

editorial

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In this twenty-fifth issue of *hidden europe*, we travel from Belgium to Belarus, from Latvia to Spain and from Iceland to Turkey. Yet our focus is not merely on destinations but also on the very process of travel. Has not our preoccupation with speed undermined all that was once attractive about travel around Europe? So, here in *hidden europe* 25, we launch our manifesto for slow travel — an agenda for restoring some sanity and even a little quality to European travel. With the slow food and slow towns movements both established, is it not now time for slow travel? Speed destroys the traveller's connection with landscape. Slow travel restores it.

hidden europe 25 is full of spectral shadows and illusions. We have the ghosts of history in Famagusta, the former Venetian port city that is now in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. And from Iceland we have the shadows of mediaeval sagas that hang in every valley — these are landscapes that captivated the Victorian polymath William Morris, and they are no less appealing today.

In this issue we visit the Belarusian village of Vetka, where lakes and forests are still haunted by the awful shadows of the stricken nuclear power plant at Chernobyl. We conjure up Europe's rich Islamic legacy in articles from Budapest and the Levante region of Spain and report from Britain's ghostly railway stations — strange places which may only have one train each week and absolutely no passengers.

And illusions? Plenty of those. We celebrate the architecture of deceit, with buildings that look like mosques concealing cigarette factories and waterworks, and fabulously ideosyncratic follies that are pure caprice. Illusion blends into fantasy in our feature on Belgium, where surreal giant bananas and entertaining gnomes add to the coastal landscape.

We appreciate the input of four outside contributors to this issue. Laurence Mitchell and Karlos Zurutuza are regulars, but Nigel Roberts and Toby Screech are both writing for *hidden europe* for the first time. To all four our sincere thanks.

So climb on board for another tour of hidden Europe. And join us in a toast to the twenty-fifth issue of the magazine.

Nicky Gardner & Susanne Kries
Editors

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front cover: Oostende, Belgium
top left: Blankenberge, Belgium (photo Westtoer, Blankenberge)
middle left: savouring slow travel (photo by Dmitry Pichugin)
bottom left: Potsdam, Germany (photo by typo-graphics)
above right: Elche, Spain (photo by Martin Garnham)
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