train station.

You can see if the train is running late by using your bookmark for www.amtrak.com/track-your-train.html.

Contact your parents to make sure you've got a ride home from Union Station. Let your lead advisor know if there is a problem. The train is usually late, but it can also arrive up to an hour early (as early as 7 am).