Beat: Automobiles

Google adds Bulgaria, Russian cities to popular Street View feature

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USPA News - Internet search giant Google on Thursday introduced Bulgaria to its popular Street View feature on Google Maps. It also expanded its coverage to include nearly 200 new towns and cities in Russia and small parts of the United Kingdom.

Google Street View, which provides panoramic views at street level, is now available in 48 countries around the world. It comes just months after Google made its biggest Street View update ever, adding and updating more than 250,000 miles (402,000 kilometers) of road around the world. "Today we`re announcing a major expansion of Street View to make our maps of Europe more comprehensive and usable," said Street View Program Manager Ulf Spitzer. With the addition of nationwide coverage in Bulgaria, users can now view street-level imagery from most countries in Europe. In addition to major Bulgarian cities such as Sofia, users can also `visit` historical and popular towns. "Users around the world can virtually experience the beautiful ski resorts of Borovets, Bansko and Pamporovo, and the stunning Architectural and Museum Reserve Tsarevets that sits on Tsarevets Hill in the old part of Veliko Tarnovo," Spitzer said. "And of course, people can check out the Black Sea coast line, which is the heart of summer tourism in the country." In addition to Bulgaria, Google has also added Street View images of nearly 200 Russian towns and cities. It follows the introduction of Street View images of the capital Moscow and St. Petersburg in February 2012, but the vast majority of the country will remain without coverage for the time being. The newly added locations in Russia include Sochi, a city on the Black Sea coast that serves as the venue for the 2014 Winter Olympics, and the Golden Abode of Buddha Shakyamuni, a popular destination for Russian Buddhists as it is the largest Buddhist temple in the Republic of Kalmykia. Street View in the United Kingdom has also received an update, with imagery in major cities such as London, Manchester, Glasgow and Cardiff being updated. It also filled in some gaps where there had previously been no coverage, such as parts of the Scottish coastline, East Anglia and South Wales. Google Street View has repeatedly raised privacy issues when the service is added in new countries, but Google said it is committed to protect privacy and comply with all local laws. Google will blur the faces of people and license plates to avoid identification, and people are able to submit complaints if they believe photos are violating people`s privacy or violating the law. In October 2012, Street View underwent its most comprehensive update since it was first launched nearly six years ago. The update added or refreshed more than 250,000 miles (402,000 kilometers) of road in places such as Macau, Singapore, Sweden, Thailand, Taiwan, Italy, Denmark, Norway and Canada.

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