

Lhotse vs. Everest

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Lhotse is the fourth tallest mountain in the world at 8,516 meters (27,940 ft). It is the closest 8,000 meter peak to Mount Everest, connected via the South Col. It is the middle of the great horseshoe (Everest, Lhotse and Nuptse). I reached the summit of Lhotse May 20th 2009 and the summit of Everest May 23rd of 2010. Two great climbs with unforgettable memories.

In sharing the memories and details of my Lhotse climb, I was asked several times: which one is harder to climb – Lhotse or Everest. Until this past spring I didn't know... and even now I still hesitate, as does my friend Chewang Lendu (from Phortse) who is agreed upon to be one of the strongest Sherpa in the Khumbu.

"Hey Chewang, which is harder to climb, Lhotse or Everest?" I asked him. As I sat next to him having some tea, he answered with a big smile: "Yes!"

"Well which is it, Lhotse or Everest?" I asked again. To which he answered again, "Yes." Thanks, Chewang.

Let's break them down: Everest vs. Lhotse.

They are both 8,000-meter peaks both very difficult climbs, which is the really short answer to Lhotse vs. Everest.

Guiding the two mountains offers different challenges:

Lhotse has some hazard of rock and ice and limited areas for resting. The sustained angle from Camp 4 on Lhotse (7850 m) is a challenge. Always looking for foot placement and finding a safe place to rest makes it difficult to get into a rhythm. Walls on either side with loose rock and ice keep you on your toes. The kicker for Lhotse is the last 150 meters, which is the steepest part of the climb. You'll need to use both your hands and feet to get to the summit, which seats only four of us at a time.

Rewards of Lhotse:

You will never get a better view of Everest. You have the opportunity to watch your friends in the middle of the night climb Everest because of the illumination of their headlamps. Summit day on Lhotse is much quieter as you are away from the crowds with your guide, Sherpa and the crunch of the snow and the thump of your heart.

Everest summit day is longer for most. Be dialed with your oxygen system. Be prepared to climb and move through a number of obstacles. The Hillary Step is just one of the tough sections.

Rewards of Everest:

Are you kidding? It is the tallest mountain on Earth. YES, it feels very good to stand on top of the highest place on earth. You have just walked over the same route as many great climbers and can add your name to that list.

Bottom line:

Everest is a harder climb in my opinion. That said, they are both 8,000-meter peaks with fantastic returns for your hard work.