Dear Carleton alumni and parents,

Over a decade ago, my husband and I spent a few weeks on the island of Sicily in May, the very best time of the year for a visit. We saw Etna capped with snow. We saw warm, sandy beaches. And we saw wild flowers blooming everywhere in colorful profusion. Visiting Segesta, a few hours drive from Palermo, we counted dozens of flowering species in the hills and valleys surrounding the Greek temple. It was the sort of trip one wants to share with friends.

In addition to its breathtaking natural beauty, Sicily displays an extraordinary wealth of cultural attractions, ranging from ancient Greek and Roman sites, to Byzantine, Norman, and Baroque monuments, to a modern-day Italian culture that embraces the sophisticated as well as the traditional. Segesta is just one of the sites of *Magna Graecia* that we can’t wait to visit again. Agrigento and Selinunte feature even more extensive complexes, with superb views along the nearby coast. Syracuse houses one of the premier archaeological museums in Europe. Its offerings are complemented by those at the Roman imperial mansion in Piazza Armerina. Syracuse’s old city center, Ortygia, presents an architecture more Baroque than ancient; there we will have the opportunity to view Caravaggio’s moving *Burial of St. Lucy*. The trip ends in Palermo, with its mosaic-rich collection of Norman imperial structures, and just outside the city we will visit one of our favorite medieval churches, the magnificent Cathedral of Monreale, whose integrated decorative scheme foreshadows Michelangelo’s frescoes for the Sistine Chapel.

Along the way, we will sample a cuisine of surprising variety and subtlety—don’t count on tomato sauce! One of the delights of our last few days will be the chance to discuss Sicily’s culinary tradition with well-known travel and food writer Mary Taylor Simeti. Readers familiar with her work will know that her expertise extends beyond food to embrace the island’s social mores, economic development, and much more.

We invite you to join us in Sicily this coming May, to enjoy a landscape so enchanting that the ancients set their pastoral poetry there, and to explore a cultural tradition so rich that you, too, will feel compelled to return.

*Alison Kettering*

October 11, 2005