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Paul Meuser (ed)

The Atlas of Space Rocket Launch Sites

Countdown, ignition, a pillar of fire and a journey to infinity: who hasn't seen the memorable images of rockets launching into space. But the launch sites themselves, what they look like, where they are located, the infrastructure that is necessary to enable these magnificent endeavours in the first place - all of this is rarely taken into account.

The Atlas of Space Rocket Launch Sites is the first book to introduce the reader to 29 of the most important launch facilities, spread across the globe from Wallops Island in Virginia, USA, to Tanegashima in Kagoshima Prefecture, Japan, and Woomera in South Australia. Illustrated in large-scale photography and specially designed maps by cartographer Katrin Soschinski, the atlas presents the architecture and geography of the various launch sites.

Rocket launch sites are often located in jungle regions, the middle of deserts or steppes, or even at sea - far from inhabited areas due to the ever-present risk of explosions and possible damage caused by debris from the discarded stages of the launch vehicles. And even though the sites range in climatic extremes from Arctic cold to desert heat, their architecture is remarkably similar: apart from the launch pad there will almost always be a mission control centre, press reception area, fuel depot, workshop sites and - for manned missions - a place where the crew of a capsule can get ready for the mission. Some of them, like Cape Canaveral in Florida, USA, or Baikonur in Kazakhstan are well known to the public and regularly visited by tourists. Others might be known by name, but are much harder to reach, such as Kourou in French Guiana. Plesetsk or Vandenberg are less commonly known, even though they are among the most busy launch facilities. And then there are those that are kept secret from the public, such as Sohae in North Korea, and Palmachim in Israel. For it is a long time since it was only the United States and the Russians who launched rockets into space. Today many other nations, and even private commercial firms, have joined in to compete for a place among the stars - in a spaceflight industry that has never before been so profit-oriented.

Each site - from north-western Alaska to Europe, Africa, Iran, Russia, India, China, Japan to New Zealand - is presented with an introduction on its history. The authors - international experts in their field - also point out the idiosyncrasies of the various facilities, describe the current usage profiles and consider the future. They also shine a light at the (geo-) political, social and ecological context of the launch sites. This atlas is, therefore, the ideal source of inspiration for space and technology enthusiasts, but also for architects and anybody in general who is fascinated by humanity's journey to the stars. It will take them along on a trip from the fantastic history of spaceflight to tomorrow's missions.



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The Atlas of Space Rocket Launch Sites

Brian Harvey / Gubir Singh, cartography by Katrin Soschinski

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