

Every Ounce Counts!

The equipment needed for a Philmont trek is listed in the *Guidebook to Adventure*. The March package from Philmont will have a printed copy of the current *Guidebook* for each member of your crew, but you can review the lists in the online [Guidebook](#) or in a prior version, they change little, if at all, year to year. A good target for overall pack weight, without crew gear, food and water, but including your backpack and everything else is 20 to 25 pounds. The Watchu "[Personal Gear Tips](#)" (or use the quick link on the [Watchu Experience](#) Web site, www.watchu.org) discusses things to look for when choosing gear on the personal gear equipment list.

Every ounce counts! Weigh each item you are considering carrying in your pack and use 3"x5" file cards to record the weights. For example, you might own two flashlights - you will have one card titled "Red Flashlight - 5 oz" and one titled "Blue Flashlight - 3 oz". When all your candidate items are recorded on cards it becomes a fun game of picking and choosing what you really want to carry and what you don't.

The idea is to carry the lightest "acceptable" pack, not necessarily the lightest individual items. For example, you might prefer the heavier red flashlight, but then that forces you to look to other areas to reduce weight. Maybe, to compensate for the heavier flashlight, you decide to leave your heavy basketball shoes at home in favor of a light pair of tennis shoes.

Also realize that weight can be saved by crew members sharing items. Maybe instead of each crew member carrying extra flashlight batteries, say 4 per person or 48 per crew, the crew as a whole packs fewer extras, say 24 per crew. Maybe tentmates share a flashlight. Does each crew member need a pocket knife, digital camera, or GPS unit? You get the idea, "backpacking is a team sport". The file cards will tell how much you and your team gain or lose with each decision.

Double Duty Helps Make Every Ounce Count!: The "Personal Gear" checklist includes one pair of long pants. They are required while working on your Conservation project as well as both the horse ride and spar pole climbing programs. While some suggest using your rainpants for these activities, they are not a good choice for spar poles. For the horse ride, your wrangler may decide the material has too much of a "swoosh" sound and could spook the horses. The BSA Switchback pants are a great solution; lightweight, very serviceable, and with the legs removed replace one of the two pairs of shorts on the gear list. Equipment that serves double duty is a key part of making every ounce count.

By now all crew members should have acquired the "Four Expensive Essentials".

1. A good pair of light weight **backpacking boots**. "Light weight" is stressed, and the boots must fit well with two pairs of socks - heavy outer wool and light inner polypropylene. Although not necessary, waterproof boots are nice to have if you can afford them.
2. A good synthetic **sleeping bag** rated for 25 to 30 degrees and weighing 3 pounds or less. The bag should stuff into a small stuff bag. Don't forget to line the stuff bag with a plastic kitchen trash bag for extra protection against getting wet. And remember you must have an insulating ground pad.
3. A sturdy **rain suit** with jacket and pants. Remember NO ponchos - they won't do in the high mountains of New Mexico. You must have a rain suit. The rain pants can also be used to double as the required long pants. Keep in mind; if your crew selects horseback riding you may need another pair of light weight long pants. You will not be allowed to ride without long pants and you can't ride with pants that swoosh for fear of spooking the horse. Long pants are also needed for spar pole climbing, and you probably do not want to use your rain pants there. Check with your Ranger.
4. A rugged **backpack** with plenty of capacity for carrying your personal gear as well as food, water and your share of the crew gear. When selecting a backpack, weight of the backpack itself is very important and often overlooked; good packs weigh about 5 pounds or less. Also, you need lots of capacity - about 4,000 cubic inches for external frame packs and 5,000 cubic inches for internal frame packs (taking into account external frame packs have the capability of adding considerable volume by attaching items to the frame.) Philmont rents very good external and internal frame packs for about \$20. If you don't care to buy a pack, borrow one from a friend for training and rent one at Philmont.

After acquiring these "Four Expensive Essentials," you can use the next few months to gather the other equipment outlined in the *Guidebook to Adventure*. You will find most of the required gear is already in your closet or down in the basement. The exercise is to find the lightest combination of gear possible.

Tip: Philmont will issue tents at check-in. They are excellent backcountry two person tents weighing about 6 pounds each. The current "best practice" target for tent weight is 3-pounds per person, which the Philmont tents meet. Should you decide to bring your own tents, consider this 3-pound per person target. If your tents are heavier, use your file cards to find something to eliminate to make up for this extra

weight. If your tents are lighter, it gives you an opportunity to include a little extra in your pack.

Phil Fact: Black Jack Ketchum was a train robber who was captured and hung in 1901 at Clayton, New Mexico. You can see a likeness of his face on a rock along the path to the Seton Library, and a small exhibit about his hanging in the Old Mill Museum in Cimarron.

It's quiet in Black Jacks camp these days!

Tom "Black Jack" Ketchum

Cimarron Canyon hideout, New Mexico Territory