

Transoceanic Expeditions: Hunt for the
Coelacanth
(In Progress)
Nikki Sutterby
March 08, 2021

CONCEPT STATEMENT

“Transoceanic Expeditions: Hunt for the Coelacanth” is a submarine-type dark-ride attraction, using show elements from both Legoland California’s “Deep Sea Adventure” and Tokyo DisneySea’s “20,000 Leagues Under the Sea” attractions. Through the use of a tracked ride system that runs through a large aquarium with real sea creatures and into show building with practical and digital sets, guests feel like they are taking a dive into the deep sea, interactively hunting for elusive creatures. Along the way, guests encounter obstacles such as shipwrecks, aggressive creatures, and trawls. The attraction will educate guests on marine life, cultivate interest in the subject, and inspire guests to take an active part in marine conservation efforts.

BACKSTORY

The ocean covers more than seventy percent of Earth’s surface and is a vital resource for all living organisms, yet only about twenty percent of the vast region has been explored and charted. In 1818, Sir John Ross discovered the first evidence of deep-sea life, and soon, curious explorers wanted to know what else was beneath the surface. Everything changed in 1977 when Robert Ballard’s team discovered hydrothermal vents, and around them, strange and wonderful ecosystems that proved life could thrive in those conditions.

The advancement of undersea technology provided opportunities for tourism, and thus Transoceanic Expeditions was created, with the goal of giving budding Hydro-explorers the chance to get up close with sea creatures not able to be kept in aquariums.

The invention of Human Remote Operated Vehicles (HROVs) allowed navigators the ability to control passenger vehicles from the surface, making them ideal for both exploration and transportation. Custom outfitted with searchlights and touchscreen databases, Transoceanic Expedition’s HROVs have allowed Hydro-explorers to explore previously unreachable ocean depths.

While most human interaction seeks to unlock the mysteries of the ocean, not all of it has pure intentions. Deep-sea commercial fisheries in the area use large nets called trawls to sweep the ocean floor, dragging their coveted catches into a trap. Organisms such as coral reefs are being destroyed by this practice, and many unwanted, vulnerable species are thrown back into the sea, already dead.

Many groups seek to put an end to the fishing, Transoceanic Expeditions included. Hydro-explorers have been recruited to help combat the practice and have successfully reported dozens of trawlers, thus saving thousands of sea creatures.

Recently, the elusive coelacanth, also known as the “living fossil”, has been rumored to be spotted in the area. Excited by the possibility of learning more about this ancient creature of the deep, researchers have partnered with the Expeditions to confirm the rumors. Hydro-explorers have been asked to keep their eyes peeled as they set out on one of the most vital expeditions yet—finding proof of the coelacanth!

OVERVIEW

ENTRANCE

A bright building with signage for deep sea tours welcomes Guests on the adventure of a lifetime. The large marquee displays the name of the attraction, with Transoceanic Tour Guides standing by to guide curious new Hydro-Explorers inside. The large aquarium connected to the building offers beautiful views of fish swimming about. Excited gasps from both kids and adults are heard whenever favorite fish swim by, and especially whenever the small sharks swim past the glass. On the aquarium's surface, submarine-style vehicles drive by, carrying Hydro-Explorers on a tour.

QUEUE

Walking inside, Hydro-Explorers gather in the lobby of Transoceanic Expeditions to be led to the vehicle bay for their tour. Cheerful posters with pictures of excited families hang in the office, along with beautiful photographs of deep-sea life. On the televisions on the walls, a bubbly voice narrates a promotional video, talking about what the experience is. A sign at the empty reception desk tells Hydro-Explorers to go through the double doors and join the line in progress.

The line for the tour snakes through the company building, giving Hydro-Explorers an up-close view of operations. The first section contains rows of cubicles, the sounds of a lively office all around. The smell of coffee hangs in the air, coming from the mugs sitting on employees' desks. Each cubicle has personalized touches, with some employees displaying pictures of their favorite creatures, and others showing the chaos of their work through messy piles of papers. A few employees hang fun messages for Hydro-Explorers to read as they wait in line. Phones ring in the background, though they are never answered in time.

Well-lit hallways bend and curve, disguising the size of the line. On the walls are posters summarizing the dangers and threats of deep-sea trawling. Research headlines are displayed alongside them, boasting about the partnership between Transoceanic Expeditions and the local research group, Submarine Ecological Association (SEA). The televisions above convey the same message, showing news reports of the damage commercial fisheries have caused to the area. One such report mentions that the "living fossil" known as the coelacanth has been spotted in the area and faces the danger of being caught in a trawl, dwindling their numbers, and rendering them extinct.

The hallways end at an oversized set of doors, opening to reveal a large theater. Inside, a Transoceanic Tour Guide and a SEA Researcher stand side by side. They explain the new mission that Hydro-Explorers will be undertaking: hunting for the coelacanth. Previously thought to only consist of one species, Researchers believe that a second species of the coelacanth exists. Short on manpower, the companies have partnered to transform part of the tour into a research expedition to try and confirm the creature's existence. A video is shown, introducing Guests to

the DIVE (Deep-sea Investigative Voyage Equipment) and its tools used for finding and identifying sea creatures from a distance, ensuring they will be unharmed.

Now briefed, Hydro-Explorers walk through a final area that has been taken over by SEA Researchers for their work. A model of the coelacanth is on display, with facts and a pronunciation guide. Other displays include a model of the vehicle, exciting undersea finds, and schematics of equipment. Strewn about the spaces are crates, lockers with diving equipment, and various piles of papers. At the end of the area are bay doors leading to a dock.

LOAD

Now partially outside, Hydro-Explorers smell the salty air of the sea and hear the sounds of dock workers. In the water are the sleek DIVE vehicles, waiting to be boarded. Hydro-Explorers are guided into the vehicles in groups of eight, divided into four pairs of two once inside the submarine.

RIDE

The voice of a Head Researcher comes through clearly, instructing Hydro-Explorers on their mission once again. The DIVE dispatches and moves out into the large aquarium. Sonar beeps provide a soundtrack for the adventure.

Through the large glass windows, Hydro-Explorers see fish and other creatures swimming around them. On the sea floor are coral reefs, shells, and more physical objects. Hydro-Explorers test their interactives out on these fish and objects, making sure they are ready to go search for the elusive coelacanth.

The DIVE descends, the sound of water and the sight of bubbles rushing up past the glass as the environment gets darker. Hydro-Explorers find their sight limited, needing to rely on their tools heavily now. Silence envelops the ship.

The Head Researcher suddenly breaks through: there is a commercial fishing boat in the area! Hydro-Explorers are jostled around as evasive maneuvers are taken by the operator from above. They're not fast enough, and a trawl grabs the DIVE, along with now-broken parts of coral and small sea creatures. A large area of destruction has been left in its wake, ruining the once captivating environment.

A transmission comes through from above, telling Hydro-Explorers that they're going to get them out of that net. Fast movements create a thrill as the voice of the Head Researcher adds to the tension and urgency of the mission. The DIVE is freed, and the trawl is destroyed in the process! It may be only one ship, but the Researchers celebrate, telling Hydro-Explorers how much even stopping one ship helps.

Diving deeper still, the water is now nearly pitch black. Straining their eyes, Hydro-Explorers see beautiful glowing streaks and spots in the water. Bioluminescent organisms! Neon greens and blues dance alongside the DIVE, lighting up the water like stars in the night sky.

A few scary creatures dart by the windows, providing a slight thrill and scare. Large shipwrecks are illuminated as the DIVE moves through, showing Hydro-Explorers just how deep down they are.

Suddenly, a large creature swims by the windows; a glimpse of blue and multiple fins visible. It's the coelacanth! Hydro-Explorers work together to quickly identify it, sending the confirmation of its existence up to the Researchers above. They did it!

The mission is complete; the DIVE begins its ascent back to the docks. The Head Researcher debriefs Hydro-Explorers on the way, telling them facts about the coelacanth as well as current efforts to help save deep-sea environments and the creatures that live within them.

UNLOAD

Back at the docks, Researchers help Hydro-Explorers disembark the submarines. The smell of salty air is a change from the plastic and metal smell of the DIVE. Heading back into the building, Hydro-Explorers are greeted by applause from both Researchers and Tour Guides as they navigate through a hallway and back to the front of the building.

EXIT

The end of the hallway leads to the gift shop, where both Transoceanic Expeditions and SEA merchandise can be found. Tasty, pre-packaged treats and drinks are available for purchase to reinvigorate Hydro-Explorers after their exciting adventure. Hydro-Explorers are encouraged to bring home mementos of their adventure, as a portion of proceeds go to conservation efforts. Short messages and tips of how individuals can help with deep-sea conservation line the walls, giving Hydro-Explorers the knowledge to spread with everyone they know.

WALKTHROUGH

ENTRANCE

A flowing building that resembles ocean waves grabs the attention of future Hydro-Explorers. Its blue and green ETFE-clad exterior provides both beauty and energy-efficiency, resembling the rippling pattern of sunlight shining underwater. A large sign set to one side of the entrance displays the name of the attraction in eye-catching graphics.

TRANSOCEANIC EXPEDITIONS: HUNT FOR THE COELACANTH

An eave of the building offers a shady space for viewing the large aquarium inside the building, the dispatched DIVE vehicles visible at the top of the tank.

Tour Guides greet Hydro-Explorers at the building's entrance, answering questions and welcoming them inside.

QUEUE – LOBBY

The lobby of Transoceanic Expeditions is bright white with pops of bright colors. Cheerful travel ads for the company hang on the walls, complemented by stunning photographs of deep-sea life. Flat-screen TVs on the walls play a promotional video, a bubbly narration set to high-energy music giving Hydro-Explorers a glimpse of the upcoming experience. The empty reception desk bears the logo of Transoceanic Expeditions, with a large sign sitting on the counter.

ALL HYDRO-EXPLORERS: CONTINUE THROUGH DOUBLE DOORS TO JOIN TOUR QUEUE

A bold red arrow at the bottom of the sign points to the doors to add clarity.

QUEUE – OPERATIONS ROOM

Hydro-Explorers enter into a large room that is bustling with activity. Aisles of white workspaces make up the structure of the queue, offering Hydro-Explorers glimpses into the lives of Transoceanic Expeditions employees. The modern office's walls are varying shades of blue, invoking the feeling of water. Large, bright painted murals of sea-life decorate the walls, each with its own artistic style.

The smell of coffee lingers in the air, accompanied by the periodic sound of the coffee maker brewing a new pot. Indistinguishable office chatter drifts out from behind closed doors and inaccessible spaces against the soundtrack of ringing phones that are never answered in time.

Each cubicle space tells a small story by utilizing the same basic props of a desk, a desk chair, and a filing cabinet in different ways. Neatly stacked papers sit on some desks, while others have strewn pages of research papers across the floor. All employees have pictures in their spaces, some displaying pictures of their favorite marine life, others choosing to show off personal photos that act as easter eggs, providing delightful finds for keen Hydro-Explorers.

Despite the fun environment, many employees have cheesy motivational posters on their cubicle walls; a distaste for Mondays is often expressed. Branded coffee cups sit next to the ringing phones, dried coffee rings marking the desks and papers of messier employees. Hand-made signs directed at Hydro-Explorers hang in some cubicles hoping to elicit a laugh or groan at the silly messages.

*WHAT SECTION OF THE NEWSPAPER DOES A FISH READ?
CURRENT EVENTS!*

QUEUE – HALLWAY

The queue continues into a winding hallway designed to hide the length of the queue. It is well-lit and modern, keeping in line with the aesthetic of the building. Bulletin boards line large sections of the walls, decorated with overlapping certificates, awards, photos, and article headlines. Push pins shaped as various marine creatures add an extra touch of personality to each board, ones shaped like the coelacanth itself holding up research findings boasting about the partnership between Transoceanic Expeditions and the local research and conservation group, Submarine Ecological Association (SEA).

Informational posters with bright, bold graphics summarize the dangers and threats of deep-sea trawling, hung on the walls for Hydro-Explorers to read as they wait. Small flat-screen TVs mounted above reinforce these facts via news reports that show the damage caused by commercial fisheries. One report mentions the “living fossil” known as the coelacanth has been spotted in the area, though reports are still unconfirmed. The report further explains the danger and threat coelacanths face because of deep-sea trawling, which dwindles their numbers and could render them extinct.

The hallway ends at a pair of oversized doors that are set on a timer. A Tour Guide stands by to assist Hydro-Explorers with entrance into the next space, as well as stall and pace when necessary.

PRESHOW – THEATER

Hydro-Explorers are led into a large, darkened theater, the doors shutting behind them. Their attention is directed to a large screen on one wall, a platform in front of it providing space for two actors to stand on side-by-side: a Transoceanic Expeditions Tour Guide and a SEA Researcher. A video of a coelacanth swimming plays silently behind them as they explain what Hydro-Explorers are doing on their deep-sea tour. Graphics and text on-screen support their message, ensuring all Hydro-Explorers receive the information.

The Researcher explains that the coelacanth was thought to be extinct until 1938, when a fishing vessel in the Western Indian Ocean miraculously caught one in a net. That was thought to be the only species of coelacanth to exist up until 1997, when an ichthyologist spotted a coelacanth being sold in an Indonesian market. Further inspection of it revealed that it was a new species! Inspired by these discoveries, SEA has been exploring the area, hoping to confirm

the recent sightings of this elusive fish. Due to a small staff size, SEA has partnered with Transoceanic Expeditions to transform part of their tours into research expeditions to support these efforts.

A new video plays, explaining that the research group has provided state-of-the-art equipment to use. Hydro-Explorers are introduced to the DIVE (Deep-sea Investigative Voyage Equipment) and its interactive tools, a touchscreen database and internally controlled searchlight.

The database displays pages of pictures of organisms Hydro-Explorers may see on their tour in a given area. By touching each organism seen, Hydro-Explorers create a personalized guide of what they've found, and what remains to be discovered. Those who have brought their smartphones on the tour can scan a QR code on their database screen once seated, while others are given the option of scanning their entry ticket or receiving a card with a code printed on it that they can connect to their accounts at a later date. This guide functions as a brief wiki, containing brief facts about each organism.

The searchlight is a vital tool for finding the coelacanth, as it exists in the dark depths of the ocean. Exploration is always rewarded however, as wandering lights may land on surprising sights!

Ending with a themed safety spiel, identical large doors on the opposite side of the theater open for Hydro-Explorers to enter the next part of the queue.

QUEUE – RESEARCH SPACE

A back warehouse space taken over by SEA serves as the final area of the queue. Metal lockers and crates are scattered about the space, some opened for viewing. Hydro-Explorers see modern diving equipment, scientific instruments, and rations inside. Temporary desks in the space are covered with scribbled on papers, microscopes, mysterious machines, and SEA-branded coffee cups. Behind the desks, large whiteboards display information about deep-sea research methods.

The smell of coffee returns, this time mixed with salty air coming in from outside. Pages and announcements for employees in the background are drowned out by the noises of the dock outside, though keen listeners can pick out fun references to pop culture here and there.

The line circles around two domed exhibits, the first being a model of the coelacanth. It's half the size of a real one but is still impressive! Easy to read signs with quick facts about it and its discovery circle around it, as well as a pronunciation guide for those unfamiliar with the word. The next dome contains a model of the DIVE, showing its exterior and allowing Hydro-Explorers to peek inside to see the seating configuration. On nearby walls, Hydro-Explorers see the schematics of the DIVE and a diagram of its tools and how they work.

The line comes to a stop at oversized roll-up bay doors that lead to the loading dock. A Researcher stands by to take party size, create groups, and direct Hydro-Explorers to their vehicle.

LOAD – DOCK

Hydro-Explorers walk through the bay doors as instructed onto a partially covered industrial dock. The smell of salty sea air and a light breeze are a welcome change from the interior spaces. DIVEs sit lined up in water, on an overhead track, parked with their doors open for easy accessibility. Though connected, this area is blocked off from the main aquarium for safety of the marine animals. Dock Workers direct groups of eight into the vehicle, assisting with load when needed.

Inside, the DIVE has a scent reminiscent of a sterile new car. The sounds of navigation equipment beep in the background, providing a soundtrack. At the front of the vehicle, the navigation display screen sits next to an informational one that shows the time, date, and current depth of the vehicle. The depth changes accordingly to further support the story moments of descent.

With a final safety check, Dock Workers dispatch the DIVE, and Hydro-Explorers set off on their tour!

RIDE – THE SHALLOWS

Moving into the actual aquarium, Hydro-Explorers hear a transmission from the Head Researcher, welcoming them on their tour. A shimmering, rippling reflection of light spreads across the bottom of the artificial sea floor, illuminating real fish and other creatures. Bright coral reefs, iridescent shells, and practical prop pieces such as anchors and pieces of shipwrecks lay on the bottom, visible through the clear water. Tropical fish, sea turtles, and small sharks swim and dart under vehicles, surprising Hydro-Explorers with a new view every time they ride.

The transmission instructs Hydro-Explorers on how to use the database and searchlight, encouraging them to test the tools out as they move through the space. The Head Researcher provides a few facts about the shallow parts of the sea floor that Hydro-Explorers are currently in, giving a conservation tip while Hydro-Explorers take in the beauty before moving into the next area.

RIDE – THE DESCENT

Now moving into a show building, the DIVE appears to descend through the use of bubbles and water trapped between the glass windows of the vehicle. Hydro-Explorers feel like they are diving deeper as the track dips slightly and bubbles rush up outside. Practical props and set pieces on the sides become less visible as the darker depths set in. The Head Researcher indicates that the searchlights will be useful down here, reminding Hydro-Explorers that exploration may lead to exciting discoveries.

RIDE – THE TRAWL

In the darkness, Hydro-Explorers see static props of large coral reefs on the sea floor. Screens simulate the water around the DIVE, showing small schools of fish swimming past in the dark. The Head Researcher's voice comes through, warning Hydro-Explorers that a commercial fishing boat has been spotted in the area and to avoid any trawls. Just as the transmission finishes, a practical prop of a large trawl comes down from the show building ceiling and captures the DIVE, the tilt of the vehicle combined with the on-screen visuals causing the feeling of sweeping the vehicle backwards. They've been caught in a trawl!

Display screens and indicators at the front of the DIVE flash and glitch as the trawl drags it along. A transmission crackles through, the Head Researcher is clearly trying to disguise panic in their voice, but vows to get them free. Escape maneuvers are taken via tilting of the stationary vehicle in front of a screen to try and break free, finally succeeding. Now free, Hydro-Explorers take in the scene as the sediment of the dredged-up sea floor settles. Left in the net's destructive wake are sections of broken coral, strewn across the simulated floor.

RIDE – THE DEEP

Descending further still, Hydro-Explorers are plunged into total darkness. The bubbles in the glass clear, and the water lights up like stars in the night sky. Simulated bioluminescent organisms swim by, leaving beautiful streaks of neon blues and greens dancing alongside the DIVE. A glowing vampire squid floats by, thrilling Hydro-Explorers. The effect is supported by practical lights around the building, casting glows on the surfaces inside the DIVE.

The Head Researcher tells Hydro-Explorers to use their searchlights heavily in this area; the coelacanth lives at these deep depths. Wandering lights reveal small thrill moments for Hydro-Explorers, illuminating practical models of large anglerfish with open mouths full of sharp teeth, giant squid, and large eels. A strange looking creature known as the goblin shark is spotted swimming through an old shipwreck that has been lost to the sea.

The navigation display begins to flash red, and the instruments whir loudly; the DIVE is getting close to something large! The Head Researcher identifies it as a large cave, excitedly explaining that they may find a coelacanth in there as they often hide inside.

RIDE – THE CAVE IN

The DIVE moves into the rocky, dark cave show set. Hydro-Explorers use their searchlights, but the cave appears empty. Suddenly, a loud rumbling is heard, and small simulated bits of rock begin to fall from the ceiling and walls. The Head Researcher breaks in with a message: there's a deep-sea drill nearby, and its motion is weakening the structure of the cave. Through the combined use of a screen and stationary tilting of the vehicle, Hydro-Explorers feel like they are

racing to get out in time, speeding through the cave and taking evasive maneuvers to narrowly avoid falling rocks.

It comes to a stop at a cave in, all hopes of getting out lost. Just then, a loud thud is heard to the side, the DIVE turning to reveal a rock moving, creating a way out! As the vehicle moves towards the exit, something large swims by, jostling Hydro-Explorers a bit.

A flash of a large blue body and multiple fins goes by; it looks like the coelacanth! The DIVE quickly follows it out of the cave, moving into the final section of the track.

RIDE – THE COELACANTH

Through the use of screens, the coelacanth swims around the moving DIVE, as if checking it out thoughtfully. Once the first Hydro-Explorer hits the identification on their database, a transmission from the Head Researcher comes through, excitedly explaining that the Hydro-Explorers did it! A celebratory mood is felt throughout the DIVE, the screen at the front of the DIVE displaying a new message:

MISSION COMPLETE!

The coelacanth swims away, off to find a new cave to call home.

RIDE – THE ASCENT

Bubbles slip by outside of the windows once again, indicating the ascent of the DIVE. The Head Researcher talks to Hydro-Explorers as the vehicle moves to Unload, stating brief facts about the coelacanth as well as explaining current efforts to help save deep-sea environments and the creatures that live there. As the vehicle begins to dock, the Head Researcher gives Hydro-Explorers a quick and easy conservation tip to share with others and inspire them to learn more.

UNLOAD – DOCK

Back on the docks, Dock Workers assist Hydro-Explorers with disembarking the DIVEs. The smell of salty sea air and a slight breeze hit Hydro-Explorers once again, a contrast from the more sterile scent inside the vehicle. Researchers and Tour Guides stand by to direct Hydro-Explorers towards the exit, clapping as they walk by.

EXIT – HALLWAY

Walking through a hallway similar to the one in the queue, Hydro-Explorers see more informational graphics and bulletin boards. This hallway is lined with offices, some with frosted windows and others clear. Silhouettes move beyond the frosted windows with sounds to match; one such room appears to contain a large pile of crabs run amok. Peering in the clear windows, Hydro-Explorers catch glimpses of break rooms, conference rooms, and personal

offices. Those who look closely may spot a few more pesky stray crabs hanging out in other rooms.

EXIT – AQUARIUM

The hallway leads into a large two-story space with low-lighting and prominent air conditioning to represent the calm feeling of being underwater. Hydro-Explorers watch the fish and creatures they observed on the DIVE, now in the context of the full tank. Carved out viewing spots on both floors extend an invitation to sit down, relax, and enjoy the peaceful environment.

Smaller carved out rooms on both floors house more intimate tanks with creatures such as seahorses and corals. Exploration stations and small hands-on activities showing the impacts of conversation are found throughout the space, reinforcing the importance of saving the oceans.

At certain times of day, educational outreach programs are available to answer questions, provide demonstrations, and inspire action.

EXIT – GIFT SHOP

All roads lead to the gift shop, which in this case also leads to the exit. Transoceanic Expeditions and SEA branded merchandise fill racks and wall displays in the bright, colorful shop. In addition to apparel, drinkware, plushies, pins, and toys relating to both the coelacanth and other marine life featured in the ride are available. A body pillow-sized coelacanth plush is one of the hottest items in the store! Hydro-Explorers are encouraged to bring home mementos of their adventure, as a portion of proceeds go to conservation efforts.

Tasty, pre-packaged treats and drinks are available for purchase to reinvigorate Hydro-Explorers after their exciting adventure. Short messages and tips of how individuals can help with deep-sea conservation line the walls, giving Hydro-Explorers the knowledge to spread with everyone they know.