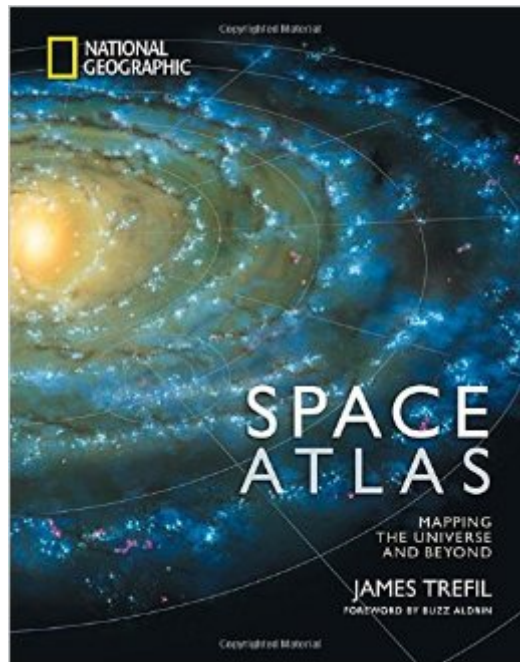


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Space Atlas: Mapping The Universe And Beyond



Synopsis

Filled with lavish illustrations, this book is a grand tour of the universe. Three ever widening domains are presented--the planets, the stars, and the large scale universe itself--each including the ones before it and extending outward. The tour starts close to home within the first domain, our own solar system. There is a tremendous variety here, from the sun scorched rocks of Mercury to the icy vastness of the Kuiper Belt beyond Pluto. We see the sun and planets born from the collapse of an interstellar dust cloud whose atoms were themselves created in long dead stars. Since many of these planets have been visited by space probes or landers, we are able to benefit from the incredible technology of exploration developed by NASA and its counterparts in other countries. The second domain is made up of the billions of stars in our own Milky Way galaxy. We walk in the steps of the American astronomer Edwin Hubble, who first established that the universe is made up of discrete galaxies, then go on to examine the fundamental constituents of those galaxies--the stars. We see stars not as eternal lights in the sky, but as objects born out of a desperate struggle between pressure and gravity. We trace the life cycle of our own sun, from its birth 4.5 billion years ago to its quiet end 6 billion years in the future. We see the galaxy not as a serene and placid place, but as a giant factory, where primordial material is taken up into stars, then returned to the galaxy enriched with the heavy elements necessary for life. Finally, we move to the ultimate domain--the large scale structure of the universe itself in which galaxies are the building blocks. We discover the most amazing fact, that the solid stuff of stars and planets on which we have been concentrating up to this point make up only a few percent of the mass in the universe, with the rest being composed of two mysterious entities called, respectively, dark matter and dark energy. We descend into deep caverns to see scientists trying to detect dark matter as it sweeps by the Earth, and we talk to theorists trying to solve the riddle of dark energy. This quest brings us to the frontier of knowledge, the edge of the unknown. To conclude, two ultimate questions remain: How did the universe begin? How will the universe end? We trace our theories back to the first fraction of a second of the life of the universe and listen to the speculations of cosmologists about how it might all have started.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I was eager to get my hands on this new book, which promised to be a nice gift for my cousin and a few other precocious kids I know. But the book is seriously marred by a gutter problem, where many of the maps and illustrations are cut in half! The most interesting parts are trapped in the middle of the tight book binding. In some cases, you can't even see the sun, because it's stuck in the gutter. This is a real shame, since it's obvious that the production values are otherwise very good. The maps of the planets are among the best I've ever seen. The text by Trefil is basic but solid. It's too bad that somebody at National Geographic didn't anticipate these complaints and compensate for the otherwise handsome design by a lay-flat binding or by adding a center gap to compensate for what's missing in the folds. Maybe this systematic shortcoming can be corrected in a new printing. If that's the case, I'll surely want a replacement copy.

I ordered this book as soon as I read about it, and I was not much disappointed when I received it. It certainly invites browsing, and many of the articles are not particularly long but give all the pertinent data. My only complaint (and I hope the NGS reads this), and reason I cannot give the Space Atlas five stars, is that book does not open flat. A book this size (and price) should open and fold flat on the table. The large 2-page planet maps are split down the middle with the spine of the book running through them, making it difficult to see the topography in the center of the planets. This does not affect the smaller satellite (moon) maps which fit on a single page. The fantastic hardcover Nasa Atlas of the Solar System (1997) also had this problem but resolved it neatly by having the enormous pages fold open completely flat. Nevertheless, I will keep the Space Atlas and refer to it often.

This is a beautiful book which gives the reader a great "big picture " view of the universe. My only complaint is that several of the highly detailed graphics span two pages, and some information is buried in the binding, since the book doesn't open flat. Update July 20, 2014 There is a paperback

version of this book which is showing up in the clearance section of large book stores. The paperback version opens flat and has no binding problems.

This is a great resource for those who are interested in astronomy, cosmology, and astrophysics topics. The book is large and heavy and full of many useful resources. One I find most useful is the topography of the planets derived from satellite imaging. This allows us to see the planets like we have never seen them before. I would highly recommend this book to anyone who is into the topic of astronomy and related fields. As an astronomy instructor I will find this book very helpful and an exquisite visual reference to many topics discussed in class.

I would give it a five star because the book itself with all the content, photos and illustrations are very good. However the binding for this book was poorly done. In every page you lose a good portion of the vibrant visuals because a large part of them are lost in the binding. You can't open it flat all the way to see the whole picture. On one page with a layout of the solar system you lose the sun and the inner planets. I almost don't like it all.

I purchased this book as a gift for my husband and he was "Wowed" by it. Breath-taking photographs. Stunning aeriels. Informative dialog. Fascinating facts. He couldn't put it down, and can't wait to read the complete volume cover to cover.

Very nice book, bought used and appears to be as new. Thanks. I agree with many other reviews about the charts and maps being stuck in the spine of the book. This is the one flaw of the book as I see it. If there is a spiral bound version that might correct this flaw. Otherwise it promises to be a good read. Would recommend just on it's up to date info on the solar system, etc.

I read the reviews about some information lost in the center binding. The book is great but for that reason I chose to buy a used version at a reduced price. It does not have as many of the great Hubble shots as David Devorkin's book Hubble. You may want both.

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