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## Microsoft WorldWide Telescope launches

Google Sky rival goes live into public beta

by Amy-Mae Elliott published on 13 May 2008

Microsoft says the "final frontier got a bit closer" as the software giant officially launches the public beta of its WorldWide Telescope, which is now available at <http://www.worldwidetelescope.org>.

Very similar to Google Sky, WorldWide Telescope is a web app that brings together imagery from ground- and space-based observatories across the world to allow people to explore the night sky through their computers.

"The WorldWide Telescope is a powerful tool for science and education that makes it possible for everyone to explore the universe", said Bill Gates, chairman of Microsoft.

"By combining terabytes of incredible imagery and data with easy-to-use software for viewing and moving through all that information, the WorldWide Telescope opens the door to new ways to see and experience the wonders of space. Our hope is that it will inspire young people to explore astronomy and science, and help researchers in their quest to better understand the universe."

The application itself is a blend of software and Web 2.0 services created with the Microsoft Visual Experience Engine, which claims to allow "seamless panning and zooming around the heavens with rich image environments".

WorldWide Telescope stitches together terabytes of high-resolution images of celestial bodies and displays them in a way that relates to their actual position in the sky.

People can browse through the solar system, galaxy and beyond, or take advantage of a growing number of guided tours of the sky hosted



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by astronomers and educators at major universities and planetariums.