

Some of the greatest disasters in history were caused by volcanic eruptions. Apart from their immediate effects, which in some cases have altered the course of human civilization, large eruptions also have world-wide atmospheric effects, with implications for the global climate that are of increasing international concern. This book, gives a readable, straightforward account--much of it from first-hand experience--of the familiar violent aspects of volcanoes and the various forms that eruptions can take. The author also goes beyond the spectacular visible displays to explore why volcanoes exist, why they occur where they do, and how examples of major historical eruptions can be interpreted in terms of physical processes. Throughout he places volcanism in a planetary perspective, exploring the preeminent role of submarine volcanism on Earth and the stunning range of volcanic phenomena revealed by spacecraft exploration of the solar system. Students of geology, geography, and the environment, as well as the interested general reader, will find this richly illustrated book a stimulating source of expert information on one of nature's most dramatic phenomena.

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