

# The 10th Mountain Division: America's Elite Alpine Warriors in World War II



## The Winter Army: The World War II Odyssey of the 10th Mountain Division, America's Elite Alpine Warriors

by Maurice Isserman

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

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The 10th Mountain Division was an elite alpine unit of the United States Army that fought in World War II. The division was activated in 1943 and trained at Camp Hale, Colorado, where it learned to ski, climb, and fight in mountainous terrain. The 10th Mountain Division deployed to Italy in 1944 and fought in the Apennine Mountains, where it earned a reputation for its skill and tenacity. The division also fought in the Vosges Mountains of France and the Alps of Germany. The 10th Mountain Division was deactivated in 1945, but its legacy lives on today.

### Formation and Training

The 10th Mountain Division was formed in response to the need for an American unit that could fight in mountainous terrain. The division was

activated on July 13, 1943, at Camp Hale, Colorado. The camp was located in the Rocky Mountains, and it provided the ideal training ground for the division's soldiers. The soldiers learned to ski, climb, and fight in mountainous terrain. They also learned how to use specialized equipment, such as snowshoes and ice axes.

The division's first commander was General George Hays. Hays was a veteran of the Mountain Troops in World War I, and he was instrumental in the development of the 10th Mountain Division. Hays believed that the division's soldiers should be highly trained and motivated. He also believed that the division should be self-sufficient and able to operate independently in mountainous terrain.

## **Deployment to Italy**

The 10th Mountain Division deployed to Italy in 1944. The division's first mission was to secure the approaches to the Brenner Pass. The Brenner Pass is a strategic mountain pass that connects Italy and Austria. The division's soldiers fought their way through the Apennine Mountains, and they eventually secured the Brenner Pass. The division's success in the Apennine Mountains earned it a reputation for skill and tenacity.

The division's next mission was to participate in the Allied invasion of Southern France. The division landed on the beaches of Southern France on August 15, 1944. The division's soldiers fought their way through the Vosges Mountains, and they eventually reached the Rhine River. The division's success in the Vosges Mountains helped to pave the way for the Allied victory in Europe.

## **The Battle for Riva Ridge**

The 10th Mountain Division's most famous battle was the Battle for Riva Ridge. The battle took place in February 1945, and it was one of the most difficult battles of the war. The division's soldiers were tasked with capturing Riva Ridge, a strategic mountaintop that overlooked the Po Valley. The division's soldiers fought their way up the mountain, and they eventually captured Riva Ridge. The victory at Riva Ridge was a major turning point in the war in Italy, and it helped to lead to the Allied victory in Europe.

## Legacy

The 10th Mountain Division was deactivated in 1945, but its legacy lives on today. The division's soldiers were some of the most highly trained and motivated soldiers in the war. They fought with skill and tenacity, and they played a major role in the Allied victory in Europe. The division's legacy is a reminder of the importance of training and motivation in warfare.

The 10th Mountain Division's legacy is also a reminder of the importance of specialized units in warfare. The division's soldiers were trained to fight in mountainous terrain, and they were able to use their skills to great effect in the war. The division's success is a reminder of the importance of having specialized units that can be deployed to meet the specific challenges of different environments.



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