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A Journey into Michelangelo's Rome
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Most travel guides are jammed with star ratings and brief descriptions of hotels, restaurants, shopping, and nightlife. By contrast, this book is full of art images, maps, and summary sidebars ranging in topics from the Reformation to madrigals. Through biography and history, the author creates a unique travel guide to Rome, focusing on the art and times of the artist Michelangelo. A freelance writer and a tour group leader, the author is married to a Roman. Her book is part of this publisher's ArtPlace series, which delves into a particular city or area by focusing on a well-known artist or artistic movement, such as *A Journey into Ireland's Literary Revival* or *A Journey into Matisse's South of France*.

An entire chapter is devoted to Michelangelo's famous painting on the Sistine Chapel's ceiling. In addition to a helpful map providing the chapel's location, a drawing from Ernst Steinmann's *Die Sixtinische Kapelle* reveals the originally blue and gold frescoed ceiling in existence before Michelangelo's painting. A sidebar summarizes Italian fresco technique and a diagram shows Michelangelo's layout of the ceiling, from his depiction of scenes from Genesis to his placement of prophets and sibyls. Throughout the chapter the author includes interesting historical tidbits, such as describing Pope Julius II's ongoing pressure over the years for Michelangelo to complete the project.

Another chapter focuses on Michelangelo's extensive marble carved sculptures. Alongside an image of Bacchus, his first work produced in Rome, a sidebar explains how the artist studied anatomical dissection in Florence for two years in order to create accurate human renderings. The historical narrative offers many fascinating details, such as how marble was quarried in the Renaissance (wet wooden wedges were inserted into stone cracks) and why the Rome Pieta alone bears Michelangelo's signature (he overheard the work incorrectly attributed to the Milanese sculptor Gobbo).

Not all of the narrative relays history. Comments relative to today are interspersed throughout, such as, "The Palazzo Farnese now houses the French Embassy and is closed to the public, but the Piazza Farnese hums with activity and hosts several charming cafes with great

views of Michelangelo's design."

This is not the guidebook for travelers wanting quick information about must-see tourist destinations. Instead, with its handy 7.5 x 7.5 size, it is a perfect accompaniment for those who desire some historical context while navigating the great sites of Rome. Armchair travelers, too, will revel in the inviting images and interesting history.

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