

# RECORD NUMBER OF CLIMBERS ON MOUNT EVEREST BRINGS ADDITIONAL RISKS



Safety concerns are on high alert this year as Mount Qomolangma, more commonly known as Mount Everest, is expected to see its highest number of climbers this year.

The mountain is located on the border between Nepal and China and in order to climb it, interested climbers need to apply for a permit from either the Nepalese or Chinese government depending on which side the ascent begins. Unlike previous years, the world's highest peak which sits at 8,848 meters above sea level, **is estimated to receive more than 1000 people this year during the peak season**, which is the highest number of climbers ever.

## Deathly Consequences of Traffic Jams

Foot traffic jams may not seem like an issue at major attractions such as Machu Picchu , but 8,000 meters above sea level while facing some of the harshest conditions in the world the climbers might remain stagnant and either freeze to death or run out of oxygen. Experienced climbers have also noted that climbers can develop extreme frostbite which could lead to the loss of their hands and toes in the most severe conditions.

## Cause of Traffic

The cause of the increasing number of climbers is varied but a lot of it has to do with the increasing popularity of the climb ever since it was opened to the public over 60 years ago. This year alone, the Nepalese government has granted 371 permits which is the most it has ever issued in a single year.

Due to a severe earthquake in 2015, many climbers are expected to ascend the mountain this year as they want to take advantage of their permits before they expire. To add fuel to the fire, 2016 saw a relatively fault free year which led to new climbers believing that the mountain was safe again. Both these factors mean that 2017 will see more congestion than ever before.

## Unrealistic Expectations

Another key factor which has caused the growth of the number of climbers may be the portrayal of Mount Everest in popular media. Experienced climbers have noted that the climb is promoted as a fashionable activity rather than what it truly is; a challenging extreme sport which should only be limited to climbers who have had experiences with similar conditions such as the 5,895 meter tall Mount Kilimanjaro.

In order to handle the increase of applications, the Nepalese government have imposed more stringent conditions such as instigating a ban on climbers who are younger than 18 or older than 75.

## The Chinese Side

Whilst most of the traffic issues have occurred on the southern Nepalese end, many climbers have also noted that traffic is also getting worse on the northern and historically less congested Chinese side.

In the past, the northern route has been known to be more challenging as the tracks are not as well-kept as well as the stricter criteria for permits being granted by the Chinese government. It has also been noted that the Nepalese government provides helicopter rescue systems as well as improved weather forecast systems which are particularly appealing to western climbers.

### **Bodies Found**

Recently four bodies were found in tents at the highest camp on Mount Everest. It has been confirmed that the climbers were not from the current year. **The finding has set off alarms in the climbing tourism industry as 5 climbers from the Nepalese side have already died on the mountain this year.** Additionally, there has also been one death recorded on the Chinese side this year.

With the growing number of climbers heading to climb the world's tallest mountain, travel agencies are being asked to reassess the seasonality and safety issues for the ascend as traffic conditions are expected to worsen this year.

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