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GOOGLE HAS ITS EYE ON GOLD COAST NATURAL WONDERS

The Gold Coast has joined the likes of the Swiss Alps, the Eiffel Tower, Machu Picchu and Yosemite National Park’s El Capitan on Google Street View.

For the first time, tourists and nature lovers can venture off-road to explore 360 degree views of the region’s most beautiful and remote locations, with some only accessible by foot.

Over 40 world-class natural attractions have been captured with the Google Street View Trekker and will feature on Google Street View from today (9 April).

Hiking through natural wonders of heritage-listed rainforests Lamington and Springbrook National Parks might take weeks, but now it can be enjoyed at home or on-the-go, on screens of all sizes.

“Google Trekker means everyone can see our hikes and trails,” says Destination Gold Coast CEO, Martin Winter. “It provides a virtual view of some of our best walks and gives those with mobility concerns a chance to experience it too.”

“People who are considering travelling to the Gold Coast can now immerse themselves in what the destination truly has to offer – it’s the ultimate try-before-you-buy form of tourism.”

Tens of thousands of images of the Gold Coast were snapped by 15 camera lenses affixed to a backpack weighing around 18 kilograms. Shots are taken every 2.5 seconds then ‘stitched together’ to make panoramic views.

Destination Gold Coast undertook the project over a four-month period, becoming the first Queensland organisation to use the Trekker technology.

The Gold Coast catalogue will feature hidden gems including:

- South Stradbroke Island waterways, just off the Gold Coast and home to wildlife and pristine beaches
- Natural Bridge, a stunning rock formation amid Hinterland rainforest
- Purling Brook Falls, the longest waterfall on the Gold Coast complete with kilometres of walking trails
- Luke’s Bluff, a fabulous setting at O’Reilly’s Rainforest Resort in the Lamington National Park
- Attractions including pelican feeding at Ian Dipple Lagoon and bird feeding at Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary.
“People are experiential by nature so being able to showcase Australia’s most biodiverse city on one of the world’s largest platforms, provides us with a tool to connect travellers with natural assets waiting to be explored,” says Mr Winter.

The vision allows viewers to completely immerse themselves in location.

“You can be sitting at the base of Purling Brook Falls looking at the water cascading down and discovering the trail you could be walking if you drove 45 minutes from the foreshore at Broadbeach to the Gold Coast Hinterland.”

Footage of Australia’s number one holiday destination famous for its beaches and near year-round sunshine has also been included.

“Trekker is an off-road device but it’s not limited to hiking trails so we shot our beaches by putting the camera on an all-terrain vehicle and drove it from The Spit to Snapper Rocks (the home of the Quicksilver and Roxy Pro) before continuing on foot to the Point Danger on the New South Wales Border,” says Mr Winter.

“Walking the 42 kilometre stretch of coastline takes more than seven hours, but for the first time, it can be done virtually in a matter of minutes.”

The technology was first introduced in Australia in 2014, and was used to capture Sydney and its surrounds. Since then, it has been widely used across the country to capture national parks and other remote areas – even including the Great Barrier Reef and Uluru.

As Google continues to connect more consumers with more locations around the world – virtual tourism will become more important in attracting actual visitors onto the ground.

The launch of the Gold Coast gallery coincides with the April Commonwealth Games which boasts a global TV audience of 1.5 billion. The 360-degree vision of the Gold Coast is set to entice current and future visitors to venture to places literally off the beaten track.

The Gold Coast Google Street View Trekker gallery can be viewed here: https://www.google.com/streetview/#gold-coast-australia.

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NOTE: Destination Gold Coast Google Street View Trekker supporting imagery and video assets can be downloaded here: https://bit.ly/2qm9KrN. Credit images/video: Destination Gold Coast
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