

A Survival Guide for the Planet

onearth

Frontlines Summer 2012



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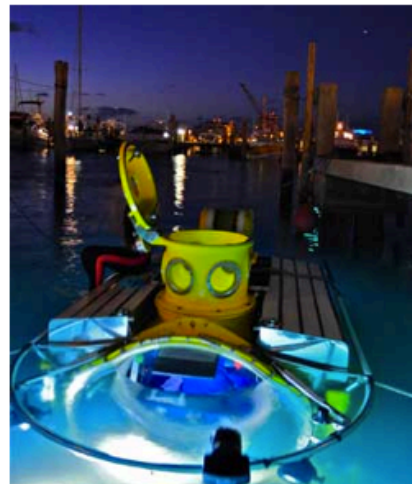
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This Place Is a Dive

Sure, scuba diving's fine for observing ocean life -- if you can't swing a submarine. Now OceanGate, a Florida-based ocean exploration company, is offering citizen scientists a chance to plumb the watery depths in an actual submersible. A ticket can run anywhere from \$2,500 to \$45,000, depending on the length and type of experience, but here's the thing: each paying passenger is helping to finance scientific research that takes place during the course of the trip. What's more, passengers undergo special training before the descent, effectively making them temporary members of the research crew.

OceanGate is modeled after other citizen-science programs that allow clients to experience nature up close while financially supporting research or preservation efforts. All projects are suggested and put together by scientists; a current one, carried out in conjunction with Miami-Dade County, is exploring the artificial reefs off the Miami coast.



Co-founder Guillermo Söhnlein says that because it's hard to predict how each experience will unfold, "no two dives are the same." The actual amount of time spent in the submarine is measured in hours. (To answer a commonly asked question: no, there are no bathrooms on board.) The more expensive trips occur farther out at sea and might include a weeklong stay on a boat; cheaper trips are completed in a single day closer to shore. While OceanGate currently owns only one sub, the company is planning to add several more in the next five years, including one that will dive to nearly 20,000 feet. For more, visit opentheoceans.com.