



Day Trips from Budapest

Gödöllő Royal Palace p155

Hungary's most painstakingly restored aristocratic residence, the Royal Palace at Gödöllő is within easy striking distance of the capital and an easy 'walk' through Hungarian history.

Szentendre p156

A town on the scenic Danube Bend that has changed little since the 18th century, Szentendre is well worth the easy trip from Budapest for its museums, galleries, architecture and shops.

Eger p158

Provincial Hungary's prettiest city contains a plenitude of museums and important architecture, a castle that helped save the nation and a valley awash in wine.

Balatonfüred p161

Arguably the most stylish of all the towns along Lake Balaton, Balatonfüred was once the preserve of the well-heeled infirm but now attracts both fun- and sun-seekers in equal measure.



TOP SIGHT GÖDÖLLŐ ROYAL PALACE

The Royal Palace at Gödöllő (roughly pronounced 'good-duh-luh'), 30km northeast of Budapest and easily accessible on the HÉV suburban train, rivalled aristocratic residences throughout the Habsburg empire when it was completed in the 1760s and is the largest baroque manor house in Hungary. The town itself, full of lovely baroque buildings and monuments, is also worth exploring.

The palace was designed in 1741 by Antal Mayerhoffer for Count Antal Grassalkovich (1694–1771), confidante of Empress Maria Theresa. After the formation of the Dual Monarchy over a century later, it was enlarged as a summer retreat for and gifted to Emperor Franz Joseph and soon became the favoured residence of his consort, the much-loved Habsburg empress and Hungarian queen Elizabeth (1837–98), affectionately known as Sissi (or Sisi). Between the two world wars the regent, Admiral Miklós Horthy, also used it as a summer residence, but after the Communists came to power part of the mansion was used as a barracks for Soviet and Hungarian troops and as an old people's home. The rest was left to decay.

Partial renovation of the mansion began in the mid-1980s, and today almost three dozen rooms are open to the public on the ground and 1st floors. They have been restored to the period when the imperial couple was in residence, and Franz Joseph's suites (done up in manly deep red) and Sissi's lavender-coloured private apartments on the 1st floor are impressive. Check out the **Ornamental Hall**, all gold tracery, stucco and chandeliers, where chamber-music concerts are held throughout the year. Also see the **Queen's Reception Room**, with a Secessionist-style oil painting of Sissi patriotically repairing the coronation robe of King Stephen with needle and thread; the **Queen Elizabeth Memorial Exhibit**, which looks at the queen's assassination by Italian anarchist Luigi Lucheni, who stabbed her to death with a needle file; and the **Grassalkovich Era Exhibition**, which offers a glance at the palace during its first century.

You can also visit the splendid **Baroque Theatre** (adult/student 1400/800Ft; ☺ Sat & Sun) and the WWII-vintage **Horthy's Bunker** (adult/student 800/500Ft) with a guide; be aware that the permanent exhibition is also by guided tour (three to five departures) during the week in winter. Audioguides cost 800Ft. There's a helpful **tourist office** (☎ 28-415 402; www.gkrte.hu; ☺ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun Apr–Oct, to 5pm Tue–Sun Nov–Mar) just inside the palace's main entrance.

There's a cafe in the palace with drinks and snacks. In town, **Pizza Palazzo** (☎ 28-420 688; www.pizzapalazzo.hu; Szabadság tér 2; pizza & pasta 1020–1590Ft; ☺ 11am–10pm Sun–Thu, to 11pm Fri & Sat) is a popular pizzeria that also has more substantial pasta dishes; it's attached to Szabadság tér HÉV station. **Solier Cafe** (☎ 06-20 396 5512; www.solier.hu; Dózsa György utca 13; mains 1500–2450Ft, set lunch 1150Ft; ☺ 8am–10pm), next to the post office, has a wonderful *cukrászda* (cake shop) on the ground floor and an upbeat restaurant above. About 500m north of the Szabadság tér HÉV stop, **Szélikakas** (Weathervane; ☎ 28-423 119; www.godolloiszeilkakas.hu; Bajcsy-Zsilinszky utca 27; mains 1650–2650Ft; ☺ 11.30am–8pm Sun & Mon, to 10pm Tue–Thu, noon–11pm Fri & Sat) is a charming eatery with a covered garden; it's great for Sunday lunch.

DON'T MISS...

- ➔ Ornamental Hall
- ➔ Queen Elizabeth Memorial Exhibit
- ➔ Baroque Theatre
- ➔ Horthy's Bunker

PRACTICALITIES

- ➔ Gödöllői Királyi Kastély
- ➔ ☎ 28-410 124
- ➔ www.kiralyikastely.hu
- ➔ Szabadság tér 1
- ➔ adult/child 2200/1100Ft
- ➔ ☺ 10am–6pm Apr–Oct, to 5pm Tue–Sun Nov–Mar
- ➔ 🕒 hourly from Stadion bus station (560Ft, 40min), 🕒 frequent HÉV services from Órs vezér tere to Gödöllő's Szabadság tér station (720Ft, 45min)