

High Adventure

Mount Everest is the highest mountain in the world. In 1953, Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay were the first people to climb to the top of Mount Everest. This is an extract from Edmund Hillary's book about this adventure. It describes the first time Hillary saw a mountain.

I was sixteen before I ever saw a mountain. My father's rapidly expanding bee business had occupied all my holidays, and I'd learned to do a full-size job before I entered my teens. But in the winter of 1935 I'd saved a little money and I was allowed to join a School Ski-ing Party to Ruapehu – one of our large New Zealand volcanoes. I was in the Lower Sixth Form at the time – a tall, bony, clumsy-looking youth, far from being the brightest lad in the class; and I don't think I'd been more than fifty miles outside of Auckland. I'd heard glowing tales from the other boys about ski-ing holidays, but it didn't mean a great deal to me – all I wanted was a chance to see the world.

I saw my first snow at midnight when we stepped off our train at the National Park station. There wasn't much of it but it was a tremendous thrill, and before long snowballs, as hard as iron, were flying through the air. And as our bus carried us steadily up towards the Château*, perched high on the mountain-side, its powerful lights sparked into life a fairy-land of glistening snow and stunted pines and frozen streams. When I crawled into my bunk at two in the morning, I felt I was in a strange and exciting new world.

For ten glorious days we skied and played on the lower slopes of the mountain, and I don't think I ever looked towards the summit*. We had been told the upper parts of the mountain were dangerous, and I viewed them with respect and fear. I never dared to venture* on them. I returned home in a glow of fiery enthusiasm for the sun and the cold and the snow – especially the snow!

An extract from *High Adventure* by Sir Edmund Hillary (2003): pp.1-2 Oxford University Press

Glossary

Château — castle

summit — the top of a mountain

to venture — to risk going