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The Smithsonian Handbook of Rocks and Minerals combines 600 vivid full-color photos with descriptions of more than 500 specimens. This authoritative and systematic photographic approach, with words never separated from pictures, marks a new generation of identification guides. Each entry combines a precise description with annotated photographs to highlight the chief characteristics of the rock or mineral and distinguishing features. Color-coded bands provide a clear, at-a-glance facts for quick reference. In addition, each mineral entry features an illustration showing the crystal system to which the mineral belongs. Designed for beginners and experienced collectors alike, the Smithsonian Handbook of Rocks and Minerals explains what rocks or minerals are, how they are classified, and how to start a collection. To help in the initial stages of rock identification, a clear visual key illustrates the differences between igneous, metamorphic and sedimentary rocks, then guides the reader to the correct rock entry. A concise glossary provides instant understanding of technical and scientific terms