

GOURMET



BRUSSELS

The French would never admit it but the food scene in neighbouring Belgium is one of Europe's best-kept gourmet secrets. Brussels is bursting with high-quality restaurants serving uniquely 'Belge' dishes: succulent beef flavoured with beer at Aux Armes de Bruxelles; more-ish pastries at Wittamer Patisserie; and gourmet sandwiches at Claire Fontaine's.

Feel like splashing out? Book a table at La Maison de Maître within the Conrad International Hotel, where the sophisticated modern cuisine had Bill Clinton coming back for thirds.

► **Doubles at the Conrad International from 220 euros (approx £140).** Tel: 00 32 2 542 42420. Return tickets to Brussels with Eurostar from £79 (www.eurostar.co.uk).

GHOST STORY



AMBERLEY CASTLE, WEST SUSSEX

An Englishman's home may be his castle, but experiencing the real thing is so much more fun, especially when the fortress in question is 900-year-old Amberley. Located just outside Arundel, about three miles from the south coast, this retreat boasts every feature King Arthur would have required – from a portcullis that is still lowered at midnight, to open fires and 19 sumptuously decorated four-poster bedrooms.

To get into the 'spirit' of things, stay in the Herstmonceux Room, where you may meet the ghost of Emily, a serving girl impregnated and subsequently rejected by the bishop.

► **Doubles from £145 (Tel: 01798 831 992).**

TOTALLY TROPICAL



PHUKET, THAILAND

Thailand is the destination of the moment. Flights are affordable, stylish accommodation is plentiful, and there is a different white sandy beach for every day of the year – especially if you head for Phuket.

Known as the 'pearl of the Andamans', this tropical idyll offers diving to rival the Maldives, sea-canoeing, elephant trekking and endless paradisaical beaches lapped by warm azure waters. The hotels are up to scratch too, notably the Evason Rawai Beach, which has its own private island, complete with luscious landscaped gardens.

► **Villas from £299 (Sixth Senses, Tel: 0151 486 4500).** Return flights from £500 (Gulf Air, Tel: 0870 777 1717).