



Wolt bid climbed the world most dangerous mountain and was close

disaster: Suddenly it rained heavy stones and oxygen bottles

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Mountain climbing has become Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg's great passion. On a daily basis, he works as a Wolt courier and saves up for expeditions to some of the world's highest mountains. Photo: Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg and Eric Gilbertson

Jonas Ancher Nyeng jany@fyens.dk

✚ For subscribers

29-year-old Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg drives around Odense with food as Wolt delivery, while he dreams of the world's highest mountains. This summer he climbed not just one, but two mountains of over 8,000 meters, where the mountain K2 in particular should prove to live up to its reputation as the world's most dangerous.

Odense/Himalaya: Andreas stands still and gasps for breath on top of the world. In his hand he has his mobile phone, which he uses to record a video that can immortalize one minute of July 28, 2022.

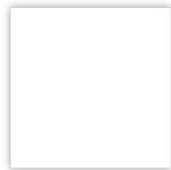
- Huuuhhaa, he says and exhales hard as the phone picks up.

- 8611 meters - Fuck yes!

If you have had food delivered with the delivery company Wolt, there is a certain probability that

that you have come face to face with Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg, who is one of them quite a few Danes who have seen the world from some of the highest places on earth.

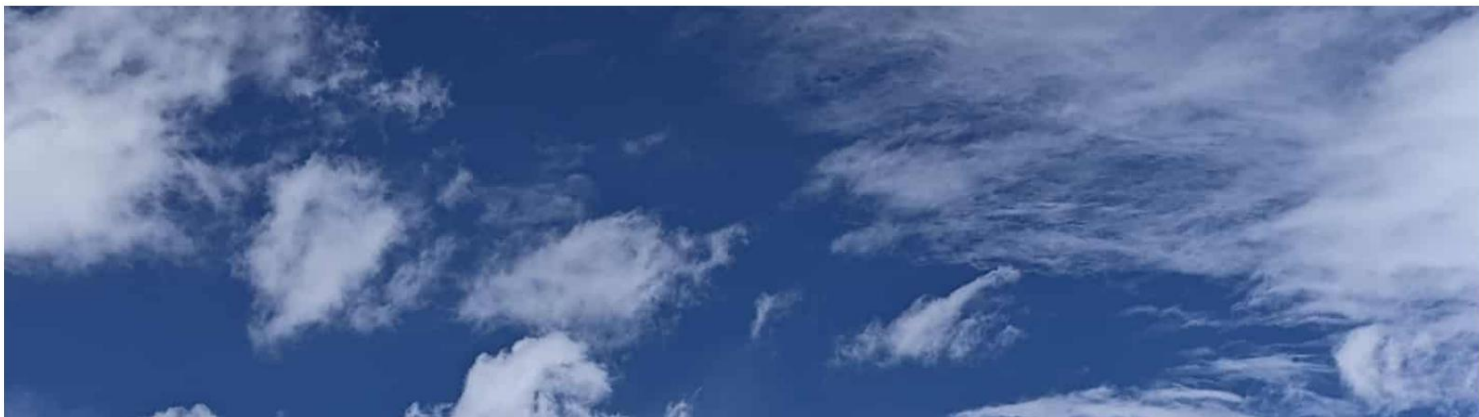
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The 29-year-old man from Odense does not make big arm movements. But behind his slightly shy and modest personality hides a true adventurer with ambitious – or rather lofty – dreams.

He has already climbed the legendary mountain Peak Popeda among mountaineers, which is one of the most difficult to conquer. He has climbed Afghanistan's highest mountain after crossing the border into a small area not controlled by the Taliban. And this summer he climbed not just one, but two mountains of over 8,000 meters in the Karakoram mountain range in the Himalayas.

One of the two was the mythical K2, which in height is surpassed only by Mount Everest, but which, on the other hand, is considered the world's most dangerous mountain, with up to 100 deaths since the first people had the too many crazy idea of moving to the top of the highest mountains on earth.





K2 is the world's second highest mountain after Mount Everest, but is known as one of the most dangerous to climb. The largest so far single disaster on the mountain happened in 2008, when 11 people lost their lives. Photo: Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg and Eric Gilbertson

Even now you may be asking if it is really worth risking your life for a few minutes on a mountain top. So let's start with Andreas' answer to that question:

- This is often the first question that people ask. Can I justify the risk to my family and friends? I can try to rationalize it by appealing to the natural experience, the simplicity, the adventure and the challenge itself in training oneself to such a great goal and then achieving it. But really it's about passion. The desire drives the work, and if the desire and passion are sufficiently great, the risk is insignificant. I naturally do what I can to reduce the risk along the way, but it plays no role in relation to whether I should go or not, says Andreas, who also does not think that K2 is quite as dangerous as the statistics might suggest imply.

The desire drives the work, and if the desire and passion are sufficiently great, the risk is insignificant.
Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg

Here you typically compare a figure for how many have climbed the mountain with a figure for how many have died on the mountain. When you calculate it that way, it's about one in four who have died. But according to Andreas, it gives a slightly skewed picture of reality.

- After all, you only have the figures for the number of dead and the number of people who have climbed the mountain, but there are perhaps 10 times as many who have been on the mountain but turned around along the way. So you can't say that 25 percent of those who have tried to climb K2 have died, he says and continues:

- But there is of course no doubt that it *can* be dangerous.



Ramt af passion

Passion can be hard to explain, but even harder to live without once you've discovered it. Photo: Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg and Eric Gilbertson

The desire to test himself and go on adventures has been a part of Andreas for so long he can remember.

Even as a child, he and his brother Asbjørn sought the highest places, when the family traveled abroad. Later he became fascinated by different kinds of endurance sports. But it was only when he went with a friend as a 24-year-old to Kyrgyzstan that he was seriously affected by what has since become his all-encompassing passion.

You will never be able to eliminate the risk completely, but you can reduce it if you train and learn to make the right decisions under extreme conditions.
Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg

There are three mountains of more than 7000 meters in Kyrgyzstan, and on the trip they found two comrades from the fact that one of the three mountains did not require the big technical ones skills. Of course, you had to learn how to behave on the smooth and steep glaciers and familiarize yourself with how to make the body able to cope with heights where it can feel as if you are breathing through a straw. But besides, the mountain seemed right to walk to.

However, Andreas' friend ended up withdrawing from the wild project, and asks man Andreas today, it was probably equally legitimately naive and foolhardy to make his debut as a mountaineer on a mountain over 7000 meters:

- I ended up getting stomach poisoning in the second camp on the way up the mountain for a bit

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med- heavy-rock-and-oxygen cylinders

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over 6000 meters altitude and had to descend again before I reached the top. Looking back on it today, it was definitely not something I should have thrown myself into.

The world's best climber

Although Andreas did not reach the top - or perhaps precisely because he did not reach the top - the trip up the mountain in Kyrgyzstan had planted itself like a seed just waiting to sprout. And back in Odense, he found out that the mountain in Kyrgyzstan was part of a mythical challenge with a total of five mountains that since 1961 have been named after arguably the world's best climber – the snow leopard.

No one from Scandinavia has yet completed the Snow Leopard and climbed all five mountains.

- So that became my goal, says Andreas, who was now very aware that he was far from having the skills to realize the goal.

He therefore joined the Odense Climbing Club and later took alpine courses and courses in ice climbing.

All to make the risk as small as possible.

- You will never be able to eliminate the risk completely, but you can reduce it if you train and learn to make the right decisions under extreme conditions.





Lokket af K2

K2 has two so-called base camps. The first is at an altitude of around 5000 metres, from where you have a great view of K2. Photo: Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg and Eric Gilbertson

Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg has since climbed three out of the five mountains in the Snow Leopard challenge – including the most difficult mountain, Peak Pobeda, which no other Dane has ever stood on top of.

And last summer, he was actually supposed to climb the last two and thus write his name into history as the first Nordic from Scandinavia who could put a notch on the Snow Leopard.

The plan was concrete that Andreas and his American partner Eric Gilbertson would first climb the world's twelfth highest mountain called Broad Peak in the Himalayas at just over 8000 meters and then rush down the mountain, rush to the airport and fly

towards the last two mountains of the Snow Leopard, so their bodies were still acclimated to the low-oxygen altitudes.

From the top of Broad Peak, however, you can look straight over and just over 500 meters up to the top of K2, and already during the many days of travel to the foot of Broad Peak, Andreas and Eric began to consider the possibility of trying their hand at the world's most dangerous mountain.

- We were riding really well on Broad Peak, so we decided to try K2 and then maybe go on to the last two mountains in the Snow Leopard afterwards.



Ingen kunstig ilt

Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay were the first to climb the world's highest mountain, Mount Everest, in 1953. However, it was several years before anyone succeeded in climbing the mountain without the use of artificial oxygen.
Photo: H0/Reuters/Ritzau Scanpix

Mountaineering is not a sport. There are no rules and judges who decide what can and cannot be done.

But already at the beginning of the 1920s, discussions began about whether it was cheating to use artificial oxygen, and whether it actually increased the risk of losing life when moving to heights where humans at that time had never been

A climber is best served by relying on his own natural abilities to warn him if he oversteps his limits.

George Mallory, mountaineer on expeditions to Mount Everest in the 1920s

The Englishman George Mallory was on three expeditions to Mount Everest in 1921, 1922 and 1924, where artificial oxygen was experimented with for the first time. However, he himself was not much in favor of making use of the oxygen he had brought with him.

- A climber is best served by relying on his own natural abilities, which will warn him if he exceeds his limits. With artificial aids, he exposes himself to a sudden collapse if the device fails, said George Mallory, who was also faced with the same question that Andreas and most other climbers are often asked.

Why is it necessary to risk one's life on Mount Everest?, asked a reporter from the New York Times in 1923.

- Because it is there, was the answer from George Mallory, who on the expedition in 1922 reached a height of 8,225 meters without the use of artificial oxygen, but who disappeared on the expedition two years later and was only found on the side of Mount Everest in 1999.

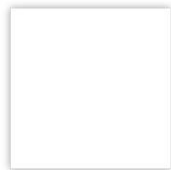
When Edmund Hillary and the Sherpa Tenzing Norgay became the first to climb Mount Everest on 29 May 1953, it was with the use of masks with artificial oxygen, and it would turn out to be another 25 years before Italian Reinhold Messner and Austrian Peter Habeler in 1978 proved that it was possible to climb the highest point on the globe without the use of artificial oxygen.

Since then, there have been two camps in mountaineering: those who use artificial oxygen and those who do not.

Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg belongs to the latter camp and also tries to stay away from all kinds of medicine on his expeditions.

- It is extremely important that you can react to the signals you get from the body. So in addition to not using artificial oxygen, I also try to avoid taking any kind of medicine, says Andreas, who is thus close to George Mallory's arguments in connection with the expeditions in the 1920s.

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However, there is also a completely different - and more practical - reason why Andreas uses as few aids as possible.

- There is also something economic in it. A very good example was on K2, where two women had paid 90,000 dollars (670,000 kroner, ed.) each to have 11 Sherpas and 4 guides with them, while we could settle for 2,000 dollars (15,000 kroner, ed.), which the permit itself to climb K2 costs, says Andreas.



Det brutale bjerg

Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg and his American partner Eric Gilbertson climbed both the mountain Broad Peak and K2, both of which are among the only 14 mountains in the world that are over 8000 meters. Photo: Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg and Eric Gilbertson

238 meters of height separate Mount Everest and K2, but among mountaineers K2 is often described as the greater challenge of the two.

- It is a brutal mountain that tries to kill you, said the American

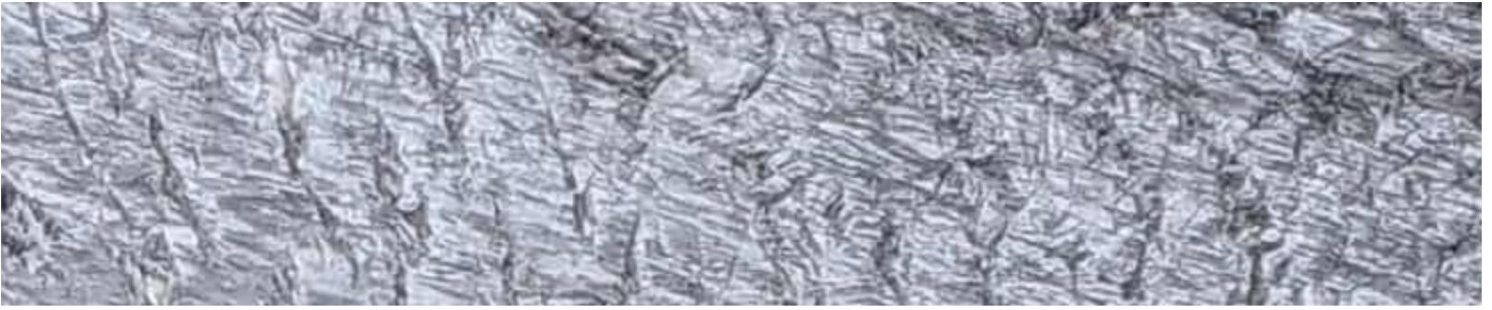
mountaineer George Bell after an expedition in 1953 and thus came to give the mountain a name that still holds true today.

According to Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg, however, "the brutal mountain" is not quite as merciless as it has been in the past. In connection with the increasing number of expeditions, so-called fixed ropes have been attached - and in a few places also rope ladders - which can be used on the way to heaven.

- It has undoubtedly become easier to climb because there are already fixed ropes from previous climbs that you can use. Having said that, we do it without artificial oxygen and the help of Sherpas, who of course make it difficult.

K2 also ends up showing its more brutal side during the Odense mountaineer's expedition this summer.





Regn med store sten og iltflasker

Both Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg and Eric Gilbertson were hanging from ropes when stones and heavy oxygen cylinders suddenly began to fall down the mountainside close to them. Photo: Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg and Eric Gilbertson

Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg has the fitness of a long-distance runner, has trained climbing for several years and taken several courses on how to get the body used to heights where more normal people would feel as if they were breathing through a straw .

All to make the risk of the 29-year-old man's great passion for mountain climbing as small as possible.

However, Andreas has no way to prepare for some of the things he will face on the world's most dangerous mountain – K2

will face on the world's most dangerous mountain K2.

After first climbing the mountain Broad Peak, Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg and Eric Gilbertson reach K2's main camp - or base camp - at around 5000 meters on Saturday 23 July and start moving up the mountain the very next day. The plan is to climb the summit three days later.



However, it doesn't take long before things go completely wrong, as the silence on the

mountain is suddenly broken by some helicopter-like sounds. Andreas and Eric look up and Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg at the top of the mountain Broad Peak, which he climbed before K2. Photo: Andreas

Ritzau sees that the sounds originate from some heavy stones and several oxygen bottles that Frydensberg and Eric Gilbertson come crashing down the mountainside and are close to hitting them

crashing down the mountainside and is close to hitting them.

It rained stones weighing 20-30 kilos, which had perhaps been knocked loose 1000 meters higher up and which from there just increased the speed down the mountain.

Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg

Andreas and Eric know that two days before there have been several expeditions that have climbed the peak, but had expected that they must be close to being down again. Now they have to duck for fallen oxygen bottles and a lot of loose stones from the less experienced mountaineers who are still on their way down the mountain.

- It is definitely the most dangerous thing I have ever experienced on any mountain. We had expected the mountain to be almost empty, but there was obviously still a 15-20 pieces, which were on their way down. They must have been exhausted and didn't think much about the fact that it can be life-threatening if you drop your equipment or tear rocks loose. It rained stones weighing 20-30 kilos, which had perhaps been knocked loose 1000 meters higher up and which from there just increased the speed down the mountain. If you are hit in the head by such a stone, you are dead on the spot, says Andreas and continues:

- You can also say that the biggest risk on K2 was not the mountain itself, but other people on the mountain.

Andreas' partner Eric is actually also hit by a rock when it suddenly takes an unexpected leap to the side. Fortunately, his calf is only grazed by the stone. So slightly limping and a little more shaken, the American and Andreas can continue, while constantly listening for the sound of the helicopter and keeping an eye out for new stones from the sky.





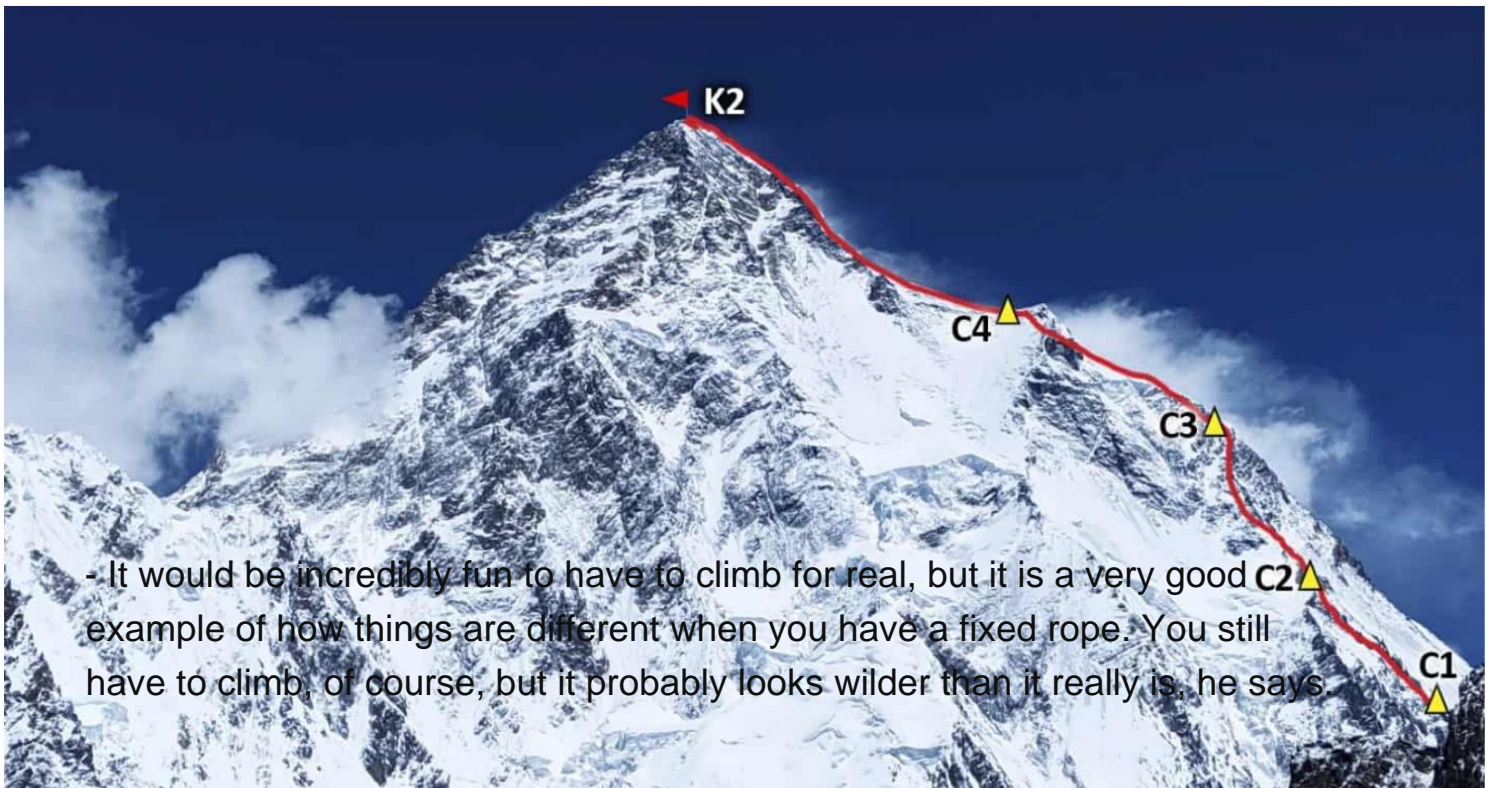
Husets skorsten

The house's chimney is a narrow, 30-metre vertical shaft, where there are already many ropes that you can connect to. Photo: Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg and Eric Gilbertson

One of the technical sections on K2 is known as House's Chimney or in Danish: Husets skorsten.

It is a 30-metre vertical shaft that you have to go through on the so-called Abruzzi Spur route up K2, which three out of four mountaineers choose to follow.

It is located at an altitude of 6600 meters not far from camp C2 (Camp 2). But according to Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg, it is no longer as technical as it used to be.



- It would be incredibly fun to have to climb for real, but it is a very good C2 example of how things are different when you have a fixed rope. You still have to climb, of course, but it probably looks wilder than it really is, he says.

There are four major camps - and some smaller camps - on the way to the summit of K2. Graphics: Wayne Southwell



En forhastet beslutning

The conditions become more and more extreme on the trip to the top. Here it is a picture from the third camp at around 7300 meters altitude. Photo: Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg and Eric Gilbertson

The chimney does not cause the two mountain climbers any major problems either. Safely up, Eric and Andreas spend the night in a tent at an altitude of 6700 meters and choose to leave sleeping bags and most of their food behind, because they are betting on being able to move relatively quickly towards the summit while the weather is still good.

However, it turns out to be a hasty decision. When they reach the third camp, after forcing another technical section called The Black Pyramid, they are caught in the middle of the snow clouds and have to spend two nights in the camp.



The first night they spend the night in a tent, where they find a single sleeping bag that they can share, but the next day the owner of the tent comes back and demands both tent and sleeping bag back. So the following night, Andreas and Eric have to think even more creatively to keep warm. They have found a single pair of quilted pants in the camp, which they each put one leg into while placing the other leg in their backpacks. And then they start shaking.

Most people will probably know the feeling of freezing so much that you can't stop shaking or shivering. In reality, it is the body's attempt to create heat. So while Eric and Andreas lie close to each other, they begin

knowing that the Black Pyramid is a relatively technical part of the route, where the black stones and the tip of the peak have given the place its name. Photo: make the body tremble as they hope for the weather to change outside the tent during the

Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg and Eric Gilbertson
at night.



Dødszonen

You can hardly complain about the view. Photo: Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg and Eric Gilbertson

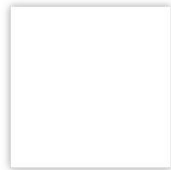
Even with sleeping bags and enough food, it is limited how long the body can manage to be at altitudes with so little oxygen - even if Andreas and Eric are in a camp at an altitude of 7,250 meters and below the so-called death zone, which is anything above 8,000 meters

is called.

It's like a stopwatch going off.
Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg on the death zone

So with over 1000 meters to the summit and only four energy bars left, the two climbers begin to doubt whether K2 will remain a dream.

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- We had reached our last chance. We had to leave that day or go down again, says Andreas, who points out that studies have been carried out which show that the human body begins to have problems surviving for a longer period of time when you get above 7,000 meters of altitude.

- It's like a stopwatch going off. Even if you have artificial oxygen with you, a person will not be able to survive at an altitude of 7000 meters for a month. When you sit still, the effect is not so great, but as soon as you move, you can feel it. Just taking a few steps gets your heart rate up, so you lose the desire and motivation to do anything, explains Andreas.

On the third day in the camp, however, the weather finally clears up, and at the same time an expedition with the help of the local Sherpas has arrived at the camp.

In addition to carrying most of the equipment, one of the sherpas' most important tasks is to clear the track, so that it becomes significantly easier for the participants of the commercial expeditions to climb a mountain.



Andreas probably would not have reached the top of K2 if he and his American partner had not been helped to And although mountaineers like Andreas and Eric would like to take life with the mountains clear the trail of some local Sherpas who were associated with another expedition. Photo: Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg and Eric on their own and without the use of artificial oxygen and other unnatural aids, they

Gilbertson

on their own and without the use of artificial oxygen and other unnatural aids, they are close to happy when they discover that the Sherpas begin the hard work and make a trail up the mountain.

- I suggested to Eric whether we should go up and help the Sherpas to break the track. At the time, however, we were with three Italian mountain guides who compared it to lying on wheels while cycling, so we chose to do that, says Andreas, who points out that even the Sherpas use artificial oxygen when they clear the track.

However, the indispensable help from the Sherpas does not change the fact that Andreas and Eric still need to make it safely from K2's most dangerous section, which has previously cost several climbers – and Sherpas – their lives.



En katastrofe sat på pause

The Bottleneck section towers in the background above the fourth camp at just under 8000 meters altitude. Photo: Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg and Eric Gilbertson

It almost goes without saying that already from the bottom of K2 you are at greater risk of being injured and ultimately losing your life than if you go up to

Owns Bavnehøj, Yding Skovhøj or Møllehøj, which with a height of 170 meters and a few centimeters make up Denmark's highest points.

However, there is one place on K2 that throughout history has proven to be particularly dangerous and which, most recently in August 2008, was the main cause of the biggest single disaster on K2, where 11 climbers lost their lives.

Bottleneck – or bottle neck in Danish – is a narrow passage not far from the summit, where the terrain in some places rises by up to 80 degrees. However, it is not the wild rate of climb that poses the danger, but the huge wall of ice that towers over anyone who attempts to climb K2. It is called a "hanging glacier" and can break off at any moment and tumble down towards the climbers.

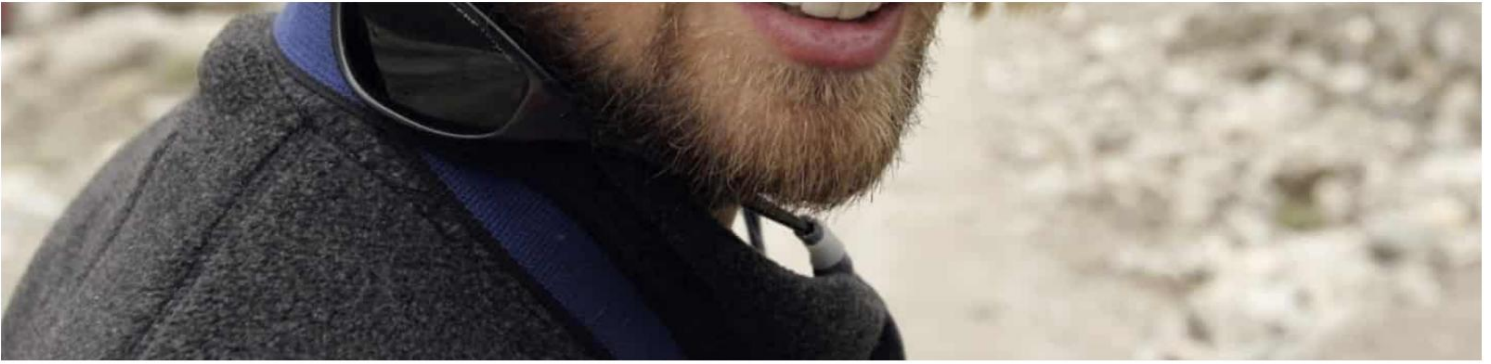




Bottleneck consists, among other things, of a kind of hanging glacier with ice that can break off and fall towards the mountain climbers. Photo: Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg and Eric Gilbertson

That's exactly what happened in 2008. Large chunks of ice broke off and tumbled down the mountain, with the falling ice cutting climbers' ropes on the steep section, while others lost their gear, becoming trapped on the mountain and later dying.





Norwegian Rolf Bae was one of 11 people who died in 2008 during the biggest single disaster on K2, where chunks of ice from the Bottleneck section broke off and cut the ropes to some of the dead. Photo: Reuters/Scanpix

The K2 bottleneck is a disaster that has just been paused. So it is about getting through the section as quickly as possible so that you are not under the ice when it breaks. Fortunately, Andreas and Eric are "running well" on the last stretch towards the top, as Andreas puts it.





The adrenaline really begins to pump on the last stretch towards the top. Photo: Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg and Eric Gilbertson

- We were actually completely surprised ourselves by how well it went. Normally you say that something drastic happens when you get above 8300 meters, where you can typically only take 10 steps before you have to take a longer break and catch your breath. But we didn't actually have to take the big breaks, although of course it goes very slowly at that time, says Andreas.



Toppen er kun halvvejs

Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg hit the summit of K2 on the morning of July 28, 2022. Photo: Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg and Eric Gilbertson

Andreas and Eric move through the night and hit the second highest point on the globe on Thursday 28 July at a little after eight in the morning - Andreas a bit

before Eric.

Perhaps you imagine that such an extreme feat is celebrated with arms in the air and a war of victory over the world.

It is not like that.

At least not for Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg. He puts his equipment in the snow, gets someone else to take a few pictures of him at the top and makes a short video in which he puts the first words of his triumph.





Mountain climbers can only truly relax when they have also made it down the mountain. Photo: Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg and Eric Gilbertson

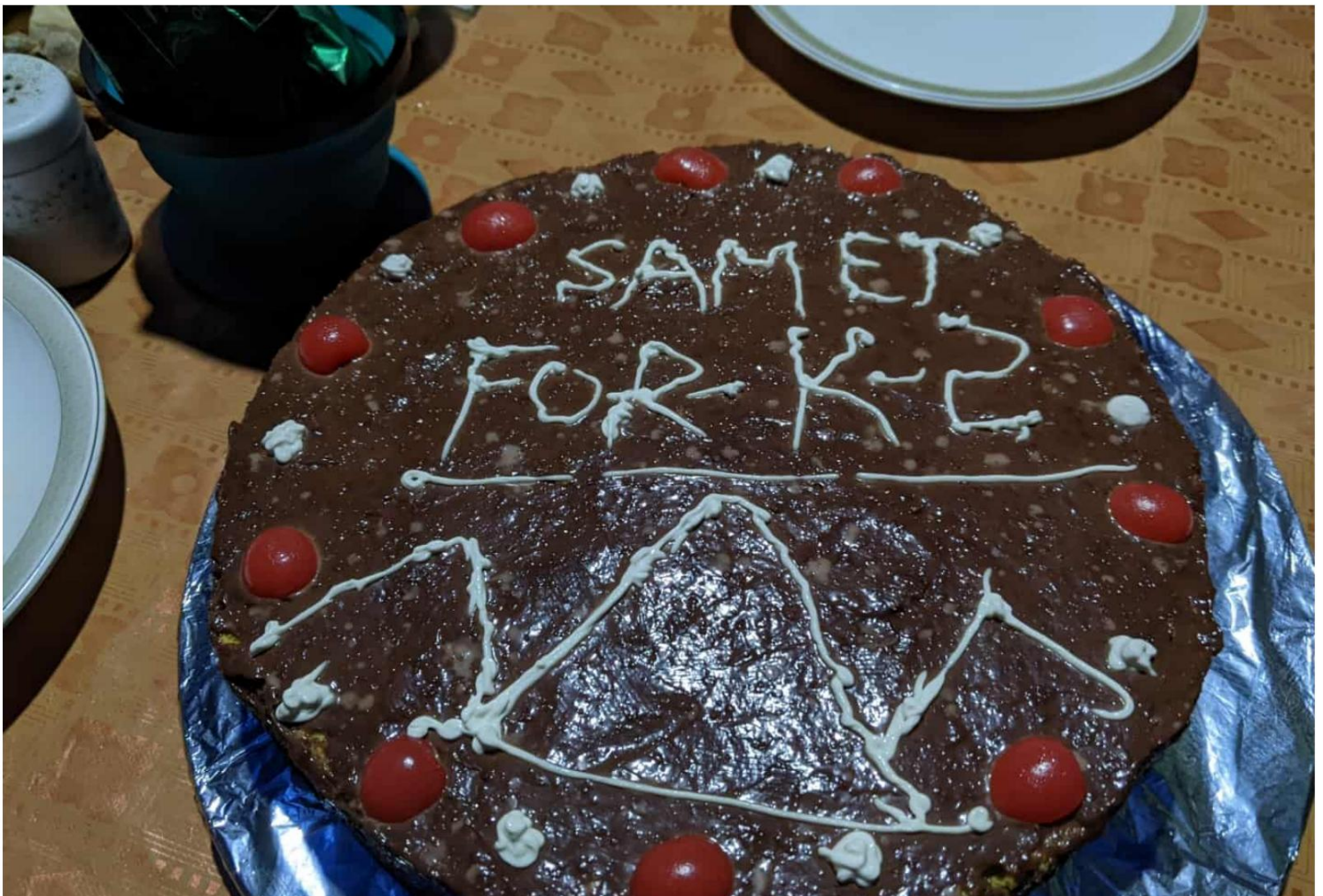
- On top of K2 without supplemental oxygen. My mate Eric is a little behind, so I'll be going down alone before long. We're up here early. It's a little after eight in the morning, so hopefully I can make it all the way back to camp 2. 8611 meters – fuck yes", are the words of Andreas, who has already started thinking about the next and perhaps even more dangerous steps down along the mountain.





White in white on the way down K2. Photo: Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg and Eric Gilbertson

- There is not a big celebration. You are of course excited and incredibly happy that you reached the top, but it is extremely important that you focus on getting back down. Many of the deaths actually happen on the descent. If you make a small mistake, it is very difficult to stop the momentum you have when you are going down. It's a little easier to save there when you're on the way up, says Andreas, who first celebrates the victory properly with a cake and robber stories, when he and Eric get back to the main camp - or base camp - the next day:





The celebration only takes place when you are back at base camp. From there, a long hike over many kilometers still awaits long glacier. Photo: Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg and Eric Gilbertson

- It is the real summit, where you have come down safely and have completed the goal you set for yourself.

Or as Edmund Hillary told many years after he was the first to climb Mount Everest:

- A complete ascent of a mountain is when you reach the top and come back down safely to the bottom.



Fra passion til pizza

In many ways, it is a long way from the Himalayas to Odense and the transition can be difficult. For Andreas, it's about enjoying the process and not having a specific mountain top as the ultimate goal. Photo: Jonas Ancher Nyeng

Back in Odense, Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg rides around on his bicycle with a Wolt box of hot dishes for the people of Odense.

And it's not always easy when you have to go from living out your passion to delivering pizzas from one day to the next.

- In neuroscience, you talk about a dopamine crash after you have achieved a big goal, which is followed by an emptiness that you have to learn to deal with. So it's not just the adjustment to everyday life itself, but also a completely physical thing that happens in the brain, where you can end up in something that resembles an actual depression, says Andreas, who continues to work on seeing mountain climbing as a process, he enjoys so he avoids staring blindly at one particular mountain peak.





Andreas still has plans to complete the Snow Leopard challenge, but also has thoughts of becoming a part of The Sirius patrol in Greenland. Photo: Andreas Ritzau Frydensberg and Eric Gilbertson

- If you enjoy mountain climbing in itself, there doesn't have to be one specific peak that you just have to reach, but a whole lot of things you want to experience, says Andreas and continues:

- I guess that's how it is in life as such.