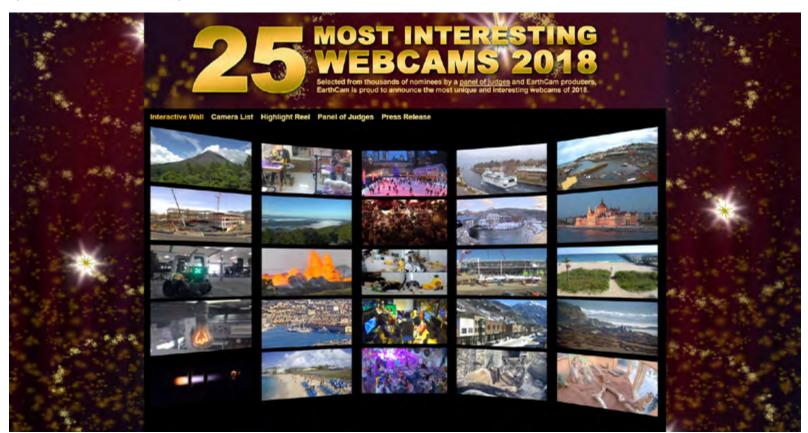


CharlevoixCam receives worldly recognition; former resident uses camera to stay connected to town he loves By Lonnie G. Allen • January 23, 2019



CHARLEVOIX — Staying connected to a place you love is a lot easier with a webcam. Rick Crane, a former Charlevoix resident who lives in California, is doing exactly that with his CharlevoixCam.

Crane came up with the idea of sharing a live camera feed with the community that he could enjoy as well.

"I was always mesmerized by the view from the bridge looking down the channel out into Lake Michigan," Crane said. "The camera keeps me connected to Charlevoix. It is a place I fell in love with over the years."

Each summer Crane can be seen taking pictures from the bascule bridge. He said the view of the channel toward Lake Michigan is incredible.

"Something about it really mesmerizes me," he said. "It just has been a joy to watch this camera. It is so serene."

Crane wasn't the only one to take notice of the beauty Charlevoix had to offer through his live streaming camera. In December, the 2018 edition of EarthCam's 25 Most Interesting Webcams was released and CharlevoixCam was on it.

"I was so shocked and so excited and many people don't know about the camera," Crane said about the recognition. "I give that panel of judges credit for catching the Emerald Isle going through. They must of sit in front of that camera for hours before catching that screenshot."

The Top 25 most interesting Webcams also include everything from breathtaking scenery and wild animals to scientific experiments and even a Guinness World Record holder. The 20th annual list spans eight countries, according to EarthCam's news release.

Viewers of the top 25 can start the day with sunrise views in Lauderdale-By-The-Sea, skate around the rink at New York's festive Bryant Park, hop over to the beautiful Italian countryside and finish with a sunset over the beaches of Brixham, United Kingdom, dance to Irish folk music inside the famous Temple Bar Pub in the heart of Dublin and don't miss last-call as the exotic nightlife winds down on the neon-lit streets of Koh Samui, Thailand.

Each of the 25 cameras is listed alphabetically for viewers to choose from.

When the Kilauea Volcano on the island of Hawaii erupted in May 2018, a local webcam provided continuously streaming updates of the lava flow and extended awareness of the devastating destruction to the island, said Jeff DeLiberto, CamMaster for EarthCam.com.



"We're always surprised by the entertaining, unique and sometimes totally bizarre cameras we discover each year when compiling our list of winners," DeLiberto said. "Webcams are connecting people with beautiful locations and interesting sights in ways that we never imagined possible. We continue to be impressed with the new applications for webcam technology and how those virtual experiences are being shared with a worldwide audience."

Crane hopes the recognition will allow his webcam to reach more people so they also can enjoy Charlevoix year round from anywhere in the world.

"It is something I can look at and keep me connected to a town I love," Crane said. "I want to share this with the people of Charlevoix, people who love Charlevoix and people who have never experienced Charlevoix."

Crane's partner on the project, Kyle Kopytko lives in Charlevoix and handles all the maintenance and technical work.

Kopytko said they were very proud when they heard the news of the camera making EarthCam's 25 Most Interesting Webcams in 2018.

"All of our hard work had been recognized and we knew we would have a much better shot at hitting our goal of 1,000 subscribers on Youtube," Kopytko said.

Kopytko is the owner/operator of TechWise Guy in Charlevoix. His company offers computer tech support, network and smart home installations and web design for residential and business customers.

Kopytko installed the camera on the Pine River Building for Crane. Originally, Crane wanted the camera to be mounted on the bridge, but he got tired of dealing with the Michigan Department of Transportation.

"I actually planned on mounting the camera on the bridge, but the red tape with MDOT caused me to give up. All the back and forth with emails was exhausting," Crane said. "I pitched the idea to Kyle and he loved it. He helped me find a spot for the camera."

Crane has invested approximately \$7,000 and Kopytko invested \$1,000 to get the camera installed and running for the past two years. Crane has kept the camera viewing free and ad free because he wants people to experience Charlevoix.

"I am happy to do it. I am not looking to make any money from it," Crane said. "I just love it and get such a kick out of it."

The camera provides a four-hour history that viewers can rewind through and see what they might have missed, Kopytko said.

During events like The Bridge Drop and Boyne Thunder, Kopytko receives many chat messages on the video.

"Viewers announce where they were watching from," he said. "Texas, Colorado, Florida, California and Alaska are a few of the places I remember seeing."

Because the camera is live Crane said many of his friends often call him when they are walking down from the lighthouse and stop and wave to the camera.

"They are waving and jumping around," Crane said. "That is kind of fun to watch and of course friends call from their boats during the summer and wave."

Friends waving and boats traveling through the channel are not the only thing that has been viewed on the camera, Kopytko said.

"The craziest would probably be 'the dancing man.' Unfortunately, we do not have a recording of said event," Kopytko said. "He was definitely dancing like no one was watching, but we were."

Since the recognition Crane and Kopytko hope the camera and their future projects will add to the success of Charlevoix.

"We feel that the ChannelCam and potential future cameras will help raise awareness by showing off the beauty that Charlevoix has to offer," Kopytko said. "I myself had never heard of Charlevoix before the age of 18 and have lived in Michigan my whole life, apart from being born in New York — more cameras equals more viewers equals more awareness helping with more potential tourism through media."

For more information about the Top 25 most interesting Webcams, visit www.earthcam.com/top25/2018/ and to view the Charlevoix-Cam, visit www.earthcam.com/top25/2018/ and visit <a href="https://wwww.earthcam.com/top25/2