

Nicky Gardner

Page 1 of 7

travel writer, lecturer and magazine editor

[HOME](#)

[INTERESTS](#)

[TRAVEL WRITING](#)

[MIDWIVES OF THOUGHT](#)

[PEN TO PAPER](#)

[LOST IN TRANSLATION](#)

[CONTACT](#)



Le seul véritable voyage ... ne serait pas d'aller vers de nouveaux paysages, mais d'avoir d'autres yeux, de voir l'univers avec les yeux d'un autre, de cent autres, de voir les cent univers que chacun d'eux voit, que chacun d'eux est.

Marcel Proust, *La Prisonnière* (1925)

Welcome to my personal pages here on the Guild of British Travel Writers website.

I write about hidden Europe - those unsung parts of the continent which don't feature too often in the regular travel media. If you want to know a bit more about my work as an author, please explore these pages. And then, if you are really interested, you can find out much more by looking at the website of [hidden europe magazine](#) of which I am co-editor.

Nicky Gardner

[PREV](#) - [NEXT >>](#)

Nicky Gardner

Page 2 of 7

INTERESTS

- slow travel
- minority cultures, religions and languages
- island communities
- borders and frontiers
- rail and ferry travel
- pilgrimages
- literature and travel
- off-beat destinations in Europe
- eastern Europe and the Balkans
- early travel history (esp. 18th-19th century)



Of course, a list of interests says nothing of what I have actually written on those topics. In the case of every area mentioned above, it is quite a respectable corpus of work.

So in the field of religion, for example, I have over the last year or two had articles published on Orthodox Old Believers, the Moravian Brethren, Islamic villages in Bosnia, an annual pilgrimage of Hasidic Jews to Ukraine and Europe's silent synagogues.

The theme of travel history is vast, but the particular area that appeals to me is early documentary writing on journeys through Europe, the Near East and the Arctic regions. It is interesting to reflect on how attitudes to travel and exploration have changed. Just recently (in January 2009), I had an article published on the role of spiritualists and clairvoyants in the search for Franklin's lost expedition in the Arctic.

It is all too common that tourist brochures proclaim a place to be offbeat. The places I visit and write about are often way off the conventional tourist trails. Think Belarus, Albania and beyond!

Yet we do not necessarily need to go to the very ends of the earth to find much which is novel. My writing also includes everyday life in Russia, the delights of beautiful town squares right across Europe and London's unsung suburbs. Add in a good number of articles on border communities across Europe, whimsical essays on the spirit of landscape, and a lot of stuff about rail and ferry travel and you begin to see what makes me tick.

Those interests amount to an agenda and a way of looking at the world. *Slow travel* nicely sums it up. It is a state of mind, an approach to people and places that means taking time to linger and get under the skin of communities.

[printer friendly page](#)

<< PREV - NEXT >>

[HOME](#)

[INTERESTS](#)

[TRAVEL WRITING](#)

[MIDWIVES OF THOUGHT](#)

[PEN TO PAPER](#)

[LOST IN TRANSLATION](#)

[CONTACT](#)

Nicky Gardner

Page 3 of 7

TRAVEL WRITING



Okay, I'll gladly admit it. I never set out to be a travel writer. Unlike many members of the British Guild of Travel Writers, who evidently often started writing about far flung places even before they knew how to count, my own interest in travel writing came much later in life.

I was of course keen on travel and most certainly interested in words and language. But I never really made the connection between the two. I had jobs where I wrote a lot: policy papers and reports, really boring stuff. Nowadays I look back in horror at all those words penned to so little effect.

I have often been impressed by the power of landscape, and have lived and / or worked in areas full of evocative scenery: the hills of mid-Wales, the Irish coast, the dusty plains and badlands of southern Alberta, the edge of the Sahara, and wistfully beautiful areas of lakes and forest in central Europe.

Another key interest, going back for years, has been in cultural difference. I've often made long journeys to go to villages or parts of cities where folk speak a different language or profess a different religion from most people in their area. Minorities are tantalising. Perhaps it is only by understanding others that we begin to comprehend ourselves.

Nowadays I write about people, places and communities across Europe. And about landscapes that mark the soul. These may be remote mountain valleys, but they may equally be scarred industrial wastelands. There is beauty even in dereliction. And there is something fascinating about the mosaic of languages, cultures and beliefs that one encounters in travelling around Europe.

Landscape and people – both inspiring. And these are the two main themes that inform my daily work as a writer. Of course there are others. Slow travel is important. It is not just a question of taking the slow train rather than the sleek modern express. It is a state of mind. Taking time to savour the journey. From time to time I write about rail travel. Odd really, as I don't know one end of a train from the other. But trains are seductive and I'm learning. Of course I write about boats and planes too.

You cannot wander through great tracts of Europe without running across politics. Europe is often a rather dark place. I've been to concentration camps and remote villages where terrible things happened. Like Lovas in eastern Croatia. So I sometimes write about communities that have been savaged by political or economic circumstance and I write too about individual and families for whom life hasn't always been so rosy: migrants, refugees and the dispossessed. History has not always been kind to many parts of Europe. But it's my world, and I still live in hope.

[HOME](#)

[INTERESTS](#)

[TRAVEL WRITING](#)

[MIDWIVES OF THOUGHT](#)

[PEN TO PAPER](#)

[LOST IN TRANSLATION](#)

[CONTACT](#)

HASTA LA VICTORIA SIEMPRE!

[printer friendly page](#)

<< PREV - NEXT >>

Nicky Gardner

Page 4 of 7

MIDWIVES OF THOUGHT

"Journeys are the midwives of thought. Few places are more conducive to internal conversations than moving planes, ships or trains. There is an almost quaint correlation between what is before our eyes and the thoughts we are able to have in our heads: large thoughts at times requiring large views, and new thoughts, new places. Introspective reflections that might otherwise be liable to stall are helped along by the flow of the landscape."

Alain de Botton, *The Art of Travel*
(2002)

[HOME](#)

[INTERESTS](#)

[TRAVEL WRITING](#)

[MIDWIVES OF THOUGHT](#)

[PEN TO PAPER](#)

[LOST IN TRANSLATION](#)


[CONTACT](#)

TO TRAVEL IS THE THING. NOT ALWAYS TO ARRIVE, BUT TO TRAVEL.

I sometimes wonder if we have lost the art of travel. Some of my writing has been about journeys. A single country road or a train journey is often a metaphor for a wider world.

A couple of years ago I wrote about the Orient Express train route. Not the posh tourist train, but the regular overnight train from Paris to Vienna. Nowadays it has been truncated to run only from Strasbourg to Vienna. That piece is nicely metaphorical. You can read it [here](#).

In an article which is one of my personal favourites, called 'The Road to Abergwesyn', a thin ribbon of tarmac becomes a metaphor for all Europe. You can read an excerpt from that article [here](#).

In another article (published in May 2008), the arrival of a train is a metaphor for the coming of spring. The article is called 'Spring, Storks and Trains: a Visit to Brcko'. I mention it here because it won a prize from the British Guild of Travel Writers. I was dead chuffed, and the Guild award made me see this modest piece of prose in a new light. It is only brief - about 800 words. You can download it here: 

[printer friendly page](#)

<< PREV - NEXT >>

Nicky Gardner

Page 5 of 7

[HOME](#)

[INTERESTS](#)

[TRAVEL WRITING](#)

[MIDWIVES OF THOUGHT](#)

[PEN TO PAPER](#)

[LOST IN TRANSLATION](#)

[CONTACT](#)

PEN TO PAPER

Slow, slow wanders the train, past minarets and mosques,
out onto the plains where women dressed in black work in
fields that are as neat as a grave on the day of its digging.

'Spring, Storks and Trains: a Visit to Brcko' (hidden europe 20)

Let me try and give you a flavour of what I have been up to over the past year. Last year, 2008, my total published output was about 150,000 words. The preceding year was pretty similar. Different words, of course. But about the same number. Most of that text was published in magazines, but a small amount was purposely written for online publication.

All those words. You'll find lots of them in *hidden europe* magazine. And at various times during 2008, some of those words have been published in *E!Sharp*, *The Lady*, *My Weekly*, *CityGuide*, *Zazpi Ka*, *Zazpi Haizetara*, and more besides. Here is a selection.

MALTESE ARRIVALS

examines what happens when travellers are shipwrecked in Malta – from St Paul to modern migrants from Africa. The article was first published in *hidden europe* 21, July 2008. You can read the basic text online [here](#).

A LAND OF MANY TONGUES

looks at multiculturalism and linguistic diversity in the Vojvodina area of northern Serbia published in *E!Sharp: People, Power, Process in Europe*, May-June 2008

SILENT SYNAGOGUES

is an evocation of Europe's lost synagogues published in *E!Sharp: People, Power, Process in Europe*, Sept – Oct 2008

LONDON'S LIVING RIVER

explores the renaissance of the Thames as a low carbon artery through the heart of London published in *E!Sharp: People, Power, Process in Europe*, Nov – Dec 2008

For examples of my writing for *hidden europe e-news*, just click [here](#). There you will find over 120 back issues of the regular newsletter published by the magazine. If you like what you find there, you can browse the table of contents of back issues of the magazine [here](#), take out a sub or buy back issues or even purchase selected individual articles that have been published by *hidden europe*.

[printer friendly page](#)

<< PREV - NEXT >>

Nicky Gardner

Page 6 of 7

LOST IN TRANSLATION



Some of my work has been translated into and published in a deliciously eclectic range of foreign languages. From Armenian to Ukrainian. Here below are three titles to savour from the last twelve months. Their very foreignness is engaging.

IN BASQUE

'Turismora Ikatzetik Paisaia eraldatzen Alemania ekialdean'
published in *Zazpi Haizetara*
March 2008, pp. 14-21

IN POLISH

'Zycie na styku: Dziedzictwo kulturowe regionów przygranicznych'
published in *Nasz Bug*
August 2008, pp. 241-250
(article written jointly with Susanne Kries)

IN SPANISH

'Del Carbon al Turismo'
published in *Zazpi Ka* (Sunday supplement of *Gara*)
12 October 2008, pp. 16-23

[printer friendly page](#)

<< PREV - NEXT >>

[HOME](#)

[INTERESTS](#)

[TRAVEL WRITING](#)

[MIDWIVES OF THOUGHT](#)

[PEN TO PAPER](#)

[LOST IN TRANSLATION](#)

[CONTACT](#)

Nicky Gardner

Page 7 of 7


CONTACT

Ms Nicky Gardner
c/o *hidden europe* magazine
Geraer Strasse 14-c
D-12209 BERLIN
Germany

tel. +49 30 755 16 128
email nicky@hiddeneurope.co.uk



You can download my miniweb pages in
a single printable version as a pdf file

here: 

For more information see
www.hiddeneurope.co.uk

*The various images which you see on my
pages here are all from the hidden europe
collection. Where we can, we illustrate every
article in the magazine with our own
photography.*

<< PREV - NEXT

[HOME](#)

[INTERESTS](#)

[TRAVEL WRITING](#)

[MIDWIVES OF THOUGHT](#)

[PEN TO PAPER](#)

[LOST IN TRANSLATION](#)

[CONTACT](#)