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Striking variety of the mountain chains appearance on satellite images provided by Google Earth.

Abstract

In 2005 the Google search engine released an interesting web site named Earth. For the first time we may watch the Earth from above driving the scale of a satellite photomosaic of the globe at scale of perhaps 1:50 mln to 1:300 000 for a chosen place close-up. We can learn a lot and even make our own discoveries finding in the image things which are not represented in maps. We are also tempted to compare 'natural' color satellite images to maps and if we concentrate on mountains there are things worth noticing. Mountain ranges on images are more diverse than in maps which is obvious when we take into account the variety of vegetation and minerals on the surface. But on images we can also see better the unique forms and spatial arrangement of mountains. Photographic depiction is inspiring and helps to find a way between reality and its unrealistic models found sometimes in popular atlases. In this paper the images of several mountain chains carefully selected will be compared with traditional depictions. Advantages and disadvantages of 'photographic' depiction will be discussed.