

Palatine Scouts trek through New Mexico wilderness



Scouts from BSA Troop 209, Palatine, hiked through the Sangre de Cristo Mountains at Philmont Scout Ranch in Cimarron, New Mexico. Pictured, from left in the back row, are: Daniel Narey, Mitch Picchiotti, Tom Narey, Michael Hansen, William Plizga and Jim Szczupaj; front row: Luke Litchfield, Evan Castro-Sarno, Tony Pluta, Philmont staffer, Nathan Szczupaj, John Glass and Jack Conneely. *Courtesy of Philmont Staff*

Submitted by Jim Szczupaj 11/18/2021 9:09 AM

A crew of teenage Scouts and their leaders went on a life-changing trek through the Sangre de Cristo Mountains at Philmont Scout Ranch in Cimarron, New Mexico.

Philmont Scout Ranch is BSA Scouts' premier high adventure camp and the largest youth camp in the world, serving nearly one million participants since

1938. The Scout Ranch covers 214 square miles of vast wilderness with trails that climb from 6,500 feet to as high as 12,441 feet.

During their trek, the crew from BSA Troop 209 hiked 70.5 miles over 12 days.

The group of Scouts and their advisers carried everything they needed to survive during the trek on their backs while hiking from camp to camp. They participated in backcountry programs along the way, including historic homesteading, making railroad ties, forest fire education, western shooting, forest ecology, western lore and spar pole climbing.

The trek included a conservation project where the Scouts learned and participated in the upkeep of Philmont's ecosystem. Along the trek, Scouts endured tough challenges, including backpacking in bear and mountain lion territory, steep climbs, and often-inclement weather. The pinnacle of this inspiring experience was a climb to the summit of Baldy Mountain, the highest peak in the Cimarron Range at an elevation of 12,441 feet.