



FOLLOWING CAESAR

From Rome to Constantinople, the Pathways That Planted the Seeds of Empire

by [John Keahey](#)

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Traveling with the Caesars, Cicero, and Horace along Roman byways.

At the apex of its power, the Roman Empire had 50,000 miles of paved roads. Constructed chiefly for military purposes, some 372 roads connected the empire's 113 provinces, from Britain to Mesopotamia and from the Danube River to Spain and North Africa. Nearly 30 roads left Rome itself. Keahey, the author of *Seeking Sicily* and *Venice Against the Sea*, begins much earlier, with the extraordinary achievement of the Roman Republic in building three ancient routes: the Via Appia, Via Egnatia, and Via Traiana. The author devotes most of the book to the first and most famous route—the Appian Way—and to those who traveled it in war or for diplomatic missions. To revisit the political, geological, and architectural history of each, Keahey's journey stuck as close as possible to the original routes, coursing through some of most arresting landscapes, ruins, villages, and towns of modern Italy, Greece, and Turkey. The author, who has written widely about Italy, reveals engineering marvels built largely by Roman soldiers, all the more impressive because so much of the pavement created from varied local materials still survives. Instrumental in the success of both journey and book were the numerous informal guides who assisted Keahey along the way, helping him separate fact from folklore and locate the most intriguing places. His own knowledge of the interplay between the great figures of the Republic and the Empire, of ancient mythology and earlier Italian cultures, is just as vital. Readers less enamored of the subject will be slowed by the sheer weight of journalistic detail and occasional repetition, but for others, it's an admirable travelogue reflecting Keahey's passions and an ideal step-by-step guide to anyone wanting to duplicate his excursions.

The ancient routes of Rome come alive in this appealing new history.