

editorial

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Women travellers sometimes have a tough time. Bemused looks turn to incredulity as we insist that we really do want to catch the slow bus to the other side of the mountains. But being adventurous never did any harm. We would be of one mind with the nineteenth-century Irish writer Mabel Crawford who once commented that, for women wishing to better themselves a little, travel is at least more improving than staying at home and doing embroidery and crochet work.

Peruse the pages that follow and you will see that we have had little time for embroidery of late. Join us on a journey that takes us from a mountain pass in Spain's Sierra Morena, where the *banditti* once lay in wait for unwary travellers, to Vardø, a Norwegian port in the Barents Sea where they used to burn witches. Maps can both enlighten and confound, but even we were a shade surprised to find that Vardø is further east than Cairo.

Rivers should be connectors of communities. Not so the River Narva which divides Russia and Estonia. Cross-border communication between villages on opposite banks of the river is very difficult. We look at life on this border and also check out a couple of other frontiers on the outer edge of the European Union: the Saimaa Canal on the Finland – Russia border and the area west of Zagreb where Slovenia and Croatia share a common frontier.

You will have to be on the ball not to get your Serbs and your Sorbs confused in this *hidden europe*. We visit some Serb villages outside Serbia. And the Sorbs? Completely different, but still Slavonic. Quite plausibly the world's smallest Slavonic nation, and a rather neglected minority that lives in eastern Germany. We visit Sorbian villages in Lusatia and find a cultural minority that has not had an easy time of it.

This October is the fortieth anniversary of the death of one of the most dedicated travellers of the last century: Che Guevara. He was executed in Bolivia in 1967, but his legacy lives on. We track down a small community in Spain where the cult of Che remains a feature of everyday life.

Welcome to *hidden europe* 16! We hope that you enjoy reading this issue of the magazine as much as we have enjoyed creating it.

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EDITORS

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front cover: the fortress at Vyborg, Russia (photo © Nikolay Sereda)

top left: woman at St Marienstern convent, Lusatia (Germany)

middle left: monument to the Knights of Saint John, Consuegra (Spain)

bottom left: on board the *MS Lofoten*, Norway

above right: Bydgoszcz, Poland

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