

editorial

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Islands are among the most tenacious of concepts; once fixed in our imagination, it is difficult to shake them loose. Prior to the exploits of John and Sebastian Cabot, Amerigo Vespucci and Christopher Columbus, Europe depicted itself on many maps as an island. The Age of Exploration only enhanced the appeal of islands (and the more exotic the better). Today the allure of the Utopian island is as powerful to holidaymakers as ever it was to explorers or political theorists. Here on the island of Lappo, a mere speck on the charts of the Baltic where we write this editorial, it is easy to see why.

In this issue of *hidden europe*, we unravel the haunting beauty of the Åland Islands, a great Baltic archipelago of rocky islands between Finland and Sweden. We also touch down in Corvo, the most isolated inhabited island in the Azores. Check that one out on a map! It is the island which the American poet and geographer, WH Babcock, called “our nearest European neighbour”. Corvo is truly Europe’s sea frontier.

More on frontiers as we flesh out a few historical oddities from Istria and Dalmatia, celebrate Europe’s newest nation state in Montenegro and visit an improbable Vietnamese enclave in Berlin. And we take a sideways look at two symbols of nationhood: banknotes and telephone dialling codes!

Along the way in this issue of *hidden europe*, we encounter Swedes and their snuff, Berliners and their currywurst, Czechs and their slivovice. And a lot of ordinary folk who deserve our thanks for the many small kindnesses that made our journeys all the more enjoyable.

More formally, we must record our indebtedness to Laurence Mitchell, who, with his essay on the Georgian Military Highway, becomes the first guest writer to score a hat-trick and contribute thrice to *hidden europe*. And thanks too to Karlos Zurutuza, a frequent contributor of photographs to past issues. This time round Karlos has been persuaded to put pen to paper on our behalf, with a short portrait of summer on the coast of Montenegro. And a hearty vote of thanks to Mervyn Benford, a *hidden europe* reader who sent us a piece on an unusual Swedish garden. For keeping us on the right road, we are indebted to Kathryn Kelly and her colleagues at Collins Bartholomew in Scotland — for without that company’s excellent maps, of which a half dozen examples grace this issue, we would surely be utterly lost.

Nicky SC Gardner & Susanne Kries
EDITORS

LAPPO, ÅLAND ISLANDS
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front cover: poets’ heads in stone, Georgia (photo by Laurence Mitchell)
left (from top to bottom): Cetinje, Montenegro (courtesy of NTO Montenegro);
Lviv, Ukraine; Långö, Åland Islands
above right: Dubrovnik (© Aleksandar Sedlak)
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