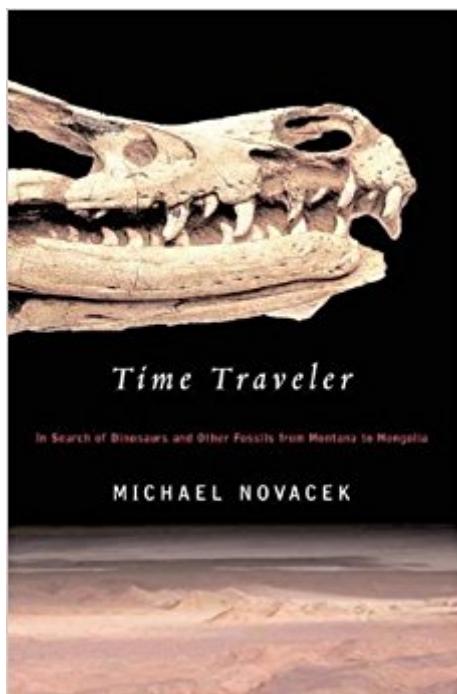


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Time Traveler: In Search Of Dinosaurs And Other Fossils From Montana To Mongolia



Synopsis

Hunting for fossils with a preeminent guide and teacher Michael Novacek, a world-renowned paleontologist who has discovered important fossils on virtually every continent, is an authority on patterns of evolution and on the relationships among extinct and extant organisms. Time Traveler is his captivating account of how his boyhood enthusiasm for dinosaurs became a lifelong commitment to vanguard science. He takes us with him as he discovers fossils in his own backyard in Los Angeles, then goes looking for them in the high Andes, the black volcanic mountains of Yemen, and the incredibly rich fossil badlands of the Gobi desert. Wherever Novacek goes he searches for still undiscovered evidence of what life was like on Earth millions of years ago. Along the way he has almost drowned, been stung by deadly scorpions, been held at gunpoint by a renegade army, and nearly choked in raging dust storms. Fieldwork is very demanding in a host of unusual, dramatic, sometimes hilarious ways, and Novacek writes of its alluring perils with affection and discernment. But Time Traveler also makes sense of many complex themes - about dinosaur evolution, continental drift, mass extinctions, new methods for understanding ancient environments, and the evolutionary secrets of DNA in fossil organisms. It is also an enthralling adventure story.

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Customer Reviews

I had an extremely hard time getting through this book, which very much surprised me. I had read another book by Michael Novacek, which was quite good and a book I would recommend, "Dinosaurs of the Flaming Cliffs." His current book "Time Traveler" really misses the mark. I think the main problem, is that Mr. Novacek is a Paleontologist, and a quite good one I should add, but he's not a very exciting writer. He has chosen to write about all his experiences in the field, from the very beginning of his career and sometimes that's just not very interesting. I was bored because even Mr. Novacek sounded like he was bored in describing some of his early field excursions. He writes much more about his dangerous run-ins with the locals, than he does about the fossils he is out to find. As a matter of fact, he seems to find very little in the way of significant fossil material throughout the whole book. Other than his trip to Mongolia, which he has already written about in his previous book, I found nothing I thought was worth writing about. I guess the bottom line for me is, I highly respect Mr. Novacek as a Paleontologist, I just think he wasn't very excited with the material when he wrote this book and it shows. I am therefore afraid I cannot recommend this book. I would like to recommend a book that I have recently read, that I think is very good. "Dragon Hunter" by Charles Gallenkamp. This is adventure and excitement at its greatest. You won't fall asleep reading this book

Not exactly what we expected....a little hard to follow....son didn't finish the book....for upper reading level.....more of a story than facts...

This book learns us a lot about prehistoric life. It shows also how very difficult it is to search for fossils.

Not a bad book, could have had more illustrations and examples of fossils found in different parts of the world.

Novacek's "attachment" for lithics and fossil evidence has led him to remote places. Raised in the urban sprawl of Los Angeles, he was introduced to the wild, quickly finding excuses to return. Paleontology is easily the best excuse available for travel and exploration. He invites us to join him

as he tours the North American West - into mountains, canyons and plateaus where fossils have emerged before. From this familiar territory he goes on to more exotic sites. His explorations reach from Andean highlands through Arabia deserts to the mysterious Mongolian plateaus. It was the latter that gave Novacek the greatest rewards and kept him occupied for more than a decade. This autobiography of a professional paleontologist provides interesting insights into the researchers depicting the prehistoric realm. Before the rewards came the trials. The first was the decision to take up paleontology when a music career dangled enticing rewards. His father was a competent guitarist. A chance to learn field work offered new opportunities and challenges. Fresh creek water proved polluted leading to "highly volatile" digestive tracts. In the Andes, Novacek's horse bolted with one boot caught in a stirrup. Walking was impossible and riding little better. Desert scorpions and rattlesnakes were added threats. In Yemen, it was overzealous military staff. The hazards of scrambling over cliff faces seeking fossil or fording rain-swollen rivers recede as serious threats and become part of daily expedition fare. All these mishaps failed to quell his desire to travel. The travel wasn't entertainment, but his quest for fossils. The search wasn't always rewarding, but the promise or the need kept him going. His misadventure in the Andes was off-set by a string of rewarding finds. Glorious to behold and thrilling to experience, the Andes are now considered the fastest rising mountains in the world. Fossils that had no business being at the altitudes Novacek's team encountered show how rapidly the mountains have been constructed by plate tectonics. This mix of life experiences and scientific endeavour is richly enhanced by the graphics sprinkled through the text. Some of the most interesting are diagrams of fossil assemblages as found in situ. These provide a good indication of the complexities of retrieval and reassembly. His maps are a bit spare, but give the general location of campsites and fossil finds. Security, an issue of increasing concern in Mongolia, demands no more detail than necessary. Some photos of the campsites themselves might have personalised the account. His bibliography verges on the bizarre, being a mix of scholastic papers and general accounts. Some of these are worth pursuing. The knowledgeable will applaud his inclusion of John McPhee [although one volume is inexplicably omitted]. Novacek is forthright in his account of the tribulations of this career, but depicts as vividly the many rewards paleontology has to offer. As he concludes in this fine account: "there's still so much to know".

[stephen a. haines - Ottawa, Canada]

This is a great book if you want to understand life as a paleontologist. Novacek goes into detail about his career, the struggles in the field, and adventures. This book is great for a younger person considering going into paleontology to be aware of the highs and lows of the field. It is also

interesting for those of us who are older and always dreamed about going into paleontology. The one warning I have is that the book is a bit long. While Novacek writes well, it is over 300 pages.

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