

editorial

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Writing this editorial at Mariánské Lázně focuses our attention on the importance of place names. For this Czech spa town was once Marienbad, and it is that former name, rather than Mariánské Lázně, which evokes sepia-toned images of fin de siècle decadence. Giving a name to a place asserts some sort of ownership over it — just as for the modern generation of travellers, taking a snapshot of a landscape is a way of somehow appropriating it unto oneself.

Few parts of Europe have been so pervasively and regularly renamed as the valleys and peaks of the Arctic island of Jan Mayen, which we visit in this issue. With no indigenous population, Jan Mayen is a place where no-one stays long — with the exception of Grayling and Ingolf, the two dogs at the island's Norwegian base.

There are islands aplenty in our latest offering. We touch down on the tiny Caribbean island that Fidel Castro once allegedly gave to the German Democratic Republic, explore Macedonia's largest island — snake-infested Golem Grad in Lake Prespa — and visit Saaremaa, a Baltic island where the locals find a hundred uses for juniper: from gin to cutlery.

Passports are interesting things, and we probe the history of those little booklets we take with us on our travels. Did you know that it is only in recent times that the passport has become evidence of nationality? Elsewhere in this issue, we follow the Elie chain walk on Scotland's Fife coast and ask how one might define a country. And we pay a visit to Belarus — surely one of Europe's least known destinations.

Our thanks are due to our three guest contributors in this issue: Chris Deliso, James Carron and Neil Taylor. We are also indebted to Kathryn Kelly at Collins Bartholomew Ltd for permission to reproduce selected map extracts. And we thank the various photographers who allowed us to use their pictures. Appropriate credits appear in each article.

In this issue we pay tribute to two men: Thomas Cook, the nineteenth-century entrepreneur who gave travel to the millions, and Ben Haines, a Londoner who died on 27 March 2007. Ben was a true European, and a man who, like Thomas Cook, helped others to travel. You can read more about Ben on page 43. It is to his memory that this issue of *hidden europe* is dedicated.

Nicky SC Gardner & Susanne Kries
EDITORS

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front cover: Lady's Tower, Elie, Scotland (photo by Domhnall Dods)
left (from top to bottom): Notting Hill carnival, England (photo by Jeff Gynane);
Grodna, Belarus; near Lake Prespa, Greece (photo by Christopher Deliso)
above right: Saaremaa, Estonia (photo by Veronika Trover)
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