

Chapter 11

HUNGARY

BUDAPEST, SZENTENDRE, VISEGRÁD,
EGER, ESZTERGOM, KALOCSA

11

Updated by
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WELCOME TO HUNGARY

TOP REASONS TO GO

★ **Castle Hill.** Cobblestone streets with Baroque, Gothic, and Renaissance houses and museums, plus breathtaking views, make this Budapest's top destination.

★ **Andrássy út.** Budapest's Champs-Élysées, this wide, straight boulevard is lined with plane trees, cafés, and grand old architecture.

★ **Széchenyi Baths.** This complex of indoor and outdoor thermal baths in Budapest is open year-round.

★ **Szentendre.** A romantic, lively little town with colorful Baroque houses, and a long history as a haven for artists.

★ **Bazilika, Esztergom.** Hungary's largest cathedral stands on a hill overlooking town.

1 Budapest. Divided by the river Danube into Buda and Pest, Hungary's capital has much to offer in terms of natural beauty, architecture, and culture.

2 Szentendre. Just north of Budapest, this quaint artisanal village nestled next to the Danube is famous for its craft markets, shops, folk-art museums, and the artist colony that now thrives there.

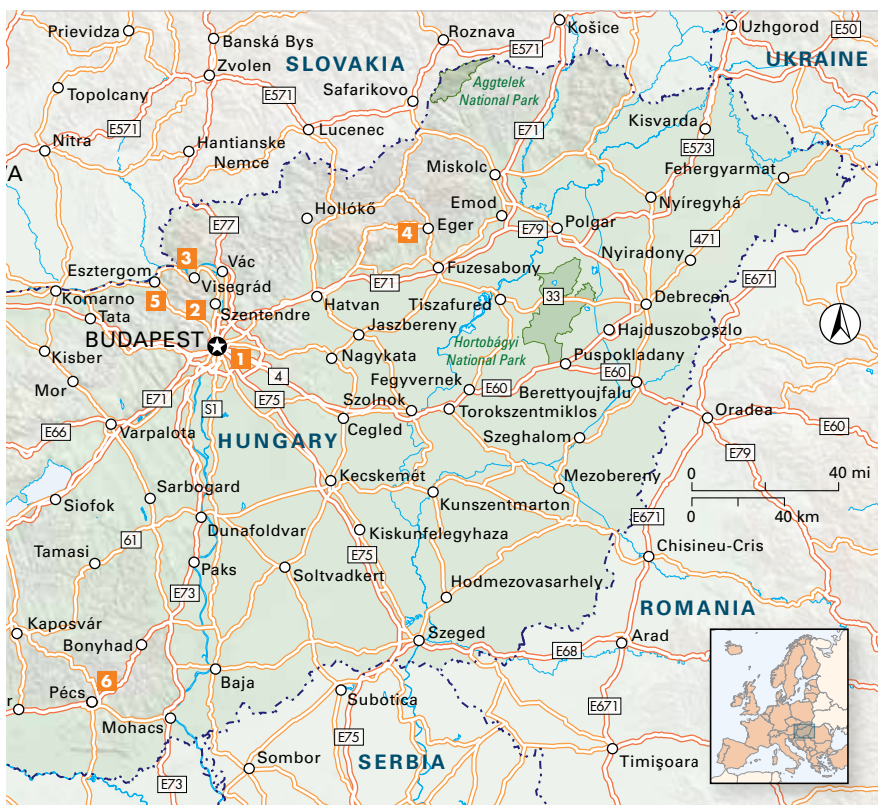
3 Visegrád. With a name deriving from the Slavic for "high castle," today the most prominent feature of this village is still the impressive royal castle on the top of the hill.

4 Eger. The more rural and gently mountainous stretch of northern Hungary includes the handsome, vibrant town of Eger.

5 Esztergom. Hungary's first capital has a beautiful riverside cathedral.

6 Pécs. A vibrant town that's home to Roman ruins and piles of Zsolnay porcelain.





COUNTRY SNAPSHOT

WHEN TO GO	AT A GLANCE
<p>High Season: Budapest is very busy from June through August, when many of the major music and culinary festivals take place.</p> <p>Low Season: Winters are dark and long in Hungary, and Hungarians are notoriously grumpy in these months, but hotels are cheaper.</p> <p>Value Season: You can catch the tail end of the wine festival and the Jewish festival in September, after the stream of backpackers diminishes but when the weather is still gorgeous.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Capital: Budapest ■ Population: 9,710,000 ■ Currency: Forint (HUF or Ft) ■ Money: ATMs are common; euros sometimes accepted. ■ Language: Hungarian ■ Country Code: 36 ■ Emergencies: 112 ■ Driving: On the right ■ Electricity: 220v/50 cycles; electrical plugs have two round prongs ■ Time: Six hours ahead of New York ■ Documents: Up to 90 days with valid passport; Schengen rules apply ■ Mobile Phones: GSM (900 and 1800 bands) ■ Major Mobile Companies: Vodafone, T-Mobile, Telenor
BIG EVENTS	
<p>January: Budapesters celebrate pre-New Year's festivities at the horse races. 🌐 www.kincsempark.hu</p> <p>March/April: Classical music lovers come from all corners for the Budapest Spring Festival. 🌐 www.budapestitavasizsfesztival.hu</p> <p>August: The Sziget Festival is the biggest music festival in Europe. 🌐 www.szigetfestival.com</p> <p>October: The Contemporary Arts Festival has an emphasis on jazz.</p>	
WAYS TO SAVE	
<p>Eat at the market halls. Farmers' market halls have cheap lunch-only canteens that serve hot, fresh local cuisine.</p> <p>Book a rental apartment. Centrally located apartments or rooms are cheaper than hotels.</p> <p>Get a Budapest Card. Good for public transport, free admission to a bathhouse, and free city tours. 🌐 www.budapestcard.org</p> <p>Take public transport. Budapest has fantastic and cheap trams.</p>	<p>WATCH THIS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Kontroll. A quirky, poignant look at the lives of Budapest metro ticket-checkers. ■ Sunshine. Story of a Jewish Budapest family around World War II. ■ A Tanú (The Witness). Hilarious send-up of Communist Hungary.

Budapest, an old-world city with a throbbing urban pulse, is a must-stop on any trip to Central Europe. Szentendre and Eger have their own charms, including majestic hilltop castles and cobblestone streets winding among lovely Baroque buildings. All this, and the generosity of the Magyar soul, sustains visitors to this land of vital spirit and beauty.

Hungary sits at the crossroads of Central Europe, having retained its own identity by absorbing countless invasions and foreign occupations. Its industrious, resilient people have a history of brave but unfortunate uprisings: against the Turks in the 17th century, the Habsburgs in 1848, and the Soviet Union in 1956. With the withdrawal of the last Soviet soldiers from Hungarian soil in 1991, Hungary embarked on a decade of sweeping changes. The adjustment to a free-market economy has not all been easy sailing, but Hungary at long last has regained self-determination and a chance to rebuild an economy devastated by years of Communist misrule.

Hungary joined NATO in 1999, and the country joined the European Union (EU) in 2004. In 2002, then 39-year-old Prime Minister Viktor Orbán was the subject of gentle mockery when he suggested that the Hungarian economy was like a guided missile that had taken off and which could not be shot down. Orbán's increasingly right-wing FIDESZ party won the 2010 parliamentary elections, achieving

a supermajority, and the party has since redrawn the Hungarian constitution.

Two rivers cross the country: the famous Duna (Danube) flows from the west through Budapest on its way to the southern frontier, and the smaller Tisza flows from the northeast across the Nagyalföld (Great Plain). What Hungary lacks in size it makes up for in beauty and charm. Hungarians are known for their hospitality. Although their unusual and difficult language is anything but a quick study, English is fast becoming the second language of Hungary, even superseding German. But what all Hungarians share is a deep love of music, and the calendar is studded with it, from Budapest's famous opera to its annual spring music festival. And at many more touristy restaurants, Gypsy violinists serenade you during your evening meal.

Planning

Getting Here and Around

AIR

Hungary has not had a flagship carrier since 2012, but there are still nonstop flights to be found on some U.S. airlines, and even a few European airlines. Travel time from New York to Budapest is 8½ hours. From Chicago, it is 9½ hours. American Airlines regularly offers direct flights from New York to Budapest, and Polish airline LOT offers direct flights to Budapest from both New York and Chicago. However, be careful when booking to make sure you've got the direct flight, and not one that makes a stop in Warsaw.

Your hotel may offer transportation from the airport for a fee; if so, arrange it when you make your hotel reservations. If you're taking a taxi, allow anywhere between just 25 minutes during nonpeak hours and at least an hour during rush hours (7 am–9 am from the airport, 4 pm–6 pm from the city).

CAR

The main routes into Budapest are the M1 from Vienna (via Győr), the M3 from near Gyöngyös, the M5 from Kecskemét, and the M7 from the Balaton; the M3 and M5 are being upgraded and extended to Hungary's borders with Slovakia and Yugoslavia, respectively. Budapest, like any Western city, is plagued by traffic jams during the day but less congested later in the evening. If unaccustomed to sharing the city streets with trams, pay extra attention. You should be prepared to be flagged down numerous times by police conducting routine checks for drunk driving and stolen cars. Be sure all of your papers are in order and readily accessible; unfortunately, the police have been known to give foreigners a hard time. Don't rent a car on arrival if your sole destination is Budapest, but it may

be worthwhile to have one if you want to explore the countryside.

TRAIN

International trains—and there is a steady stream of them, from all directions—are routed to two stations in Budapest. Keleti Pályaudvar (East Station) receives most international rail traffic coming in from the west, including Vienna but also south to Pécs. Nyugati Pályaudvar (West Station) handles a combination of international and domestic trains. Déli handles trains to the Lake Balaton region and to Pécs. Within Hungary, there is frequent and convenient rail service to many smaller cities and towns on the many routes that radiate in all directions from Budapest.

CONTACTS Keleti Pályaudvar. (*East Railway Station*) ☒ District VIII, Baross tér, Budapest ☎ 1/349-4949 MÁVDIREKT customer service 🌐 www.mavcsopot.hu. **Nyugati Pályaudvar.** (*West Railway Station*) ☒ District XIII, Teréz körút, Nyugati Train Station ☎ 1/349-4949 MÁVDIREKT customer service 🌐 www.mavcsopot.hu 🚶 M3: Nyugati Train Station.

Money

Hungary's currency is the Forint, represented either as HUF or Ft. Both are used throughout this chapter.

Hotels

Budapest has a wide range of hotels in all price categories, with several very good luxury options at (for Europe at least) relatively moderate prices.

All room rates given are based on double occupancy in high season. For luxury hotels, V.A.T. of 18% and sometimes breakfast and a tourist tax of 4% will not be included in the room rate. Assume they are included unless there is a note to the contrary.

BOOKING

Advance reservations are an absolute requirement in summer, especially at the smaller, lower-priced hotels and during the week in August that Formula 1 racing descends on Budapest. In winter it's not anywhere near as difficult to find a hotel room, even at the last minute, and prices are usually reduced by 20% to 30%.

APARTMENT RENTALS

Apartment hotels are a good option for business travelers or families. Luxury apartments can be rented for approximately 20% less than a room in a five-star hotel. Regardless of what you pay, there can be a minimum rental imposed, anywhere from a few nights to a few weeks. Some companies insist on a month-to-month rental. You can rent from apartmentsinbudapest.com, vrbo.com, or airbnb.com, among others.

Restaurants

Budapest's culinary scene is lively and varied, and these days often described as "emerging international." The city has seven Michelin-starred restaurants and hosts Europe-wide chef competitions. Along with the traditional eateries, you'll find a hotel of fine-dining restaurants offering modern takes on classic Hungarian dishes, as well as a growing variety of cuisines and street-food options. Lunch-only eateries (called *étkezdés*) can still be found, and serve good food for low prices on weekdays.

SAVING MONEY

Restaurants in the city center (District 5) cater to tourists and expats, and are more expensive. Better deals can be found a bit farther out of the tourist zone. But regardless of what part of town you're in, many places offer low-cost, prix-fixe lunches, so it's worth checking. Ask for tap water to avoid paying high rates for bottled water.

MEALS AND MEAL TIMES

Many restaurants are closed Sunday, and upscale restaurants are often closed Sunday and Monday. It is rare to get a hot meal past 10 pm at any place any night of the week, so night owls, beware.

PAYING

Most restaurants take credit cards, but some smaller places do not. A gratuity of 10% will often be added to the bill. If the service was exceptional, it's customary to tip beyond the gratuity.

HOTEL AND RESTAURANT PRICES

⇒ *Prices in the restaurant reviews are the average cost of a main course at dinner or, if dinner is not served, at lunch; taxes and service charges are generally included. Prices in the hotel reviews are the lowest cost of a standard double room in high season, excluding taxes, service charges, and meal plans.*

What It Costs in forints (HUF)

\$	\$\$	\$\$\$	\$\$\$\$
RESTAURANTS			
under 2,000 HUF	2,000 HUF–4,000 HUF	4,001 HUF–5,500 HUF	over 5,500 HUF
HOTELS			
under 31,000 HUF	31,000 HUF–50,000 HUF	50,001 HUF–75,000 HUF	over 75,000 HUF

⇒ *Restaurant and hotel reviews have been shortened. For full information, visit Fodors.com.*

Visitor Information

CONTACTS Budapest.com. www.budapest.com. **Visit Hungary.** www.visithungary.com.

Budapest

Situated on both banks of the Danube, Budapest unites the colorful hills of Buda and the wide, businesslike boulevards of Pest. Though it was the site of a Roman outpost during the 1st century, the city was not officially created until 1873, when the towns of Óbuda, Pest, and Buda united. Since then, Budapest has been the cultural, political, intellectual, and commercial heart of Hungary. For the 20% of the nation's population who live in the capital, anywhere else is simply *vidék* ("the country").

Budapest has suffered many ravages in the course of its long history. It was totally destroyed by the Mongols in 1241, captured by the Turks in 1541, and nearly destroyed again by Soviet troops in 1945. But this bustling industrial and cultural center survived as the capital of the People's Republic of Hungary after the war—and then, as the 1980s drew to a close, it became renowned for "goulash socialism," a phrase used to describe the state's tolerance of an irrepressible entrepreneurial spirit. Budapest has undergone a radical makeover since the free elections of 1990. Change is still in the air. As more and more restaurants, bars, shops, and boutiques open their doors—and with fashion-conscious youths parading the streets—almost all traces of Communism may seem to have disappeared. But then look again: the elderly ladies selling flowers at the train station are a poignant reminder that some Hungarians have been left behind in this brave new world of competition.

Much of the charm of a visit to Budapest lies in unexpected glimpses into shadowy courtyards and in long vistas down sunlit cobbled streets. Although some 30,000 buildings were destroyed during World War II and in the 1956 Revolution, the past lingers on in the often crumbling architectural details of the antique structures that remain.

The principal sights of the city fall roughly into three areas, each of which can be comfortably covered on foot. The Budapest hills are best explored by public transportation. Note that, by tradition, the district number—a Roman numeral designating one of Budapest's 22 districts—precedes each address. For the sake of clarity, in this book, the word "District" precedes the number. Districts V, VI, and VII are in downtown Pest; District I includes Castle Hill, the main tourist district of Buda.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND BUS AND TRAM

Buses, trams, and trolleybuses all are abundant and convenient for travel within Budapest. When looking at a transit map, buses are blue, trams are yellow, and trolleybuses are red. A single-fare ticket is valid for only one ride in one direction, unless you purchase a transfer. Tickets are widely available in metro stations and newsstands and must be validated on board. Alternatively, you can purchase a one-, three-, or seven-day tourist ticket, which allows unlimited travel on all services within the city limits. Hold on to whatever ticket you have; spot checks by aggressive officials (look for the red armbands) are numerous and often targeted at tourists. Trolleybus stops are marked with red rectangular signs that list the route stops; regular bus stops are marked with similar light blue signs. Tram stops are marked by light blue or yellow signs. Note that while it's possible to buy tickets directly from bus drivers, it costs more, they have no change, and you'll be holding up a grumbling line of passengers impatient to board.

SUBWAY

Service on Budapest's subways is cheap, fast, and frequent; stations are easily located on maps and streets by the big letter "M" (for metro). Tickets—valid on all forms of mass transportation—can be bought at hotels, metro stations, newsstands, and kiosks. They are valid

for one ride only, including transfers to different trains within one line (i.e., M1 to M2) for one hour; you can't change direction or interrupt your trip at a station. All tourist tickets and passes are equally valid for the subway, too. Tickets must be validated in the time-clock machines in station entrances and should be kept until the end of the journey, as there are frequent checks by undercover inspectors; a fine for traveling without a ticket is 25,000 HUF (\$68) or 12,000 (\$33) when paid on the spot. Cash and debit cards are accepted for on-the-spot payments, but be sure to ask for a receipt. If you purchased a ticket but forgot to validate it, you'll still get fined. If you cannot pay on the spot, you will have to pay the fine via cash or check through a transaction that must be conducted at the post office.

TAXI

In 2013, the government imposed new regulations on taxis in Budapest. All taxi rates have been standardized so that there should be no difference in the cost of hailing a taxi on the street or ordering one by phone. Additionally, all licensed taxis are yellow and the rates are printed on the back window. All taxi companies have English-speaking operators. The base fare is 1,100 HUF (\$3) and 440 HUF (\$1.20) per km (½ mile). There are free-lance taxis available, also yellow, and they will have a "független szolgáltató" (free-lance) sign displayed on their doors. Try to avoid these. There are no ride-share services like Uber in Budapest.

CONTACTS Bolt Taxi. ☒ Budapest

🌐 www.bolt.eu **City Taxi.** ☒ Budapest

📞 1/211-1111 🌐 www.citytaxi.hu **Főtaxi.**

☒ Budapest 📞 1/222-2222 🌐 www.fotaxi.hu **6X6 Taxi.** ☒ Budapest 📞 1/666-

6666 🌐 www.6x6taxi.hu

NIGHTLIFE

Budapest is filled with *sörözős* (beer bars), but the way to go is to head for one of the *rom kerts* ("ruin bars," which are housed in the courtyards of

abandoned buildings). There you will meet a cross section of artists, professionals, students, and tourists enjoying a DJ or Hungarian microbrew. If wine is more your thing, don't miss spending a few hours in a wine bar (more upscale than the divey *borozós*). Wine bars have lengthy wine lists comprising excellent Hungarian wines, and most servers speak reasonable enough English to recommend a wine and explain what you are getting.

PERFORMING ARTS

Budapest is a city deeply rooted in its love and appreciation for the performing arts. During the main season, which runs from September through June, you can find ballet, opera, classical music, and theater performances any night of the week. And compared to those for performances in many European cities, tickets to events in Budapest are affordable indeed to Western pocketbooks.

Hungary is, perhaps, best known for modern classical music, having produced two of the most famous composers of the 20th century, Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály, both of whose works are widely played throughout the city by numerous orchestras. Budapest is also home to the world-renowned Liszt Ferenc Music Academy (named after Hungarian composer Franz Liszt), which has by far the city's finest classical concert hall.

Tickets can be bought at the venues themselves, but many ticket offices sell them without an extra charge. Prices are still relatively low. Ticket availability depends on the performance and season—it's usually possible to get tickets a few days before a show, but performances by major international artists sell out early. Tickets can be purchased at 🌐 budapestconcert.com, which also has a complete list of events.

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Budapest

MARGITSZIGET

ÚJLIPÓTVÁROS

VIZIVÁROS

VÁRKERÜLET

LIPÓTVÁROS

NAPHEGY

TABÁN

GELLÉRTHEGY

BELVÁROS

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Margit körút

Bem József tér

Batthyány tér M+H

Kossuth Lajos tér (Széchenyi rakpart)

Halász utca

Hunyadi János út

Clark Ádám tér

Óroszlános udvar

Dózsa György tér

Várkert Bazár

Dobrenai tér

Rudas Gyógyfürdő

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Sights

- 1 Budapest-Belvárosi Nagybaldogasszony..... D8
- 2 Gellért Termálfürdő.....E9
- 3 Halászbástya.....A5
- 4 Holocaust Emlékközpont.....G9
- 5 Hősök tere.....I2
- 6 Magyar Nemzeti Galéria.....B7
- 7 Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum.....F8
- 8 Memento Park.....A9
- 9 Mátyás-templom.....A5
- 10 Országház.....C4
- 11 Szent István Bazilika.....E6
- 12 Széchenyi Fürdő.....J1
- 13 Széchenyi Lánchíd.....C6
- 14 Terror Háza.....G4

SHOPPING

Strictly speaking, Budapest is not a shopping town. There are interesting things to buy, of course, but a weekend in Budapest doesn't promise the same shopping thrill that, say, a weekend in Istanbul or Paris does (except during the Advent season, when Christmas markets set up in central areas offering all manner of goods and food). Major European and American retailers have outposts here and show the latest fashions, but prices are generally about the same as anywhere else in Europe, and the selections can be limited.

Shops are generally open until 5 or 6 on weekdays and until 1 on Saturday, although some shops stay open until 8. Most shops, excluding shopping centers and malls, are closed on Sunday so its good to check online before.

Várkerület (Castle District)



★ 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.

★ 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 Kosztka 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 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 Halászógyerek diszkút (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, built from a 13th-century Gothic chapel, is the highest point on Castle Hill. Officially the Buda Church of Our Lady, the building has been known as the Matthias Church since the 15th century; though it was briefly converted into a mosque by the Turks who conquered Hungary. The intricate white stonework, colorful mosaic roof



Budapest's famous Fisherman's Bastion offers magnificent views of the Hungarian Parliament, which sits on the opposite side of the Danube.

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 Szentháromság tér. Be sure to visit the Trinity Chapel, the church's treasury, and the collection of ecclesiastical art. For an extra fee, you can also climb the panoramic tower for spectacular views of the city. High mass is celebrated every Sunday at 10 am, sometimes with full orchestra and choir. During the summer there are organ recitals in the church on Saturday and Sunday at 7:30 pm. ☒ *Szentháromság tér 2, Castle District* ☎ 1/355-5657 🌐 *matyas-temp-lom.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 Láncid, Castle District* 📍 *Tram 19, 41.*

Restaurants

★ **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 Mangalitza 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.*

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.*

Hotels

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* ➡ *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* ➡ *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* ➡ *47 rooms* 🍳 *Free Breakfast*
 🚊 *Tram 19, 41.*

Gellérthegy (Gellért Hill) and Tabán



Sights

★ Gellért Termálfürdő

(Gellért Thermal Baths)

HOT SPRING | At the foot of Gellért Hill, the gorgeous Gellért Baths has beauty and history in spades, with mineral-rich hot springs that have supplied curative baths for nearly 2,000 years. The entrance to the spa is on a side street to the right of the palatial (but now closed) Hotel Gellért. Budapest's baths, once segregated, are now primarily co-ed (with special hours for segregated bathing for some baths), and it's the same story here: men and women can now use all steam and sauna rooms as well as both the indoor pool and the outdoor wave pool—a Jazz Age classic that claims to be one of the first wave pools in the world—at the same time. These baths are very popular so book ahead online, and remember to bring your own towel, slippers or flip-flops, and (if using the indoor pool) swimming cap, otherwise you will have to buy them in the shop. Come for the lovely tiles, architecture, and painted glass, stay for the range of massages and treatments (some of which require a doctor's prescription).

■ **TIP** ➔ **It's worth paying the extra 1,000 HUF for a cabin ticket; you'll get a private changing room with a safe for valuables.**

☒ *District XI, Gellért tér 1, Gellérthegy*
 ☎ *1/466-6166* 🌐 *www.gellertbath.hu*
 ➡ *9,400 HUF weekdays for daily ticket, 10,900 HUF Fri.–Sun.* 🚊 *M4: Szent Gellért tér.*

Memento Park

CITY PARK | After the collapse of the Iron Curtain, Hungarians were understandably keen to rid Budapest of the symbols of Soviet domination. The communist memorials—including huge statues of Lenin, Marx, and Hungarian puppet prime minister János Kádár—that once dotted Budapest's streets and squares have been moved to this open-air “Disneyland of Communism.” Somewhat tacky but amusing souvenirs are for sale, and songs from the Hungarian and Russian workers' movements play on a tiny speaker system. To get there, take Metro 4 to Kelenföld vasútállomás (Kelenföld train depot) then, from the adjoining bus depot, catch the 101 or 150 bus in the direction of Budatétény vasútállomás (Campona). It's only two stops (10 minutes), but if in doubt, tell the driver that you want to get off at Memento Park. There is a guided tour in English at 11 am Friday through Sunday during peak season (7,200 HUF per person), or there are private guided tours available all year round (22,360 HUF). ☒ *District XXII, Balatoni út, corner of Szabadkai utca, Budapest* ☎ *1/424-7500* 🌐 *www.mementopark.hu* ➡ *3,000 HUF.*



Hotels

Hotel Orion Várkert

\$\$ | **HOTEL** | Location is this hotel's main strength, as it manages to be both quiet and extremely central, though the rooms are clean and comfortable (if a little soulless) and there's a decent breakfast restaurant, as well as an on-site gym with sauna. **Pros:** reasonably priced; great Buda location; comfortable and clean. **Cons:** fairly basic and business-like; lacks parking facilities; no lunch or dinner available on-site. 📍 *Rooms from: Ft35,000* ☒ *Döbrentei utca 13, Tabán*
 ☎ *1/356-8583* 🌐 *www.hotelorion.hu*
 ➡ *30 rooms* 🍳 *No Meals* 🚊 *Tram 19, 41; bus 5, 16, 105.*

Belváros (Inner Town)



Budapest-Belvárosi Nagyboldogasszony

(Inner Town Parish Church)

CHURCH | Located at the Pest end of the Erzsébet híd (Elizabeth Bridge), this is not only the oldest church in Budapest, but the oldest building anywhere on this side of the river; its importance is illustrated by the evasive bend in the main road beside it. The relatively understated 18th-century Baroque facade belies the long history and variety of architectural styles you'll find inside, where a medieval Gothic nave stands over the remains of the original 11th-century Romanesque basilica (complete with fragments of frescoes) and the ruins of the Roman garrison that it was built upon. You will also find frescoes from the 14th and 15th centuries, a 16th-century Islamic *mihrab* (prayer niche)—a holdover from the 150-year Ottoman occupation of Hungary—a 19th-century rococo pulpit, and a 20th-century high altar. The church contains the relics of Saint Gellért, the bishop who was first buried here in 1046 after pagans pushed him off a hill across the river, as well as those of 11th-century Hungarian king Saint László. ☎ *Március 15 tér, Belváros* ☎ 1/318-3108 🌐 www.belvarosiplebania.hu 📞 3,000 HUF. Free on Sun. 📺 M3: Ferenciek tere.



Restaurants

★ Babel

\$\$\$\$ | **HUNGARIAN** | This atmospheric and intimate Michelin-starred restaurant, which sits in the shadow of the Inner Town Parish Church, serves a choice of tasting menus inspired by the lands of the Carpathian Basin, from Austria in the west to Romania in the east—and, of course, Hungary at the heart of things. Chef Kornél Kaszás and his team specialize in innovative, flavorful, and playful dishes that put gourmet spins on

traditional Central European country fare: think oysters served on cheese crackers, layered potato with Mangalica bacon, and schnitzel with sweetbread, as well as surprisingly effective flavor pairings like white asparagus and coffee. **Known for:** intimate dining (only a dozen tables); inventive dishes and theatrical presentation; very expensive for Budapest. ☎ *Average main: Ft55,000* ☎ *Piarista köz 2, Belváros* ☎ 70/600-0800 🌐 www.babel-budapest.hu ☺ Closed Sun. and Mon. No lunch 📺 M3: Ferenciek tere.

★ Centrál Kávéház

\$\$\$\$ | **CAFÉ** | A classic turn-of-the-20th-century gathering spot for Hungarian writers, this coffeehouse has endured two wars and a communist closure. Today, it offers 19th-century grandeur in 21st-century luxury: coffees are served on silver trays with glasses of mineral water like in the old days, but in air-conditioned comfort. **Known for:** fancy coffee service on silver trays; traditional Hungarian dishes; excellent cakes and pastries. ☎ *Average main: Ft6,500* ☎ *Károlyi utca 9, Belváros* ☎ 30/945-8058 🌐 www.centralgrandcafe.hu 📺 M3: Ferenciek tere.



Hotels

Kempinski Hotel Corvinus Budapest

\$\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | The moment you step inside the Kempinski, it's clear you're in one of Budapest's finest five-star hotels, as the lovely lobby area gives way to a charming promenade lined with lounge cafés, cocktail music bars, boutique flower and gift shops, takeaway delis, and even a small art gallery. **Pros:** good-sized swimming pool for a city-center hotel; superb food options; huge underground parking lot. **Cons:** breakfast service can be slow; lacking the history of some Inner Town hotels; expensive in summer (but off-season bargains to be had). ☎ *Rooms from: Ft135,000* ☎ *Erzsébet tér 7-8, Belváros* ☎ 1/429-3777 🌐 www.kempinski.com 📶 353 rooms 🕒 No Meals 📺 M1, M2, M3: Deák Ferenc tér.



The Széchenyi Baths is the largest medicinal spa in Europe.

Shopping

Nagyvásárcsarnok (*Great Market Hall*)

CRAFTS | A trip to Budapest wouldn't be complete without a visit to this spectacular grand food hall, a 19th-century iron-frame construction that was reopened in the mid-1990s after years of renovation. Pictures on the east wall show the history of this market, when it was Budapest's central location for meat and produce coming in from the countryside. Even during the leanest years of Communist shortages, the abundance of food came as a revelation to shoppers from East and West.

Like most markets in Hungary, seasonal products prevail: in summer tomatoes and peaches are abundant; in November celeriac and pumpkin. The stalls on the ground floor sell meat and produce as well as prepared food. This is the place to buy Hungarian delicacies such as piquant salamis, robust paprika, and buttery goose or duck liver pâtés. Upstairs is filled with folk-art vendors, souvenir

shops, and a few fast-food kiosks. Handmade tablecloths, painted boxes, and traditional embroidery are the best buys among the handicrafts. For the full experience, go morning or midday in the week, as its only open until 3 on Saturday and closed on Sunday. ☒ *District IX, Vámház körút 1–3, Belváros* ☎ *1/366–3300*
☹ *Closed Sun.* 🗺 *M3: Kálvin tér, M4: Fővám tér, Tram 2, 47, 49: Fővám tér.*

Southern Pest

Sights

★ **Holocaust Emlékközpont** (*Holocaust Memorial Center*)

MEMORIAL | On the 60th anniversary of the closing off of Budapest's Jewish ghetto, April 15, 2004, Hungary's first major center for Holocaust research and exhibits opened. The stone facade of this one-time synagogue is an eerily high, windowless wall; the entrance comprises two tall, massive iron doors. Just inside the courtyard is a black wall bearing the

names of all known Hungarian victims of the Holocaust, including both Jews and many Roma (Gypsies). From there you go downstairs into a cellar, where you proceed through a compelling and haunting blend of family and individual stories told through photos, films, original documents, personal objects, and touch-screen computers (with all text also in English). ☒ *District IX, Páva utca 39, East Pest* ☎ 1/455-3333 🌐 www.hdke.hu 📞 1,400 HUF ☺ Closed Mon. 🗺 M3: Corvin-negyed.

★ Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum (Hungarian National Museum)

HISTORY MUSEUM | The permanent collection here takes you on a stimulating journey into the everyday Hungarian experience, from the recent to the more distant past. Among the highlights are the 20th-century exhibit, including an early movie theater replete with films of the era, an old schoolroom, a 1960s apartment interior, and a host of historical posters—all of which lead up to the end of communism and the much-celebrated exodus of Russian troops. Older attractions include masterworks of cabinet-making and woodcarving (e.g., church pews from Nyírbátor and Transylvania); a piano that belonged to both Beethoven and Liszt; and goldsmithing treasures. The museum also regularly hosts interesting programs, including lectures on historical aspects and showcases on restorations—check website for exact events. ☒ *Múzeum körút 14-16, South Pest* ☎ 1/338-2122 🌐 mnm.hu 📞 2,900 HUF ☺ Closed Mon. 🗺 M3: Kálvin tér.

Hotels

Eurostars Palazzo Zichy

\$\$ | **HOTEL** | For an elegant and chic hotel stay, with flavors of old and modern Budapest, it is hard to beat this boutique conversion of the former palace of Hungarian Count Nándor Zichy. **Pros:** historic charm at an affordable price; attentive service staff; impressive gym and sauna.

Cons: smallish rooms; not the most central location; noisy area on weekends.

☎ *Rooms from: Ft45,000* ☒ *Lőrinc Pap tér 2, South Pest* ☎ 1/235-4000 🌐 eurostarshotels.com ➡ 80 rooms 🍷🍷 Free Breakfast 🗺 M4: Rákóczi tér.

Erzsébetváros (Elizabeth Town) and the Jewish Quarter

Restaurants

Dobrumba

\$\$ | **MIDDLE EASTERN** | This charming restaurant just around the corner from all the hustle and bustle of Budapest's Jewish District offers a mouthwatering spread of Middle Eastern and Mediterranean dishes—everything from patatas bravas to fattoush and shawarma—plus a lively, relaxing atmosphere to go with it. There are a lot of vegan and vegetarian options, as well as a nice selection of wine. **Known for:** slow and leisurely service; vegan- and vegetarian-friendly; modern Middle Eastern dishes. ☎ *Average main: Ft4,000* ☒ *Dob utca 5, Jewish Quarter* ☎ 30/194-0049 🌐 www.dobrumba.hu 🗺 M1: Deák Ferenc tér.

Hotels

★ Corinthia Hotel Budapest

\$\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | The Corinthia first opened as the opulent Grand Royal Hotel, in time for the Magyar Millennium in 1896. **Pros:** opulent setting without a break-the-bank price; amazing spa and spa package deals; rich history at every turn. **Cons:** too big and too formal for some; non-spa packages don't offer the same value for money; service can be inconsistent. ☎ *Rooms from: Ft100,000* ☒ *Erzsébet körút 43-49, Jewish Quarter* ☎ 1/479-4000 🌐 www.corinthia.com ➡ 440 rooms 🍷🍷 No Meals 🗺 M1: Oktogon.

Városliget (City Park)



Hősök tere (Heroes' Square)

PLAZA/SQUARE | Andrásy út ends in grandeur at Heroes' Square, with Budapest's answer to Berlin's Brandenburg Gate. Cleaned and refurbished in 1996 for the Magyar millecentenary (1,100th anniversary), the Millenniumi emlékmű (Millennial Monument) is a semicircular twin colonnade with statues of Hungary's kings and leaders between its pillars. Set back in its open center, a 118-foot stone column is crowned by a dynamic statue of the archangel Gabriel, his outstretched arms bearing the ancient emblems of Hungary surrounded by seven Magyar horsemen. Before the column lies a simple marble slab, the Nemzeti Háborús Emléktábla (National War Memorial), the nation's altar, at which every visiting foreign dignitary lays a ceremonial wreath. District VI, *Hősök tere, Andrásy út* M1: *Hősök tere*.

★ Széchenyi Fürdő (Széchenyi Baths)

HOT SPRING | Széchenyi Thermal Bath, the largest medicinal bathing complex in Europe, is housed in a beautiful neobaroque building in the middle of City Park. There are several thermal pools indoors as well as two outdoor pools, which remain open even in winter, when dense steam hangs thick over the hot water's surface. You can just barely make out the figures of elderly men, submerged shoulder deep, crowded around waterproof chessboards. To use the baths, you pay a standard price (unless you get a doctor's prescription, in which case it's free), plus a surcharge if you prefer having a private changing cabin instead of a locker. Facilities include an outdoor lap pool, Finnish and steam saunas, medical and leisure massage treatments, carbonated bath treatments, and other wellness treatments and wraps. A great way to sweat away last night's *pálinka* (fruit

brandy). Állatkerti körút 9–11, *City Park* 20/435–0051 www.szechenyibath.hu Mon.–Thurs. 9,400 HUF; Fri.–Sun. 10,900 HUF M1: *Széchenyi fürdő*.

Parliament and Around



★ Országház (Parliament)

GOVERNMENT BUILDING | The huge neo-Gothic Parliament is mirrored in the Danube much the way Britain's Parliament is reflected in the Thames. It was designed by the Hungarian architect Imre Steindl and built between 1885 and 1902. The grace and dignity of its long facade and 24 slender towers, with spacious arcades and high windows balancing its vast central dome, lend this living landmark a refreshingly Baroque spatial effect. The interior is filled with statues of historic Hungarians, gilded staircases, and works of art. Parliament's most sacred treasure, the Szent Korona (Holy Crown) of St. Stephen, reposes with other royal relics under the cupola. The only way you can visit the newly renovated Parliament and see the crown is on one of the daily tours that depart from a visitor center next to the Parliament (buy tickets in advance online). Parliament is closed to the public when the legislature is in session (usually Monday and Tuesday from late summer to spring). District V, *Kossuth tér, Parliament* 1/441–4415 latogatokozpont.parlament.hu 5,000 HUF (EU citizens); 10,000 HUF (others) Closed during plenary sessions M2: *Kossuth tér*.

★ Szent István Bazilika (St. Stephen's Basilica)

CHURCH | The basilica's handsome and massive dome is 315 feet high (the same as Parliament). Architect József Hild began building the basilica in Neoclassical style in 1851. After Hild's death, the project was taken over in 1867 by Miklós Ybl, the architect who shifted

the motifs toward the neo-Renaissance style. Ybl died in 1891, and the basilica was completed by József Kauser—but not until 1905. Below the cupola is a rich collection of late-19th-century Hungarian art, the centerpiece a Carrara marble statue of King (St.) Stephen I, Hungary's first king and patron saint. Stephen's mummified right hand is preserved in the Szent Jobb Kápolna (Holy Right Chapel). You can also climb the 364 stairs (or take the elevator) to the top of the cupola for a spectacular view of the city. ☒ *Szent István tér 1, Parliament* ☎ 1/311-0839 🌐 www.bazilika.biz 🗨 *Church: 2,000 HUF; Panoramic Terrace & Treasury: 3,200 HUF; All-in-One ticket: 4,500 HUF* 📍 M1: Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út, M2, M3: Deák Ferenc tér or M3: Arany János utca.

Terror Háza (House of Terror)

HISTORY MUSEUM | The most controversial museum in post-Communist Hungary was established at great cost, with the support of the center-right government in power from 1998 to 2002. The building itself has a terrible history. Starting in 1939, it was headquarters of the Arrow Cross Party. From 1945 to 1956, the notorious Communist state security police, the ÁVO (later succeeded by the ÁVH), used it as its headquarters and as its interrogation-cum-torture center. A powerful visual and sensual experience, this state-of-the-art, multimedia museum features everything from videos of sobbing victims telling their stories to a full-size Soviet tank. An English-language audio guide is available. Some critics have called the exhibits sensational and focused too much on the Communist atrocities instead of the Holocaust. A bigger problem for foreign tourists may be that most exhibit documentation is in Hungarian only. ☒ *District VI, Andrásy út 60, Andrásy út* ☎ 1/374-2600 🌐 www.terrorhaza.hu 🗨 3,000 HUF; audio guide 1,500 HUF ☺ Closed Mon. 📍 M1: Vörösmarty utca.

Restaurants

Kisharang Étkezdé

\$\$ | **HUNGARIAN** | There are only a few tightly packed tables and a counter in this tiny, homestyle restaurant that draws an early lunch crowd and bustles well into the evening with downtown professionals and in-the-know travelers. The cuisine is the simple kind Hungarian grandmothers make: sour cherry soup, mushroom paprikash, and baked pork shank. **Known for:** traditional Hungarian cuisine; surly waiters who warm as the evening progresses; hearty dishes ideal for cold winter nights. 📍 *Average main: Ft3,000* ☒ *Október 6 utca 17, Parliament* ☎ 30/732-7874 🌐 www.kisharang.hu 📍 M3: Arany János utca.

Kispiac Bisztró

\$\$\$ | **HUNGARIAN** | Kispiac Bisztró is a tiny gem of a restaurant (its name means “little market”) that specializes in huge portions of fresh roasted meat, sourced straight from nearby market halls. Delicious Mangalica pork chop, wild boar ribs, or the famed grilled duck is the way to go, along with a plate of homemade pickles. **Known for:** meat and more meat; handwritten menu based on availability; homemade cakes. 📍 *Average main: Ft5,500* ☒ *Hold utca 13, Parliament* ☎ 1/269-4231 🌐 www.facebook.com/Kispiac ☺ Closed Sun. and Mon. 📍 M3: Arany János utca.

Trattoria Pomo D'oro

\$\$\$ | **ITALIAN** | **FAMILY** | Real Italian pizzas from a brick oven attract a hungry business crowd during the week. Weekends see just as many people indulging in pastas like ravioli with Gorgonzola and walnut sauce or the “priest strangler”—homemade pasta in tomato ragout flambéed with Parmesan. **Known for:** large menu of grilled foods, pizzas, and pastas; good selection of both Italian and Hungarian wines; rustic Tuscan decor. 📍 *Average main: Ft5,500* ☒ *Arany János utca 9, Parliament* ☎ 1/302-6473 🌐 www.pomodoro-budapest.com 📍 M3: Arany János utca.

Hotels

Casati Budapest Hotel

\$\$ | HOTEL | Much about this boutique hotel is small—the sauna, the fitness room, the adjoining cocktail bar Tuk Tuk, and the hotel's carbon footprint—but it's big where it counts, on style, service, and comfort. **Pros:** central location; charming cocktail bar part of hotel; spacious rooms. **Cons:** no restaurant; located on a crowded side street; no guests under 14 years. **📍 Rooms from:** Ft50,000 **✉ Paulay Ede utca 31, Parliament** **☎ 1/343-1198** **🌐 www.casatibudapesthotel.com** **🛏 25 rooms** **🍳 Free Breakfast.**

★ Four Seasons Hotel Gresham Palace

\$\$\$\$ | HOTEL | It doesn't get much better than this: a centrally located, super-deluxe hotel in a museum-quality landmark with the prettiest views in town. **Pros:** Four Seasons luxury; incredibly variety of amenities; large, marble-filled bathrooms. **Cons:** no real deals to be had; some rooms have restricted views; not many food-and-beverage options. **📍 Rooms from:** Ft210,000 **✉ District V, Széchenyi István tér 5-6, Parliament** **☎ 1/268-6000, 800/819-5053 toll-free in U.S.** **🌐 www.fourseasons.com** **🛏 179 rooms** **🍳 No Meals** **📍 M1: Vörösmarty tér.**

Mamaison Hotel Andrássy

\$\$ | HOTEL | A classic Bauhaus villa a short walk from City Park, the Mamaison Hotel offers contemporary design, an elegant restaurant, and comfortable rooms with high ceilings and large, modern bathrooms. **Pros:** great location; views of Andrássy út; breakfast on a pleasant patio. **Cons:** understated atmosphere; no sauna or gym; some rooms overlook the parking lot. **📍 Rooms from:** Ft38,000 **✉ Andrássy út 111, Parliament** **☎ 1/462-2100** **🌐 www.mamaisonandrássy.com** **🛏 68 rooms** **🍳 Free Breakfast** **📍 M1: Bajza utca.**

Opera Garden Hotel & Apartments

\$\$ | HOTEL | FAMILY | Offering all the charm of a high-ceilinged Budapest apartment, minus the vacation rental headaches,

Opera Garden is set on pedestrianized Hajós utca, surrounded by quaint bars and restaurants, and just minutes from the Opera House and Basilica on either side. **Pros:** complimentary lemonades, wine, and snacks; champagne breakfasts served in the atrium; great value for the location and space. **Cons:** rooms can vary in quality; no full restaurant on-site; difficult to reserve larger rooms. **📍 Rooms from:** Ft45,000 **✉ Hajós utca 24, Parliament** **☎ 1/301-9030** **🌐 www.operagardenhotel.hu** **🛏 35 rooms** **📍 M1: Opera.**

Margitszeget (Margaret Island) and Northern Pest

Restaurants

★ Kiskakukk

\$\$ | EASTERN EUROPEAN | The Art Deco facade of the Little Cuckoo restaurant evokes the history of this fashionable residential neighborhood street. The setting today is comfortable; wood-paneled walls and leather-upholstered chairs give the place a sophisticated, albeit homey, feel. **Known for:** classic dishes like goose and duck leg with cabbage; large portions; attentive service. **📍 Average main:** Ft4,000 **✉ Pozsonyi út 12, Budapest** **☎ 1/786-3439** **🌐 www.kiskakukk.hu** **📍 M3: Nyugati pályaudvar.**

Szentendre

21 km (13 miles) north of Budapest.

A romantic, lively little town with a flourishing artists' colony, this is the gateway to the Danube Bend from Budapest. With its profusion of enchanting church steeples, colorful Baroque houses, and winding, narrow cobblestone streets—as well as its myriad art museums—it's no wonder Szentendre attracts swarms of visitors, tripling its population in peak season.

Szentendre



Sights

- 1 Ferenczy Múzeum..... D6
- 2 Fő tér..... D3
- 3 Kovács Margit
Kerámiamúzeum..... E3
- 4 Szentendrei Szabadtéri
Néprajzi Múzeum..... A1

Named for St. Andrew, Szentendre was first settled by Serbs and Greeks fleeing the advancing Turks in the 16th and 17th centuries. They built houses and churches in their own style; rich in reds and blues seldom seen elsewhere in Hungary. From town, a short drive or ferry brings you to the amazingly untouched green paradise that is Szentendre-sziget (Szentendre Island).

As Szentendre is within easy reach of Budapest, some choose to make it their base while exploring the Hungarian capital. Accommodation is cheaper and the town is empty of tourists by the evening, offering a peaceful night after a long day's sightseeing.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

If you have access to a car, you can drive to Szentendre from Budapest. It's a relatively short trip (30 minutes), straight up Route 11 on the west bank of the river. There are also three to five local commuter trains (HÉV) an hour from Batthyány Tér Metro station (line M2); the journey takes around 40 minutes.

From mid-April to September, the most interesting way to get to Szentendre is by ferry. Leaving from a dock off Budapest's Vigadó Square at 10 am, the journey takes 1½ hours. Return ferries leave Szentendre at 5 pm, taking just an hour. A single trip costs 3,500 HUF, or it's 5,500 HUF for a return; you'll find a full list of prices and timetables at www.mahartpassnave.hu.

Once in Szentendre, ditch the vehicles and simply stroll along the town's lovely cobblestone streets. If this proves tiring (or you wore heels) you can always explore the town by horse-drawn carriage, which you'll see hitched up near the main town square (Fő tér).



Sights

Ferenczy Múzeum

ART MUSEUM | The museum honors the work of Impressionist Károly Ferenczy (1862–1917), an important leader in the Nagybánya Artist Colony and a Szentendre native. There are a number of his artworks on display, though many of his most famous are in Budapest's Hungarian National Gallery. The exhibition also features the work of his three children, all of whom were popular artists of the early modern era: the expressionist painter Valér, the pioneering tapestry artist Noemi, and the sculptor and graphic artist Beni.

■ **TIP** → Your ticket also includes entry into a handful of other town museums and galleries, including the Kmetty Múzeum and the Kovács Margit Ceramic Museum.

✉ Kossuth Lajos utca 5, Szentendre

☎ 20/779-6657 🌐 www.femuz.hu

🎫 Combined museum ticket: 2,300 HUF

🕒 Closed Mon.–Wed.

Fő tér

PLAZA/SQUARE | Fő tér is Szentendre's colorful main square, the centerpiece of which is an ornate **Memorial Cross** erected by Serbs grateful that their town was spared from a plague. The cross displays a painted crucifixion and stands atop a triangular pillar adorned with a dozen icon paintings. Every single house on Fő tér is a designated landmark. The **Szentendre-i Képtár** serves as an information center and also has its own excellent collection of local contemporary artists and revolving exhibits of international art. Cross the square and check out the **Kmetty Múzeum**, featuring the work of János Kmetty (1889–1975), a pioneer of Hungarian avant-garde painting. Kmetty tried his hand at everything from Impressionism to Cubism, and his absorbing self-portraits utilize a fascinating mix of styles. Gracing the corner of Görög utca is the Serbian Orthodox church **Blagoveštenska templom**, with its elegant

18th-century edifice built on the site of a wooden church dating from the Great Serbian Migration (around AD 690). Its greatest glory—a symmetrical floor-to-ceiling panoply of stunning icons—was painted between 1802 and 1804.

Behind the church lies the **Szerb Egyházi Múzeum**, with its exquisite assemblage of ecclesiastical art and artifacts relating to the history of the church in Hungary. ☎ *Szentendre*.

Kovács Margit Kerámiámúzeum (*Margit Kovács Ceramic Collection*)

ART MUSEUM | If you have time for only one of Szentendre's myriad museums, make it this extraordinary exhibition showcasing the works of a renowned Budapest ceramics artist. Margit Kovács, who died in 1977 aged 74, left behind a wealth of richly textured works that range from ceramic figurines to life-size sculptures and draw inspiration from folk history, Christianity, and 20th-century life. Look out for the tiny but wonderful Beggar Woman with Forget-Me-Not Eyes, half-hidden in a wall recess. Your ticket includes entry into the Ferenczy and Kmetty Museums, along with a few other locals museums and galleries.

☎ *Vastagh György utca 1, Szentendre*
☎ 20/779-6657 🌐 www.femuz.hu

🎫 *Combined museum ticket: 2,300 HUF.*

Szentendrei Szabadtéri Néprajzi Múzeum (*Szentendre Skanzen Village Museum*)

MUSEUM VILLAGE | Szentendre's farthest-flung museum is also the largest open-air museum in the country. Located 5 km (3 miles) northwest of the city center, it is a living re-creation of 18th- and 19th-century village life from different regions of Hungary—the sort of place where blacksmith shops and a horse-powered mill compete with wooden farmhouses and folk handicrafts for your attention. A heritage train takes you around the site. The museum is accessible by bus from stand 6 of the

Szentendre terminus of the HÉV suburban railway; expect departures roughly every hour from the early hours until after 10 pm. Guided tours in English are available if booked in advance. ☎ *Sztaravodai út 75, Szentendre* ☎ 26/502-537

🌐 www.skanzen.hu 📞 3,000 HUF

🕒 *Closed Mon. and Oct.–Mar.*



Restaurants

★ **Aranysárkány**

\$\$\$\$ | **EASTERN EUROPEAN** | A favorite of early-20th-century Hungarian writer Frigyes Karinthy, the Golden Dragon restaurant has been welcoming locals and tourists for decades. Set within a small, sloped-roof house, it's known for its charming Hungarian decor and its meat- and fish-heavy menu; highlights include the *velős piritós* (bone marrow on toast), *sárkányerőleves* (dragon's bouillon) with quail eggs, and *mézes-mázas libasteak* (honey-glazed goose steak). **Known for:** serves international cuisine (not, as the name suggests, Chinese food); extensive wine list with many Hungarian choices; reservations a must in summer. 💵 *Average main: Ft6, 100* ☎ *Alkotmány utca 1/a, Szentendre* ☎ 26/301-479 🌐 www.aranysarkany.hu 🕒 *Closed Mon.*

Promenade

\$\$\$\$ | **HUNGARIAN** | An elegant country dining room, a 16th-century vaulted wine cellar for tastings, a sprawling garden terrace with stunning views of the Danube, and a menu of enticing farm-to-table dishes: what's not to love? Perhaps the fact it's only open weekends. **Known for:** locally sourced game and lamb; few options for vegetarians; extensive menu of about 60 Hungarian wines. 💵 *Average main: Ft6, 150* ☎ *Futó utca 4, Szentendre* ☎ 26/312-626 🌐 www.promenade-szentendre.hu 🕒 *Closed Mon.–Fri.*

Shopping

Flooded with tourists in summer, Szentendre is saturated with the requisite souvenir shops. Among the attractive but overpriced goods sold in every store are dolls dressed in traditional folk costumes, wooden trinkets, pottery, and colorful hand-embroidered tablecloths, doilies, and blouses.

Because of high weekend traffic, most Szentendre stores stay open all day on weekends, unlike those in Budapest, where opening hours can vary drastically. Galleries, closed Monday, accept major credit cards, although other stores may not.

Szamos Marcipán Cukrászda

CANDY | This quaint little bakery-café and store is the place to indulge your sweet tooth, with a selection of delicious almond-meal candies and other confections; try the orange marzipan bonbons. It also has a small exhibition (500 HUF) with a zany selection of all-marzipan figures: a life-size Princess Diana holds court among animals, flower arrangements, and more. ✉ *Dumtsa Jenő utca 14, Szentendre* ☎ 26/310-545 🌐 www.szamos.hu/uzletek/muzeum-cukraszda.

Activities

BICYCLING

The waterfront and streets beyond Szentendre's main square are perfect for a bike ride—free of jostling cobblestones and relatively calm and quiet. Check with Tourinform for local rental outfits. Rentals are possible in Budapest; bicycles are permitted in a designated car of each HÉV suburban railway train. Many people make the trip between Budapest and Szentendre on bicycle along the designated bike path, which runs on busy roads in some places, but is pleasant and separate from the road for the stretch between Békásmegyer and Szentendre.

Visegrád

20 km (12½ miles) northwest of Szentendre, 40 km (25 miles) north of Budapest.

Visegrád was the seat of the Hungarian kings during the 14th century, when a fortress built here by the Angevin kings became the royal residence. Today, the imposing fortress at the top of the hill towers over the peaceful little town of quiet, tree-lined streets and solid old houses. The forested hills rising just behind the town offer popular hiking possibilities. For a taste of Visegrád's best, climb to the Fellegvár, and then wander and take in the views of the Danube curving through the countryside. Do make time to stroll around the village center a bit—on Fő utca and other streets that pique your interest.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

Visegrád is best reached by car from Szentendre, as you can go directly up to the citadel and park. To get to the town from Szentendre, simply head northwest on Szarvashegyi út/Szentendrei utca (from Budapest, you'll need to follow Route 11 north to Szentendre before heading northwest from there).

The best public transport option to Visegrád is Bus 880, which leaves every hour from Budapest's Batthyány tér station (90 minutes) and goes via Szentendre (40 minutes). There are also hourly trains from Budapest–Nyugati station (40 minutes), but these drop off at Nagymaros–Visegrád station on the wrong side of the river, so you'll need to walk down from here to catch the hourly car ferry.

If you're coming directly from Budapest in spring or summer, the quickest (and most fun) option is the hydrofoil. Boats leave from a dock off Budapest's Vigadó Square at 9:30 am and the journey, via Vác, takes just one hour. There's also a return ferry at 5:30 pm. A one-way trip costs 6,500 HUF, while a round trip is 10,000 HUF. You'll find a full list of



The Hungarian Parliament building, designed by Imre Steindl, was only finished in 1902.

prices and timetables at 🌐 www.mahart-passnave.hu.

Those without a car should pack comfortable shoes for the 40-minute climb up to the citadel—or prepare to pay for a taxi.

Sights

★ **Fellegvár** (Citadel)

CASTLE/PALACE | Crowning the top of a 1,148-foot hill, Visegrád's dramatic citadel was built in the 13th century and served as the seat of Hungarian kings in the early 14th century. In the Middle Ages, this was where the Holy Crown and other royal regalia were kept, until they were stolen by a dishonorable maid of honor in 1440; 23 years later King Matthias had to pay a vast sum to retrieve them from Austria. Today, the crown is safe and sound in Budapest's Parliament building. There are some interesting exhibits and artifacts inside the castle, including coats of arms, hunting trophies, models of the castle through history, and waxwork re-creations of Renaissance feasts and

balls, but most people's abiding memory of the site is the breathtaking views it offers of the Danube Bend below. It's certainly ample reward for the strenuous 40-minute hike up, which starts from the back gate of Salamon Tower. Then again, you can always drive up the hill from the center of Visegrád in five minutes and park (for a fee).

■ **TIP** → **Only interested in the view? Come after closing time for free access to the terrace.** ✉ *Visegrád* 🌐 www.parkerdo.hu 📞 2,000 HUF 🕒 Closed Mon.–Thurs. Dec.–Feb.

Mátyás Király Múzeum (Museum of Matthias Rex)

CASTLE/PALACE | In the 15th century, King Matthias Corvinus had a separate, 350-room palace built on the bank of the Danube below the citadel. It was eventually razed by the Turks, and not until 1934 were the ruins finally excavated. Now, after extensive reconstruction, it's possible to visit about 20 of the rooms—including the royal bed chambers, the kitchen, and the chapel—which

are spread throughout the **Királyi palota** (Royal Palace) and its **Salamon torony** (Salamon Tower). Come during summer to see medieval games and craft demonstrations. ✉ *Fő utca 23, Visegrád* ☎ *26/597-010* 🌐 *www.visegradmuzeum.hu* 📞 *1,800 HUF* ☺ *Closed Mon. and Oct.–Feb.*

Activities

HIKING

Visegrád makes a great base for exploring the trails of the Visegrád and Pilis hills. A hiking map is posted on the corner of Fő utca and Rév utca, just above the pale-green Roman Catholic Parish Church. A well-trodden, well-marked hiking trail (posted with red signs) leads from the edge of Visegrád to the town of Pilisszentlászló, a wonderful 8½-km (5-mile) journey that takes about three hours, through the oak and beech forests of the Visegrád Hills into the Pilis conservation region. Deer, wild boars, and mouflons roam freely here, and there are fields of yellow-blooming spring pheasant's eye and black pulsatilla.

TOBOGGAN SLIDE

Visegrádi Bobpálya (*Visegrad Bobsled*)
SNOW SPORTS | **FAMILY** | Winding through the trees on Nagy-Villám Hill, high above the town (and just beyond the Silvanus Hotel), is this all-year-round toboggan run, one of the longest slides you've ever seen. You ride on a small cart that is pulled uphill by trolley, then careen down the slope in a small, steel trough that resembles a bobsled run. It's 900 HUF per ride, 4,500 HUF for 6, or 7,200 HUF for 10. Trust us: one ride won't be enough. ✉ *Nagyvillám 1, Visegrád* ☎ *26/397-397* 🌐 *www.bobozas.hu* 📞 *900 HUF.*

Hotels

★ Hotel Silvanus

\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | Situated high up on Fekete Hill, with commanding forest and Danube views, this is Visegrád's highest-altitude hotel—and one of its finest, incorporating a large wellness center with indoor and outdoor pool, Jacuzzis, saunas, steam rooms, salt chambers, and more. **Pros:** unbeatable views over the Danube Bend; half-board buffet breakfasts and dinners are great; superb pool and spa facilities. **Cons:** some of the decor is a little dated; only accessible by car; parking costs 1,000 HUF a night. 📞 *Rooms from: Ft65,000* ✉ *Panoráma út 2, Visegrád* ☎ *26/398-311* 🌐 *www.hotelsilvanus.hu* 🚗 *151 rooms* 🍷 *All-Inclusive.*

Eger

87 km (54 miles) east of Hollókő, 132 km (82 miles) northeast of Budapest.

With vineyard surroundings and more than 175 of Hungary's historic monuments—a figure surpassed only by Budapest and Sopron—the picture-book Baroque city of Eger is ripe for exploration. The city, which lies in a fertile valley between the Mátra Mountains and their eastern neighbor, the Bükk range, has borne witness to much history, heart-break, and glory. It was settled quite early in the Hungarian conquest of the land, and it was one of five bishoprics created by King Stephen I when he Christianized the country almost a millennium ago.

In 1552 the city was attacked by the Turks, but the commander, István Dobó, and fewer than 2,000 men and women held out for 38 days against 80,000 Turkish soldiers and drove them away. One of Hungary's great legends tells of the women of Eger pouring hot pitch onto the heads of the Turks as they

Sights

- 1 Bazilika..... A5
 2 Egri Vár..... C1
 3 Szépasszony-
 völgy..... A5



attempted to scale the castle walls (the event is depicted in a famous painting now in the National Gallery in Budapest). Despite such heroism, however, Eger fell to the Turks in 1596 and became one of the most important northern outposts of Ottoman power until its reconquest in 1687.

Today, restored Baroque and rococo buildings line Eger's cobblestone streets, making for excellent strolling and sight-seeing. Wherever you wander, make a point of peeking into open courtyards, where you may happen upon otherwise hidden architectural gems.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

Driving to Eger from Hollókő takes around 1½ hours; simply head east on Routes 21 and 23. From Budapest, it's about the same: follow the M3 east

for around 115 km (71 miles) then head north on the M25.

Another easy option from Budapest is the train, with direct service every hour from Budapest-Keleti station. The journey takes a little under two hours. Check train schedules at www.mavcsopot.hu.

Once in the downtown area (about a 20-minute walk from the train station), you'll find most attractions are within walking distance. A fun alternative way to get around is the Kisvonat (www.kisvonatok.hu), a miniature land train that starts and ends in Egészség ház utca, between the train station and center. Between April and October, it departs on the hour every day between 10 am and 6 pm and costs 1,900 HUF per person.



Bazilika

CHURCH | The grand, Neoclassical Eger Bazilika, built in the center of town early in the 19th century, is the second-largest cathedral in Hungary after Esztergom (which was built later by the same architect, József Hild). Its beautiful exterior is approached by a split stairway flanked by statues of four saints—Stephen, László, Peter, and Paul—offering views across leafy Eszterházy Square to the similarly monolithic Lyceum building. But it's the interior of the Bazilika that really takes the breath away, with its carved biblical reliefs by Italian sculptor Marco Casagrande set beneath a soaring dome. Visiting on a Sunday, June through October? Stop by for the delightful half-hour organ recital, held at 12:45 pm. ☒ *Pyrker János tér 1, Eger* ☎ 36/420-970 ☉ www.eger-bazilika.plebania.hu 🗳️ Free (suggested donation 300 HUF).

★ Egri Vár (Eger Castle)

CASTLE/PALACE | **FAMILY** | Built after the devastating Tatar invasion of 1241–42, Eger's castle is inspired by the mighty fortresses seen by Béla IV in Italy and Western Europe. An imposing Romanesque cathedral was built within the castle walls, then later rebuilt in Gothic style, though today only its foundations remain. The casemates—a labyrinth of underground tunnels hewn in the 16th century by Italian engineers and used in the war against the Ottomans, when hundreds of defenders raced back and forth so the attackers would think there were thousands of them—now display many of the cathedral's surviving artifacts. Elsewhere, the Gothic-style Püspök Ház (Bishop's House) contains the castle museum, with exhibitions on local history and culture. Look out also for the statue of St. Stephen watching over the cathedral ruins; the Ágyúdomb (Cannon Hill) with its sweeping views of Eger; and—for an extra fee—the Panoptikum (Wax Museum) with characters from the historical

novel *Eclipse of the Crescent Moon*. The Palotaudvar (Palace Courtyard) regularly hosts live music concerts.

■ **TIP** → **Not interested in the exhibitions? Come once they have closed—after 5:30 pm in high season, or after 3:30 pm (or all day Monday) in low season—and you'll pay less than half the entrance fee.** ☒ *Vár 1, Eger* ☎ 36/312-744 ☉ www.egrivar.hu 🗳️ 3,600 HUF; evening ticket 1,500 HUF.

★ Szépasszony-völgy

NEIGHBORHOOD | It may be a 30-minute walk (or 10-minute drive) from the center of town, but no trip to Eger is complete without a visit to the wonderful Szépasszony-völgy (literally “Valley of the Beautiful Woman”). Eger wine is renowned within and beyond Hungary, and this wine-growing area on the southwestern edge of Eger's city limits is the place to sample the best vintages. Literally hundreds of small wine cellars (some of them literally holes-in-the-wall) stand open and inviting in warm weather, and a few are open in winter, too. You may be given a tour of the cellar, and wines will be tapped from the barrel into your glass by the vintners themselves at the tiniest cost (but it's prudent to inquire politely how much it will cost before imbibing). Make sure you sample the area's best-known variety, Egri Bikavér (Bull's Blood of Eger), a full-bodied red wine, as well as other outstanding vintages like the delightful dry white Leányka, the dark red dessert wine Medoc Noir, and the sweeter white Muskotály. ☒ *Szépasszonyvölgy, Eger*.

🍴 Restaurants

HBH Bajor Sörház

\$\$ | **GERMAN** | For substantial German-style cuisine and frothy beer, head for the popular HBH Bavarian Brewery, which has a great location just off Dobó István tér. The menu comprises traditional Hungarian and German fare, along with American-style bar snacks like chicken

wings and onion rings. **Known for:** beer brewed under a Bavarian license; hearty tavern fare; boisterous atmosphere.

💰 *Average main:* Ft3,800 📠 *Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út 19, Eger* ☎ 36/515-516

🌐 www.hbh-eger.hu.

★ Macok

\$\$\$ | **HUNGARIAN** | Considered one of the best restaurants not only in Eger but in the whole of Hungary, Macok is the city's most coveted dining experience. Yet it isn't formal and stuffy: this is a playful, colorful, and elegant bistro offering a menu full of upscale comfort food, including confit duck leg with cabbage-flavored pasta, toasted rabbit with potato donuts, and risotto with porcini mushrooms.

Known for: best dining option in Eger; great location at the foot of the castle; fine wines from the renowned St. Andrea vineyards. 📠 *Average main:* Ft5,490 📠 *Imola Udvarház, Tinódi Sebestyén tér 4, Eger* ☎ 36/516-180 🌐 www.imolaudvarhaz.hu.

Palacsintavár

\$\$ | **EASTERN EUROPEAN** | **FAMILY** | This hip little cellar establishment, adorned with funky wall (and ceiling) art from Dalí prints to cigarette packs, is *the* place to have your fill of Hungary's famous rolled-up pancake, the *palacsinta*. You can choose from any of more than two dozen varieties, from the "Boss's Favorite" (with a filling of pork knuckle, beans, cabbage, and sour cream) to the "Spring Pancake" (sheep's cheese with dill and chives), to banana pancakes with vanilla cream. **Known for:** savory and sweet pancakes; cellar is pleasantly cool on a hot summer day; food can be a little salty.

📠 *Average main:* Ft4,000 📠 *Dobó István utca 9, Eger* ☎ 36/413-980 🌐 www.palacsintavar.hu ☺ *Closed Mon.*

Esztergom

26 km (16 miles) west of Visegrád, 50 km (31 miles) northwest of Budapest.

The impressive Esztergom Basilica, dramatically reflected in the Danube River, is front and center in this ancient river town. Small though it may be, Esztergom has proved a major force in Hungary's history: St. Stephen, the first Christian king and founder of the nation, was crowned here in AD 1000. This established Esztergom as Hungary's first capital, which it remained for the next 250 years. It also made Esztergom the seat of the Roman Catholic Primate of Hungary, which it has remained for more than a thousand years.

While the town's main attractions can be visited in a day, Esztergom is also home to a fine selection of restaurants and (in particular) bars and music clubs, as well as some decent accommodation options, so consider staying overnight.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

You can drive from Visegrád to Esztergom in less than 30 minutes by following the Danube-hugging Route 11 west. There's also a regular bus (number 880) that takes around 45 minutes. During weekends from late April to September, you can also take a hydrofoil boat trip from Visegrád to Esztergom; it departs at 10:30 am and returns at 5 pm; return tickets cost 6,500 HUF. The boat starts and ends in Budapest and also goes via Vác; there's more information at 🌐 www.mahartpassnave.hu.

To reach Esztergom from Budapest by car, simply drive an hour northwest along Routes 10 and 11. There are also hourly trains from Budapest-Nyugati, which take 90 minutes.

Once you're in town, everything can be visited on foot; though prepare for some climbing up and down from the basilica.

If you enjoy strolling, leave yourself a little time to explore the narrow streets of Víziváros (Watertown) below the basilica, lined with brightly painted Baroque buildings.

Sights

★ **Esztergomi Bazilika**

CHURCH | This immense basilica, the largest in the country and visible from miles around, is the seat of the cardinal primate of Hungary. Completed in 1856 on the site of a medieval cathedral and recently restored, the basilica's most wondrous feature is the **Bakócz Chapel** (1506). Named for a primate of Hungary who only narrowly missed out on becoming pope, the chapel—on your left as you enter—is the most beautiful work of Renaissance architecture in all of Hungary; note its red marble, magnificent carvings, and enormous altar painting. Other highlights to look for are the sacristy, which contains a valuable collection of medieval ecclesiastical art; the vast and deep crypt, where the cathedral's builders and key priests are buried; and the treasury, containing a trove of precious ecclesiastical objects. For a great view of Esztergom, climb the long, winding staircase up to the observation platform in the cathedral's cupola, or take a stroll around the back of the building to the impressive **Szent István megkoronázása** (St. Stephen's Coronation) sculpture. Each section of the basilica's interior requires an entrance fee, from 500 HUF to 2,000 HUF, so your best bet is to purchase the combination ticket. ☎ *Szent István tér 1* ☎ 33/402–354 🌐 www.bazilika-esztergom.hu 📄 *Combination ticket: 3,300 HUF.*

Keresztény Múzeum (*Christian Museum*)

ART MUSEUM | Considered by many to be Hungary's finest art gallery, the Christian Museum is located in the Primate's Palace in the pretty riverside Víziváros district. It's home to the country's greatest collection of medieval Hungarian

religious art, as well as Dutch, German, and Italian master paintings; the 14th- and 15th-century Italian collection is unusually large for a museum outside of Italy. The museum's showstopper is the intricately carved 15th-century Holy Sepulchre of Garamszentbenedek, depicting the 12 Apostles clustered around Christ's tomb, which was wheeled through the town during Easter processions. You can reach the museum from the basilica via the steep Macskalépcső, or Cat Stairs. ☎ *Mindszenty tér 2* ☎ 33/413–880 🌐 www.keresztenymuzeum.hu 📄 1,500 HUF ☺ *Closed Mon. and Jan.–Mar.*

Vármúzeum (*Castle Museum*)

HISTORY MUSEUM | Situated right beside the basilica, the Castle Museum is housed in the former Royal Palace, built in the 12th century when Esztergom was the country's capital but later ransacked by the Turks. Today, it's an intriguing jumble of modern and medieval, with a historic collection of archaeological finds from the area, including pottery and artifacts dating from the 11th century. Visitors can also explore the remaining rooms of the Royal Palace, including the gorgeous chapel with its 13th-century frescoes. ☎ *Szent István tér 1* ☎ 33/415–986 🌐 www.varmegom.hu 📄 2,500 HUF ☺ *Closed Mon.*

Restaurants

★ **Csülök Csárda**

\$\$\$ | **HUNGARIAN** | With its hearty Hungarian fare, rustic atmosphere, and unbeatable location in full view of the basilica, the Pork Knuckle Tavern has long been popular with locals and visitors alike. Knuckles are, of course, the specialty here, and if you've never tried this succulent dish, now's your chance. **Known for:** pork knuckle in many varieties and forms; basic tavern atmosphere; few options for vegetarians. 💰 *Average main: Ft5,000* ☎ *Batthyány Lajos utca 9* ☎ 33/412–420 🌐 www.csulokcsarda.hu ☺ *Closed Mon.*



Eger's castle is the most popular destination in this town along the Danube Bend.

Mediterraneo

\$\$\$ | **HUNGARIAN** | The name perhaps overstates the Southern European influence on the menu, but this pleasant eatery is popular for generous portions of tasty, meaty Hungarian and vaguely international dishes. Meat lovers will appreciate a hearty duck leg or pork knuckle, fish fans will favor the baked salmon or perch, and vegetarians and vegans will find a limited selection of soups, salads, and side dishes. **Known for:** homey Hungarian fare; meatless salads and sides; central location with views of the bridge. ☑ *Average main:* Ft4,790 ☑ *Helischer József út 2* ☎ 33/311-411 🌐 www.mediterraneo.hu 🕒 *No dinner Sun.*

★ Primás Pince

\$\$\$ | **HUNGARIAN** | Its dramatic setting under soaring vaulted ceilings in the old basilica's cellar is just one of this contemporary dining room's many attractions. Add an enticing menu of Hungarian and international dishes, the city's best wine selection (with information boards on all of the country's distinct wine-growing

regions), and surprisingly low prices, and you've got the top choice in town.

Known for: spectacular cellar setting with shimmering chandeliers; roast duck leg and baked trout; draws crowds but never feels crowded. ☑ *Average main:* Ft4,900 ☑ *Szent István tér 12* ☎ 33/541-965 🌐 www.primaspince.hu.

🍷 Nightlife

All in Music Café

LIVE MUSIC | The centrally located All in Music Café is Esztergom's go-to spot for an instant party and features both live music and an enormous selection of wine and brandy. ☑ *Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út 37* 🌐 www.facebook.com/allinmusiccafe 🕒 *Closed Sun.*

Kaleidoszkop Ház

LIVE MUSIC | This many-faceted art gallery and cultural center hosts a Friday-night series of live concerts featuring indie bands, jazz, folk, and contemporary experimental music by Hungarian and European talents. Concerts are held in

the garden in warm weather and in the center's spacious vaulted cellar in the cooler months. ☒ *Pázmány Péter utca 7*
☎ *30/334-6024* 🌐 *www.kaleidoszokphaz.hu* ☺ *Closed Mon.–Thurs.*

Hotels

★ **Hotel Senator-Ház**

🇳🇪 | **HOTEL** | This little inn, a lovely 18th-century town house, sits on Eger's main square (albeit across the river from the main part). **Pros:** historical building has lots of character; infrared sauna available to guests; bike rental included in price.

Cons: service in restaurant can be slow; can hear street noise from some rooms; no elevator. 💰 *Rooms from: Ft28,750*

☒ *Dobó István tér 11, Eger* ☎ *36/411-711*
🌐 *www.senatorhaz.hu* ➡ *11 rooms*

🍳 *Free Breakfast.*

Pécs

175 km (109 miles) southwest of Kecskemét, 195 km (121 miles) south of Budapest.

Pécs (pronounced “paytch”), the southern capital of Transdanubia (the area south and west of the Danube), dates back to the Roman period. For centuries it was a frontier province and an important stop along the trade route; today it is far richer in Roman ruins than the rest of Hungary. The city played an important role during the Middle Ages as well; in 1009 St. Stephen set up a diocese in Pécs to help cement Christianity among the Magyar tribes. In fact, it was a thriving city right up until the Turkish Conquest in 1543, and the Turks’ 143-year rule left its own distinct imprint on the city. While the Hapsburgs later destroyed or converted many of the Ottoman buildings, Pécs is home to many of Hungary’s most important remaining Turkish-era

sites. The latter half of the 19th century was most notable for the rise of local hero Vilmos Zsolnay, whose Secession-style ceramics company would go on to define the city and become one of Hungary’s national treasures.

Today Pécs is a vibrant and dynamic university town, rich with historic (and often UNESCO-listed) sites, including early Christian tombs, a magnificent basilica, two mosques, and a handsome synagogue—as well as a half-dozen museums. What’s more, Pécs’s status as European Capital of Culture in 2010 led to an extreme makeover and the creation of new attractions like the remarkable Zsolnay Cultural Quarter. Add it all together, and you can easily justify a two- or three-day stay here.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

Driving to Pécs from Budapest involves a straight trip down the M6 and takes two hours. From Kecskemét, you’ll need to drive west along Route 52 to join the M6, then follow that south. The journey takes around 2½ hours in total.

Trains leave from Budapest-Keleti every hour and take between three and four hours. From Kecskemét, there are regular buses to Baja, Dunaföldvár, and Cece, from where you can pick up a second bus to Pécs. It’s around four hours of travel time altogether.

Pécs itself is best explored on foot, as some of the downtown area is blocked off to cars. The city is small enough to tour in a day but rich enough with attractions that you could spend a leisurely weekend exploring the area. Take time to meander through the side streets for glimpses of the Zsolnay tiles that adorn random buildings throughout the city.

Sights

Most of the city's biggest sights are located downtown, the area within the old city walls. But one of its newest—the remarkable Zsolnay Cultural Quarter—is a 20-minute walk east of the center. If you have time, it's also worth exploring the hillside district of Tettye, home to the medieval ruins of a bishop's palace as well as stunning city views.

★ **Cella Septichora**

RUINS | Situated in a serene little park in front of Pécsi Bazilika, this subterranean museum—and UNESCO World Heritage site—is home to a series of burial chambers, many with remarkably well-preserved religious murals. The burial site dates back to when Pécs was a Roman outpost called Sopianae, though it was located just outside the city walls (as was the custom). Today, the excavated crypts are linked with a series of suspended metal walkways to help preserve them from damage. Two are of particular note: the beautifully decorated Wine Pitcher Burial Chamber, with its paintings of vines and drinking vessels (best seen from above); and the chapel-like Peter and Paul Burial Chamber, covered in Christian symbols and colorful frescoes (best seen from below).

■ **TIP** → A “Time Traveler” ticket also gets you into the nearby **Early Christian Mausoleum, a tomb with stunning murals of Adam and Eve, Daniel in the Lion's Den, and the Resurrection, as well as the Medieval University.** ☎ *Sétatér* 7621, Pécs ☎ 30/701-3771 🌐 www.vilagorokseg-pecs.hu 🗨 *Cella Septichora only:* 2,800 HUF; *Time Traveler ticket:* 3,500 HUF 🕒 *Closed Mon.*

★ **Pécs-Belvárosi templom**

(Inner Town Parish Church)

CHURCH | Crowning the city's main square, Széchenyi tér, this delightful 16th-century Turkish mosque-turned-church is a Pécs landmark. Dating

from the years of Turkish occupation (1543–1686) when it was known as the Mosque of Pasha Qasim, the building was converted into a Catholic church in 1702; a fact you might infer from the cross that surmounts the gilded crescent atop the dome. Despite the fierce religious war raging on its walls—Christian statuary and frescoes beneath Turkish arcades and *mihrabs* (prayer niches)—this church remains the largest and finest relic of Turkish architecture in Hungary. Look out in particular for the enormous painting above the gallery, showing the defeat of the Turks: while triumphalist, the defeated soldiers are depicted rather sympathetically. ☎ *Széchenyi tér, Pécs* ☎ 30/373-8900 🌐 www.pecsiegyhazm-egye.hu 🗨 2,400 HUF; *combo ticket with Pécsi Bazilika:* 4,000 HUF.

Pécsi Bazilika (Pécs Basilica)

CHURCH | Also known as the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul, though it was promoted to basilica rank after Pope John Paul II's visit in 1991, this is one of Europe's most magnificent churches with foundations dating back 1,000 years. At the beginning of the 19th century, Mihály Pollack directed the transformation of the exterior, changing it from Baroque to Neoclassical; its interior remained Gothic. Near the end of the 19th century, Bishop Nándor Dulánszky decided to restore the cathedral to its original, Árpád-period style—the result is a four-spired monument that has an utterly breathtaking interior frescoed from floor to ceiling in shimmering golds, silvers, and blues. It's so light and colorful that it feels brand-new. Climb the lookout tower for a beautiful view over Pécs, including the nearby city walls. ☎ *Dóm tér 2, Pécs* ☎ 72/513-030 🌐 www.pecsiegyhazm-egye.hu 🗨 2,400 HUF; *combo ticket with Pécs-Belvárosi templom:* 4,000 HUF.

★ Zsolnay Kulturális Negyed (Zsolnay Cultural Quarter)

NEIGHBORHOOD | You can easily spend half a day exploring this sprawling complex, a city within a city that was opened in 2010 to mark Pécs's status as European Capital of Culture. Built on the site of the old Zsolnay porcelain factory, which was established by Miklós Zsolnay in the 19th century, the streets and squares are adorned with a host of colorful ceramic-tiled features, from industrial chimneys to charming pavilions. Many of the buildings are home to Zsolnay-related exhibits, including the Pink Exhibition, showcasing the factory's early rose-tinted output like the decorative Lotus series; the Golden Age Collection, a series of more than 600 pieces revealing Zsolnay's evolution towards the Art Nouveau style; and the Live Manufactory, where brand-new ceramic creations are molded, painted, and fired. The quarter also has a shopping street, some excellent cafés and restaurants, and even rental apartments. As well as Zsolnay exhibits, it's home to 1861 Kesztyűmanufaktúra, the factory, shop, and exhibition space of luxury glove brand Hamerli; the Bóbita Bábszínház (Bóbita Puppet Theater); and a Planetárium. ■ **TIP→ Head to the cigar room of the Zsolnay Restaurant to see one of Zsolnay's most beautiful and innovative creations; a gorgeous black-and-gold fireplace.** ☎ *Felsővárház utca 52, Pécs* ☎ 72/500–350 🌐 www.zsolnaynegyed.hu 📠 Grounds free; exhibitions from 1,800 HUF; all-in Zsolnay ticket 7,500 HUF.

Zsolnay Múzeum

ART MUSEUM | FAMILY | If you haven't had your fill of Zsolnay, make a beeline for this museum. Occupying the upper floor of the oldest surviving building in Pécs, which dates from 1324 and has been built and rebuilt over the years in Romanesque, Renaissance, and Baroque styles, this museum is a merry show-and-tell waltz through a revolution in pottery that started in 1851. That's when local merchant Miklós Zsolnay bought the site

of an old kiln and set up a stoneware factory for his son Ignác to run. Ignác's brother, Vilmos, a shopkeeper with an artistic bent, bought the factory from him in 1863, imported experts from Germany, and (with the help of a Pécs pharmacist for chemical glaze experiments and his daughters for hand-painting) created the distinctive namesake porcelain. Today, the museum's collection includes Vilmos's early efforts at Delft-blue handmade vases, cups, and saucers; his two-layer ceramics; examples of the gold-brocade rims that became a Zsolnay trademark; and table settings for royal families. Look up on your tour to see the unusual Zsolnay chandeliers lighting the way. ☎ *Káptalan utca 2, Pécs* ☎ 72/514–045 🌐 www.jp.m.hu 📠 2,500 HUF ☺ Closed Mon.

Restaurants

★ Bagolyvár Restaurant

\$\$\$ | **HUNGARIAN** | For dinner with a view, it's hard to beat the Owl Castle, an unusual pseudo-cellar restaurant that is not only aboveground but situated high up on the hill in the Tettye district of Pécs. Take a seat in the brick-vaulted interior to enjoy the carved columns, decorative furnace, and folksy bric-a-brac, or sit out on the terrace surrounded by orchards—the fruit from which is used to make the potent house pálinkas—for spectacular city views. **Known for:** 900,000-brick interior with folksy decor; gorgeous city views from terrace; steep drive or a bus then 10-minute uphill walk. 📍 *Average main: Ft5,500* ☎ *Felsőhavi dűlő 6, Pécs* ☎ 72/513–213 🌐 www.bagolyvarpecs.hu.

★ Trüffel Cukrászda

\$ | **BAKERY** | This out-of-the-way bakery and cake shop, a good 20-minute walk from the center, has display cabinets crammed with mouthwatering confections, from honey cream slices to chocolate profiteroles, apple poppy cake to smoked cheese scones. Inside, it appears to be just a small take-out place,

but stroll around the back to discover a lovely, sprawling terrace and garden, complete with kids' play area. **Known for:** a bit of a walk from downtown Pécs; lemon ice cream is to die for; tasty vegan cakes available. 📍 *Average main: Ft960* 📠 *Hársfa út 34, Pécs* ☎ *70/409-6661* 🌐 *www.truffel.hu.*

Hotels

Adele Hotel

\$\$ | **HOTEL** | This charming boutique hotel, a two-minute walk from Széchenyi tér, is set within a protected building dating back more than 200 years, yet it's one of the city's most modern and elegant accommodation options. **Pros:** convenient central location; great little wellness center in the cellar; delicious breakfasts with fresh orange juice (a rarity here). **Cons:** sauna gets busy, so prebooking advised; room service has an additional fee; nude photographs in public areas are tasteful but might bother some. 📍 *Rooms from: Ft39,500* 📠 *Mária utca 15, Pécs* ☎ *72/510-226* 🌐 *www.adelehotel.hu* ➡ *19 rooms* 🍳 *Free Breakfast.*

Palatinus Boutique Hotel

\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | The neighbor and little brother of the long-established Palatinus Grand Hotel, this sophisticated boutique offers elegantly appointed (if small) rooms in the heart of Pécs. **Pros:** chic decor; great city center location; exceptional brunch-style breakfasts included. **Cons:** some street noise can be heard; lacking wellness facilities; rooms are small (even the largest "Executive" ones). 📍 *Rooms from: Ft56,000* 📠 *Király utca 3, Pécs* ☎ *72/889-400* 🌐 *www.palatinusboutiquehotel.hu* ➡ *29 rooms* 🍳 *Free Breakfast.*