

[Where are we now on porters' rights?](#)

In our major campaign for [porters' rights](#) in mountainous regions we highlighted the working conditions for Nepalese Sherpas supporting trekking tours on Everest. This is making the headlines again in 2015. So again we are speaking out.



Trekking has become big business for a very poor country; yet it comes at great cost. The local guides risk their lives routinely in the interests of foreign tourists. 16 guides died in bad weather in April 2014. The Nepalese government promised a miserly 40,000 rupees (£245) by way of 'compensation' ([Guardian, 26/4/14](#)). This sum would barely cover the cost of a decent funeral.

A number of problems lie behind this tragedy. Despite the widespread dissemination of a code of practice, there is still a chronic need for regulation in the trekking industry. This needs to go beyond a tick box list of the qualities, skills and experience of the guides. To many this is also starting at the wrong end - it's patronising to put many guides through bureaucratic tests when most are highly experienced, very fit and well used to living in their own environment. Government officials need to consider their position carefully, as it's calculated that the country earns over £60m per season from tourists coming to Everest. Even if apparently less than £10 million from these earnings stays in the country, surely more of the income made from trekking companies ought to be put aside for welfare costs, insurance, hospitals, rescue teams and equipment.

Sad to relate, it is only too clear that the working conditions of the guides, including the respect with which they are treated, is still not as well observed as it should be outside the most respected travel companies. If the Sherpas are prepared to take great risks on behalf of their tourists, literally carrying great burdens, they should not then find themselves treated like beggars and menial servants.

Government agencies, mountaineering associations, and some tour companies are showing signs that they are taking these matters seriously. For real change, however, *Tourism Concern* advocates that tourists themselves demand higher standards and vote with their feet if they find that companies they are using are not implementing improved porter conditions. For fuller details of our suggested code of practice go to the links below.

More Info

- [Porters Campaign](#)
- [IPPG](#)
- [Sherpa families angry and fearful eight months on from Everest disaster](#)