



# Northern Uplands

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## Why Go?

Forested hiking trails, superb wine regions, traditional folk culture and hilltop castle ruins beckon you to the Northern Uplands. OK, the highest peak here – Kékestető in the Mátra Hills – is only just over 1000m. But in a country as flat as a *palacsinta* (pancake), these foothills of the Carpathians soar above most of Hungary. After exploring Bükk National Park on foot or caving in Lillafűred, why not sample the spectacular red wines of Eger or the honey-sweet whites of Tokaj? The five ranges that make up the Northern Uplands – Cserhát, Mátra, Bükk, Aggtelek and Zemplén – are not just about nature. This is a land where the Palóc and Mátyo people hold strong in traditional villages such as Hollókő and Mezőkövesd. As reminders of far too many battles won and lost, ageing castles and evocative ruins punctuate the landscape. Outdoor recreation, culture, history – it's time to head for the hills!

## Best Places to Eat

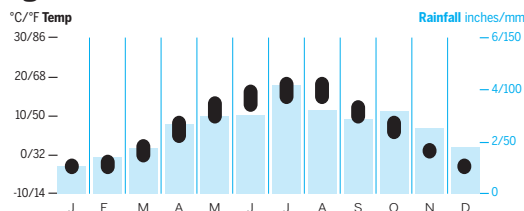
- » Kékes Étterem (p242)
- » Imola Udvarház Borétterem (p251)
- » Mátyás Restaurant (p260)
- » Toldi Fogadó (p263)

## Best Places to Stay

- » Hotel Senator Ház (p250)
- » La Contessa Kastély Hotel (p255)
- » Hotel Palota (p260)
- » Kastélyhotel Sasvár (p245)
- » Gróf Degenfeld Castle Hotel (p261)
- » Palóc Holiday Houses (p240)

## When to Go

### Eger



**Mar & Apr** Easter in Hollókő or Mezőkövesd, when everyone dons their traditional finery for Mass

**Jul & Aug** Crowded it may be but this is the time for medieval tournaments at castles such as Boldogkő

**Dec–Mar** Snow (usually) falls and Hungary's only ski centre at Kékestető comes to life

# HOLLÓKŐ

32 / POP 360

The Cserhát Hills may not be graced with soaring peaks (none of them is higher than 650m), but they are cloaked in a rich folk-culture tapestry belonging to the Palóc people. Hollókő (Raven Rock), a two-street village nestled in a tranquil valley, is the epicentre. What sets Hollókő apart is its restored 13th-century castle and the architecture of the so-called Old Village (Ófalu), where some 65 houses and outbuildings have been on Unesco's World Heritage list of cultural sites since 1987. The village has burned to the ground many times since the 13th century (most recently in 1909), but the residents have always rebuilt their houses exactly to plan in traditional wattle and daub.

## Sights

The Old Village's folk architecture is the main attraction. Stroll down one cobblestone street and up the other, past white-washed houses with carved wooden porches and tiled roofs. Few people live in the Old Village any more, preferring the more modern accommodation of the New Village, which you'll pass on the way here.

## Hollókő Castle

CASTLE

(Hollókői Vár; 06 30 968 1739; adult/child 700/350Ft; 10am-5.30pm Apr-Oct) At 365m on Stalk Hill (Szár-hegy), Hollókő Castle commands a striking view of the surrounding hills. The fortress was built at the end of the 13th century and strengthened 200 years later. Captured by the Turks, it was not liberated until 1683 by the Polish king Jan Sobieski (r 1674-96). It was partially destroyed after the war of independence early in the 18th century but the shell is fairly intact. Climb to the top of the pentagonal keep to look out across fields and forested hills without a trace of human occupation. Exhibits inside focus on weaponry and heraldry. There's also a small wax museum.

## Hollókő Church

CHURCH

(Kossuth utca) The focus of the village's spiritual and social life, this adorable wooden church is on the corner where Petőfi utca, the Old Village's 'other' street, branches off from Kossuth utca. Built as a granary in the 16th century and sanctified in 1889, it is a fairly austere affair both inside and out.

## Village Museum

MUSEUM

(Falumúzeum; 379 255; Kossuth utca 82; adult/child 250/100Ft; 10am-6pm Apr-Oct) The award-winning Village Museum contains the usual three rooms of a Hungarian peasant house, with local folk pottery, painted furniture and embroidered pillows. In the backyard there's an interesting carved wine press dating from 1872.

## Postal Museum

MUSEUM

(Postamúzeum; 379 288; Kossuth utca 80; adult/child 750/375Ft; 10am-6pm Apr-Oct) The Postal Museum is a branch of the one in **Budapest** (Postamúzeum; Map p68; 1-269 6838; www.postamuseum.hu; VI Andrassy út 3; adult/child/family 500/250/1000Ft; 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; M1 Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út). If you must skip one, choose this overpriced museum.

## Country House

MUSEUM

(Tájház; 379 157; Kossuth utca 99-100; adult/child 250/130Ft; 10am-5pm daily Apr-Oct, Sat & Sun Nov-Mar) A nature exhibition at the Country House deals with the flora, fauna and human inhabitants of the Eastern Cserhát Landscape Protection Reserve, part of which surrounds the village.

## Doll Museum

MUSEUM

(Babamúzeum; 379 088; Kossuth utca 96; adult/child 250/150Ft; 10am-5pm Apr-Oct) This museum exhibits more than 200 porcelain dolls in traditional costumes from all across Hungary.

## Legend House

MUSEUM

(Legendák Háza; 06 30 597 8952; Kossuth utca 62; adult/child 400/200Ft; 10am-5pm Apr-Oct) Rather hokey mini-museum tells the story of Hollókő Castle and its legends through costumed figures in three rooms.



## Activities

There are some gentle **walks** into the hills and valleys of the 140-hectare landscape protection reserve to the west and south of the castle. *Cserhát*, the 1:60,000 map (No 8; 1215Ft) from Cartographia, will help you plan your route.

## Kézművesporta

COURSE

(06 20 569 7525; www.kezmuvesporta.hu; Kossuth utca 53; per craft 300-1400Ft; 10am-4pm Wed-Fri, to 5pm Sat & Sun) You can learn to weave straw baskets, dip candles and sew cloth dolls the old-fashioned way at Kézművesporta.