

# Fast-tracking the ladder

In 2019, 37-year-old Mexican climber Viridiana Alvarez Chavez broke the Guinness World Record for the fastest ascent of Everest, K2 and Kangchenjunga by a female with supplementary oxygen – now she's ready to conquer the world



**O**n 15 May 2019, Viridiana Álvarez Chávez reached the top of Himalayan giant Kangchenjunga, just one day short of two years since summiting Everest. What was particularly incredible about this feat was that she climbed K2 in between.

Chávez is self-trained. Growing up in Aguascalientes, a small Mexican city situated within a valley, there were no mountains around. “So, my best friend was the Internet and YouTube,” she told *En Fuego (Sports Illustrated)* of her initial training programmes.

“That’s how I learned how to do the technique.”

It started with a goal to become more active and run 10 kilometres at the age of 28. Triathlons and marathons followed, and two years later she discovered the depth of her passion for climbing at the “life-changing” summit of Pico de Orizaba (5,636m), Mexico’s most acclaimed mountain, and the third-highest peak in North America. Chávez left her full-time desk job after 10 years in the automotive industry and literally set her sights on Everest.

The next logical step on the road to get there was Aconcagua in Argentina (6,962m), the world’s highest peak outside of Asia. ➤





And she conquered it ten months later. “I thought when I was just about to quit my job, it was like we just have one life,” Chávez said.

“There’s no rehearsals. There’s no second opportunities. If I don’t do it now, I won’t be able to do it later because I was 30 at that point.”

“[I was] risking comfort to experience the magic of the mountains,” Chávez recalled in her Guinness World Records acceptance speech.

“It was proof that dreams do not have to be lifelong dreams and

that anyone who sets them can achieve even what are considered ‘unattainable goals,’ such as breaking a world record.”

Chávez’s world record attempt started with Everest (8,848 meters; 29,029 feet) on May 16, 2017, followed by K2 (8,611 meters; 28,251 feet) on July 21, 2018, and finished on top of Kangchenjunga (8,856 meters; 28,169 feet) on May 15, 2019.

She is the first Latin American to climb K2, the second-highest mountain in the world, and one of

the most dangerous. “On Everest you see dead bodies on the way,” Chávez explained.

“But in K2, I saw someone dying, so it was like another level.”

This Guinness World Records title was previously held by Go Mi-Sun (South Korea), whose ascent to the three highest mountains was achieved in two years and two days.

In addition to mountaineering, Chávez serves as a public speaker at youth conferences and events to promote a message of breaking paradigms; highlighting the importance of emotional intelligence, a positive attitude, discipline, and consistency to achieve goals.

Her next ambition includes conquering the 14 highest mountains in the world, and becoming the first North American to do so. She already has five down.

“I just need money then I’m ready to go. I just need the money,” Chávez says.

“We can dream as high as we want, and if we believe it, we will be able to make it.”

Travel restrictions meant she became very familiar with nearby Cerro del Muerto in 2020. It may have an ominous name, but at 2,440 meters, it represents a training ground for Chávez.

“Here is where I dream of climbing the highest peaks in the world,” she says.

“Sometimes we think that what we have around is not enough, but everything that we need is inside of us. It doesn’t matter where you are, you can dream as high as you want [just] where you are.”

[viridianaalvarez.com](http://viridianaalvarez.com) ■



**Above:** Mexican climber Viridiana Álvarez Chávez is the Guinness World Record hold for summiting K2, Everest (pictured) and Kangchenjunga in one year and 364 days  
**Left:** Kangchenjunga was the final climb of the three