

# City Park & Beyond

## Neighbourhood Top Five

**1** Taking the waters at the ‘wedding-cake’ **Széchenyi Baths** (p148) in Budapest’s sprawling City Park, which boasts some of the hottest thermal water of all the city’s spas and arguably its most waterlogged chess players.

**2** Enjoying the stunning architecture and the

friendly residents of the Elephant House at the **Budapest Zoo** (p149).

**3** Having a close call with one Great Master after another at the rich **Museum of Fine Arts** (p147).

**4** Strolling City Park and then relaxing with an alfresco beer at **Pántlika** (p151) or **Kertem** (p152).

**5** Reaching City Park on the toy-like **M1 metro**, Continental Europe’s first underground train.



For more detail of this area, see Map p254 ➔

## Lonely Planet's Top Tip

When the sun's out, a peaceful option for whiling away an hour in City Park is to rent a rowing boat on the lake. Just beyond Heroes' Sq, landlubbers take to the water for 1200Ft for half an hour of rowing, 1800Ft for an hour.

### Best Buildings

- Palace of Art (p149)
- National Institute for the Blind (p150)
- Vajdahunyad Castle (p150)

For reviews, see p149 ➡

### Best Places to Eat

- Olimpia (p150)
- Gundel (p151)
- Wang (p151)

For reviews, see p150 ➡

### Best for Spectator Sports

- Hungaroring (p152)
- Ferenc Puskás Stadium (p153)
- Kincsem Park (p152)

For reviews, see p153 ➡

## Explore: City Park & Beyond

Stately Andrassy út ends at Heroes' Sq (Hősök tere), which more or less forms the entrance to City Park (Városliget). City Park is Pest's green lung, an open space measuring almost exactly a square kilometre that hosted most of the events during Hungary's 1000th-anniversary celebrations in 1896. And while it may not compete with the Buda Hills as an escapist's destination, there are more than enough activities and attractions to keep everyone happy and entertained.

The park area was originally marshland and served for a time as a royal hunting ground. Leopold I (Lipót; r 1658–1705) gave it to the city of Pest, but it was not drained and planted for another half-century. The arrangement you see today dates from the late 19th century, when the *angol park* (English park), an idealised view of controlled nature, was all the rage throughout Europe. The park's green spaces contain a large number of both exotic and local trees (largely maple, oak and beech), which attract up to 100 bird species.

Most of the museums, galleries and important statues and monuments lie to the south of XIV Kós Károly sétány, the path that runs east–west just below the top third of the park. Activities and attractions of a less cerebral nature – the Capital Circus of Budapest, Budapest Zoo and Széchenyi Baths – are to the north.

## Local Life

➤ **Eating** Most locals wouldn't consider dining in the evening at pricey Gundel (p151), but come Sunday and the punters arrive in droves for its excellent-value buffet.

➤ **Architecture** The neighbourhoods south and east of the park are happy hunting grounds for some of the capital's grandest Art Nouveau buildings (p192).

➤ **Sport** In winter the City Park Ice-Skating Rink (p153) attracts not just casual skaters but also aficionados of bandy, a sport with its own rules alternatively known as Russian hockey.

## Getting There & Away

➤ **Metro** The M1 metro from Vörösmarty tér and then below VI Andrassy út to Hősök tere and Széchenyi fürdő.

➤ **Trolleybus** No 70 to/from V Kossuth Lajos tér, 72 to/from V Arany János utca and 75 to/from XIII Jászai Mari tér.

➤ **Bus** No 105 linking points in Buda and V Deák Ferenc tér in Pest with Hősök tere.