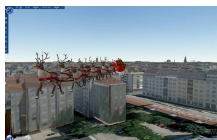


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By: Marius Oiaga, Technology News Editor



Virtual Earth 3D Santa Tracker
Microsoft

[Virtual Earth 3D Santa Tracker, Behind the Scenes](#)

The making of, courtesy of Microsoft

Ahead of Christmas, Microsoft introduced what it referred to as a [Virtual Earth Christmas experience](#), namely a 3D version of Santa's Village at the North Pole, along with a new Santa Tracker, all made available to users via the company's mapping, search, and location platform. Not only did the software giant put Santa's Village at the North Pole on the map in Virtual Earth, but it also allowed for users to navigate the Earth along with him. The application was created by [Chris Pendleton](#), Virtual Earth tech evangelist, Microsoft Live Search, using three dimensional models designed by Caligari.

"As Santa heads north for his annual slumber and we're all left with buyer's remorse and daunting credit card bills, we can now reflect on something positive: how Christmas was changed this year for the better with a 3D version of tracking Santa using [Microsoft Virtual Earth](#)." Pendleton stated.

"The North Pole Experience wasn't that hard - Tom [Grimes] (and his Caligari friends) built the models, I crunched the map tile overlays, and then wrote the code to pull everything together."

Pendleton chose to share the experience of building the [Virtual Earth 3D](#) Santa Tracker along with the code he wrote, revealing how he managed to overcome various issues, from time constraints to Santa's flight trajectory around the world.

In the end, the application relied heavily on raster tile overlays, 3D model importation and GeoRSS importation, as well as on customization, in order to have Santa travel all over Virtual Earth, and enable users to keep track of his journey.

"I thought the biggest challenge for me was going to be figuring out when to start Santa flying and when to end him, but it turned out the parsing of a GeoRSS file for customization was more of a challenge. However, I used quite a bit of Virtual Earth functionality, so I figured this was just as good a place to document some of it as any," Pendleton added, promising that he would top the 2008 Virtual Earth 3D Santa Tracker, come the 2009 holiday season.