

Women Mountaineers

Early pioneers such as Lucy Walker, the first woman to summit the notorious Matterhorn, and Margaret Jackson, the first person to attempt a winter traverse of the Jungfrau, all wore skirts on their climbs. In fact, women wore skirts for more than half a century, while climbing successfully.

The archaeologist, linguist and mountaineer Gertrude Bell wrote about using her skirt as a windbreak to try and light a fire while stranded on a mountainside; the explorer Mary Kingsley wrote about the 'blessings of a good thick skirt' when she fell onto the points of an animal trap on her travels.

Interestingly, while photographs confirm that the wearing of skirts was **commonplace** for these women, their writings rarely refer to their clothes.

Notions of comfort and **practicality** are a modern construct; these women wore clothes that were normal for them in that time and place. They did, however, sometimes make adaptations to their skirts, including the **sewing** of cords into the **linings** to allow the skirt to be raised from a **toggle** at the **waistband**. Later in the century skirts were kilted – a clever form of buttoning that created an almost trouser-like effect.

Common place : usual

Practicality : easy to use

Sewing : *mettre dans la couture*

Linings : *doublure*

Toggle: small button looped-wise sewed to the fabric

Waistband : the elastic which holds the skirt at the waist



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