

Google Maps app rockets up iTunes store list

December 13 2012, by Michael Liedtke



The new Google Maps application is demonstrated in New York on Thursday, Dec. 13, 2012. The world's most popular online mapping system returned late Wednesday with the release of the Google Maps iPhone app. The release comes nearly three months after Apple Inc. replaced Google Maps as the device's built-in navigation system and inserted its own map software into the latest version of its mobile operating system. (AP Photo/Karly Domb Sadof)

[Google Maps have found their way back to the iPhone](#), and the new alternative was already the top-ranking free app in Apple's iTunes store Thursday.

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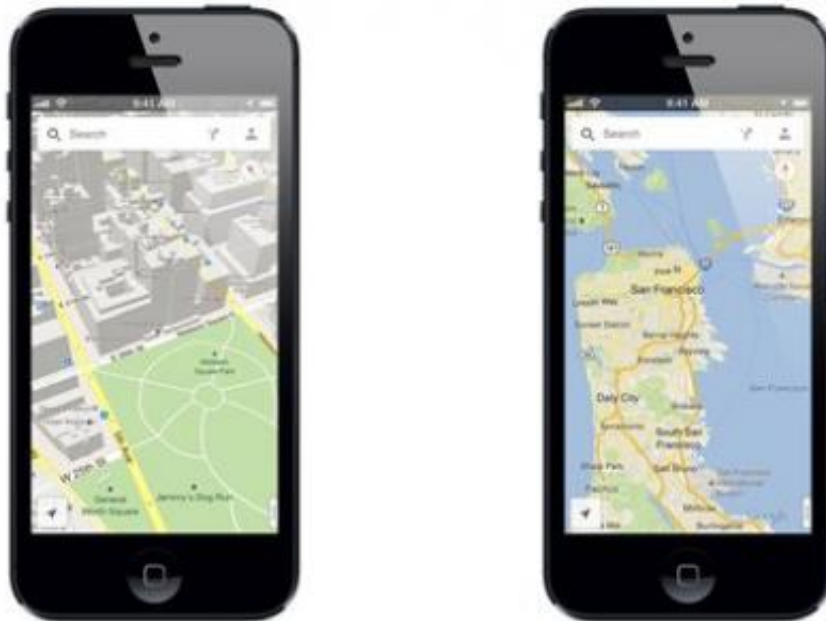
By noon Thursday in the U.S., users had chimed in with more than 10,000 reviews of the Google app. Nearly 90 percent gave Google maps a five-star rating—the highest possible grade. Despite the quickly rising popularity, Google's solution still wasn't listed among the 18 recommended mapping apps in iTunes as of early Thursday afternoon.

Apple declined to comment about Google's map app, but it approved the technology before its release.

Apple's maps application proved to be far inferior to Google's, turning what was supposed to be a setback for Google into a vindication.

The product's shoddiness prompted Apple CEO Tim Cook to issue a rare public apology and recommend that iPhone owners consider using Google maps through a mobile Web browser or seek other alternatives until his company could fix the problems. Cook also replaced the executive in charge of Apple's mobile operating system after the company's maps became a subject of widespread ridicule.

Among other things, Apple's maps misplaced landmarks, overlooked towns and sometimes got people horribly lost. In a particularly egregious example flagged this week, Australian police derided Apple's maps as "life-threatening" because the system was steering people looking for the city of Mildura into a sweltering, remote desert 44 miles (71 kilometers) from the desired destination.



This image made available by google, shows the new Google Maps application, on Thursday, Dec. 13, 2012. The world's most popular online mapping system returned late Wednesday with the release of the Google Maps iPhone app. The release comes nearly three months after Apple Inc. replaced Google Maps as the device's built-in navigation system and inserted its own map software into the latest version of its mobile operating system. (AP Photo/Google)

Google Inc., by contrast, is hailing its new iPhone app as a major improvement from the one evicted by Apple.

"We started from scratch," said Daniel Graf, mobile director of Google Maps. Google engineers started working on the new app before Apple's Sept. 19 ouster, Graf said, though he declined to be more specific.

The additional tools in the free iPhone mapping app include turn-by-turn directions. Google's previous refusal to include that popular feature on the iPhone app—while making it available for smartphones running on

its own Android software—is believed to be one of the reasons Apple decided to develop its own technology. The friction that has developed between Google and Apple as they jostle for leadership in the increasingly important smartphone market also played a role in the mapping switch.

Google's new iPhone mapping app also will offer its street-level photography of local neighborhoods for the first time on Apple's mobile operating system, as well as three-dimensional views, public transit directions and listings for more than 80 million businesses around the world. The iPhone app still lacks some of the mapping features available on Android-powered phones, such as directions in malls and other buildings.

There still isn't a Google mapping app for Apple's top-selling tablet computer, the iPad, but the company plans to make one eventually. Google, which is based in Mountain View, California, declined to say when it hopes to release an iPad mapping app. For now, iPad owners can use the maps in an iPhone mode. That won't be the best experience, but it still may be better than Apple's maps on the iPad.

The return of Google's map app may even encourage more iPhone owners to upgrade to Apple's latest mobile software, iOS 6. Some people resisted the new version because they didn't want to lose access to the old Google mapping application built into iOS 5 and earlier versions.

Graf said Google isn't hoping to make Apple look bad with its new mapping app. "On maps, we have a friendly relationship," he said.

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