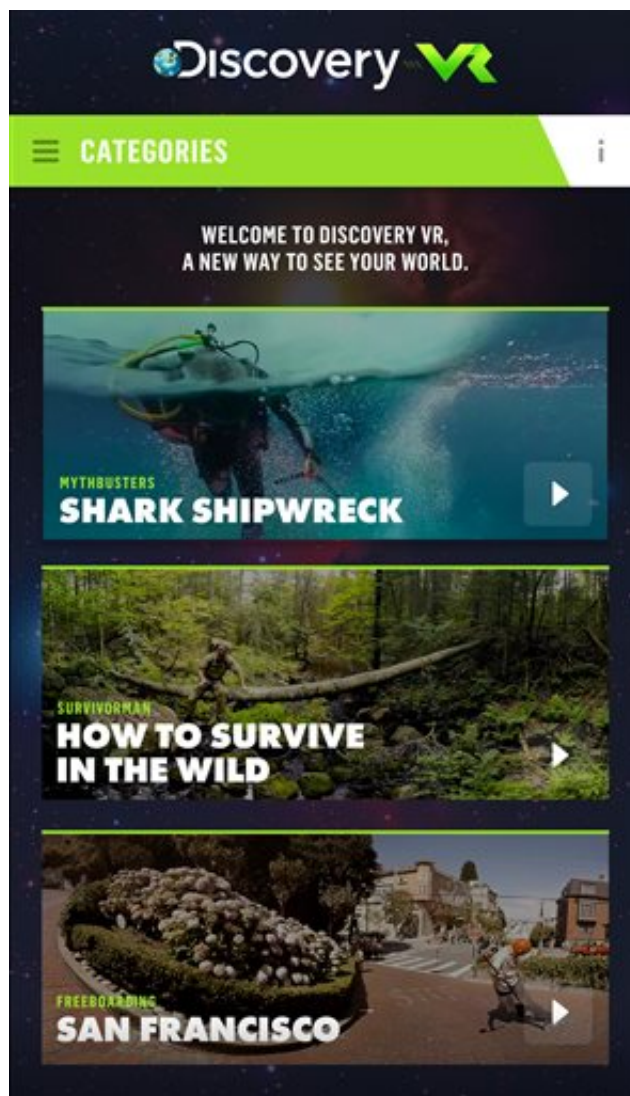


Sharks, skateboards, survival debut on Discovery VR network

August 27 2015, by Ryan Nakashima



This images provided by Discovery Communications shows a screen shot of Discovery virtual reality network, Discovery VR, a fledgling service that is testing the limits and capabilities of the new immersive format. (Discovery

Communications via AP)

Discovery is unleashing the first videos for its virtual reality network, Discovery VR, a fledgling service that is testing the limits and capabilities of the immersive format.

The videos debuting Thursday on DiscoveryVR.com, YouTube and on Android and iPhone apps, reveal some of the promise of the medium, which covers every angle you could possibly look and is navigable by moving a smartphone around you or even clicking and dragging the viewing angle around with a mouse.

In the short video, "Shark Shipwreck," sharks swim around and above you—one even bumps the camera rig—as a narrator explains that the scent of food is being released by a diver nearby. Details that might not be obvious, like the parasitic fish that swim along the underbellies of sharks cruising overhead, are revealed when you swivel and look around.

In "Freeboarding: San Francisco," viewers are put on the helmet of a skateboarder cruising down San Francisco's famously winding Lombard Street. Looking backward or staring at fans lining the road doesn't get you into an accident.

And you might be surprised at which direction outdoorsman Les Stroud enters the picture in "How to Survive the Wild," because the forest scenery and burbling brook are entrancing on their own before he walks in unnoticed and starts discussing the day's survival lesson.

Conal Byrne, Discovery Communication Inc.'s senior vice president of digital media, says the point of the project is to determine what works in the emerging format, including finding out what could make someone

feel ill or disoriented.

"It needs to be repeated that we're experimenting a lot," Byrne says.
"There are borders and boundaries that we're really going to try to push."

In addition to computers and mobile devices, the Discovery VR content can also be viewed using virtual reality headset devices, such as Google Cardboard and Samsung Gear VR, which are on sale now, as well as Facebook's Oculus Rift, which is expected early next year.

Some content will be linked to existing shows such as "Survivorman," "Gold Rush" and "MythBusters" and others are original creations that will exist in categories like the thrill-seeking Adventure and placid Planet. Discovery VR plans to unveil new content every week at least for the next 12 months, Byrne says.

More information: Freeboarding: San Francisco video, bit.ly/1Jzc82G

Pacific Sunset: Half Moon Bay video, bit.ly/1V7DBwg

MythBusters: Shark Shipwreck video, bit.ly/1IduzEB

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Citation: Sharks, skateboards, survival debut on Discovery VR network (2015, August 27)
retrieved 26 April 2024 from
<https://phys.org/news/2015-08-sharks-skateboards-survival-debut-discovery.html>

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