



Hungary

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Why Go?

Where else but Hungary can you laze about in an open-air thermal spa while snow patches glisten around you, then head to a bar where a Romani band yelps while a crazed crowd whacks its boot heels? Or follow that spa visit with a trip to a wine cellar to taste the local vintage alongside arguably Eastern Europe's best, and spiciest, cooking?

If these pursuits don't appeal there are Roman ruins, ancient castles and even the occasional Turkish minaret, hold-overs from centuries of Ottoman rule, in cities such as Pécs and Eger. In the countryside you can see storks nesting on street lamps and a sea of blooming apricot trees.

Cosmopolitan Budapest is filled with world-class opera, great clubs, monumental buildings and the mighty Danube River flowing through its centre.

Best Places to Eat

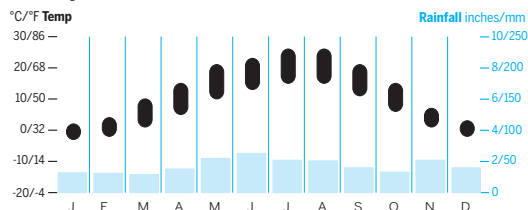
- » Köleves, Budapest (p615)
- » Bagolyvár, Budapest (p614)
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Best Places to Stay

- » Backpack Guesthouse, Budapest (p611)
- » Home-Made Hostel, Budapest (p614)
- » Wieden Pension, Sopron (p619)
- » Hotel Korona, Szeged (p623)
- » Nap Hostel, Pécs (p622)

When to Go

Budapest



May Spring is in full swing, with generally reliable weather, cool temps and lots of flowers.

Jul & Aug Lots of sunshine; if it's too hot in Budapest, decamp to the countryside or Lake Balaton.

Sep Sunshine, mild temperatures and grape-harvest festivals; may be the best time to visit.

Connections

Hungary's landlocked status ensures plenty of possibilities for onward travel overland. There are direct train connections from Budapest to major cities in all of Hungary's neighbours. International buses head in all directions, including localities across the border in Serbia and Romania. In the warmer months you can take a ferry along the Danube to reach Bratislava or Vienna.

ITINERARIES

One Week

Spend four days in Budapest, checking out the sights, museums and cafes. On your fifth day take a day trip to a Danube Bend town: see the open-air museum in Szentendre or the cathedral at Esztergom. Day six can be spent getting a morning train to Pécs and seeing the lovely Turkish remains, and checking out the many galleries in town.

Two Weeks

If you're here in summer, make sure you spend some time exploring the towns around Lake Balaton, or just chill out on the beach by the side of this popular lake. Siófok is a party town with an Ibiza-style vibe. Alternatively head south to see some of the Great Plain: Szeged is on the Tisza River and Kecskemét is further north.

Essential Food & Drink

- » **Gulyás (goulash)** Hungary's signature dish, though here it's served as a soup, not a stew.
- » **Pörkölt** This paprika-infused stew is closer to what you imagine as goulash.
- » **Galuska** Gnocchi-like dumplings that soak up the sauce in a *pörkölt*.
- » **Halászlé** Fish soup made from freshwater fish, tomatoes, green peppers and paprika.
- » **Lángos** Street food made from fried dough and topped with cheese and/or sour cream.
- » **Wine** Two Hungarian wines are known internationally: the sweet dessert wine Tokaji Aszú and Egri Bikavér (Eger Bull's Blood), a full-bodied red.
- » **Pálinka** A strong, firewater-like brandy distilled from fruits.

AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Hungarian forint (Ft)
- » **Language** Hungarian
- » **Money** ATMs abundant
- » **Visas** Not required for citizens of the EU, USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand

Fast Facts

- » **Area** 93,000 sq km
- » **Capital** Budapest
- » **Country code** ☎36
- » **Emergency** ☎112

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	192Ft
Canada	C\$1	191Ft
euro zone	€1	266Ft
Japan	¥100	220Ft
New Zealand	NZ\$1	144Ft
UK	UK£1	299Ft
USA	US\$1	184Ft

Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room** 14,000/9000Ft (Budapest/outside Budapest)
- » **Two-course evening meal** 4000Ft
- » **Museum entrance** 800Ft
- » **Beer** 450Ft per bottle

Resources

- » **Hungarian National Tourism Organisation** (www.hungary.com)
- » **Budapest Times** (www.budapesttimes.hu)
- » **Caboodle.hu** (www.caboodle.hu) Useful Hungarian news portal.