

Google Earth eclipses one billion downloads

October 5 2011, by Glenn Chapman



View of the African and European continents on Google Earth on a computer screen in Paris 2005. Google Earth software has been downloaded more than one billion times, and that stellar achievement was marked Wednesday with a website showcasing ways the interactive replica of the planet is used.

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OneWorldManyStories.com features 40 real-world tales of how people around the globe have used [Google](#) Earth to follow dreams, defend nature, explore distant places, or learn about the planet.

Of course, Google Earth maps let people travel virtually to locales where such stories play out.

"Google Earth is probably one of the most downloaded applications of

all time in terms of raw numbers," product manager Peter Birch told AFP.

To provide context, Google Earth and Maps vice president of engineering Brian McClendon pointed out that a billion hours ago humans were living in the Stone Age and that a billion minutes ago the [Roman Empire](#) was flourishing.

"We're proud of our one billion milestone, but we're even more amazed at the way people have used Google Earth to explore the world," McClendon said.

"When we founded Keyhole, Inc. back in 2001 we never imagined our geospatial technology would be used by people in so many unexpected ways," he continued.

McClendon was a co-founder of startup Keyhole, which Google bought in 2004 and turned into the free online Earth atlas launched in June of the following year.

The service weaves satellite images and aerial photos into 3D interactive graphics which people can zoom into, starting from space and homing in on buildings or plots of land.

Google Earth stories include that of a professor from the University of Western Australia who used it to discover [ancient tombs](#) and geoglyphs without leaving Perth.

Professor David Kennedy scrutinized Google Earth recreations of thousands of square kilometers (miles) in Saudi Arabia and Jordan, discerning clues to the whereabouts of archeological treasures.

Retired English teacher Jerome Burg created Google Lit Trips, which

uses Google Earth to let readers follow paths set in famous books such as "The Travels of Marco Polo" and "The Odyssey" by Homer.

Renowned oceanographer Sylvia Earle takes Google Earth users under the seas to rally allies in a quest to stop widespread devastation of marine life.

Conservation group Save the Elephants uses the Internet Age atlas to track and safeguard magnificent pachyderms.

Google Earth has been used to help clear land mines, rebuild earthquake-shattered towns, stop mining operations from blasting off mountain tops, teaching geography to children, or simply see one's home from above.

A US couple living in Ireland even used the online atlas to research an ideal place in Oregon to plant a vineyard.

They didn't see the property in person until it was time to close the deal that led to the founding of their dream winery, Grande Dalles.

"Nobody anticipated all the things people would do with [Google Earth](#)," Birch said.

"It's a little hard to know where people are going to take it next," he added. "The more you can raise awareness of how we impact the world, the more there will be a chance for change."

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