

Eavesdrop on Whale Conversations on This First-of-its-kind Cruise Through Alaska This Summer

Make your "Finding Nemo" dreams a reality.



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CREDIT: COURTESY OF AMERICAN QUEEN VOYAGES

[American Queen Voyages](#) is inviting travelers to hop aboard a cruise from [British Columbia](#) to [Alaska](#) – and eavesdrop on some whales along the way.

In February, the company announced a sailing in partnership with Dr. Michelle Fournet, director of the [Sound Science Research Collective](#), an acclaimed acoustic ecologist, and a leading expert in the communication of North Pacific humpback whales. As part of the partnership, Fournet and the Sound Science Research Collective, a marine conservation non-profit, will collaborate with the American Queen Voyages expedition team and California Polytechnic State University researchers for the inaugural Alaska expedition season of the recently debuted *Ocean Victory*.



CREDIT: COURTESY OF SOUND SCIENCE RESEARCH COLLECTIVE

On the boat, the scientists and guests will have access to the Sound Science Collective hydrophones, which will be used onboard to listen to the voices of Alaska's whales in real time. Guests will also learn and participate in whale tracking through fluke identification by uploading their own photos from the vessel to a scientific database following the whale's seasonal movements.

"When they are out on the water with me, there are a few different things that guests are likely to hear," Fournet tells *Travel + Leisure* exclusively. "Our first aim is always to have people hear the voices of humpback whales, but they're not always talking. So sometimes what people are going to get to hear is going to be the exact same thing that the whales do. The environment in itself – the crashing of the waves and the talking of the fish. And then they are going to hear us. I think it will be a real awareness for people to understand what we sound like underwater. But the goal is certainly to listen to the voices of whales, seals, fish, and whatnot."

For the partnership, Fournet will sail on the May 6 maiden voyage from Vancouver to Sitka, Alaska on her way into the field for the summer. And fellow Sound Science Collective scientist Andy Rogan will join the Jun. 17 voyage. Guests will have the chance to be active contributors to their research throughout the season, as they learn firsthand from these scientists while onboard, with a rich itinerary that includes a series of enriching lectures and thrilling expedition activities.



"At American Queen Voyages, we strive to deliver extraordinary experiences for our guests and this partnership with Michelle and the Sound Science Research Collective team will offer unique encounter travel experiences," Shawn Bierdz, chief operating officer of American Queen Voyages, shared in a statement released to T+L. "I look forward to welcoming the team onboard and seeing our guests learn firsthand from the world's leading researchers directly in the field."

As for the ship itself, American Queen Voyages' *Ocean Victory* accommodates only 186 guests, for a more intimate, personalized experience. It is expected to sail 12 and 13-day journeys through lesser-traveled regions of Alaska and offer up-close exploration of Alaska by deploying kayaks and Zodiacs with expedition guides. On the excursions, guests can not only listen for the whales, but also look out for wildlife from sliding observation platforms.

Beyond the excursions, guests can also take part in discussions with First Nation leaders and lectures featuring Fournet and her team.

"In lectures with me and the Sound Science team, what people can expect to understand is a deep dive into how animals like whales and seals interpret the natural world," Fournet says. "How do they communicate with each other? When you're an animal that lives in a medium almost entirely devoid of light, how do you find each other? How do you know who you're talking to?"

In short, Fournet adds that "guests onboard will get a whale's eye perspective of the world." Learn more about the sailings, which are available from May through Sept. 2022, [here](#).