

# editorial

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When Leon Trotsky travelled by train from Budapest to Belgrade he remarked that, although the journey proceeded in a more or less southerly direction, the cultural trajectory was most definitely towards the east. The journeys of the mind are often so much more interesting than those we trace on maps.

The Europe of the imagination is an intriguing continent, one which we explore a little in this issue of *hidden europe* as we envisage a Switzerland without the Alps and try to unravel quite why it is that Berlin is well beyond the comfort zone of many who have been brought up and live in Germany's western *Bundesländer*. The demise of the *Thomas Cook Overseas Timetable*, published this month for the very last time, prompts us to imagine a journey or two from yesteryear as we cast back to the days when a footnote to some Russian rail schedules advised that tourists were banned from selected routes. Closed cities still exist in Russia and we get to know Ludmilla, who is rather proud to live in a city where no tourists are allowed to visit. And we encounter restrictions of another kind when we meet Ivan. He has a passport, but his travel horizons are limited to the apartment where he lives with his family in a small town in Belarus.

There is a watery theme to *hidden europe 32*. The waters of the Sava and the Danube mingle below the Kalemegdan Fortress in Belgrade and both rivers feature twice in this issue (in articles on Serbia and Croatia respectively). The Rhine takes a leading role too, as we survey the great cascades at Schaffhausen, wondering if we should be in awe of the beauty or the fury of the moment. At the other end of the watery scale, we ponder the intimacy of the *mikveh* — the ritual bath used by devout Jews for total immersion.

We have four guest contributors in this issue. Rudolf Abraham and Laurence Mitchell write regularly for us. Nigel Roberts has his second piece in *hidden europe*, escorting us back to the town in Belarus that he describes as his spiritual home. And a warm welcome to Hilary Bradt, a distinguished travel writer and founder of the publishing house that bears her name, who makes a debut contribution with an essay on the little churches of south-west England. To all four guest writers, our most sincere thanks for their work on our behalf.

Nicky Gardner & Susanne Kries  
Editors

Strasbourg, France  
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front cover: Belgrade and the Danube, Serbia (photo © Vladimir Babic)

top left: Kalemegdan Fortress, Serbia (photo © Elena Elisseeva)

middle left: Schaffhausen, Switzerland

bottom left: Berlin, Germany (photo © Christian Draghici)

above right: Lonjsko polje, Croatia (photo © Rudolf Abraham)

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