



Hungary

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Jókai Bisztró (p194)
- ➔ Erhardt (p189)
- ➔ Kisbuda Gyöngye (p184)
- ➔ Fő Tér (p197)

Best Places to Stay

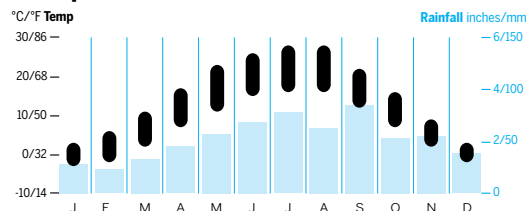
- ➔ Hotel Palazzo Zichy (p184)
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Why Go?

Hungary is just the place to kick off a European adventure. Lying virtually in the centre of the continent, this land of Franz Liszt and Béla Bartók, paprika-lashed dishes, superb wines and the romantic Danube River continues to enchant visitors. The allure of Budapest, once an imperial city, is immediate at first sight, and it also boasts the hottest nightlife in the region. Other cities, too, like Pécs, the warm heart of the south, and Eger, the wine capital of the north, have much to offer travellers, as does the sprawling countryside, particularly the Great Plain, where cowboys ride and cattle roam. And where else can you laze about in an open-air thermal spa while snow patches glisten around you? That's at Hévíz at the western edge of Lake Balaton, continental Europe's largest lake and Hungary's 'inland sea', which offers innumerable opportunities for rest and recreation. In Hungary you'll find all the excitement and fun of Western Europe – at half the cost.

When to Go

Budapest



May Spring is in full swing, meaning reliable weather, cool temperatures and flowers.

Jul & Aug Sunny but often very hot; decamp to the hills or Lake Balaton (book ahead).

Sep & Oct Blue skies, mild temperatures and grape harvests – perhaps the best time to visit.



Hungary Highlights

1 Lose yourself in Europe's best nightlife – the 'ruin pubs' and 'garden clubs' of **Budapest**.

2 Learn about the bravery of **Eger** (p196) when it was under Turkish attack, and sample the region's famed Bull's Blood wine.

3 Watch cowboys ride at Bugac in **Kiskunság**

National Park (p579), the heart of the Great Plain.

4 Absorb the Mediterranean-like climate and historic architecture of **Pécs** (p193), including its iconic Mosque Church.

5 Take a pleasure cruise across **Lake Balaton** (p190), Central Europe's largest body of fresh water.

6 Ease your aching muscles in the warm waters of the thermal lake in **Hévíz** (p577).

7 Mill about with artists, freethinkers and day trippers at the too-cute-for-words town of **Szentendre** (p188).

BUDAPEST

21 / POP 1.75 MILLION

There's no other city in Hungary like Budapest. Home to almost 20% of the national population, Hungary's capital (*főváros*; 'main city') is the nation's administrative, business and cultural centre.

But it's the beauty of Budapest – both natural and man-made – that makes it unique. Straddling a gentle curve in the Danube, the city is flanked by the Buda Hills on the west bank and the beginnings of the Great Plain to the east. Architecturally it is a gem, with enough baroque, neoclassical and art nouveau elements to satisfy everyone.