

- Home
- Hotels
- Destinations
- Cruise
- USA
- Family
- Rail
- Ski
- Luxury
- Deals

## Simple Minds' Jim Kerr's heaven on earth

Simple Minds singer-songwriter Jim Kerr loves Taormina's great location overlooking the Ionian Sea, where he can see as far as the lights of Calabria.



'Sicily is where the continents meet, and has all sorts of influences, including Arabic, Greek and Roman' Photo: GETTY

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I first went to Sicily with my school when I was 14. It was then that I discovered the world was in colour – the Glasgow of my childhood wasn't the vibrant city it is today.

I always enjoyed touring in Italy with Simple Minds and I particularly liked Sicily. We played a gig there once on my birthday and a friend took me for lunch the next day in Taormina, a little town on the island's east coast. I fell in love with it instantly, went back as often as I could, made friends with the locals, and eventually it became a home from home.

What's so special about it? For a start it has a great location, overlooking the Ionian Sea, and you can see as far as the lights of Calabria. It's also steeped in history. It's where the continents meet,

and has all sorts of influences, including Arabic, Greek and Roman. There's also a wonderful open-air, ancient Greek theatre, where they have amazing concerts. But the real cherry on the cake is that it has the most fantastic view of Mount Etna.

In fact, Taormina is so special that around 10 years ago a friend and I opened a hotel there, The Hotel Villa Angela (0039 0942 27038; [www.hotelvillaangela.com](http://www.hotelvillaangela.com))

One of my favourite local restaurants is La Botte (24198; [www.labotte1972.it](http://www.labotte1972.it)) where the fish, along with just about everything else, is delicious. I can also recommend Tira Misu (24803; [www.tiramisutaormina.it](http://www.tiramisutaormina.it)), which is more of a family restaurant, but is a great place to dine al fresco at night.

Sicilian cuisine is distinctive from the rest of Italy in that it includes a lot more fish, be it squid, salt fish, or tuna, depending on the season, and you can see the fishermen bringing in the catch if you're up early enough. The local fruit and vegetables also taste fantastic. Unusually for a Scotsman, I'm teetotal but the local wines are said to be very good and have started to win a lot of prizes.

A good time to visit is May when it's not too hot, though I first went in the heat of high summer and loved it.

As for any danger posed by the Mafia, forget it. The Mafia is as dangerous for holidaymakers as the Loch Ness Monster.

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The new Simple Minds single, 'Stars Will Lead The Way', taken from their 'Graffiti Soul' album, is released on Tuesday. The UK tour starts in Newcastle on November 30 (details at [www.simpleminds.com](http://www.simpleminds.com))

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