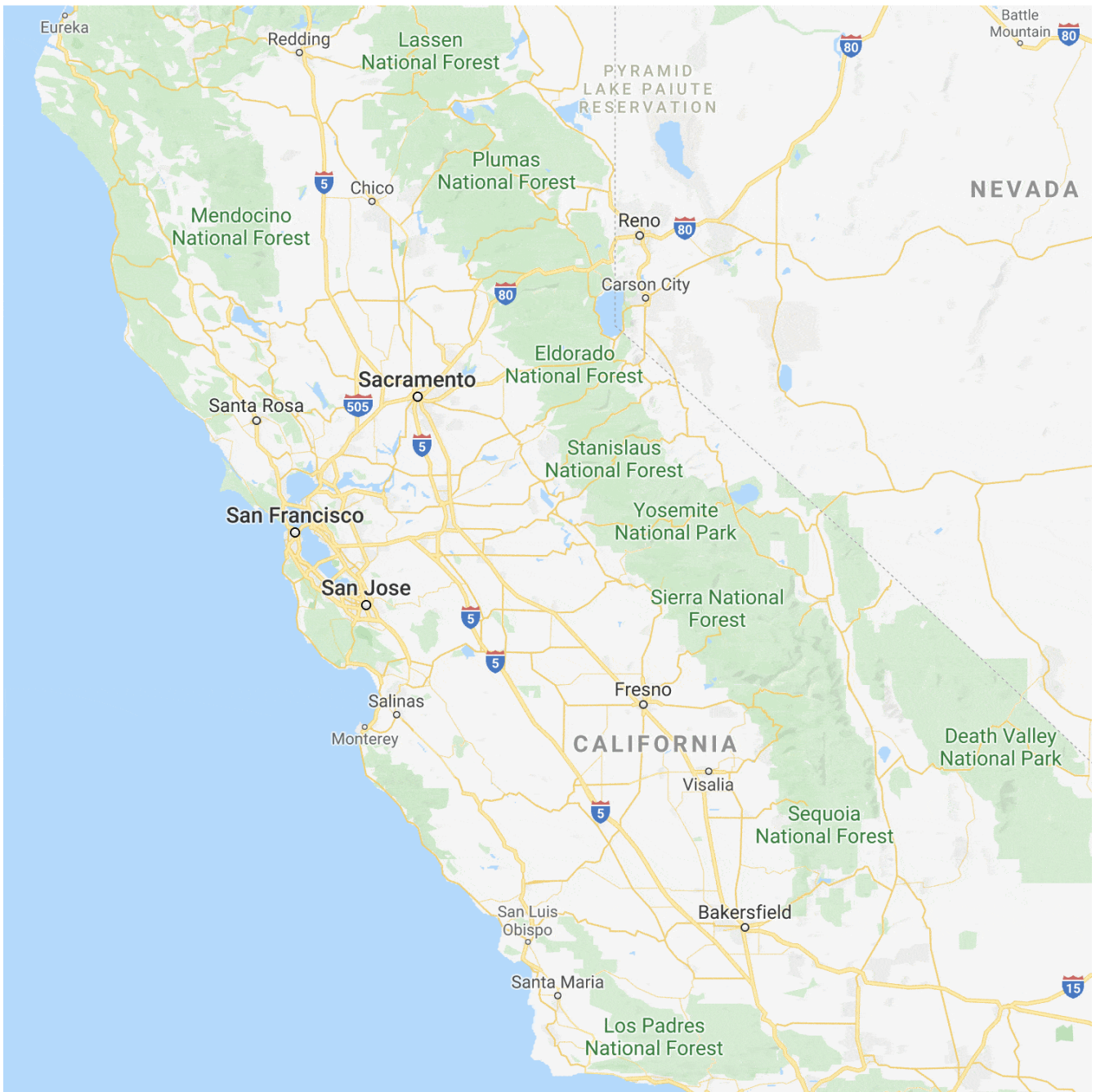


GOOGLE MAPS TESTING NEW APPLE MAPS-INSPIRED MAP STYLE

AUGUST 2023

Back in **August 2020**, Google began testing a seemingly Apple Maps-inspired map style that added darker and deeper landcover colors throughout the world:

GOOGLE MAPS
CALIFORNIA



OLD MAP

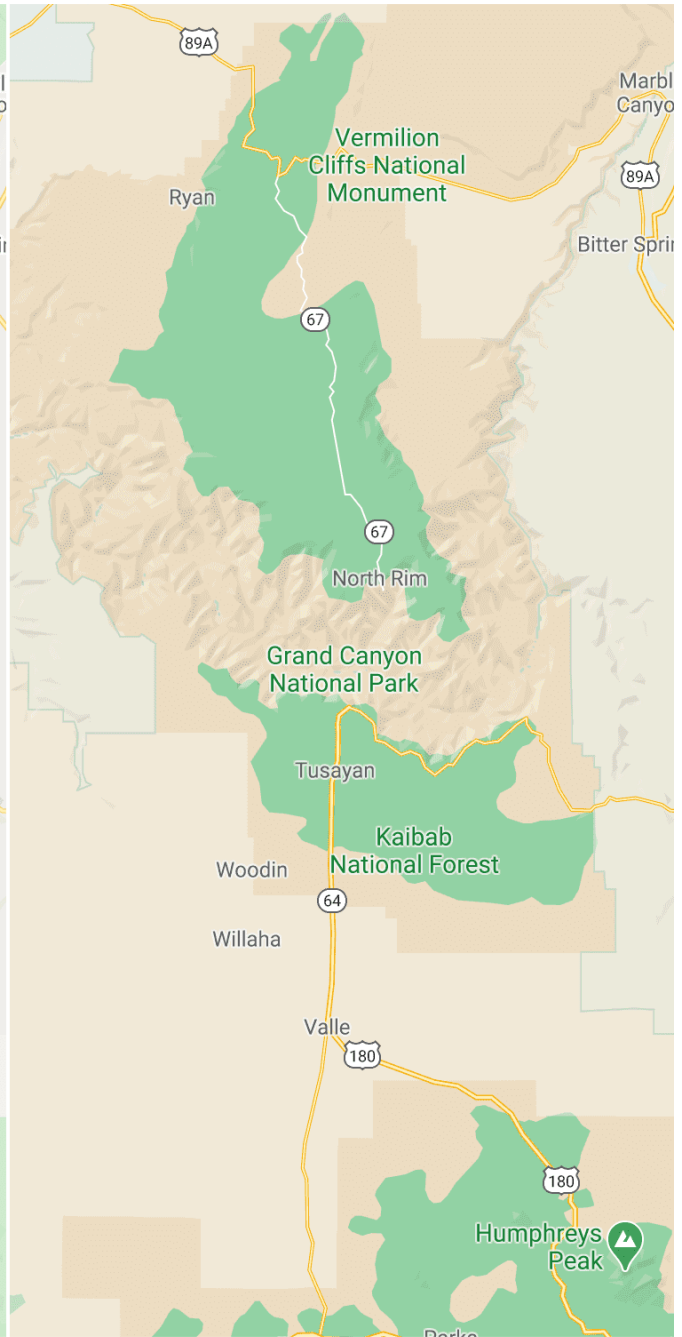
NEW MAP

While some areas, like deserts, looked much improved...

GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK



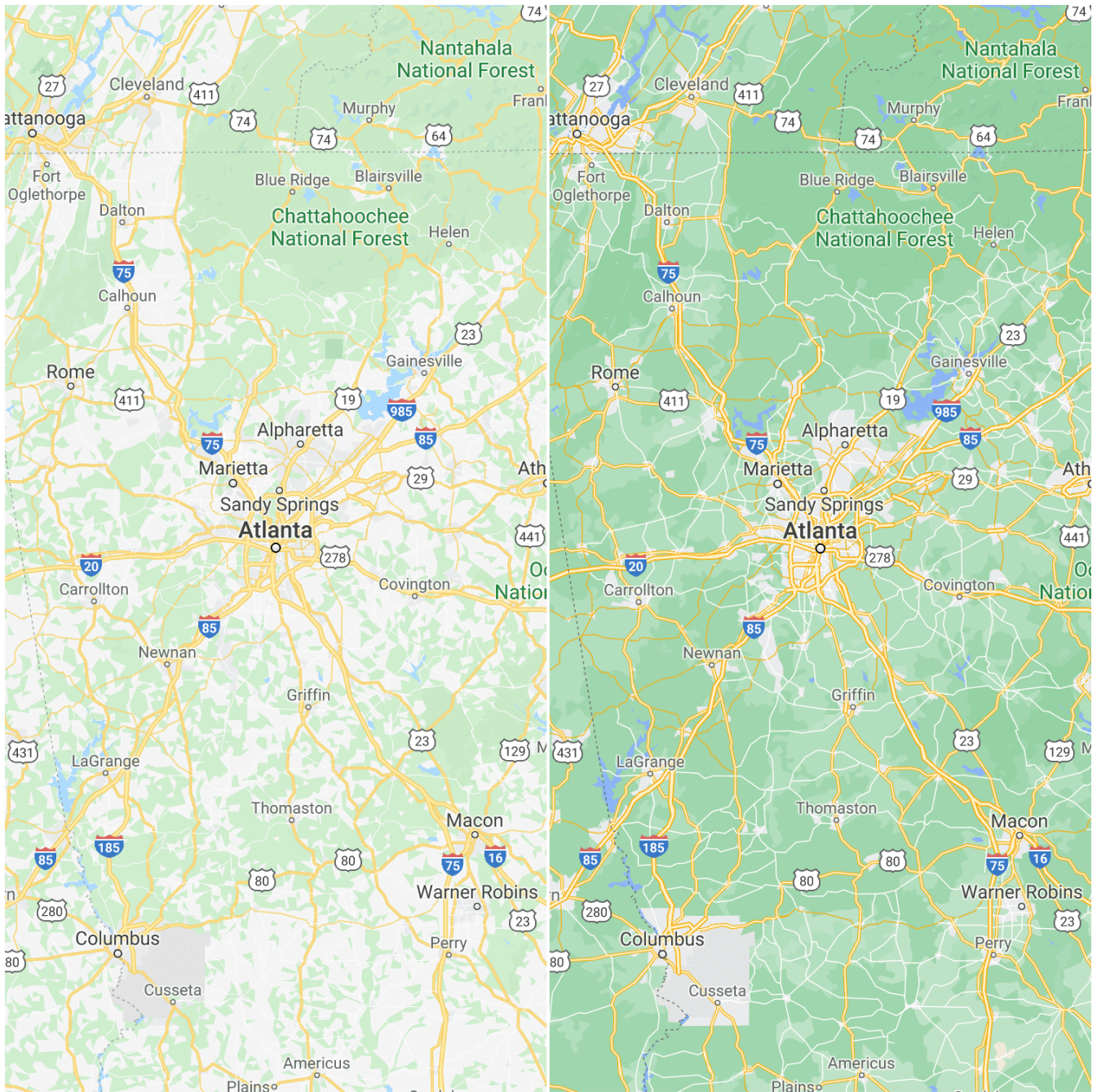
OLD MAP



NEW MAP

...other areas, like metropolitan areas, became harder to read:

METRO ATLANTA

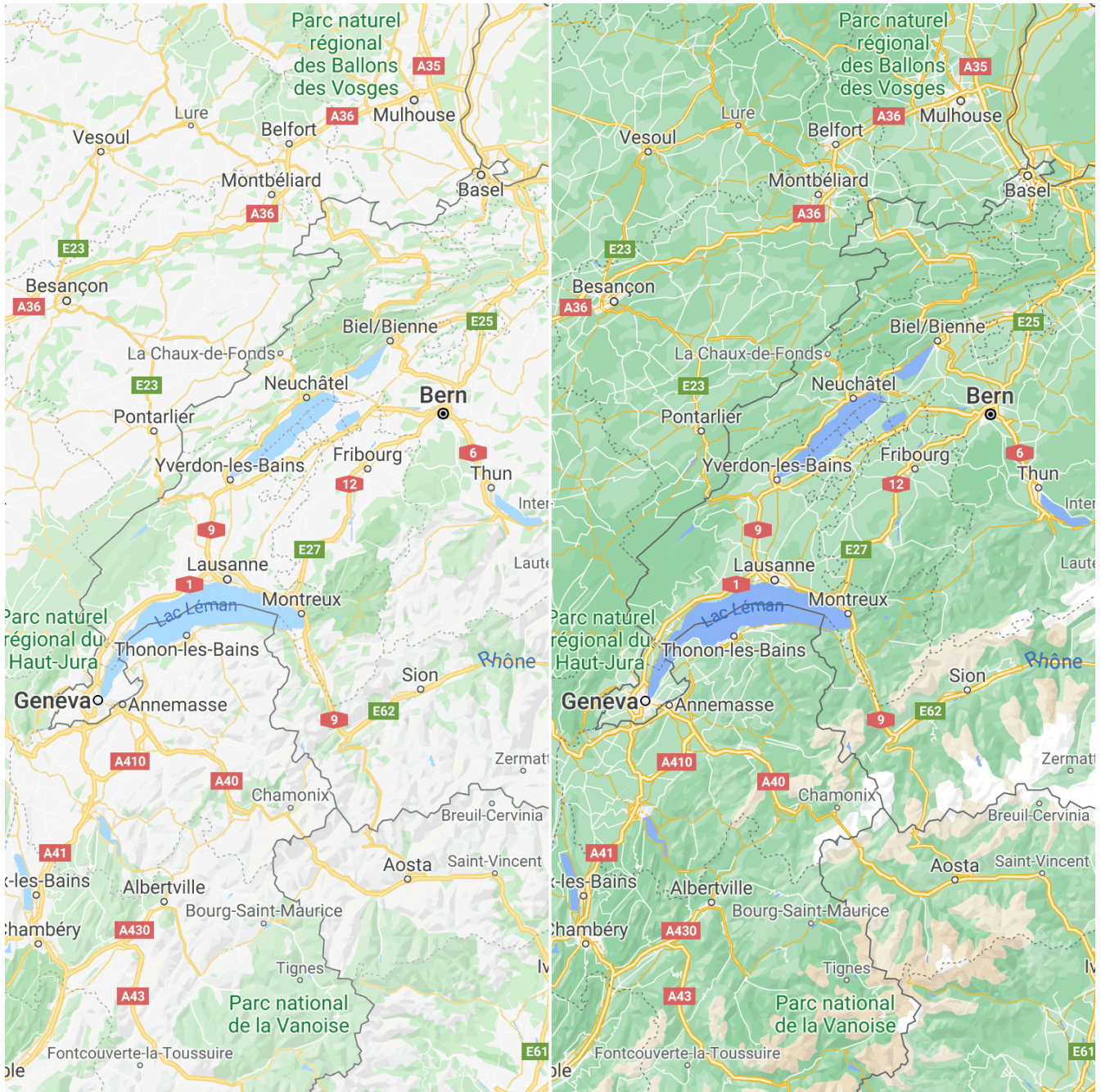


OLD MAP

NEW MAP

And areas with lots of hills and mountains became especially cluttered and difficult to scan:

THE ALPS



OLD MAP

NEW MAP

For the past three years, Google's cartography has largely remained in this difficult-to-scan state—that is, until now. That's because as of late August 2023, Google appears to be testing a new Apple Maps-inspired map style.

Unfortunately, Google's new, in-testing map style is even worse than its old one. Here in Chicago, for instance, notice how much harder it is to read and scan the map:¹

And the same goes for New York City:

The new New York map above looks comically bad, almost like student-level work.

It's difficult to understand Google's motivations for making such garish changes—that is, until you zoom in further on New York or any of the other three cities where Google recently added road markings.

Here you see that Google seems to be attempting to mimic the look of Apple's "Detailed City Experience", particularly the roads:

If Google's aim was to make its map look more like Apple's, then it succeeded:

But in many other ways, the experience is even worse than before. Case-in-point: the traffic display, which is now even harder to parse:

It increasingly feels as if Google Maps has gotten lost.

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1 Here's a reminder of how much nicer Google Maps used to look (particularly back in 2018):



