

Chapter 3

VÁRKERÜLET (CASTLE DISTRICT)

3

Updated by
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 Sights

★★★★★

 Restaurants

★★★★☆

 Hotels

★★★★☆

 Shopping

★★☆☆☆

 Nightlife

★★★★☆

NEIGHBORHOOD SNAPSHOT

TOP EXPERIENCES	VIEWFINDER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Amble around Várhegy: Stroll cobbled Castle Hill streets like Úri utca, with its fragments of ancient walls, grand embassy buildings, and two-bodied, one-headed lion (corner of No. 13). ■ 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). ■ Up, up, and away: Feeling too lazy to climb all the way up from the riverside to Buda Castle? Hop on the quaint, 19th century sikló (funicular) and you'll be there in a jiffy. ■ 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It may cost relatively little, but there are three good reasons to avoid paying for the stunning city views from the Halászbástya (Fishermen's Bastion). Firstly, you can simply walk 10 minutes west to the Királyi Palota (Royal Palace) to enjoy similar vistas for free. Secondly, if you come back to Halászbástya after 8 pm, when most of the tourists are gone, it's free to visit. And thirdly, there are many great alternative views to be had from the castle; for example, soak in the sublimity of the Buda hills with a walk along Tóth Árpád sétány (Árpád Tóth Promenade).
<p>GETTING HERE</p>	<p>PLANNING YOUR TIME</p>
<p>The riverside is easy to reach from anywhere in Budapest. The metro station Batthyány tér is at the heart of the district, trams run along Bem rakpart street, 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, hop on the historic sikló, or take the free escalator up from the Várkert Bazár. Most of the neighborhood is pedestrianized or limited to traffic, so leave the car at your hotel.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 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.

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 that's laced with cobblestone streets lined by beautifully preserved baroque, Gothic, and Renaissance houses, all 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 majority of this district's most noteworthy attractions, including big hitters like the Royal Palace, Matthias Church, and the Fisherman's Bastion, can be found high up on Castle Hill. The exceptions are the Buda Reformed Church and the Várkert Bazár, both of which sit below the castle in Víziváros, and the Széchenyi Chain Bridge.

Bécsi kapu tér (Vienna Gate Square) **PLAZA/SQUARE** | 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



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

house at number eight, with its pink-and-white striped facade and unusual curved windows. Nearby is the medieval stone gateway (rebuilt in 1936) that marks the northern entrance to Castle Hill, and after which the square is named. Literally translated as “Vienna Gate,” the archway once sat at the end of a highway that connected Buda Castle to the Austrian capital. ☒ *Castle District* 📍 *M2: Széll Kálmán tér.*

Budai Református Templom (*Buda Reformed Church*)

CHURCH | Sitting on a charming little square punctuating Víziváros most strollworthy street, Fő utca, this striking, neo-Gothic church was designed by Samu Pecz and built in 1893–96. Rising above the deep-red brickwork of its facade, both its steeple and a massive dome above the main part of the church are covered with colorful tilework from the famous Zsolnay factory in Pécs. ☒ *Szilágyi Dezső tér, Castle District* 📍 *Tram 19, 41.*

Corvin tér

PLAZA/SQUARE | This small square on Fő utca is a lovely, leafy place to take a break during a day's sightseeing. While home to a few monuments and a nice little café, Corvin tér is most notable for its eye-catching buildings at either end: to the north, a turn-of-the-20th-century masterpiece that contains the Hungarian Heritage House and Budai Vigadó concert hall; and to the south, a church that was converted from a Turkish mosque at the end of the 17th century and rebuilt in the romantic style in the mid-1800s. ☒ *Off Fő utca, Castle District* 📍 *Tram 19, 41.*

★ **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 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 after 8 pm to freely explore the whole structure. ☒ *Szentháromság tér, Castle District* 🌐 *budavar.hu/halaszbastya* 📞 *1,200 HUF* 📍 *M2: Batthyány tér.*

House of Houdini

PERFORMANCE VENUE | **FAMILY** | Named for the renowned Budapest-born illusionist and escapologist, this entertaining, family-friendly museum is home to an enormous collection of Harry Houdini artifacts, from personal letters to stage magic props. Fun, English-language guided tours are topped by a live magic show performed by talented local conjurers. ☒ *Dísz tér 11, Castle District* 📞 *1/951-8066* 🌐 *houseofhoudinibudapest.com* 📞 *€9* 📍 *M2: Déli pályaudvar.*

Kapisztrán tér (*Capistrano Square*)

PLAZA/SQUARE | This historic square at the northwestern 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 its tower: you can pay to 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* 🌐 *budatower.hu* 📞 *Free (Buda Tower: 1,500 HUF)* 📍 *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 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. It comprises three main sections set around the Lion Courtyard: the river-facing east wing (A-D) houses the **Magyar Nemzeti Galéria** (Hungarian National Gallery); the baroque southern wing (E) contains the **Vármúzeum és Szent István-terem** (Castle Museum and St. Stephen's Hall); and the W-shaped



Sights ▼

- 1 Bécsi kapu tér..... D3
- 2 Budai Református Templom..... F4
- 3 Corvin tér F4
- 4 Halászbástya E4
- 5 House of Houdini E5
- 6 Kapisztrán tér C3
- 7 Királyi Palota F7
- 8 Labirintus..... E5
- 9 Magyar Nemzeti Galéria..... F7
- 10 Mátyás-templom..... E4
- 11 Széchenyi Lánchíd H6
- 12 Tóth Árpád sétány D5
- 13 Várkert Bazár..... G7
- 14 Vármúzeum és Szent István-terem F7
- 15 Ybl Budai Kreatív Ház G8

Restaurants ▼

- 1 Édeni Vegán E3
- 2 Halászbástya Étterem..... E4
- 3 Pavillon de Paris..... F5
- 4 Pierrot D3
- 5 Róma Ételbár E2

Quick Bites ▼

- 1 Coyote Coffee & Deli F3
- 2 Franziska..... F3
- 3 Kedves Krém D2
- 4 Nagy Palacsintázója..... F3
- 5 Rétesvár D5
- 6 Royal Guard Café F7
- 7 Walzer Café D3

Hotels ▼

- 1 Hilton Budapest..... D4
- 2 Hotel Clark..... F6
- 3 Monastery..... F4
- 4 Pest-Buda D4



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.

west wing (F) is home to the **Országos Széchényi Könyvtár** (National Széchényi Library), which has a copy of more than two million volumes—everything ever published in the Hungarian language—along with well-preserved medieval codices, manuscripts, and even a sound library. ☒ *Szent György tér 2, Castle District* 🌐 budavar.hu 📧 *Grounds free. Exhibition prices vary; see individual listings* 🚶 *M2: Déli pályaudvar.*

Labirintus (*Labyrinth of Buda Castle*) **CAVE | 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—has a fascinating history. Today, the cave system has been turned into something of a novelty attraction, which gets mixed reviews. Exhibits include elaborately costumed wax figures attending a “haunted” masked ball, the mist-filled tomb of Count Dracula (who is

said to have been imprisoned here), and the “Labyrinth of Darkness,” a pitch-black section of the maze. It’s a good escape on a hot day—it’s a consistent 20°C in the caves—or join the 6 pm evening tour, when the winding corridors are illuminated only by oil lamp. ☒ *Úri utca 9, Castle District* ☎ *1/212-0207* 🌐 labirintus.eu 📞 *4,000 HUF* 🚶 *M2: Széll Kálmán tér.*

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

ART GALLERY | 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 independently pursued a style akin to French impressionism), and the Surrealist Mihály Tivadar Kosztká Csontváry, who was much admired by

Get Carded



If you plan to explore the Castle District from top to toe, consider getting a Budapest Card. They’re available in **24h** (€33), **48h** (€49), **72h** (€63), **96h** (€77), and **120h** (€92) formats, and each covers popular Várhegy sights like the Castle Museum and St. Stephen’s Hall, the Hungarian National Gallery, and Buda Tower. Also included for card holders are a walking tour of Buda (and another of Pest), public transport throughout the city (as well as use of the Budapest

Castle Bus), and entry to other city attractions like the Lukács Baths. Staying for three days and aiming to pack in a lot? Consider the **72h PLUS** card (€96), which also covers entry to the Matthias Church, a return trip on the Buda Castle funicular, door-to-door airport transfers, and a sightseeing river cruise. All cards are available to buy in advance online (🌐 www.budapestinfo.hu/budapest-card), to be collected at the airport, train stations, or in the center of Pest.

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 an audio guide is available.

In front of the gallery, facing the Danube, 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. For another outdoor artwork, check out the nearby *Halászógyerekek díszkút* (Fountain of the Fishing Children).

■ **TIP** → There is a 1,000 HUF charge to take videos, which are limited to permanent exhibitions. ☒ *Szent György tér 2, Castle District* ☎ *1/201-9082* 🌐 mng.hu 📞 *From 4,200 HUF; audio guide 1,200 HUF* 🕒 *Closed Mon.* 🚶 *M2: Déli pályaudvar.*

★ **Mátyás-templom** (*Matthias Church*) **CHURCH** | 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 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, colorful mosaic roof decorations, and some of its geometric patterned columns seem to suggest Byzantium, yet it was substantially rebuilt in the neo-Baroque 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 *Szentháromság tér*.

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

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 classical concerts on Friday (plus some Mondays and Wednesdays) at 7 pm, and organ recitals on Saturday and Sunday at 7:30 pm. ☒ *Szentháromság tér 2, Castle District* ☎ 1/355-5657 🌐 *matyas-templom.hu* 🚗 2,500 HUF; Tower 2,900 HUF 🚇 M2: *Batthyány tér*.

Széchenyi Lánchíd (Széchenyi Chain Bridge)

BRIDGE | The oldest and most elegant of the 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 4,000 HUF for a

return ticket. 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 Capistrano Square toward the Royal Palace. It offers a fascinating behind-the-scenes look at the matte-pastel baroque houses that face Úri 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 weariest. About halfway along the route is a staircase leading down to 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. Although fascinating, entry to Sziklakórház (including an English-speaking tour) costs a hard-to-justify €25. ☒ *Between Úri utca and Lovas út, 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 Miklós 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

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. Still have 15 minutes to spare? Go to the central rooms on the second floor to view *Modern Times: Hungarian Art between 1896 and World War II*.

Castle Hill for free. ☒ *Ybl Miklós tér 2–6, Castle District* ☎ 30/198-5274 🌐 *varkert-bazar.hu* 🚇 Tram 19, 41.

★ **Vármúzeum és Szent István-terem (Castle Museum and St. Stephen's Hall)** **HISTORY MUSEUM** | The baroque southern wing of the Royal Palace is home to two of its greatest gems: the **Vármúzeum** (Castle Museum) and **Szent István-terem** (St. Stephen's Hall).

The former, which is part of the **Budapesti Történelmi Múzeum** (Budapest History Museum), displays 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 later sightseeing in context.

The latter is one of Budapest's most ornate rooms: an elegantly carved Romanesque masterpiece with a strong Hungarian flavor. You'll be given a tablet with an audiovisual guide to talk you through the history and features of the

room, as well as surrounding exhibits like the replica of the Hungarian crown. As there's a lack of seating, you may find yourself skipping through some of the longer-winded commentaries.

Separate tickets are available for the two attractions, but a combined ticket is the best option. Guided tours are available for a small additional fee. ☒ *Szent György tér 2, Castle District* ☎ 1/487-8800 *Castle Museum* 🌐 *Castle Museum: varmuzeum.hu; St. Stephen's Hall: szentistvanterem.hu* 🚗 *Combined ticket: 4,500 HUF. Castle Museum only: 2,400 HUF. St. Stephen's Hall only: 3,900 HUF.* ☹ *Closed Mon.* 🚇 M2: *Déli pályaudvar*.

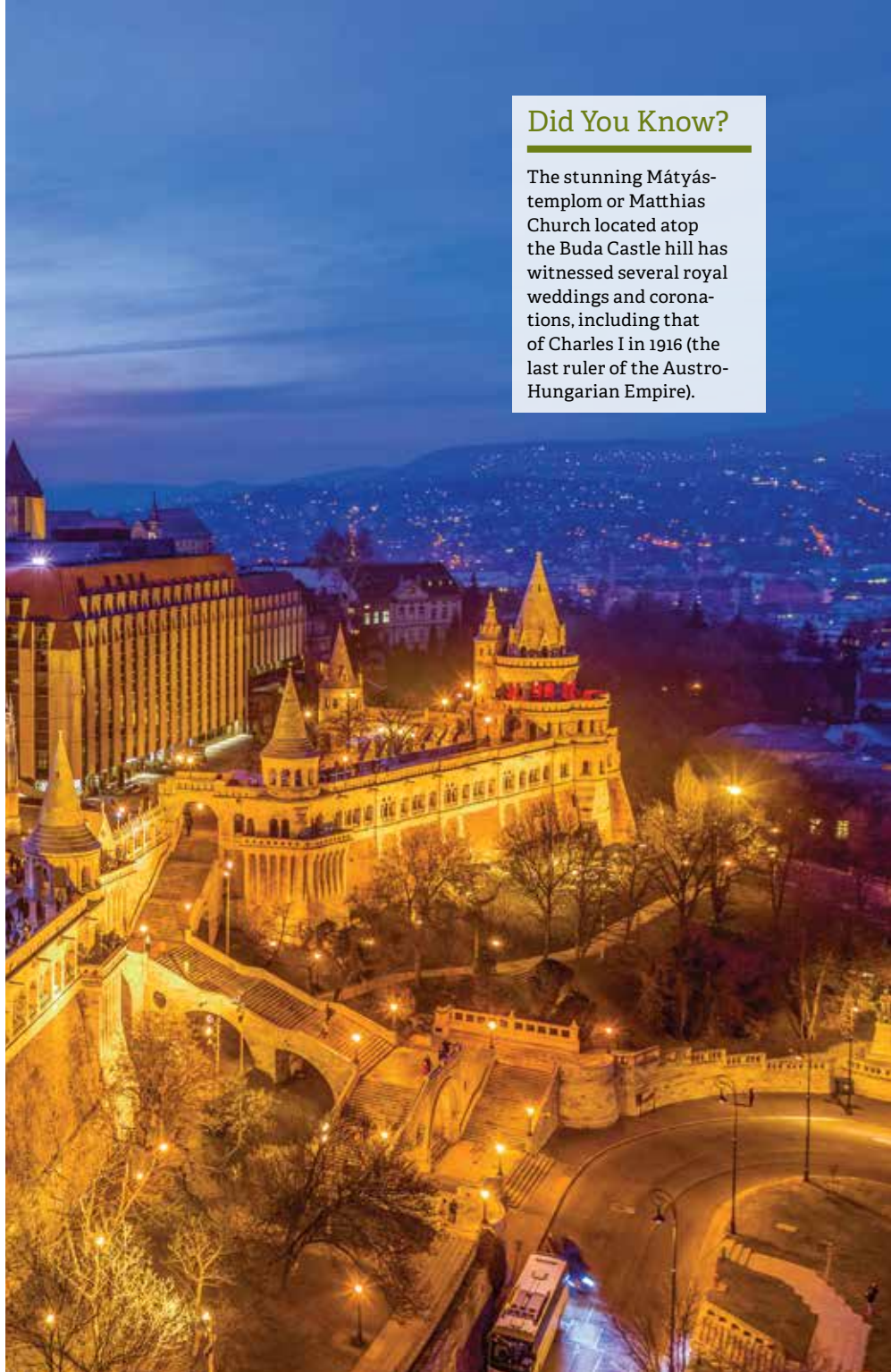
Ybl Budai Kreatív Ház (Ybl Buda Creative House)

ART GALLERY | 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 has rotating exhibitions of modern art. Access is through FELIX Kitchen&Bar, an elegant (and pricey) stop for a coffee, cocktail, or sumptuous meal. ☒ *Ybl Miklós tér 9, Castle District* ☎ 30/735-5041 🌐 *felixbudapest.com* 🚇 Tram 19, 41.



Did You Know?

The stunning Mátyás-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).



Restaurants

The COVID-19 pandemic had a huge impact on the restaurant scene in touristy Várkerület, with some of the neighborhood's most renowned restaurants closing down. While many good dining options remain, both up on Várhegy (Castle Hill) and down along the river in Víziváros, prices have increased significantly in recent years, so don't expect a cheap meal out.

Édeni Vegán

§ | **VEGETARIAN** | In a country that isn't always easy to navigate with 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:** generous self-service portions; popular mushroom vegan burgers; good value daily lunch menus (2,990 HUF). ☎ *Average main: Ft2,500* ☒ *Iskola utca 31, Castle District* ☎ 20/921–5276 🌐 *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 Jersey cheese mousse, to the Mangalitzka pork tenderloin with octopus, to the strawberry and elderberry Savarin, 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: Ft20,400* ☒ *Halászbástya, Off Szentháromság tér, Castle District* ☎ 1/201–6935 *reservations* 🌐 *halaszbastya.eu* ☺ *No lunch* 📍 M2: *Batthyány tér.*

Pavillon de Paris

\$\$\$\$ | **FRENCH** | The main draw of this popular French restaurant, set across the road from the French Institute in Víziváros, is the incredibly romantic summer garden, where wrought iron chairs and cloth-covered tables are bathed in the glow of fairy lights. But that's not all it has going for it: come for the ambience but stay for the delicious French fare, including bourguignon snails, ratatouille with comté, and crème brûlée, all served with a smile. **Known for:** modern takes on classic French dishes; long list of wines and cocktails; service is hit-and-miss. ☎ *Average main: Ft7,900* ☒ *Fő utca 20, Castle District* ☎ 30/711–1135 🌐 *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 wonderful, plant-filled “secret” garden to enjoy an array of delicious, beautifully presented dishes. **Known for:** delicious smoked sturgeon with caviar; building dates back to 13th century; hefty 18% service charge. ☎ *Average main: Ft7,500* ☒ *Fortuna utca 14, Castle District* ☎ 1/375–6971 🌐 *pierrot.hu* ☺ *Closed Mon. and Tues.* 📍 M2: *Batthyány tér.*

★ Róma Étélbár

\$\$ | **HUNGARIAN** | A favorite local lunch stop for more than three decades, and recently revived by enthusiastic owner Dániel Andrusch, this cozy streetside restaurant serves the most authentic Hungarian food in Víziváros. It's deliciously hearty, meaty stuff, from thick goulash stews to fist-sized schnitzel *cordón 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: Ft3,500* ☒ *Csalogány utca 20, Castle District* ☎ 30/190–7773 🌐 *facebook.com/romaelbar2020* ☺ *No dinner* 📍 M2: *Batthyány tér.*

Coffee and Quick Bites

Coyote Coffee & Deli

§ | **BAKERY** | This cute little local-feeling café, just off Batthyány tér, serves up 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; Vienna-sourced coffee made with care; delicious Coyote cheesecake. ☎ *Average main: Ft2,500* ☒ *Markovits Iván utca 4, Castle District* ☎ 20/283–6959 🌐 *coyotecoffee.hu* 📍 M2: *Batthyány tér.*

Franziska

\$\$ | **CAFÉ** | 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. **Known for:** delicious savory and sweet breakfasts; lots of vegetarian and vegan options; Tiger Spice chai latte. ☎ *Average main: Ft4,200* ☒ *Iskola utca 29, Castle District* 🌐 *franziska.hu* ☺ *No dinner* 📍 M2: *Batthyány tér.*

Kedves Krém

§ | **ICE CREAM** | Walking up from Víziváros to Várhegy from the north side? Then pop into this delightful ice cream and frozen yogurt parlor to cool down. **Known for:** spectacular lemon sorbet; paper-based spoons (no plastic); tasty homemade cakes. ☎ *Average main: Ft600* ☒ *Batthyány utca 26, Castle District* ☎ 30/333–6963 🌐 *kedveskrem.hu* 📍 M2: *Széll Kálmán tér.*

Nagy Palacsintázója

§ | **DESSERTS** | This branch of the small chain, which means “Granny's pancake house” in English, is a decent stop for a very affordable Hungarian-style pancake

any time of day or night. The location by Batthyány tér is pleasant compared to other branches, and there are tables outside in summer. **Known for:** good mix of savory and sweet options; tasty black cherry filling; reheated pancakes can be soggy. ☎ *Average main: Ft800* ☒ *Batthyány tér 5, Castle District* 🌐 *facebook.com/nagyipalacsintazojabudapest* 📍 M2: *Batthyány tér.*

Rétesvár

§ | **BAKERY** | For a sweet treat any time of day, this tiny, tucked-away bakery in the heart of Castle Hill serves traditional homemade Hungarian *rétes* (strudel) in various flavors, from apple to plum, cottage cheese to cabbage, as well as delicious gingerbread, croissants, cheese scones, cinnamon snails, and other sweet and savory delicacies. **Known for:** delicious poppy and cherry strudel; good coffee and cold drinks; hidden down a tiny passageway. ☎ *Average main: Ft650* ☒ *Balta köz 4, Castle District* ☎ 70/408–8696 🌐 *budavariresesvar.hu* 📍 M2: *Déli pályaudvar.*

Royal Guard Café

\$\$\$ | **HUNGARIAN** | Set inside the seemingly historic Főőrség (Guard House), though it was actually only built in 2020, this is a pleasant and convenient stop for a coffee or a light lunch while exploring the Királyi Palota (Royal Palace). **Known for:** colorful decor with vintage photos; tasty Somlói sponge cake; views of the recently revived Királyi lovarda (Royal Riding Hall). ☎ *Average main: Ft6,000* ☒ *Hunyadi-udvar, Castle District* ☎ 30/553–6126 🌐 *foorseg.hu* 📍 M2: *Déli pályaudvar.*

★ 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 toasted sandwiches. **Known for:** close to Matthias Church and Fisherman's Bastion; decadent milkshakes; quiet haven in a

busy district. 📍 *Average main: Ft2,000*
 ☒ *Tancsics Mihály utca 12, Castle District*
 ☎ 30/250-5971 🌐 [facebook.com/walzercafe](https://www.facebook.com/walzercafe)
 ☹ Closed Mon. and Tues. No dinner
 🚏 M2: Batthyány tér.

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 all help out. Hotels down by the Danube in Viziváros have great river views of Parliament and Pest, or of Castle Hill itself, and are a little easier to get to and from.

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, and great views from Castle Hill will soothe the most delicate of aesthetic sensibilities. **Pros:** some rooms have Parliament views; impeccable service; quiet location in the evenings. **Cons:** no pool and minimal fitness facilities; smart but slightly soulless rooms; bizarre combo of Gothic stonework and 1970s tinted gold windows. 📍 *Rooms from: Ft88,000* ☒ *Hess András tér 1-3, Castle District* ☎ 1/889-6600 🌐 [budapest.hilton.com](https://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, contemporary, adults-only boutique hotel at the Buda end of the Chain Bridge. **Pros:** elegant but down-to-earth decor; excellent breakfasts (ask for the sweet bakery basket); hotel's rooftop bar is one of the best in Budapest. **Cons:** corridors are perilously dark; wellness

area comprises just a small gym and sauna; top-floor rooms book up fast. 📍 *Rooms from: Ft106,000* ☒ *Clark Ádám tér 1, Castle District* ☎ 1/610-4890 🌐 [hotelclarkbudapest.hu](https://www.hotelclarkbudapest.hu) 🚏 86 rooms 🚏 No Meals 🚏 Tram 19, 41.

Monastery

\$\$\$ | HOTEL | As the name suggests, this 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: Ft65,000* ☒ *Fő utca 30, Castle District* ☎ 1/770-8210 🌐 [monasterybudapest.accenthotels.com](https://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; seasonal terrace with Matthias Church views; boutique style is something a little different. **Cons:** breakfast starts late and finishes early; room lights are unnecessarily complicated to use; no elevator. 📍 *Rooms from: Ft60,000* ☒ *Fortuna utca 3, Castle District* ☎ 1/800-9213 🌐 [pest-buda.com](https://www.pest-buda.com) 🚏 11 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 Viziváros.

BARS

Belgian Brasserie Henri

BARS | 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 🌐 [belgasorozo.com](https://www.belgasorozo.com) 🚏 Tram 19, 41.

Bereg

BARS | 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* ☎ 1/615-1254 🌐 [beregbar.hu](https://www.beregbar.hu) 🚏 M2: Széll Kálmán tér.

Lánchíd Söröző

PUB | 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. ☒ *Fő utca 4, Castle District* ☎ 1/214-3144 🌐 [lanchidsorozo.hu](https://www.lanchidsorozo.hu).

Leo Rooftop Bar

COCKTAIL BARS | 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. ☒ *Hotel Clark, Clark Ádám tér 1, Castle District* ☎ 70/944-6320 🌐 [leobudapest.hu](https://www.leobudapest.hu) 🚏 Tram 19, 41.

Oscar American Bar

COCKTAIL BARS | Just around the corner from Széll Kálmán tér Metro station, this hip Tinseltown-themed bar attracts a mixed Hungarian and international crowd, who come for the delicious cocktails

and classic Hollywood memorabilia. ☒ *Ostrom utca 14, Castle District* ☎ 70/700-0222 🌐 [oscarbudapest.hu](https://www.oscarbudapest.hu) 🚏 M2: Széll Kálmán tér.

Performing Arts

CHURCH CONCERTS

Mátyás Templom (Matthias Church)

CONCERTS | The city's most famous church hosts concerts from Hungarian and international organists, orchestras, and choirs. During the summer there are classical concerts on Friday (plus some Mondays and Wednesdays) at 7 pm, and organ recitals on Saturday and Sunday at 7:30 pm. There are also less regular concerts held throughout the year: see website for details. ☒ *Szentháromság tér 2, Castle District* ☎ 1/355-5657 🌐 [matyas-templom.hu/events](https://www.matyas-templom.hu/events) 🚏 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, Castle District* ☎ 1/201-6364 🌐 [felsovizivaros.plebana.hu](https://www.felsovizivaros.plebana.hu) 🚏 M2: Batthyány tér.

FOLK DANCE

Magyar Állami Népi Együttes (Hungarian State Folk Ensemble)

FOLK/TRADITIONAL DANCE | The 30-member ensemble, formed in 1951, performs at the beautiful and historic 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, Castle District* ☎ 1/225-6000 🌐 [hagyomanyokhaza.hu](https://www.hagyomanyokhaza.hu) 🚏 Tram 19, 41.

Shopping

ART GALLERIES

★ Koller Gallery

ART GALLERY | 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 🌐 *kollergaleria.hu* ☺ *Closed Sun. and Tues.–Thurs.* 🚏 M2: *Batthyány tér.*

Ráth Lépcső

ART GALLERY | The small, newly opened art gallery facing the Budavári sikló (Buda Castle Funicular) has ever-changing exhibitions, which mostly showcase local Hungarian artists. Much of the artwork on display is available for purchase. ☎ *Hunyadi János út 1, Castle District* ☎ 1/202-3836 🌐 *rathlepcso.hu* ☺ *Closed Sun. and Mon.* 🚏 *Tram 19, 41.*

FASHION

Agnes Toth Studio

HANDBAGS | 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* 🌐 *agnestothstudio.com* ☺ *Closed Mon. and Tues.* 🚏 *Tram 19, 41.*

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 🌐 *bortarsasag.hu* ☺ *Closed Sun.* 🚏 *Tram 19, 41.*

Activities

★ VR Tours Budapest

WALKING TOURS | For an alternative way to experience the Castle District, take this unique, 90-minute VR tour. Guides take small groups from their main office near the Várkert Bazár all the way up the hill to the Királyi Palota (Royal Palace) and back down again, with half a dozen stops along the way to strap on a VR headset and get a glimpse into the Buda of years gone by. That means a series of 360-degree, 3D animations depicting castle sieges, royal processions, revolutionary battles, and more—all soundtracked by a Samuel L. Jackson-esque voiceover. It's a surprisingly immersive experience, so removing your headset after each stop to see Buda's present-day, tourist-thronged reality can be a little discombobulating.

■ **TIP** → **The tour includes a lot of walking (and a lot of steps), so a reasonable level of fitness and mobility is required.** ☎ *Lánchíd utca 23, Castle District* ⚡ *(ring bell for entry)* ☎ 30/261-0848 🌐 *virtoursofficial.com* 💰 6,990 HUF 🚏 *Tram 19, 41.*