

editorial

source: *hidden europe* 13 (March 2007)
text © 2007 Nicky SC Gardner und Susanne Kries
www.hiddeneurope.co.uk



We are not sure that Byron ever actually went to Armenia. That did nothing to diminish his affection for the country. During a winter in Venice, the English poet travelled out by boat every morning to the Armenian monastery on the island of San Lazzaro where, under the careful tutelage of the monks, he devoted many long hours to learning the Armenian language. Byron immersed himself in all things Armenian, and, in a letter to his publisher back in Britain, he wrote: “If the Scriptures are rightly understood, it was in Armenia that Paradise was placed.”

That Byronic affection for place, and the mysterious ways in which distant spots tug at our souls, lie at the very heart of our endeavours in *hidden europe*. It might be memories of the mountain road to Abergwesyn, the harbour wall at Piran at sunset, a solitary breakfast at Tczew or the accents in a café in the Engadine: it is such delicate images and hazy cameos that always make it worthwhile packing a small bag and heading off on the slow train.

In this issue of *hidden europe*, we make many journeys that touch the soul... to Armenia, to be sure, and on to one of the most troubled parts of the Caucasus region — Nagorno Karabakh. En route, we stop off at airport chapels in Brussels, Bergamo and a dozen other spots besides. When was the last time you paused on a journey to allow your soul to catch up with you?

We are travelling along the upper Danube valley this week. It is odd to think that the water that seeps out of the melting snows in tinselled Black Forest villages will run through ten countries before reaching the sea. No other European river basin encompasses such cultural variety — and along the Danube that diversity reaches its apotheosis in the Vojvodina region of northern Serbia, an area the size of Wales with six official languages. In this *hidden europe*, we explore the complex cultural mosaic of Vojvodina.

Elsewhere in this issue, we look to El Hierro in the Canaries to understand the problem of longitude, visit grim cities in Russia where the snow that falls is yellow or black, and reflect on whether it really matters that all but one of the seven ancient wonders of the world no longer exist. Perhaps the Colossus of Rhodes is all the more appealing because it invites a journey of the imagination. Just like Byron’s engagement with Armenia.

Nicky SC Gardner & Susanne Kries
EDITORS

DONAUESCHINGEN, GERMANY
FEBRUARY 2007



front cover: industrial Europe (photo © Vladimir Zykov)

left (from top to bottom): Shushi, Nagorno Karabakh (photo by Karlos Zurutuza);
Bernina pass, Switzerland; blue mosque, Norilsk, Russia (photo © Sergey Anatolievich Pristyazhnyuk);

above right: the Knoydart Peninsula, Scotland

copy deadline for this issue was 14 February 2007

www.hiddeneurope.co.uk