

## **In 360-degree vistas, Google Street View delivers road trips through 5 Calif. national parks**

TRACIE CONE Associated Press

FRESNO, Calif. (AP) -- Imagine being the only driver on a two-lane asphalt highway as the stark desolation of Death Valley National park passes on each side and the crystal blue sky stretches up from the horizon.

Or picture a tight left turn on Yosemite's Glacier Point Road where in the east iconic Half Dome suddenly appears against a backdrop of the snow-capped High Sierra.

The Google Street View service that has brought us Earth as we might not be able to afford to see it - as well criticism that some scenes along its 5 million miles of the globe's roadways invade privacy - this month has turned its 360-degree cameras on road trips through five national parks in California.

"Everyone likes to take a road trip through a national park," said Evan Rapoport, the Street View project manager, who was inspired by a cross-country camping trip he took after graduation. "Bringing unique places to people that they might not go in the real world is unique to Street View."

The company sought permission from the Department of the Interior before filming in May as drivers hit the road in vehicles rigged with 15-lens cameras that point in all directions, Rapoport said. The camera fires off still images at intervals depending upon the speed of the vehicle, then custom software blurs faces and stitches all of them together into an ever-advancing 360-degree panorama.

Click right and see orange-hued boulders formed from cooling magma. Click up and squint into that fireball of a sun hovering over the southeast California desert in Joshua Tree National Park, which is featured with the others along with the forest-dense Sequoia & Kings Canyon and Redwood National Park at Crescent City near the Oregon border.

Stop in the middle of the virtual road and do a 360 without worrying about being rear-ended by a ubiquitous RV.

The project was part of a Street View "refresh" of California that involved a trip down Highway 1 along the Big Sur coast, including the famous Bixby Creek Bridge that spans the mouth of a coast-hugging canyon.

Is it part of a master plan to capture people in a virtual world?

"I sure hope not," Rapoport said. "Part of our goal is to inspire people to see these places in person."

As national park attendance continues to decline, officials welcome this unique virtual visit as a way to keep fans connected and inspire others to experience the sights in person.

"I often wish we could get the word out on some of the park system's lesser known wonders," said Candace Tinkler, chief interpreter at Redwoods, with its massive trees that can live 2,000 years and soar up to 350 feet. "This is a wonderful opportunity for people around the world to connect to these places."

The parks join other Street View features like a snowy glide down one of the ski runs at Squaw Valley of 1960 Olympics fame, or a walk around the gardens of the Louvre museum in Paris. Rapoport would not say whether other U.S. national parks are being considered for this special look.

Joe Zarki at Joshua Tree says the virtual drive could be used to show tourists at the 1,200-square-mile park's peripherally located visitors' centers that the flat expanse of desert changes to a landscape of boulders and the namesake towering yuccas within an hour's drive.

With summer temperatures hovering near 120 degrees and heat stroke warnings common, this time of year only the hearty visit Death Valley, which at 282 feet below sea level boasts the lowest locale in the U.S.

"We're often the forgotten big park," said spokeswoman Cheryl Chipman of the 3,000-square-mile park that is the largest in the lower 48. "I think it will make people want to come to the park. It's a cool place, but it is remote. When they see those photos and the crystal clear blue skies they're going to want to come here - especially in the middle of the winter."

----

Online:

Yosemite National Park - <http://bit.ly/OVcQ9M> [1]

Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks: <http://bit.ly/NBuxOq> [2]

Death Valley National Park - <http://bit.ly/PSx0FO> [3]

Redwood National Park - <http://bit.ly/MbNCJD> [4]

Joshua Tree National Park - <http://bit.ly/OjnAUp> [5]

----

Follow the reporter on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/TConeAP> [6]

[© 2012 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.](#) [7] Learn more about our [Privacy](#)

# In 360-degree vistas, Google Street View delivers road trips through 5 Calif

Published on Electronic Component News (<http://www.ecnmag.com>)

---

[Policy](#) [8] and [Terms of Use](#) [9].

## Source URL (retrieved on 04/26/2015 - 1:14am):

[http://www.ecnmag.com/news/2012/07/360-degree-vistas-google-street-view-delivers-road-trips-through-5-calif-national-parks?qt-video\\_of\\_the\\_day=0](http://www.ecnmag.com/news/2012/07/360-degree-vistas-google-street-view-delivers-road-trips-through-5-calif-national-parks?qt-video_of_the_day=0)

## Links:

[1] <http://bit.ly/OVcQ9M>

[2] <http://bit.ly/NBuxOq>

[3] <http://bit.ly/PSx0FO>

[4] <http://bit.ly/MbNCJD>

[5] <http://bit.ly/OjnAUp>

[6] <http://twitter.com/TConeAP>

[7] [http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US\\_GOOGLE\\_NATIONAL\\_PARKS?SITE=MA&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT#70d3de3e-cec4-4c93-a4c8-61dc9bb683ae](http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US_GOOGLE_NATIONAL_PARKS?SITE=MA&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT#70d3de3e-cec4-4c93-a4c8-61dc9bb683ae)

[8] <http://hosted2.ap.org/APDEFAULT/privacy>

[9] <http://hosted2.ap.org/APDEFAULT/terms>