2026 Backpacking Information for Scouts, Adults, and Parents

THIS IS A BACKPACKING TRIP

IF YOU DON'T PACK IT, YOU WON'T HAVE IT!

ADULTS ARE TAKING JUST WHAT THEY NEED SO THEY WON'T HAVE ITEMS YOU FORGET! PLAN AHEAD, CARRY WHAT YOU NEED, BUT NO MORE.

It is the intention of this trip to provide everyone with a realistic backpacking experience like you will encounter at Philmont or backpacking in other wilderness areas. - Plan accordingly. This document contains information specific to our 2026 backpacking trip.

Menu

- Patrols should bring a Cracker Barrel for Friday night. Plan for a quick no cook breakfast for Saturday. For Sunday morning, plan a no cook or one that only requires hot water like oatmeal. Plan on a hot drink mixed with water. Take foods high in energy and carry trail mix and trail snacks for the hike.

- **Adults and Scouts should bring their own Saturday lunches and trail snacks from home in resealable plastic bags**. **Also bring a resealable plastic bag for trash on the hike and in camp Saturday/Sunday**. Everyone is responsible for their own trash.

- Saturday dinner should be a meal requiring only the addition of boiling water and waiting. We will have about 4 backpacking stoves to heat water for everyone, and **we will NOT be able to cook meals on the stoves**.

- **Patrols** have the option to cook a combined one pot meal for the patrol Saturday evening or have patrol members bring individual meals. At most we can heat your pot for a maximum of 5 minutes after you add the hot water. If you bring individual meals, we recommend you bring a freeze-dried meal. If cooking as a patrol, search the internet for "one pot meal" & "backpacking" and you will have many simple menu suggestions from which to choose. Choose something easy to clean up afterwards – avoid sticky sauces (e.g. cheese sauces).

- Patrols should all eat together regardless of how the meal is cooked.

- Everyone should avoid canned foods; they are heavy and create a disposal item. You can precook some items at home so they will be better preserved and easier to prepare. Transfer and transport food in resealable bags. You can also purchase meats and fish in sealed foil bags instead of cans.

- Bring hot chocolate mix or cider mix for hot drinks Saturday evening and Sunday morning. It will help warm you up.

- **Adults should each bring all their own food this year.** It is suggested you bring a freeze-dried meal with 500-1000 calories. You can also bring a one pot meal that requires less than 5 minutes to cook in your own pot. You will have access to the stoves after all the water is heated.

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Water – IMPORTANT FOR YOUR SURVIVAL

- There is scares reliable water in the forest where we will be hiking and camping Saturday and Sunday.

- We will be camping near a public campground with water available on Friday. It would have to be transported by vehicle from the public campground to our site. To save time and effort on Saturday morning, the Troop should bring some water containers with us to refill bottles before we hike on Saturday morning.

- We will set up a water cache in Mr. Boutilier's truck near Big Mountain Overlook. From the overlook, walk clockwise along the road to the parking area for the towers. **Each participant should carry an unused empty water bottle, minimum 1 liter, to be filled at the cache and carried the 2 miles downhill into our camp.** On arrival into our camp, this water should be placed near the picnic table, and it will be used for cooking dinners and hot beverages – not personal consumption.

Logistics For 2026

- *Drivers should read the Driving Directions and Information. It contains more detail about the driving direction, parking, access, and other information useful to drivers on this trip.*

- We will be camping Friday Night at the Group Camp in Cowans Gap State Park, PA. There is no water or open restrooms at the site. The nearest restroom is about 9 minute walk along roads and trails. It is shorter if the stream can be crossed (Mr. Boutilier will decide what we will do when we get to the campsite.)

- The long hikers will be shuttled 2.6 miles to the start of their hike at the Sharpe Trailhead by short hike drivers. The long hike is 10.5 miles and climbs two ridges for a total ascent of 2300 feet. This will be a challenging hike and should only be attempted by individuals prepared and capable of completing it. There is no reliable water along the trail. Carry enough water to safely reach our water cache at about 8.5 miles.

- The short hikers will leave camp and walk 0.5 miles to their trailhead. The trail starts behind the picnic area just to the left of the road to the maintenance buildings. This road is just north of the exit from Parking Lot #3 and the restroom in the parking lot. The short hike is 6.3 miles (including the walk to the trailhead). It climbs up and along one ridge for a total ascent of 1291 feet.

- Drivers will pick up the hikers in the large parking lot at the Mountain House Bar & Grill to the right of the building on Sunday. The Tuscarora Trail connects to the parking lot at the far side.

- Scouts and adults should be divided into long and short hike groups at the shed. Ideally, adults should be transporting scouts who are doing the same hike they are doing. It will make shuttling easier.

- We may need at least two adults, who are not doing either hike, to help with the shuttle. These adults do not have to backpack either of the routes, but they may have to carry all their gear about 1 mile into camp to keep the spirit of a backpacking trip, and to meet PA primitive camp requirements. Once in Saturday's camp, their vehicles are off limits,

except for emergency use, until we are start our Sunday shuttle. This may change when we have a better idea of the people participating in the trip

CELL SERVICE:

- There is poor to no cell service in the park and along Aughwick Rd near the park, depending on your carrier (mine is AT&T). Google maps could not create a route while in the state park. Download Google Maps for this area before you leave on the trip. Also, download offline maps for any trail navigation software you use. WE SHOULD BRING GMRS RADIOS to communicate. We should bring at least 2 for each hike in case we have to take someone off the trail.

Fires

- We will have a campfire on Saturday night if permitted and wood is available. We won't know for certain until Friday of the weekend. The fire must be completely out and cold by morning. There can be **NO fires in the morning** because water to put it out completely will be scarce.