



YouVisit Brings College Campuses to You

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The screenshot displays the YouVisit website interface, which offers virtual tours of various college campuses. The interface is organized into a grid of tour cards. Each card features a 'Full Tour' or 'Preview Tour' button at the top, a representative image of the campus, and the name of the institution at the bottom. The Stanford University card is highlighted with a white background and includes detailed information:

Stanford University
Stanford, CA

Institution Type:	Private
Years:	4 Year
Campus Setting:	Suburb
Enrollment:	19,945
Tuition (In-State):	\$40,050
Tuition (Out-of-State):	\$40,050

Below the table are two buttons: 'Request Full Tour' (red) and 'View Preview Tour' (blue).

The grid of tour cards includes the following institutions:

- West Point
- Vanderbilt University
- Ohio State University-Main
- Syracuse University
- Florida Atlantic University
- LIM College
- MIT
- UCLA
- Florida International University

When trying to entice prospective students, colleges and universities encourage students for a visit to get a feel for the campus atmosphere. But not everyone has the ability to travel to their potential dream school, which is where YouVisit enters the picture.

Literally.

YouVisit offers virtual campus tours that go beyond what you would get by simply visiting a university's homepage, a mix of film, photography and narration that mimics actual campus tours. But these virtual tours include stops that visitors normally don't have access to, such as a residence hall or a high-tech lab.

"[Most] virtual tours are more a grouping of pictures, but the problem with that is that it doesn't give students a good sense of life on campus," said Abi Mandelbaum, co-founder of YouVisit, who started the site with Endri Tolka and Taher Baderkhan. "[It saves] students and their families a lot of time and money so that they can get a better feel for what it's like to live and study at college campuses across the country from their homes."

The trio met at Brandeis University as international students — from Colombia, Albania and Jordan, respectively — and came up with the idea for YouVisit when trying to find a way to show their families what their college looked like. YouVisit started as a Facebook app, later expanding to the Web and a mobile app as it grew in popularity, especially with teens.

While the virtual tours are free for students, YouVisit charges schools for its services and to be featured on the Web site.

However YouVisit is accessed, users can also search for schools based on factors like location, size and tuition price. With more than 400 tours to choose from, there is a



wide variety, from well-known Ivies to smaller liberal arts colleges. But even with 4,000 colleges and universities in the U.S. alone, it's far from all-encompassing.

“We have [tours] in multiple languages, like Mandarin or Spanish ... one of the biggest things for a lot of our partner schools is that they're trying to bring in international students,” said Tolka. This is a big plus for schools trying to recruit international students, he added, especially students from China.

There are several other sites that also offer virtual tours, of course, including [CampusTours.com](#) and [eCampusTours.com](#). In addition, many schools, such as Stanford and Yale, already incorporate mobile devices to embellish tours, or have downloadable apps.

And while none will completely replace the traditional college tour anytime soon, it is an indicator of how colleges are adjusting to the digital age. So, even if you can't set foot on campus, you can still see it for yourself.