



Cosmos

Giles Sparrow

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The largest ever (42 cm x 35 cm) fully illustrated guide to the universe from our home planet to the edge of space and time. Our view of the universe covers at least 130 billion trillion kilometers (80 billion trillion miles) in every direction around us. We know that the magnificent vault of stars emblazoning Earth's night skies are an infinitesimal fraction of the hundreds of billions that inhabit our galaxy, and we know there are at least as many galaxies in the universe as there are stars in the Milky Way. "Cosmos" makes sense of this dizzying celestial panorama by exploring it one step at a time and by illustrating the planets, moons, stars, nebulae, white dwarfs, black holes and other exotica that populate the heavens with over 450 of the most spectacular and up-to-date photographs and illustrations. We begin at home, with an orbital survey of planet Earth, before venturing deeper into the solar system via the Moon, Venus, Mercury, the Sun and Mars. Crossing the asteroid belt takes us into the outer solar system and the realm of the gas giants Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune. Beyond Neptune's orbit we encounter a graveyard of icy debris left over from the solar system's formation that marks the outer limits of the Sun's sphere of influence. Emerging in interstellar space, we head for the heart of our galaxy as the rhythms of stellar life unfold before our eyes: we pass through dark clouds of dust and gas ablaze with clusters of newly smelted stars, we watch dying stars bloom and fade as planetary nebulae, or tear themselves apart as supernovae. Navigating through thick swarms of stars, we reach the galactic core, a gravitational maelstrom of exotic stars in the thrall of a supermassive black hole. Having crossed the Milky Way, we enter intergalactic space. Out here we watch the hidden lives of galaxies: we see them tear their companions apart or devour them whole, we see them flock and cluster, forming massive conglomerations that span millions of light years and warp space with their tremendous gravity. As we press ever deeper into the cosmos, so we travel further back in time. After covering an almost unimaginable 13.4 billion light years, we approach the edge of space and the dawn of time where our voyage must end, but not before we consider how our universe was born, and how it might die.

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