

Growing up with yaks

Tenzing's father, Mingma, was a yak herder. His job was to look after a large group of yak that belonged to a local monastery. Work was a family affair. In the summer, the family took the yaks higher up the mountain slopes to graze on the rich grass, and in the winter, they would move further down the mountainside where they owned a house.

The animals would live in the bottom of the house whilst the adults and children would sit on the floor above. It was a squeeze and there was certainly no privacy for anyone. The stink of the animals, the smoke from cooking and the general hubbub would etch themselves on Tenzing's memory. Yet, despite the hardships Tenzing and his family were happy.



Tenzing's family share their house with yaks in the winter.

Tenzing's Everest ambition

When he was old enough, Tenzing began working too. There was always plenty to be done, from growing potatoes, barley and maize to tending to the sheep and, of course, the yaks. What Tenzing enjoyed most of all was wandering with the yaks along the mountainsides. Far above him, towering over the tops of all the nearby mountains, was the mighty Everest. The mountain fascinated the young Tenzing. Despite the many tales told by his people of the gods, demons and terrible creatures that stalked its snowy peaks, Tenzing longed to explore it. As a young boy, he had seen Western expeditions coming up the Kharta Valley and he knew that, while some men had died trying to climb Everest, most had not.

He later wrote, 'What I wanted was to see for myself, find out for myself. This was the dream I have had as long as I can remember.'



Tenzing gazes at Everest, his dream is to climb to its summit