Great Falls Council

2027 Philmont Contingent Family Guide

Prepared for the families, youth participants, and adult advisors of the Great Falls Council's 2027 Philmont contingent

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Welcome to Your Philmont Adventure!

Dear Philmont Families,

Congratulations on taking the first step toward one of the most memorable adventures Scouting America has to offer! The Great Falls Council is excited to welcome you and your Scout to our 2027 Philmont Scout Ranch contingent. This experience represents much more than a backpacking trip. It is an opportunity for young people to challenge themselves physically and mentally, develop leadership skills, build lasting friendships, and discover what they can accomplish through determination, teamwork, and perseverance.

Located in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains of northeastern New Mexico, Philmont Scout Ranch offers a truly exceptional high-adventure experience. Over the course of their trek, participants will travel through rugged mountain terrain, carry their equipment and supplies, prepare meals in the backcountry, and experience programs that celebrate the history, culture, and outdoor traditions of the American Southwest. Along the way, Scouts will develop confidence, independence, and a greater appreciation for the outdoors.

To our parents and guardians, thank you for making this investment in your Scout's future. We recognize that participating in Philmont requires a significant commitment of time, financial resources, preparation, and family support. From purchasing equipment and attending training weekends to helping your Scout prepare physically, your involvement is essential to the success of this adventure. The lessons your Scout brings home—leadership, responsibility, resilience, and teamwork—will extend far beyond the trails of Philmont.

Our council's goal is to ensure that every participant arrives at Philmont properly prepared, physically ready, and excited for the experience ahead. This guide is designed to help families understand the expectations, preparation requirements, equipment needs, travel arrangements, and important milestones associated with the 2027 contingent.

We look forward to sharing this extraordinary adventure with your family!

Yours in Scouting,

Great Falls Council
2027 Philmont Contingent Leadership Team

1. Overview and Trek Introduction

What is Philmont?

Philmont Scout Ranch is Scouting America's premier backpacking high-adventure base, encompassing more than 140,000 acres of mountainous wilderness.

Participants hike through forests, valleys, meadows, and high-elevation terrain while taking part in programs that may include rock climbing, conservation, horseback riding, shooting sports, and historical activities, depending on their assigned itinerary.

What to expect on the trail

A traditional Philmont trek typically involves approximately 12 days at the ranch, including arrival and departure activities. Shorter trek options may also be available, depending on the council's reservation.

Each crew travels together under the leadership of its youth Crew Leader, supported by trained adult advisors and Philmont staff. Crews should anticipate:

- Hiking several miles each day while carrying personal and crew equipment.
- Camping in backcountry locations, often without modern conveniences.
- Carrying and treating drinking water.
- Preparing meals and cleaning cooking equipment using Philmont-approved methods.
- Following Leave No Trace principles and Philmont's wildlife safety procedures.
- Participating in conservation projects and staff-led programs as scheduled.
- Working together to navigate challenges, changing weather, and demanding terrain.

Expectations for youth participants

Philmont is a youth-led experience. Every Scout is expected to contribute to the crew's success by preparing physically, attending required training, maintaining personal equipment, completing assigned responsibilities, and supporting fellow crew members.

Expectations for adult advisors

Adult advisors are responsible for safety, mentoring, appropriate supervision, and helping the youth leadership team succeed. Advisors should encourage Scouts to make decisions, solve problems, and lead the crew rather than taking over routine responsibilities.

All adults must meet applicable Scouting America registration, Youth Protection, training, medical, and Philmont eligibility requirements.

2. Physical Preparation and Conditioning

Philmont is physically demanding. Participants may hike at elevations ranging from approximately 6,500 feet to more than 12,000 feet, often while carrying substantial backpacks.

Physical preparation should begin several months before departure. The best training program combines cardiovascular conditioning, strength, flexibility, and progressively longer hikes with a loaded backpack.

A suggested progression:

Preparation period	Recommended activity
6–9 months before	Regular walking, hiking, and aerobic exercise
4–6 months before	Weekly hikes, increasing distance and elevation
2–4 months before	Loaded backpack hikes and crew training
Final 6–8 weeks	Longer hikes with terrain and pack weights similar to trek conditions
Final week	Rest, hydration, equipment inspection, and travel preparation

Participants should consult their healthcare professionals about appropriate conditioning, particularly if they have medical concerns.

Important: Training hikes and shakedown weekends are essential crew preparation activities. Families should plan for their Scout or adult participant to attend all designated sessions.

3. Gear and Equipment

Every participant is responsible for bringing appropriate personal equipment. Good equipment does not have to be the most expensive, but it must be reliable, properly fitted, and suitable for extended backcountry travel.

Personal equipment checklist

- Backpack and sleeping equipment
- Internal-frame backpack, approximately 60–75 liters, properly fitted
- Sleeping bag rated appropriately for cold mountain nights

- Lightweight sleeping pad
- Waterproof pack liner or durable dry bags
- Trekking poles (recommended)
- Clothing and footwear
- Broken-in hiking boots or trail footwear suitable for the trek
- Multiple pairs of moisture-wicking hiking socks
- Synthetic or wool hiking shirts
- Durable hiking pants or shorts
- Warm fleece or insulated jacket
- Waterproof rain jacket and rain pants
- Warm hat and gloves
- Sun hat and sunglasses
- Sleep clothing and camp footwear, as permitted
- Personal essentials
- Water bottles or hydration system with adequate capacity
- Headlamp and spare batteries
- Personal first-aid supplies and blister treatment
- Toothbrush and small personal hygiene kit
- Sunscreen and lip protection
- Bandana or small quick-dry towel
- Personal medications in appropriate containers
- Required identification and medical paperwork
- Crew and specialized equipment
- Tents and shelter equipment
- Cooking pots, utensils, and food-handling equipment
- Water-treatment supplies
- Bear bags, ropes, and other wildlife-protection equipment
- Navigation and emergency equipment
- Crew first-aid kit and repair supplies

The council will publish a finalized packing list identifying which crew equipment will be supplied and which items participants must provide. Philmont's official equipment list and current policies take precedence over the general recommendations above.

Equipment purchasing recommendations

Families are encouraged to avoid purchasing major equipment until after the initial contingent orientation. Crew advisors can assist with proper backpack fitting, footwear selection, sleeping systems, and opportunities to borrow or share equipment.

Cotton clothing is generally a poor choice for backpacking because it retains moisture. Synthetic and wool fabrics are preferable for hiking and insulation.

4. Itineraries and Crew Leadership

Selecting a trek itinerary

Philmont offers itineraries with different hiking distances, elevation gains, difficulty levels, and program opportunities. The council's crews will review the available itinerary options and participate in the selection process according to Philmont's reservation procedures.

Factors considered include crew members' experience, physical conditioning, interests, and the overall capabilities of the group.

The most difficult itinerary is not necessarily the best choice. A successful trek is one that challenges the entire crew while allowing every participant to contribute and succeed.

Youth leadership positions

Position	Primary responsibilities
Crew Leader	Leads crew planning, coordinates daily activities, facilitates decisions, and represents the crew
Chaplain's Aide	Supports reflection, spiritual opportunities, and crew morale
Wilderness Pledge Guia	Promotes environmental stewardship and responsible outdoor practices
Other crew assignments	Cooking, sanitation, navigation, equipment, water, and other rotating duties

The crew will also work with a Philmont Ranger during the initial portion of its trek. The Ranger helps the crew learn and demonstrate Philmont's backcountry procedures before continuing independently.

Adult advisors remain responsible for health and safety, required supervision, and compliance with Scouting America's policies.

5. Health, Medical, and Safety

Philmont's medical and physical requirements are important components of participant readiness. All youth and adult participants must meet the requirements applicable to their trek.

Annual Health and Medical Record

Each participant must complete the required Scouting America Annual Health and Medical Record, generally including Parts A, B, and C for a traditional Philmont trek.

Part C requires a physical examination and completion by an authorized medical provider within the applicable validity period.

Families should ensure that medical records accurately disclose current medical conditions, allergies, medications, and other information needed for safe participation.

Official resource: Scouting America Annual Health and Medical Record

Height and weight requirements

Philmont has height and weight eligibility standards designed to reduce risks associated with strenuous backpacking at elevation. These requirements apply to adults as well as youth.

Families should review the current Philmont height/weight chart early in the planning process. Individuals who do not meet the applicable standards may be unable to participate, even if travel arrangements have already been made.

Because eligibility criteria can change, the council will confirm the requirements published for the 2027 season rather than relying on earlier charts.

Pre-existing medical conditions

Medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, severe allergies, cardiac concerns, or other conditions requiring ongoing treatment should be discussed with the participant's healthcare professional well before departure.

Families should also communicate relevant medical planning needs privately with designated contingent leadership. Philmont medical staff should be consulted when eligibility or accommodation questions arise.

Medication management

Participants must bring an adequate supply of prescribed medications, including any required emergency medications. Medication storage, administration, backup supplies, and emergency procedures must comply with Philmont and Scouting America requirements.

First aid and emergency response

Each crew will carry an appropriate first-aid kit and will receive instruction in Philmont's emergency procedures. Participants should have appropriate first-aid training, and

designated crew members must meet applicable wilderness first-aid and CPR requirements.

Philmont maintains medical services at its Infirmary and has established emergency-response procedures for backcountry incidents.

The Infirmary provides medical assessment and treatment within its capabilities, but it is not a substitute for advance medical clearance, personal medications, or comprehensive hospital care. Serious conditions may require evacuation and off-ranch treatment.

Additional safety considerations

Crews must be prepared for altitude illness, dehydration, lightning, sudden temperature changes, wildlife encounters, and injuries associated with hiking.

All participants must follow Philmont's current procedures for bear and wildlife safety, sanitation, water treatment, lightning response, and emergency communications.

6. Food and Cooking on the Trail

Philmont provides trail meals designed to supply the energy needed for extended backpacking. Meals generally contain substantial calories and carbohydrates to support physically demanding activities.

How meals work

Breakfasts and lunches generally consist of foods that require little preparation, while dinners often involve cooking or rehydrating meals using backpacking stoves.

Crew members work together to prepare food, distribute meals, wash equipment, and maintain proper sanitation. Responsibilities are assigned or rotated so everyone participates.

Crews collect food supplies at designated backcountry commissary locations along their itinerary.

Food, scented items, and cooking equipment must be managed according to Philmont's wildlife-protection procedures.

Food allergies and special dietary requirements

Families must notify contingent leadership well in advance about food allergies, intolerances, or religious dietary requirements.

Philmont can provide some special-diet options, but participants with particular dietary needs may need to bring replacement foods. The current Philmont guidance explains how

to label substitutes by participant, expedition number, and meal, and how to arrange their delivery to backcountry commissaries.

Philmont Scout Ranch+1

Replacement foods should be coordinated with Philmont before departure. Families should not assume that suitable substitutions will be available without advance arrangements.

Official resource: Philmont Food and Cooking Information

7. Base Camp Procedures

Philmont's Camping Headquarters, commonly called Base Camp, serves as the starting and ending point for traditional treks.

Arrival day

The crew should plan to arrive during Philmont's designated morning check-in window. Early arrival allows sufficient time to complete required procedures before beginning the trek the following day.

A typical arrival includes:

1. Welcome Center: Meet Philmont staff, receive tent assignments, and connect with the assigned Ranger.
2. Registration: Confirm crew roster, adult identification, required certifications, and administrative paperwork.
3. Medical recheck: All participants complete a medical review with Philmont personnel.
4. Outfitting: Receive applicable crew equipment, food, and supplies.
5. Equipment shakedown: Inspect gear, remove unnecessary items, and verify readiness.
6. Logistics: Review the itinerary, campsites, water sources, and transportation arrangements.
7. Leadership orientation: Crew Leaders and other designated youth and adults attend briefings.
8. Evening activities: Dinner, religious services, and the opening campfire, as scheduled.

These steps reflect Philmont's published arrival procedures; the final 2027 schedule will govern.

Departure for the backcountry

Following Base Camp orientation, the crew travels to its assigned trailhead and begins the trek. The Ranger accompanies the crew during the initial portion to provide hands-on instruction in Philmont's procedures.

Return to Base Camp

Upon completing the trek, crews typically return to Camping Headquarters for equipment return, administrative checkout, showers, meals, and closing activities.

Participants may have an opportunity to visit the Tooth of Time Traders, purchase souvenirs, and explore selected ranch attractions, depending on the schedule.

Final departure

The contingent will depart Philmont according to its confirmed transportation schedule. Families should expect the council to coordinate departure arrangements rather than making individual plans without prior approval.

8. Travel and Touring

The anticipated travel itinerary includes flights to and from New Mexico, chartered ground transportation, overnight hotel accommodations, and sightseeing opportunities before arriving at Philmont.

Off-camp touring opportunities

Sandia Tram and Stone Hut Hike

The "stone hut" hike from the top of Sandia Peak Tramway leads to Kiwanis Cabin, a historic limestone shelter built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1936. From the upper tram terminal at 10,378 feet, it is roughly a 1-mile hike each way along the crest area.

2027 Travel Itinerary

Great Falls Council Contingent Travel Schedule

Travel component	**Details**
Departure date	July 10, 2027, 8:05 AM EST
Departure airport	Buffalo Niagara International (BUF)
Airline and flights	Southwest Flt. 4762 BUF-BWI | Southwest Flt. 713 BWI-ABQ
New Mexico arrival	July 10, 2027, 1:45 PM MST
Ground transportation, 1st night accommodations & meals	Provided by Blue Sky Tours
Pre-trek touring	Sandia Tram and Stone Hut Hike 3:00 PM MST
Philmont arrival	July 11, 2027, approx. 12:00 pm MST
Trek dates	To be determined (based on crew's trek choice)
Philmont departure	July 23, 2027, approx. 7:00 am MST
Return flight and arrival	Southwest Flt. 3117 ABQ-BWI | Southwest Flt. 744 BWI-ABQ

Travel considerations

Families should plan for airline baggage restrictions, particularly for backpacks, trekking poles, pocketknives, stove fuel, and other outdoor equipment. Fuel and certain hazardous materials cannot be transported on commercial aircraft.

All participants must follow the council's travel instructions, including identification requirements, luggage labeling, medication handling, and meeting times.

9. Communication and Contact

One of the most important aspects of Philmont is the opportunity for Scouts to spend an extended period away from everyday electronic distractions.

Communication while on the trail

Parents should not expect daily telephone calls, text messages, or electronic updates from their Scouts.

Cellular coverage in Philmont's backcountry is limited and unreliable. Crews should not depend on personal cellular phones for routine communications or emergencies.

Philmont has established procedures for communicating with backcountry crews when necessary. Routine communication is not generally available while a crew is on the trail.

Philmont Scout Ranch Emergency communication

In the event of a significant family emergency, parents should contact the designated council emergency contact or Philmont through its official channels.

Philmont staff will determine the appropriate method for relaying urgent information to the crew.

2027 Emergency Contact Information

Contact	**Information**
Council contingent leader	Matt Wallace
Contingent emergency phone	Karl Ziegenfus (607) 743-6899
Philmont emergency contact	(575) 376-2281
Crew identification number	711-200

Communication at Base Camp

Participants may have limited opportunities to communicate with family members before entering the backcountry or after returning to Base Camp.

Families should understand that travel delays, weather, logistical changes, and limited connectivity may affect the timing of messages.

The council will establish a communication plan for departure, arrival, trek completion, and return travel. Any planned group updates will be explained before departure.

10. Religious Services and Duty to God

Chapel Services - Philmont Scout Ranch

Scouting America recognizes the importance of reverence and encourages every participant to reflect upon personal beliefs, values, and responsibilities.

Philmont traditionally offers daily religious services at Camping Headquarters, including:

- Jewish services
- Protestant services
- Catholic services
- Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) services

These opportunities are generally offered in the evening, subject to the current operating schedule.

Participants are encouraged to attend services consistent with their beliefs or take part in appropriate personal reflection. The crew's Chaplain's Aide may also help organize moments of reflection during the trek.

11. Crew Conduct and Personal Responsibility

All participants represent the Great Falls Council and Scouting America throughout the trip.

Youth and adults are expected to demonstrate the principles of the Scout Oath and Scout Law through respectful behavior, teamwork, and responsible decision-making.

Expectations include respecting other participants and staff, following safety instructions, maintaining appropriate behavior, caring for shared equipment, and contributing positively to the crew.

Bullying, hazing, harassment, prohibited substances, and violations of Youth Protection policies will not be tolerated.

All participants must comply with the Guide to Safe Scouting, Scouting America's Barriers to Abuse, Philmont policies, and the council's contingent conduct expectations.

A serious policy violation may result in removal from the trek or early return home, subject to applicable procedures.

12. Financial Responsibilities and Additional Expenses

Participation in Philmont represents a significant family investment. The council will provide the final contingent fee and payment schedule separately.

Depending on the final budget, the contingent fee may include Philmont registration, transportation, lodging, touring, and other group expenses.

Families should anticipate potential additional costs for personal backpacking equipment, clothing, training activities, meals during travel, souvenirs, and incidental expenses.

Financial planning information

Item	**2027 details**
Total contingent fee	$3,800
Initial deposit	$400 – Paid at registration
Installment payment schedule	$500 - January 15, 2027 $500 - February 15, 2027 $500 – March 15, 2027 $500 - April 15, 2027 $500 - May 15, 2027 $500 - June 15, 2027 $400 – July 1, 2027
Final payment deadline	July 1, 2027
Cancellation and refund policy	Refunds will only be given when you find your replacement.
Fundraising opportunities	Council Peanut Sale - https://gfcscouting.org/volunteers/unit-support/peanuts/
Scholarship assistance	Subject to availability

Families should avoid purchasing major specialized equipment until the council provides appropriate instructions.

13. Important Dates to Remember

The council will publish a detailed preparation calendar as the 2027 contingent plans are finalized.

2027 Contingent Planning Calendar

Parent and participant orientation

December 7, 2026

Crew organization and leadership selection

December 15, 2026

Equipment and backpack fitting session

January 11, 2027

Shakedown Weekend #1

April 24-25, 2027

Shakedown Weekend #2

May 22-23, 2027

Additional crew training hikes

TBD as needed

Medical records submission deadline

March 1, 2027

Final parent and participant meeting

June 19, 2027

Final equipment inspection

June 19, 2027

Contingent departure

July 10, 2027

Arrival at Philmont

July 11, 2027

Contingent return home

July 23, 2027

Philmont's 2027 preparedness webinars

Philmont has published a 2027 preparedness webinar series. Three sessions currently listed on its preparation page are:

Date	Topic
December 7, 2026	Parent/Participant Information Webinar
March 17, 2027	Base Camp procedures and arrival/departure expectations
April 21, 2027	Final updates and preparation review

These are Philmont-hosted sessions, separate from Great Falls Council's required training events. Additional webinars and details are available on the Philmont Preparing for Philmont page.

14. Parent Preparation Checklist

Family Readiness Tracker

- Review this parent guide with your Scout
- Attend the contingent orientation
- Review current Philmont eligibility and medical requirements
- Schedule the required medical examination
- Help your Scout begin a physical conditioning program
- Confirm personal equipment needs before major purchases
- Ensure hiking footwear is properly fitted and broken in
- Notify leadership of relevant medical or dietary needs
- Plan for participation in all shakedown weekends
- Review payment deadlines and family expenses
- Confirm identification and travel requirements
- Review the emergency communication plan
- Attend the final contingent meeting

15. Frequently Asked Questions

Does my Scout need previous backpacking experience?

Previous experience is helpful but is not necessarily required. Participants must meet Philmont's eligibility requirements and complete the crew's preparation program.

Shakedown weekends provide an opportunity to develop essential skills before arriving at the ranch.

How old must a Scout be to attend?

Philmont's published eligibility guidance states that traditional trek participants must be at least 14 years old, or at least 13 years old and have completed eighth grade before participation. The council will confirm the applicable 2027 requirements.

How much weight will participants carry?

Philmont describes typical backpack weights of approximately 35–50 pounds, depending on equipment, food, water, and individual circumstances. Proper equipment selection and physical conditioning are essential.

Will Scouts be able to shower during the trek?

Showers are generally available at Base Camp but should not be expected during the backcountry portion. Participants will learn appropriate trail hygiene and sanitation practices.

Can parents send packages or care items?

Families should not send packages without coordinating with contingent leadership. Mail and packages must follow Philmont's procedures, and delivery to participants in the backcountry cannot be assumed.

What happens if my Scout becomes homesick?

Homesickness can occur, especially early in the experience. Crew members, youth leaders, and adult advisors will help participants adjust while encouraging independence and teamwork.

What happens if a participant becomes sick or injured?

The crew will follow Philmont's emergency and medical-response procedures. Depending on the situation, care may involve backcountry staff, the Philmont Infirmary, evacuation, or outside medical services. Parents or guardians will be contacted when appropriate.

What happens if someone cannot finish the trek?

Philmont staff and contingent leadership will evaluate the circumstances and determine appropriate arrangements. A participant who leaves the backcountry early may require supervision, transportation, medical care, or travel changes.

16. Official Philmont Resources

Families should use Philmont's official publications as their primary reference for technical and operational requirements.

Guidebook to Adventure and preparation resources

Annual guides, preparation seminars, and shakedown resources

What to Bring

Equipment recommendations and packing guidance

Health and Medical Records

Medical forms, eligibility, and health requirements

Navigating Your First Day

Camping Headquarters check-in and orientation

Guide to Safe Scouting

Scouting America's official safety policies

17. A Final Message to Parents

Sending your Scout to Philmont is an investment in much more than a summer adventure. It is an investment in character, confidence, independence, leadership, and personal growth. Your Scout will face challenges, celebrate accomplishments, and discover strengths that may not yet be apparent. Some of the most meaningful lessons will come not from reaching a mountain summit, but from helping a fellow crew member, overcoming a difficult day, or realizing that success depends on the contributions of everyone.

We also recognize the important role families play in making this experience possible. Your encouragement during training, patience throughout the planning process, financial commitment, and willingness to support your Scout's growing independence are all essential.

When our contingent returns home in 2027, we hope every participant brings back more than photographs, patches, and stories. We hope they return with stronger friendships, greater self-confidence, new leadership skills, and a renewed understanding of what it means to live the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

Thank you for supporting the Great Falls Council's 2027 Philmont contingent. We look forward to an unforgettable adventure!