



360 Virtual Tours

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When a potential home buyer can't get out right away to tour a listing, savvy real estate agents hold an open house on the potential buyer's computer screen using software that produces 360 virtual tours.

360 virtual tours aren't just a cool gimmick real estate agents use to show off their technological prowess. Consumers demand 360 virtual tours. Seventy-eight percent of those who shop for homes on the Internet say the most important feature when searching online is photos -- followed closely by detailed property descriptions and 360 virtual tours, according to the 2003 National Association of Realtors Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers.

What's more, those who demand 360 virtual tours are more likely to be smarter, wealthier consumers in their prime home-buying years, compared to those who don't take tours. On a typical day, 2 million people are using the Internet to go on 360 virtual tours, according to the Pew Internet & American Life Project.

Those 360 virtual tours are not always virtual home tours. They also take viewers to far off places on Earth and beyond, say, to Mars, and include vacation destinations, colleges, art exhibits, hotels, and notable homes like the White House and Taj Mahal.

360 virtual tours of homes, however, are among some of the most common tours taken. Pew's nationwide phone survey to examine the impact of the Internet interviewed 914 adults, 534 of whom are Internet users. The survey said those who take tours were more often single, white, women, aged 28 to 49, earning \$50,000 a year or more, graduate degree holders and broadband access subscribers.

Home buyers like 360 virtual tours because they provide them with an immediate and efficient way to view and eliminate the homes they don't like and choose the homes they want to go see in person. For sellers it can mean less foot traffic, but just as many, if not more eyeballs on their home for sale.



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360 virtual tours are particularly common tool in the high-end market, where the best are professionally produced in living color, often with voice-overs as if the real estate agent is along for the tour. The best are also easy to navigate, allowing you to smoothly tour the listing room by room, as if you were walking through the home and looking up and down, left and right.

Technology has improved immensely and costs have plummeted since the first jerky images rotated with fits and starts on a computer screen, but it still takes a clean, speedy broadband connection or a download to a computer with a fast video processor to fully enjoy the 360 virtual tours without unwanted stop-action.

Overall, the Pew study said, 45 percent -- 54 million -- of American adults who use the Internet have taken 360 virtual tours, but more -- 60 percent -- of those who have broadband connections at home and 62 percent of those who have broadband connections at work have taken 360 virtual tours of some type.

360 virtual tours making also takes skilled professionals to output high-quality, life-like videos. A 360 virtual tours produced unprofessionally can harm a listing more than help it. Occasionally, the best virtual tour may not be of the home itself, but, say, of its unobstructed view of the ocean, hillsides or meadow. Putting a home's unique feature in its best light with a virtual tour and leaving the rest to good old still photography remains an option.

For example, it's nearly impossible to overcome "bloating" rooms when the confines of a small space forces the 360 virtual tours maker to snap on the wide angle lens to capture the flow of the room. Real Hollywood magic on the silver screen or an in-person visit remains necessary to see a home as it really exists.



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Why Photographer's Have An Advantage

"I believe that to excel at this business you need to know how to take pictures," says Ellen Hart, "because basically a panoramic image is twelve pictures that are stitched into one picture.

"Any virtual tour system, as good as it is, doesn't do 360 virtual tours automatically. There still needs to be a certain level of talent and ability in the person who is operating the equipment and using the software to turn out a really great 360 virtual tours.

"I know some REALTORS have bought the equipment and are producing 360 virtual tours, but from what I've seen on the MLS listings and things on the Internet, most REALTORS don't have a clue about how to take a good picture.

"With the 360 virtual tours that we turn out, sometimes we do extensive color adjustments and light adjustments and so forth in PhotoShop to the individual pictures before we ever stitch them together. I'm not sure a lot of others do that because not everyone has a working knowledge of PhotoShop. PhotoShop is a complicated program and it has a steep learning curve.

"The RTV software used to produce 360 virtual tours, itself, does compensate somewhat for differences in light between one picture and another, but it doesn't do it all.



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Real Tour Vision™ (RTV™) is leveraging the Internet with 360° Panoramic 360 Virtual Tours that are already in demand by Real Estate firms, Resorts, Universities, Hospitals, and many other businesses that benefit from providing an online, e-mail or disk/CD-ROM tour of properties or facilities. RTV

360 Virtual Tours are distinguished by their high quality, speed of delivery and many features (including audio). RTV Dealers buy a turnkey business complete with proprietary software, comprehensive start-up kit and strong profit potential.

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