



Ed Viesturs

Ed Viesturs is widely regarded as America's foremost high-altitude mountaineer. He is familiar to many from the 1996 IMAX Everest Expedition documentary. In 1992 he received the American Alpine Club Sowles Award for his participation in two rescues on K2. In 2002, he received the historic Lowell Thomas Award by the Explorer's Club for outstanding achievement in the field of mountaineering, joining an elite group of climbers including Sir Edmund Hillary. His achievements as an alpinist include seven summits of Mount Everest.

Viesturs has made a career as a professional mountaineer. He currently does corporate motivational speaking as well, touching on subjects such as Risk Management, Leadership, Teamwork, Overcoming Major Obstacles, and Decision Making Under Pressure. He is also a brand ambassador for Rolex and continues his long involvement as a design consultant for several prominent outdoor equipment manufacturers.

In the community, Ed serves as an advocate for Big City Mountaineers (BCM), an organization that instills critical life skills in under-resourced youth through wilderness mentoring experiences that help kids stay in school, reduce violence and avoid drug use. He is spokesperson for BCM's Summit For Someone benefit climb series, which places individuals on iconic peaks to raise support for BCM youth and programs.

Viesturs capped his climbing career by reaching the summits of all fourteen of the world's 8000-meter peaks without supplemental oxygen, an 18 year project he christened Endeavor 8000. He is one of only a handful of climbers (and the only American) in history to accomplish that feat. He completed his quest on May 12, 2005 with his ascent of Annapurna, one of the world's most treacherous peaks. That year National Geographic's named him Adventurer of the Year.

During the 18 year span of Endeavor 8000, Viesturs was a member of 31 Himalayan expeditions to the 8000 meter peaks, reaching the summit on 21 of these. In January 2011 he led a climb of Vinson Massif, the highest peak in Antarctica, at 16,066'. He climbs without bottled oxygen, which he feels is unwieldy and potentially troublesome. Only an extremely conditioned athlete can scale heights above 25,000 feet without supplemental oxygen – a fact Viesturs has turned into an important metaphor for his audiences: the key to the journey is in the time and energy invested in the preparation.

Viesturs motto has always been that "climbing has to be a round trip - summiting is optional, but descending is mandatory". All of his planning and focus during his climbs maintains this ethic, and he is not shy about turning back from a climb if conditions are too severe. Viesturs recalls once being just 300 feet away from the top of Mount Everest when he had to turn back. In spite of his conservative attitude, Viesturs has been one of the most successful Himalayan climbers in American history. His story is about risk management, including being patient enough to wait for conditions that allow an ascent. Ultimately, in his words, "The mountain decides whether you climb or not. The art of mountaineering is knowing when to go, when to stay, and when to retreat."

At the start of their 2005 season, the Seattle Seahawks football team engaged Viesturs to speak to them about teamwork. The team and coaches incorporated some of his messages and ideas into their practices and games, and went on to play in the Super Bowl that season. According to Viesturs, regardless of the enterprise, teamwork is the same: "It is an implicit trust in, and recognition that the person next to you is No. 1," he explains. "If we're climbing a mountain together and you slip and fall, I'm there to save your life" – the ultimate definition of teamwork. Another tenet Viesturs stresses is the importance of perseverance, or going step by step and not getting discouraged by setbacks when working toward your goal.

In October 2005 Viesturs's best-selling autobiography "No Shortcuts To The Top" was published by Broadway Books. The book covers Viesturs's career as a mountaineer, how he prepared for his expeditions, and his philosophy on managing the inherent risks. In 2008 Viesturs published his second book - "K-2, Life and Death on the World's Most Dangerous Mountain" (Broadway Books).

This book chronicles 6 historic expeditions on the world's second highest peak, and discusses the risks of success and the costs thereof. Risk management is a key theme throughout. Viesturs's third book - "The Will to Climb: Obsession and Commitment and the Quest to Climb Annapurna - the World's Deadliest Peak" was released on October 4, 2011.

Viesturs was born in 1959 and now lives in Ketchum, Idaho with his wife of 24 years, Paula, and their four children. He continues to conduct speaking engagements, consult, go on adventures, and guide in Idaho and on Mt. Rainier. In May 2021, he made his 216th ascent of 14,410' Mt. Rainier.