



# UAE Resident Collects Samples from the Challenger Deep

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Dubai-based explorer Hamish Harding broke new ground earlier this month, when he and his American counterpart Victor Vescovo plumbed the depths of the Mariana Trench in a two-person submersible. By traversing the entire length of the Challenger Deep, the pair set a new Guinness World Record for the longest distance travelled at full ocean depth.

Aside from making history, their mission was also undertaken to collect samples from the sea floor. Particles of plastic pollution have [already been found in some of the world's remotest locations](#) and Harding's mission is expected to find more evidence of human activity at the deepest point of the Earth's surface. Meanwhile, the duo is also hopeful of discovering new lifeforms which may even hold clues to the secret of the origin of all life on the planet.

## Representing the Emirates

At almost 11,000 metres underwater, the Challenger Deep is more than 13 times further away from the surface of the ocean than the tip of the Burj Khalifa is from the soil it is built upon. For that reason, only a select few individuals have ever visited it in the entire history of the Earth. After the excursion, Harding will become just the 19<sup>th</sup> person ever to have plumbed those depths. For comparison, 24 people have landed on or orbited the Moon, while thousands of people have ascended to the tallest point on the planet, Mount Everest.

"It is truly inspiring to see the UAE make such great strides in space exploration with the recent launch of its Emirates Mars Mission and Hope Probe," [explained Harding](#). "My journey to the deepest depths of the ocean aims to map another uncharted territory and I hope it will contribute in some small part to the UAE's reputation of being a place where people push human ambition to the limits."

## Like father like son

Although Harding's son is just 13 years old and therefore too young to accompany him to the depths of the ocean in the two-person submersible Limiting Factor, he monitored his father's progress from the expedition yacht DSSV Pressure Drop. Giles, who is currently in Year 9 at Dubai College, has previously broken the record for the youngest person to reach the South Pole last year. He continued his



schoolwork onboard the remote vessel while simultaneously documenting Harding and Vescovo's voyage on Instagram.

The vessel in which the two intrepid explorers descended to the Challenger Deep is the first of its kind designed to withstand extreme pressures for prolonged periods of time. It is capable of taking up to 100,000 tonnes of pressure, which is roughly the same as 8,000 double-decker buses or 50 jumbo jets resting atop it. It's approximately 1,200 more intense than normal sea pressures, explaining why an entirely new deep-sea submergence vehicle (DSSV) was required to undertake the journey.