



High Adventure: Our Ascent of Everest

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2003 BCL Press HB. originally published in 1955, memoir by Sir Edmund Hillary of the first ascent of Everest in 1953 after a decade of failures and deaths, The volume was published in a new edition on the 50th anniversary of the final ascent by Hillary and guide Tenzing Norgay.

High Adventure: Our Ascent of Everest Details

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Author : Edmund Hillary

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Ken Peters says

My third book on Everest this year (and my tenth overall!), but this one written by the first man to have climbed it. I'm always fascinated by mountain climbing books, but this book stands out among the rest. Hillary's expressive writing style is so engaging that I could feel his fears and his thrills as he described each obstacle and each accomplishment from the icefall to the summit to the descent. Hillary truly seems to want his readers to gain a very real sense (albeit an obviously slight sense compared to true realities!) of the immensity and the scale of his and Tenzing's historic achievement.

Eduardo Teixeira says

The only criticism I have about this book is when he mentioned he never trusted science again, after a experimenting doctor who clearly made some mistake regarding Ed's condition (the doctor said Ed wasn't supposed to be alive in that particularly moment according to his blood count and altitude). He was quite hypocritical there, because the same science played a vital role on this quest to the summit - the oxygen bottles. I hope he had changed his mind about science in the following years. It's a great book and a great story though. And he's done so much for the people of Nepal and around the world, a great man indeed.

Vicky Hunt says

A great first hand account of Hillary's adventures in mountain-climbing.

In different scope from other books I've read on the Everest 1953 summiting climb, this book is every bit a personal memoir. If you are looking for more of a comprehensive work on the expedition, expedition leader John Hunt's book, "The Ascent of Everest" is an in-depth account from the focus of the expedition as a whole. But, if you want to see the journey through the eyes of one man... looking at the peaks and valleys of the world through the eyes of Sir Edmund Hillary may just be the best view on the planet.

My favorite quote from the book:

"It is not necessary to find excuses for not climbing Everest - the mountain will supply these in abundance."
-From Hillary's comments on the Swiss failure in '52

Audra says

The funny thing is that people probably eschew this book, thinking it's written in "old fashioned" terminology or it's "just another summit book."

Nothing could be further from the truth. Hillary's enthusiasm for mountain climbing punctuates every page (literally; I don't think there's a page in the book that lacks an exclamation point). He talks about the

technicalities of climbing with ease and in accessible language, and he regards the mountains as beings in their own right, worthy of respect and awe.

In addition, the edition of the book I read, despite being a paperback, was illustrated not only with line drawings reminiscent of Arthur Ransome's books, but with simple maps and diagrams showing exactly where the various glaciers are or the path through the Khumbu icefall (not nearly as simple as later books/authors make it seem!).

This is an enthralling book that goes along at a great pace and it was definitely over too soon. Give it a try: it's worth at least a dozen of the whiny 70's mountaineering books!

Anirudh says

A very Frank and straightforward account of the expedition to Mt Everest. Hilary goes into great detail of the time spent up in the Himalayas making you almost feel part of his journey- day by day account of their trek, the challenges of crossing crevices, cutting steps, rationing loads, keeping warm, eating canned food and drinking hot lemon water. It is a very matter of fact style of writing with none of the romanticism or heroism of climbing mountains, making it feel more honest. This is something this guy did and now he is telling us how he did it.

However, he does give away a lot of emotions - the fears, disappointments, frustrations, the passion of climbing, the comradeship, the relief and elation of making it. On reading you realize that although he and Tensing made it to the summit, there were so many others who made it possible for them.

You also get to learn a lot about climbing given Hilary goes very deep in describing all the nuances and jargons and equipments.

A great journal of the first men to scale the Everest!

Lisa says

The story is told matter-of-factly, which makes you read between the lines to figure out how much danger the climbers are really in. I enjoyed reading it in Sir Edmund Hillary's words, but if he had added a few descriptions of how he felt at times, it would have added to the story.

Alexandra says

It doesn't really make you want to climb the Everest, but it's a good realistic story which makes you feel the cold temperatures of the mountains.

Christopher says

Great story, well told. Makes me jealous of the days when mountain climbers were explorers. They went places no one did. They had to find their way to the mountain before they could climb it.

Stephanie says

Hillary is quite amusing - even when he's not intending to be - and I was pleased to read about the ascent in his words.

(Bone to pick: how many WEEKS did you do pre-ascent training? And in all that time you couldn't take five minutes to teach Tenzing to use a camera to take your picture on top of Everest?)

Heather says

really interesting account... a little slow but slow is OK for 250 pages.

Justin says

Great story of the historic climb of the world's highest peak by the famous climber himself Sir Edmund Hillary. He describes not only the effort in sumitting the Everest in 1953 but also the prior expeditions in the Himalayas that served as a preparation for the 1953 British expedition.

Having recently read Jon Krakauer's account "Into Thin Air" of the disastrous 1996 expedition up Everest, it's all the more impressive and meritorious that Hillary and Tenzing, plus John Hunt and the entire crew of climbers and sherpas that made the expedition possible, were able to climb the mountain with the primitive equipment and limited knowledge available at the time.

Definitely an adventure story to read and reread!

Tobias Taylor says

The attributes that got them to the top: average climbing skills, willing to go fast and hard!

This will always be a classic mountaineering tale read for generations to come and Hillary's comedic and highly personal voice makes it an enjoyable 250 pages to read.

Even if you're a climbing/adventure fan it can be dry at times and the author's autobiography 'Nothing Venture, Nothing Win' includes this account in much more concise terms as well as countless other brilliant and formidable tales.

...a tribute to discomfort:

"Life was pretty grim when we settled down for the night. [a lot of things that would make a hobbit squirm] But nothing seemed able to disturb Shipton (the Eric Shipton). Sitting in his sleeping-bag, with his umbrella

over his head to divert the drips, he puffed at his pipe and read a novel in the flickering light of a candle. He couldn't have looked more contented in an easy chair at home in front of a cosy fire."

Janis says

I can't remember the last time I held in my hands a book that was printed in the 50's. It smelled musty and the lack of a paper cover and the black-and-white photographs promised a dull account.

However, Hillary speaks plainly (and provides a glossary) so you get pulled right into his story that boils down to "When I grew up in New Zealand, I learned to climb mountains. I got hooked. Ten years later, I climbed Mount Everest. This is how we did it. We got down again, too. The End." :-) He tells a somewhat modest tale and gives everyone credit but sometimes painted the Sherpas as stupid or helpless. I don't think so!

I used my imagination (which still remembers the IMAX film of the 1996 Everest climb and snippets of "Into Thin Air") and sometimes felt like I was right there with him. I also couldn't help wondering, if even in the 50's climbers were leaving their trash there, how many oxygen bottles and other junk has accumulated since then? I'm looking forward to reading more Everest accounts, the new Hillary love story that's out, and perhaps rereading Into Thin Air.

Ankur Bose says

Another factual account by the ones who did it first. Makes you realise what true mountaineering was done before all the equipment and the technology...a sport of the balls and of the heart!!!

Harinarayan Sreenivasan says

My obsession towards Mt. Everest and high mountains of the world started after watching the movie Everest(2015). That followed scouring the internet for all sorts of information about the mountain and watching the movie again. I had already formed a mental 3D picture of the mountain and surrounding areas.

Then I wanted to know how they would have attacked the dangerous terrain for the very first time and the obvious thing to do was to hear it from the horse's mouth.

This book is not a marvel of literature, but a thorough memoir of his expeditions which led up to the conquering of the summit in 1953. There are no words which can describe the kind of dangers the terrain presents, the determination with which the party overcame all of them and the feeling when one becomes the first human to accomplish something of that sort. Gets a wee bit boring on the Khumbu Icefall, but otherwise the book is very engaging.

Must read for mountain lovers, but do your research before starting to read this book.

Anthony Nelson says

Hillary's matter of fact tale of his conquest of Everest, this is a straight ahead recounting of the three expeditions to Everest that finally ended in success in 1953. While well-written and fast-paced, the book suffers a bit from the lack of a wider view on the logistical and political machinations around the climb, but without a doubt offers some very fine writing about the hardships and everyday effort required.

Tati Dengo says

Reading this account reminded me a lot of reading about astronaut Franklin Chang Díaz, who often states that we can't reach great accomplishments without each other's support.

Even though only two men reached the summit during this expedition, the key word here is EXPEDITION. There were dozens of people involved in this success for all humankind, and it speaks to the humility of these men, how *never* in this account is there a confrontation about who gets to reach the summit first. There is no "me" on a mountain, and "me" was never the priority, even though they all dreamed of this so badly.

Hillary is very diplomatic and never direct about this, it was just a matter of circumstance that it ended up being him and Norgay for the attack. And even though Hillary is seen as the first, and will probably always will be, the effort they endured together transcends the timing of their respective footsteps.

The account ends *very abruptly* and includes nothing about the aftermath. I picked this up with a million questions and now I have a million more, especially after that ending, but this is fun! I've read so much about Everest since finishing this, and there's probably other great books about the aftermath. This mountain is full of stories.

Lastly, Sir Hillary can be very funny on occasion. I cracked up at least three times within the first 50 pages. (The first third or so is about his previous experiences in the Himalayas.)

Clio says

Aaaah I just had to read it all really fast. It's crazy what magic a little "rhythm and breath" and a lot of hard work and training can make! Also the part about rafting on the air mattresses was kind of hysterical.

You know going into reading this that this expedition's success was impressive, but now that I know a lot more of the detail behind all the preparation and work that went into it, I am even more impressed.

Arlomisty says

What a great book about the first ascent of Mt Everest in 1953... truly a tale of adventure and danger... loved every minute and page of this book...

Sunny says

What I love the most about this book is how Hillary's passion for the mountains just leaps off the page. It shines bright and clear from every sentence. It's clear that he enjoyed so much just being on the mountains, watching a sunset or smelling the mountain air.
