

# editorial

*source: hidden europe 15 (July 2007)*  
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Å is the very end of the road. Yes, there really is a village in the Lofoten islands called Å. Place names don't come briefer than this outpost on the island of Moskenesøya in northern Norway. The main highway across the Lofotens is called the E10 — but don't be seduced by images of a great motorway. This road is a real tiddler that meanders round coves, clings to cliffs and eventually gives up at Å.

The Lofoten islands are a magical landscape of glaciated mountains and fishing villages. A place “where towering cliffs in oceans stand”, as Norway's celebrated poet Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson nicely put it. We followed the road all the way to Å and in this issue of *hidden europe* we present a feature on two remote Lofoten communities.

There is a certain northern theme to this *hidden europe*, for we consider the issues surrounding the preservation of fragile cultural heritage in Arctic regions, and along the way run across what we think might well be the most northerly train in the world (on the island of Spitsbergen). Back on the Scandinavian mainland, we take a night train from Stockholm to Narvik in northern Norway. Why fly, when there's a train? And a very handsome one at that!

But there is more to Europe than these chilly northern regions and, as we are ever anxious to ensure a good geographical balance, in this *hidden europe* we also take in fireworks in Malta, allotments in Berlin, Spanish exclaves on the Barbary coast, Prague department stores, a spa town in Bohemia and an intriguing island in the Gulf of Riga. There we track down a tower designed by Gustave Eiffel.

Eiffel's tower on the island of Ruhnu is not the only tower to get a mention in *hidden europe 15*, for we also visit the Svaneti region of Georgia. There, in the upper Inguri valley, the towers on fortified homesteads are a Svan icon. This is wild country, and home to the highest permanently inhabited communities in Europe.

There are so many folk who generously help us bring the magazine to publication, and in this issue we offer our special thanks to our three guest contributors: Mark Baker, Victor Paul Borg and Karlos Zurutuza. All three essays make for some fine reading. Other acknowledgements and credits appear in the various texts and on the inside back cover.

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EDITORS

Å, LOFOTEN (NORWAY)  
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front cover: Hamnøy harbour, Lofoten (Norway)

top left: boy at Khaishi, Georgia (photo by Karlos Zurutuza)

middle left: Catholic church at Františkovy Lázně, Czech Republic

bottom left: path between allotment gardens in Berlin, Germany

above right: Reine, Lofoten (Norway)

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