



Female Mountaineers

Junko Tabei

It took until 1975 for a woman to climb to the summit of Mount Everest. Junko Tabei created the Ladies Climbing Club in 1969 because many men refused to climb with her. On the way to the top of Everest, Tabei and her team narrowly avoided being buried by an avalanche. When she reached the peak, she said, “I didn’t intend to be the first woman on Everest. I just simply climbed a mountain. But the environment around me changed so much, just because I was the first woman.”

Tabei’s climbing adventures didn’t end with Mount Everest. She went on to complete the Seven Summits challenge. This involved climbing the highest mountains on each of the seven continents.

Lynn Hill

Lynn Hill was a pioneer of free-climbing in the 1980s and 1990s. Free-climbing involves climbing extremely difficult rock faces without any safety ropes or harnesses. By the age of 18, Hill had already climbed the hardest route ever completed by a woman.

Hill completed her most famous climb in 1993. She became the first person ever (not just the first woman) to complete The Nose climb. The Nose is one of the faces of El Capitan in Yosemite Park. It is still considered one of the most ambitious climbs in the world. Her first ascent took her four days to complete. She astounded everybody by returning the next year and completing the same climb in less than a day.

Edurne Pasaban

In 2010, Edurne Pasaban became the 21st person and first female to climb all fourteen mountains in the world that are over 8,000m high. She completed her first 8,000m climb in 2001 on Mount Everest. Her achievement wasn’t without controversy. A South Korean climber named Oh Eun-sun claimed to have completed the climbs a month before Pasaban did. This would have made her the first female to complete them all. However, it soon became clear that she hadn’t reached the summit of one of the mountains due to bad weather. Even so, it’s still a great achievement by another amazing female mountaineer.

Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner

Gerline Kaltenbrunner also climbed the fourteen peaks. She became the second woman to do it in 2011. What made her attempt even more impressive was that she was the first woman to do all fourteen mountains without any additional oxygen. Pasaban had used oxygen tanks to help her at higher altitudes. Her first 8,000m climb was a mountain called Cho Oyu in 1998.

Lhakpa Sherpa

Most famous Sherpas are men. That doesn't mean that only male Sherpas climb the mountain. Lhakpa Sherpa is one of many female Sherpas and holds the record for the most climbs up Mount Everest by a woman. She has reached the summit nine times in total. Her first was in 2000 when she became the first Nepalese woman to successfully complete the climb. Perhaps even more impressively, she completed one climb eight months after giving birth, and again when she was two-months pregnant.

VOCABULARY FOCUS

1. Find a word that means "by a small amount".
2. Which phrase means that somebody didn't mean to do something.
3. What does the word "ambitious" tell you about climbing The Nose?
4. If something causes controversy, what does it mean?
5. Write another phrase that could replace "Even so".

VIPERS QUESTIONS

- R** When did the second woman finish climbing all fourteen mountains?
- I** What do you think Junko Tabei meant when she said, "The environment around me changed so much, just because I was the first woman."?
- I** Why is free-climbing so dangerous?
- E** Explain how the author shows that they respect the women in the text.
- S** Why was Oh Eun-sun **not** considered the first female to climb the fourteen highest peaks?

Answers:

1. Narrowly
2. Intend
3. It is difficult and hard to do
4. Not everybody agrees with it
5. Despite that, in spite of that - accept alternatives

R: 2011

I: By being the first woman, it meant that other women had the opportunity or wanted to try

I: There are no ropes or harnesses

E: The author uses language such as hero, pioneer, astounded - refers to Oh Eun-sun as an amazing mountaineer

S: She didn't reach the top of one of the mountains due to bad weather

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