



## Dr. Peggy Whitson

### Record-Breaking Astronaut

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#### WHY PEGGY WHITSON IS CAPTIVATING AUDIENCES

Precious few human beings are able to say they've been lucky enough to travel to space. Peggy Whitson, however, is in a league of her own. The veteran astronaut has an incredible list of record-breaking accomplishments to her name: **first woman to command the International Space Station twice (2008 & 2013); first non-military Chief Astronaut and most space walks (10) of any female astronaut, the most spacewalks completed by a woman (at 60 hours, 21 minutes total) and third most of any spacefarer; and at 665 days, Dr. Whitson has spent more time in space than any other American.**

Unsurprisingly, behind all of these tremendous accomplishments lies one of the most passionate, knowledgeable, and courageous scientists in the world today. While she was breaking records, Dr. Whitson was also conducting groundbreaking research on a wide breadth of subjects with enormous implications for the future of humanity—robotics and artificial intelligence, medicine, agriculture, logistics, engineering, marine life, and beyond.

Dr. Whitson's remarkable life story is a thrilling example for others to follow, humble beginnings on a farm to her daring tales of spaceflight and crash landings in the steppes of Kazakhstan, leaving audiences on the edge of their seat. She was named as one of **TIME Magazine's Most Influential People (2018)**, was on the cover of *National Geographic Magazine*, and was one of eight astronauts featured in Darren Aronofsky's, *National Geographic* series **One Strange Rock**.

*Dr. Peggy Whitson inspires younger generations, particularly young women, to pursue their dreams—whether the goal is a career in the ever-crucial STEM fields or to break some records of their own.*

#### **ABOUT PEGGY WHITSON**

Dr. Peggy Whitson is a NASA astronaut and biochemist. She flew on Expedition 50/51 and participated in four spacewalks, bringing her career total to ten. With a total of 665 days in space, Whitson holds the U.S. record, placing eighth on the all-time space endurance list. The Iowa native also completed two six-month tours of duty aboard the station for Expedition 5 in 2002, and as the station commander for Expedition 16 in 2008 where she accumulated 377 days in space between the two missions, the most for any U.S. woman at the time of her return to Earth.

Dr. Whitson began her career at NASA/Johnson Space Center as a Research Biochemist in the Biomedical Operations and Research Branch; she developed negotiation and leadership skills as a member of the U.S.-USSR Joint Working Group in Space Medicine and Biology. She continued developing these skills in 1992, when she was named the Project Scientist of the Shuttle-Mir Program and served in this capacity until the conclusion of the Phase 1A Program in 1995. Dr. Whitson held the additional responsibilities of the Deputy Division Chief of the Medical Sciences Division at Johnson Space Center from 1995 to 1996, and served as Co-Chair of the U.S.-Russian Mission Science Working Group.

Selected from thousands of applicants, Dr. Whitson began her Astronaut training in 1996. Upon completing two years of training and evaluation, she was assigned technical duties in the Astronaut Operations Planning Branch and served as the lead for the Crew Test Support Team in Russia from 1998 to 1999. From November 2003 to March 2005, she served as Deputy Chief of the Astronaut. Also in 2003, she served as commander of the fifth NASA Extreme Environment Mission Operations (NEEMO) mission.

She continued serving in a number of leadership roles. From March 2005 to November 2005, she served as Chief of the Station Operations Branch. Then trained as the backup ISS commander for Expedition 14 from November 2005 to September 2006.

Whitson completed two six-month tours of duty aboard the International Space Station, the second as the station commander for Expedition 16 in April 2007-8. She accumulated 377 days in space and performed a total of six career spacewalks, adding up to 39 hours and 46 minutes between these first two missions, the most for any woman. After returning from space, Whitson was tapped to chair the Astronaut Selection Board in 2008-9.

From October 2009 to July 2012, Whitson served as Chief of the Astronaut Corps and was responsible for the mission preparation activities and on-orbit support of all International Space Station crews and their support personnel. She was also responsible for organizing the crew interface support for future heavy launch and commercially provided transport vehicles. Whitson was the first female, nonmilitary Chief of the Astronaut Office.

Whitson's third and final mission launched in November 2016. Originally planned as a 6-month mission, she was extended to a nine-and-a-half-month mission, returning in September 2017, accumulating the records noted above while accomplishing an enormous wealth of scientific research.

Whitson graduated from Mt. Ayr Community High School, Mt. Ayr, Iowa, in 1978; received a Bachelor of Science in Biology/Chemistry from Iowa Wesleyan College in 1981 and a Doctorate in Biochemistry from Rice University in 1985.

**SPEECH TOPICS**

*Dreams are Possible*

*Record-Breaking: My Life and Career with NASA*

*The Future of STEM Education*

*The Power of Team: Leadership and Followership*

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