

# welcome to Hungary



## Super Structures

Hungary's scenery is more gentle than striking, more pretty than stunning. But you can't say the same thing about the built environment across the land. Architecturally Hungary is a treasure trove, with everything from Roman ruins and medieval town houses to baroque churches, neoclassical public buildings and Art Nouveau bathhouses and schools. And we're not just talking about Budapest here; walk through Szeged or Kecskemét, Debrecen or Sopron and you'll discover an architectural gem at virtually every turn. Some people (ourselves included) go out of their way for another glimpse of their 'hidden' favourites, like the Reök Palace in Szeged,

the buildings of Kőszeg's Jurisics tér or the Mosque Church in Pécs. It's almost as if they're afraid these delightful structures will crumble and disappear unless they are regularly drenched in admiring glances.

## In Hot Water

Hungarians have been 'taking the waters' supplied by an estimated 300 thermal springs since togas were all the rage and Aquincum was the big Smoke. They still do – for therapeutic, medicinal and recreational purposes – but the venues have changed somewhat. Today they range from authentic bathhouses dating from the Turkish occupation and Art Nouveau palaces to clinical sanatoriums straight



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*Hungary has always marched to a different drummer – speaking a language, preparing dishes and drinking wines like no others. It's Europe at its most exotic.*

(left) Gellért Baths (p55), Budapest

(below) Wine tasting at Tokaj's Rákóczi Cellar (p262)



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out of a Thomas Mann novel. This is where the older generation like to rejuvenate and catch up on the local gossip. More and more though, you'll see clear, chlorinated waters in organically shaped pools that bubble, squirt and spurt at different rhythms and temperatures alongside the requisite wellness centre offering a myriad of treatments. Good for the kids, good for the grown-ups, good for the whole family.

## **Eat, Drink & Be Magyar**

There is a lot more to Hungarian food than goulash – it remains one of the most sophisticated styles of cooking in Europe. Magyars even go so far as to say there are three essential world cuisines: French,

Chinese and their own. That may be a bit of an exaggeration but Hungary's reputation as a food centre dates largely from the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th and, despite a fallow period during the chilly days of communism, is once again commanding attention. So too are the nation's world-renowned wines – from the big-bodied reds of Villány and white Olaszrizling from Badacsony to honey-gold Tokaj.