Internet allows virtual Giza tour in 3D

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The pyramids in the Giza plateau in the outskirts of Cairo are pictured in 2009. Vicarious travellers and students of history can take a virtual stroll through the vast necropolis build by the ancient Egyptians in the Giza Plateau, thanks to a 3D Internet project launched this week.

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The interactive recreation, to be found at www.3ds.com/giza3D , was put together by French design company Dassault Systems with material from the archives of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Massachusetts.

"With a simple domestic computer, the public can now discover the marvels of ancient Egypt," said Dassault employee Mehdi Tayoubi, including the insides of some of the pyramids.

"Users will be able to roam throughout the necropolis, visit the carefully restored tombs, access shafts and corridors, as well as browse all the information on the occupants of each burial chamber, including the dates of discovery and objects collected," added a statement.

The plateau, situated on the outskirts of Cairo, constitutes a vast necropolis spread over two kilometres (over one mile) from east to west and 1.5 kilometres from north to south.

It includes the great pyramids where the kings lay buried, flanked by smaller ones for their queens.

"The Giza Plateau is... subject to threats from all sides, whether from rampant urban sprawl, the elements or even vandalism," the statement said.

"This raises two seemingly incompatible questions: how can this heritage be preserved, and how can it be shared with as many people as possible?"

The answer: the Internet.

The project is also aimed at use in the classroom.