

Chapter 3

VÁRKERÜLET (CASTLE DISTRICT)

DISTRICT 1

3

Updated by
Joseph Reaney



 Sights

★★★★★

 Restaurants

★★★★☆

 Hotels

★★★★☆

 Shopping

★★☆☆☆

 Nightlife

★★★★☆

NEIGHBORHOOD SNAPSHOT

TOP EXPERIENCES	QUICK BITES
<p>■ Taste wine in a cave: Delve deep down into the medieval Faust Wine Cellar, situated in the caves below the Hilton Budapest, for a truly unique wine tasting experience.</p> <p>■ Catch a dance show: Watch one of the world’s finest folk dance ensembles put on a show at the architecturally fascinating Hagymányok Háza (Hungarian Heritage House).</p> <p>■ Up, up, and away: Feeling too lazy to climb all the way from Víziváros to Buda Castle? Hop on the quaint, 19th century sikló (funicular) and you’ll be up there in a jiffy.</p> <p>■ Drink in the view: Sip a delicious cocktail as you admire the city below from the Leo Rooftop bar; a clever sliding-window system means it’s now open year-round.</p>	<p>■ Royal Guard Café. Set inside the seemingly historic Főőrség (Guard House), which was actually only built in 2020, this is a pleasant and convenient stop for a coffee. ☒ <i>Lovarda utca, Castle District</i> 📍 <i>M2: Déli pályaudvar</i></p> <p>■ KedvesKrém. Pop into this delightful ice cream and frozen yogurt parlor to cool down during the long walk up from Víziváros to Várhegy. ☒ <i>Batthyány utca 26, Castle District</i> 🌐 <i>www.kedveskrem.hu</i> 📍 <i>M2: Széll Kálmán tér</i></p> <p>■ Home of Franziska. With its floral prints, muted colors, and geometric patterns, this calm little café is an away-from-it-all stop for a tasty breakfast, light lunch, or afternoon snack. ☒ <i>Iskola utca 29, Castle District</i> 🌐 <i>www.franziska.hu</i> 📍 <i>M2: Batthyány tér</i></p> <p>■ Rétesvár. For a sweet treat any time of day, this tiny, tucked-away bakery serves traditional home-made Hungarian strudel, as well as delicious gingerbread. ☒ <i>Balta köz 4, Castle District</i> 🌐 <i>www.budavari-retesvar.hu</i> 📍 <i>M2: Déli pályaudvar</i></p>
GETTING HERE	
<p>Víziváros is easy to reach from anywhere in Budapest. The metro station Batthyány tér is at the heart of the district, trams run along the riverside street Bem rakpart, and it’s just a short walk across the river to Belváros and Lipótváros. Getting up to Várhegy (Castle Hill) is trickier, as it’s a climb from any of the metro stations or tram stops. If you don’t want to walk, catch the frequent Bus 16, to hop on the historic sikló (funicular), or to take the free escalator up from the Várkert Bazár (Castle Garden Bazaar). Most of the neighborhood is pedestrianized or limited to traffic, so leave the car at home.</p>	
PLANNING YOUR TIME	
<p>As one of the city’s main tourist neighborhoods, the Castle District’s attractions are typically open all week long and year-round. Most close in the early evening (between 5 and 7 pm), at which point Castle Hill can suddenly feel very deserted. However, it’s worth sticking around for spectacular views of the lit-up city from the suddenly-free-to-visit Fisherman’s Bastion, before heading down to Víziváros for some after-dark fun.</p>	

Most of Buda’s major sights and many of its best restaurants can be found in the Castle District, which encompasses two areas: the attraction-packed Várhegy (Castle Hill), a long, narrow plateau laced with cobblestone streets, beautifully preserved baroque, Gothic, and Renaissance houses, and crowned by the magnificent Royal Palace; and the riverside district of Víziváros (Water City), which lies below the castle and is a popular spot for dining, drinking, and making merry.

 **Sights**

The hill itself is home to Budapest’s biggest historical draws, including the 700-year-old Royal Palace, the enormous medieval Matthias Church, and the neo-Renaissance Fisherman’s Bastion. It also has several fascinating museums and exhibits, as well as some of the most jaw-dropping views in the city. Mostly pedestrianized, the area is best explored on foot, and you can easily spend a whole day doing so.

As the sun sets, venture down to Víziváros, the Danube-hugging district below the Buda Castle complex. While it has a few worthwhile sights of its own, such as the Church of St. Anne and the Király Thermal Bath, it’s best known for its hip cafés, excellent restaurants, and rooftop cocktail bars.

The vast majority of this district’s noteworthy attractions, including big hitters like Matthias Church and the Royal Palace, can be found high up on Castle Hill. The exceptions are the Várkert Bazár, which sits below the castle in Víziváros, and the Széchenyi Chain Bridge.

Bécsi kapu tér (Vienna Gate Square) PLAZA | This lovely square (well, triangle) at the northwestern end of Castle Hill is home to some fine baroque and rococo houses. It’s dominated by the enormous neo-Romanesque headquarters of the Országos Levéltár (Hungarian National Archives), a cathedral-like shrine to paperwork built in the 1910s, but there are other gems here, too: check out the house at number eight, with its pink-and-white striped facade and unusual curved windows. Nearby is the medieval stone



Sights

1	Bécsi kapu tér.....	D3
2	Első bástya	D3
3	Halászbástya	E4
4	House of Houdini	E5
5	Kapisztrán tér	C3
6	Királyi Palota	F7
7	Labrintus.....	E5
8	Magyar Nemzeti Galéria.....	F7
9	Mátyás-templom.....	E4
10	Országos Széchényi Könyvtár	F7
11	Széchenyi Lánchíd	H6
12	Tóth Árpád sétány	D5
13	Várkert Bazár.....	G7
14	Ybl Budai Kreatív Ház	G8

Restaurants

1	Alabárdos.....	D4
2	Csalogány 26 Étterem	D2
3	Édeni Vegán	E3
4	Halászbástya Étterem.....	E4
5	Nagy Palacsintázója.....	F3
6	Pavillon de Paris.....	F5
7	Pierrot.....	D3
8	Róma Ételtár.....	E2
9	Zóna.....	G6

Quick Bites

1	Angelika Kávéház	F3
2	Coyote Coffee & Deli	F3
3	Walzer Café	D3

Hotels

1	art'otel budapest.....	F4
2	Hilton Budapest.....	D4
3	Hotel Clark.....	F6
4	Lánchíd 19.....	G7
5	Monastery.....	F4
6	Pest-Buda	D4



The Halászbástya or Fisherman's Bastion with its panoramic viewing terrace and fairy-tale towers is one of the best known monuments in Budapest.

gateway (rebuilt in 1936) that marks the northern entrance to Castle Hill, and after which the square is named. As the name suggests, this Vienna Gate once marked the end of a highway that connected Buda Castle to the Austrian capital. ☒ *Budapest* M2: Széll Kálmán tér.

Első bástya (First Bastion)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE | Finally opened to the public in 2019, this area at the heart of Buda Castle was until recently a United States Marine Corps residence (the site was given to the US in 1948 as war reparations). Before that, it was used as a prison during the anti-Habsburg revolution of 1848–49, and way back in the 13th century, it was probably home to the royal residence of King Béla IV. Uncover the archaeological history of the site with a wooden-walkway audio guided tour of the excavated bastion and walls, all while enjoying spectacular views of the city below. ☒ *9 Táncsics Mihály utca, Castle District* ☎ 30/153–0673 🌐 www.t9.hu/en 📞 900 HUF M2: Batthyány tér.

★ Halászbástya (Fisherman's Bastion)

VIEWPOINT | The wondrous porch overlooking the Danube and Pest is the neo-Romanesque Fisherman's Bastion, a merry cluster of white stone towers, arches, and columns above a modern bronze statue of St. Stephen, Hungary's first king. Medieval fishwives once peddled their wares here; today it's the turn of merchants selling souvenirs and crafts. During the day in high season, you must pay to get to the upper lookout level, but the very reasonable price is well worth the view. Nevertheless, if you don't want to pay it, you can still access the lower portion of the walkway, or come at night to freely explore the whole structure. ☒ *Szentháromság tér, Castle District* 🌐 www.budavar.hu/halasz-bastya-belepodijai 📞 1,000 HUF M2: Batthyány tér.

House of Houdini

MUSEUM | FAMILY | Named for the renowned Budapest-born illusionist and escapologist, this entertaining, family-friendly museum is home to an

Tight on Time in the National Gallery?

Go right to the permanent exhibition halls focusing on the art of the great 19th-century Hungarian master, László Munkácsy. In the permanent exhibition *Variations on Realism – From Munkácsy to Mednyánszky*, you'll find Munkácsy's masterpieces *The Condemned Cell* and the *Woman Carrying Brushwood*, as well as works by László Paál, Lajos Deák Ébner, Adolf Fényes, József Koszta, Gyula

Rudnay, and László Mednyánszky. Don't miss Pál Szinyei Merse, who quite on his own pursued a style akin to French impressionism but was not appreciated in his own era. If you're a fan of early ecclesiastical art, the medieval triptychs are something to behold. Have 15 minutes to spare yet? Go to the central rooms on the second floor to view *Modern Times – Hungarian Art between 1896 and World War II*.

enormous collection of Harry Houdini artifacts, from personal letters to stage magic props. Fun guided tours are topped by a live magic show performed by talented local conjurers. ☒ *Dísz tér 11, Castle District* ☎ 1/951–8066 🌐 www.houseofhoudinibudapest.com 📞 3,000 HUF M2: Déli pályaudvar.

Kapisztrán tér (Capistrano Square)

PLAZA | This historic square at the north-western end of Castle Hill is named after St. John of Capistrano, a 13th-century Italian friar who recruited a crusading army to fight the Turks who were threatening Hungary; you can find a statue of the honored Franciscan here. The square is also home to the remains of the 12th-century Gothic **Mária Magdolna templom** (Church of St. Mary Magdalene). With most of church destroyed by air raids during World War II, the main feature still standing is the tower; today you can climb its 172 steps for stunning city views. Also on the square is the **Hadtörténeti Múzeum** (Museum of Military History), set within a former barracks that still has cannonballs from the 1849 siege lodged in its walls. The exhibits, which include collections of uniforms and military regalia, trace Hungary's military history from the original Magyar conquest in the 9th century through the period of Ottoman rule to the mid-20th

century. ☒ *Castle District* M2: Széll Kálmán tér.

Királyi Palota (Royal Palace)

CASTLE/PALACE | A palace originally built on this spot in the 13th century for the kings of Hungary was reconstructed in the Renaissance style under the supervision of King Matthias during the 15th century. That, in turn, was demolished as Buda was recaptured from the Turks in 1686.

The Habsburg empress Maria Theresa directed the building of a new palace in the 1700s. It was damaged during an unsuccessful attack by revolutionaries in 1849, but the Habsburgs set about building again, completing work in 1905.

Then, near the end of the Soviets' seven-week siege in February 1945, the entire Castle Hill district of palaces, mansions, and churches was reduced to rubble. Decades passed before reconstruction and whatever restoration was possible were completed. Archaeologists were able to recover both the original defensive walls and royal chambers, due in part to still surviving plans and texts from the reigns of Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund and King Matthias.

Freed from mounds of rubble, the foundation walls and medieval castle walls were completed, and the ramparts



Királyi Palota or the Royal Palace is a historic castle-and-palace complex atop Castle hill on the Buda side, hence it is also referred to as Buda Castle.

surrounding the medieval royal residence were re-created as close to their original shape and size as possible. If you want an idea of the Hungarian homelife of Franz Josef and Sissi, however, you'll have to visit the baroque Gödöllő Palace.

Today, the Royal Palace is used as a cultural center. The baroque southern wing contains the **Budapesti Történeti Múzeum** (Castle Museum), displaying a fascinating permanent exhibit of modern Budapest history from Buda's liberation from the Turks in 1686 through the 1970s. Viewing the vintage 19th- and 20th-century photos and videos of the castle, the Széchenyi Lánchíd, and other Budapest monuments—and seeing them as the backdrop to the horrors of World War II and the 1956 revolution—helps to put your later sightseeing in context. You will also find the **Országos Széchényi Könyvtár** (National Széchényi Library), which has a copy of everything ever published in the Hungarian language.

In front of the Royal Palace, facing the Danube by the entrance to Wing C, stands an equestrian statue of Prince Eugene of Savoy, a commander of the army that liberated Hungary from the Turks at the end of the 17th century. From here there is a superb view across the river to Pest. ☒ *Szent György tér 2, Castle District* 🌐 www.budavar.hu ☎ *Castle Museum 2,400 HUF* ☺ *Castle Museum closed Mon.* 🗺 *M2: Déli pályaudvar.*

Labirintus (*Labyrinth of Buda Castle*)
NATURE SITE | FAMILY | Used as a wine cellar during the 16th and 17th centuries and then as an air-raid shelter during World War II, this 16-meter (52-foot) deep, 1,200-meter (3,900-foot) long labyrinth—entered at *Úri utca 9* below an early-18th-century house—is perhaps best explored on the 6 pm evening tour, when the spooky, winding corridors are illuminated only by oil lamp. Special exhibits include a wax museum with elaborately costumed figures depicting the attendants of a “haunted” masked ball held by the Black Count—a legendary

18th-century inhabitant of the tunnels; medieval stone monuments, including a red marble parapet from the palace of King Mathias; the Maze of Darkness—a completely dark section of the tunnels; and “Count Dracula’s” mist-filled tomb.

■ **TIP**→ **This attraction is a little overpriced for what it is and gets mixed reviews from visitors, but if you like caves and getting a little spooked, it might be worth a visit.**

☒ *District I, Úri utca 9, Castle District*
☎ *1/212-0207* 🌐 www.labirintus.eu
☎ *3000 HUF* 🗺 *M2: Széll Kálmán tér, take bus 16 or 16/A to Szentháromság tér, M3: Deák Ferenc tér, take bus 16 to Szentháromság tér.*

★ **Magyar Nemzeti Galéria** (*Hungarian National Gallery*)

MUSEUM | Spread across four wings (and four floors) of the Royal Palace, this national gallery exhibits Hungarian fine art, from medieval ecclesiastical paintings, statues, and triptychs, through to Gothic, Renaissance, and baroque art, to a rich collection of 19th- and 20th-century works. Especially notable are the works of the romantic master painter Mihály Munkácsy, the Impressionist Pál Szinyei Merse (who quite on his own pursued a style akin to French impressionism), and the Surrealist Mihály Tivadar Kosztká Csontváry, who was much admired by Picasso. There is also a large collection of modern Hungarian sculpture, as well as regular (paid) temporary exhibits. Labels and commentary for both permanent and temporary exhibits are in English, and there's an audio guide available.

■ **TIP**→ **There is a 1,000 HUF charge to make video recordings, which are limited to the permanent exhibitions.** ☒ *Castle District*
☎ *1/201-9082* 🌐 www.mng.hu ☎ *From 3,200 HUF; audio guide 800 HUF*
☺ *Closed Mon.* 🗺 *M2: Déli pályaudvar.*

★ **Mátyás-templom** (*Matthias Church*)
RELIGIOUS SITE | The ornate white steeple of the Matthias Church is the highest point on Castle Hill. It was added in the 15th century, above a 13th-century

View Finder



You can either pay a modest fee to enter the Halászbástya (Fishermen's Bastion)—right by Mátyás templom (Matthias Church)—or else walk 10 minutes (or hop on any Várbusz) to the Királyi Palota (Royal Palace), where the lovely vistas are free. To soak in the sublimity of the Buda hills, meanwhile, go to the other side of the castle district (a two-minute walk) and walk along Tóth Árpád sétány (Árpád Tóth Promenade).

Gothic chapel. Officially the Buda Church of Our Lady, it has been known as the Matthias Church since the 15th century, in remembrance of the so-called Just King who greatly added to and embellished it during his reign (though many of these changes were lost when the Turks converted it into a mosque). The intricate white stonework, mosaic roof decorations, and some of its geometric patterned columns seem to suggest Byzantium, yet it was substantially rebuilt again in the neobaroque style 87 years after the Turkish defeat in 1686. One fortunate survivor of all the changes was perhaps the finest example of Gothic stone carving in Hungary: the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, visible above the door on the side of the church that faces the Danube.

Inside, the Trinity Chapel holds an *encolpion*, an enameled casket containing a miniature copy of the gospel to be worn on the chest; it belonged to the 12th-century king Béla III and his wife, Anne of Chatillon. Their burial crowns and a cross, scepter, and rings found in their excavated graves are also displayed here. The church's treasury contains Renaissance and baroque chalices, monstrances, and vestments. Climb the steps in the church's northwest corner to visit



Did You Know?

The stunning Matyas-templom or Matthias Church located atop the Buda Castle hill has witnessed several Royal weddings and coronations, including that of Charles I in 1916 (the last ruler of the Austro-Hungarian Empire).



the Royal Oratory and the collection of ecclesiastical art, as well as (for an extra fee) the panoramic tower with spectacular views of the city. From here, you can also admire the baroque Trinity Column in the square opposite, erected in 1712–13 as a gesture of thanksgiving by survivors of a plague.

High Mass is celebrated every Sunday at 10 am, sometimes with full orchestra and choir and often with major soloists; get here early if you want a seat. During the summer there are organ recitals on some Fridays and Sundays at 7:30 pm. ☞ *Szentháromság tér 2, Castle District* ☎ 1/355–5657 🌐 www.matyas-templom.hu 🚶 1,800 HUF; Tower 1,800 HUF 🚶 M2: Batthyány tér.

Országos Széchenyi Könyvtár (Széchenyi National Library)

LIBRARY | The western wing (Wing F) of the Royal Palace is the Országos Széchenyi Könyvtár, which houses more than 2 million volumes. Its archives include well-preserved medieval codices, manuscripts, and historic correspondence, as well as the newly added Sound Library, which includes more than 2,600 digitized sound recordings of jazz music operettas, military music, folk songs, and more. This is not a lending library, but the reading rooms are open to the public (though you must show a passport); the most valuable materials can be viewed only on microfilm, however. Temporary exhibits on rare books and documents, for example, are usually on display; the hours for these special exhibits vary, and admission for smaller exhibits is sometimes free, though major exhibits usually have a charge. Note that the entire library closes for one month every summer, usually in August. ☞ *District I, Királyi Palota (Wing F), 1 Szent György tér 4-6, Castle District* ☎ 1/224–3745, 1/224–3700 to arrange English-language tours 🌐 www.oszk.hu 🚶 1200 HUF 🚶 M2: Széll Kálmán tér.

Széchenyi Lánchíd (Széchenyi Chain Bridge)

BRIDGE/TUNNEL | The oldest and most elegant of the eight road bridges that span the Danube in Budapest—particularly when lit up at night—the Széchenyi Chain Bridge connects Víziváros on the west bank with Lipótváros on the east. Before it was built, the river could be crossed only by ferry or by pontoon bridge that had to be removed when ice blocks began floating downstream in winter. It was constructed at the initiative of the great Hungarian reformer and philanthropist Count István Széchenyi, using an 1839 design by the English civil engineer William Tierney Clark, and was finished by the Scotsman Adam Clark (no relation). After it was destroyed by the Nazis, the bridge was rebuilt in its original, classical and symmetrical form—though widened for traffic—and was reopened in 1949, on the centenary of its inauguration. At the Buda end of the Chain Bridge is **Clark Ádám tér** (Adam Clark Square), from which you can zip up to Castle Hill on the *sikló* (funicular); it's 1,400 HUF one way. The square is also home to the **0 kilométerkő** (Zero Kilometer Stone), a sculpture from which all highway distance signs are measured all over the country. ☞ *Széchenyi Lánchíd, Castle District* 🚶 Tram 19, 41.

Tóth Árpád sétány (Árpád Tóth Promenade)

PROMENADE | This romantic tree-lined promenade, often overlooked by sightseers, follows the castle's ramparts southeast from the Museum of Military History toward the Royal Palace. It offers a fascinating “behind-the-scenes” look at the matte-pastel baroque houses that face Üri utca, with their regal arched windows and wrought-iron gates. On a late spring afternoon the fragrance of the cherry trees and the sweeping view of the quiet Buda neighborhoods below may be enough to revive even the most weary. About halfway along the route is a staircase leading down to

the **Sziklakórház** (Hospital in the Rock), a subterranean World War II medical facility turned Cold War nuclear bunker that's part of the extensive Castle Hill caves network; entry costs 4,000 HUF. ☞ *Castle District* 🚶 M2: Déli pályaudvar.

Várkert Bazár (Castle Garden Bazaar)

GARDEN | It may look centuries old, but this beautiful complex of palatial riverside buildings was actually only constructed in the late 1800s by architect Miklos Ybl; the use of neobaroque and neo-Renaissance architecture was very fashionable at the time. The buildings are today home to everything from theaters and art exhibitions to restaurants and shops, but the complex's highlights are the spaces in between, including the manicured ornamental gardens and the lovely, strollable footpaths. You can take an elevator and escalator from here up to the top of Castle Hill for free. ☞ *Ybl Miklós tér 2-6, Castle District* ☎ 30/198–5274 🌐 www.varkertbazar.hu 🚶 Exhibitions 4,000 HUF 🚶 Tram 19, 41.

Ybl Budai Kreatív Ház (Ybl Buda Creative House)

ARTS VENUE | A self-described “open community cultural space” located in a beautiful former pump house on the banks of the Danube, this cool little gallery and art space also boasts a pleasant café and bar. ☞ *Miklós tér 9, Castle District* ☎ 1/569–8597 🌐 budaikreativhaz.hu 🚶 Trams 19, 41.

🍴 Restaurants

Alabárdos

\$\$\$\$ | **HUNGARIAN** | Something of a Buda Castle institution, Alabárdos first opened its doors almost 60 years ago—and within a building several centuries older than that. It remains one of the area's best gourmet dining options, with a menu that takes Hungarian classics and adds international and experimental twists to create fusion dishes like fillet of duck thigh risotto and poached trout with

black olives. **Known for:** modern Hungarian cuisine; lovely enclosed garden and terrace; open kitchen showcases chefs at work. ☞ *Average main: 7,500 HUF* ☞ *Országház utca 2, Castle District* ☎ 1/356–0851 🌐 www.alabardos.hu ☹ Closed Sun. 🚶 M2: Déli pályaudvar.

Csalogány 26 Etterem

\$\$\$ | **EUROPEAN** | Perennially on the Michelin radar, Csalogány 26 is one of the few truly great restaurants on the Buda side, and it's an ideal place to dine before or after taking in the Castle District. It also offers one of the best prix-fixe lunches in the city for a fraction of the cost of dinner. **Known for:** roasted lamb; prix-fixe menus with wine pairings; advance reservations necessary. ☞ *Average main: 3,500 HUF* ☞ *Csalogány utca 26, Castle District* ☎ 1/201–7892 🌐 www.csalogany26.hu ☹ Closed Sun. and Mon. No dinner Tues. and Wed.

Édeni Vegán

\$ | **VEGETARIAN** | In a city that isn't always friendly to strict dietary requirements, this canteen-style bistro caters to several of them. Not only is every dish on the menu entirely vegan, from the leafy salads and fresh pastas to the thick soups and hearty stews, but many are also sugar-free, fat-free, gluten-free, and preservative-free. **Known for:** entirely plant-based dishes; generous pick-and-mix portions; popular mushroom vegan burgers. ☞ *Average main: 1,000 HUF* ☞ *Iskola utca 31, Castle District* ☎ 20/921–5276 🌐 www.edenivegan.com 🚶 M2: Batthyány tér.

★ Halászbástya Étterem

\$\$\$\$ | **HUNGARIAN** | With a blockbuster view like this, a restaurant could be forgiven for lacking a focus on food—but that's not the case at this romantic terrace restaurant, part of the Fisherman's Bastion. From the goat cheese and pomegranate salad, to the Mangalitzka pork tenderloin with octopus, to the smoking chocolate and raspberry dessert, every dish on the minimum three-course menu is perfectly prepared

and appealingly presented. **Known for:** sweeping views of the Danube in both directions; innovative take on Hungarian cuisine; service can be slow when busy. **📍 Average main:** 14,000 HUF **☒ Halászbástya, Szentháromság tér, Castle District ☎ 30/897-1517 🌐 www.halaszbastya.eu ☺ Closed Mon. and Tues. 🚶 M2: Batthyány tér.**

Pavillon de Paris

\$\$\$ | FRENCH | The main draw of this popular French restaurant, set across the road from the French Institute, is the incredibly romantic summer garden, where wrought iron chairs and cloth-covered tables are bathed in the glow of a million fairy lights. But that's not all it has going for it: come for the ambience but stay for the delicious French fare, including foie gras with brioche, bourguignonne snails, and crème brûlée, all served with a smile. **Known for:** delightful garden setting; modern takes on classic French dishes; expensive mains. **📍 Average main:** 4,900 HUF **☒ Fő utca 20, Castle District ☎ 20/509-3430 🌐 www.pavillon-deparis.hu 🚶 Tram 19, 41.**

Pierrot

\$\$\$\$ | HUNGARIAN | When touring the sights of Castle Hill, this elegant, long-established restaurant (once a medieval bakery) is the perfect stop for lunch or dinner. Sit in the romantic vaulted dining room or out in the lovely garden to enjoy an array of delicious, beautifully presented dishes—it's mainly traditional Austro-Hungarian staples with inventive, 21st-century twists—along with a good selection of local wines. **Known for:** crispy panfried pike perch; building dates back to 13th century; nightly live piano music. **📍 Average main:** 6,000 HUF **☒ Fortuna utca 14, Castle District ☎ 1/375-6971 🌐 www.pierrot.hu 🚶 M2: Batthyány tér.**

★ Róma Étélbar

\$\$ | HUNGARIAN | A favorite local lunch stop for more than three decades, and recently revived by new owner Dániel Andrusch, this cozy streetside restaurant

serves the neighborhood's most authentic Hungarian food. It's deliciously hearty, meaty stuff, from thick goulash stews to fist-sized *cordon bleu*, but make sure you save space for dessert—particularly the giant, lip-smacking *túrógombóc* (cottage cheese dumpling). **Known for:** long-time Róma resident hostess Cica; wooden chairs and gingham tablecloths; *túrógombóc* (cottage cheese dumpling). **📍 Average main:** 2,500 HUF **☒ Csalogány utca 20, Castle District ☎ 30/190-7773 🌐 www.facebook.com/romaetelbar2020 ☺ No dinner 🚶 M2: Batthyány tér.**

Zóna

\$\$\$ | INTERNATIONAL | This cool and contemporary bistro consistently ranks as one of Budapest's best, with a choice of globally inspired menus offering elegant, seasonal, and beautifully presented dishes on the one hand (think pigeon breast and duck liver) and unfussy gastro-grub on the other (think gourmet burgers and fries). The interior is bright, snazzy, and fun, with pastel-colored walls, patterned wood floors, and precariously dangling lights, while the floor-to-ceiling windows make the most of the river views. **Known for:** extensive wine menu with bottles on display; cellist plays some evenings; service can be hit and miss. **📍 Average main:** 3,500 HUF **☒ Lánchíd utca 7, Castle District ☎ 30/422-5981 🌐 www.zonabudapest.com 🚶 Tram 19, 41.**

☕ Coffee and Quick Bites

Angelika Kávéház

\$ | CAFÉ | This four-room café gets even bigger in the summer, when six small graduated terraces with awnings open up outside. You can get a full range of cakes here and an over-the-top iced coffee with ice cream and whipped cream. **Known for:** Parliament views; drinks and desserts; bustling terrace. **📍 Average main:** 1,000 HUF **☒ District I, Batthyány tér 7, Batthyány tér ☎ 1/225-1653 🌐 www.angelikacafe.hu 🚶 M2: Batthyány tér.**

Coyote Coffee & Deli

\$ | BAKERY | This cute little local-feeling café offers good coffee and great baked treats. A friendly team, who all speak good English, is another plus, as are the street-side tables to watch the world go by in warm weather. **Known for:** bagels and breakfast; coffee made with care, sourced in Vienna; people-watching on the patio. **📍 Average main:** 1500 HUF **☒ Markovits Iván ut 4, Batthyány tér ☎ 20/283-6959 🌐 www.facebook.com/CoyoteCoffeeDeli 🚶 M2: Batthyány tér.**

★ Walzer Café

\$ | CAFÉ | This cute little café is within walking distance of the Castle District's top sights, but far enough off the tourist path to not feel or operate like a tourist trap. You'll find warm and friendly service along with delicious cakes and sandwiches. **Known for:** convenient to Matthias Church, Fisherman's Bastion, and Buda Castle; delicious cakes; charming and local-feeling. **📍 Average main:** 1000 HUF **☒ Tancsics Mihály utca 12, Castle District ☎ 30/250-5971 🌐 www.facebook.com/walzercafe.**

🏨 Hotels

The fairy-tale surroundings of Castle Hill make it a delightful place to stay. Sure, walking home is a strenuous uphill affair, but buses, taxis, and the sikló (funicular) can help out. Hotels down by the Danube in Víziváros have great river views of Parliament and Pest, or of Castle Hill itself, and are a little easier to get to and from.

art'otel budapest

\$\$ | HOTEL | Encompassing a large, modern building and an 18th-century baroque wing on the Buda riverfront, the art'otel adroitly blends old and new, with the modern design elements—including a vast contemporary art collection—supplied by American artist Donald Sultan. **Pros:** colorful and distinctive design; luxury ELEMIS bathroom products; contemporary artworks by Donald Sultan.

Cons: breakfast isn't included in the rates; standard rooms have no tea and coffee facilities; design choices won't appeal to all. **📍 Rooms from:** 38,000 HUF **☒ Bem rakpart 16-19, Batthyány tér ☎ 1/487-9487 🌐 www.radissonhotels.com/en-us/hotels/artotel-budapest ➡ 165 rooms 🚶 No meals 🚶 Tram 19, 41.**

Hilton Budapest

\$\$\$\$ | HOTEL | FAMILY | A quick walk around the exterior of this hotel quickly betrays its mixed architectural origins—it was built in 1977 around the remains of a 13th-century Gothic chapel—but the modern and tasteful rooms, proximity to Matthias Church (right next door), and great views from Castle Hill will soothe the most delicate of aesthetic sensibilities. **Pros:** dramatic river views; prime Castle Hill location; wine tastings in atmospheric medieval cellar. **Cons:** no pool and minimal fitness facilities; typical chain-hotel rooms; bizarre combo of Gothic stonework and 1970s tinted gold windows. **📍 Rooms from:** 102,500 HUF **☒ Hess András tér 1-3, Castle District ☎ 1/889-6600 🌐 www.budapest.hilton.com ➡ 322 rooms 🚶 No meals 🚶 M2: Batthyány tér.**

★ Hotel Clark

\$\$\$ | HOTEL | Commonly referred to as Hotel Leo—an easy mistake, as the bistro and rooftop bar are called Leo, and there are lion motifs everywhere—this is a trendy and contemporary boutique hotel at the Buda end of the Chain Bridge. **Pros:** elegant but down-to-earth decor; two-thirds of rooms face the river; excellent breakfasts (ask for the sweet bakery basket). **Cons:** corridors are perilously dark; wellness area comprises just a small gym and sauna; top-floor rooms book up fast. **📍 Rooms from:** 55,000 HUF **☒ Clark Ádám tér 1, Castle District ☎ 1/610-4890 🌐 www.hotelclark-budapest.hu ➡ 86 rooms 🚶 No meals 🚶 Tram 19, 41.**

Lánchíd 19

\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | While the interior design is a big selling point of this modern boutique hotel—each of the 48 rooms and suites offers distinctive color palettes, furnishings, and artworks (by talented local students)—its location between the Chain Bridge and the Várkert Bazár leading up to Castle Hill means you'll find yourself looking out more often than in.

Pros: stunning city views from floor-to-ceiling windows; popular L19 Bistro is right downstairs; building exterior made up of color-changing panels. **Cons:** no fitness center or spa; trees can obscure river views in summer; two-day minimum stay in summer. **Rooms from:** 47,500 HUF **☎** Lánchíd utca 19, Castle District **☎** 1/457–1200 **🌐** www.lanchid19hotel.hu **🚶** 48 rooms **🕒** No meals **🚏** Tram 19, 41.

Monastery

\$\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | As the name suggests, this brand-new boutique hotel is located within a 300-year-old, baroque Franciscan abbey. **Pros:** fascinating history meets modern convenience; breakfast served in lovely covered courtyard; free parking available. **Cons:** not all rooms face the river; showers could be stronger; breakfast is nothing special. **Rooms from:** 65,000 HUF **☎** Fő utca 30, Castle District **☎** 1/770–8210 **🌐** www.monasterybudapest.accenthotels.com **🚶** 47 rooms **🕒** Free breakfast **🚏** Tram 19, 41.

Pest-Buda

\$ | **HOTEL** | Conveniently located in the heart of Castle Hill, this small, family-owned design hotel has a long and illustrious history stretching all the way back to 1696. **Pros:** spacious and stylish rooms; restaurant has hearty Hungarian cuisine; seasonal terrace with Matthias Church views. **Cons:** breakfast starts late and finishes early; room lights are unnecessarily complicated to use; no elevator. **Rooms from:** 30,000 HUF **☎** Fortuna utca 3, Castle District **☎** 1/800–9213 **🌐** www.pest-buda.com **🚶** 10 rooms **🕒** Free breakfast **🚏** M2: Batthyány tér.

Nightlife

For the neighborhood's best bars and clubs, head down from Castle Hill and stroll the streets of Víziváros.

BARS

Belgian Brasserie Henri

BARS/PUBS | For beer aficionados, nowhere beats this dimly lit underground bar: there are more than a dozen Belgian brews available on draught, with many more bottles filling the fridges. The food, including Belgian staples like mussels and fries, is nothing special, but it does help keep you upright. **☎** Bem rakpart 12, Castle District **☎** 1/201–5082 **🌐** www.belgasorozo.com **🚏** Tram 19, 41.

Bereg

BARS/PUBS | Located around the back of the eye-catching Hattyú haz (Swan House), an example of the short-lived "organic" architectural style, this quirky little pub is a great place for a local craft beer and a bite to eat. If the weather is good, sit out in the leafy garden, complete with puddle-sized pond and wooden bridge. **☎** Batthyány utca 49, Castle District **☎** 1/615–1298 **🌐** www.beregbar.hu **🚏** M2: Széll Kálmán tér.

Lánchíd Söröző

BARS/PUBS | Next to Clark Ádám tér, a large square in Buda at the end of the Lánchíd (Chain Bridge), this tiny pub attracts tourists and locals alike. The walls are covered in black-and-white photos from Budapest and Paris. Ask for owner Róbert Nagy, who speaks excellent English and loves to meet visitors from abroad. **☎** District I, Fő utca 4, Batthyány tér **☎** 1/214–3144 **🌐** lanchid-sorozo.hu.

Leo Rooftop Bar

BARS/PUBS | An extension of the Hotel Clark, this chic and atmospheric rooftop bar offers a breathtaking view of the Chain Bridge below, as well as along the Danube to the Parliament. Soak up the views while sipping one of the bar's

signature cocktails (the whisky sour is especially good). The seating area is covered and heated, meaning the bar is open year-round; though it's always hard to get a table so book ahead. **☎** Clark Ádám tér 1, Castle District **☎** 70/944–6320 **🌐** www.leo-budapest.hu **🚏** Tram 19, 41.

Oscar American Bar

BARS/PUBS | This hip Tinseltown-themed bar attracts a mixed Hungarian and international crowd, who come for its delicious cocktails and its classic Hollywood memorabilia. **☎** Ostrom utca 14, Castle District **☎** 70/700–0222 **🌐** www.oscarbar-budapest.hu **🚏** M2: Széll Kálmán tér.

Performing Arts

CHURCH CONCERTS

Budai Capuchin Templom (Buda Capuchin Church)

FILM FESTIVALS | The Capuchin Church holds monthly concerts on the last Thursday of every month starting at 7:30 PM. **☎** District I, Fő utca 30–32, Batthyány tér **🚏** M2: Batthyány tér.

Mátyás Templom (Matthias Church)

CONCERTS | The city's most famous church hosts concerts from Hungarian and international orchestras every Friday and Saturday night year-round. Most performances start at 7 pm. **☎** Szentháromság tér 2, Castle District **☎** 1/355–5657 **🌐** www.matyas-templom.hu **🚏** M2: Batthyány tér.

Szent Anna Templom (St. Anne's Church)

CONCERTS | The historic baroque church, which was built in 1761, hosts regular organ and classical music concerts throughout the year; performances typically start at 7:30 or 8 pm. **☎** Batthyány tér 7, Batthyány tér **☎** 1/201–6364 **🌐** felsovizivaros.plebana.hu **🚏** M2: Batthyány tér.

FOLK DANCE

Magyar Állami Népi Együttes (Hungarian State Folk Ensemble)

DANCE | The 30-member ensemble, formed in 1951, performs at the beautiful, eclecticist Hagyományok Háza (Hungarian Heritage House), known for its architectural motifs of flowers and birds. Choreography is based on authentic dances that date back hundreds of years. It's considered to be one of the top folk groups worldwide, having performed in 50 countries. The ensemble gives between 100 and 120 shows in Budapest annually at their venue. **☎** Hagyományok Háza, Corvin tér 8, Batthyány tér **☎** 1/225–6000 **🌐** www.hagyomanyok-haza.hu **🚏** Tram 19, 41.

Shopping

ART GALLERIES

★ Koller Gallery

ART GALLERIES | This charming little art gallery showcases contemporary works by Hungarian artists including Victor Vasarely, the leader of the Op Art movement. Everything you see here is for sale, including the sculptures in the beautiful garden out back. Climb the creaky stairs to the top floor for an exhibition on artist Amerigo Tot, who once lived here, as well as spectacular city views.

■ **TIP** → If the door is closed, it doesn't mean the gallery is; try ringing the doorbell.

☎ Táncsics Mihály utca 5, Castle District **☎** 1/356–9208 **🌐** www.kollergaleria.hu **🚏** M2: Batthyány tér.

FASHION

Agnes Toth Studio

JEWELRY/ACCESSORIES | This small fashion and art store, owned by a contemporary Hungarian painter and embroiderer, has quickly gained a reputation for its unique, hand-crafted, floral-patterned designer handbags. **☎** Lánchíd utca 13, Castle District **🌐** www.agnestothstudio.eu **🕒** Closed Mon. and Tues. **🚏** Tram 19, 41.

Romani Design

CLOTHING | Gorgeous bright greens, reds, blues, and yellows make Romani Design dresses stand out in Hungary, but it's the quality of the cut that has made them stand out on international catwalks in recent years. Designer Helena Varga draws on her Roma roots to design clothes with an authentic Hungarian Romani flavor and modern chic appeal. Handmade accessories, including purses, bags, and jewelry complement flowing dresses, tight pants, and frilly shirts. One of the country's freshest clothing designers, every piece from this designer is an original. To find Romani Design, visit the Magma+ Hungarian Art&Design shop on Úri utca, Fian Koncept on Fortuna utca in Buda's Castle District, or take the long journey out to visit the Romani Design studio in District 15 on Batthyány utca 31/b (by appointment only). ☎ *Magma+ Hungarian Art&Design, Úri utca 26-28, Castle District* ☎ 30/258-9774 🌐 www.romani.hu.

FOOD AND WINE

Bortársaság

WINE/SPIRITS | There's an excellent selection of Hungarian vintners represented at this conveniently located little shop, with knowledgeable staff offering background and guidance on the country's wines, like this year's Tokaji or Kékoporto. There's a good selection of wine accessories as well, from oak wine racks to high-tech bottle openers. It's one of more than a dozen Bortársaság outlets in the city. ☎ *Lánchíd utca 5, Castle District* ☎ 1/225-1702 🌐 www.bortarsasag.hu ☹ Closed Sun. 🚊 Tram 19, 41.

PORCELAIN

★ **Herendi Majolikabolt** (*Herend Village Pottery*)

CERAMICS/GLASSWARE | For the Herend name and quality without the steep price tag, visit this small shop where you can choose from Herend's practical line of informal ceramic cups, dishes, and table settings, all hand painted. The colorful pasta bowls are perfect for outdoor summer entertaining. ☎ *Bem rakpart 37, Batthyány tér* ☎ 1/356-7899 🌐 www.herendimajolika.hu ☹ Closed Sun. 🚊 M2: *Batthyány tér*.