

Websites to Explore the Earth

Only so much Geography can be explored in a textbook. You may think that everything has been discovered, but GPS and the Internet show a whole new aspect to exploring our world. Find your way to a few key websites and you may find yourself appreciating a modern journey.

Some facts are interesting to read from a book and some are interesting to discover yourself. A happy medium I came across is located somewhere in between the two, on the Internet. Studying others travels, seeing them for yourself to the degree you want to be adventurous (Whether just at your computer desk or going to a pictured location), and even documenting new places that have yet to be captured on the web are part of the fun. A cool website where you may find sites referenced around the globe is found at <http://www.confluence.org/search.php>. Here you may click on several locations documented or even type in coordinates for two points to see if a place has been visited and recorded yet or not. Where the points meet is a confluence you may be interesting in seeing and reading about online, seeing for yourself and documenting your travels to, or it may just be a location that will remain uncharted. The website also gives the antipode, or opposite location on the Earth from a given point. It can be fun just to jump around the globe to different GPS locations from your computer. Go to www.google.com to use google maps or google Earth in conjunction with the website and you can get a glimpse of what exists in an area you may or may not visit, as well as enjoy satellite images to match.

A website that explains some interesting information to understand some of the basics of navigating the globe is <http://aerospace.wcc.hawaii.edu/map.html>. It explains how the North and South poles were determined. Then how the equator was the dividing line between the two, halving the globe. From there it talks about how 15 degrees for each latitude line equals approximately 1,000 miles on an accurate map, how longitudinal lines were in accord with accurate clocks (Or accurate Sand Timers) with the passing of each hour (So each line traveled by the Earth's rotation is one hour difference, hence time zones. And finally, how the computation of the difference between time zones can give an approximation of distance from one point to another allowing a formula to compute the antipodal point if you wanted to actually calculate it.

I won't take away all of the fun. Give these websites a look and explore for yourself. You may find yourself interested in orienteering courses, geo caching, GPS tracking, and discover a newfound interest in the geography of your world. Maybe you can find some other great websites to help navigate the Earth.

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