

MAR 16, 2017 @ 11:35 AM 217,569 **The Little Black Book of Billionaire Secrets**

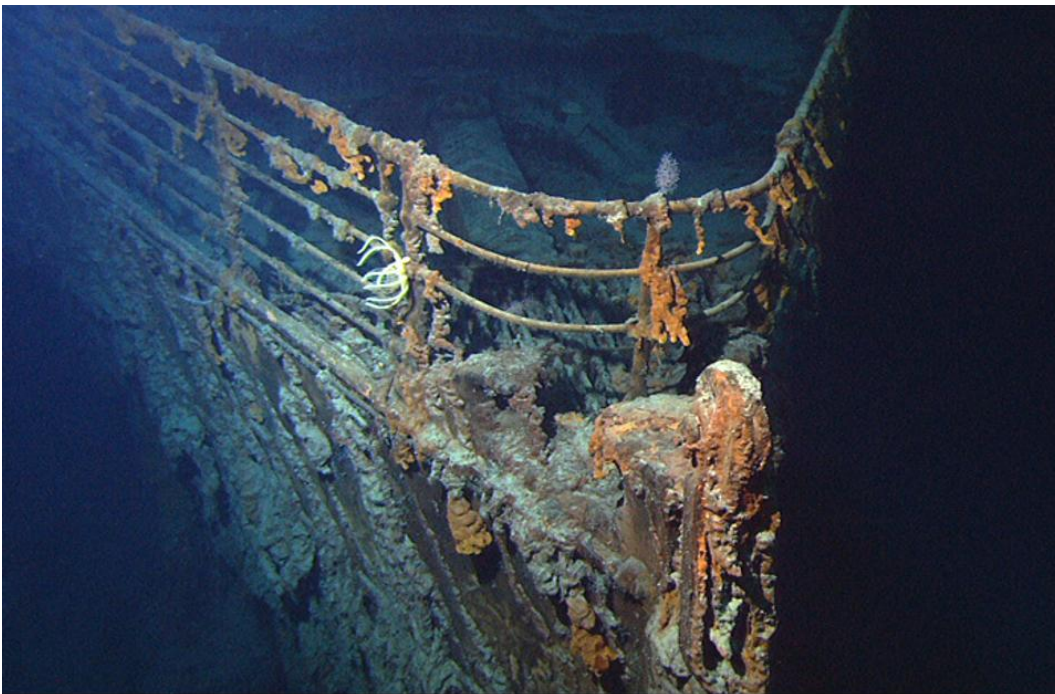
After A Dozen Years, Firm Offers Tourists A Chance To Dive To Titanic Wreck -- For \$105,000 A Person



Jim Clash ,
CONTRIBUTOR

I write about culture and adventure sports.

It's been 12 long years since the wreck of RMS Titanic, resting some 12,500 feet at the bottom of the North Atlantic, has been visited by humans. If all goes according to plan, that drought will end next spring when OceanGate Expeditions launches a series of deep submersible dives.



The Titanic bow after a century below the North Atlantic.

The price for regular folk (what they call “mission specialists” – they have to perform a range of simple technical tasks) isn’t cheap - \$105,129 per person, or what it would cost in today’s dollars for a first-class Titanic passenger berth in 1912. The six-figure price is nearly double the \$59,000 tourists paid Deep Ocean Expeditions in 2005, but it’s hard to put a price tag on visiting one of the most storied vessels of all time.

“Since her sinking 105 years ago, fewer than 200 people have visited the wreck, less than have flown to space or climbed Mt. Everest, so this is an incredible opportunity,” says Stockton Rush, OceanGate’s CEO.

Oceanographer Robert Ballard, on a secret mission to find two sunken U.S. nuclear submarines, discovered Titanic in 1985. Celebrities who have been down in submersibles to see the wreck since include Buzz Aldrin, the second man on the moon, movie director James Cameron and Soyuz astronaut Richard Garriott.

OceanGate's seven-week-long expedition plans to depart from St. John’s, Newfoundland, in May 2018 with scientists, content experts and tourists joining the crew in a series of 8-day missions. The crew size for each mission will be about 20 people, including nine tourists, the submersible pilots and an operations crew.

Renata Rojas, a banker in New York, has wanted to visit Titanic since she was a child. As soon as she heard OceanGate's news, she put down a deposit. "This is my life’s dream," says Rojas, who just turned 49. You can feel the enthusiasm emanating from her tiny 5-foot, 2-inch frame.

Experts from the Advanced Imaging and Visualization Laboratory (AIVL) at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI) will collaborate on the expedition. Bill Lange, director of the AIVL at WHOI, has participated in previous expeditions to Titanic. His team will provide imaging and lighting equipment and will lead efforts to capture images of the wreck and then assemble these overlapping images into a 3D photographic model of the wreck after returning to the surface.

Importantly, OceanGate will not collect any artifacts of the deteriorating wreck during the expedition. "We recognize that the entire site is a memorial, and we undertake our mission with great respect for those who lost their lives in the sinking [in 1912]," says Rush.

The expeditions are to be conducted in accordance with NOAA Guidelines for Research, Exploration and Salvage. The guidelines comply with UNESCO’s for the preservation of underwater world heritage sites.

OceanGate Inc., which owns OceanGate Expeditions, is a privately held company based in Everett, WA. Founded in 2009, the firm provides manned submersible services for industry, research and exploration. OceanGate currently owns and operates two 5-person submersibles that provide deep-sea access for underwater site survey and

inspection, scientific research, technology testing and film production. It is currently building a new submersible, Cyclops 2, to visit Titanic.

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