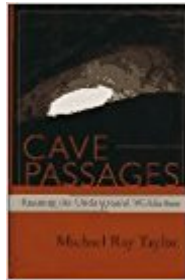




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Cave Passages : Roaming The Underground Wilderness



Synopsis

"The primal draw of the cave is as undeniable as the primal dread in which it is wrapped. So long as there are holes in the ground, uneasy adventurers will poke into them, candles flickering." Michael Ray Taylor thus describes the beckoning subterranean wilderness in this literary exploration of the sport of caving--a stunning blend of natural history, travel/adventure writing, and personal essay.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Caving is exciting, adventurous, and sometimes dangerous. It's the one true exploration frontier still available to the individual. Michael Ray Taylor's fascination with canyons and crevices hundreds of feet below the earth has taken him from Wyoming's Grim Crawl of Death to Chinese burial caves, the Old Croton Aqueduct beneath Spanish Harlem, and in 1994 to Zacaton, Mexico, where the world's greatest cave diver, Sheck Exley, dies in a dive. In a book of travel adventure, natural beauty, and emotional honesty, Taylor tours the world's deepest and least accessible pits, illuminating the personalities and people whose passion is slithering in the dark. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

If cave diving is the ultimate in extreme sport, then cave exploration is right behind it. Taylor, a veteran caver and expedition leader for the National Speleological Society, points out that because the last frontiers are space, the ocean floor and underground, caving is the obvious choice for most individuals. He gives a vivid account of special adventures?slithering through narrow chimneys,

using rock-climbing techniques to descend, and squeezing through passages less than a foot high in icy water. The Grim Crawl of Death, in Wyoming's Great Expectations Cave, is, he says, the ultimate test of skill and resolve; it is the Eiger of American caving. Taylor describes a 1991 rescue?which took four days and involved 170 people?of a woman in the Lechuguilla Cave in New Mexico. He chronicles other underground adventures in China, Jamaica and the Old Croton Aqueduct in New York State. Taylor reminds us that caves are exceedingly fragile systems?a careless or clumsy caver can destroy 10,000 years of geologic sculpture. This is an involving introduction to another mysterious world. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Its decently written and the author has been to some great places, which he describes nicely. Don't buy into his justification of taking pebbles from caves, next it will be cave pearls from lech. Also, just leaving his knife instead of attempting retrieval is not cool. Historic trash is one thing, they didn't know better, we do. Overall good read, if you can get past his ethics.

Cave Passages is a safe way (from your armchair instead of in real life) to explore extreme caves. Well written and interesting.

In this irresistible book, Taylor shares his passion for caving in easy-going prose that never falters. He takes us all over into all kinds of caving situations, and the result is simply fascinating. What's more, Taylor never falls prey to the immodest "boy-am-I-ever-cool-and-macho" style that afflicts some who write about their awesome adventures. On the contrary, Taylor is disarmingly candid about his occasional fears and breaches of caving etiquette. His honesty adds to the pleasure of reading this fine little book. Although the book is never quite as lyrical as one might hope, the last few paragraphs are surprisingly bittersweet. The single significant flaw is not in the text, but rather in the lack of photographs. One wonders how a book in which great pains are taken to describe underground scenes, and in which the personalities and work of several cave photographers are described, could be virtually photograph free. It's strange and a little frustrating. But this is still a delightful book.

Michael Ray Taylor sends a much needed jolt to the world of cave literature. The book is a celebration of caving for caving's sake, rather than for some loftier goal. Mike is your average guy who has an unusual hobby, one that, in another time or place would remain unfulfilled. But Mike has not only been able to enjoy his hobby immensely, he has been able to weave it somewhat into his

career. In his role as a journalist he has wormed his way onto some of the most interesting trips of the past decade and, on occasion, been present at the making of history. Michael Ray Taylor has given us that rarest of things, real life adventure, told in a down to earth, believable style. In a world of incongruous movies and unrealistic fiction, this book is worth its weight in gold.

Come visit Michael Ray Taylor's underground world and explore some of the last great wilderness on earth without leaving the safety and comfort of your armchair. This collection of short stories on caving takes you around the world to some of the most exotic caving regions. Michael's easy and casual style of writing puts you right in the action. One can easily imagine how tight the Devil's Pinch must be, and what those rocks felt like as they squeeze you from above and below. I liked how Michael made each account personal by letting you get to know the other cavers and the local inhabitants of the region. This book is for anyone with an adventurous spirit.

After reading this and realizing I live within minutes of some of the places mentioned it makes me want to try it. It also helps me realize how lucky I am to live here. The book took me to what seemed like another world at times. Although I might not agree with some of his and other caver's philosophy, I still appreciate what they are trying to do with the sport. Maybe, I'll get to meet a member of the tight knit, eccentric, caving family and experience first hand some of the thrill and pain of going underground.

Michael does an excellent job in this book describing what it is like to travel in the subterranean world of caves. He is able to capture the imagination of the reader and transport them into his real life experiences. At times the reader actually feels like they are crawling through bat guano in some Caribbean cave while realizing that it is safer here than being on the surface where you might get shot at. This is real life Indiana Jones with a little extra thrown in.

After finishing this book for the second time, I again felt the pang of loss for having the pages not continue. A blend of caving, philosophy, and caving philosophy, his work gives one pause for finding meaning in one's life. I for one am jealous of the karst regions he has been fortunate to explore. Telling about those exploits is handled with style that doesn't get in the way of the story itself. I'm sure others would enjoy this book. I do.

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