After centuries of speculation and decades of advanced high-tech searches, astronomers are just now getting solid evidence of distant wanderers -- planets outside our own Solar System. Armed with new tools and techniques, researchers have made enormous strides in planet-searching in the last few years. And the results of their efforts are nothing short of spectacular. In a refreshing and approachable style that will appeal to the non-specialist, veteran science journalist Bruce Dorminey explains what has already been found and what is likely to be found as astronomers gaze further and more clearly into space. The early returns, he reports, are amazing: planets come in all kinds of shapes and sizes. They are searingly hot and mind-bogglingly cold. Some have nearly circular stable orbits, others follow wildly elliptical paths. And some recently discovered planets seem to have no orbits at all, but wander star-less. In interviews with dozens of cutting-edge astronomers, exobiologists, and other scientists, Dorminey shows us how planets outside our Solar System are a great new frontier -- the source of unimaginable and totally unexpected new information about the cosmos.

My Personal Review:
The search for planets in orbit around stars outside our own Solar Systems is one of the most exciting fields of science today. Since the first indirect detection of a planet circling another Sun-like star was announced in 1995, dozens of extrasolar planets have been discovered. In Distant Wanderers, Bruce Dorminey looks at the history, methods, and future of extrasolar planet hunting. He predicts, Before the end of this new century, every schoolchild will know for certain how many planets circle nearby stars, and whether or not Earth-like planets are a rare anomaly. Like many rapidly developing scientific fields, the search for extra-solar planets has had many controversies and false starts along with the startling new discoveries, and the book presents a variety of theories and viewpoints in a fair and even-handed way. In the first part of the book, Dorminey, an award-winning science journalist and former bureau chief for Aviation Week & Space Technology, describes methods that planet hunters have used (spectroscopic methods, astrometric detection, interferometry, microlensing, transit studies, and direct imaging through the use of a coronagraphic mask in the focal plane a camera). Although most of these
methods require sophisticated technology and painstaking analysis, he explains each term or concept as it is introduced. He makes the science seem simple enough for lay readers to grasp and explains the strengths and limitations of each method. The rest of the book looks ahead to programs that are planned for the future, including telescopes in space and larger, more sophisticated instruments here on Earth. Some of these programs are already funded and will begin soon. Others are ambitious ideas that may not be attempted for years, if they ever happen at all.

Dorminey explains current ideas about formation of planets and discusses the search for Earth-like planets and for chemical signatures of extraterrestrial life. Through interviews with numerous researchers and experts, he presents information on what has already been learned about extrasolar planets and gives readers a feeling for the personalities and activities involved in doing this kind of research. In the process of writing Distant Wanderers, Dorminey himself wandered to far-off places, meeting the scientists and visiting the telescopes that are searching for extrasolar planets. His reports on his travels make the book much more human, interesting, and also tell us something about the writer. After a visiting the European South Observatorys Very Large Telescope (VLT) in Chiles Atacama Desert, Dorminey wrote, After a night on an observatory mountain, E-mails left unanswered and faxes gone missing seem trivial indeed. I knew that a thousand miles south and several thousand miles north, the world was racing hither and yon. But for me, at that moment, my own existence seemed as precarious as the shallow atmosphere separating us from the nothingness beyond. If only for a fleeting minute, it was impossible not to imagine Earth as it really is; an oasis in the midst of a relative void. Perhaps you cant quit your day job to make a grand tour of observatories. If thats the case, buy this book and read it. I learned and enjoyed. So will you.

For More 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price:
Distant Wanderers: The Search for Planets Beyond the Solar System by Bruce Dorminey - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!