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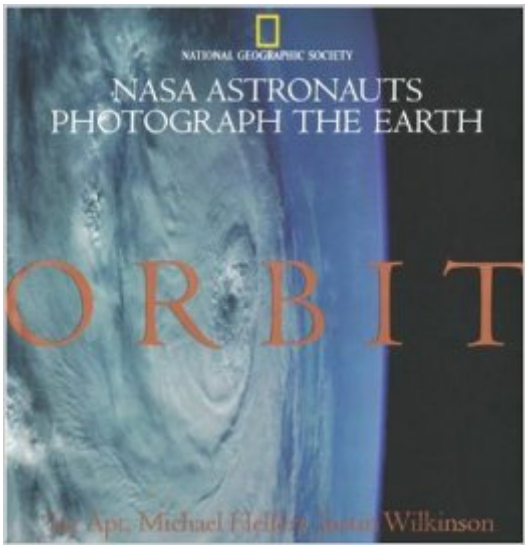
Orbit: NASA Astronauts Photograph The Earth



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Synopsis

Photographs taken from space capture the natural forces that have shaped the planet, and human impact on Earth.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Shuttle astronaut Jay Apt, together with scientists Michael Helfert and Justin Wilkinson, has put together a wonderful book of photographs under the auspices of National Geographic, Orbit. These are all photographs taken by astronauts from the space shuttle while in orbit (with a few exceptions, historically significant photographs from moon circlings and early trips into space). Photography, interestingly enough, is never really scheduled as a shuttle activity, but rather done 'in between' the other assignments. The photographs included in this book do not come from special 'space' cameras, but rather from regular hand-held, off-the-shelf cameras that astronauts took with them.The shuttle offers a unique platform for photography, to say the least. It has 11 different windows, and as the shuttle orbits in what one might consider an upside-down position, the windows and cargo-bay with doors open are almost always facing the earth. Astronauts take lots of film with them, and record many phenomena. This book is divided geographically, by earth region: Africa, Europe and the Middle East, Asia, the Pacific, Middle and South America, and North America. There is also a special section on the Aurora, with dazzling photographs of things that look right out of Star Trek!The images include daytime and nighttime views, calm views and stormy views. One can see hurricanes and cyclones from high above, stretching their entire lengths across great portions of the globe. One can see the difference lighting makes in an urban area at night, the way

terrain and human-engineering connect, and how much of the world seems to remain unspoilt when viewed from a distance of even a few hundred miles away.This is a remarkable book, full of glorious photographs of the 'home world', a great coffee-table book, a great gift, and a great guide of inspiration for younger readers who might be interested in science, geography, or even becoming an astronaut.

Astronaut Jay Apt, with the help of geographer Justin Wilkinson and climatologist Michael Helfert, has assembled a book full of pictures of Earth taken from orbit. These photographs were chosen from over a 145,000 that are available from the NASA photographic library and focus on many different aspects of our planet's geology and climate. The large coffee table style format and the high quality of the reproductions allows this book bring out the stunning features of our home and is welcome addition to anyone who is interested in space photography, especially since most of the book is photographs and very little text.The book is divided into sections covering each continent, the Pacific Ocean and the aurora. To show the range of Earth's geology and climate, each section highlights the major geological features found in each region and if appropriate mankind's influence. To further emphasis to geological diversity of the planet, occasional surface photographs that correspond to an orbital photograph are also included. For example, in the section on Africa, there are photos of the Nile, Nile cities, the Sahara desert, various coastline features and cloud formations. The only portions of the Earth not covered are the North and South Poles, since the shuttle does not fly over these regions. There is also one extremely interesting two page map spread which shows the location of each one of the 268,000 photographs taken by the astronauts.This book is one of my favorite space photography books and I look at it often and each time that I do I always notice something different. This is a great book and well worth the price.

The book is published by National Geographic, so it goes without saying that the quality of the photographs is superb. But to look at this collection of space-born images is to never see the earth in the same way again. All the contintents and oceans are covered and even the Aurora is documented. The astronauts who took these photographs are some of the luckiest men and women on (or off) the earth, and this book will show you why.Despite all that man has done to harm the environment, many of the photographs give you an eerie sense of what it might've been like to look down on the earth thousands of years ago, seeing only a beautiful collection of shapes, colors and clouds. Some pictures of the African desert and its coastline will leave you breathless.A wonderful collection that beats satellite imagery any day of the week.

I first heard about ORBIT while paging through a National Geographic. The images were disorienting and intriguing. Each photo challenged me to look at the planet like I never had before. "Why is that river so muddy?" "Where do those colors come from?" "How could those shapes be natural?" I would highly recommend getting a magnifying glass to best experience these pictures. They are so rich in detail that constant and close-up attention would be very rewarding. The book is divided into chapters of the continents. To look at the whole book in one sitting is so overwhelming, I would suggest perusing it a chapter at a time.

Don’t mistake "Orbit", by Apt, et al. for a casual, coffee table sort of book. The high resolution images of the earth, taken primarily by space shuttle crew members, are visually arresting. The massive impact of deforestation and the resulting soil erosion is particularly sobering. In vignettes such as the shrinking Aral Sea, this book conveys a visual truth which goes beyond the idealization and abstraction of maps to the current reality of the planet’s surface. This is a beautiful and profound book.

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