

Looking at the photo – the clear blue sky and queues of people – you might 1 ____ that this 2 ____ a group of walkers on a summer's day climbing a popular local peak. But this 3 ____ the summit of Everest – almost 9,000 metres high, with temperatures of -15 and winds 4 ____ at 50km/h on a 'good' day. What's more, at this altitude the lack of oxygen 5 ____ confusion, slow your movements and make it almost impossible to keep warm. It's so dangerous they 6 ____ this place 'the Death Zone'.

Some argue that pictures like this create a false impression. They attract too many amateurs who 7 ____ a romantic idea of reaching 'the top of the world' and 8 ____ rich enough to pay \$70,000 to make their dream come true. However, they 9 ____ no proper concept of the risks when they climb Everest. They 10 ____ too heavily on using fixed ropes and the support of their guides and they 11 ____ the skill or experience to cope when things go wrong.

But amateurs on Everest 12 ____ nothing new. In the 1930s, some eighty years before this photo 13 ____ taken, a man called Maurice Wilson attempted to climb Everest. His plan 14 ____ to fly from Britain and land on the Great Rongbuk glacier, and from there 15 ____ to the top. There 16 ____ only two problems – he 17 ____ how to fly a plane and he'd never climbed before.

In fact these weren't the only barriers to achieving his goal. He 18 ____ been shot during the First World War and 19 ____ only partially use his left arm. The British government tried to stop him even getting to India because they 20 ____ him as dangerous; the authorities in Nepal and Tibet also refused to let him enter their territory.

Incredibly, then, just two months after his first flying lesson, he 21 ____ to fly solo all the way to India in a tiny second-hand plane – a huge achievement for the time. He then managed to enter Tibet by disguising himself as a Tibetan monk and 22 ____ several hundred miles to reach the Rongbuk monastery at the foot of Everest.

Without a guide, Wilson 23 _____ off up the glacier. He frequently 24 _____ lost among the towers of ice and it 25 _____ him three days to reach Camp 2, which 26 _____ been established by a previous expedition. There 27 _____ climbing equipment at the camp but he ignored it and continued up the mountain. At 6,500 metres a storm hit and he 28 _____ forced to sit in his tent for two and a half days. When the storm eased he 29 _____ back to the monastery – starving, half blind and his arm in great pain.

However, he rested for just two days before he 30 _____ again. This time he persuaded two local Sherpas to help him carry supplies up the mountain and guide him through the glacier. With their help he 31 _____ higher up to Camp 3 but once again high winds and snow stopped them going further. As the weather cleared, Wilson continued up the mountain on his own, reaching around 7,500 metres before returning to Camp 3. He 32 _____ by this time exhausted and six days at such high altitude 33 _____ him headaches. The Sherpas desperately 34 _____ to persuade him to give up, but Wilson 35 _____ on trying one more time. The last words in his diary are still full of optimism. ‘Off again. Gorgeous day.’ He never returned. His body 36 _____ found a year later. He 37 _____ wearing green boots, a grey suit and a purple jersey – almost as if ready for a walk in the park on a chilly London afternoon.