Virtual island could revolutionize tourist trade sector

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Three-dimensional versions of Mediterranean islands will be updated virtually automatically with current information from a range of public and private databases. The European research project may launch a "revolution" in the tourist trade sector.

With MedIsolae-3D you will be able to "fly over" Mediterranean islands and swoop down when something catches your attention. "Landing" on the beach or a village square, you will be able to move about, getting a feel for the shops, restaurants and attractions. You can make purchases and reserve tables. You can find a hotel - and if you like it you can book in. If you don't find what you want, you can simply "swoop up" into the air once more and try somewhere else. Of course, you will do all this without stepping away from the computer on your desk.

MedIsolae-3D is a project that combined software designed for aircraft landing simulations with orthophotography and [satellite images](#) of the islands, as well as public data such as digital terrain models, maps and tourist services to create the portal to the 3D island experience. It has capitalised on the LANDING project that was also funded by the Aviation Sector of the EC/RTD programme.

The plan is to link the virtual-visiting tool to web-geoplatforms such as [Google Earth](#), MS [Virtual Earth](#), or ESRI ArcGlobe to make it available to people across the globe. The EU-funded MedIsolae-3D project planned to deliver the service to more than 100 European Mediterranean islands - territories of Greece, Cyprus, France, Italy, Malta and Spain offer platforms for island [visualisation](#).

Combining multi-sources in one

One of the biggest challenges for the MedIsolae-3D team was to take data from local governments and other providers in a range of formats and data standards, and to use this data to produce a system capable of interoperating its sources to deliver a single virtual visiting service.

MedIsolae-3D is an EU-funded project and it builds on the recent development of Inspire, a standardised Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI) for Europe. Inspire, backed by an EU Directive creates a standard that allows the integration of spatial information services across the Union. Once standardised, users can access local and global level social services, in an interoperable way.

The result of the combined datasets must be seamless for the user as they move from satellite generated images above the islands and onto the island's roads and streets.

Once the MedIsolae-3D framework is in place, it can work in

combination with a range of spatial data services to aid tourism, transportation and other money-earners for the island economies, but it can also provide services for health and disaster planning, the environment, and policy-making.

Preparing for commercial launch

At the moment, MedIsolae-3D is in a pre-commercial state, according to Professor Marc Bonazountas from the National Technical University of Athens, and project coordinator. He is also a part-owner of Epsilon International SA, the company that intends to exploit the innovations developed in MedIsolae-3D.

"There is a large number of islands and if you want to offer a product to the market, you can't do it simply with one island, you have to do it with a large number. That is what we are investigating now. We want to package this in a cheap way to get money for these islands."

A pilot has been built using data from the Greek Island of Santorini. The project team is in discussions with five local prefectures which have responsibility for the government of over 50 islands. Once the system has been completed, standardised data can be delivered more or less automatically into Medisolae-3D to create or update 3D images. A spin-off product has already been developed - www.yachting123.com - that provides boating enthusiasts with information and views of marina facilities and services in island ports.

  More information: MedIsolae-3D project - www.medisolae-3d.eu/

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