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[Hillary-Tenzing Explorer watch sets](#)

Lead

At 11.30am on 29 May 1953, Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tenzing Norgay earned their place in history by becoming the first people to reach the summit of Mount Everest – and tradition has it that they were wearing Rolex Oyster wristwatches of the type that preceded the legendary Explorer model.

Now, for the past three years or so, a Rolex aficionado called Philipp Stahl has been working on developing a series of limited-edition sets to commemorate the climb – and these have recently become available to buy. Each of the 88 Hillary-Tenzing Explorer (HTE) sets is based around a four-drawer chest, itself based on the type of expedition crates carried by the British team in 1953, with the top drawer containing three Explorer watches in the different case sizes of 36mm, 39mm and 42mm, each specially engraved on the back and supplied with a bracelet and a leather strap.





The remaining contents of the chest include a silver pin in the form of a rope and ice axe; a 1950s Kodak film canister packed with leather grease for the straps; a leather pouch containing a magnifying glass and screwdrivers (for strap changing); and a leather-bound, 1953 map of the Himalayas describing the route taken by the British expedition from Kathmandu to Everest.



Buyers also get a DVD showing original footage of the 1953 ascent, a special-edition book describing the expedition by the youngest member of the team, the late George Band, and a certificate signed by Peter Hillary and Jamling Tenzing Norgay - the sons of the two mountaineers who have been instrumental in developing the sets and have given the idea their full backing.



A prototype version of the HTE package was sold at Christie's Geneva in May last year for SFr100,000, with the proceeds going to the Hillary and Tenzing family foundations. Its contents, however, were different (there were, for example, two Explorer watches and a Datejust, while the ephemera included a first-day cover 'conquest of Everest' envelope addressed to Sir Edmund Hillary's office in Kensington).

Photos: Hillary Tenzing Explorer Ltd.

Gallery

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