

Google SA launches Street View



By [Issa Sikiti da Silva](#)

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In light of the 2010 FIFA World Cup and beyond, South Africans looking to explore their country, buy houses and see their potential neighbourhood, or international tourists looking to explore Africa's wonders, or any adventurer wanting to embark on a solo trip of discovery, will from now on use Street View, a new feature launched today, Tuesday, 1 September 2009, in Johannesburg by Google SA for its Google Maps.

The initiative has been launched in partnership with Toyota, which, through its Prius models, will in the coming weeks drive Google people around SA to take photographs of locations such as Joburg, Cape Town, Pretoria, Port-Elizabeth and Durban.



Google SA said Street View is a hugely popular feature of Google Maps that is already available in more than 100 metropolitan areas around the world. Street View allows users to virtually explore and navigate a neighbourhood through panoramic street-level images. It is also available in Google Earth and on Google Maps for Mobile.

Processed and stitched together

Images collected by the cars will be processed and carefully stitched together, a technological process that can take several months. They will be made available at a later date in Street View on Google Maps for SA.

In areas where Street View is available, one can access street-level imagery by zooming into the lowest level on Google Maps, or by dragging the orange "Pegman" icon on the left-hand side of the map onto a blue highlighted street.

Someone wanting to go out can also check out a restaurant before arriving, make travel plans, arrange meeting points, or get a helping hand with geography homework. House hunters can save time by exploring properties and their surrounding area in advance and also by looking up driving directions.



Businesses can also benefit from the Street View technology by embedding Google Maps directly into their sites for free, helping them to promote a chain of hotels or raise awareness about a local library or restaurant.

“Seeks to boost tourism”

Andrew Kirby, Toyota senior VP for sales and marketing, said, “We are excited about the project, which seeks to boost tourism and strengthen our presence in the region and grow awareness and understanding of technology in SA, especially as we are drawing near 2010.

“We firmly believe that Street View is the right vehicle to use because it is both fun and practical.”

“Collecting data and later processing it take several months but we will ensure that Street View is available as soon as possible. Google Street View is a very smart way of discovering the world like you have never seen before,” said Jaroslav Bengl, product manager for Google Maps Europe, Middle East and Africa.

“We have to take account of road conditions, traffic flows and weather but we will try to cover as many areas as we can. At the end of the day, we are satisfied that we could contribute to bringing such important information that will benefit local and

international communities,” Stephen Newton, country manager for Google SA, said.



“Available for free”

Asked how Street View will make money out of this, Newton said, “This is a big service we are making available for free, ensuring that local and international communities get hold of information - something Google does in its daily life.”

For more information on Street View and how it can be used for recreational purposes and by businesses, go to www.google.co.za/help/maps/streetview/faq.html.

ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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