



Blue Sky Adventures

"The Experts in Philmont Travel!"

January 4, 2016

TRAVEL INFORMATION LETTER

The entire team at Blue Sky Adventures is very excited to be a part of your adventure this summer and we promise to make *your* journey to Philmont special!

Let's go over some things you need to know about your trip with us.

But first----PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE share this information letter with your Advisors, participants and parents. Everybody will have a better time if they have all the information.

Keep this letter handy and use it as a reference guide for questions that arise during your Philmont preparation.

Where we are Staying

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Albuquerque, New Mexico 87109

- Pay TV and room phones will be turned off (you can receive outside calls but you can't make them). No room charges are allowed.
- Please advise your Scouts to be respectful as there are other guests in the hotel.
- Each scout is responsible for any damages at the hotel.
- Roll a way beds are not allowed in hotel rooms with two beds due to fire code.
- Scouts are generally four to a room, which means two to a bed. Tell your scouts this before they get to the hotel so they are not surprised. Remind them that the bed is bigger than the tent they will share at Philmont and if they want "privacy", use their sleeping bag on the bed.
- Adults are two to a room.
- Additional rooms are available for \$150 per night. This must be finalized when you submit your rooming list on April 15.

What to Bring On Tour

- Pack a SMALL carry-on with toiletries, medications, sunscreen, rain gear, fleece, bathing suit, extra class "B", etc.
 - Remember, you're only with us one or two nights so you don't need much.

- Anything you bring of value that doesn't go on the trail with you can be stored in a locker at Philmont. Each crew will be assigned two 2'x2'x3' lockers at Philmont (note that you must supply combination padlocks).
- Excess storage of bulky non valuable items is normally available at the Philmont security office.
- Blue Sky Adventures has no capability to store excess items while you are at Philmont.
- Groups on tour with us will be provided with a custom 16 ounce Blue Sky Adventures Nalgene water bottle suitable for use on the trail. We will also give you some other neat items you can use on the trail but we'll surprise you with those when you get here! *Groups on our No Frills itinerary do receive water bottles but do not receive other giveaways.*

Laundry Facilities

- In New Mexico, there are no laundry facilities at the hotel or anywhere nearby. **PLEASE DO NOT PLAN ON DOING LAUNDRY.**

White Water Rafting

- If rafting in New Mexico, make sure all participants have sneakers, booties, water shoes or strap-on sandals to wear on the river. *You can't go bare foot or with sandals or flip flops that aren't strapped on to your feet. Everyone likes the Croc's shoes but they really aren't good for rafting as they come off your feet as soon as you hit the water. What good are they as rafting shoes if they come off when you need them most?*
- Our outfitters provide PFD's and helmets. Both are mandatory!
- Your Lead Advisor will provide you with the required release forms. Please fill these out and return to your Lead Advisor.

General Liability Release Forms

- Every participant will be required to complete a Blue Sky Adventures general liability release form regardless of the itinerary you have selected.
- Your Lead Advisor will provide you with the required release forms. Please fill these out and return to your Lead Advisor.

All required release forms and paperwork can be found online in the [Trip Paperwork Section](#) of our [website](#).

What to Do With Your Backpack on the Plane

There is no need to over think this one, it just isn't that complicated. We've handled 50,000 backpacks over the years and seen it all! Here are some options that work well.

- Purchase a nylon commercial laundry bag and put your pack in it. This is your very best option—inexpensive, easy to store, effective and can be used again at home.

They are available online, at discount stores or ask your local dry cleaner; they may be able to get them for you. Or,

- Place your backpack in a very heavy-duty plastic bag (contractor trash bags work well) and tape the bag securely. Affix a luggage tag to the outside of the wrapped backpack so it is visible. Bring extra bags and tape. Or,
- Use a normal size duffel bag that will hold your pack. See comment below on use of oversize sports bags

Here are some "DON'TS"

- Don't pack your backpack in a box—they take up too much room and there's nowhere to store the box en route to or at Philmont.
- Don't put your pack in a plastic bin--we will never get all the bins on the bus and there is nowhere to store the bins at Philmont...
- Don't plan to ship your backpacks to us or to where you will be staying. We have no way to handle or store backpacks. If you want to ship your backpack, ship them to Philmont.
- **Don't use oversize sports bags, golf bags or giant duffel bags--they take up too much room and we'll never get all of them on the bus—you may be holding your backpack and your giant hockey bag in your lap on the way to Philmont!**

Check with your airline for size and weight restrictions on backpacks and any additional fees which may be required. Most airlines are now charging for checked bags and the cost of an overweight backpack is an additional premium.

Keep in mind that your backpack should weigh about 25 to 35 pounds before crew gear, water and food. That's right; your backpack at the airport should weigh 25 to 35 pounds! We see packs at the airport all the time that weigh 50, 60 and even 70 plus pounds!! And that is before food, water and crew gear. **WAY, WAY, WAY TOO MUCH STUFF.** You can leave all that stuff home or at Philmont after your ranger does a shake down. It is easier to leave it home. Don't carry all that stuff with you for 12 days on the trail, be miserable and bring a lot of gear and clothes back you never used. That just doesn't make sense!

As a rule of thumb, your personal gear should only take up about 25% of the volume capacity of your pack. The rest is for food, water and crew gear. Spend some time thinking about what you *really* need and how you can live without what you think you might need. It is worth the effort and you will save some money with the airline and on extra gear you really don't need.

Boots

What's the big deal on this you ask!

- Every year, there are as many as 100 kids who show up in the southwest without their boots—they forgot to pack them. Now that's a **BIG** problem.
- We actually had one crew ship all their boots in one bag and the airline lost the bag. Now that's a **HUGE** problem!

- Here's the fix—make your Scouts and Advisors wear their boots to the airport and onto the plane. Easy isn't it? It may be a little inconvenient but it sure is a lot easier than buying new boots the night before you arrive at Philmont.

Stoves

Lots of ideas on this as well but here's what you need to do. Trust us on this!

- For white gas stoves, wash out the fuel bottles and stoves, air dry to remove fumes.
- Ship stoves (white gas and propane) to Philmont via UPS to the attention of the lead advisor and put the crew number on the box. Contact Philmont for the current shipping address.
- Ship the stoves to arrive before your scheduled arrival date and then call Philmont to make sure they got the package.
- Check your Philmont Advisor kit mailed to you in mid March for specific instructions on shipping stoves and other gear to Philmont.
- Put other bulky and hard to pack crew gear items like tent stakes, hiking poles, water pumps, etc. with the stoves to further reduce check baggage fees and overweight backpacks.

Here's another "DON'T"

- Don't put your gas or propane stove or fuel bottles in your pack and check your luggage. **YOUR STOVE PROBABLY WON'T BE IN YOUR PACK WHEN YOU ARRIVE AND YOU'LL LIKELY NEVER SEE IT AGAIN.** Yes it is possible to get someone on the phone at an airline to tell you it is ok but that guy won't be there when your stove is pulled by security.

Fuel

- The Tooth of Time Traders carries an assortment of popular propane fuels and white gas. Call Philmont and verify that they carry the fuel you plan to use on your trek. The number is 575-376-2281 and ask for the Tooth of Time Traders
- If your fuel is not sold by Philmont or you are concerned that supplies will not be available, you are responsible to acquire the fuel you need before you leave home and ship it to Philmont ahead of time along with your stoves. **DO NOT EXPECT TO ACQUIRE THE FUEL YOU NEED WHILE ON TOUR WITH US.**

Emergency Transportation

- Unfortunately, from time to time participants must leave the trail at Philmont and go home for a variety of reasons (mostly health related). This does not happen often but it does happen occasionally.
- All individual emergency transportation needs are to be coordinated with the Philmont administrative staff who will coordinate with various transportation providers, including Blue Sky Adventures.
- On a space available basis, we are pleased to transport any Blue Sky customer who requires emergency transportation to either the Albuquerque or Denver airport

at no extra charge on an existing scheduled bus. There is no guarantee we can accommodate a participants specific situation.

What do I do if I Forgot Something (fuel?) and Need to go to a Store?

- It happens all the time and there are a number of options
 - Try the airport stores
 - There is a gift store at the hotel
 - There is a Target, Walgreens and a Lowes within a 15 minute walk of the hotel
 - The Tooth of Time Traders at Philmont carries almost everything you could need on a trek
- If you do not believe you can acquire what you need with the above options, you will need to arrange private transportation in the evening via taxi from the hotel to a local store. Please be aware that this can be expensive with round trip cab fare ranging from \$30 to \$50.
- We are not able to organize shopping expeditions to local department stores or outfitters with the bus while on tour or in the evening. There is no time in the itinerary for extra stops and our insurance does not provide for such stops.

Tips and Gratuities

Your fee includes all tips and gratuities for wait staff and event staff. You need not worry about tips in restaurants, or gratuities for rafting or biking guides. However, you may want to consider a tip for your Blue Sky Adventures tour guide. While not required, most groups do tip as they feel the experience has been well worth something extra.

Calls to Scouts on Tour

The lead advisor of each crew should provide parents with his cell phone number for emergencies. Note that cell coverage is spotty in parts of New Mexico so don't panic if you can't get through.

Please do not give out the Blue Sky Adventures phone number for emergencies from home. The quickest way to reach someone on tour is to call their Advisor directly.

Food Allergies and Special Dietary Needs

If you have a food allergy, advise your tour guide who in turn will make sure you have an opportunity to speak to management of any restaurant we are at so that you will know what food to avoid and alternatives can be identified. There is no need to alert Blue Sky before your trip about your allergies or special dietary needs.

If you have a special dietary need due to a medical condition, we will help you as much as possible. However, we do face limitations based on the restaurants we visit. **If you have a rare allergy or a food preference (vegan, vegetarian, etc...) you should plan on providing your own supplemental food and snacks.**

Tour Itinerary

- There is very little down time until we get to our accommodations. Scouts love it but advisors sometimes feel rushed. Remember, we gear our itinerary to the attention span of a teenage Scout. This usually his/her age plus two minutes!
- Advisors-- go with the flow and enjoy watching the Scouts have fun.
- We will do everything on the itinerary but we may change the order to avoid lines or due to weather conditions.
- From time to time there are unexpected closures of some venues caused by weather, fire conditions, other events, etc. In the unlikely event that a closure affects your trip with us, we will visit alternative venues comparable to what was scheduled on your itinerary.

Airline Baggage Check Tags

- Here's a time saver tip—let each Scout keep his own luggage check tag. If a bag is lost and the advisor has all the check tags, it takes a long time to figure out which tag belongs to the lost bag and the group can't get going until we file a lost bag report. This is a lesson learned the hard way with 36 Scouts and one lost bag!
- If you are missing a bag at the airport, immediately notify your tour guide who will instruct you on what to do next. Someone in your group should be identified as the person in charge of following up with the airline to locate the lost bag.
- Lost luggage is an infrequent event and bags are normally delivered to the hotel within 24 hours.

Commemorative Patches

Each member of your Expedition will be provided with a special patch to memorialize your journey to Philmont with Blue Sky Adventures. You will receive these patches from us when you arrive in the southwest.

Philmont Arrival Postcard

You will be asked by Philmont to complete and mail a postcard or on line form advising them of your arrival plans and giving them a contact phone number. You will arrive via charter bus at the welcome center at about 10:00 AM. Put your lead advisor and his cell number for contact person. Do not list Blue Sky Adventures as your contact.

Last Minute Details

Blue Sky Adventures will contact your Lead Advisor 1 week before your trip to confirm the final details, provide you with a contact phone number, and answer any last minute questions you may have.

Once you arrive, your tour guide will communicate mostly with your crew leaders so don't be offended if you feel left out of the loop. Kick back and relax and let us take over!

Thanks again for letting us be a part of your Philmont adventure this summer. You have my word that you will be pleased with the Blue Sky Adventures experience!

Yours in Scouting,

Rob Pardue