

DISASTERS

MOUNTAIN DISASTERS

ANN WEIL

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CHAPTER 1 | Introduction

DATAFILE

Timeline

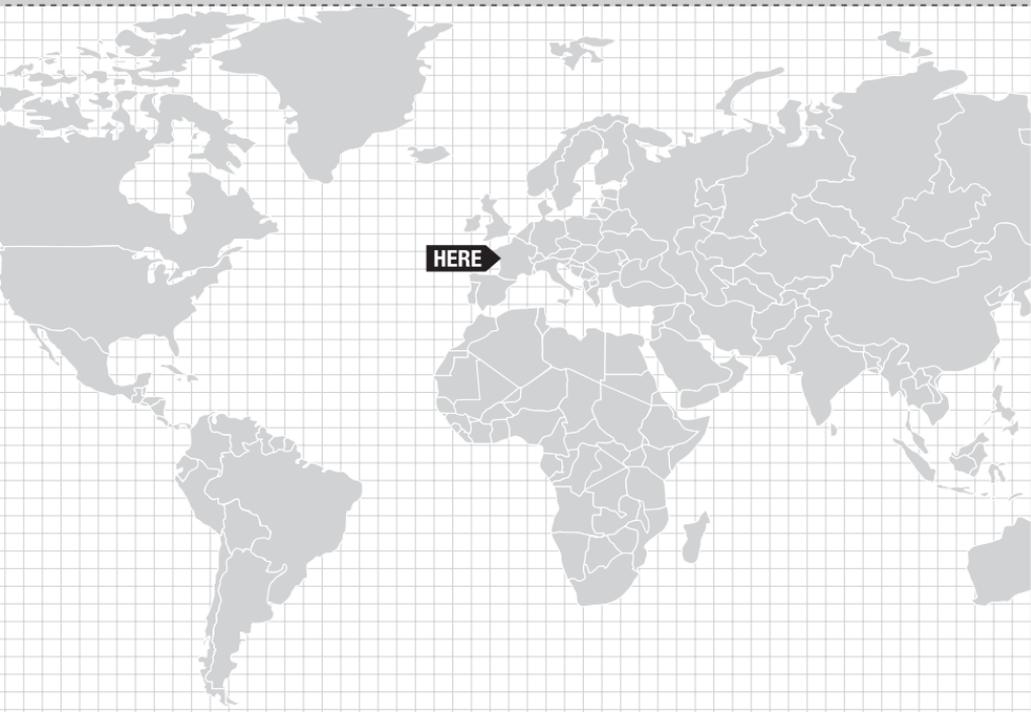
June 1924

Climbers George Mallory and Andrew Irvine are lost on Everest.

May 2, 1999

Climbers find the frozen body of George Mallory.

Where is France?





Did You Know?

The sport of mountaineering began on Mont Blanc, a mountain in France. Mountaineers climbed Mont Blanc in 1786. It was the first time in recorded history that climbers had reached the top.

Key Terms

avalanche—a huge amount of rock or snow that falls swiftly down a mountain

Everest—the highest mountain in the world

mountaineering—the sport of mountain climbing

CHAPTER 1 | Introduction

Many people like climbing mountains. There are parks with trails up mountains. These trails are well marked. That way, people don't get lost.

Climbing a mountain like this is a great day trip for families. The view from the top is wonderful.

People started climbing mountains for fun in the late 1700s. But people had climbed mountains before then.

People hunted animals for food in the mountains. Sometimes they lived in the mountains to protect themselves from enemies.

Mountaineering

The sport of mountain climbing is called mountaineering. People all over the world enjoy mountaineering. They feel proud of themselves when they reach the top of a mountain.

Climbing very high mountains requires a lot of planning. Most tall mountains are covered with snow and ice. This type of mountaineering requires special equipment.

Mountaineers need extra warm clothes. It can get very cold up high in the mountains. They also use ropes. Sometimes they tie themselves to each other.

Climbers often fall. Many times, the fall isn't serious. Sometimes, though, a climber can slide a long distance. If climbers are roped together, the other climber can stop the slide.

Equipment Makes a Difference

Climbers also attach ropes to the side of the mountain. People can hold onto these ropes as they climb. This makes climbing easier and safer.

Good equipment is necessary. Still, it does not protect climbers from every danger. Mountaineering can be very risky. Many climbers die trying to reach the tops of very high mountains.

The Risks

Some of the risks have to do with the weather. It can get very windy on tops of high mountains. Strong winds can blow climbers off their feet.

A gust of wind can even blow a climber off the side of a mountain. A sudden avalanche can bury climbers under tons of ice and snow.

Storms can appear with little notice. It's easy to get lost during a bad snowstorm. The snow makes it difficult to see.

Climbers stuck on a mountain during a storm can freeze to death. Many mountaineers have died this way. Sometimes their bodies are never found. They are buried underneath the snow and ice.

“Because it is there.”

In 1999, climbers on Everest looked for the bodies of George Mallory and Andrew Irvine. They did not find Irvine. But they did find Mallory. He had been dead for 75 years. His body was frozen in the ice and snow near the top of the highest mountain on Earth.

Mallory and Irvine were lost on Everest in 1924. They were trying to reach the top. Did they make it to the top before they died? No one knows for sure. It is one of the great mountaineering mysteries.

Mallory gave an interview before he set out for Everest. A reporter asked Mallory why he wanted to climb Everest. Mallory's answer became famous. He said, "Because it is there."



Mallory and his expedition team.

CHAPTER 2 | The Eiger

DATAFILE

Timeline

July 1936

Four climbers die trying to climb the Eiger, a mountain in the Swiss Alps.

1957

Four climbers try to climb the Eiger. One survives.

Where are the Swiss Alps?

