

The submarine is truly impressive to look at. The "Neptun" is approximately 30 metres in length. Unlike submarines of like purpose being produced in capitalist countries, the Severodvinsk submarine offers passengers total reliability - reliability with plenty to spare. One fact will illustrate this. In the event of something unexpected happening, the Soviet submarine will surface in 30 seconds. And while the "Atlantic" can accommodate 20 tourists on board at one time, the "Neptun" can handle twice as many. The "Neptun's" first dive lasted three hours, but regular tourist excursions, once they begin, will last one and half hours. During this span of time the tourist submarine can descend to a depth of several dozen metres. On the first occasion, 16 metres were all that were needed to convince one of ship's promising future.

What are the plans for utilizing this unusual submarine? There are a number of possibilities. One of these - the most realistic - is leasing. Businessmen in a number of countries, especially in Saudi Arabia, are prepared to pay about 1.5 million dollars a month to lease the ship. In Finland and Japan an hour's voyage underwater runs to between 50 and 150 dollars. But for the time being, it is too early to speak about how and where the "Neptun" will be used since trials are not yet complete.

Chief builder Yurii Nikolaevich Grechkov of the shipyard was kind enough to invite me inside the submarine. What once would have seemed unthinkable has now happened: I am getting to meet the crew of the "Neptun". To be sure, the crew is very small - only three people. The captain is pilot A.V. Shaposhnikov. The technical crew will be on the shore.

"It's all very simple," explains Anatolii Vladimirovich, surveying his domain. "In this lounge tourists will enjoy the delights of the underwater kingdom."

The lounge is very comfortable and cozy. There are forty-two easy chairs and 22 portholes with a diameter of 65 centimetres. On the day I visited the "Neptun" there was no deep dive. The water in the Dvina has been unpleasant to see for a long time. But since it is proposed to operate the submarine in southern waters, there