Mount Etna is Europe's largest volcano. In winter the upper slopes are covered in snow but in summer there is just brown lava dust and lava flows .... a moon-like landscape on earth.

Further down the mountain there is forest and groves of walnut and hazel. Lower still there are vineyards, cherry orchards, orange and olive groves, farms, and many villages.

Over 1 million people live on the slopes of this very active volcano, enjoying the sunny climate, farming the fertile soils and making money from the tourists. As Sicily's population grows more and more people live there, encouraged by the fact that this volcano rarely kills (even though they know it destroys).

Everything is based on lava ........ the roads are made of it; the houses are built of lava blocks; many crops grow well on the rich soil which has weathered from the lava dust.

Every so often, the volcano takes it all back again ..................
People in the Mount Etna area are well used to their volcano erupting. They can never stop it but have learned ways of reducing the damage and danger.

Zafferana is a farming village 10kms from the summit of Mount Etna. It was badly hit by lava in 1792 then enjoyed 200 years without damage. Late in 1991 the village was once again threatened by an eruption lasting four months.