

Trek 26 Summary

709-H2 - 2006 Chester County Council Contingent

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Pictures at www.troop6bsa.org

This Trek Summary is designed to explain our experiences and the choices we made, you mileage will most certainly vary.

Our Crew was a young crew (8 youth, 2 14, 3 15, 1 16, 1 17 & 1 18), well except for the old guys, but the result is the same ... we weren't the fastest on the planet, but we slept everywhere we were supposed to and got all the program we had hoped for and more. The older youth (the 17 & 18 y/o) were Philmont vets (as were all but 1 of the 4 adults with a combined trek tally of 6 between them). This was a very different experience than our '04 Trek. In '04 we took Trek 4, a great Trek that is ostensibly unchanged in '06. In '04 we had lots of rain. This trek, while more difficult on its face (by about 22!) had none of the weather induced challenges of '04 as we were graced with great weather. We had a little rain, just enough to have us break out rain gear, on Day 5 on the way to Comanche (that would be New Comanche ... see below) and a bit more with hail mixed in for good measure after Cons at Cito on Day 9.

Trek 26 isn't easy. With the exception of Day 1 and perhaps the segment from Hunting Lodge to Upper Clarks, all the hikes were challenging at some level.

Staffs were, universally, very good to great. All were friendly and accommodating. Unlike our experience with the wrangler's in Beaubien in '04, this year's wranglers at Clarks were great.

Logistics were good. We didn't get as detailed water info as I would have liked in base camp. We had only one shot at Cons ... at Cito. We discovered that Comanche Camp had been moved at PJ at our food pickup. I believe it was re-located after we started due to flooding during the week prior to our arrival. At Philmont you get it all ... Fires, Floods, Rain, Hail and, yes, great low humidity days to hike in as well.

The Day summaries below attempt to detail hiking times, program experiences and level of difficulty as observed by the advisors.

One final note, we were had a truly great experience with our Ranger, An extremely competent and confident individual who bonded with the crew and could communicate well with the adults. Page 73 of the Ranger's guide book details the peril's of dealing with "experienced advisors" ... those with prior Philmont experience either as participants, advisor's or staff. Fortunately Eric didn't have to use this section much with us (that I know of). Of the nine crews from Chester County Council I'm aware of at least one that was less than impressed with their Ranger. In their case the Ranger had difficulty keeping up with the Crew and the Crew ended up carrying some of the Ranger's gear to lighten the load. Oh, one more point in our Ranger's favor ... he was a product of Troop 6, one of our own, and so we all know him very well. While I was aware of his assignment to us in advance of our arrival, the remainder of the crew was not. I had some second thoughts that familiarity might reduce his authority in the eyes of either the older experienced scouts or the adults but this proved not to be the case ... it was a wonderful experience for us all.

Day 0 – July 9 - Base Camp

9:30 Arrived Welcome Center
Crew Leaders w/o Contingent Director only checked in at Welcome Center
Trailbound Tents Assigned
Ranger Called
Ranger Arrived
Processed through Registration
Logistics
Lunch
Health Lodge
Services
Post Office
Purchased Fuel
Shakedown
A little down time at the trading post and in camp
Dinner
Meetings (Advisors, Crew Leader, Chaplain)
Chapel
Opening Campfire – New since '04. Pretty Good.
Ceremonial Burrito at the Sanck Bar – A Troop 6 tradition before leaving

Synopsis – Busy Day. Busier than expect as our day 1 schedule dictated that all base camp activities be completed on day 0.

Day 1 – July 10 – Zastro turnaround to Rayado River

- 8:00 Bus from the welcome center to the Zastrow Turn Around. This made day 0 a bit of a hump in that we needed to accomplish all of in-processing on Day 0. We initially blamed our Ranger for this, later in the day he admitted that while he was, indeed, keen to get in the back country that Bus schedules are out of his hands as simply assigned by logistics.
- 8:15 Arrived Zastro Turn Around.
- 8:30 Ranger conducted Orienteering Training at Turn Around.
- 9:20 Arrived Zastrow after an easy and short hike down a jeep trail
Checked in
Registered for Program (Orienteering & Woodbadge)
Two choices for 'O' program, short (20 min) & long (60 min).
Short is basics only, long more detailed including GPS
- 9:30 Toured Woodbadge museum
- 9:55 Long O Program started – Took closer to 2
- 12:00 Ate lunch – Hiked on to Rayado River.
- PM Ranger Training
Site Selection
Bear Protocol
Water Purification.
- PM Advisor's Coffee @ Zastro
Dutch Oven Cobbler's @ Zastro
Scout rededication @ Zastro
- we opted out of this and headed back to camp.
- I wish we had done it ...

Synopsis – Great day, packed a lot in, great to be in the back country. Negotiated with Ranger to make time for evening program at either Abreu (Cantina) or Zastro (Dutch Ovens & Zastro Ball). Actually we didn't know anything of Zastro's program before we arrived at 9:20, but after we heard what it was the crew chose it over Root Beer ... it was only Day 1.

Day 2 – July 11 – Rayado River to Urraca

7:20 depart RR
7:55 arrive Abreau – Breakfast, skipped program – easy trail

8:30 depart
9:35 5 minute break
10:30 arrived toothache springs – 20 minute – this segment difficult

10:50 depart
11:50 summit Urraca Mesa – this segment very difficult, very steep & rocky

12:00 Lunch on top of mesa at trail intersection

12:50 depart
13:15 arrive Urraca Camp – this segment moderate

13:30 porch talk, assigned Campsite 7 (requested)

15:35 Program, Challenge Course - Good

PM Advisor Coffee
PM Campfire – Fair

Synopsis – Hard Day. Climbing the Mesa was challenging, and a wake-up call for what was to come. Crew enjoyed program.

Day 3 – July 12 – Urraca to Miner’s Park

4:30 wake up
4:45 hike to inspiration point for sunrise (check Eagles Soaring High for times)
6:00 return to campsite 7 - moderate

7:30 depart
8:00 depart water spigot
9:00 breakfast at a spot overlooking the tot – moderate + abandoned road

9:50 depart
11:10 arrive Lover’s Leap Camp – moderate

11:25 depart lovers
13:05 arrive Miner’s – Moderate to Easy

Opted for AM program (was offered 3:00)

PM Advisors Coffee
PM Climbing wall

Synopsis - Nice view from porch; Friendly Staff; Open Porch. Rocks program available at 8-10-1-3 (report to porch 45 minutes before). First part of hike (Urraca to Lover’s) was more challenging than we had thought it would be ... and 5 of us hiked it in '04! Nice hike in the end, Some down time at Miner’s was nice. When the advisor’s returned from coffee the distinct smell of Tuna filled the air by our campsite ... (Lunch was tuna) ... we couldn’t locate the source, and had not problems in the end, but it got us excited.

Day 4 – July 13 – Miner’s Park to Black Mountain

- 6:00 wake up
- 7:15 Rocks program at Miner’s
- 8:00 On Program
- 10:20 Off program
- 10:50 back in camp
 - could have backpacked to trail intersection and dropped packs
- 11:30 depart
 - took env program with us to North Fork Urraca
 - Ask for Shaun, he was excellent
- 12:15 arrived North Fork Urraca CS #1 for Env Program
 - Beaver dams & ponds
 - Moderate up and narrow at points
- 1:45 depart NFU#1 for Black Mountain
- 3:25 @ 493978x031686 spotted a rather large Black Bear squatting in the trail.
 - We waited 20 minutes after he wandered off
- 6:20 arrived Black Mountain after 48 stream crossings
 - Once you see campsites, you have two more stream crossings
 - # 47 & 48 if you have been counting
 - No campsite maps here, part of the act
 - Staff greeted us immediately even though it was their dinner hour
 - This segment moderate to difficult, lots of PUDS (pointless ups and downs, and the 48 or so stream crossings to slow you up a bit)

Synopsis - Hike out to North Fork Urraca was nice, doing Miner’s environmental program there was a gem ... ask for it, and Shaun. Friendly Staff at Black Mountain, rarely out of character. Do both programs, Blacksmithing & Black Powder. The Crew leader earns a take away from blacksmithing. Check out the Burros while you are there, the mule train set out for Beaubien for supplies while we were there ... this weekly (Friday) occurrence is the only way to get trash out and supplies in. Black Mountain and Crooked Creek are the only two staff camps on the ranch no reachable by vehicle. As a result, Black Mountain doesn’t take trash. No biggie – Miners does and so does Phillips Junction. Our sister crew is having problems with one advisor ... apparently the others had to help steady him during stream crossings... Not good. They assert that he doesn’t belong here. They are contemplating skipping Comanche completely and hiking on to Comanche Peak and doing two days there. I remind them that Philmont expects them to follow their itinerary and used the recent evacuation of the south country due to the Riviera Mesa fire as an example why ... we shall see.

Day 5 – July 14 – Black Mountain to Comanche

- 6:30 up (actually 6:45)
- 8:00 Blacksmithing program started at 8:15 – Good
- 9:30 Black Powder – Great
- 10:15 Program over

Took time before program to purify

- 10:45 depart
- 11:55 reached the Pass – Moderate, Narrow, Steep in places
- 12:40 reached the Meadow above Beaubien – Ate Lunch

- 13:30 depart
- 14:20 arrived PJ
- 14:40 Food P/U complete, visited Trading Post, got fresh fruit
 - Advised the Comanche Camp had been moved
 - Given GPS coordinates, staff updated our sectionals as well
 - This segment moderate, narrow but a great hike

- 15:30 depart PJ
- 17:45 arrived New Comanche
 - Had some difficulty locating campsites due to misleading signage
 - Campsites are uphill, opposite the signs, ignore the arrows
 - Quite a hump up to the campsites
 - This segment easy, except for the hump at the end

- PM Bear rope go tangled on the cable. Took a while to resolve
 - Considered spar pole climbing – not
 - Lashed a rather large knife to a rather small tree and cut the rope down
 - o It was really the \$20 carbineer that interested us most
 - o Check out the photos

Synopsis – Just a little irritated by the misleading trail signs – they seemed to point away from where the campsites are. This is probably fixed by now, or so I hope. A long day that we did anticipate. We see our sister in camp, perhaps my words of wisdom had an impact.

Day 6 – July 15 – Comanche to Comanche Peak

6:00 Wakeup
7:40 Depart
8:30 Breakfast – Easy trail

9:00 Depart
10:05 Arrive Clear Creek – Easy Trail

Did Hawks at CC
Watered up at CC

11:00 Depart
12:05 Lunch – Moderate to Difficult

12:55 Depart
13:50 20 Minute Break – Difficult

14:40 Depart
15:30 Summited Phillips – Very Difficult / NFI – Very Rocky

16:15 Depart
17:00 Heard distress signal – three whistle blasts ... pause ... repeat ... repeat ...
- Located our sister crew off the trail, disoriented ... they had lost trail.
- Youth only, adults were no where to be found. Youth indicate that they (the adults) had fallen behind.
- Embedded sister crew in our own and proceeded to Comanche Peak Camp
17:30 Arrived Comanche Peak
- Lead Advisor from Sister was waiting on a rock.
- We had a discussion.
- He indicated that they wouldn't wait and that when he arrived at camp he left them a note (pointing to a scrap of paper in the trail sign)
- We had another discussion.

Synopsis – Irritated by crews that think the rules are for others. Comanche peak is dry, one of two places where carrying water is required. Most crew members started up Phillips with 4 or 5 liters depending on capacity. One advisor carried nine ... his five plus 4 extra. Neat campsite, nice sunrise. Found the walking stick of one of the other crews from CCC at the bear cable. One of our guys adopted it. Found a bear bag and an extra pot lid as well, adopted those as well.

Day 7 – July 16 – Commanche Peak to Lower Sawmill

- 6:00 Wakeup
- 6:45 Depart
- 7:45 Thunder Ridge – Breakfast & Red Roof - Moderate

- 8:20 depart
- 9:25 5 min @ 8069x3974 – easy trail

- 9:30 depart
- 10:10 5 min @ 8995x4068

- 10:15 depart
- 10:30 arrive Sawmill
 - Take packs to cabin
 - We dropped packs because we didn't understand the sign
 - Easy trail
- 11:00 arrive at cabin

- 11:15 Program – Reloading
- 12:05 Depart for Range
- 12:25 Program – On the Range shooting
- 13:30 Return to Cabin
 - Chill on porch, playing shoes, enjoying the best porch view yet
 - Toughest trail from cabin to range
 - Sump available near cabin for dinner prep
- 16:00 Start Dinner

- 18:40 Depart
- 19:50 Arrive Lower Sawmill – Rugged trail

Sawmill staff awesome and laid back, made us feel very welcome
Great decision to spend 'down afternoon chilling as the is *nothing* at lower sawmill.
Sawmill indicated that our sister had arrived in camp about (the evening before because of an advisor with altitude sickness, although they never say said advisor – me thinks it was attitude sickness. We see our sister later, they indicate that they are considering hiking on to Aspen Springs, Cito or Hunting Lodge. I bite my tongue. Camp director speaks with the regarding their arrival the night before before they leave ... later we see them at lower sawmill.

Day 8 – July 17 – Lower Sawmill to Hunting Lodge

6:00 wakeup
7:05 depart
8:05 breakfast – easy trail

8:30 depart
8:40 Ute Gulch Trail intersection
- Sent 4 runners
- Remaining crew played cards, crashed, looked at wild life – Fox here
- Easy trail

8:50 runners arrived UGC
10:05 runners return

10:30 depart
11:10 arrive Aspen Springs #3 for break (Hidden Valley Route)
- Moderate

11:25 depart
12:30 arrived Window Rock
- Lunch
- Be sure to take the 100 yd or so uphill trail to the right to see a great back country view, including your destination, better than the window rock view IMHO

2:00 depart
3:00 arrived Hunting Lodge

3:15 assign CS#1
4:00 did HL tour

PM Advisor's Coffee
PM Stories on the Porch & Muffins for the crew

Synopsis - Again, a great staff – Baked a birthday cake for a crew member and brought it down to us at Dinner. Enjoyed the after dinner program on the porch as well.

Day 9 – July 18 – Hunting Lodge to Upper Clarks Fork

- 6:00 Wakeup
- 8:00 Cons Project @ Cito
- Discovered that we needed to sign up in advance – fortunately there was an 8:00 slot left
 - 1 hour explanation / safety – Excellent ... explained why we were doing what we were doing
 - 1.5 hour hard labor
 - 30 minutes cleanup, sign-offs
- 11:00 Showers & Wash (11 is the Advisor's hour) & Lunch
- 12:30 depart Cito
- 13:00 Arrive HL CS#1 – Pick Up Packs
- 14:15 depart HL
- 15:00 Arrive CF – Moderate
- 15:30 depart CF
- 16:00 arrived UCF
- Search for Campsites
 - Sent “cooks” 1 plus 3 friends to CF
 - UCF has sites in two clusters
 - o A small meadow at the lower end
 - o A grove at the upper end
 - o Both near the main trail intersections with a large undeveloped spot in between
 - o Upper sites are tight
 - Campsite sign was missing at lower end making life a little difficult
- 17:00 Side Hike CF for Chuckwagon Dinner
- 17:20 arrived CF
- 17:45 Chuck Wagon
- Seating was poor . several tables for Advisors that arrive early
 - Advisors served first
 - Plenty of food for Seconds & Thirds
 - Clean-up (personal gear) is in sink at the side of pavilion – line forms early
- 20:00 Campfire
- Very entertaining
- 21:05 depart for UCF
- 21:45 arrived UCF #6

Synopsis – The walk up and down, two more round trips than hiking thorough, was inconvenient. The Chuck Wagon meal was good, but crowded. The campfire was first rate and worth staying back for. The staff was awesome, a trend we were noticing by now ...

Day 10 – July 19 – Upper Clarks Fork to Tooth Ridge

- 6:00 wakeup
- 7:15 depart
- 7:40 arrived CF for Program
- 8:00 Program - Branding
- 8:45 Program - Trail Ride (Date and time set in Logistics on Day 0)
- 11:30 return from Ride
- 11:55 depart for UCF
- 12:25 arrived UCF #6
- 13:45 depart
- 15:15 Schaffer's Pass Camp – Moderate +
- 15:30 depart
- 16:30 arrive TRC #14 – Difficult
 - #12 No Sump
 - # 10 is my favorite
 - Check out sunset from the mound near #10

Synopsis – What's not to like about TRC? It's my favorite trail camp on the ranch, although there are plenty left to see. Water management is part of the game for me, I'm not a fan of cooking dinner someplace where there is water to avoid carrying it. Sure, that meant 4-5 liters per person from Clarks Fork – two in the bladder to drink on the way, one for the crew for dinner tonight and one or two down to base camp. It worked out fine, we arrived, at least most of us, with water to spare.

Day 11 – July 20 – Tooth Ridge to Base Camp

4:45 wake-up

5:30 depart for Tooth

6:15-6:45 summit Tooth

- Sunrise shots from summit or face

7:30 Off

8:10 Return TRC#14

9:00 depart

11:15 arrived Base Camp – Easy – Moderate

- Took regular trail
- Stockade Trail is not suitable for packs
- Pasture trail leaves you on an unsheltered road for the hike in, and you miss the “you made it” sign
- Take the long way, what be in a rush, besides there are many shady spots

Base Camp Lunch

13:00 Returned gear

16:30 Villa Tour

Base Camp Dinner

20:00 Closing Campfire

- in Services due the Threat of Rain that never materialized.
- Very good, loved the old time video segments

Synopsis – Do the villa. You can get a burger and fries back home, but seeing the home of the guy that gave scouting this wonderful place is part of the experience.

Day 12- July 21 – Base Camp

5:00 wakeup

5:45 Continental Breakfast (Bus 2 – Co Springs)

6:00 Depart (Bus 1)

- Commissary prepared *HOT* Box Breakfast for eating enroute
- We arranged in advance, or so we thought, registration had no record
 - o Managed to arrange with Dining Hall on Day 0
 - o Philmont discourages this because some crews were taking food back to tent city and causing wild life problems in base camp.
 - o Arrangements should be made with Mark Anderson directly if this is needed.

7:00 Depart (Bus 2)

- Actually departed 6:45
- Arrived Co Springs 9:30 For a 1:10 flight.
 - o Could have departed at 8, had regular breakfast, and had time to spare.