



The Lost Explorer: Finding Mallory on Mt. Everest

Conrad Anker, David Roberts

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On June 8, 1924, George Leigh Mallory and Andrew Irvine disappeared somewhere near the summit of Mount Everest, leaving open the tantalizing question of whether they had reached the summit of Everest twenty-nine years before Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay. In 1999, climber Conrad Anker discovered Mallory's body on Everest and helped solve one of the greatest mysteries in the history of adventure and exploration. In "The Lost Explorer," Anker and historian David Roberts craft a dramatic account of the expeditions of 1924 and 1999, and ultimately capture the passion and spirit of two men driven to test themselves against nature at its most brutal.

The Lost Explorer: Finding Mallory on Mt. Everest Details

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Elaine Thompson says

The Lost Explorer

Firstly I would like to say a massive thank you to the man that wrote this book! A truly amazing book, which had me captivated from the first page. I've been totally addicted and absorbed. Beautifully written, really descriptive. I've also read the last hours to which this book follows, which was just as good. Well recommended

Dan Walker says

I enjoyed the book and yet seriously disliked it, as you shall see. It seems to me that high-altitude mountaineering has a serious credibility gap. Or at least it did 18 years ago when the book was written. Perhaps times have changed. The book wants you to believe that once you ascend into the death zone, strong, experienced climbers suddenly go catatonic and die of exposure or other mishap. Which climber gets struck by this is utterly random and unpredictable.

I don't believe it. I expect that a blood oxygen level test, simple cognitive tests, and other medical tests taking only a few minutes would identify which climbers are weakening under the strain. These should be required to return to camp before they ascend the next obstacle and place themselves further beyond aid. As it is, identifying which climbers are not physically capable of summiting and returning to camp is left up to each climber individually. To their credit, some climbers sense that "it's not their day" and they return to safety. However, far too many climbers miscalculate, summit, and then die while descending.

Life and death decisions should not be made by people with their mental skills deteriorating and the summit of Everest literally within sight. The age of heroic exploration is over. There is no glory in summiting Everest and then spending the next couple days dying of exposure, unable to descend, all while leaving behind a wife and kids. Furthermore, the companies that sponsor these expensive expeditions should insist on a simple testing system to avoid these outcomes. Surely they find it extremely embarrassing to sponsor an expedition that leaves several of its members dead on Everest. Or do they have no shame?

In case you think I'm being dramatic, read the book. Everest is apparently littered with bodies. The difficulty of finding Mallory was partially about DIFFERENTIATING HIS CORPSE FROM ALL THE OTHER CORPSES. Fortunately that wasn't too hard, since he didn't have modern climbing gear. Still, the corpses they found could be catalogued by the condition of the body, since some victims apparently cartwheeled down the precipice at terminal velocity. The authors fail to give us perspective by publishing guesses as to how many feet the corpses fell.

I was also unimpressed with how the high-altitude climbing community processes such deaths, many of which appear to be needless. This is done with a combination of alcohol and Buddhist beliefs. I don't know much about Buddhism, but frankly it appears to be a form of escape from reality. Instead of contemplating your mistakes while slowly dying of exposure, mistakes which surely sink to the level of sins when leaving behind a family, and coming to the realization that you are dying due to a lack of humility, and that perhaps

it's time to ask for forgiveness before death, the Buddhist initiate instead concentrates on keeping his/her emotions flat while becoming one with the abominable snowman. Or some such ridiculousness. Yes, definitely unimpressed with Buddhism and mountain climbing.

Mallory at least had an excuse. He literally had no idea that he could not successfully summit Everest. He did not know the obstacles in the way, because no one else had climbed Everest. He did seem to be aware that the climbing gear of the day was simply inadequate. However he, too, was guilty of miscalculating. The authors believe he slipped while attempting to down climb in the dark. Very plausible.

So, read the book, enjoy it, but don't be impressed by the underlying attitude of indestructibility. The truth is there, but I'm not sure the mountaineering community has embraced it yet.

Emily Dillon says

A very quick and interesting read about an exciting discovery. I really enjoyed the historical/biographical comparison about how climbing gear has changed. What early climbers were able to accomplish without modern climbing gear is really impressive.

Anne says

Great book, though I recommend also watching the documentary *The Wildest Dream* as a supplement. Filmed several years after this book was written, Conrad Anker actually tries to summit Everest in similar conditions to what Mallory would have faced- at times even wearing similar clothes and free climbing areas where modern climbers use a ladder. As a result, Anker comes to a different conclusion than the one laid out in this book. Either way still interesting.

Liz Nutting says

Why go climb a mountain?

Because it's there.

That zen koan-like exchange has for decades resonated as a profound statement on the nature of humanity's desire for exploration and discovery. The response was uttered by George Leigh Mallory, one of Britain's great adventurers and mountaineers, who three times attempted to be the first to summit Mt. Everest, almost 30 years before Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay finally reached the top of the world.

On his third attempt in 1924, Mallory and his climbing partner Irvine set off on a calm, sunny day from the high camp. Hours later they were seen by a colleague climbing one of the steep steps of the North Face, the last obstacle before the top. They were never seen again.

For almost a century the mystery of what happened to Mallory and Irvine on Everest has lingered. And even more intriguing, did they reach the summit before they died? In 1999 a group of mountain climbers decided to mount a search, after hearing reports of other climbers spotting "an old English dead" half buried in the

snows. That expedition did find the body of George Mallory, 75 years almost to the day after he disappeared.

This short book, co-authored by the climber who first found Mallory's body, is the story of that expedition. Intertwined with that is the story of Mallory himself. The authors, renown climbers in their own rights, offer their thoughts on the question of whether Mallory and Irvine were the first to summit Everest. It's a compelling tale of what animates a man to put everything at risk for such an abstract prize.

As for Mallory's famous philosophical musing...it was originally a sarcastic remark in response to a reporter's pestering. Proof that the profound is often found in the most mundane moments.

Blue Jello Elf says

The story of the discovery of Mallory's body was interesting, but by the time I was halfway through the book I was ready to push Conrad Anker off the mountain, and David Roberts with him. They needed an editor who was willing to delete all of Anker's musings on his own awesomeness, as well as Roberts's worshipful agreement.

James Christensen says

A thorough search in 1999 for and discovery of Mallory who died on the North face in 1924. Impartial discussion of the unlikelihood that Mallory and Irvine summited and died in the down-climb, taking into account their clothing and lack of crampons, the extreme difficulty of free-climbing the "second step", and other circumstantial evidence. Interesting description of Ander's and Hauns' successful summit. Enjoyed the detailed description of Mallory's various attempts on Everest and especially of the 1924 expedition. A good read. I like Anker.

Jude says

It's ok but have read better in the subject.

Ed says

Pretty good book. Wanted a little more information after reading Into the Silence. Conrad Anker is good writer and one of the finest climbers in the world. Still I am not sure of his conclusions. I think we often forget the in the past people found amazing ways to use the equipment they had on hand. Still a very good book.

Christopher Doyle says

Enjoyed it, but recommend starting with Wade Davis book "In To The Silence" first.

Audra says

This is one of the best books I've read since Edmund Hillary's. One writer is a historian; the other a mountain climber on the expedition that found George Mallory's body in 1999. The mountain climber, Conrad Anker, is contemplative and humble, and he climbs mountains because he loves them. He pieces together what might have happened in 1924 in chapters alternating with a recounting of Mallory's several expeditions. A most excellent book that left me humbled and happy despite the fact that it could have been quite morbid.

Maryse says

I knew nothing about George Leigh Mallory before reading this book (I wasn't aware that it was he who said the famous line "Because it's there" regarding climbing Everest). I only remember his name because I had written a poem about him once back in high school, when the news of his body being found briefly appeared on TV. The image of the body at the foot of a long snowy slope with the summit behind him struck me, enough to write a quick poem about it, and to remember his name ten years later, as I browsed a catalog of books on sale.

Written in separate, alternating accounts by Anker and Roberts, the dual narrative follows the 1999 expedition to find traces of Mallory's ill-fated 1924 expedition. At one moment, you're reading Anker's finding of the body, the next you're in third person back in 1920s enthralled by Mallory. Charming, handsome, and reckless, Mallory seemed larger than life and a fitting nemesis to the ultimate peak, Everest. The dual storyline gives a more complete scope to the tale. It's not just about Anker, nor just about Mallory, but Mallory AND Everest. Since both writers are mountaineers, the sense of adventure and exploration colors the pages, but is likewise tempered by accounts of death in the mountain.

On the last chapters, Anker recounts his struggle to get down from the summit, thinking about the Ukrainians who have died a few nights before, juxtaposed against the last sighting of Mallory and Irvine and the mystery of had they reached the summit or not. There, the full duality of Everest is shown. Romantic and full of promise at one point, harsh and fatal at another. Anker gets home. Mallory disappears and becomes a legend.

The ultimate everest debate of whether Mallory and Irvine made it to the summit before dying does not interest me. Mallory has summited into the legend that nothing can diminish his legacy. And like all legends, Mallory and Everest continues to fascinate me. I finished the book in less than a day, considering this is not the usual type of books I read. But I guess that is the lure of Mallory

Filip says

Predobra literatura za svakoga koga zanima povijest alpinizma.

Lisa says

I enjoy these mountain climbing books, weirdly enough. I would never do what these people do. As I read in the book by his wife, friends die, fall off mountains, into crevices, buried in avalanches. If this is your "passion," you will lose friends. I liked how the books alternated between the time that Conrad Anker found the body of Mallory back to the preparation years and then 1924 when he and his climbing partner (Sandy who did not have a lot of experience but was good with the oxygen tanks.) I've read about Mallory before so the writing was a great review for me. Like Anker, I would venture to say that Mallory and Sandy did not make it to the top. That last step or whatever it is, just too difficult for them with their equipment in that decade, almost 100 years ago. I appreciated Anker's positive spin on those two. They did accomplish something just climbing as high as they did. Such a tragedy but all of the lost climbers over the last 100 years are also tragedies. Good book.

Joel says

the best parts of the book are Anker's observations when he finds Mallory's body and his conclusions about why he doesn't think Mallory and Irvine could have reached the summit. There's also some good details from the historical accounts of the 1920s expeditions. The rest of the book is a bunch of fawning over how great Anker is, which is annoying
