

town will be at the heart of the celebrations).

Travel in a two-berth roomette costs from £110.75 per person, one way, including dinner and breakfast. Four-berth sleepers cost from £65pp and reclining seats from £56. Return Eurostar fares from Waterloo start at £59.

Rail Europe (0870 5848848, www.raileurope.co.uk).

Nice and spicy

THE subtle secrets of sambhars (southern tangy lentils), pakoras (Indian tempura), bhindi do pyaza (okra) and gajjar halwa (sweet carrot desert) can be yours, as well as a glowing sun-tan, if you sign up for a week's cookery course in the Goan beach resort of Anjuna.

Different sessions will focus on the northern Indian Kashmir and Avadhi cuisines,

which have strong central Asian influences, Bengali and Gujarat dishes, which use a great variety of dhals and pickles, and the coconut and rice-based menus of southern India. Visits to daily markets to buy spices for each day's labours are also on the agenda.

You can arrange your own accommodation or have it booked for you at the five-star Taj Village, which has two swimming pools, Ayurvedic spa treatments, watersports, along with tennis and squash facilities.

To help you maintain the benefits at home, the school will give you a recipe book, freshly ground, blended spices and a list of utensils you should acquire to produce future gastronomic banquets.

The cookery course with accommodation costs £395 from May to September, £495 from

October to April, the course alone is £245. Flights are not included but can be arranged. On the Go Tours (020-7371 1113, www.indiaonthemenu.com).

Pigs and the King

THE world's biggest Pork Barbecue Championship is staged on the banks of the Mississippi in Memphis from May 13-15, with sideshows, music and a Ms Piggie contest. Visitors will swap recipes and chomp their way through burnt offerings.

America Direct has a seven-night holiday starting May 9, combining three nights at the Courtyard Marriott in New Orleans and four at the Elvis Presley Heartbreak Hotel in Memphis. The price is £938pp (room only), twin share, and includes flights and car hire. America Direct (0870 8890827, www.americadirect.co.uk).