

Everett company planning Titanic expedition with civilians

by Gabe Cohen
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Photo courtesy of OceanGate

EVERETT, Wash. -- Everett-based company OceanGate Expeditions is planning a seven-week research expedition to the RMS Titanic, to study the wreckage and its larger impact on the ocean.

The crew will set off from St. John's, Newfoundland in late May 2018, and be the first manned submersible expedition to the wreck since 2005.

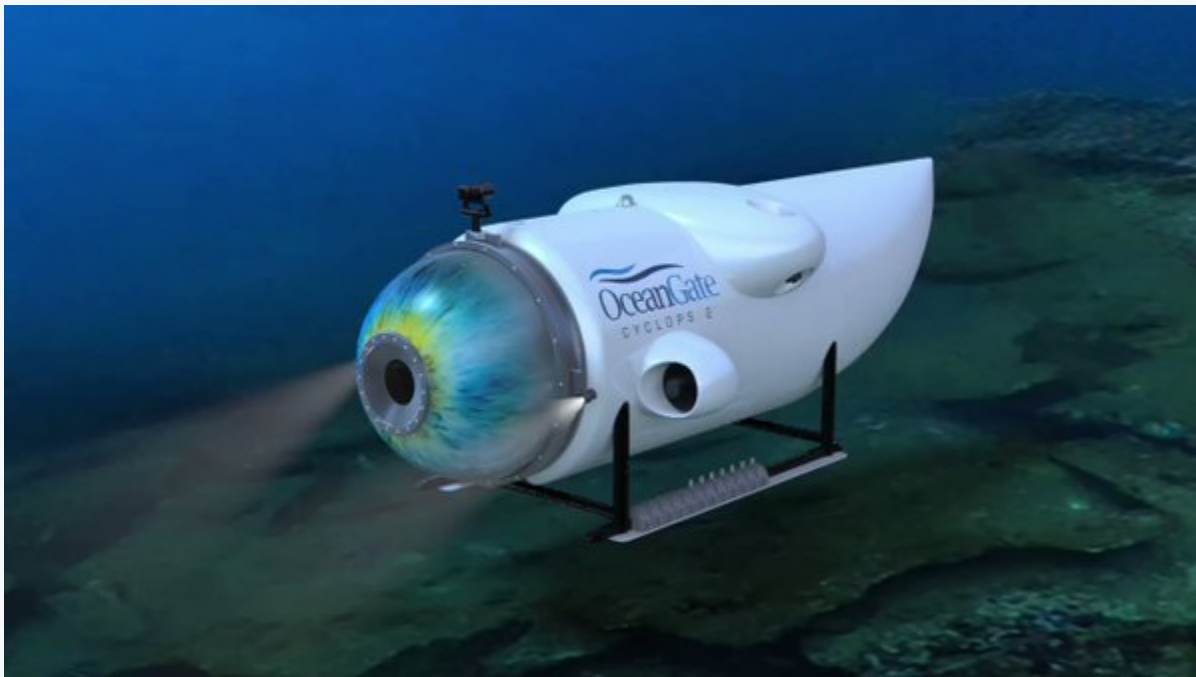


Its skilled team of scientists and content experts will be joined by 54 “mission specialists,” civilians each paying \$105,129 for the privilege of laying eyes on the most famous

shipwreck in the world. That price is the inflation-adjusted cost of first-class passage on the Titanic in 1912 (\$4,350). They will rotate, each doing one dive to the ocean floor. OceanGate CEO Stockton Rush says it won't be a casual vacation.

"We don't want somebody going into the sub to just be entertained," Rush said. "You're there with a mission, so if somebody comes with us, they're going to work on operating the sonar, they might be on communications, they might just be taking pictures."

The 2018 voyage is already booked, but [OceanGate is taking applications for 2019 right now.](#)



The company is currently designing and building a new sub, Cyclops 2, that improves on its earlier vessels to handle the 13,000-foot Atlantic Ocean depth. The carbon fiber and titanium submersible will carry five members to the site on each dive. OceanGate says it will be the only privately owned vessel that can go that deep. OceanGate expects it will be afloat later this year, in time for test runs before it heads to the Atlantic next year.

On the expedition next May, OceanGate's research team will map the Titanic wreckage using 3D and laser imaging. The team will not salvage; only observe and document.

Cyclops 2 will be outfitted with high definition sonar, lasers for imaging, and two cameras for photogrammetry.

“It paints like the ultrasound of a baby,” CEO Stockton Rush said. “We’ll be able to map the hull.”



OceanGate plans to return to the Titanic each year moving forward, using its data to study the ship’s decay over time.

It’s part of a larger project, OceanGate says, to better understand the impact of shipwrecks on our waters. The company says there are 1,300 shipwrecks in US waters that sank with more than a half million gallons of oil still inside.

“The potential for them to leak out toxic chemicals is not well known,” Rush said. “It depends on oxygen in the water, currents, storms, biofouling and marine life.”

This research, Rush hopes, will help indicate “which wrecks are benign and which could be harmful.”