



This is the country:

- which boasts one of the world's most beautiful capital cities: Budapest, the "Pearl of the Danube", whose wonderful panorama is on UNESCO's World Heritage list,
 - where, despite repeated historical disasters which devastated both the people and their heritage, much remains of great value that is worth visiting and getting to know,
 - where 2000-year-old Roman ruins and 400-year-old Turkish monuments can be found side-by-side, not to mention beautiful churches from the Romanesque period in Ják, Lébényszentmiklós, and Pannonhalma, or one-time stately castles in Eger, Sümeg, and Siklós,
 - where magnificent palaces functioning as hotels await tourists in Szirák, Seregélyes, and Nagycenk, to mention only the most famous,
 - where Lake Balaton is located, Central Europe's largest lake, providing a natural paradise for families with small children,
 - where hundreds of therapeutic mineral springs gush up from the depths, helping many thousands to recover their health,
 - where the rich Hungarian folk art and the horse shows which introduce the lifestyle and traditions of the "puszta" (Great Hungarian Plain) attract tens of thousands.
- And there's something else that keeps bringing visitors back to us - the legendary Hungarian hospitality.

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Established in 1989

Address: H-1061 Budapest, Paulay Ede u. 7-9. T: +36 1 429 9720 F: +36 1 429 9710

E: incoming@bcdtravel.hu Web: www.vistahungary.com & www.bcdtravel.hu



About Hungary



Budapest & Surroundings



Hungary's oldest academic library, the University Library, is to be found here. It is the location of Europe's largest synagogue. It is the only capital city in the world where there are more than one hundred hot thermal springs. There are no other cities of comparable size anywhere where visitors can explore dripstone (stalactite) caves in the middle of the residential districts.



It would be difficult to find another city where visitors are faced with such a choice of transport: bus, tram, trolleybus, train, underground railway, cogwheel railway, funicular, forest railway, horse-and-trap, chair-lift, boat, bicycle and on Margaret Island "bringóhintó" family cycle cars - Budapest has them all! Let's choose one, and set off in the World Heritage streets.

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About Hungary



Eger-Tokaj Hilly Wine Region

Every step is a new adventure



Here we find the country's highest mountain, and smallest village, the first Hungarian language bible from the 16th century, and the oldest railway from the 19th century. The world renowned Hungarian wine, the Tokaji aszú, ages in the cellars of this region, while one of Europe's most beautiful horse tracks and biggest cave systems is also found here. Three of Hungary's eight UNESCO listed world heritage sites can be found here.

To reach the northern Hungarian region's closest city, we only have to travel sixty kilometers from Budapest. If we want to see its farthest boundaries, then our journey will take us to the banks of the Tisza river. The region's southern border is the Alföld, while Slovakia borders it to the north. The region's castles from the Middle Ages, its 16th and 17th century palaces, numerous churches, villages famous for their folkloric traditions and handicrafts, as well as famous historic towns are cradled amongst the five mountain ranges that we find there the Cserhát, Mátra, Bükk, Cserehát and Zemplén ranges.



The Alföld, Protected Treasures, Distinctive Landscape



Almost everyone knows of it, but yet so few actually know it. The Alföld has given us such everyday terms such as puszta, paprika, csárda, and csikós, but only those understand their real meaning are those who visit this special place.

The Alföld is a place of legends, and legendary sights. The bird nature reserves its two counties contain, the Hortobágy and the Tisza lake, have made it onto the UNESCO world heritage list. Three national parks can be found within its borders. Other sights include Europe's largest fruit producer, one of the Greek Catholic faith's oldest sites, Central Europe's biggest windmill, the plain's only medieval stone castle, Hungary's oldest railway station, and the world's second largest panorama painting.

The Alföld is bordered on the west by the Danube, and in the east by the Tisza. Hungary's second largest river has a different life to its nearest neighbour, the Danube. The Tisza has very little commercial boat traffic, but many touring boats. It has few bridges, but many ferries, in fact in 11 places simple boats provide a crossing. Just like in the olden days. You only have to stand on its banks once to understand why its been known for centuries as the fair or "blonde" Tisza. The very fine, almost unnoticeable sand grains floating in it give it its golden color. For its entire Hungarian length, these fine grains or fine pebbles transform its edges into a many

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The sunshine is said to bathe in thermal waters in the southern Alföld, which has the country's highest amount of daylight hours. The famous thermal baths of this region back right onto each other.

This wealth of sunshine also ripens such Hungarian produce as the golden apricot, from which is made the barackpálinka of Kecskemét. Paprika, that most essential herb for Hungarian dishes such as pörkölt, halászlé gulyásleves, also grows here. The region's most notable produce is the red onion of Makó, which in the town of Makó itself is celebrated in builds like The Onionhouse, and The Tália house.



There isn't a region in Hungary which has as many events and festivals connected with gastronomy. Baja has its halászlé cooking folk festival, while in Pusztamérges they hold the Szeged district's halászlé cooking competition. In the Szatmár region they hold a plum jam making contest, while in Békéscsaba its salami, Bereg its gulyás, and this is not to mention the many wine tastings and events.

Only those who are only happy in the mountains can't find themselves something to their liking in the Alföld. Everyone else partakes in memorable events.

Pannonia (Transdanubia)



The innumerable small delights make this a loveable countryside. A baroque terrace in Sopron, the early morning bell ringing in Veszprém, the ancient highway's stone, worn silky smooth over time in Szombathely, the glitter of a green and gold tiled well in Pécs. In Kőszeg we can taste roasted chestnuts, in Villány we can drink kékoportó, in Lake Velence we can dine on roast fish, and can feast on wild boar pörkölt in Bakony. There isn't a region in Hungary which has this many tastes, colours, scents, that is as varied as Dunántúl, west Hungary. That is, Pannónia. The region got its name two thousand years ago, when the Roman legions were stationed there.

The river was the border of the Roman Empire, which was guarded by encampments stationed every 15-20 kilometres. Under the Romans, many settlements flourished, connected by the good road network. If we compare ancient maps with modern ones, we find that most of the ancient towns are still where they were founded back in Roman times. Today the region is still bordered in the east and north by the Danube; to the south is Croatia, Slovenia, and in the west is Austria. Lake Balaton, central Europe's largest fresh water lake lies within this region, and so we deal with separately. Here we also find the region's largest castle, the gardening world's legendary lime alley, the country's largest baroque palace, one of the world libraries, one of

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Europe's oldest continually inhabited settlements, the nation's very first Christian church, the country's most beautiful forest and the only intact castle from the Middle Ages. Here are made two famous Hungarian products, the porcelains of Herend and Zsolnay.

Three sites are listed in the UNESCO World Heritage list, the convent at Pannonhalma, the catacombs of Pécs, and lake Fertő.

Here, everyone finds a destination to their tastes, be they sailors or rock climbers, those who crave city nightlife, or those who want to disappear in a small village. In Pannónia, everything is possible, from fine dining, touring, swimming in clear waters, healing in thermal springs, to fishing, hunting, castle climbing, strolling in gardens, enjoying the wine trail and marveling at palaces. There's one thing that isn't possible in Pannónia, and that's being bored.



Lake Balaton Ever Enticing



Nobody quite knows who first declared themselves in love with Lake Balaton. Perhaps a poet, or a traveler, but it's a fact that from the start of the 19th Century onwards, more and more statements like this are recorded. First in beautiful prose, then in newspaper articles, nowadays in virtually everyday speech. For those who haven't been yet it is hard to understand the attraction to Lake Balaton. If we want to educate them, then for every question there is an answer.

Children wallow in the fabulous fun of wading in the shallow, warm, silky waters, and are only willing to be ordered out of the lake. Youths recall the all-night "big parties" of the hot summer evenings. For them, Lake Balaton is a world of meetings and new adventures. The nature lovers speak lovingly of the idyllic quiet of the Balaton's upper region, or of the flocks of startled water birds rising from the wetlands of the "Small Balaton".

Painters and photographers rightfully believe Hungary's best panoramas are the hills that rise from the lake. Wine lovers sing the praises of the Kéknyelű from Badacsony, or the Italian reisling of Boglár, while gastronomes rave about the toothfish delicacies. The fishermen tell of metre-plus long fish, the yachtsmen of the racing boats bent over in the wind, the rheumatics of the healing powers of the Hévíz thermal baths, the music lovers of the Tihany organ recitals, the Opera fanciers of the Siófok opera galas.



The list goes on, but the flame of adulation would easily be lit by the first dozen testimonials. Come with us, and feel at home at Lake Balaton!

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The Capital with the World's largest number of Thermal Springs



Budapest first gained the epithet City of Spas in 1934, and with it recognition that there isn't another capital city anywhere in the world that has more hydrothermal and mineral springs. It is also a unique fact that the 118 natural or specially drilled springs, with a temperature ranging from 21 to 78 °C (70–172 °F), deliver 70 million litres (15.4 million gallons) per day. Walking along the Danube embankment on the Buda side, you come across the famous thermal baths one after the other. They have a wide appeal, suiting those engaged in sports as well as those who would rather sweat it out in the steam room or pass the time of day unwinding in the soothing thermal water. The particular mineral content of the waters here marks them out as being efficacious in the treatment of locomotor, circulatory and gynecological disorders. Close to the baths you can find springs and pump rooms, offering the range of natural mineral waters to drink. The most renowned pump room for taking curative drinks is at the entrance to the Lukács Baths. It was opened in 1937 and is recommended, amongst other things, for those suffering from gastric complaints. The building dates from 1894, and the establishment's fame spread quickly throughout Europe, becoming one of Hungary's best known attractions.

In Buda there are also working thermal baths remaining from the Turkish period, for example the Király and the Rác, both built towards the end of the 1500's. Another, the Rudas, is both the oldest and the most elaborately decorated, and includes a fine octagonal main pool.

Budapest's Finest Art Nouveau Thermal Spa

The foot of Gellért Hill was the site of a hospital in the Middle Ages; by the Turkish period there was a bathing place there. On one of his travels, the Turkish writer Evlia Cselebi advised that one should stay in the water almost until one's body turns red and then quickly get out but keep warm. Today's Gellért Hotel and Baths date from 1918, although the wave pool and whirlpool bath are later additions. This is Budapest's finest thermal bathing complex, still displaying original art nouveau fittings, colourful mosaics, marble columns and stained glass windows and statues.

The Best Views of Buda and Pest

Legend has it that in 1046 pagan Hungarians revolting against Christianity hurled the missionary Bishop Gellért into the Danube from a steep cliff face on the hill that now bears his name. His huge statue marks the spot, above a waterfall, and looks commandingly out over the river. Following the putting down of the Hungarian War of Independence (1848-49) the Austrian Emperor had a citadel built at the top of the hill – to show the rebellious town who was master. From its terraces 450 feet above the Danube there are spectacular views over the city. And conversely from nearly every point down below there is a good view up to the bronze statue of a

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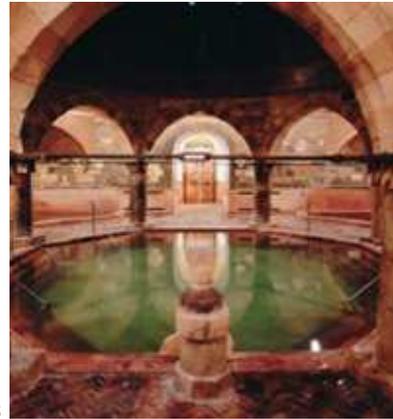
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woman holding aloft a palm branch, the Liberation Monument. This was erected in 1947 and commemorates the liberation of Budapest at the end of the Second World War.



Király Baths



Rudas Baths



Playing chess at the Széchenyi Baths

Gastronomy and wine



Hungary caters for all tastes and you'll find on offer food from all corners of the world. However, be sure to sample some of the delights of local cuisine – gastronomy is a key ingredient of the country's cultural experience. Occupiers and immigrants have brought many diverse influences to bear on Hungary's food, and you'll find flavours originating from Turkey, Slovakia, France, Italy, Austria and Germany. Furthermore, the contemporary master chefs continue to keep a close eye on trends across Europe. However, despite such foreign influences of past and present, at the very heart of Hungarian cooking are the traditions of the Hungarian kitchen.

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When eating in Hungary, you're likely to come across key ingredients including paprika, cumin, garlic, smoked bacon, sauerkraut, sour cream and curd cheese. Don't miss out on specialities such as goose liver, goulash soup, paprika chicken, spicy sausage, salami, pancakes (both sweet and savoury) – as well as some of the dreamiest cakes and ice-creams you'll ever taste.

Hungarian wine has been acclaimed globally for many centuries. There are 22 wine regions in Hungary, and – in addition to restaurants and bars – you can take a taste in wine cellars, wine museums or at the vineyards themselves. Look out for Tokaj Aszú, which Louis XIV famously declared to be the 'king of wines, wine of kings'.

Pálinka – fiery fruit brandy – is one of Hungary's national treasures. The name 'pálinka' can only be used for spirits made from fruit grown in the territory of Hungary. Pálinka is distilled from 100% fruit – without the addition of any alcohol or artificial flavourings – and has an alcohol content of at least 37.5%. It can be sipped either as a warming winter aperitif or as a spicy summer slurp!

Take a table in a pretty spot and lose yourself in some delicious food. Hungary's cuisine will tantalise your tastebuds – and the flavoursome memories will make you drool for years to come

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