

How to Render Your Minecraft Worlds Google Earth-style with Mapcrafter



If you've ever had the urge to zoom around your Minecraft world like it was a Google Earth map, Mapcrafter is for you. Read on as we show you how to use this powerful little program to take your entire Minecraft world and render it like 3D model.

A Word on Mapcrafter

Like previously reviewed tool AMIDST, Mapcrafter isn't a tool for enhancing in-game play. Mapcrafter is a tool for enjoying and admiring your Minecraft creations outside of the actual game. It takes your Minecraft world (or any Minecraft world of your choosing that you have the world save file for) and renders it in a 3D representation highly reminiscent of the world browser found in Google Earth. It's a really fantastic way to admire your world and the creations therein in a whole new way.

Of every trick, tool, and mod we've highlighted in both our basic and advanced Minecraft series, however, Mapcrafter is definitely the most opaque to use. We're warning you ahead of time that there isn't going to be a point and click GUI, you'll have to create your own configuration files, and you'll definitely get annoyed once or twice before you see the final product. That said, the final product is *super cool* and it's completely worth the hassle of navigating the semi-arcane command line interface of the program.



If you'd like a taste of what the program can offer before installing and configuring it, we'd strongly encourage you to check out [the demo world hosted at Mapcrafter.org](#) (seen in the screenshot above). It's a very small world with only a few dozen chunks loaded but it gives you a very good idea of what the program is capable of (as well as allowing you to play around with the world-viewer interface).

The program was originally designed for use on a Linux machine and later ported to Windows. Although the Windows build is labeled as experimental, we found that it worked quite well, as long as you understand and properly apply the syntax of the configuration file and the command line. Instructions for installing the Windows, OS X, and Linux versions are [available here](#).

Installing and Configuring MapCrafter

The Linux and OS X instructions on their wiki are quite clear and the Windows instructions are pretty nonexistent, basically amounting to instructing you to download the experimental copy. Because we're using Windows and because the instructions need some fleshing out, we'll walk you through the process.

Once you've downloaded the Windows file ([mapcrafterdist.zip](#)), extract the contents into a subfolder of your ever-growing pile of Minecraft tools like `/MapCrafter/`.

Before we proceed, let's clear up a few points that will make your adventures with MapCrafter a lot more enjoyable. First, you'll need to make a configuration entry for *each* map you render, but don't worry, we'll show you how to create the configuration files.

Second, rendering time is based on map size and map size is determined by how many chunks have actually been loaded into the world. We suggest using a map you haven't explored much, such as a test map, to speed up your initial renders. A small map on a beefy

computer will render in minutes; a large map with tens of thousands of chunks stored in the map file will take much longer.

The first step in configuring MapCrafter is creating input and output directories. In the same directory that you extracted MapCrafter, create the following directories:

```
/MapCrafter/worlds/myworld  
  
/MapCrafter/output/
```

Then, copy the contents of the /saves/[someworld] folder corresponding to the world you wish to render into the /myworld/ folder. This will be the source material for your render.

Once you've set up the directories and copied the files, you can make your first configuration file. Create a new text document in the /MapCrafter/ folder and put the following text in it. Note, this text is specific to the folder structure we just made, if you make any adjustments to either the folder structure or to the configuration file you need to ensure these are mirrored in your configuration file.

```
output_dir = output  
  
[world:myworld]  
  
input_dir = worlds\myworld  
  
[map:map_myworld]  
  
name = My World  
  
world = myworld
```

Save the file as render.conf in the /MapCrafter/ folder. Now you're ready to run MapCrafter. If you wish to render many maps at one time (let's say you wanted to leave the machine running overnight and wake up to a pile of maps) you can create multiple entries in the configuration file. In the above example we have one world [world:myworld] and one output [map:map_myworld]. You can create additional pairs for as many maps as you wish to render.

Rendering and Viewing Your World

Now that we have the world file in the proper directory and the configuration file setup, it's time to do a little command line work to get the ball rolling.

Open a terminal and navigate to your MapCrafter directory. Execute the following command:

```
Mapcrafter.exe -c render.conf
```


MapCrafter will spring to action and start chugging along with a little ASCII animation bar charting the progress, chunks rendered, and estimated time left. When it completes the render it will announce the time it took to render the map.

Once it's complete, it's time to visit the /output/ folder and investigate. There you'll find the /map_myworld/ folder, freshly created, as well as index.html, and some javascript files. Open the index.html file in your web browser.

Remember the Survival Mode world we shared with you back in [Lesson 6 of our Minecraft Basics series](#)? Here it is as seen in the game.



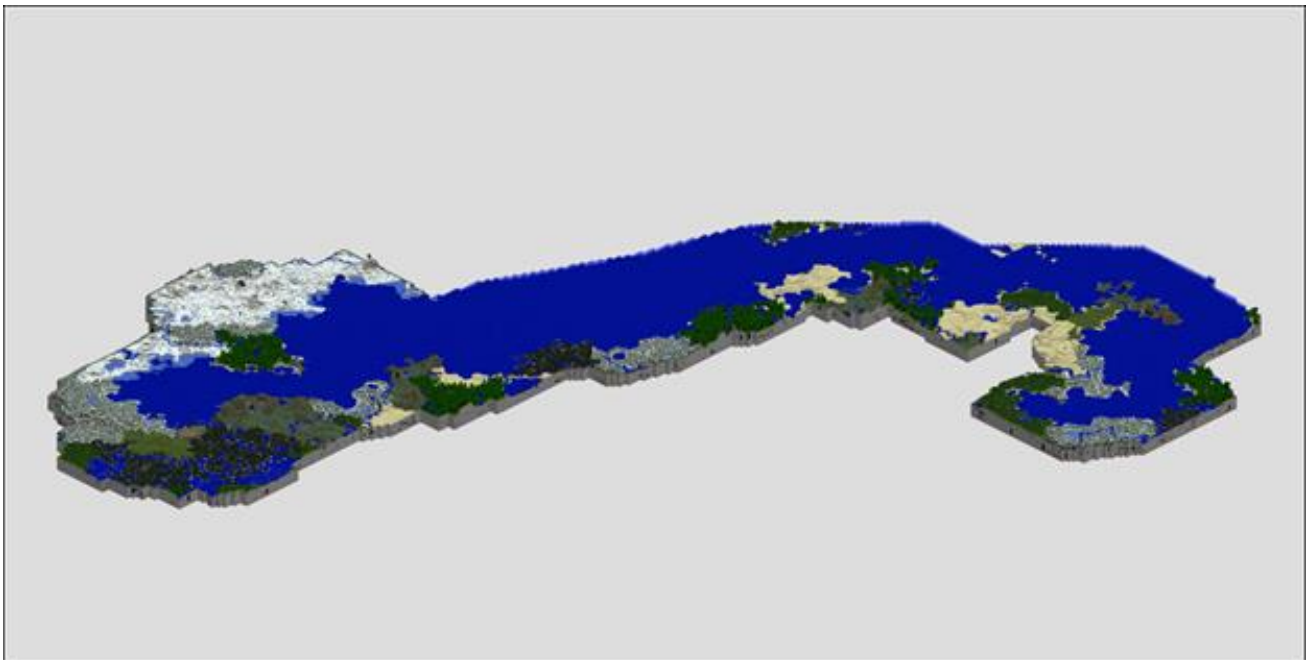
Here it is as rendered by MapCrafter.



One thing that isn't immediately apparent just from a screenshot is that we can zoom up close to the structures and move around the area. Let's zoom in as if we were flying at about 60 blocks above sea level or so.



We can also zoom way out and see every chunk we've explored in the map laid out.



What seems so tiny when viewed at this distance is actually a huge distance in the game. Our castle-in-progress is located on the patch of jungle just south of the snowy area on the far left edge of the map. It took us several hours of exploration by land and sea to get all the way to the ocean areas on the far right of the map. Don't be surprised if the map you thought would be so huge is actually fairly modest in size like the one we rendered here.

Mapcrafter isn't for everyone, but if you're a Minecraft fan that wants a beautiful, rendered, and interactive map of your entire Minecraft world it's worth downloading and fiddling with the configuration files.