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Good Things

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A toast to BRITTANY

Cathy Howes discovers one little corner of France that glories in its rich heritage, fabulous produce and a glass of rosé with the weekly shop

The Saturday market in the seaside town of Dinard is a world apart from the wonky trolleys of a British high street. Stalls groaning with homard (blue lobster) and fraises gariguettes (flat, super-sweet, early season strawberries) command the attention of glossily-groomed ladies in tailored jackets and full maquillage. While they seductively squeeze artichokes and muse over slivers of Port Salut, their menfolk tuck into snack du jour the saucisson galette – a buckwheat pancake wrapped around a local sausage served with mustard.

Then everyone descends on one of the market bars like Le Marché des Anges for a midday glass of Loire valley rosé and a good old gossip. It makes that free coffee in Waitrose feel a bit tame.

Dinard is all 19th-century balconies with flashes of Art Deco, chic art galleries and a feeling of old money. In summer, the striped tents for hire on the beach hark back to a bygone age of parasols and fob watches, so it's no surprise that Winston Churchill and Edward VII all enjoyed the tranquil view of Dinard's gentle harbour en vacances.

A statue of Alfred Hitchcock with birds on his

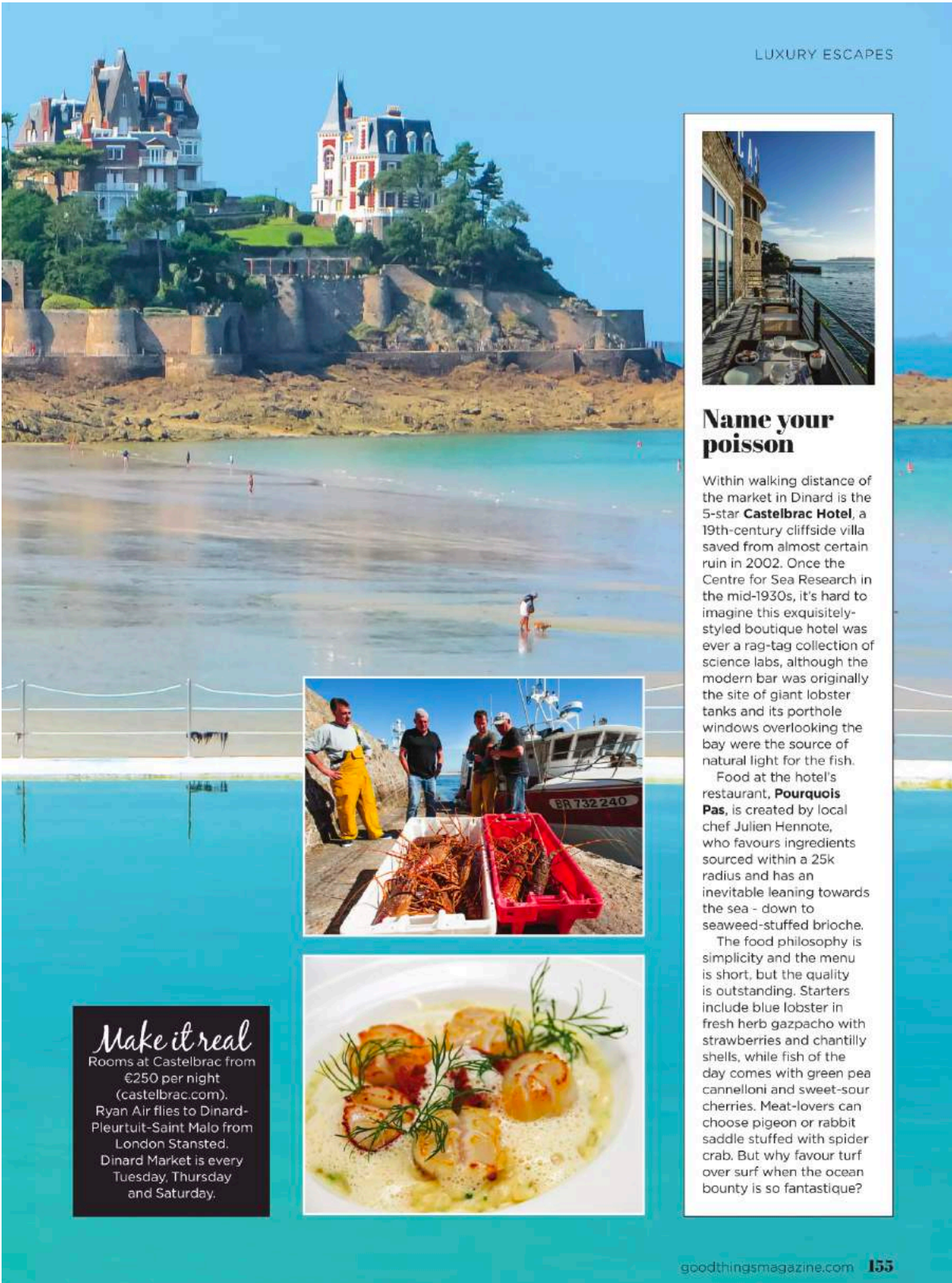
shoulders also commemorates the master of suspense's love of Dinard – not least the villa on the headland which inspired the house in *Psycho*.

Gallic charm

This corner of Brittany is a fabulous base for a foodie weekend, with patisseries, restaurants and brasseries at every turn. Go fine dining if you're feeling classic, or keep things rustic – at creperie Hauteclouque, the Galette Paysanne comes with jambon sec, Parmesan, egg, tomatoes and pistou, similar to Italian pesto without the pine nuts. Simple, traditional and fantastic with a local cider.

The 12th century fortified town of Saint-Malo, reached via a short ferry ride, is also worth exploring. At Café de L'Ouest, a canny recommendation from a local boatman – moules in Roquefort dressing – left us speechless until every drop of sauce had been scooped up with the last crumb of bread. And the stunning chateaubriand was flamed at the table by a waiter straight out of central casting, complete with full-length apron and *Allo Allo* accent.

Would we go again? Bien-sur!



Name your poisson

Within walking distance of the market in Dinard is the 5-star **Castelbrac Hotel**, a 19th-century cliffside villa saved from almost certain ruin in 2002. Once the Centre for Sea Research in the mid-1930s, it's hard to imagine this exquisitely-styled boutique hotel was ever a rag-tag collection of science labs, although the modern bar was originally the site of giant lobster tanks and its porthole windows overlooking the bay were the source of natural light for the fish.

Food at the hotel's restaurant, **Pourquoi Pas**, is created by local chef Julien Hennot, who favours ingredients sourced within a 25k radius and has an inevitable leaning towards the sea - down to seaweed-stuffed brioche.

The food philosophy is simplicity and the menu is short, but the quality is outstanding. Starters include blue lobster in fresh herb gazpacho with strawberries and chantilly shells, while fish of the day comes with green pea cannelloni and sweet-sour cherries. Meat-lovers can choose pigeon or rabbit saddle stuffed with spider crab. But why favour turf over surf when the ocean bounty is so fantastique?



Make it real

Rooms at Castelbrac from €250 per night (castelbrac.com). Ryan Air flies to Dinard-Pleurtuit-Saint Malo from London Stansted. Dinard Market is every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.