Black Forest Gateau-way

Brenners Park's Marcus Schindler plans an autumnal escape to Baden-Baden, Germany

"In the summer the city is indisputably lovely, but a chill in the air means bracing strolls and hot pastries – it's exquisite in the winter light.

Café König Enjoy an unrivalled Schwarzwälder (Black Forest Gateau) in fabulous gilded peach-and-pink surroundings.

Friedrichsbad Baden-Baden has repaired visitors' health since the 3rd century AD, when thermal springs were found. This 120-year-old bathing hall is the most famous.

Casino Baden-Baden This classic 19th-century casino recalls a bygone era.

Christmas Markets Baden-Baden's fabulously festive, traditional market is the real deal.

Brenners Park Restaurant An elegant Michelin-starred restaurant serving up a modern take on authentic regional cuisine.

Fabergé Museum Dedicated to one of history's greatest jewellers, Carl Peter Fabergé, this is a must for lovers of fine objets d'art." *(www.brenners.com)*



HAPPY FAMILIES

The teen years are tough on all of us, not least the long-suffering parents of said angst-ridden adolescents. So why not give yourself a break this half term with an adventure-packed alternative to brooding in bedrooms: the Ananda Active Teen Programme? Don't be deterred by the name, we're not talking terrifying the puppy fat out of them in a US reality show-style ranch, a cowboy with a God complex reducing your surly teens to tears, but rather exercising their mind, body and soul in breathtaking Himalayan haven, the Ananda Spa.

From mountain trekking to rafting in the ancient Ganga River, the Ananda's new package, launching this month, offers plenty of opportunity for boredom-beating and post-holiday boasting alike. Alongside specialist Ayurverdic cuisine (although you *can* keep that to yourself), the programme includes meditation, yoga, relaxation and breathing exercises, preparing your almost-adults to tackle whatever it is next that life throws at 'em – making it perfectly placed for pre-exam stress-busting and pre-prom preening alike.

Best of all, while it's the ideal opportunity to reconnect with your moody mini-mes, you can also enjoy everything that the Ananda's stunning 24,000 sq ft spa has to offer while they're up a mountain or down in downward-facing-dog. Now *that's* what we call family friendly.

Valid for teens aged 14-19, until April 2015. Narendra Nagar, India (+91 124 451 6650; www.anandaspa.com)

3 of the best... Halloween hot spots



PLUCKLEY KENT

With its thatched cottages and cosy pubs, Pluckley seems far too pretty to have the title of the most haunted village in Britain – it was the setting for *The Darling Buds of May*, after all. But spooky spots include Screaming Woods, where it's rumoured you can hear the cries of the dead, and Fright Corner, where a gruesomely murdered highwayman appears. You'll find rustic respite at boutique hotel Elvey Farm – but venture into the dairy and you may just hear deceased farmer Edward Brett whispering his last words: "I will do it!" *(www.elveyfarm.co.uk)*



EL DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS MEXICO

Mexico's El Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) festival, from 1-2 November, is a celebration of lost loved ones that's as vibrant as it is macabre. The colonial town of Oaxaca is one of the best places to soak up the atmosphere, where a sea of flowers, flickering candles and painted faces make up the street parades and cemetery vigils, and locals barter for sugar skulls at the markets. Or base yourself in Mexico City and take a day trip to the Island of the Dolls where, in a morbid memorial to a drowned girl, discarded doll parts hang from the trees. Yikes!



SALEM MASSACHUSETTS

If the recent production of *The Crucible* at the Old Vic has whetted your appetite for witchcraft, make the New England town of Salem your Halloween haunt. Home to the famous 17th-century witch trials, there's a whole coven of museums housing eerie memorabilia – at the Witch House you'll find a bottle of finger bones. If your nerves can stand it, stay at the Hawthorne Hotel. Built on the site of an orchard belonging to the first woman to be executed during the trials, you could just find yourself bunking up with a ghost. *(www.hawthornehotel.com)*

Words: Anna Bailey