Mount Everest

Mount Everest is the world’s highest mountain. It’s 8,848 metres (or 29,028 feet) high.

New Zealander, Edmund Hillary, and Nepalese Sherpa¹, Tenzing Norgay, were the first people known to have reached the summit of Mount Everest. They did so on 29 May 1953 as part of a British expedition.

The expedition set up Base Camp in March 1953. They then set up their final camp at South Col. On 26 May, two members of the expedition set out for the summit but had to turn back because their oxygen system failed. Hillary and Tenzing were then directed to make an attempt to reach the summit.

Snow and wind held the pair up at the South Col for two days. They set out on 28 May and pitched a tent at 8,500 m (27,900 feet).

On the following morning, Hillary discovered that his boots had frozen solid outside the tent. He spent two hours warming them before he and Tenzing attempted the final ascent wearing 14 kg packs.

The crucial move of the last part of the ascent was the 12 m (40-foot) rock face later named the "Hillary Step". Hillary saw a means to wedge his way up a crack in the face between the rock wall and the ice and Tenzing followed. From there the following effort was relatively simple.

They reached Everest's 8,848 m (29,028 ft) summit, the highest point on earth, at 11:30 am. As Hillary put it, "A few more whacks of the ice axe in the firm snow, and we stood on top."

They spent only about 15 minutes at the summit.

Hillary took the photo of Tenzing posing with his ice-axe, but since Tenzing had never used a camera, Hillary's ascent went unrecorded.

¹ The Sherpa are an ethnic group from the most mountainous region of Nepal high in the Himalayas. The term Sherpa is also used to refer to local people who are employed as guides for mountaineering expeditions in the Himalayas.
Tenzing left sweets and biscuits in the snow as a Buddhist offering to the gods. Hillary left a cross that he had been given.

The two had to take care on the descent after discovering that drifting snow had covered their tracks, complicating the task of retracing their steps.

Hillary described the peak as "a symmetrical, beautiful snow cone summit".

Hillary was one of the members of an expedition in 1951 that discovered the southern route to the top of the mountain.

There were two routes from Base Camp to South Col: via the Lhotse Face or via the Khumbu Icefall.

In the 1953 expedition, Hillary forged a route through the Khumbu Icefall.

In 1952, Tenzing reached the then record height of 8,599 m (28,215 feet) during a Swiss expedition.

Mount Everest was named after Sir George Everest, the surveyor-general of India who was the first to produce detailed maps of the Indian subcontinent including the Himalayas.