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This intricate, literary traveler's guide explores the contiguous cities of Rome built on the Tiber floodplain over the centuries. McGregor, co-head of the University of Georgia's department of comparative literature, chronologically traces the successive periods of intense architecture and planning that helped Rome achieve strategic greatness, from the Etruscan management of the Tiber Island ford 3,000 years ago, to the city's unparalleled artistic stamp by Bramante and Michelangelo during the Renaissance, to Mussolini's monumental Fascist vision, to the precarious repairs heralding the Jubilee Year of 2000. The ancient historian Strabo remarked that while Greek cities were esteemed for their beauty and wealth, Rome excelled in the construction of roads, aqueducts and sewers, and on this theme McGregor dwells expertly, giving readers an excellent tour of ancient landmarks. As an official residence of emperors until the fourth-century displacement of the capital to Constantinople, Rome gushed with water in the form of baths and fountains; with the return of the popes from Avignon in 1377, the Vatican assumed prominence, and Bramante's restructuring of Old St. Peter's became a beacon for Rome's new mission. Here is a walking tour in stately, inviting prose that renders wonderfully manageable a massive history lesson for the intellectually curious and adept.