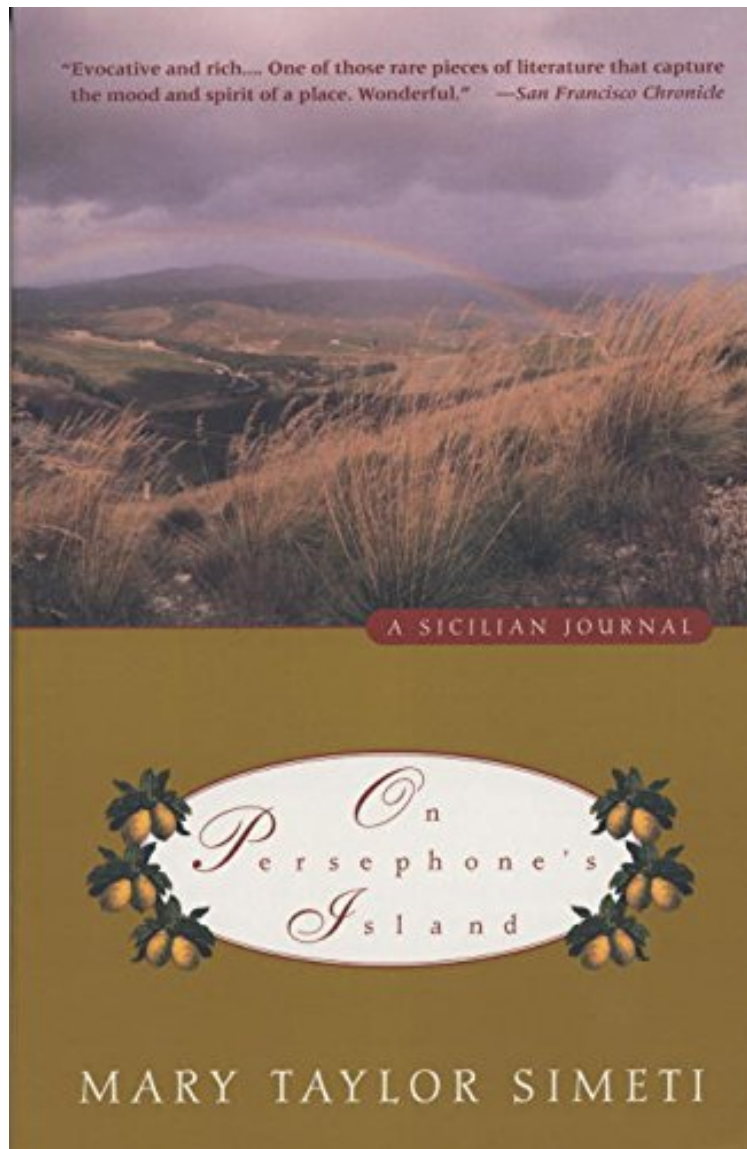


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On Persephone's Island: A Sicilian Journal

Mary Taylor Simeti

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Mary Taylor Simeti : On Persephone's Island: A Sicilian Journal before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised On Persephone's Island: A Sicilian Journal:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. I did not realize how useful until I got to Sicily By Mirielle I found much of this very slow-going and way too much detail to be an enjoyable read. I got lost in the multiple holidays, horticulture and the many family outings (this is why I prefer fiction often because a good writer deletes all the extraneous detail to get to the themes). HOWEVER, there was a revelation when I actually was in Sicily. The details

did help me understand what I was seeing and what I was eating...down to the gelato on a brioche and the fried chickpea patties! So if you are planning to go to Sicily, this book will set the stage for a great visit.3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Read this book before you go to SicilyBy Karen E. DatkoI found this book by looking at offerings about Sicily. I borrowed it through interlibrary loan and decided I must have it in my permanent collection. This book is a treasure. Yes, it's dated. It first came out in 1986. But much of what she wrote about is timeless. Her personal story is just a part of the book. Sicily is the focus. The knowledge she shares will help you understand the island if you're planning to visit. If you research her, you'll find out that she and her husband still make wine. She has had a remarkable life and I'm grateful that she shared her story with all of us.4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A love-letter to SicilyBy pittieloveThe author paints a lovely portrait of what life is like for an American expatriate- who is also wife and mother- in Sicily. Every aspect of daily Sicilian life is recounted: the feasts and celebrations, the rural traditions, the city routines. Knowing Sicily well, I knew all these depictions to be true. I did feel that the book went on a bit too long, however, and seemed at times considerably repetitive and a bit too langorous. Yet the writing is beautiful and intelligent, and the writer is enjoying painting her Sicilian life in all its detail. Were it slightly more concise, it would be a perfect read!

An American woman residing in Sicily for the past twenty years portrays the Sicilian landscape and customs—both rural and urban—from the perspectives of both a “foreigner” and a resident.

.com Mary Taylor Simeti arrived in Sicily in 1962 to do volunteer work. Freshly graduated from Radcliffe College after growing up in a distinguished and privileged New York City family, the last thing she expected was to fall in love and marry a Sicilian. On Persephone's Island: A Sicilian Journal is the ambivalent love story of an intelligent, complex, and self-reflective woman. The book recounts the events of 1983, the year Simeti turned 42. Her narrative alternates between Palermo, where her children attend school and her husband Toninno is a professor of agricultural economy, and Bosco, in eastern Sicily, where she shoulders demanding responsibilities on the working farm that has belonged to her husband's family for three generations. Simeti feels the isolation of being an expatriate and outsider, although she claims to welcome this perspective when faced with frustration and disgust at the pervading political corruption and corrosive effects of the Mafia on everyday life. Despite her natural diffidence, she shares personal insights that make On Persephone's Island as compelling as her prose. Simeti intersperses rich helpings of Sicilian history and culture with mundane events and insight into what motivates the peasants essential to the survival of the family farm. And she makes pessimistic observations about the complexity of changing times in a society where the persistent reliance on feudal relationships and agriculture is finally crumbling. An academic manqué, Simeti researches and ruminates on the mythological underpinnings of the many holidays and festivals that punctuate the rhythm of Sicilian life. She focuses particularly on the Greek goddesses Persephone and Demeter, who held Sicily under their protection. She eventually discovers a correlation between her own situation and the story of Persephone, who alternately inhabited the worlds of light and darkness. From Publishers Weekly An American married to a Sicilian professor and ancestral farm owner, Simeti with her family divides the year between Palermo and the countryside. In a beautifully written journal covering one year, she records with an artist's eye the rhythm of the seasons, the extremes of climate and contrasts between the lush coastal region, wheatlands and the mountainous, more barren interior of the island. With a useful historical perspective on Sicily's blend of civilizations, she also provides lively insights into the character of its people, their social and burial customs and festivals, some of them of Greek, Arab or Norman origin. The author appears to have retained an American independent spirit while immersing herself in an alien society and mastering the practical demands of rural existence. That her sensitivity to the charms of her adoptive land does not blind her to its shortcomings makes her a most reliable guide. Illustrations. Copyright 1986 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Simeti, an American who was graduated from Radcliffe in the early 1960s, went to Sicily to aid in Third World development. She married a Sicilian professor; they have two children, an apartment in Palermo, and a farm. Now, after 20 years, she has written this excellent journal depicting the social life and customs of the island. Using the seasons as a guide, she takes the reader on a year-long visit, comparing and contrasting various aspects of daily life, especially holiday customs. There is also a little history and politics and a lot of geography, horticulture, and relating of contemporary to classical lore. A very engaging book that dispels one-sided notions about Sicily. Recommended. Sondra Brunhumer, Western Michigan Univ. Libs., Kalamazoo Copyright 1986 Reed Business Information, Inc.