

editorial

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The Scottish writer Robert Louis Stevenson once spent a fortnight wandering through the Cévennes area of southern France with a peculiarly stubborn donkey called Modestine. His account of the journey was published in 1879, and in it Stevenson insisted that he travelled not to reach anywhere, but merely to savour the process of travel. Modestine the donkey probably would not agree, but Stevenson has a point. “The great thing is to move,” wrote Stevenson, “to feel the needs and hitches of our life more nearly; to come down off this featherbed of civilisation, and find the globe granite underfoot and strewn with cutting flints.”

So often in our work for *hidden europe*, we feel that modern travel patterns prioritise the destination at the expense of the journey. We fly from one end of Europe to the other in four or five hours. The potential adventure of a journey is discarded in favour of a speedy arrival.

Stevenson was driven by lamentable ill health to forsake his native Scotland. Slow travel can be wonderfully therapeutic — with or without a donkey. A long journey across Europe by train is perhaps a better cure for melancholia than any prescription drug. A journey might be prompted by self-indulgent nomadic rootlessness or a gentle sense of enquiry into the manners of other countries: either way it is an invitation to explore our surroundings and ourselves. We learn something new at every turn. Whether it be Laurence Sterne’s discovery, at the very start of *A Sentimental Journey*, that “they order things better in France” or Gertrude Bell’s delight in unravelling the threads of influence among the desert tribes which vied for power in Kurdistan, the discernment of pattern in foreign lands is hugely enriching. It is an art that is not easily practiced from the window of an aeroplane.

In this issue of *hidden europe* we dispense our regular cocktail of reports about journeys and places. We cross the English Channel (La Manche) by both balloon and train. We travel by boat up the Moselle valley, pause on the shores of an Irish lough, and visit a village in Saxony that, as the worldwide hub of the Moravian Church, has sent missionaries to Greenland, the Caribbean and Africa.

Our thanks are due to Rudolf Abraham, Karlos Zurutuza and Paul Hadfield for their contributions to this issue. All three have written for us before, and we are delighted that each agreed to write again for *hidden europe*. Other thanks are recorded on the inside back cover.

Nicky Gardner & Susanne Kries
EDITORS

Herrnhut, Saxony
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front cover: Cochem on the Moselle river, Germany (photo by Eric Gevaert)

top left: birch tree, Russia (photo by Alexei Averianov)

middle left: Bernkastel, Moselle valley, Germany

bottom left: Tiraspol, Transdniestr (photo by Karlos Zurutuza)

above right: watchtower at the Moravian cemetery in Herrnhut, Saxony

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