

that's real life

# You're never too old to climb Everest

**IF you think you've left it a bit late to trek through Nepal, Tibet or even take on Kilimanjaro, think again.**

Roland Hunter is boss of The Mountain Company, one of Britain's leading adventure travel firms, and he leads the treks and mountain climbs himself.

Far from it being a young man's game, a large proportion of his clients are older men and women, some experienced walkers or climbers, and others keen to make their first attempt.

He expects to see even more golden years as we live longer, and Roland reckons having a mixture of an experienced head and knowing your body's limitations means over-60s are ideally suited to such expeditions.

"Most of the people who book our luxury treks are older," says 66-year-old Roland, and we're seeing older people coming back to try something tougher.

"If someone was determined to try a Himalayas trek first, a gentle one would be about four-to-six hours walking a day, having breakfast, doing a bit

by Craig Campbell

then stopping for lunch, then a bit more walking on the track until early afternoon.

"We grade our treks into gentle, moderate and strenuous, and I've had people do them in their late 70s.

"We send them a pre-trip questionnaire about their fitness and medical condition, but we don't concentrate on their age.

"One man recently was recovering from cancer, and we like to get a doctor's letter from people, but we don't have hard and fast rules.

"We've had guys in their late 60s who turned out to be the fittest of the lot, while some in their early 40s were totally out of shape!



People of all ages and fitness levels can enjoy a Himalayan trek.

"You do need fitness, but a lot of it is down to the altitude and how you cope with it.

"It's a lottery and has nothing to do with fitness. We had a lady who'd cycled for Team GB and was superfit, but she was the only one in the group who couldn't get to the summit.

"It's something we still haven't figured out, but superfit people don't acclimatise to altitude very well.

"Sir Edmund Hillary was the first man to reach the summit of Mount Everest, but at 35 years of age, he couldn't climb over 10,000 feet.

"It's just a matter of what you're born with, and how your body copes with it, so age doesn't mean you can't

Apart from the altitude, one thing takes everyone's breath away — the views.

Roland, who has conquered Everest himself, admits he's still awestruck by the beauty as he looks down from the roof of the world.

"Whichever trek you decide on, the views are incredible," he enthuses.

"And you don't have to worry about keeping up with anyone else.

"One gentleman in his late 70s brought his wife and they just wanted to go at their own pace, so off they went with a Sherpa guide and had a great experience.

"We have Western-led treks and Sherpa-led treks. The Western leaders will do the

there's less medical help around. But Everest has hospitals and a mobile phone network, so you aren't completely alone.

"My tips for older people trying it for the first time would be to do a bit of walking in the UK first, then do our Everest Base Camp trek.

"You'd stay in

comfortable lodges with home comfort

"See how you cope with the altitude, a more remote camp treks would be next climbing a peak or

"And I advise cor in the off-peak period to avoid the crowds

● For more, visit [www.themountaincompany.co.uk](http://www.themountaincompany.co.uk)

