Space first: Live 3-D images from orbit

August 17 2011

The International Space Station (ISS) flies over the North Caspian Sea in 2005. On August 6, NASA astronaut Ron Garan produced the first live 3-D video images from space when he used a stereoscopic camera to film the inside of the ISS and streamed the images live to ESA's research and technology centre in the Netherlands, it said.

Astronauts have produced the first live 3-D video images in the 50-year history of space travel, the European Space Agency (ESA) said on Wednesday.

On August 6, NASA astronaut Ron Garan used a stereoscopic camera to film the inside of the International Space Station (ISS) and streamed the images live to ESA's research and technology centre in the Netherlands, it said.

Viewers wore polarised glasses similar to those used in cinemas "and

were amazed by the quality of the images," ESA said in a press release.

The experiment, using a shoebox-sized gadget called the Erasmus Recording Binocular (ERB-2), should have a practical use on the ISS.

"The camera could also be used in the future outside the ISS to support the astronauts' spacewalks or other critical robotic operations," said ERB-2 coordinator Massimo Sabbatini.

"This really felt like being in space with an astronaut by your side."

The agency plans to post ERB-2 images on a new ESA YouTube 3-D channel.

In the meantime, it has posted small clip on its website (www.esa.int/esaHS/SEMWLEOT9RG_index_0.html). Viewers need red-and-blue stereo glasses to get the 3-D effect.