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Cave: Nature and Culture (Reaktion Books - Earth)

Ralph Crane, Lisa Fletcher

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To enter caves is to venture beyond the realm of the everyday. From huge vaulted caverns to impassable, water-filled passages; from the karst topography of Guilin in China to the lava tubes of Hawaii; from tiny remote pilgrimage sites to massive tourism enterprises, caves are places of mystery. Dark spaces that remain largely unexplored, caves are astonishing wonders of nature and habitats for exotic flora and fauna.

This book investigates the natural and cultural history of caves and considers the roles caves have played in the human imagination and experience of the natural world. It explores the long history of the human fascination with caves, across countries and continents, examining their dual role as spaces of both wonder and fear. It tells the tales of the adventurers who pioneered the science of caves and those of the explorers and cave-divers still searching for new, unmapped routes deep into the earth. This book explores the lure of the subterranean world by examining caving and cave tourism and by looking to the mythology, literature, and art of caves. This lavishly illustrated book will appeal to general readers and experts alike interested in the ecology and use of caves, or the extraordinary artistic responses earth’s dark recesses have evoked over the centuries.

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