

Victor Vescovo on driving exploration

As his self-funded journey to the bottom of all five oceans nears the halfway point, Victor Vescovo tells *Elite Traveler* what inspired his mission, and why exploring the unknown is so important

I feel like I have been exploring all my life. From riding all over my neighborhood on a bicycle as a kid; immersing myself in the pages of many, many books; climbing to the tops of some very high mountains; and now, diving to the depths of the world's oceans.

My first 'expedition' taught me perhaps my most valuable lesson. At three years old, I tried to drive a car, and after a very brief initial success, it ended as expected – extremely badly. Surviving that trauma had a profound impact on how I view life. I have always felt fortunate to be alive, and I have an intense desire to make the most of the time I have on Earth.

I hugely admire great explorers, pilot engineers and climbers like Roald Amundsen, Neil Armstrong, Chuck Yeager and Reinhold Messner. My childhood dream was to become an astronaut, then a pilot. To me, making the most of life means experiencing all the world has to offer and what it has to show from every possible angle. That desire drives my curiosity and truly is the fuel for my need to explore.

What I love most about this journey is the uncharted nature of it – that no person, organization or government has ever even *tried* to make it happen. In fact, no one in history has been to the bottom of *four* of our five oceans – well, now there are only three left to reach since we just dived to the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean in December 2018. Human beings are capable of accomplishing truly amazing feats if they put their minds and resources to it.

The Five Deeps Expedition is an extremely complex technological,



organizational and logistical challenge. An endeavor of this magnitude requires partners at the top of their fields with the required technical skills and expertise, but who share the same curiosity and passion for exploration that I have – like EYOS Expeditions, which is running the day-to-day execution of the mission.

When I first called Triton Submarines, I wasn't sure what the response would be, but I am grateful that they did not laugh me off the phone. Not only did they jump at the chance to build a full ocean depth submersible, but they worked tirelessly to design, build and perfect it. The DSV *Limiting Factor* not only delivers on the objective, but will have a life well beyond our expedition.

As the Five Deeps Expedition vision

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became a reality, we saw how much this expedition could impact the scientific community. Not only can we finally obtain reliable access to some of the world's most punishing environments, we also have the ability to study organisms and other undiscovered samples that promise a world of new scientific discovery in biological, geological and oceanographic study.

To many people, the Five Deeps Expedition looks like a very elaborate and expensive vanity project – another check on a bucket list of sorts. Okay, fair enough. I say, at some level, it is. But I also believe it is incredibly important for those with the means to fund basic science and technological development to do so. Science and technology have solved more world problems and alleviated more suffering than any other historical factor – except, perhaps, regime change. And there's nothing more inspiring than seeing people and organizations being pushed to do things that have never been done before that advance us as a species.

What excites me most about diving the Five Deeps Expedition is the act of doing it, against all of the challenges and moments of doubt. My hope is that this is just the beginning of an uncovering of knowledge, a technical proving ground that will be a part of propelling scientists across the world into a new era of exploration and innovation – as well as the continuation of the full story of the oceans that is only now beginning to be told.

That's where the Discovery Channel and Atlantic Productions come in. Sharing our discoveries in a television series is a win for everyone who wants to learn more about two-thirds of our planet. Once our expedition is complete, I hope the DSV *Limiting Factor* will continue to explore the oceans' hidden places and help in complex undersea recoveries.

As for what's next for me, maybe I'll finally fulfill my childhood dream of becoming an astronaut. Mr Musk, if you're reading this, I say to you: I'll give you a ride in my vessel, if you give me a ride in yours.

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