



HUNGARY



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1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

Location: Central Europe.

Hungarian National Tourist Office (HNTO)
Margit Körút 85, 1024 Budapest, Hungary
Tel: (1) 355 1133. Fax: (1) 375 3819.
E-mail: htbudapest@hungarytourism.hu
Web site: <http://www.hungarytourism.hu>

Tourinform (HNTO)
Sütö-u. 2, 1052 Budapest, Hungary
Tel: (1) 317 9800. Fax: (1) 317 9656.
E-mail: tourinform@mail.hungarytourism.hu
Web site: <http://www.hungarytourism.hu>

Ministry of Economic Affairs
Honved utca 13-15, 1051 Budapest, Hungary
Tel: (1) 302 2355. Fax: (1) 332 9794. E-mail: webmaster@gm.hu
Web site: <http://www.gm.hu>

Embassy of the Republic of Hungary
35 Eaton Place, London SW1X 8BY
Tel: (020) 7235 2664. Fax: (020) 7823 1348.
Consular section: Tel: (020) 7235 2664 or (09001) 171 204 (visa enquiries; calls are charged at the rate of 60p per minute). Fax: (020) 7235 8630. Opening hours: 1000-1200 Monday to Friday.
Web site: <http://www.huemblon.org.uk>

Hungarian National Tourist Office (HNTO)
46 Eaton Place, London SW1X 8AL
Tel: (020) 7823 1032 or 7823 1055 or (0891) 171 200 (recorded information; calls cost 60p per minute). Fax: (020) 7823 1459. E-mail: htlondon@btinternet.com
Web site: <http://www.hungarytourism.hu>

British Embassy
Harmincad Utca 6, 1051 Budapest, Hungary
Tel: (1) 266 2888. Fax: (1) 266 0907. E-mail: info@britemb.hu
Web site: <http://www.britishembassy.hu>

Embassy of the Republic of Hungary
3910 Shoemaker Street, NW, Washington, DC 20008
Tel: (202) 362 6730. Fax: (202) 966 8135 or 688 6412.
E-mail: office@huembwas.org
Web site: <http://www.hungaryemb.org>

Hungarian National Tourist Office (HNTO)
150 East 58th Street, New York, NY 10155
Tel: (212) 355 0240. Fax: (212) 207 4103. E-mail: info@gotohungary.com
Web site: <http://www.gotohungary.com>

Embassy of the United States of America
Szabadság tér 12, 1054 Budapest, Hungary
Tel: (1) 475 4400 or 475 4924 (after hours). Fax: (1) 475 4764 (consular section). E-mail:
usconsular.budapest@state.gov (consular section).
Web site: <http://www.usis.hu>

Embassy of the Republic of Hungary
299 Waverley Street, Ottawa, Ontario K2P 0V9
Tel: (613) 230 2717. Fax: (613) 230 7560. E-mail: sysadmin@huembott.org
Web site: <http://www.docuweb.ca/hungary>
Consulates in: Calgary, Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver.

Canadian Embassy
Budakeszi út. 32, 1121 Budapest, Hungary
Tel: (1) 392 3360. Fax: (1) 392 3390.
Web site: <http://www.canada.hu>

Country dialling code: 36.

2 GENERAL

Area: 93,030 sq km (35,919 sq miles).

Population: 10,091,789 (1999).

Population Density: 108.5 per sq km.

Capital: Budapest. Population: 1,838,753 (1999).

Geography: Hungary is situated in Central Europe, sharing borders to the north with the Slovak Republic, to the northeast with Ukraine, to the east with Romania, to the south with Croatia and Serbia and to the west with Austria and Slovenia. There are several ranges of hills, chiefly in the north and west. The Great Plain (Nagyalföld) stretches east from the Danube to the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains in the CIS, to the mountains of Transylvania in Romania, and south to the Fruska Gora range in Croatia. Lake Balaton is the largest unbroken stretch of inland water in Central Europe.

Government: Republic. Head of State: President Ferenc Madl since 2000. Head of Government: Prime Minister Viktor Orbán since 1998.

Language: Hungarian (Magyar) is the official language. German and English are widely spoken. Some French is also spoken, mainly in western Hungary.

Religion: 65% Roman Catholic, 20% Calvinist. Eastern Orthodox and Jewish minorities. There is no official national religion.

Time: GMT + 1 (GMT + 2 from last Sunday in March to Saturday before last Sunday in October).

Electricity: 230 volts AC, 50Hz. European-style 2-pin plugs are used.

Communications:

Telephone: IDD available. Country code: 36. Outgoing international code: 00. Public telephones are operated by Ft10, Ft20 and Ft50 coins or by telephone cards.

Mobile telephone: Two GSM 900 networks provide coverage in the whole country. An 1800 network also covers the Budapest area.

Fax/telegram: Services are available at main post offices all over the country and at the Telecommunications Information and Service Office, Petőfi Sándor u., Budapest.

Internet/E-mail: ISPs include MIWO (web site: <http://www.miwo.hu>). There are cybercafés in larger towns.

Post: Airmail takes three days to one week to reach other European destinations. In addition to the main post office, the offices at West and East railway stations in Budapest are open 24 hours a day. Stamps are available from tobacconists as well as post offices. Post office hours: 0800-1800 Monday to Friday, 0700-1400 Saturday.

Press: National dailies include Népszabadság, Magyar Hírlap and Népszava. English-language newspapers include the Budapest Business Journal, Budapest Week, Courier Diplomatique, The Budapest Sun, The Hungarian Economy, The Hungarian Observer, The Hungarian Quarterly and The Same Guide To Hungary.

BBC World Service and Voice of America frequencies: From time to time these change.

BBC:

MHz15.589.4106.1956.180

Voice of America:

MHz15.269.7701.1970.792

3 PASSPORT

	<i>Passport Required?</i>	<i>Visa Required?</i>	<i>Return Ticket Required?</i>
British	Yes	No	No
Australian	Yes	Yes	No
Canadian	Yes	No	No
USA	Yes	No	No
OtherEU	1	No	No
Japanese	Yes	No	No

PASSPORTS: Passport valid for at least 6 months required by all, except 1. nationals of Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Spain and Switzerland holding a national identity card. The German Kinderausweis is also accepted.

VISAS: Required by all except the following:

(a) nationals of the UK for stays of up to 6 months;

(b) nationals of other EU countries, Canada, Japan and USA for a stay of up to 90 days; (c) nationals of Argentina, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Iceland, Israel, Korea (Rep. of), Liechtenstein, Macedonia (former Yugoslav Republic), Malaysia, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Poland, Romania, Seychelles, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Switzerland, Ukraine, Uruguay and Venezuela for a stay of up to 90 days;

(d) nationals of Cuba, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, San Marino, Singapore, South Africa and Yugoslavia (Serbia & Montenegro) for a stay of up to 30 days;

(e) nationals of Singapore for a stay of up to 14 days.

Types of visa and cost: Fees in brackets refer to non-residents of the UK: Single-entry: £26 (£42). Transit: £25 (£32). Double-entry: £48 (£65). Double-transit: £42 (£58). Multiple-entry: £118 (£130). Multiple-transit: £98 (£118). Airport transit: £13 (£16). Double airport transit: £19 (£22).

Note: (a) Visas are free for nationals of India (but the telex fee of £7 must still be paid). Visas issued on a special sheet cost an additional £7. (b) Nationals of countries not listed above who are not resident in the UK and wish to transit through Hungarian airports require an Airport transit visa.

Validity: Entry visa (Tourist and Business): Valid for 30-day stay within 6 months of the date of issue. Transit visa: Valid for 48-hour stay within 6 months from date of issue. Multiple-entry visa: Valid for multiple entries into Hungary within 6 months from the date of issue.

Application to: Consulate (or Consular section at Embassy; see address section). Visas are not issued at road border points or at Budapest Airport.

Application requirements: (a) 3 recent, identical passport-size photos, or 5 for double-entry or transit visas. (b) Valid passport. (c) Completed application forms. (d) Fee (non reimbursable); payable in cash or postal order only. (e) Telex fee of £7 for visa application to be sent to Hungary for approval. (f) For Business visas, written invitation from host organisation or company (endorsed by the Hungarian police). (g) Return ticket. (h) Stamped self-addressed, registered or recorded envelope with £3 handling charge for postal applications. (i) Bank statement proving adequate financial situation. (j) Confirmation of accommodation in Hungary, or letter of invitation from friends or relatives living in Hungary (endorsed by the Hungarian police).

Working days required: Visa applications take approximately 3 weeks. Nationals of Australia and some other countries (mainly in South and Central America) may receive their visas in a short procedure or even on the same day. Nationals eligible for short procedure may ask for an immediate visa which can be issued in one hour for an extra fee of £10.

Note: Within 48 hours of arrival, visitors who will be staying for more than 30 days must register with the police (the hotel will handle this); if staying in a private residence with friends, there is no requirement to register.

4 MONEY

Currency: Hungarian Forint (Ft) = 100 fillér. Notes are in denominations of Ft10,000, 5000, 2000, 1000, 500 and 200. Coins are in denominations of Ft100, 50, 20, 10, 5 and 2. A large number of commemorative coins in circulation are legal tender.

Currency exchange: Currency can be exchanged at hotels, banks, airports, railway stations, travel agencies and some restaurants. Automatic exchange machines are available in Budapest and other main tourist centres. Credit cards can be used to withdraw money from cash dispensers. Visitors should retain all exchange receipts, as it is illegal to change money on the black market.

Credit cards: It is possible to withdraw cash by credit card at more than 3200 post offices. MasterCard, American Express, Diners Club and Visa are accepted. Check with your credit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services which may be available.

Travellers cheques: Widely accepted in stores and banks. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take travellers cheques in US Dollars or Pounds Sterling.

Exchange rate indicators

The following figures are included as a guide to the movements of the Forint against Sterling and the US Dollar:

Date May '00 Aug '00 Nov '00 Feb

'01 £1.00=432.98422.24444.38422.22 \$1.00=291.69281.43306.97289.13

Currency restrictions: The import of local currency is limited to Ft200,000, provided the amount is declared on arrival. The export of local currency is limited to Ft200,000 and must be declared. The import of foreign currency is unlimited, provided the amount is declared. The export of foreign currency is limited to the amount declared on import. There is no compulsory money exchange. Hungarian currency can be re-exchanged for up to 50% of the officially exchanged sum (but not more than US\$450) at any authorised office or branch of the National Savings Bank.

Banking hours: 0900-1400 Monday to Friday.

5 DUTY FREE

The following may be imported into Hungary by persons over 16 years of age without incurring customs duty:

500 cigarettes or 100 cigars or 500g of tobacco; 1 litre of spirits, 1 litre of wine and 5 litres of beer; gifts to the value of Ft270,0000.

6 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Jan 1 2001 New Year's Day. Mar 15 Anniversary of 1848 uprising against Austrian rule. Apr 16 Easter Monday. May 1 Labour Day. Jun 4 Whit Monday. Aug 20 National Day (Feast of St Stephen). Oct 23 Republic Day (Anniversary of 1956). Dec 25-26 Christmas. Jan 1 2002 New Year's Day. Mar 15 Anniversary of 1848 uprising against Austrian rule. Apr 1 Easter Monday. May

1 Labour Day. May 20 Whit Monday. Aug 20 National Day (Feast of St Stephen). Oct 23 Republic Day (Anniversary of 1956). Dec 25-26 Christmas.

7 HEALTH

	<i>Special Precautions</i>	<i>Certificate Required</i>
Yellow Fever	No	No
Cholera	No	No
Typhoid and Polio	No	-
Malaria	No	-
Food and Drink	1	-

1: Mains water is normally chlorinated, and whilst relatively safe may cause mild abdominal upsets. Bottled water is available and is advised for the first few weeks of the stay. Milk is pasteurised and dairy products are safe for consumption. Local meat, poultry, seafood, fruit and vegetables are generally considered safe to eat.

Rabies, although on the decrease, is present. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered. If you are bitten, seek medical advice without delay. For more information, consult the Health appendix.

Hepatitis A occurs. Tick-borne encephalitis occurs in forested areas. Vaccination is advisable.

Health care: There is a reciprocal health agreement with the UK. On presentation of a UK passport, treatment is free at hospitals, 'poly-clinics' and doctor's surgeries. For emergencies, call 104. Charges will be made for dental and ophthalmic treatment and for prescribed medicines. For emergency dental services, call 330 189. Chemists are open in the capital from 0800-1700. There are chemists with a 24-hour emergency service open in every district.

Travel - International

AIR: The national airline is Malév (MA), operating flights to 37 cities. For further information, contact Malév Hungarian Airline, 22-25A Sackville Street, London W1X 1DE (tel: (020) 7439 0577; fax: (020) 7734 8116). Other airlines serving Budapest include Aeroflot, Air France, British Airways, British Midland, KLM, Lufthansa and Swissair.

Approximate flight time: From London to Budapest is 2 hours 20 minutes.

International airport: Budapest Ferihegy (BUD), 16km (10 miles) from the city (travel time - 30 minutes). There are now two passenger terminals, one of which is used exclusively by Malév, Air France and Lufthansa. Facilities include a duty-free shop, florist, newsagent, restaurants and bar, bureaux de change (0600-2300), banks (0830-1600), tourist information centre (0700-2300), gift shop and post office (0830-1600). Regular coach and bus services are available to the city, costing around Ft600 for the centrum bus and approximately Ft1200 for the airport minibus, which runs to and from any address in the city. The 93 bus runs an express service for Ft75 between the underground terminus at Kobánya-Kispest and the Ferihegy terminals. Taxis are available at all times. The major car hire companies are represented.

Departure tax: None.

RIVER: From April 3 to November 1 there is a daily hydrofoil service run by MAHART between Vienna and Budapest. The journey costs approximately US\$65 and takes six hours. Reservations must be made in advance. 20kg of luggage may be carried free of charge. Passengers arriving by boat are advised to reserve a taxi through the shipping line, as none are readily available on the dock. For further details contact MAHART at Belgrád rakpart, 1056 Budapest (tel: (1) 318 1704 or 318 1586 or 266 4198; fax: (1) 318 7740; e-mail: tours@maharttours.com).

RAIL: Direct rail links connect Hungary to 16 European cities and there are three international trains daily to Budapest. Inter-Rail, Eurotrain and RES concessions are valid on the Hungarian State Railways (MÁV). Between Dresden and Budapest there is a car transport system. The Wiener Waltzer from Basel travels via Zurich, Salzburg and Vienna to Budapest, arriving at 1430. First- and second-class day carriages run from Basel through to Budapest and both sleeping cars and couchettes (the latter second-class only) as far as Vienna. There is a minibar service in Switzerland and Austria, and a dining car in Hungary. The most convenient route from London is via Dover/Ostend, joining the Ostend/Vienna Express (with sleeping cars and couchettes to Vienna). Luggage allowances: 35kg for adults, 15kg for children.

Note: Travellers leaving Hungary by train must pay their fare in convertible currency. Most generally recognised international concessionary tickets are accepted in Hungary. For further details contact MÁV at Budapest VI, Andrássy út 7375 (tel: (1) 342 8948 or 461 5500 (reservations and timetables); fax: (1) 342 8342). Seat reservations are strongly advised for all services.

ROAD: Route via The Netherlands, Belgium and Austria and from Vienna via the E5 Transcontinental Highway which passes near Bratislava (Slovak Republic). Bus connections are available from most major European cities.

Travel - Internal

AIR: There are no scheduled internal air services in Hungary.

RIVER/LAKE: There are regular services on the Danube and Lake Balaton from spring to late autumn. MAHART and the Budapest Travel Company (BKV) also operate ferries in the city centre, the Roman Embankment (Római Part) and at some crossing points. Ferry services on the Danube, suitable for cars and buses, operate hourly between Esztergom and Párkány (Sturovo) throughout the year (except for when the river is frozen) 0800-1800 daily. On Lake Balaton, a ferry operates during the summer at 40-minute intervals daily between Tihanyrév and Szántódrév 0620-0000; at other times of the year the service runs 0630-1930. Contact MAHART for further details (see Travel - International for contact details).

RAIL: Services are operated by MÁV. All main cities are linked by efficient services but facilities are often inadequate. Supplements are payable on express trains. Reservations for express trains are recommended, particularly in summer. Tickets can be bought 60 days in advance on domestic railway lines, as can seat reservations. The most popular tourist rail routes are Budapest-Kecskemet-Szeged-Budapest and Budapest-Siofok-Lake Balaton.

Cheap fares: Concessions are available for groups (minimum of six persons), those under the age of 26 and for pensioners. Children aged 4-12 pay half fare. Children under 4 travel free. Balaton and Tourist Season Tickets (7-10 days) are also available. Contact MÁV for details (see Travel - International for contact details). The Hungarian Flexipass, sold by travel agents worldwide and by Rail Europe, offers unlimited first-class train travel for 5 days in a 15-day period or for 10 days in a 30-day period. The Hungarian Tourist Card offers discounts on rail,

bus, taxi and ship services, as well as accommodation, restaurants and museums. The Hungarian National Tourist Office can provide further information (see address section).

ROAD: Traffic drives on the right. There are eight arterial roads in the country: all but the M8 start from central Budapest. Tolls are payable on some roads and all motorways. Season tickets can be purchased. From Budapest the two main highways are the M1 from Győr to Vienna and the M7 along Lake Balaton. The M3 connects Budapest with eastern Hungary. Generally the road system is good. Bus: Budapest is linked with major provincial towns. Tickets are available from Volán long-distance bus terminal, Budapest, and at Volán offices throughout the country. A bus season ticket is also available. Car hire: Available at Ferihegy Airport or at Volán, Express and Budapest tourist offices as well as at major hotels. Regulations: Speed limits are 50kph (31mph) in built-up areas, 80kph (50mph) on main roads, 100kph (62mph) on highways and 120kph (75mph) on motorways. Seat belts are compulsory. Petrol stations are infrequent and there are no special tourist petrol coupons. There is a total alcohol ban when driving; severe fines are imposed for infringements. It is obligatory to keep headlights dipped at all times when on the open road. Breakdowns: The Hungarian Automobile Club operates a breakdown service on main roads at weekends and a 24-hour service on motorways. For further details contact the Hungarian Automobile Club, Rómer Flóris utca 4/A, H-1024 Budapest (tel: (1) 345 1680 or 06 (1)345 1755 (24-hour emergency helpline); fax: (1) 345 1801; e-mail: autoklub@euroweb.hu; web site: <http://www.autoklub.hu>). Documentation: Pink format EU licence accepted but International Driving Permit required if green licence held.

URBAN: There is good public transport in all the main towns. Budapest has bus, trolleybus, tramway, suburban railway (HEV), a 3-line metro and boat services. The metro has ticket barriers at all stations. The bus-trolleybus-tramway system has pre-purchase flat fares with ticket puncher on board. Day passes are available for all the transport modes in the city. Trams and buses generally run from about 0430-2300. Some night services also operate. The metro runs from 0430-2310 and stations can be identified by a large 'M'. There is also a cogwheel railway (Városmajor-Széchenyi Hill), a Pioneers' Railway (Hüvösvölgy-Széchenyi Hill), a chairlift and a funicular. There are tramways in some of the other towns, or else good bus services. Day passes are available in Budapest.

JOURNEY TIMES: The following chart gives approximate journey times (in hours and minutes) from Budapest to other major cities/towns in Hungary.

Road	Rail
Sopron	3.303.25
Miskolc	3.002.20
Pécs	3.003.00
Szeged	2.002.20
Szentendre	0.300.40
Lake Balaton	2.002.15

8 ACCOMMODATION

HOTELS: In all classes of hotel, visitors from the West can expect to be made very welcome and service will usually be friendly and smooth. In addition to hotels, there are Tourist Hostels, which provide simple accommodation usually in rooms with four or more beds. For information contact the Hungarian Hotel Association, Secretariat, Novotel Budapest Convention Centre, Jagello-u 1-3, 1123 Budapest (tel: (1) 466 9462 or 322 3854; fax: (1) 322 3854; e-mail: hah@mail.mata.v.hu; web-site: <http://www.miwo.hu/hah>).

Grading: Hungarian hotels are classified by use of a star rating system. 5- and 4-star hotels are luxury class and are generally extremely comfortable. 3-star hotels are comfortable but less luxurious and offer good value for money. 2- and 1-star hotels are generally adequate and clean.

GUEST-HOUSES: Available almost everywhere. Paying-guest accommodation is an inexpensive and excellent way of getting to know the people. Renting often includes bathroom but not breakfast. Such accommodation should be reserved well in advance. Further information can be obtained from the Hungarian National Tourist Office (see address section).

SELF-CATERING: Bungalows with two rooms, fully equipped, can be rented at a large number of resorts. Full details and rates can be obtained from the Hungarian National Tourist Office (see address section).

CAMPING/CARAVANNING: Camping is forbidden except in the specially designated areas. Booking is through the Hungarian Camping And Caravanning Club, Mária u., 34. II floor, 4apt., H-1085 Budapest (tel: (1) 267 5255 or 267 5256; fax: (1) 267 5254); further information can also be obtained from the Hungarian National Tourist Office (see address section) and there is an online booking facility (web site: <http://www.miwo.hu>). Most of the sites cater only for campers bringing in their own equipment. Caravans are permitted in all sites that have power points; a parking charge is made. Young people between 6-16 pay half price and there is no charge for children under the age of six. Grading: There are four categories of site, designated I, II, III and IV, according to the amenities provided, and most are open from May to September.

Youth Hostels: There are ten in Budapest and 14 in other towns. Hostels are open all day and beds cost around US\$6. For further information, contact Express Travel Bureau, Semmelweis U. 4, 1052 Budapest (tel: (1) 317 8600; fax: (1) 317 6823); or Hungarian Youth Hostel Association (MISZSZ), PO Box 119, Budapest 1410 (tel/fax: (1) 343 5167; e-mail: hostels@elender.hu).

Note: The Hungarian Tourist Card provides discounts on accommodation, including hotels, guest houses and youth hostels (the Hungarian National Tourist Office can provide further information).

Budapest & the Danube

For the purpose of this guide, the country has been divided into five regions: Budapest & the Danube; Lake Balaton & the West; the Great Plain Area; Southern Hungary; and the Northern Highlands.

The capital city of Budapest, situated on one of the most beautiful areas of the Danube, is made up of two parts - Buda and Pest. The former is the older, more graceful part, with cobbled streets and medieval buildings; the latter is the commercial centre. Hungary's capital is a lively city which has long been a haven for writers, artists and musicians. In the Buda section can be found Gellert Hill, which gives a wonderful view of the city, river and mountains; on the hill is the Citadella, a stone fort. The Royal Palace, bombed during World War II and now reconstructed, houses the

National Gallery, with collections of fine Gothic sculpture and modern Hungarian art (including many paintings by Mihaly Munkácsy) and the Historical Museum of Budapest, containing archaeological remains of the old city, and furnishings, glass and ceramics from the 15th century. Also in the Buda region is the Fisherman's Bastion - so called because it was the duty of the fishermen of the city to protect the northern side of the Royal Palace during the Middle Ages - and Matthias Church with its multicoloured tiled roof.

On the Pest side are the Parliament; the Hungarian National Museum, containing remarkable treasures including the oldest skull yet found in Europe and Liszt's gold baton; the Belvárosi Templom, Hungary's oldest church, dating back to the 12th century; the Museum of Fine Arts housing European paintings; the Ethnographic Museum; and Margaret Island, connected to both Buda and Pest by a bridge. The whole island is a park with a sports stadium, swimming pool, spas, a rose garden and fountains. Budapest has about 100 hot springs; one is in the city zoo, much to the delight of the local hippo population who breed there very successfully.

Upstream from Budapest is Szentendre, an old Serbian market town where the Hungarian painter Károly Ferenczy did most of his work; there is a museum named after him containing historical, archaeological and ethnographic collections as well as paintings. The Serbian Museum for Ecclesiastical History contains many fine examples of ecclesiastical art from the 14th to the 18th centuries. There are many good exhibitions in the city, particularly of the ceramics of Margit Kovács.

Visegrád: Visegrád, a few miles further upriver, was once a royal stronghold, but is now a tourist resort. The 15th-century summer palace has been excavated and restored. The King Matthias Museum housed in a Baroque mansion displays many archaeological discoveries.

Esztergom: Esztergom was originally a Roman outpost; it later became the residence of Magyar kings in the 12th and 13th centuries. The Cathedral, the Museum of the Stronghold of Esztergom and the Christian Museum of Esztergom, containing some of Hungary's finest art collections, are worth visiting.

Lake Balaton & the West

The lake is a popular holiday region, not least because of its sandy beaches and shallow waters, with an average depth of only 3.5m (11ft). The surrounding countryside consists mainly of fertile plains dotted with old villages. Further west, towards the Austrian border, the terrain becomes more hilly and forested.

Székesfehérvár: Székesfehérvár, between the lake and Budapest, has a 17th-century Town Hall in the Baroque style, as well as the Zichy Palace and the Garden of Ruins - an open-air museum.

Siófok: Siófok, on the south shore of the lake, has some of the sandiest beaches and best facilities for tourists.

Keszthely: Keszthely is a pleasant old town containing the Georgikon, founded in the 18th century, the first agricultural college in Europe; the Helikon Library; and the Balaton Museum.

Balatonfüred: Balatonfüred is a well-known health resort with 11 medicinal springs.

Veszprém: Veszprém, 10km (6 miles) north of Lake Balaton, built on five hills, is a pretty town with cobbled streets. It is the home of the Var Museum, an Episcopal Palace and the 15th-century Gizella Chapel.

Further west, the main towns are Szombathely (which claims to be the oldest town in Hungary) and Zalaegerszeg. Szombathely has superb examples of Romanesque stonework.

Sopron: Sopron, close to the Austrian frontier, is built on its old Roman foundations, and reminders of the region's history are still very much in evidence. Among the sights here are the Fire Tower, the Liszt Museum and the ancient quarry at Fertőrákos.

Nearby is the spa town of Balf and the Baroque castle of Fertőd, recently restored to its original condition.

Two other towns worth visiting in this region are the walled town of Kőszeg and the riverside town of Győr, on the main Budapest-Vienna highway. About 18km (11 miles) southeast of Győr is the ancient hilltop monastery of Pannonhalma, with a library containing over a quarter of a million books.

The Great Plain Area

This region covers more than half the country and contains thousands of acres of vineyards, orchards and farmland.

Kecskemét: Kecskemét, 85km (53 miles) southeast of the capital, is the home town of the composer Zoltán Kodály. Although an industrial town in many respects, it still has some fine examples of peasant architecture and of crafts in the Native Artists and Katona Jozsef Museum. There is an artists' colony and it is also a centre for folk music. Outside the town is the Kiskunság National Park with the Shepherd Museum showing how animals and people lived in earlier times.

Szeged: Szeged is the economic and cultural centre of this region. It is famed for its Festival of Opera, Drama and Ballet held in July and August. Here, too, is Hungary's finest Greek Orthodox (Serbian) church.

Baja: Baja is a small, picturesque town on the banks of both the Danube and Sugovica rivers. It has many small islands, some old churches and an artists' colony.

Southern Hungary

Pécs: Pécs, the main town of this region, contains much architecture dating back to the Middle Ages. The area was also colonised by the Romans and there are many archaeological sites and museums containing relics from this period; in addition, the Turkish conquest of Hungary during the 16th century has left Pécs, like so many other Hungarian cities, with many glorious examples of Ottoman architecture. Principal amongst these is the Mosque of Pasha Hassan Yakovali.

Mohács: Mohács, on the Danube, was the site of the battle in 1526 at which the Turks gained control of Hungary. The battlefield has now been turned into a memorial park.

Kalocsa: Kalocsa is a town of museums where many aspects of Hungarian folklore are preserved. South of Kalocsa is the Forest of Gemenc, a government-protected nature reserve and the home of many varieties of plant and animal life.

The Northern Highlands

Miskolc: Miskolc, Hungary's second-biggest city, is situated near the Slovak border. Primarily industrial, the city has nevertheless several points of interest, including medieval architecture and the warren of man-made caves in the Avas Hills near the city centre. Nearby are the beautiful Bükk Mountains.

Eger: Eger, one of the country's oldest cities, has nearly 200 historical monuments, including the Minaret.

Due east of Miskolc is Tokaj, the centre of the most famous wine-producing region of the country. Halfway between Tokaj and the Slovak border is the spectacular castle of Sárospatak, one of Hungary's greatest historical monuments.

9 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

Outdoor pursuits: Outdoor Pursuits: Hungary has 5 national parks and nearly 1000 protected areas. Hikers can head for the mountains in the north and northwest of the country. The Börzsöny, Mátra and Pilis ranges not far to the north of Budapest are popular, with the Mátra mountains containing Hungary's highest peak, Kékeseto (1015m/3329ft). Less strenuous walking is possible around Lake Balaton and in the hills in the south of the country. Hungary's many wetlands, rivers and lakes attract large numbers of water birds, and birdwatching is popular. A particularly good area for this is Hortobágy National Park in the Great Plain in the east of the country, where different types of storks, warblers, eagles and herons can be seen. A guide is required for visits to some parts of the park, and motor vehicles are not permitted. Other wildlife to be found in the country includes rare wild cats and lake bats, while species such as boar, otter and deer are common. Horseriding is particularly good in Hungary, with its long tradition of equestrianism. Long-distance riding in areas such as the Great Plain, with its wide open spaces, is popular, and riders are well catered for. Hungary is the only European country, apart from Ireland, which places no restrictions on riders. There are many riding schools all over the country which can organise all types of excursions. The Great Plain contains several famous stud farms, and horse shows take place regularly. Carriage driving is also popular, and tourists can arrange to have tuition in this art through riding schools. Cycling is a good way to see the country. Local tourist offices can assist in the organisation of cycling tours by providing bicycles, transporting luggage and arranging picnics and sightseeing. Although bicycles can be hired in many places, those planning to do longer tours should bring their own.

Watersports: Watersports: These are widely practised on Hungary's major lakes, Lake Balaton and Lake Velence. Sailing is popular on Lake Balaton, where motorboats are banned, while windsurfing is common on Lake Velence. Surfboards can be hired in hotels or at resorts, and tuition is available. On the Rivers Danube, Tisza and Körös, there are opportunities to do rowing, canoeing and kayaking. Specialist operators organise guided trips, with accommodation in tents.

Fishing: Fishing: The River Tisza, by the Kisköre reservoir, is regarded by many as Europe's second best angling area (after the Danube Delta). Accommodation for anglers is readily available, and guides can be hired if required. Species such as carp, bream, pike, trout and tench are abundant. There are rules and regulations governing fishing seasons and licences; for further information, contact the tourist board (see address section).

Spa stays: Spa stays: Budapest alone has over 100 thermal springs and around 50 swimming pools and medicinal baths. The culture of bathing has been established since Roman times, and today a wide variety of therapeutic treatments, both ancient and modern, is on offer. Some of Hungary's bath houses are also of great architectural interest: the Király Medicinal Baths, for example, date from the Middle Ages, while the Rudas Medicinal Baths feature a fine dome dating from the 16th century. Outside Budapest, notable spa resorts include Debrecen in the far east; Hévíz, near Lake Balaton; Harkány in the south; and Eger, northwest of Budapest. Treatment is cheaper than in western Europe or North America, and many foreign insurers will pay part of the cost.

10 SOCIAL PROFILE

Food & Drink: There is a good range of restaurants. Table service is common, although there are many inexpensive self-service restaurants. A typical menu offers two or three courses at inexpensive rates. Fine dairy and pastry shops (cukrászda) offer light meals. Specialities include halászlé (fish soups) with pasta and Goulash gulyás soup. Western goulash is called pörkölt or tokány. Stuffed vegetables, sweet cakes, gundel palacsinta (pancake) and pastries are also popular. Drink: Eszpresszó coffee bars and Drink bars offer refreshments. Gerbeaud's is probably Budapest's most famous coffee-house. Tokaji (strong dessert wine) or Bull's Blood (strong red wine) are recommended. Pálinka or barack (apricot brandy) is a typical liqueur. Imported beers and soft drinks are also available. There are no licensing hours, but the legal age for drinking in a bar is 18 years. Minors are allowed to go into bars but will not be served alcohol.

Nightlife: Budapest has many nightclubs, bars and discos. There is a casino in the Budapest Hilton, and one on the river in front of the Forum. Cinemas in major towns show many English-language films. During summer months the popular Lake Balaton resort has a lively nightlife. Western Hungary in particular has a lot of very good wine cellars. Visitors would do well to search out traditional folk music and dancing, as the gypsy music which is so common in bars is not considered the 'true' folk tradition of the country. The magnificent Budapest Opera House stages regular performances, and seats are (by Western standards) exceedingly cheap.

Shopping: Special purchases include embroideries, Herend and Zsolnay porcelain and national dolls. Shopping hours: Department stores are open from 1000-1800 Monday to Wednesday and Friday, 1000-2000 Thursday, 0900-1300 Saturday. Food shops are open from 0700-1900 Monday to Friday, 0700-1400 Saturday.

Special Events: For a detailed list of festivals and special events celebrated in 2001 contact the Hungarian National Tourist Office (see address section) or see the web site (<http://www.fesztivalvaros.hu/english.html>). The following is a selection of events held in Hungary in 2001:

Jan 1 2001 New Year Concert at the Opera, Budapest. Feb 25 Busójárás Carnival, Mohács. Mar 16-Apr 1 Budapest Spring Festival. Apr 15-16 Hollókő Easter Festival, Szécsény. May 1-31 Balaton Festival (theatre, music and folklore performances), Keszthely. Jun 2 Savaria International Dance Competition, Szombathely. Jun 9-17 Danube Flower Carnival, Budapest. Jun-Jul Ferencváros Festival (open air performances in Budapest). Aug 4-19 BUDAFEST (opera and ballet festival), Budapest. Aug 17-19 Formula 1 World Championship Budapest Grand Prix. Sep 4-9 Budapest International Wine and Champagne Festival. Oct 19-Nov 4 Budapest Autumn Festival. Dec 31 New Year's Eve Gala and Ball at the Opera, Budapest.

Social Conventions: Most Hungarians enjoy modern music and dance, although older people still preserve their traditions and culture, particularly in small villages. Handshaking is customary. Both Christian name and surname should be used. Normal courtesies should be observed. At a meal, toasts are usually made and should be returned. A useful word is egészségünkre (pronounced Ay-gash-ay-gun-gre), meaning 'your health'. Few people speak English outside hotels, big restaurants and tourist offices. A knowledge of German is very useful. Gifts are acceptable for hosts as a token of thanks, particularly when invited for a meal. Casual wear is acceptable in most places, with the exception of expensive restaurants and bars. Formal attire should be worn for important social functions, but it is not common practice to specify dress on invitations. Smoking is prohibited on public transport in towns and public buildings. Travellers may smoke on long-distance trains. Photography: Military installations should not be photographed; other restrictions will be signposted. Tipping: In Budapest, 10-15% is expected

for nearly all services. Elsewhere, tipping is not obligatory, although 10-15% is normal for most services.

11 BUSINESS PROFILE

Economy: Hungary is poor in natural resources other than bauxite, natural gas and some oil. For this reason, it relies especially heavily on foreign trade, which accounts for half of its GDP. The country has a fairly well-developed industrial economy concentrated in chemicals, plastics, pharmaceuticals, fertilisers, computers and telecommunications, mining, construction and aluminium (from the bauxite deposits). It has also traditionally been an exporter of agricultural produce, particularly fruit and vegetables, maize and wheat, sugar beet, potatoes and livestock. Before the political upheaval in Eastern Europe during 1989, Hungary had gone furthest of all the socialist-bloc countries in decentralising and deregulating the economy. In the 1990s, it eschewed the Polish-style 'big bang' road to capitalism and opted for a more gradual transition. Price controls were removed, and a programme of privatisation was implemented, starting with the retail and property sectors. By 1995, small business privatisation was more or less complete, while sales of the larger state-owned concerns proceeded apace. Foreign investment has picked up, largely as a result of the liberalisation of trade through agreements with the EU, EFTA and the Visegrad mechanism. The Hungarians have also been keen on the creation of joint ventures with Western European concerns as a means of both attracting investment and acquiring expertise. An Association Agreement has been signed with the EU as a preparatory step to applying for full membership, negotiations for which began in 1998. Hungary may therefore be admitted to the EU between 2003 and 2005. The country's principal trading partners are Germany, Austria, Italy, Russia and the Czech Republic. Outside Europe, there are important links with the USA, Japan and Brazil.

Business: Business people are expected to dress smartly. Local business people are generally friendly and hospitable and it is usual for visitors to be invited to lunch or dinner in a restaurant. Business cards are widely distributed and visitors are well advised to have a supply available in Hungarian. Best months for business visits are September to May. Appointments should always be made. Interpreter and translation services may be booked through travel agents. Office hours: 0800-1630 Monday to Thursday. 0800-1400 Friday.

Commercial Information: The following organisation can offer advice: Budapest Kereskedelmi és Iparkamara (Budapest Chamber of Commerce and Industry), Krisztina Krt 99, H-1016 Budapest (tel: (1) 488 2000; fax: (1) 488 2108; e-mail: bkik@bkik.hu; web site: <http://www.bkik.hu>); or ITD Hungary, 46 Eaton Place, London SW1X 8AL (tel: (020) 7235 8767; fax: (020) 7235 4319; e-mail: huntrade.london@virgin.net; web site: <http://www.itd.hu/britweb>).

Conferences/Conventions: The following organisation can offer advice: Hungarian Convention Bureau, Sütö-u. 2, 1052 Budapest (tel: (1) 317 9056; fax: (1) 318 9059; e-mail: hcb@hungarytourism.hu; web site: <http://www.hcb.hu>).

12 CLIMATE

There are four seasons, with a very warm summer from June to August. Spring and autumn are mild, while winters are very cold. Rainfall is distributed throughout the year with snowfalls in winter.

13 HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

History: During the 9th century, Finno-Ugriar nomads came into Hungary via south Russia, settling down in the latter half of the 10th century. The Arpád Dynasty ruled until the end of the 13th century when Hungary was devastated by a Mongol invasion. Matthias Corvinus subsequently re-established Hungary as the leading power in central Europe, also developing Magyar arts and literature. His successor, Laszlo II, undid his work within a few years, and Hungary fell under Turkish sovereignty during the 16th century, re-establishing independence after the Thirty Years' War. Hungary formed an alliance with Austria and was ruled by a Magyar aristocracy. It remained an essentially feudal state until 1914 (under monarchic and republican regimes), with an antiquated social system (by European standards) which was not fully dismantled until after the Second World War. Hungary sided with Nazi Germany during the War until 1944, when German troops occupied the country and the Hungarians sought to break the alliance. The Germans in turn were driven out by the Russians in January 1945. By 1949, Hungary had become a Soviet-style socialist state, a member of the Warsaw Pact and a People's Republic. The ruling Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party was riven by factional splits between pro-Soviet hard-liners and the more liberally inclined group around Imre Nagy. The dispute came to a head in 1956 when hard-liners led by Janos Kádár overthrew premier Imre Nagy with the support of Soviet army units. Despite its origins, the Hungarian regime had by the 1970s become the most liberal of all Soviet bloc systems. This was largely a result of the introduction in 1968 of the 'New Economic Mechanism' which allowed a significant role to be taken by private enterprise and the market in the Hungarian economy. Expressions of political opposition were not as ruthlessly suppressed as elsewhere in Eastern Europe. The socialists nonetheless maintained a firm grip on the country's political and economic life. During the 1980s the political situation relaxed still further as Kádár's influence over the Government was gradually reduced. He was removed from the ruling Politburo in 1988 and Hungary began the transition to a pluralistic political system. When elections were held in two rounds in the spring of 1990, it was the relatively new opposition umbrella group, the centre-right Hungarian Democratic Forum (Magyar Demokrata Forum, MDF), which took 165 seats in the new 386-seat assembly and formed a coalition Government with Jozsef Antall as prime minister and the support of the agrarian Smallholders' Party (FKgP) and the Alliance of Free Democrats. In common with the rest of the region, where leftist parties were resurgent in the mid-1990s, the Hungarian Socialist party (Magyar Szocialista Part, MSzP) fared better in the May 1994 election, and the Socialist leader, Gyula Horn was able to form a Government with centrist support. However, Horn's economic austerity programme and its implementation brought him into continual conflict with his own ministers as well as much of the industrial workforce who staged mass demonstrations against the Government during 1995. (That year, President Arpad Goncz was elected to a second five year term). By the time of the next election in May 1998, Horn was on his fourth finance minister. The MSzP vote stood up well: in fact, the MSzP attracted the largest single party share of the vote. But the Alliance of Young Democrats (Fiatal Demokraták Sz`vetsege, FIDESz, which had displaced the MDF as the main centre-right party), won the largest number of seats in the new parliament and, together with the Smallholders' Party (FKgP) and the much-diminished MDF formed a new Government. FIDESz leader Viktor Orban became the new prime minister. Few changes have been made in the fundamentals of either domestic or foreign policy. The latter is now dominated by the pursuit of full membership of the European Union, now that the other main objective - membership of NATO - has been achieved. Along with Poland and the Czech Republic, Hungary was admitted to NATO in April 1999 after a 2-year period of negotiation and a national referendum which approved future membership by a 6-to-1 margin. Hungary has also joined with the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia in the Visegrad group, which was established to promote political and economic co-operation in central Europe. Hungary needs to proceed with considerable caution, however, in supporting NATO operations close to home. As well as worries about

regional stability, Budapest needs to take account of sizeable ethnic Hungarian minorities in the Yugoslav autonomous region of Vojvodina (400,000), north-eastern Romania (1.7 million), the Slovak Republic (550,000) and Ukraine. Hungary clearly believes, however, that NATO is the best guarantor of stability in the region.

Government: Legislative power is held by the 386-seat national assembly, the Országgyűlés, which is elected for 4 years. (176 members come from single seat constituencies; 152 by proportional representation in multi-seat constituencies; and 58 members by proportional representation on a national basis.) The Council of Ministers, the highest executive organ, is elected by the assembly on the advice of the president, who is also elected by the national assembly for a 4-year term, and may serve 2 terms. In April 1995, a 53-member National Autonomous Authority of the Romany Minority was ratified, with the power to administer funds disbursed by the central Government.

14 OVERVIEW

Country Overview: Hungary is situated in Central Europe, sharing borders with the Slovak Republic, Ukraine, Romania, Croatia, Serbia, Austria and Slovenia. There are several ranges of hills, chiefly in the north and west.

The capital city of Budapest, situated on one of the most beautiful areas of the Danube, is made up of two parts - Buda and Pest. The former is the older, more graceful part, with cobbled streets and medieval buildings; the latter is the commercial centre. The capital is a lively city that has long been a haven for writers, artists and musicians. The Historical Museum of Budapest contains archaeological remains of the old city, and furnishings, glass and ceramics from the 15th century.

On the Pest side is the Parliament and the Hungarian National Museum, containing remarkable treasures including the oldest skull yet found in Europe.

Lake Balaton in the west is a popular holiday region, not least because of its sandy beaches and shallow waters.

Local dishes include halászlé (fish soup) with pasta and goulash (gulyás) soup.

Budapest has many nightclubs, bars and discos. During summer months the popular Lake Balaton resort has a lively nightlife.

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