



Sherpas

Climbing Mount Everest is an unforgiving task. Climbers have to ensure they have the correct equipment and are in peak physical condition. To make things a little bit easier, all climbers must pay a local mountain guide to help them. These guides are called Sherpas and are the unsung heroes of every expedition to climb Mount Everest.

Sherpas spend most of their lives in the area of the mountain. Training begins at an early age. Many Sherpas spend much of their lives living at higher altitude. This helps their body to adjust to the gruelling conditions further up the mountain.

A successful expedition isn't guaranteed even with the help of a Sherpa. Climbers can still get into trouble if they don't prepare properly. A Sherpa isn't strong enough to lift a climber back down the mountain on their own. Nor can they suddenly arrange for oxygen to be brought to high altitudes. The Sherpa is always in charge of the expedition for these reasons. They can abandon the climb if they think the climber is in danger.

Climbing the mountain is dangerous for Sherpas as well. The more experienced a Sherpa is, the more he will be asked to join expeditions. Apa Sherpa climbed to the peak of Everest for the 21st time in 2011. Along with Phurba Tashi Sherpa, Apa Sherpa was the only person to reach the summit that many times. He retired as a Sherpa immediately afterwards. He said, "Everyone says 21 is a good number. I have to make my family happy. Every time I go, they worry because Everest is very risky." Sherpas understand the risk more than anybody.

The record is currently held by Kami Rita Sherpa. He reached the summit for the 24th time on 21st May 2019. His family have a history as Sherpas. His father was one of the first professional Sherpas. His brother was also a Sherpa and climbed the mountain 17 times.

Kami Rita is all too aware of the dangers of being a Sherpa. Roughly one-third of all deaths on Mount Everest are Sherpas. Kami Rita became a Sherpa because there were no other options. "We were illiterate and poor, and there were no other means of survival," he said. He is ensuring his

own children get a full education so that they can make a safer choice.

There are roughly 150,000 Sherpas in Nepal. They are fighting for changes to the way expeditions work. Sherpas earn a lot more money than most people in Nepal, but their job is much more dangerous. While climbers only pass through dangerous areas once, Sherpas may have to do it several times to prepare. Changes including using helicopters to take equipment up the mountain are helping to make the work less risky. With Everest's unforgiving nature, climbers will always need the expert advice of these unsung heroes.



VOCABULARY FOCUS

1. Which phrase tells you that climbing Mount Everest doesn't have much room for error?
2. Write a definition for "ensure".
3. What is an "unsung hero"?
4. Find a word with a definition closest to "extremely tiring and demanding".
5. Find two different words in the text that mean "top of".

VIPERS QUESTIONS

- I** Why did Apa Sherpa retire?
- R** Who else had climbed Everest 21 times at the same time as Apa Sherpa?
- S** Why might climbing Mount Everest be more dangerous for Sherpas than regular climbers?
- R** How many Sherpas are there in Nepal?
- E** How does the author give their opinion on how valuable Sherpas are?

Answers:

1. Unforgiving task
2. Make sure
3. A hero who doesn't get much/any credit/recognition
4. Grueling
5. Summit/peak

I: He wanted to spend more time with his family and knew how dangerous it was

R: Phurba Tashi Sherpa

S: They have to pass through the dangerous areas several times/they complete the climb many times/they have to carry equipment

R: 150,000

E: The author refers to them as unsung heroes/explains how dangerous their job is/explains that they can't guarantee a successful trip