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# Budapest, Hungary

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## Overview

### Introduction

Budapest, Hungary, may be the capital of the landlocked country, but it's far from dry. In fact, Budapest's most seductive element is water. It springs from underground wells, filling Ottoman, neoclassical and art-nouveau pools.

It flows through the city in the broad and meandering Danube River, dividing Buda and Pest in yin-yang fashion. It even provides welcome relief after a bowl of hot paprika-spiced goulash.

Few visitors can resist the Budapest baths, but the city's allure goes beyond its spa status. As a large urban center, Budapest manages to strike a nice balance between nature and development. Hills, islands and parks coexist with hotels, theaters, cafes, monuments and other buildings in an eclectic array of architectural styles.



### Highlights

**Sights**—Budavari Palota (Buda Castle); Matyas Templom and Halaszbastya on Castle Hill; Parliament; Rudas and Kiraly Gyogyfurdo (Turkish baths); Hosok tere (Heroes Square); Szent Istvan Bazilika.

**Museums**—Magyar Nemzeti Muzeum for Hungarian history; Hungarian art at the Magyar Nemzeti Galeria; the Franz Liszt museum for a peek at the home of the country's most famous composer.

**Memorable Meals**—Fabulous service with the best strudels at Elso Pesti Reteshaz; traditional Hungarian coffee and pastries at Central Cafe and Restaurant, New York Café or Gerbeaud; fine dining at Costes, Hungary's first Michelin-starred restaurant; Hungarian food combined with a great wine list at Tigris Etterem, which is partially owned by winemakers.

**Late Night**—Enjoy a drink at Vian or Doblo; listen to live jazz at Fat Mo's Speakeasy and Music Club or folk at Fono Budai Zenehasz; dance with the young crowd at Barba Negra Track.

**Walks**—Along the Danube embankment; around Castle Hill; up and down Andrassy ut and Vaci utca; along the *korut* (ring road); up Gellert Hill; around the lovely neighborhood surrounding the Hungarian National Museum; on Margit Island; in the Buda Hills; in Varosliget.

**Especially for Kids**—Fovarosi Allat es Novenykert, the zoo in Varosliget; Csodak Palotaja (the Palace of Wonders); a ride on the Children's Railway through the Buda Hills.

### Geography

Orientation is slightly more complicated than dividing the city into Buda and Pest—but it's a good way to start. The Danube (Duna in Hungarian) flows through the middle of the city: Buda and Obuda are on the west side, Pest is on the east. Seven bridges, in addition to two railway bridges, span the divide.

Buda has hills. Castle Hill is home to some of the city's most visible landmarks, including Budavari Palota (Buda Castle). Szell Kalman ter, a square north of Castle Hill, is an important transportation hub. To the south of Castle Hill is Gellert Hill, which is topped by the Citadel and the Liberation Monument. North of Castle Hill is Rozsadomb (Hill of Roses), an upper-class neighborhood. Still farther north is Obuda, the oldest part of the city. The city's Turkish baths are located in Buda near the river.

By comparison, Pest is flat. The grand Parliament building dominates the Pest embankment and skyline. South of Parliament is the area

that is generally referred to as the city center. Deak ter is a square at the heart of the city—three metro lines cross there. The boulevard Andrassy ut runs from Deak ter to Hosok tere (Heroes Square), which is at the edge of Varosliget, the main city park.

Most of the attractions in Pest are contained within an area between the river and a ring road (actually, more like an arc), which changes its name every 10 blocks or so. In a north-to-south progression, it's called Szent Istvan korut, Terez korut, Erzsébet korut, Jozsef korut and Ferenc korut.

Fortunately, there's another aid to orientation: All of Budapest is divided into 23 numbered districts. Districts 1-3, 11, 12 and 22 are on the Buda and Obuda side (Castle Hill is the first district). District 21 is on Csepel Island, and the remainder of the districts are on the Pest side. The city center is the fifth district, and districts 6-9 encircle it to the east and southeast. The number of the district is written after the street address.

Addresses will be easier to understand if you know a few Hungarian words—*ut* means avenue, *utca* means street, *ter* (or *tere*) means square, *hid* means bridge, *koz* means alley and *korut* means ring road.