

Jay Sargent Takes Discovery Channel on an Adventure

Through her relationship with dolphins, this horsewoman and trainer has become a spokesperson for the magic of animal and human communication.

In a follow-up interview after we shared Jay Sargent's story about swimming with dolphins (November 2020), she updates us on her upcoming Discovery Channel project.

Kristin Rover: How did Discovery Channel hear about your story?

Jay Sargent: A friend of mine who was on the island, David Greene, was contacted by Discovery Channel, and they asked him who he knew that had a close relationship with JoJo, and he said, "That would be Jay."

I met David through JoJo. He was paddle boarding and saw some dolphins and found my blog and emailed me. He started coming out a lot to swim with the dolphins.

They hand-picked four people out of the whole world who have these kinds of relationships with animals. They thought it was a pretty amazing, cool relationship.

KR: What is it that makes the relationship special?

JS: It's hard to explain, really, but having a dolphin come up and look you in the eye as if to say, "Where have you been? It's good to see you" is pretty wonderful. It's nice that [JoJo] remembers me and we have the relationship we have. He's introduced me to his friends and that makes it particularly special.

KR: Tell us more about JoJo.

JS: He's a very playful guy. I would say he's in his late 40s. There are stories about him that are just nuts, and I keep hearing more. He used to move people's anchors. There was one lady he didn't like, and he would dunk her. He has a sense of humor, this dolphin. I've seen them all play; they're funny.

KR: How did the filming process work?

JS: First, they came here [to Rhode Island] in May and interviewed John (Bahret, Sargent's husband) and me. They came to



Jay Sargent regularly swims with JoJo and his dolphin friends in between her time training horses and riders.

COURTESY OF JAY SARGENT

the house, and we went to the barn to learn more about my relationship with horses, and that was really fun.

The waiting period [until the trip to Turks and Caicos] was because of dialysis; I can't go more than two days without it. They only have six [dialysis] chairs on the whole island. Plus, COVID-19 and all of the restrictions—we figured it all out, and we went in late July and August with their crew.

Ten people were there. One person organized where we would be and when, what food we were going to have. There were sound guys and drones; there was so much equipment it was crazy. They were all super nice and friendly.

I think they're going to do a series. I know it's going to be an hour long. One show is about a kangaroo, and one is about a cheetah.

KR: What was it like filming with the dolphins?

JS: It was an amazing, amazing production, and luckily the dolphins were great.

We found JoJo the first day. He does this thing where he comes behind the boat and follows the drag behind it. The next day we didn't see any dolphins.

I kept saying to them, "They're dolphins, and it's their world." I felt like I had prepped them. I could see their faces getting longer and longer, so I was nervous about it, but all those times I go down, after all these years, he always knows me. They don't forget who their friends are, like a lot of animals. Animals remember.

The next day JoJo felt like swimming with me. He came right up, and we had our little heart-to-heart, and it was wonderful. That's what I live for, but the boat with the camera crew wasn't close.

Then, Scooter and Bo swam with me, and that was great. There was a guy with an underwater camera, so they got footage of me with the dolphins.



COURTESY OF JAY SARGENT

“They hand-picked four people out of the whole world who have these kinds of relationships with animals,” said horsewoman Jay Sargent of her Discovery Channel project about human-animal communication.

The coolest part was the last day. I was swimming with a mother and baby and JoJo came right up to me and swam right behind me. For only being there for a few days we really lucked out. The dolphins couldn’t have been any better. They were wonderful.

KR: How did you have to manage your dialysis and treatments when you were in Turks and Caicos?

JS: I had to do dialysis three times while we were there, 8 to 11 p.m., which made for a very long night.

The good part was I felt pretty good after that. Chemo knocks you right out. I’m on two different types of chemo, but here’s the good news: My numbers finally went down significantly. It doesn’t mean they will stay there, but it’s good news.

KR: How has swimming with the dolphins benefitted you as you’ve been fighting cancer?

JS: My oncologist really wants me to go to the island. Swimming is good for my back but also for my well-being. I went one

time in 2019, but then I got sick and had pneumonia, so it had been a really long time. This was the first time since that I felt like, for a few moments, I didn’t have cancer. It was just wonderful. The dolphins go slow and hang with me, which is polite of them—just to feel like I’m healthy for a few

minutes was huge.

KR: What were you hoping for the film crew to gain from their experience with you and the dolphins?

JS: For me to have the ability to swim with dolphins and show them what goes on in their world—I

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believe others don’t get that opportunity. I see them play and fight and do all kinds of stuff that not everybody gets to see. I may not be a scientist, but I get to witness things that other people don’t get to see, and I find that absolutely fascinating.

As of our publication date, there has been no announcement about the air date for this Discovery Channel program. You can follow along with Jay and JoJo and see any updates on Sargent’s website and blog: jojoandjay.com.