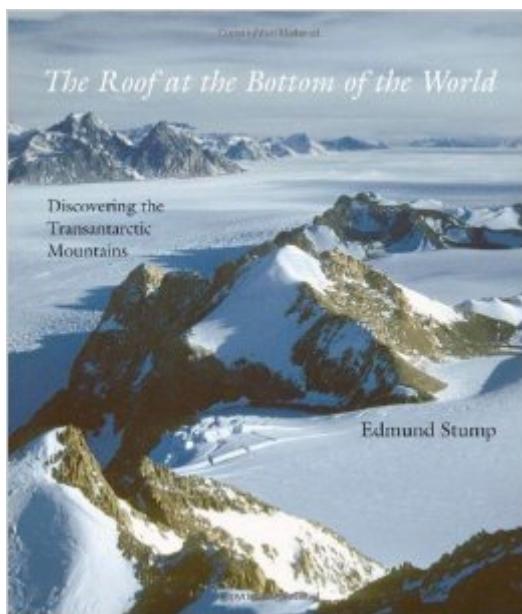


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The Roof At The Bottom Of The World: Discovering The Transantarctic Mountains



Synopsis

The Transantarctic Mountains are the most remote mountain belt on Earth, an utterly pristine wilderness of ice and rock rising to majestic heights and extending for 1,500 miles. In this book, Edmund Stump is the first to show us this continental-scale mountain system in all its stunning beauty and desolation, and the first to provide a comprehensive, fully illustrated history of the region's discovery and exploration. The author not only has conducted extensive research in the Transantarctic Mountains during his forty-year career as a geologist but has also systematically photographed the entire region. Selecting the best of the best of his more than 8,000 photographs, he presents nothing less than the first atlas of these mountains. In addition, he examines the original firsthand accounts of the heroic Antarctic explorations of James Clark Ross (who discovered the mountain range in the early 1840s), Robert Falcon Scott, Ernest Shackleton, Roald Amundsen, Richard Byrd, and scientists participating in the International Geophysical Year (1957-1958). From these records, Stump is now able to trace the actual routes of the early explorers with unprecedented accuracy. With maps old and new, stunning photographs never before published, and tales of intrepid explorers, this book takes the armchair traveler on an expedition to the Antarctic wilderness that few have ever seen.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

What a surprise! I knew there were mountains in Antarctica, but I had no idea that they were so amazing and magnificent. This book offers a unique perspective. It shows the routes used by Scott, Amundsen and others to explore the continent by tracing on maps and photographs the actual

routes they took. The story is engrossing, the mountains are spectacular, and the photography is surreal. This is a beautiful book!

As I understood the history books, the South Pole was 'conquered' by explorers who climbed up an ice pack over 1,000 feet thick and mashed their way to the pole. There were some mountains in the distance somewhere, and some big mysterious crevasses in the polar ice, but I thought it was mostly a flat empty plain. The Roof at the Bottom of the World sets the story straight. The polar explorers sailed as far as they could into the Ross Sea to minimize the distance they had to walk to the pole. And when the explorers embarked on their land journey, the first step was to climb the glaciers ...not a flat ice cap. These glaciers are 10 mile wide rivers of ice coming down a steep slope from a mountain range 10,000 feet high. The first leg of the journey is up the icefalls. That's why there are huge crevasses. That's why this is a story about climbing, yet the rock faces are mostly just pretty pictures. Much of the story describes the detailed routes the early explorers took through the glaciers, the snow conditions, and the geological sampling. While well polished, the story's pace often invites speed reading. But the illustrations help the reader see where the explorers were going, what obstacles they overcame, and the interesting things they found, including the molten lava pool. The Roof at the Bottom of the World isn't just a coffee table book of photos, it provides a carefully detailed history of the pioneers of Antarctica. This book changed my idea of Antarctic exploration from one of people riding dogsleds to one of maniacs climbing icefalls into a steady 30 MPH wind in the worst imaginable cold. It's enlightening and worthwhile to read, but not everyone would want it as a gift. The Roof at the Bottom of the World is a travel story about a place normal people wouldn't enjoy. I don't need to go there, I'll just read the book.

Stump's book focuses on one of Earth's great mountain ranges, the Transantarctic, that form a backbone to the Antarctic continent. He is a geologist who has made 13 expeditions mapping and exploring this range. During that time he took thousands of photographs, the best of which are in this book, and they are stunning. His book is an inventive join of history and his contemporary experience. Stump tells of the exploration of Antarctica and the discovery of the Transantarctic Mountains and blends this with his photographs and personal experiences, thus his memoir complements parts of the history. Detailed accounts are given of the efforts of early twentieth century explorers. Some of these historical exploits are from diaries and appear in print for the first time. Stump's research into history was thorough. Although the majority of the book is his recount of historical events, sidebars in many chapters describe his own experiences in varied situations as he

explored the mountains over the decades. Many sidebar scenes have vivid descriptions, and include how he felt in situations, but without dialog. He uses a full narrative style. His novel organization of his book is successful; he has presented a journey of discovery that he shared with history.

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