

16 October 2007

By: Marius Oiaga, Technology News Editor

Miami
Virtual Earth

[38.1 Terra Update to Virtual Earth Introduces Birds Eye Navigation in 3D](#)

A concept similar to Photosynth

Microsoft has fed a 38.1 TB update to Virtual Earth and with it introduced a new feature dubbed Birds Eye Navigation in 3D. In the video embedded at the bottom, courtesy of the Virtual Earth team, you will be able to see Birds Eye Navigation in 3D in action. The update is an integer part of the overall overhauling of the Windows Live suite of products and services. And in this context, as the platform that powers Live maps, Virtual Earth could not have been ignored. The largest volume of the 38.1 TB update is of course represented by Oblique Imagery (Bird's Eye), Ortho Imagery (GlobeXplorer) and Satellite Imagery (Geoeye). But the added functionality, such as the ability to seamlessly navigate maps in three dimensions is worth checking out. "As you navigate the virtual world the camera is snapped to the same parameters the real-world camera had at the time the scene was captured. As you rotate, you will first see virtual 3D buildings and terrain just as the corresponding scene is loaded and overlaid. if you are zoomed out past a single image, a series of white outlines hint at where to click to bring in a new image, very much like the Photosynth UI. smooth camera tweening links the scenes creating an amazing tapestry of the highest resolution aerial image online," revealed a member of the [Virtual Earth team](#). The Birds Eye Navigation in 3D experience can be enjoyed from both Internet Explorer and Firefox, as Microsoft delivered support for both browsers. And indeed, the Redmond company borrowed concepts from Photosynth in order to offer a natural and fluid navigation model. And in this context, users will be able to recognize the same techniques for creating 3D mosaics from disparate images containing common elements in Birds Eye Navigation in 3D as in [Photosynth](#). "[With] birds eye images, because of the way they are captured, there is no easy way to stitch them at their edges without introducing nasty distortions. The result is that Birds eye imagery is viewed as discrete 'scenes' instead of 1 giant tapestry. when you navigate to the edge of the current scene, the most appropriate next scene is dynamically determined, then displayed. Since Birds eye imagery is captured from 4 angles, we have North, South, East and west views of each point on earth adding another dimension of complexity to navigation," explained the Virtual Earth team representative.