

Mounting a Challenge



Everest. K2. Kilimanjaro. Why are humans so driven to climb to the highest places on Earth? When mountain climber George Mallory was asked why he dared to climb Mount Everest, he replied, "Because it's there." His answer seemed both childish and heroic, a mixture of folly and fearlessness. Have you ever climbed a mountain? Consider why you did it on August 1, Mountain Climbing Day.

Mallory was one of the first to climb Mount Everest, the highest mountain peak on Earth. Today, more than 600 people every year complete that feat. Similarly, over 50,000 people climb yearly to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro in Kenya to see its famous snows. Obviously, these climbers are not trying to win any accolades for being the first to reach the summit. So if the challenge has been done so many times before, why do people still want to climb? The answer is that the challenge is not necessarily the mountain; climbers climb to challenge themselves. In this sense, the mountain is an innocent bystander.

Serious mountain climbing provides many life lessons. In order to succeed, climbers must have careful planning, teamwork, discipline, athleticism, risk management, and the ability to improvise in a split second. Survival is paramount when you are moving in some of the world's harshest conditions. Many times, people who climb together forge lifelong bonds born out of the cooperation necessary in order to survive.

And then there is the outdoor aspect of a climb. Climbs may be physically and mentally demanding, but they occur in some of the most beautiful natural places on our planet. For many climbers, an ascent is akin to meditation. Climbers are alone on a mountain, intensely aware of their environment in a manner that is transcendent. Mountain climbing allows one to escape civilization and focus only on the essentials of survival. This, for many, is reason alone to climb.

August Birthdays

Residents

Mahadeo Dhanraji 8/07	Lucie Mathurin 8/29
John Bramlett 8/09	Mary Fugallo 8/29
Charles Schultz 8/09	Patricia Watkins 8/29
Joaquin Kessler 8/15	Grace Griffin 8/29
Ana Tolentino 8/19	Victoria Contos 8/30
Fradoina Webb 8/20	
Bonnie Middleborn 8/20	
Elnora Williams 8/26	
Mark Swisher 8/28	

Staff

Ceelynn Saick 8/01	Jamie Smith 8/20
Coretha Davis 8/02	Marie Garcia 8/23
Rosa Lamboy 8/03	Joseph Victor 8/25
Jon Irvine 8/05	Dasha Bolton 8/31
Paulette Grant 8/08	Aletha Cotton 8/20
Saintelise Desil 8/09	
Michele Forney 8/12	
Jenna Gullikson 8/12	
Ursula Bellamy 8/15	
Johanna Boelhower 8/16	
Idia Alimi 8/19	
Christina Breithoff 8/19	
Makesha Dawson 8/19	

Animal Kingdom



Lions, elephants, and orangutans, oh my! August celebrates all these wonderful animals with World Lion Day on August 10, World Elephant Day on August 12, and International Orangutan Day on the 19th. While all of these species are precious and majestic, why should we celebrate such animals? To celebrate animals is to celebrate our human relationship with the entire animal kingdom, of which we are a part. Humans have evolved from hunters and gatherers, to herders, to guardians and conservationists. We humans have made advances that have allowed us to populate the world, but we cannot do this at the expense of animals. Human health and animal health are interconnected. Only together, as a united animal kingdom, will we survive.

Palm Garden Post

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An Indian Thanksgiving

Around the world, August heralds the start of annual harvest festivals, when farmers begin to reap the delicious rewards of the summer growing season. Perhaps there is no place that celebrates the harvest with more joy and enthusiasm than the state of Kerala on India's Malabar Coast. For 10 days each August, Kerala celebrates *Onam* and gives thanks for the return of the god king Mahabali.

Hindu legend states that under Mahabali's rule, Kerala flourished with great prosperity, and he was beloved by all. He was so popular that the other gods became jealous and decided to overthrow him. However, when Mahabali showed reverence to the gods, they granted him one wish, that once a year he could return to his kingdom of Kerala. This is why, during *Onam*, the people of Kerala prepare for Mahabali's return and enjoy the prosperity of the harvest.

The first day of *Onam*, known as *Atham*, involves visiting temples and preparing for the arrival of Mahabali. One of the most significant preparations is the *Pookalam*, a beautiful and elaborate carpet made out of multicolored flowers, a sort of Mahabali welcome mat. Each day flowers are added to the *Pookalam*, and it grows and grows. On the fourth day, known as *Visakam*, families begin their preparation of the grand feast that is held on the last day. For the next five days, locals engage in various merriments. Snake boat races are held on the river Pampa. Each massive boat is oared by hundreds of paddlers while massive crowds line the river. Men play various traditional games known as *Onakalikal*. Competitors vie for archery and wrestling titles, while others play a game similar to dodgeball, except that players use their feet to move the ball. On the tenth and final day, King Mahabali arrives for the feast of *Onasadya*, which requires the preparation of a nine-course meal including 13 essential dishes. This is the culmination of a 10-day cultural tour-de-force, the ultimate expression of Kerala's blessed history.

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