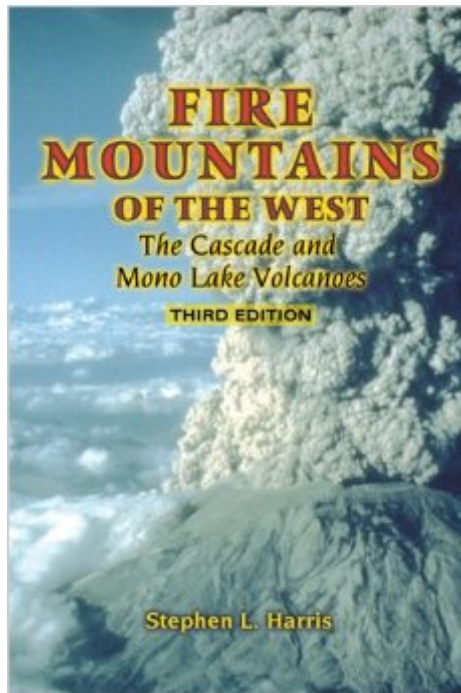


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Fire Mountains Of The West: The Cascade And Mono Lake Volcanoes



Synopsis

The recent volcanic activity at Mount St. Helens is a continuing reminder of the explosive power of our western volcanoes. *Fire Mountains of the West: The Cascade and Mono Lake Volcanoes* is Stephen Harris's completely revised, thoroughly researched account of the volatile history and deadly potential of volcanoes spanning the West from California to southwestern British Columbia. *Fire Mountains of the West* is intended for the general reader with an interest in the geologic forces that shape our western mountainscape. It begins with an introduction to volcanoes, the processes that create them, and the glaciers that sculpt them. The heart of the book is a fascinating biography of each of the major volcanoes of the West. From the subterranean lava tube caves of the Medicine Lake volcano to the fire-and-ice formation of Mount Garibaldi, from the cataclysmic collapse of Crater Lake to the incinerating blast of modern Mount St. Helens, and from deadly volcanic gas presently killing trees at Mammoth Mountain to massive mudflows waiting to burst from Mount Rainier, Stephen Harris brings to life in dynamic, crystal-clear language the geologic story behind each of the major volcanoes of the Cascade Range and Mono Lake area. Dramatic photos and illuminating maps and diagrams graphically illustrate the features of these magnificent mountains. A brief section at the end of each chapter gives directions and descriptions for those visiting the volcano. Harris also offers a careful appraisal of the prospects of each for future eruptions some of which may be more devastating to human life and property than any in the past. The book ends with a hypothetical account of a future eruption at Mount Shasta. With a rare ability to describe geologic processes in layperson's terms and elegant prose, Harris inspires in readers great respect and awe for the rugged beauty as well as the violent potential of these majestic fire mountains.

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Customer Reviews

An excellent, cautionary primer on the volcanic mountains of the Cascades, Stephen Harris' "Fire Mountains of the West," spends a chapter on each volcano of the Cascade Range, lovingly detailing each peak, or former peak, in layman's terms and an adventurer's spirit. The book's scope stretches from the Mono Lakes Region just east of Yosemite National Park, to the southernmost Cascades in California: Lassen Peak and Mt. Shasta, to the weathered and eroded peaks of Central and Southern Oregon, like the Three Sisters and Mt. Thielsen. Along the way we also meet former giants of the region, like the former Mt. Mazama, now Crater Lake in Southern Oregon, which destroyed itself in a catastrophic series of blasts hundreds of years ago, sending the peak collapsing in on itself, and forming the present-day caldera. Mt. Jefferson and the graceful Mt. Hood near Portland make appearances during the trip north, as we cross the Columbia and come face to face with the sleeping giants of the Northwest, Mt. Adams and Mt. Rainier, as well as the currently active Mt. St. Helens. Harris gives each mountain its own personality and traits, and warns of the obvious dangers these mountains present today, not only in the form of volcanic explosions, but also in the form of pyroclastic flows and superheated, ash-laden mudflows, similar to those that roared down the Cowlitz and Toutle River Valleys in Southwest Washington following the St. Helens eruption in 1980. The journey finishes with the steam plumes at Sherman Crater on Mt. Baker, and Mt. Garibaldi in British Columbia. Essential reading for any hiker, outdoor enthusiast, closet geologist, or those longing for unique Northwest road trips. Some impressive photographs of the 1914 eruption of Lassen Peak in California highlight the book as well.

Dr. Harris has provided an outstanding guide to the Cascades here. He provides wonderful detail on all the big Cascade volcanoes from Garibaldi to Lassen, and covers Mono Lake/Long Valley, a geologically unstable area that deserves far more attention, as a bonus. Especially welcome is his information on Glacier Peak and Newberry, two of the most overlooked volcanoes of the Northwest. The geological detail is mid-range; Harris explains the chemical composition of different types of lava but does not overwhelm readers with charts and graphs. Harris sometimes crosses over into the realm of tour guide, as he provides basic instructions on how to visit and climb the Cascade volcanoes, and he provides welcome information about the prehistoric and modern histories of the mountains, including the stories about how they got their many names (the story behind Mount Adams is great). Also included is a wealth of information about glaciers and the conflict between 'fire

and ice.' However, this book is primarily designed to be a lesson about the nature of the 'fire mountains,' and there Harris succeeds on every level. If you are remotely interested in geology, like to hike or climb in the Pacific Northwest, or simply live there yourself, you ought to know the story and potential of Rainier, Hood, St. Helens, and their kin. This is especially true if you have Hood or Rainier as a neighbor! Highest possible recommendation.

"Fire Mountains of the West" is a well-done account of the volcanoes of the Cascade chain, plus the Mono Lake/Long Valley caldera. I enjoyed each chapter--indeed have read some two or three times (Mt. Hood and Crater Lake, of course!). The text incorporates all the volcanologic knowledge of the 'Cades volcanoes to date (1988 for my copy). This would be a good book for the beginning reader of volcanoes, as well as the more informed home volcanologist. As an artist, I appreciated Chris Hunter's careful line drawings, which depicted the volcanoes, some of the prehistorical eruptions (Mazama), and detailed geological maps. All in all, a book that's worth every cent.

Stephen Harris may be one of the last non-specialist authors. He doesn't confound the reader with copious scientific jargon. Instead he conveys his love for what may be one of the last wild regions in the United States. In addition to excellent, understandable discussions of each volcano's potential danger and past history, Harris' technique enables the reader to use his book and a simple road map to plot the reader's own choice of which delightful scenic areas to visit. We visited the Oregon and southern Washington Cascades, as well as Mount Shasta, last September, and without Harris' well-planned guidebook, we would have missed many sights, such as Mount Newberry, and would have failed to fully appreciate others, such as the Columbia Gorge. Harris' doesn't overwhelm the reader with propaganda about environmental spoliation by logging companies, but simply lets the facts speak for themselves. The book is an absolute must for anyone planning a vacation, in whole or in part, in the Cascades or Mono Lake region.

I ordered this book for a geology course. It arrived on-time in a cardboard box. This book is very well written and informative about PNW volcanos. This book is a solid read for anyone interested in geology. I recommend ordering college books through because of the reduced price and the hassle free buyback program.

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