
A PHILMONT JOURNEY

Crew 807-7B

By. Cameron Chua

THIS ISSUE'S FEATURED ARTICLES:

Shakedown
ToTT
Wilderness Guia
The Trek
Tooth of Time
That's a Wrap



In the summer of 2021, a crew from Troop 58 traveled from Ashburn, Virginia to Cimarron, New Mexico. It all began on August 6 when the crew met at Dulles International Airport early in the morning. From there, they flew to Denver International Airport, where they hiked the Garden of the Gods and rode up to Pikes Peak on a cog railway.

The next day, after what seemed like hours on the road, they finally arrived at Philmont Scout Ranch. Located in Colfax county near the Village of Cimarron, it is the world's largest youth camp ranch and encompasses much of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains of the Rockies, spread over 140,000 acres.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

I was never good at writing but please 'bear' with me. Please excuse the pun and enjoy.

SHAKEDOWN

Philmont. The 4th and final high adventure of my scouting career. After Sea Base in 2019, Northern Tier in 2020, and various Summit trips, I never thought I would make it to the world-famous Philmont Scout Ranch. When we arrived, I was in awe at the size of the place. There were so many tents and buildings that it was almost like a maze. Everyone there was in uniform, all bearing patches that advertised their home council and their achievements. It was a blur of activity and color as we waited at the welcome center, witnessing the busy city that we call Philmont.

It was there at the welcome center where we met Harrison DeFord, a 20-year-old Eagle Scout leading his last trek of the summer. We all introduced ourselves and without missing a beat, he took us on his world-famous Philmont Tour.



We planned this trip well but I did not realize how much more we had to do at basecamp. We completed paperwork at Registration, verified our itinerary with Logistics, checked out gear at Outfitting services, and received health checks at the Infirmary. In addition, we collected our food and had our crew photo taken. A keepsake to cherish forever, it was also used for identification purposes during search and rescue.

The biggest part of the day was the shakedown. We took our cot outside and put all of our gear on one side. As our ranger called out an item, we moved it to the other side of the cot. This helped us separate the necessary items from the unnecessary ones. Everything that we didn't bring was put into lockers.

My biggest problem thus far was weight. My pack weighted about 42 pounds with food and 4 liters of water. It was a bit heavier than the 30 pounds that I usually carried on training hikes, but they don't call this high adventure for nothing.

TOTT

You may be wondering what ToTT stands for. It has many acronyms, but at Philmont, it stands for Tooth of Time Traders. It is Philmont's trading post and essentially a mini REI as it has a complete supply of outdoor gear and equipment. Items such as patches, buckles, maps, and other souvenirs are in stock. In some ways, it was better than the trading post at Sea Base and Northern Tier, but each camp has its own unique set of items and gear. The thing about this trading post is that you can come to Philmont with absolutely nothing and still manage to go on a trek with all the gear offered by the trading post.



At the other 3 high adventure bases, I bought a leather belt, a belt buckle, and a Nalgene water bottle. At Philmont, I was able to complete my collection and now have all three items from all four high adventure bases. I spent most of my time in the Tooth of Time Traders after the trek and there were so many things I wanted to buy, but only ended up buying a map of our trek and some stickers and souvenirs. But, I did manage to get a free book with a \$75 purchase!



WILDERNESS GUIA

A couple of weeks back, the crew needed 2 scouts to step up and become leaders. Gabe was already our crew leader and the 2 open roles that needed filling were the Chaplain's Aide and the Wilderness Pledge Guia. As the environmentalist I was, I decided to become the Guia (Guide). Also because no one else wanted to do it. Before the trek, I thought I was just someone who enforced LNT principles and made sure we didn't do anything bad. But after the Wilderness Guia meeting, I realized there was much more. Each Guia was handed a packet that explained all of our duties.

All of my duties were equally important but I mainly focused on qualifying for the Wilderness Pledge Award. It focused on discussing each of the 7 principles of LNT and participating in the training provided by our ranger. My duties also included tracking different species that we encounter in the wilderness such as deer and turkeys, as well as preparing us for our conservation project.



Conservation was one of the biggest events I was looking forward to. Our project consisted of working with the Philmont Conservation Staff to conduct forest fuels reduction. It involves the removal of trees and the management of those debris to create a healthier forest ecosystem which in turn will help to prevent the spread and damage of forest fires.

As Wilderness Pledge Guia, I was in charge of making sure we followed all procedures, especially ones that kept bears away and the environment safe. There was a lot of rules when it came to bear procedures. A big one includes the bear munda triangle, which meant keeping all food inside the triangle created by the bear bags, fire ring, and sump. Packs needed to be placed away from tenting area, food and smellables needed to be hung in bear bags, and dish washing and teeth brushing had to be done by the sump.

Philmont Wilderness Pledge

Through good Scout camping, I pledge to preserve the beauty and splendor of the Philmont Wilderness. I commit myself to:

1. An absence of litter and graffiti
2. Respect for Philmont's Wildlife.
3. Conservation and proper use of water.
4. Respect for trails and trail signs.

THE TREK

Sunday, August 8th, was the first day of the trek. It all started with a bus ride to the Kit Carson Museum at Rayado. There, we began our "31" mile, 6-day trek. The first day was spent hiking approximately 4 miles with an elevation gain of 1,200' to the first camp, Backache Springs. There, Harrison taught us about Philmont and the basics of setting up camp. From putting up the dining fly to cooking and cleaning, we were basically prepared for the rest of the trip, or so we thought.

Monday, August 9th, we packed up camp and hiked on to Urraca. A short but tough hike, we arrived there right before lunch. There, we participated in a bunch of challenging activities, also known as COPE courses. Although those were fun, the most memorable event was the campfire that night. I don't know where to begin when describing it. As the sun fell over the horizon, we just relaxed and let the heat of the campfire wash over us as we sang along to music played by the staff. It was a different experience altogether and in my opinion, was my favorite part of the trek.



Tuesday, August 10th, we woke up early and did a morning to a peak near Urraca. Afterwards, we hiked to Miners Park. At this point, I lost track of how many miles we walked and just went along. At Miners, we restocked food and spent most of our afternoon doing our conservation project. There at the camp, we rock climbed and did basic bouldering, but that was small compared to the next day.

Wednesday, August 11th, we spent the morning doing real rock climbing near Miners Park. Afterwards, we hiked to Shafers Pass and relaxed for the rest of the day. Mr. Miller taught us a stick game which haunted a few crew members throughout the week. I'm proud to say I understood the game.

Thursday, August 12th, was the day we finally climbed the Tooth of Time. At Clarks Fork, we branded various items and enjoyed a chuckwagon dinner. There, we also had another campfire, but nothing could beat the one at Urraca.

Friday, August 13th, back to HQ.

Picture on the left shows early morning sunrise hike at Urraca.

TOOTH OF TIME

I can't believe I'm writing a whole page about the Tooth of Time. But truth be told, this requires about a whole page. Honestly, each day at Philmont could've had its own page, but that was too much work. The iconic Tooth of Time was the biggest part of our trek and is actually one of Philmont's most popular sights.

With an elevation of 9,003ft, the Tooth literally looks like a tooth and creates a sheer vertical face. Both its pinkish-gray color and its unusual shape make it a notable geological landmark that was used to determine the cut-off for heading to Santa Fe or to the Oregon Trail. It is located in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and is the highest point along the Tooth Ridge. Rising over 1700ft above the base of the ridge, it reveals views of the eastern horizon, Urraca Mesa to the south, Black Mountain to the west, and Baldy Mountain to the northwest.

Thursday morning, August 12th, our crew set out to hike the Tooth of Time. We left our packs at Shaefer's Pass and brought day packs with us. With only water and a few other essentials, we took a very rocky trail along Tooth Ridge that was comprised of many large boulders but had amazing views. With a rock scramble similar to that of Old Rag, we finally made it to the top.



THAT'S A WRAP

Sunsets have been consistent among all the high adventures I have been on. As my last high adventure trip came to an end, I reflect back on all the other trips I have been on. Starting with Sea Base in 2019, Northern Tier in 2020, and finally, Philmont in 2021, I feel lucky to have even attended one, let alone three. Technically, if you count Jamboree, my first was National Jamboree in 2017. After Philmont, I got many questions about which one was my favorite. Honestly, I don't have one. There is a lot of criteria and I could've made a chart quantifying it to figure out which one was the best. But each one was unique in its own way, but mentally and physically.

As I write this article, my time as a youth scout is coming to an end. I observe how my time in scouts has made me a better person as a whole. From the adventures I have been on to the people I have helped, I regret nothing in my time in Troop 58. I can go on and on about the troop meetings, camping trips, service projects, and much more. In this bubble that is Ashburn, VA, I wouldn't have been able to do the things I have without this troop and the people in it. When searching for these Philmont photos, I came across other ones from Northern Tier, Sea Base, Jamboree, and various campouts, meetings, and CoHs. I am proud to have seen Troop 58 grow from the beginning to where it is now.

There's something about a beautiful sunset that makes an experience complete, the perfect end to a perfect adventure.

