

Hungary

Hungary's uniqueness extends beyond its incomprehensible tongue. Here's your chance to strip down to your swimmers in the midwinter minuses and loll around an open-air thermal spa, while snowy patches glisten around you. Following that, you could go to a smoky bar where a Romani band yelps while a crazed crowd whacks its boot-heels, as commanded by Hungarian tradition. Or go clubbing in an ancient bathhouse, where all dance in swimsuits, waist-deep in healing waters.

If these pursuits don't appeal, check out Roman ruins, ancient castles, Turkish minarets in baroque cities, or experience the rural pleasures of cowboys riding astride five horses, storks nesting on streetlamps, and a sea of apricot trees in bloom.

Cosmopolitan Budapest is a capital to rival any on the continent – with world-class operas, monumental historical buildings, and the Danube River flowing through the middle of it all. Prices here are somewhere in the middle: not nearly as high as Austria or nearly as reasonable as Ukraine. Having established itself as a state in the year 1000, Hungary has a long history, a rich culture and strong folk traditions that are well worth exploring. So go ahead, dive in.

FAST FACTS

- **Area** 93,000 sq km
- **Capital** Budapest
- **Currency** forint (Ft); €1 = 276Ft; US\$1 = 216Ft; UK£1 = 410Ft; A\$1 = 164Ft; ¥100 = 185Ft; NZ\$1 = 143Ft
- **Famous for** paprika, Bull's Blood and *csárdás* music
- **Official Language** Hungarian (Magyar)
- **Phrases** *jo napot kivanok* (good day); *szia* (hi/bye); *köszönöm* (thank you)
- **Population** 10 million
- **Telephone Codes** country code ☎ 36; international access code ☎ 00; intercity access code ☎ 06
- **Visa** no visa required for most countries if you stay less than 90 days; see p408



HIGHLIGHTS

- Take a bath and ease your soul and your joints in Budapest's **thermal baths** (p364) and throw in a mudpack or water massage to get your blood flowing.
- See the capital city bathed in lights from atop Buda's **Castle Hill** (p363). The gothic Parliament building glows like a birthday cake.
- Taste some of Hungary's greatest wines in the alluring Valley of Beautiful Women in **Eger** (p400) and see the city's wonderful ancient castle and baroque architecture.
- Watch the cowboys ride at Bugac in **Kiskunsági Nemzeti Park** (p397) at the heart of the Hungarian *puszta* (plain) – the stuff of myth and legend.
- Feel a bit Mediterranean in the southern town of **Pécs** (p391), exploring the 16th-century Mosque Church and other Turkish sights.

ITINERARIES

- One week** Make sure that you spend at least four days in Budapest, checking out the sights, museums and pavement cafés. On your fifth day take a day trip to a Danube Bend town. See the open-air museum in Szentendre or the cathedral at Esztergom. Day six can be spent getting a morning train to Pécs and seeing the lovely Turkish remains, and checking out the many gal-

HOW MUCH?

- Lángos (fried dough snack)** 120-220Ft
- Hostel bed** 1600-3000Ft
- Loaf of bread** 160Ft
- Midrange double room** 8500-14,200Ft
- Symphony ticket in Budapest** 1200-2500Ft

LONELY PLANET INDEX

- Litre of petrol** 265Ft
- Litre of bottled water** 150Ft
- Beer (a bottle from grocery store)** 130Ft
- Souvenir T-shirt** 900-2500Ft
- Street snack (gyro)** 500Ft

leries in town. Let your hair down on day seven and try some local wine in Eger, a baroque town set in red-wine country.

- Two weeks** If you've already spent a week in Budapest, you still have time to cover a lot of ground, since all the places mentioned in this chapter are no more than five hours by train from the capital. If you are here in the summer, make sure you spend some time exploring the towns around Lake Balaton, or just chill out on the beach by the side of this popular lake. Tihany is a rambling hillside village filled with craftsmen's houses, set on a peninsula that is a protected nature zone. Keszthely is an old town with a great palace in addition to a beach. Alternatively, head south to Pécs and see more of the Great Plain. Szeged is on the Tisza River and Kecskemét is further north. Finish your trip in Eger.

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

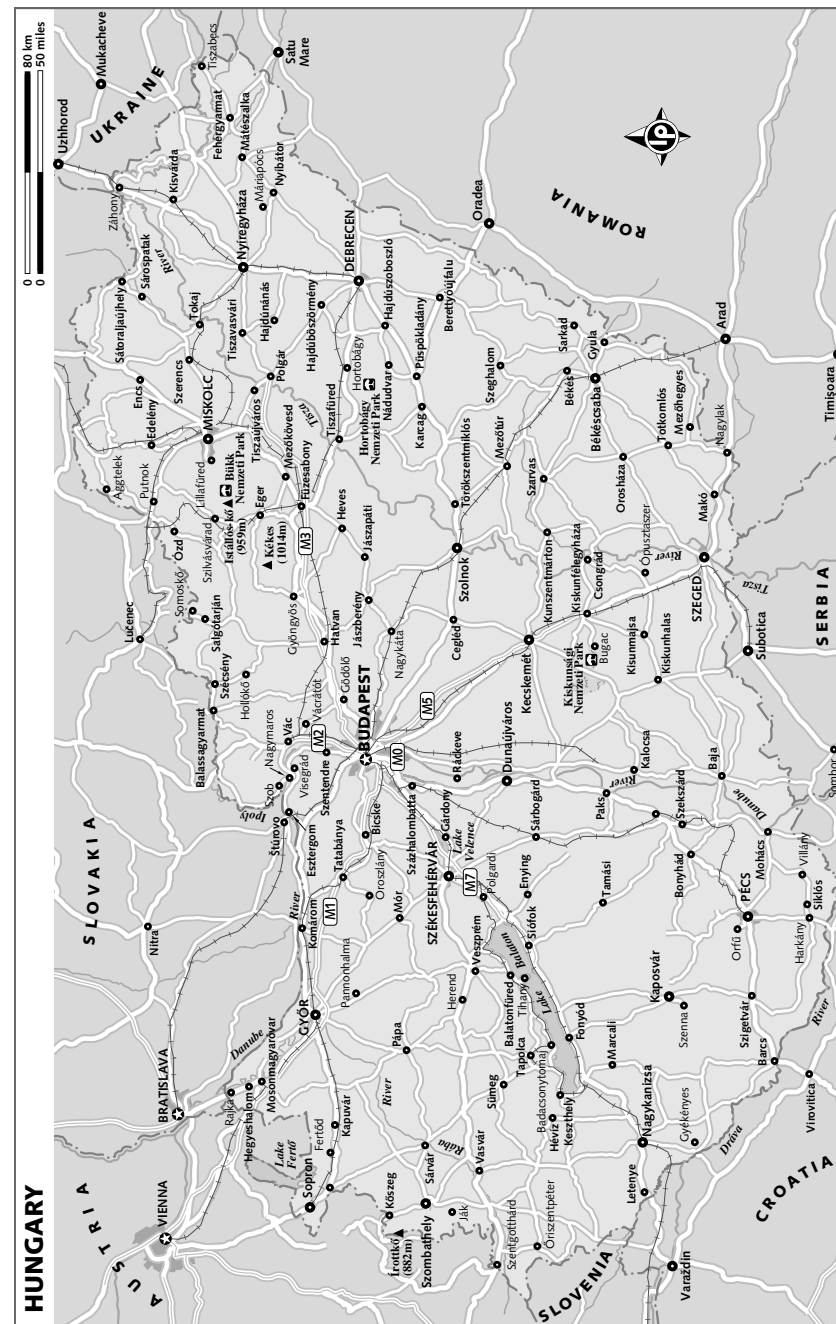
Hungary has a temperate continental climate. July and August are the warmest months, and when the thermometer hits 27°C it can feel much hotter, given that most places don't have air-con. Spring is unpredictable, but usually arrives in April. November is already rainy and chilly; January and February are the coldest, dreariest months, with temperatures dropping below 0°C. September, with loads of sunshine, mild temperatures and grape-harvest festivals in the countryside, may be the best time to visit. May, with a profusion of flowers and sunshine, is a close second. See p911 for climate charts.

The busiest tourist season is July and August (Lake Balaton is especially crowded), but hotels quote high-season prices from April to October. In provincial and smaller towns, attractions are often closed, or have reduced hours, from October to May.

HISTORY

Pre-Hungarian Hungary

The plains of the Carpathian Basin attracted waves of migration, from both east and west, long before the Magyar tribes decided to settle here. The Celts occupied the area in the 3rd century BC but the Romans conquered and expelled them just before the Christian era. The lands west of the Danube (Transdanubia) in today's Hungary became part of the Roman province of Pannonia, where a Roman legion was stationed at the town of Aquincum (now



called Óbuda). The Romans brought writing, planted the first vineyards and built baths near some of the region's many thermal springs.

A new surge of nomadic tribesmen, the Huns, who lent Hungary its present-day name, arrived on the scene with a leader who would become legendary in Hungarian history. By AD 441, Attila and his brother Bleda had conquered the Romans and acquired a reputation as great warriors. This reputation still runs strong and you will notice that many Hungarians carry the name Attila, even though the Huns have no connection with present-day Hungarians, and the Huns' short-lived empire did not outlast Attila's death (453), when remaining tribesmen fled back from whence they came. Many tribes filled the vacuum left by the Huns and settled in the area, such as the Goths, Longobards and the Avars, a powerful Turkic people who controlled parts of the area from the 5th to the 8th centuries. The Avars were subdued by Charlemagne in 796, leaving space for the Franks and Slavs to move in.

The Conquest

Magyar (Hungarian) tribes are said to have moved in around 896, when Árpád led the alliance of seven tribes into the region. The Magyars, a fierce warrior tribe, terrorised much of Europe with raids reaching as far as Spain. They were stopped at the Battle of Augsburg in 955 and subsequently converted to Christianity. Hungary's first king and its patron saint, István (Stephen), was crowned on Christmas Day in 1000, marking the foundation of the Hungarian state.

Medieval Hungary was a powerful kingdom that included Transylvania (now in Romania), Transcarpathia (now in Ukraine), modern-day Slovakia and Croatia. Under King Matthias Corvinus (1458–90), Hungary experienced a brief flowering of Renaissance culture. However, in 1526 the Ottomans defeated the Hungarian army at Mohács and by 1541 Buda Castle had been seized and Hungary sliced in three. The central part, including Buda, was controlled by the Ottomans, while Transdanubia, present-day Slovakia, and parts of Transcarpathia were ruled by Hungarian nobility based in Pozsony (Bratislava) under the auspices of the Austrian House of Habsburg. The principality of Transylvania, east of the Tisza, prospered as a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire.

Habsburg Hegemony & the Wars

After the Ottomans were evicted from Buda in 1686, the Habsburg domination of Hungary began. The 'enlightened absolutism' of the Habsburg monarchs Maria Theresa (r 1740–80) and her son Joseph II (r 1780–90) helped the country leap forward economically and culturally. Rumbblings of Hungarian independence surfaced off and on, but it was the unsuccessful 1848 Hungarian revolution that really started to shake the Habsburg oligarchy. After Austria was defeated in war by Prussia in 1866, a weakened empire struck a compromise with Hungary in 1867, creating a dual monarchy. The two states would be self-governing in domestic affairs, but act jointly in matters of common interest, such as foreign relations. The Austro-Hungarian monarchy lasted until WWI.

After WWI and the collapse of the Habsburg Empire in November 1918, Hungary was proclaimed a republic. But she had been on the losing side of the war. The 1920 Treaty of Trianon stripped the country of more than two-thirds of its territory – a hot topic of conversation to this day.

In 1941 Hungary's attempts to recover lost territories saw the nation in war, on the side of Nazi Germany. When leftists tried to negotiate a separate peace in 1944, the Germans occupied Hungary and brought the fascist Arrow Cross Party to power. The Arrow Cross immediately began deporting hundreds of thousands of Jews to Auschwitz. By early April 1945, all of Hungary was liberated by the Soviet army.

Communism

By 1947 the communists assumed complete control of the government and began nationalising industry and dividing up large estates among the peasantry. On 23 October 1956, student demonstrators demanding the withdrawal of Soviet troops were fired upon. The next day Imre Nagy, the reformist minister of agriculture, was named prime minister. On 28 October Nagy's government offered an amnesty to all those involved in the violence and promised to abolish the hated secret police, the ÁVH (known as ÁVO until 1949). On 4 November Soviet tanks moved into Budapest, crushing the uprising. By the time the fighting ended on 11 November, some 25,000 people were dead. Then the reprisals began: an estimated 20,000 people were arrested; 2,000 were executed, including Nagy; another 250,000 fled to Austria.

By the 1970s Hungary had abandoned strict central economic control in favour of a limited market system, often referred to as 'Goulash Communism'. In June 1987 Károly Grósz took over as premier and Hungary began moving towards full democracy. The huge numbers of East Germans who were able to slip through the Iron Curtain by leaving via Hungary may have contributed to the eventual crumbling of the Berlin Wall.

The Republic

At their party congress in February 1989 the Hungarian communists agreed to give up their monopoly on power. The Republic of Hungary was proclaimed in October, and democratic elections were scheduled for March 1990. Hungary changed its political system with scarcely a murmur, and the last Soviet troops left the country in June 1991.

The painful transition to a full market economy resulted in declining living standards for most people and a recession in the early 1990s, but the end of the 20th and early years of the 21st century have seen astonishing growth. Hungary became a fully fledged member of NATO in 1999. In a national referendum during April 2003, the Hungarian people voted to join the European Union (EU), and the country became one of the newest members of the EU on 1 May 2004.

The dissolution of intra-European customs controls at airports and borders was immediate, but border restrictions with neighbouring members Austria, Slovakia and Slovenia will not be completely removed any time soon. Hungary aims to adopt the euro by 2010, providing that its high economic deficit is brought within acceptable levels.

In April 2006 the Socialist-led coalition won the parliamentary elections, becoming the first government to win consecutive terms in office since the restoration of democracy in 1990. The new prime minister, Ferenc Gyurcsány, was chosen by the Socialist Party to succeed the former prime minister, Peter Medgyessy. The coalition has been in government since the last elections in 2002.

PEOPLE

Approximately 10.6 million Magyar people live within the national borders, and another five million Hungarians and their descendants are abroad. The estimated 1.44 million Hungarians in Transylvania constitute the largest ethnic minority in Europe, and there are another 520,000 in Slovakia, 295,000 in Serbia and Montenegro, 157,000 in Ukraine and 40,600 in Austria.

Ethnic Magyars make up approximately 93% of the population. Many minority groups estimate their numbers to be significantly higher than official counts. There are 13 recognised minorities in the country, including Germans (0.6%), Slovaks (0.2%), Croats (0.1%), Romanians (0.07%), Ukrainians (0.04%) and Rusyns (0.01%). The number of Roma is officially put at 1.9% of the population though some sources place it as high as 4%.

SPORT

The Formula One Hungarian Grand Prix, held in mid-August, is the year's biggest sporting event. The **Hungaroring** (www.hungaroring.hu) track is 19km north of Budapest, in Mogyórod, but hotels in the capital fill up and prices skyrocket.

TOP FIVE WAYS TO TAKE A BATH

- Soak in palatial elegance – tiled mosaics, stained-glass skylights – at the **Gellért Fürdő** (p364) in Buda.
- Bubble up in the jetted central section in one of the expansive outdoor thermal pools at the turn-of-the-century **Széchenyi Fürdő** (p365) in Pest.
- Float among lilies in the summer, and steam in the winter, at one of Europe's largest thermal lakes, the **Gyógytó** in Hévíz (p390).
- Go modern at the **Rába Quelle** (p381) thermal spa in Győr: slide down the waterslide and splash under the two-storey waterfall.
- Take a romantic summer evening swim in the outdoor thermal mineral pool of the **Gyógyfürdő** (p394) in Harkány; the high sulphur content might do you good.

RELIGION

Of those Hungarians declaring religious affiliation, about 52% are Roman Catholic, 16% Reformed (Calvinist) Protestant, 3% Evangelical (Lutheran) Protestant, 2.5% Greek Catholic, 1% Orthodox and 0.1% Jewish (down from a pre-WWII population of nearly 10 times the current size).

ARTS

Budapest is Hungary's artistic heart, but the provinces resound with the arts too. The country (and the capital in particular) is known for its traditional culture, with a strong emphasis on the classical – and for good reason. The history of Hungarian arts and literature includes world-renowned composers such as Béla Bartók and Franz Liszt, and the Nobel prize-winning writer Imre Kertész and his innovative contemporary Peter Esterházy. Hungary's proximity to classically focused Vienna, as well as the legacy of the Soviet regard for the 'proper arts' means that opera, symphony and ballet are high on the entertainment agenda, and even provincial towns have decent companies.

For the more contemporary branches of artistic life, Budapest is the country's queen bee, with many art galleries, theatre and dance companies, as well as folk music and handicrafts that have grown out of village life or minority culture.

Music

As you will no doubt see from the street names in every Hungarian town and city, the country celebrates and reveres its most influential musician, composer and pianist, Franz (or Ferenc) Liszt (1811–86). The eccentric Liszt described himself as 'part Gypsy', and in his *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, as well as in other works, he does indeed weave Romani motifs into his compositions.

Ferenc Erkel (1810–93) is the father of Hungarian opera, and the stirringly nationalist *Bánk Bán* is a standard at the Hungarian State Opera House in Budapest. Béla Bartók (1881–1945) and Zoltán Kodály (1882–1967) made the first systematic study of Hungarian folk music; both integrated some of their findings into their compositions.

Hungarian folk musicians play violins, zithers, hurdy-gurdies, bagpipes and lutes on a five-tone diatonic scale. Romani (Gypsy) music, found in restaurants in its schmaltzy form (best avoided), has become a fashionable

thing among the young, with Romani bands playing 'the real thing' in trendy bars till the wee hours: a dynamic, hopping mix of fiddles, bass and cymbalom (a table-top-like stringed instrument played with sticks). An instrument a Roma band would never be seen without is the tin milk bottle used as a drum, which gives Hungarian Roma music its characteristic sound, reminiscent of traditional Indian music, an influence that perhaps harks back to the Roma's Asian roots. Look out for names such as Kalyi Jag (Black Fire), Ando Drom, Kal, Silvagipsy and Parno Graszt (White Horse). The latter is a folk ensemble of musicians and dancers dedicated to preserving Romani musical traditions, who also borrow from other regional folk styles. (One of their songs sounds quite like a Jewish wedding dance.)

Klezmer music (traditional Eastern European Jewish music) has also made a comeback into the playlists of the young and trendy. Bands like Di Naye, Kapelye and the Odessza Klezmer band are popular.

You can hear classical concerts in Budapest's large, ornate halls, as well as churches, and festivals sometimes bring the music outdoors. Rock, jazz, blues, funk – just about any music you're looking for is on tap at Budapest's many night spots.

Literature

Hungary has some excellent writers, both of poetry and prose. Sándor Petőfi (1823–49) is Hungary's most celebrated poet. A line from his work *National Song* became the rallying cry for the War of Independence between 1848 and 1849, in which he fought and is commonly thought to have died. His comrade-in-arms, János Arany (1817–82), wrote epic poetry. The prolific novelist and playwright Mór Jókai (1825–1904) gave expression to heroism and honesty in works such as *The Man with the Golden Touch*. Lyric poet Endre Ady (1877–1919) attacked narrow materialism; poet Attila József (1905–37) expresses the alienation felt by individuals in the modern age; and novelist Zsigmond Móricz (1879–1942) examines the harsh reality of peasant life in Hungary.

Contemporary Hungarian writers whose work has been translated into English and are worth a read include Tibor Fischer, Péter Esterházy and Sándor Márai. The most celebrated Hungarian writer is the 2002 Nobel prize-winner, Imre Kertész, whose excellent semi-autobiographical novel *Fateless* describes the or-

deal of a teenage boy sent to Nazi death camps at Auschwitz, Buchenwald and Zeitz. Kertész also wrote the screenplay for the film of the same name, directed by Lajos Koltai and nominated for the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival in 2005. It is Hungary's most expensive movie production (it cost US\$12 million), and one of its best. Kertész's work has been likened in its power to the writing of Primo Levi. Corvina Books publishes translations and anthologies of the above writers' works.

Visual Arts

Favourite painters from the 19th century include realist Mihály Munkácsy (1844–1900), the so-called painter of the plains, and Tivadar Kosztka Csontváry (1853–1919). Győző Vásárhelyi (1908–97), who changed his name to Victor Vasarely when he emigrated to Paris, is considered the 'father of op art'. In the 19th and early 20th century, the Zsolnay family created world-renowned decorative art in porcelain. Ceramic artist Margit Kovac (1902–1977), a Hungarian national treasure, produced a large number of statues and ceramic objects during her career. The traditional embroidery, weavings and ceramics of the nation's *népművészet* (folk art) endures and there is at least one handicraft store in every town.

ENVIRONMENT The Land

Hungary occupies the Carpathian Basin to the southwest of the Carpathian Mountains. Water dominates much of the country's geography. The Duna (Danube River) divides the Nagyalföld (Great Plain) in the east from the Dunántúl (Transdanubia) in the west. The Tisza (597km in Hungary) is the country's longest river, and historically has been prone to flooding. Hungary has hundreds of small lakes and is riddled with thermal springs. Lake Balaton (596 sq km, 77km long), in the west, is the largest freshwater lake in Europe outside Scandinavia. Hungary's 'mountains' to the north are merely hills, with the country's highest peak being Kékes (1014m) in the Mátra Range.

Wildlife

There are plenty of common European animals (deer, wild hare, boar, otter) as well as some rarer species (wild cat, lake bat, Pannonian lizard), but three-quarters of the country's 450 vertebrates are birds, particularly waterfowl. Hungary is a premier European sight for bird-

watching. Endangered or vulnerable populations include eastern imperial eagles, saker falcons and the great bustard. An estimated 70,000 cranes pass through every year and a great number of storks arrive in the northern uplands and on the Great Plain every spring.

National Parks

There are 11 national parks in Hungary. Bükk Nemzeti Park, north of Eger, is a mountainous limestone area of forest and caves. Kiskun-sági Nemzeti Park (p397; www.knp.hu) and Bugac (p397), near Kecskemét, and Hortobágy Nemzeti Park (www.hnp.hu) in the Hortobágy Pusztas (a World Heritage site), outside Debrecen, protect the unique grassland environment of the plains.

Environmental Issues

Pollution is a large and costly problem. Harmful emissions from low-grade fuels such as coal and the high numbers of buses and cars, especially in Budapest, affect the air quality. The overuse of nitrate fertilisers in agriculture threatens ground water beneath the plains. However, there has been a marked improvement in air and water quality in recent years as Hungary attempts to conform to EU environmental standards.

FOOD & DRINK Staples & Specialities

The omnipresent seasoning in Hungarian cooking is paprika, a mild red pepper that appears on restaurant tables as a condiment beside the salt and black pepper, as well as in many recipes. *Pörkölt*, a paprika-infused stew, can be made from different meats, including *borju* (veal), and usually it has no vegetables. *Galuska* (small, gnocchi-like dumplings) are a good accompaniment to soak up the sauce. The well-known *paprikas csirke* (chicken paprikash) is stewed chicken in a tomato-cream-paprika sauce (not as common here as in Hungarian restaurants abroad). *Töltött káposzta* (cabbage rolls stuffed with meat and rice) is cooked in a roux made with paprika, and topped with sour cream, as is *székelygulyás* (stewed pork and sour cabbage). Another local favourite is *halászlé* (fisherman's soup), a rich mix of several kinds of poached freshwater fish, tomatoes, green peppers and...paprika.

Leves (soup) is the start to any main meal in a Hungarian home; some claim that you will develop stomach disorders if you don't

eat a hot, daily helping. *Gulyás* (goulash), although served as a stew outside Hungary, is a soup here, cooked with beef, onions and tomatoes. Traditional cooking methods are far from health-conscious, but they are tasty. Frying is a nationwide obsession and you'll often find fried turkey, pork and veal schnitzels on the menu.

For dessert you might try the cold *gyümölcs leves* (fruit soup) made with sour cherries and other berries, or *palinacsinta* (crepes) filled with jam, sweet cheese or chocolate sauce. A good food-stand snack is *lángos*, fried dough that can be topped with cheese and/or *tejföl* (sour cream).

Two Hungarian wines are known internationally: the sweet, dessert wine Tokaji Aszú and Egri Bikavér (Eger Bull's Blood), the full-bodied red, high in acid and tannin. But the country produces a number of other eminently drinkable wines. Hungarian beers sold nationally include Dreher and Kőbányai; Borosodi is a decent amber brew. For the harder stuff, try *pálinka*, a strong, firewater-like brandy distilled from a variety of fruits, but most commonly plums or apricots. Zwack distillery produces Unicum, a bitter aperitif that has been around since 1790; it tastes a bit like the medicine doctors give you to induce vomiting – but it's popular.

Where to Eat & Drink

An *étterem* is a restaurant with a large selection, formal service and formal prices. A *vendéglő* is smaller, more casual and serves homestyle regional dishes. The overused term *csárda*, which originally meant a rustic country inn with Romani music, can now mean anything – including super-touristy. To keep prices down, look for *étkezde* (a tiny eating place that may have a counter or sit-down service), *önkiszolgáló* (a self-service canteen), *kinai gyorsbifé* (Chinese fast food), *grill* (which generally serves gyros or kebabs and other grilled meats from the counter) or a *szendvicssbar* (which has open-face sandwiches to go).

There are still a number of stuffy Hungarian restaurants with condescending waiters, formal service and Romani music from another era. For the most part, avoiding places with tuxedoed waiters is a good bet.

Wine has been produced in Hungary for thousands of years and you'll find it available by the glass or bottle everywhere. There are plenty of pseudo British-Irish-Belgian pubs,

smoky *söröző* (a Hungarian pub, often in a cellar, where drinking is taken very seriously), *borozó* (a wine bar, usually a dive) and night-clubs, but the most pleasant place to imbibe a cocktail or coffee may be in a café. A *kávéház* may primarily be an old-world dessert shop, or it may be a bar with an extensive drinks menu; either way they sell alcoholic beverages in addition to coffee. In spring, pavement tables sprout up alongside the new flowers.

Vegetarians & Vegans

Traditional Hungarian food is heavy and rich. Meat, sour cream and fat abound, and *saláta* generally means a plate of pickles (cucumbers, cabbage, beets and/or carrots). At least in Budapest, other alternatives are available, especially at Italian or Asian restaurants.

Some not-very-light, but widely available dishes for vegetarians to look for are *rántott sajt* (fried cheese), *gombafejek rántva* (fried mushroom caps), *gomba leves* (mushroom soup) and *túrós* or *káposzta csusza* (short, wide pasta with cheese or cabbage). *Bableves* (bean soup) usually contains meat.

Habits & Customs

The Magyar are a polite people and their language is filled with courtesies. To toast someone's health before drinking, say *egéséegére* (egg-eh-shaig-eh-ray), and to wish them a good appetite before eating, *jo étváogat* (yo ate-vad-yaht). If you're invited to someone's home, always bring a bunch of flowers and/or a bottle of good local wine.

BUDAPEST

📍 1 / pop 1.8 million

Budapest seductively displays its many cultural influences and historical remains: the sensible Germanic logic of its layout, the decadent opulence of its Turkish baths, the Viennese coffeehouses, the straight lines of the sober Socialist structures, the Habsburg elegance and the silent old Jewish quarter, the Balkan smokiness of its bars, and above all, the unique Magyar spirit.

Budapest can be a summer hotspot – you can walk along the Danube, go drinking and clubbing in the boat bars and get into the boho coffee-house lifestyle. During the chillier months the city transforms into a winter resort with its many bathhouses, where you can be sitting in

BUDAPEST IN TWO DAYS

The best way to start your day in Budapest is to have an early morning soak at fresco at **Széchenyi Fürdő** (p365). Then stroll through the **Városliget** (City Park; p365) to **Hősök tere** (p365). Depending on your tastes, visit the **Szépművészeti Múzeum** (p365), the city's fine art museum, or if contemporary art is more your thing, go to **Műcarnok** (p365). Stroll down Andrassy út and grab a (very) late breakfast or coffee at **Lukács** (p365), next to the infamous and ever-popular spy museum, the **Terror Háza** (p365). Carry on down, past Oktogon tér, and have lunch in the wonderful **Menza** (p370), then take an afternoon tour around the grand **Magyar Állami Operaház** (Hungarian State Opera House, p365). Have cake at the legendary **Gerbeaud** (p371) before hitting the shops on **Váci utca** (p365). Go dancing at **Cha Cha Cha** (p372) or **Sark** (p371) or have drinks at **Szimpla/Dupla** (p371).

On day two grab breakfast at **Eckermann** (p371) among the city's intellectual crowd, before getting the funicular to **Várhegy** (Castle Hill; p363) in Buda. Wander the old streets and appreciate the views from the pathways along the ancient walls. Tour **Mátyás Templom** (p364) and explore the many museums, including the **Budapesti Történeti Múzeum** (p364), to find out more about the city's history. In the evening, back in Pest, don't forget to take a walk along the waterfront to see Castle Hill lit up. You may want to have a drink or a meal at any of the boat restaurant-pubs and enjoy the scenery before going Hungarian dancing at **Fonó Budai Zeneház** (p372).

a steaming outdoor pool while snow glistens around you. Regardless of the season, you can always plunge in and explore Budapest's rich cultural heritage of opulent architecture, fascinating and sometimes bizarre museums, art galleries and Roman ruins. But you don't have to drown yourself in culture – Budapest has some of the more exciting nightlife spots in Eastern Europe, with unusual club nights (such as dancing waist deep in thermal waters), excellent DJs, live Romani and Klezmer music, and more bars than you'll be able to crawl around.

Pest is the city's commercial centre, with culture, restaurants and nightlife, smoky bars and shady gardens, museums, cheap sleeps and high-class hotels. Buda's sleepy green hills are home to the famous Castle Hill and medieval buildings, and its peaceful neighbourhoods house the city's affluent dwellers.

Whatever you choose to sample from the offerings of Budapest, make sure you take time to enjoy it in the city's slow, relaxed pace.

HISTORY

Strictly speaking, the story of Budapest begins only in 1873 with the administrative union of three cities that had grown together: Buda, west of the Danube; Óbuda (Buda's oldest neighbourhood) to the north; and Pest on the eastern side of the river. But the area had been occupied for thousands of years before Budapest as we know it existed. The Romans built a settlement at Aquincum (Óbuda) during the first centuries of the Christian Era. In the

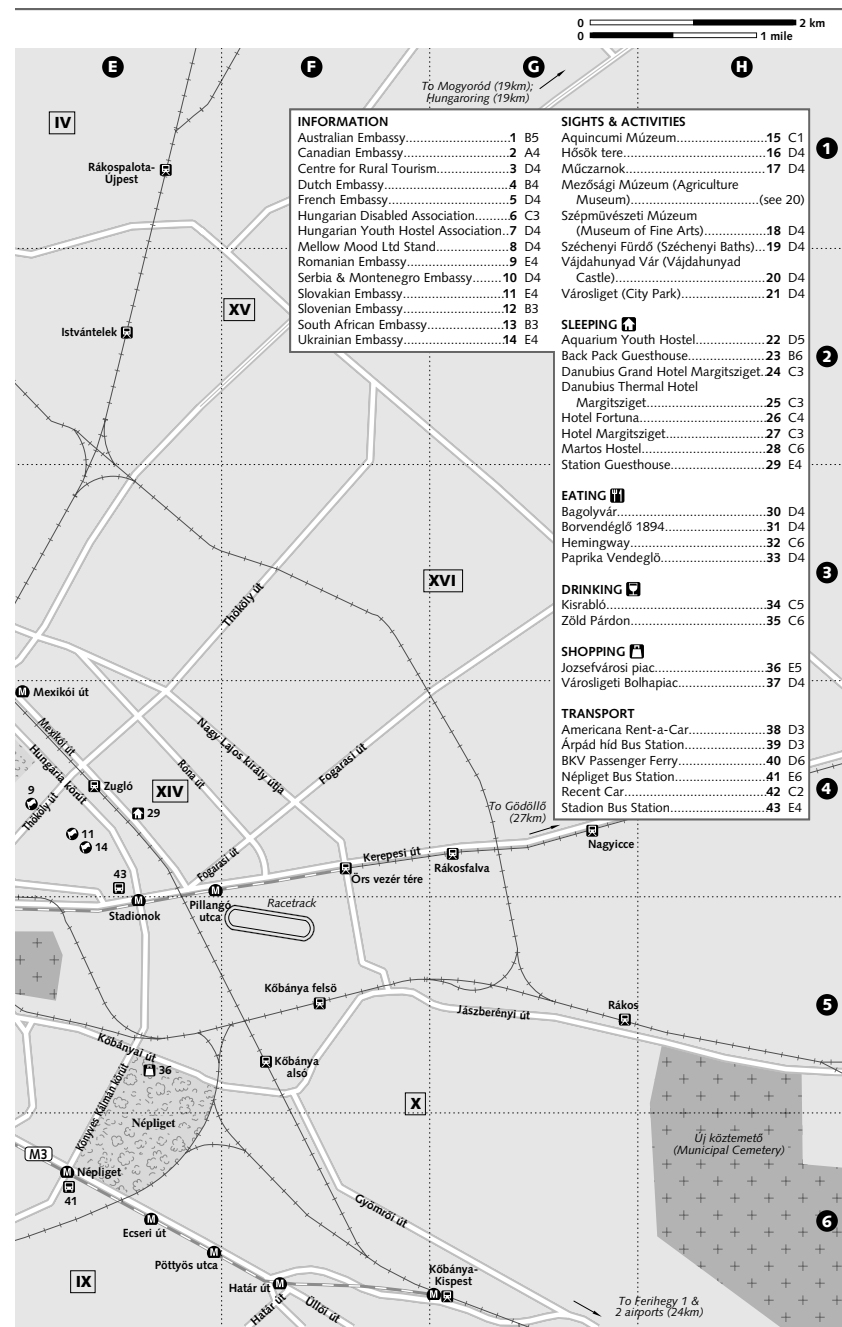
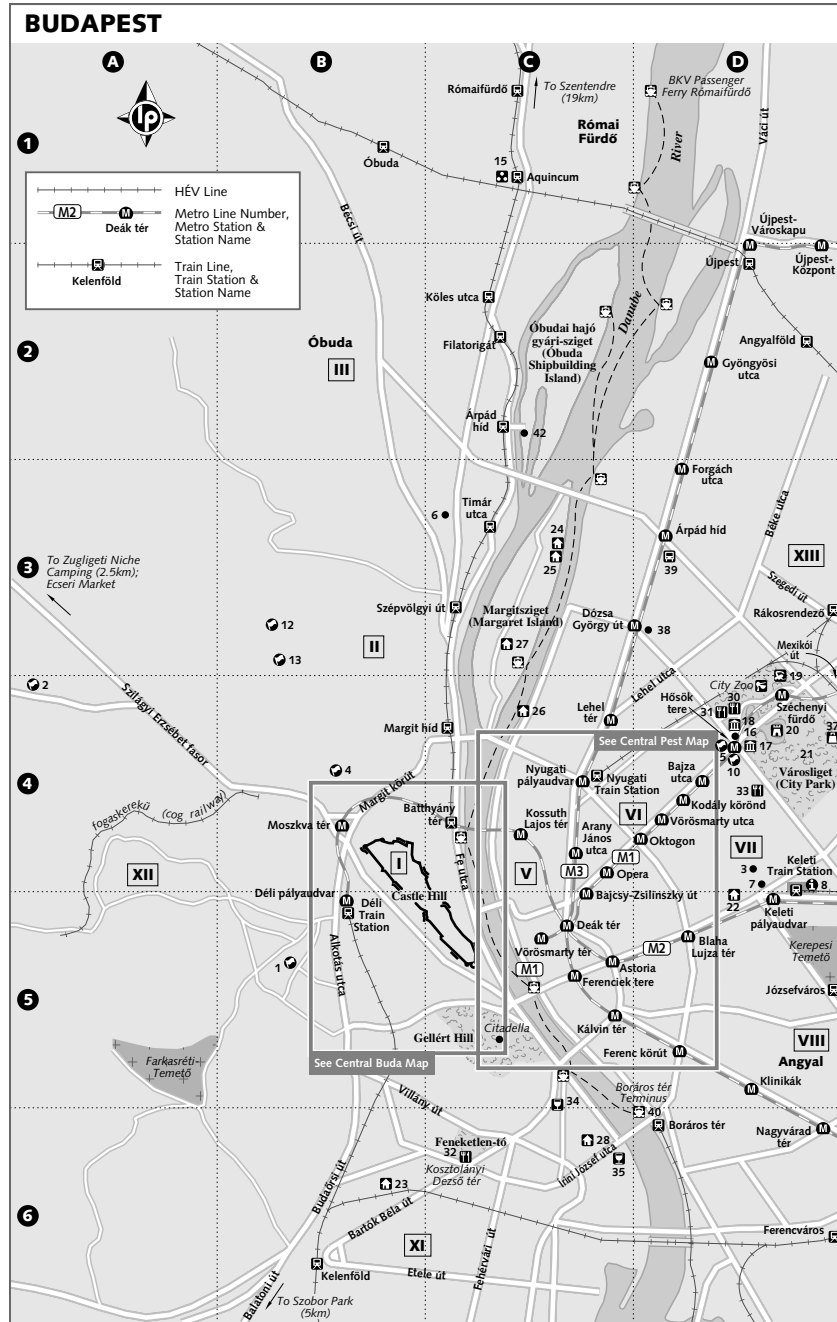
1500s, the Turks arrived uninvited and stayed for almost 150 years. The Habsburg Austrians helped kick the invaders out, but then made themselves at home for 200 more years.

At the turn of the 20th century, under the dual Austro-Hungarian monarchy, the population of Budapest exploded and many buildings date from that boom. The city suffered some damage in the two world wars and the 1956 revolution left structures pockmarked with bullet holes. Today many of the old buildings have been restored, and Budapest is the sophisticated capital of a proud nation, one of the newest in the EU.

ORIENTATION

The city's traditional artery, the Danube, is spanned by nine bridges that link hilly, residential Buda with bustling, commercial and very flat Pest. Two ring roads link three of the bridges across the Danube and essentially define central Pest. Important boulevards such as Rákóczi út and leafy Andrassy út fan out from these, creating large squares and circles. The most central square in Pest is Deák tér, where the three metro lines meet. Buda is dominated by Castle and Gellért Hills; the main square is Moszkva tér.

Budapest is divided into 23 *kerület* (districts). The Roman numeral appearing before each street address signifies the district. Central Buda is district I, central Pest is district V, and fans out to zones VI and VII. You can also tell the district by reading its postal code: the



HUNGARY

HUNGARY

two numbers after the initial one signify the district (ie H-1114 is in the XI district).

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Irók Boltja (Map p362; ☎ 322 1645; VI Andrásy út 45; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat) Good selection of Hungarian writers in translation.

Libri Stúdium (Map p362; ☎ 318 5680; V Váci utca 22; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat & Sun) Tons of coffee-table and travel books, many Lonely Planet titles.

Red Bus Second-hand Bookstore (Map p362; ☎ 337 7453; V Semmelweis utca 14; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat) Sells used English-language books, next door to the hostel.

Discount Cards

Budapest Card (www.budapestinfo.hu; 48/72hr card 5200/6500Ft) Offers free access to many museums; free transport on city trams, buses and metros; and discounts on other services. Buy the card at hotels, travel agencies, large metro station kiosks and some tourist offices.

Also worth considering is the Hungarian Card. See p405 for details.

Emergency

For emergency numbers, see the boxed text, p407.

District V Police Station (Map p362; ☎ 373 1000; V Szalay utca 11-13) The most centrally located police station in Pest.

Internet Access

The majority of year-round hostels offer internet access (free to 250Ft per half hour). Among the most accessible internet cafés in Budapest are the following.

Ami Internet Coffee (Map p362; ☎ 267 1644; V Váci utca 40; per hr 700Ft; ☎ 9am-2am) Tons of terminals; it's very central, but superbusy.

CEU NetPoint (Map p362; ☎ 328 3506; Oktober 6 utca 14; per hr 400Ft; ☎ 11am-10pm) Quiet and central. There's a dozen terminals, CD writing, fax, webcams and wi-fi connection for your laptop.

Medical & Dental Services

American Clinics (Map p361; ☎ 224 9090; I Hattyú utca 14, 5th fl; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Thu, 8.30am-6pm Fri, 8am-noon Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) On call 24/7 for emergencies.

S O S Dental Service (Map p362; ☎ 322 0602; VI Király utca 14) Around-the-clock dental care.

Teréz Gyógyszertár (Map p362; ☎ 311 4439; VI Teréz körút 41) Twenty-four-hour pharmacy.

Money

ATMs are quite common, especially on the ring roads and main arteries. Most banks have both ATMs and exchange services. Banks have standardised hours nationwide. See p405 for information about opening and closing times.

American Express (Map p362; ☎ 235 4330; V Deák Ferenc utca 10; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat) Will change its own travellers cheques without commission; not the best rates.

K&H Bank (Map p362; V Váci utca 40) Quite central.

OTP Bank (Map p362; V Nádor utca 6) Favourable rates.

Post

Main post office (Map p362; V Városház utca 18) Pick up poste restante mail here.

Tourist Information

The Hungarian National Tourist Board, in conjunction with the Budapest Tourism Office, runs Tourinform offices in Budapest.

Tourinform (☎ 24hr hotline 06 80 630 800; www.budapestinfo.hu; Main Office (Map p362; ☎ 438 8080; V Sütő utca 2; ☎ 8am-8pm); Liszt Ferenc Square (Map p362; ☎ 322 4098; VI Liszt Ferenc tér 11; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri); Castle Hill (Map p361; ☎ 488 0475; I Szentháromság tér; ☎ 10am-7pm)

Travel Agencies

You can get information, book tours and transport, and arrange accommodation at travel agencies in Budapest. They also sell discount cards.

ibusz (Map p362; ☎ 485 2716; www.ibusz.hu; V Ferenctek ter 10; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat Jul-Aug) The main branch of this national agency has an exchange office, books private rooms and pensions, and sells air and train tickets – all the works.

Mellow Mood Ltd Stand (☎ 413 2062; www.mellowmood.hu; ☎ 7am-8pm) Stands can be found at Keleti (Map pp358-9) and Déli (Map p361) train stations. Staff will help you find hostel and other accommodation, as well as provide info. It's affiliated with the Hungarian Youth Hostel Association and Hostelling International (HI).

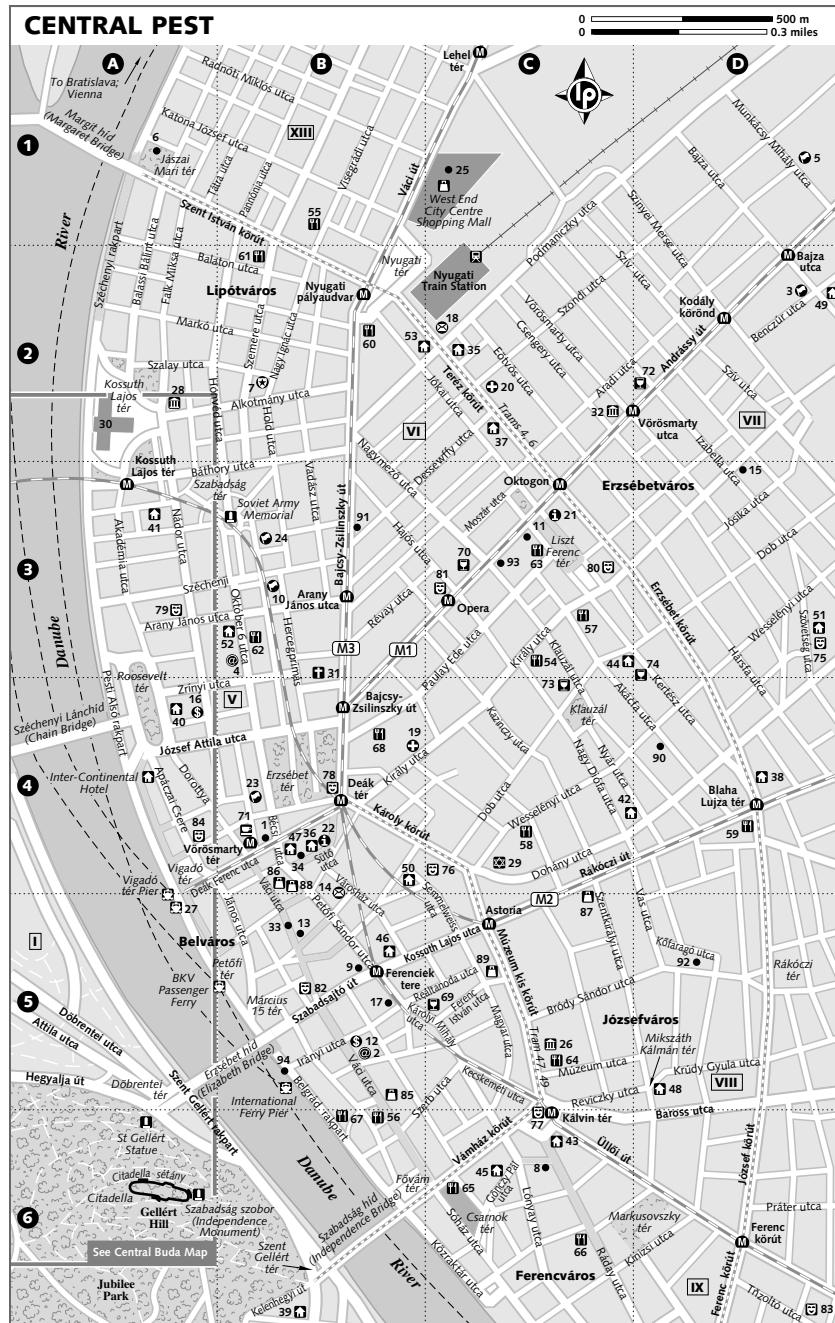
Vista Visitor Centre (Map p362; ☎ 452 3636; www.vista.hu; VI Pauly Ede utca 2; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) Book apartments and arrange tours here. There's internet access and a café.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Overall, Hungary is a very safe country with little violent crime, but scams can be a problem in the capital. Overcharging in taxis is

CENTRAL BUDA

| INFORMATION | |
|--|---------|
| American Clinics | 1 A2 |
| German Embassy | 2 B3 |
| Mellow Mood Ltd Stand | 3 A3 |
| Tourinform Castle Hill | 4 B3 |
| SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES | |
| Budapesti Történeli Múzeum (Budapest History Museum) | (see 8) |
| Citadella | 5 D6 |
| Hadtörténeli Múzeum (Military History Museum) | 6 A2 |
| Halászbástya (Fishermen's Bastion) | 7 B3 |
| Királyi Palota (Royal Palace) | 8 C4 |
| Magdolona toronye (Magdalen Tower) | 9 A2 |
| Magyar Nemzeti Galéria (Hungarian National Gallery) | (see 8) |
| Mátyás Templom (Matthias Church) | 10 B3 |
| Sikló (Funicular) | 11 C4 |
| Szabadság szobor (Independence Monument) | 12 D6 |
| Szent Gellért szobor (St Gellert Statue) | 13 D6 |
| Szent István szobor (St Stephen Statue) | 14 B3 |
| Szentháromság szobor (Holy Trinity Statue) | 15 B3 |
| Vár hegy (Castle Hill) | 16 B3 |
| SLEEPING | |
| Art'otel Budapest | 17 C3 |
| Burg Hotel | 18 B3 |
| Büro Panzió | 19 A1 |
| Citadella Hotel | 20 D6 |
| Gold Hotel | 21 B6 |
| Hotel Kulturinnov | 22 B3 |
| Fény utca piac (market) | 24 A1 |
| Fortuna Onkiszolgáló | 25 B3 |
| Mongolian Barbecue | 26 A4 |
| Pita House | 27 A1 |
| Gold Hotel | 21 B6 |
| Tabáni Kakas | 28 C5 |
| SHOPPING | |
| Magyar Borok Háza (House of Hungarian Wines) | 29 B3 |
| EATING | |
| Café Miró | 23 B3 |



| INFORMATION | | Néprajzi Múzeum (Ethnography Museum) | | Múzeum | |
|---|----------|--------------------------------------|-------|--|-------|
| American Express | 1 B4 | Museum | 28 A2 | Nagycsarnok (Great Market) | 65 C6 |
| Ami Internet Coffee | 2 B5 | Nagy Zsinagóga (Great Synagogue) | 29 C4 | Ráday Étkezde | 66 C6 |
| Austrian Embassy | 3 D2 | Parlament | 30 A2 | Taverna Dionysos | 67 B6 |
| CEU Net Point | 4 B3 | Szent István Bazilika | 31 B3 | Vista Café | 68 B4 |
| Croatian Embassy | 5 D1 | Terror Háza (Terror House) | 32 C2 | | |
| Debrecen Summer University | | Branch | 6 A1 | DRINKING ☑ | |
| District V Police Station | 7 B2 | Váci utca | 33 B5 | Centrál Kávéház | 69 C5 |
| Hungarian Equestrian Tourism | | Yelló Zebra Bikes | 34 B4 | Eckermann | 70 C3 |
| Association | 8 C6 | | | Gerbeaud | 71 B4 |
| Ibuzs | 9 B5 | SLEEPING ☑ | | Lukács | 72 D2 |
| Irish Embassy | 10 B3 | Best Hostel | 35 C2 | Sark | 73 C4 |
| Irók Boltja | 11 C3 | Best Hotel Service | 36 B4 | Szimpla/Dupla | 74 D3 |
| K&H Bank | 12 B5 | Caterina Hostel | 37 C2 | | |
| Libri Stúdió | 13 B5 | Corinthia Grand Hotel Royal | 38 D4 | ENTERTAINMENT ☑ | |
| Main Post Office | 14 B4 | Danubius Hotel Gellért | 39 B6 | Angyal | 75 D3 |
| National Association of Village Tourism | 15 D3 | Four Seasons Hotel | 40 A4 | Café Eklektika | 76 C4 |
| OTP Bank | 16 A4 | Garibaldi Guesthouse | 41 A3 | Cha Cha Cha | 77 C6 |
| Pegazus Tours | 17 B5 | Hostel Marco Polo | 42 C4 | Gödör Klub | 78 B4 |
| Post Office | 18 C2 | Hotel Ibis Centrum | 43 C6 | Kalamajka Táncház | 79 A3 |
| Red Bus Second-hand Bookstore | (see 50) | Hotel Queen Mary | 44 C3 | Liszt Ferenc Zenekadémia | 80 C3 |
| S O S Dental Service | 19 B4 | Kálmán Ház | 45 C6 | Magyar Állami Operaház (Hungarian State Opera House) | 81 C3 |
| Teréz Gyógyszertár | 20 C2 | Leopold Pánzió | 46 B5 | Musica Mix | 82 B5 |
| Tourinform Liszt Ferenc Square | 21 C3 | Mellow Mood Central Hostel | 47 B4 | Trafó Bár Tangó | 83 D6 |
| Tourinform Main Office | 22 B4 | Museum Guest House | 48 D5 | Vigadó Jegyiroda | 84 A4 |
| UK Embassy | 23 B4 | Radio Inn | 49 D2 | | |
| US Embassy | 24 B3 | Red Bus Hostel | 50 B4 | SHOPPING ☑ | |
| Vista Visitor Centre | (see 68) | Red Bus II | 51 D3 | Folkart Centrum | 85 B5 |
| | | To-Ma Travel Agency | 52 B3 | Folkart Kézművesház | 86 B4 |
| | | Yellow Submarine Hostel | 53 B2 | Magyar Palinka Háza | 87 C5 |
| | | | | Rözsavölgyi Music Shop | 88 B4 |
| | | EATING ☑ | | Retrock | 89 C5 |
| | | Al-Amir | 54 C3 | | |
| | | Angyalok Konyhája | 55 B1 | TRANSPORT | |
| | | Fatál | 56 B6 | BKV Office | 90 D4 |
| | | Frici Papa | 57 C3 | Hungarian Bicycle Touring Association | 91 B3 |
| | | Kék Rózsza | 58 C4 | Kenguru | 92 D5 |
| | | Kaiser's | 59 D4 | MÁV Ticket Office | 93 C3 |
| | | Kaiser's (Hungarian National Museum) | 60 B2 | Mahart PassNave Ticket Office | 94 B5 |
| | | Kis Italia | 61 B2 | | |
| | | Kisharang | 62 B3 | | |
| | | Menza | 63 C3 | | |

not unknown and we have received reports of unscrupulous waiters stealing credit-card information. Watch out for tricks on the street: the usual pickpocket method is for someone to distract you (by running into you, dropping something etc) while an accomplice makes off with your goods.

Guys should avoid drop-dead gorgeous women who approach them (especially around Váci utca) and offer to take them along to a local nightspot. Disreputable clubs hire these women to lure you in and then charge insane rates for drinks (upwards of €80 a pop) for you and the girls, who order refills adeptly.

There is a small but persistent neo-Nazi presence in Budapest that wants to blame Jews, Roma, Asians or blacks for the ills of the world, but for now their action seems to be limited to the staging of rallies and protests.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Buda CASTLE HILL

Surfacing at the red line metro station of the Socialist-style Moszkva tér, continue left up Várkő utca, or cross the street and board the Vár bus (a minibus with a picture of a castle on the sign) to reach **Várhegy** (Castle Hill; Map p361) where most of Budapest's remaining medieval buildings are clustered. Várhegy is high above the glistening Danube, and wandering the old streets and enjoying the city views is part of the attraction, so get off at the first stop after the Vienna Gate and walk.

Magdolona toronye (Magdalen Tower; Map p361; Kapisztrán tér) is all that's left of a Gothic church destroyed here during WWII. The white neoclassical building facing the square is the **Hadtörténeli Múzeum** (Military History Museum; Map p361; ☎ 356 9522; 1 Toth Árpád sétány 40; admission free; ☷ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, to 4pm Oct-Mar).

For a peek into the life of the Budapest bourgeoisie, check out the mansions of the Buda Hills to the south of the ramparts promenade. Follow the third alleyway to your left and you reach Szentháromság tér and the **Szentháromság szobor** (Holy Trinity Statue; Map p361) at its centre.

Don't miss the gorgeous, neo-Gothic **Mátyás Templom** (Matthias Church; Map p361; ☎ 489 0717; | Szentháromság tér; adult/student 600/300Ft; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun), with a colourful tiled roof and lovely murals inside. Franz Liszt's *Hungarian Coronation Mass* was played here for the first time at the coronation of Franz Joseph and Elizabeth in 1867. Classical music concerts are still hosted here some evenings.

Sample the country's varieties of wine at the **Magyar Borok Háza** (House of Hungarian Wines; Map p361; ☎ 212 1031; www.magyarborokhaza.hu; | Szentháromság tér 6; wine tasting 3500Ft; ☎ noon-8pm) across the square, under the gaze of Hungary's first king, the equestrian **Szent István szobor** (St Stephen Statue; Map p361) to the south. Behind the monument, walk along **Halászbástya** (Fishermen's Bastion; Map p361; | Szentháromság tér; adult/student 330/160Ft; ☎ 8.30am-11pm). The fanciful, neo-Gothic arcade built on the fortification wall is prime picture-taking territory with views of the river and the parliament beyond.

Tárnok utca runs southeast to Dísz tér, past which is the entrance for the **Sikló** (Funicular; Map p361; district | Szent György tér; uphill/downhill ticket adult 600/500Ft, child 3-14yr 350Ft; ☎ 7.30am-10pm). The views from the little capsule, across the Danube and over to Pest, are glorious. The Sikló takes you down the hill to Clark Ádám tér. The massive **Királyi Palota** (Royal Palace; Map p361) occupies the far end of Castle Hill; inside are the **Magyar Nemzeti Galéria** (Hungarian National Gallery; ☎ 375 7533; | Szent György tér 6; admission free, special exhibitions adult/child/family 1500/800/3000Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) and the **Budapesti Történeti Múzeum** (Budapest History Museum; ☎ 375 7533; | Szent György tér 2; adult/student 900/450Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm daily mid-May-mid-Sep, 10am-4pm Wed-Mon mid-Sep-mid-May).

GELLÉRT HILL

The 'other peak' overlooking the Danube, south of Castle Hill, is Gellért Hill. The **Szabadság szobor** (Independence Monument), a statue of a gigantic lady with a palm leaf proclaiming freedom throughout the city, sits at its top, and is visible from almost anywhere in town. The monument was erected as a tribute to the Soviet soldiers who died liberating Hungary in 1945, but the victims' names in Cyrillic let-

ters, that used to adorn the plinth, as well as the memorial statues of Soviet soldiers, were removed a decade ago.

West of the monument is the **Citadella** (☎ 365 6076; admission 300Ft; ☎ 8am-10pm). Built by the Habsburgs after the 1848 revolution to 'defend' the city from further Hungarian insurrection, it was never used as a fortress. Excellent views, exhibits, a restaurant and a hotel can be enjoyed in the Citadella. Take tram 19 along the riverfront from Clark Ádám tér and climb the stairs behind the waterfall and **Szent Gellért szobor** (St Gellért Statue), then follow the path through the park opposite the entrance to the Danubius Hotel Gellért. Or take bus 27 which runs almost to the top of the hill from XI Móricz Zsigmond körtér, southwest of the Gellért Hotel (and accessible using tram 19 and 49).

Bellow Gellért Hill is the city's most famous thermal spa, the **Gellért Fürdő** (Gellért Baths; Map p362; ☎ 466 6166; Danubius Hotel Gellért, XI Kelenhegyi út; thermal baths & swimming pool 2700Ft; ☎ 6am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat & Sun May-Sep; baths only Oct-Apr), where majestic domes arch over healing waters. This Art Nouveau palace has dreamy spas where you can soak for hours whilst enjoying its elegant and historic architecture.

SZOBOR PARK

In Buda's southwest is **Szobor Park** (Statue Park; ☎ 227 7446; www.szoborpark.hu; XXII Szabadkai út; admission 600Ft; ☎ 10am-dusk), a kind of historical dumping ground for Socialist statues deemed unsuitable since the early '90s. It's a major tourist attraction and there is a direct bus from Deák tér in Pest at 11am daily (2450Ft return, including admission). To go independently, take tram 19 from Clark Ádám tér to the XI Etele tér Terminus, then catch a yellow Volán bus to Diósd-Érd.

AQUINCUMI MÚZEUM

Seven kilometres north of Buda's centre, in Óbuda, is the **Aquincumi Múzeum** (Map pp358-9; ☎ 430 1563; III Szentendre út 139; adult/student 700/300Ft; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Oct-Apr, to 6pm May-Sep, grounds 9am) containing the heart of the most complete ruins of a 2nd-century Roman civilian town left in Hungary. Take the HÉV from the Batthyány tér metro stop.

Pest HŐSÖK TERE & AROUND

The leafy Andrassy út, Budapest's own Fifth Ave and Pest's northeastern artery, is the best

place to start your sightseeing. At its western end, Andrassy út turns into Bajcsy-Zsilinszky ut and touches Deák ter. Pest's central square, and its opposite end spills onto the wide, tiled **Hősök tere** (Heroes' Square; Map pp358-9) that bears a sprawling monument constructed to honour the millennial anniversary (1896) of the Magyar conquest of the Carpathian Basin.

Continental Europe's oldest underground – Budapest's M1 yellow line metro, constructed in the 19th century – runs beneath Andrassy út. Start your sightseeing almost at the end of the yellow line at Hősök tere, above the metro station of the same name. The tall green monument on the square showcases statues of important moustachioed tribal leaders, kings and statesmen. Across the street, the **Szépművészeti Múzeum** (Museum of Fine Arts; Map pp358-9; ☎ 469 7100; www.zszepmuveszeti.hu; XIV Hősök tere; admission free, temporary exhibitions adult/child 1200/600Ft; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Tue-Sun) houses a collection of foreign art, including an impressive number of El Grecos. Don't miss the **Múzcarnok** (Map pp358-9; ☎ 460 7000; www.mucarnok.hu; XIV Hősök tere; adult/student 600/300Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Wed & Fri-Sun, noon-8pm Thu), opposite the museum, a large contemporary art gallery that displays the work of Hungarian and international artists.

Adjacent is the oasis of **Városliget** (City Park; Map pp358-9), which has boating on a small lake in the summer, ice skating in winter, and duck-feeding year round. The park's schizophrenic **Vajdahunyad Vár** (Vajdahunyad Castle; Map pp358-9) was built in varied architectural styles typical of historic Hungary, including baroque, Romanesque, Gothic and Tudor. Originally a millennial celebration exhibit hall, the castle now contains the **Mezősági Múzeum** (Agriculture Museum; ☎ 343 0573; XIV Városliget; adult/student 500/200Ft; ☎ Tue-Fri & Sun 10am-5pm, Sat to 6pm), exciting only for those interested in Hungarian viticulture. In the park's northern corner is **Széchenyi Fürdő** (Széchenyi Baths; Map pp358-9; ☎ 363 3210; XIV Állatkerti út 11; admission 1700Ft; ☎ 6am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat & Sun), its cupola visible from anywhere in the park. Built in 1908, this place has an amazing outdoor pool that is open summer and winter, to cool you down or warm you up. Have a look inside all of the various entrances: the peaceful atmosphere of the indoor thermal baths, saunas and massage area contrasts with the buzzing atmosphere of the outside pool.

Walk southwest from Hősök tere on Andrassy út, to see many grand, World Heritage-listed 19th-century buildings. Stop for coffee

and cake at **Lukács** (☎ 302 8747; VI Andrassy út 70; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri; 10am-8pm Sat & Sun), the old haunt of the dreaded secret police, whose headquarters have now been turned into the **Terror Háza** (Terror House; Map p362; ☎ 374 2600; www.terrorhaza.hu, Hungarian only; VI Andrassy út 60; admission foreigners 3000Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, to 7.30pm Sat & Sun), almost next door. The museum specialises in accounts of spying and atrocities, and always attracts a crowd. Although it's an interesting account of Hungary's tough times during WWII and under the Communist regime, the museum has been criticised for its lack of exhibits on the Holocaust.

Further down on Andrassy út, the opulence of the 1884 neo-Renaissance **Magyar Állami Operaház** (Hungarian State Opera House; Map p362; ☎ 332 8197; www.opera.hu; VI Andrassy út 22; tours 1200Ft; ☎ 3pm & 4pm) is a real treat; try to make it to an evening performance here. **Váci utca**, in Pest's touristy centre, is an extensive pedestrian shopping street. It begins at the southwest terminus of the yellow line, Vörösmarty tér. The **Nagycsarnok** (Great Market; Map p362; IX Vámház körút 1-3; ☎ 6am-5pm Mon, to 6pm Tue-Fri, to 2pm Sat) is a vast steel and glass structure. There are produce vendors on the ground floor, souvenirs and snacks on the 1st floor.

PARLIAMENT & AROUND

Other sights and museums are scattered about Pest. The huge, riverfront **Parlament** (Parliament; Map p362; ☎ 441 4904; www.mkogy.hu; V Kossuth Lajos tér 1-3; adult/student 1700/800Ft; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat, to 2pm Sun for Hungarian-language tours), apparently modelled on London's Westminster, but with crazy spires, dominates Kossuth Lajos tér. English-language tours are at 10am and 2pm daily.

Across the park is the **Néprajzi Múzeum** (Ethnography Museum; Map p362; ☎ 473 2400; www.hem.hu; V Kossuth Lajos tér 12; adult/student 500/250Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), which has an extensive collection of national costumes among the permanent displays on folk life and art. Look for the mummified right hand of St Stephen in the chapel of the colossal **Szent István Bazilika** (Map p362; ☎ 311 0839; V Szent István tér; church admission free, treasury adult/student 200/150Ft, dome 500/400Ft; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 1-4pm Sun) near Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út.

JEWISH QUARTER

Northeast of the Astoria metro stop is what remains of the Jewish quarter. The twin-towered, 1859 **Nagy Zsinagóga** (Great Synagogue; Map

p362; ☎ 342 8949; VII Dohány utca 2; synagogue & museum adult/child 1000/400Ft; 📍 10am-5pm Mon-Thu, 10am-2pm Fri & Sun) has a museum with a harrowing exhibit on the Holocaust, and behind the synagogue is a **Holocaust Memorial** in the shape of a weeping willow. Funded by the actor Tony Curtis, it's dedicated to those who perished in the death camps. A few blocks south along the *kis körút* (little ring road) is the **Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum** (Hungarian National Museum; Map p362; ☎ 338 2122; www.hnm.hu; VIII Múzeum körút 14-16; adult/student 800/400Ft; 📍 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), with its historic relics from archaeological finds to coronation regalia.

BUDAPEST EYE

For a different view, rise above it all in the **Budapest Eye** (Map p362; ☎ 238 7623; www.budapesteye.hu; VI Váci út 1-3; adult/child 3000/2000Ft, extra to take photos; 📍 10am-6pm May-Oct), a hot-air balloon tethered to the West End City Centre Shopping Mall.

TOURS

To tour the Danube, **Mahart PassNave sightseeing cruises** (☎ 484 4013; www.mahartpassnave.hu; V Vigadó tér Pier; 📍 Apr-Oct) runs 1½-hour sightseeing cruises (adult/child 1900/950Ft) and lunch and dinner buffet cruises (2800/1400Ft). On Wednesdays and Sundays from May to September, folklore evening cruises (9500Ft) include regional dishes, Romani music and folk dancing. Tickets can be purchased at the pier before departure.

For a fun way to tour the city, day or night, **Yellow Zebra Bikes** (Map p362; ☎ 266 8777; www.yellowzebrabikes.com; V Sütő utca 2, in courtyard; 📍 8.30am-8pm May-Sep, 10am-6pm Nov-Feb, 9.30am-7.30pm Mar-Apr & Oct) offers bicycle rentals (one day 3000Ft). The office has internet access and is quite the hang-out for English speakers. The same company runs **Absolute Walking Tours** (☎ 06 30 211 8861; www.absolutetours.com), and both have tours departing from Deák tér. You could take the entertaining 3½-hour town walking tour (adult/student 4000/3500Ft), but the best tours on offer are the Hammer & Sickle and Pub Crawl (adult/student 5000/4500 Ft) tours, which give you a whiff of life under socialism, and an idea of modern Hungarian drinking habits with a lick of the strong stuff.

SLEEPING

Accommodation prices and standards are pretty reasonable in Budapest. Many year-round hostels occupy middle floors of old apartment buildings (with or without a lift) in central Pest. Come summer (July to late

August), student dormitories at colleges and universities open to travellers. HI-affiliated Mellow Mood Ltd (p360) runs many summer, and a few year-round, hostels in town and has stands at Keleti and Déli train stations. Tourinform and the Hungarian Youth Hostel Association publish a youth-hostel brochure you can pick up in Tourinform's offices and various hostel receptions, or read online (www.youthhostels.hu).

Private rooms assigned by travel agents are plentiful, but not always central. Costs range from 4000Ft to 7500Ft for a single, 9000Ft to 12,000Ft for a double and 12,000Ft to 14,000Ft for a small apartment, with a supplement if you stay fewer than four nights. Ibusz (p360) has the most extensive listings in town (some with photos on its website) and Vista Visitor Centre (p360) is good for apartments. Two other private-room brokers:

Best Hotel Service (Map p362; ☎ 318 4848; www.besthotelservice.hu; V Sütő utca 2; 📍 8am-8pm)

To-Ma Travel Agency (Map p362; ☎ 353 0819; www.tomatour.hu/beut/; V Oktober 6 utca 22; 📍 9am-noon & 1-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun)

Buda

BUDGET

Zugligeti Niche Camping (☎ 200 8346; www.campingniche.hu; XII Zugligeti út 101; camp sites 1/2 people 1900/2800Ft, caravan sites 1/2 people 2800/3700Ft; 📍 May-Oct) An excellent option for mixing a city break with a hiking holiday: the camp's location is in the Buda Hills at the bottom station of a chair lift. The camp is a bit cramped, but has good shade and there's a restaurant nearby. Take bus 158 from Moszkva tér to the terminus.

Back Pack Guesthouse (Map pp358-9; ☎ 385 8946; www.backpackbudapest.hu; XI Takács Menyhért utca 33; dm 2500-3000Ft, r 7000Ft; 📍 📍) A hippy-ish, friendly place with an oasis-of-peace feel. There's a lush garden in the back with a hammock stretched invitingly between two trees. Dorm rooms have five to 11 beds, and there's one small double. Take bus 7 (from Erzsébet hid or Keleti train station in Pest), tram 49 from the *kis körút* in central Pest, or tram 19 from Batthyány tér in Buda.

Citadella Hotel (Map p361; ☎ 466 5794; www.citadella.hu; XI Citadella sétány, Gellért Hill; dm/r €10/51; 📍 📍) What could be better than sleeping in a historic old fortress? Well, OK, the furniture could be newer, but the place has great views. Solo travellers may prefer somewhere more central, as it's a bit isolated and the disco can get loud.

Take bus 27 from XI Móricz Zsigmond körtér in Buda, then hike.

Martos Hostel (Map pp358-9; ☎ 209 4883; reception@hotel.martos.bme.hu; XI Sztoczek utca 5-7; d €32, s/d with shared bathroom €16/20; 📍 📍) Primarily student accommodation, Martos is open year-round to all. It's a few minutes' walk from Petőfi Bridge (or take tram 4 or 6).

MIDRANGE

Büro Panzió (Map p361; ☎ 212 2928/29; buro-panzio@axelero.hu; II Dékán utca 3; s 6000-8000Ft, d 10,000-12,000Ft; 📍 📍) Recently revamped and redressed, Büro now wears gleaming white walls, the beds are covered in white linen and small orange lamps light up the rooms. The central Moszkva tér transportation hub – metro stop, tram stations – is barely seconds away.

Hotel Kulturinnov (Map p361; ☎ 224 8100; www.mkahotel.hu; I Szentháromság tér 6; s/d €64/80; 📍 📍) A small hotel sitting in the belly of the grandiose Hungarian Culture Foundation, with an L-shaped corridor leading to its 16 rooms. The feeling is relaxed and the décor longs for the '80s, but the most impressive are the surroundings: a gorgeous stately building, on top of Castle Hill, and of course the low prices.

Gold Hotel (Map p361; ☎ 209 4775; www.goldhotel.hu; I Hegyalja út 14; s €64-84, d €74-94; 📍 📍 📍) A rather odd castle-like building at Gellért Hill, with a golden yellow façade and a 'tower feature' at the front, where rooms have extra little seating areas by the window. The rooms are in terracottas and creams, with good, large beds and plenty of light. Take bus 8 from Elizabeth Bridge or bus 78 from Keleti train station in Pest.

Burg Hotel (Map p361; ☎ 212 0269; www.burghotelbudapest.com; I Szentháromság tér 7-8; s €85-105, d €99-115; 📍 📍 📍) A fantastic combination of location and price: the affordable Burg is at the centre of Castle Hill. Ask for a room overlooking Mátyás Templom for a truly historic wake-up view. The rooms are simple, with warm peachy walls compensating for a slight lack of light. The reception staff are friendly and informative.

TOP END

Danubius Hotel Gellért (Map p362; ☎ 889 5500; www.danubiusgroup.com/gellert; XI Szent Gellért tér 1; s €66-130, €150-210; 📍 📍 📍 📍) This turn-of-the-(20th)-century grand dame of the Danube is worth peeking into even if you don't choose to stay here. Constructed between 1916 and 1918, its once-legendary elegance is now more on the faded side, and though it's not quite up to

today's luxury standards, staying here guarantees use of big, fluffy bathrobes you can wear on your way to free access to the Gellért Baths (p364). **Purr.**

Art'otel Budapest (Map p361; ☎ 487 9487; www.artotel.hu; I Bem rakpart 16-19; r €198-318; 📍 📍 📍 📍) Budapest's supermodern designer hotel, the Art'otel was dreamed up by the American Donald Sultan, and is part of a group of hotel-galleries. The rooms are a sleek mix of red, white and black, with Sultan's artworks adorning each one. The domino and needle-and-thread carpets lead you from the modern glass building through to the four old town houses in the back. Rooms for disabled travellers are available.

Pest

BUDGET

Caterina Hostel (Map p362; ☎ 269 5990; www.caterinahostel.hu; VI Teréz körút 30, 3rd fl; dm €10, r €27; 📍 📍) A cosy place with a clean and bright interior, excellent for travellers who want to feel at home. The only drawback is that there is no lounge, but the modern, friendly feel and accommodating owners make it a good choice. Rooms have TVs.

Museum Guest House (Map p362; ☎ 318 9508; www.budapesthostel.com; VIII Mikszáth Kálmán tér 4, 1st fl; dm 2600-3000Ft; 📍 📍) Wind your way through the maze of rooms. Eclectic décor includes some bunk lofts with blanket curtains and red log bedsteads. No doubles. The building is on a calm square off the main road.

Aquarium Youth Hostel (Map pp358-9; ☎ 322 0502; www.budapesthostel.com; VII Alsóerdősor utca 12, 2nd fl; dm/s/d 2800/3900/7800Ft; 📍) Associated with the Museum Guest House, but this place has more basic bunk-bed rooms, as well as doubles.

Red Bus Hostel (Map p362; ☎ 266 0136; www.redbusbudapest.hu; V Semmelweis utca 14, 1st fl; dm 3000Ft, r 7900Ft; 📍 📍) Congenial owners are part of the reason that the very central Red Bus has such a faithful following. Spacious rooms with colourful walls and wood floors are another. Next door is an associated English-language used-book store. There's a **Red Bus II** (Map p362; ☎ 321 7100; VI Szövetség utca 35; dm/s/d 2700/6500/7500Ft; 📍 📍) near Keleti train station.

Garibaldi Guesthouse (Map p362; ☎ 302 3457; baldi.guest@hotmail.com; V Garibaldi utca 5; per person €20-45) This old building belongs to an eccentric, multilingual owner who has many apartments on several floors. Double, triple, quad and five-person guestrooms have shared kitchens and en suite bathrooms and are furnished

with crazy deer-in-the-woods tapestries, plush pink draperies and odd antiques. Some small rooms with shared bath (€18) are in the inquisitive owner's flat.

Other recommended hostels:

Station Guesthouse (Map pp358-9; ☎ 221 8864; www.stationguesthouse.hu; XIV Mexikói út 36/b; dm 1900-2700Ft, r 6400Ft; ☒ ☑) This is a party house: there's a 24-hour bar, pool table and occasional live music. Take red bus 7 from Keleti train station.

Yellow Submarine Hostel (Map p362; ☎ 331 9896; www.yellowsubmarinehostel.com; VI Teréz körút 56, 3rd fl; dm/s/d 2800/7000/8000Ft; ☒ ☑) Overlooking busy ring road, near Nyugati.

Best Hostel (Map p362; ☎ 332 4934; www.besthostel.hu; VI Podmaniczky utca 27, 1st fl; dm/s/d 3000/4200/8400Ft; ☒ ☑) Closest to Nyugati train station; not too, too noisy.

Mellow Mood Central Hostel (Map p362; ☎ 411 1310; www.mellowmoodhostel.com; V Bécsi utca; dm in 4-6-/8-bed room 4100/3600/3200Ft, tw 5700Ft; ☒ ☑)

MIDRANGE

Hostel Marco Polo (Map p362; ☎ 413 2555; www.marcolohostel.com; VII Nyár utca 6; dm 3800-5800Ft, s 10,800-12,800Ft, d 14,200-17,000Ft; ☒ ☑) With telephones and satellite TV in the rooms, and a bar-restaurant in the cellar, this Mellow Mood Ltd hostel is more like a hotel. Pastel greens and yellows colour the nifty rooms. The neighbourhood is not the world's most polished, but it's safe.

Hotel Queen Mary (Map p362; ☎ 413 3510; www.hotelqueenmary.hu; district V Kertész utca 34; s €50-70, d €60-85; ☒ ☑) Among the trendy bars and cafés of Kertész street, this hotel, in a 19th-century building, has neat rooms with modern furniture and hanging potted plants. If you're travelling in a group, ask about the triples (€75 to €105) and quads (€84 to €112).

Leo Panzió (Map p362; ☎ 266 9041; www.leopanzió.hu; V Kossuth Lajos utca 2/A, 2nd fl; s €45-66, d €69-82; ☒ ☑) Just steps from Váci utca, the Leo is in the middle of everything. Rooms have an Art Deco-ish flair with cherry-stained beds inset with blonde wood. Some have views of Elizabeth Bridge. The tiny bathrooms sparkle.

Kálmán Ház (Map p362; ☎ 216 4635; www.kalvinhouse.hu; IX Gönczy Pál utca 6; s €55-62, d €65-82; ☒ ☑) One of the few historic pensions in town – the Victorian antiques and high ceilings are a standout. Laundry service and internet access are a bonus. The restored 19th-century, coral-colour building is near Kálmán tér metro station and Ráday utca nightlife.

Radio Inn (Map p362; ☎ 342 8347; www.radioinn.hu; VI Benczúr utca 19; s €52-70, d €75-86; ☒ ☑) Spacious apartments with full kitchens, sitting areas and one or two bedrooms are on offer here, and they are perfect if you wish to stay for longer and really feel at home in Budapest. Embassies are your neighbours on the quiet, tree-lined street near Bajza utca metro stop (M1 yellow line).

Other good options:

Hotel Fortuna (Map pp358-9; ☎ 288 8100; www.fortunahajo.hu; Szent István Park, waterfront; s with shared bathroom €16-20, d €24-30, tr €32-40; ☑) Float on a boat (hotel) on the Danube. Doubles with bathroom and satellite TV cost €60 to €80.

Dunaparts (☎ 225 9003; www.dunaparts.com; apt for 1-2 people €55-60) Perhaps one of the best places for renting apartments, this is an internet booking agency with one- and two-bedroom apartments in central Pest. The friendly staff come and pick you up from the airport, free of charge.

Hotel Ibis Centrum (Map p362; ☎ 215 8585; www.ibis-centrum.hu; IX Ráday utca 6; s €59-69, d €85-106; ☑ ☒ ☑) So, so near the bar and café scene. The style is chain-hotel modern and modular.

Hotel Margitsziget (Map pp358-9; ☎ 329 2949; hotelmargitsziget@axelero.hu; XIII Margitsziget; r 14,500Ft; ☑ ☒) Good-value budget resort; there are tennis courts, a swimming pool and sauna.

TOP END

Corinthia Grand Hotel Royal (Map p362; ☎ 479 4000; www.corinthiahotels.com; VII Erzsébet körút 43-49; s €140-250, d €160-350; ☑ ☒ ☑ ☑) Pest's pride and joy of five-star beauties has been carefully reconstructed in the Austro-Hungarian style of heavy drapes, sparkling chandeliers and large, luxurious ballrooms, and has won prizes for best hotel architecture.

Danubius Grand Hotel Margitsziget (Map pp358-9; ☎ 889 4700; www.danubiusgroup.com/grandhotel; XIII Margitsziget; s €131-164, d €150-184; ☑ ☒ ☑ ☑) The Margaret Island setting is a green oasis in the city, and the 1873 splendour of the hotel contrasts with the contemporary nature of its sister, the **Danubius Thermal Hotel Margitsziget** (Map pp358-9; ☎ 889 4700; www.danubiusgroup.com/thermalhotel; XIII Margitsziget; s €144-174, d €164-194; ☑ ☒ ☑ ☑). The two are connected via an underground passageway and guests at both enjoy free use of the upscale baths at the Thermal.

Four Seasons Hotel (Map p362; ☎ 268 6000; www.fourseasons.com; district V Roosevelt tér 5-6; r €270-700; ☑ ☒ ☑ ☑) Restored to Dr Seuss-esque elegance with mushroom-shaped windows, whimsical ironwork and glittering gold decorative tiles on the exterior, the Four Seasons

inhabits the Art Nouveau Gresham Palace and provides superb views of the Danube through Roosevelt Park.

EATING

It's becoming more common to find both Hungarian and international cuisines on the streets of Budapest. There are restaurants so modern and trendy that they could sit proudly in the streets of Manhattan, and others that are oblivious to the concept of change, with traditional food and old-fashioned décor. Both types can be equally good (or bad), and there's no guarantee that going posh will result in better nosh. In any case, eating out is affordable in Budapest, and even on the tightest of budgets you should be able to squeeze in one upmarket restaurant.

Fast-food restaurants and take-away windows abound on the ring roads and in pedestrian areas. The train and bus stations all have food stands.

Ráday utca and Liszt Ferenc tér are the two most popular traffic-free streets. The moment the weather warms up, tables and umbrellas spring up on the pavements and the people of Budapest crowd the streets. Both areas have tons of cafés, restaurants, snack shops and bars.

Buda

BUDGET

Fény utca piac (market; Map p361; II Fény at Retek utca; ☒ 6am-5pm Mon-Fri, 6am-2pm Sat) Next to Mammut I Shopping Mall, this market has picnic supplies and produce on the ground level and food stands and butcher shops on the 1st floor.

Bambi Presszó (☎ 212 3171; II Frankel Leó út 2-4; mains 500-800Ft; ☒ 8am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9am-8pm Sat-Sun) Old plastic plants hang above your head here and plastic dominoes whack the plastic tables. This is how the old Communist *presszó* bars used to be and what makes it a cult eatery among young and old Budapestians. The food is basic, but the omelettes and sandwiches taste great. Many come just to have a beer and dream of the old times.

Fortuna Önkielgáláló (Map p361; ☎ 375 2401; I Hess András utca 4, 1st fl; mains 500-900Ft; ☒ 11.30am-2.30pm Mon-Fri; ☒) For a bite to eat near the castle, climb the passageway stairs to this cafeteria, which serves all the fried favourites.

Pita House (Map p361; ☎ 315 1479; II Margit körút 105; mains 500-800Ft; ☒ 8am-midnight; ☒) This is an excellent choice if you're in Moszkva tér, with tasty gyros and falafel pitas. A helping from the salad bar costs 410Ft.

MIDRANGE

Café Miró (Map p361; ☎ 375 5458; I Úri utca 30; mains 690-2190Ft; ☒ 9am-midnight) Most restaurants on Castle Hill have surly service and are full of tourists. This arty café is no exception, but the soups and Greek salad are good. For dessert there are plenty of cakes to choose from, and the delicious *erdei gyümölcskremleves* (forest berry soup) is topped with a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

Tabáni Kakas (Map p361; ☎ 375 7165; I Atilla út 27; mains 1900Ft; ☒ noon-midnight) Everything here is cooked in goose fat, and delicious it is. The place is old-fashioned and dimly lit, and the service friendly. Try the crispy goose leg with juicy, cooked red cabbage and potato and onion mash – absolutely ravishing.

TOP END

Hemingway (Map pp358-9; ☎ 381 0522; XI Kosztolányi Dezső tér 2, Feneketlen-tó; mains 1850-3100Ft; ☒ noon-midnight; ☒) A bit of panache: dine on a terrace overlooking the Bottomless Lake. Entrées include lamb cutlet with a blue-cheese mint sauce.

Mongolian Barbecue (Map p361; ☎ 353 6363; XII Márvány utca 19/A; mains before/after 5pm 1990/3690Ft; ☒ noon-midnight; ☒) Choose your meat and watch as it's grilled in front of you. The all-you-can-eat price includes as much house beer and wine as you can sink, too.

Pest

BUDGET

Fridi Papa (Map p362; ☎ 351 0197; VII Király utca 55; mains 400-700Ft; ☒ 11am-8pm Mon-Sat) A popular place for a basic, hearty, no-frills Hungarian meal where you sit elbow-to-elbow with workers, riff-raff, families and tourists. For the price there's a surprising amount of white-meat chicken in the soup.

Kisharang (Map p362; ☎ 269 3861; V Október 6 utca 17; mains 490-850Ft; ☒ 11am-8pm Mon-Fri, 11.30am-4.30pm Sat & Sun) Lantern-like lamps hang low over chequered tablecloths in this wonderful little *étkezdé* (canteen). It serves simple dishes that change daily; expect to wait for a table.

Kis Italia (Map p362; ☎ 269 3145; V Szemere utca 22; pizzas & pastas 760-990Ft; ☒ 11am-10pm Mon-Sat; ☒) Descend into this cellar restaurant for interesting pizza combinations – such as bacon, onion and pickle – at low prices. Just ignore the cheesy synthesizer player in the corner; he's not too loud.

Ráday Étkezdé (Map p362; ☎ 219 5451; IX Ráday utca 29; mains 420-650Ft; ☒ 6am-4pm Mon-Fri) Of the many takeaway windows and self-service places

among the cafés and bars on Ráday utca, this is a reliable choice. The *főzelék*, a sort of creamed vegetable stew, is particularly good.

Nagycsarnok (Great Market; Map p362; IX Vámház körút 1-3; ☎ 6am-5pm Mon, to 6pm Tue-Fri, to 2pm Sat) This is Budapest's main market, selling fruit and vegetables, deli items, fish and meat. Food stalls on the upper level sell beer, sausage and tasty *lánogs* among other quick eats. There's also a cafeteria – a bit of a tourist trap – with a Romani violinist and midrange prices.

Grocery-store chains are everywhere in Pest; Kaiser's has a branch facing Blaha Lujza tér and one opposite Nyugati train station on Nyugati tér.

MIDRANGE

Al-Amir (Map p362; ☎ 352 1422; VII Király utca 17; mains 700-1500Ft; ☎ noon-11pm Mon-Sat; 1-11pm Sun) Good Middle Eastern food is hard to come by in Hungary, but this place is excellent. Pictures of mysterious eyes behind veils and camels in the desert decorate the spacious, otherwise plain space. Order either a meze-type meal, combining the many starters, or try the kebabs and a nice tabbouleh. No alcohol is served.

Paprika Vendéglő (Map pp358-9; ☎ 06 70 574 6508; I Dózsa György út 72; mains 950-1600Ft; ☎ 11am-11pm) Step inside what looks like a rustic Hungarian farm house on the very urban street bordering City Park (M1 yellow line, Hősök tere). Good game dishes.

Angyalok Konyhája (Map p362; ☎ 412 0427; XIII Vizegrádi utca; mains 1080-1480Ft; ☎ 11am-11pm Sun-Thu, to midnight Fri & Sat; ☎) Formerly known as Wabisabi, the food here is organic and vegan-friendly, with strong Asian influences – a rarity in meat-

crazy Hungary. The portions are huge, although not massively delicious. The décor is a mix of Arabic and Japanese, floor seating on cushions and shoes off.

Other recommendations:

Vista Café (Map p362; ☎ 268 0888; VI Paulay Ede utca 7; mains 800-1600Ft; ☎ 9am-11pm Mon-Fri, 10am-11pm Sat & Sun) Hungarian, Mediterranean, Italian – a little of everything, including free internet access.

Kék Rózsa (Map p362; ☎ 342 8981; VII Wesselényi utca 9; mains 850-1600Ft; ☎ 11am-10pm) Three-course Hungarian menus 1200Ft to 1800Ft.

Taverna Dionysos (Map p362; ☎ 318 1222; V Belgrád rakpart 16; mains 1250-2750Ft; ☎ noon-midnight; ☎) A bit of Mediterranean sun and juicy *stifado* (a Greek stew with meat, onions and tomato).

TOP END

Fatál (Map p362; ☎ 266 2607; V Váci utca 67, cnr Pintér utca; mains 1580-2490Ft; ☎ 11.30am-2am) A whimsical menu prefaces the fun at this cellar restaurant with medieval adornment. The homy Hungarian dishes are served in gigantic portions. We've heard comment that waiters can be brusque with foreigners, but that wasn't our experience. Book ahead.

Bagolyvár (Owl's Castle; Map pp358-9; ☎ 468 3110; XIV Állatkert út 2; mains 1600-3500Ft; ☎ noon-11pm) Gundel's first sibling, the Owl's Castle, is known for Hungarian classics done impeccably. The hidden courtyard tables are a pleasant surprise.

Borvendéglő 1894 (Map pp358-9; ☎ 468 4040; XIV Állatkert út 2; mains 1650-2700Ft; ☎ 6-11pm Tue-Sat) This wine cellar is one of the two sister restaurants to the world-famous (and overpriced) Gundel restaurant around the corner. The best things about the place are the choice of wine for tasting and the traditional Hungarian drinking snacks – goose cracklings, steak tartar and *pogacs* (salty, buttery biscuits).

Múzeum (Map p362; ☎ 267 0375; VIII Múzeum körút 12; mains 2400-4400Ft; ☎ 10.30am-1.30am) *Fin-de-siècle* ambience, wide lanterns hanging low from the high ceilings, the Múzeum is like an old friend to many of Budapest's diners. The Hungarian food is good and varied, the service is smooth and the place stays open late.

DRINKING

One of Budapest's ceaseless wonders is the number of bars, cellars, cafés, clubs and general places to drink. The cafés usually serve cakes, and the bars almost always have live music, and, if you can see through the smoke curtains, lovely (or at least interesting) décor.

In the spring and summer months thousands of outdoor pavement tables spring up all over the city. The best places to drink are in Pest (Buda's too sleepy to stay up all night), especially along Liszt Ferenc tér and Radáy utca; the squares are pedestrian-only and have a positively festive feel during the summer.

Buda

Kisrábló (Map pp358-9; ☎ 209 1588; XI Zenta utca 3; ☎ 11am-2am) The eclectic pub décor here resembles a boat's hull, busy masthead and all. Take tram 19 or 49 one stop past Danubius Hotel Gellért.

Zöld Párdon (Map pp358-9; XI Iríni József utca at Petöfi hid; Map pp358-9; ☎ 9am-6am mid-Apr–mid-Sep) College students on a budget flock to the big, seasonal beer garden and disco near Petöfi Bridge.

Pest

Sark (Map p362; ☎ 328 0753; VII Klauzál tér 14; ☎ 10am-2am Mon-Thu & Sun, 10am-3am Fri & Sat) A small bar on two levels with an airy ground floor and a large photo mural decorating the space. Downstairs is a smoky cellar where a Romani band plays every Tuesday (see p372) and a mix of foreigners, Hungarians and Roma jump around together. During the day it's a quiet place, nice for a coffee, but come evening time, Sark gets packed and the atmosphere is fab.

Szimpla/Dupla (Map p362; ☎ 342 8991; VII Kertész utca 48; ☎ noon-2am) Perhaps it was the espressos that inspired the name ('szimpla' means single and 'dupla' double) of these two excellent places. The café and restaurant are connected by a long, atmospheric cellar bar and make a kind of two-in-one experience. The furniture is distressed, the cutlery and crockery rescued from flea markets, and the crowd super relaxed. There's live jazz on Fridays.

Eckermann (Map p362; ☎ 374 4076; VI Andrássy út 24; ☎ 9am-11pm Mon-Sat; 10am-10pm Sun) Part of the Goethe Institut, this airy café attracts an intellectual crowd that is invariably either reading the newspapers or discussing what they've just read in the newspapers. They are apparently refugees from the now tourist-occupied Művész across the street. Try the plentiful Viennese coffee, served in bowls, and excellent pastries, perfect for breakfast. In the evenings Eckermann turns out the lights and lights up candles, and the clientele sips wine and discusses tomorrow's news.

Centrál Kávéház (Map p362; ☎ 266 4572; V Károlyi Mihály utca 9; ☎ 7am-1am) Having been closed for a

long time, Centrál Kávéház is once again one of the finest coffee houses in the city. The interior has been carefully reconstructed to resemble its original 19th-century décor, with high, engraved ceilings, lace-curtained windows, tall plants, elegant, dainty coffee cups and professional service. You can have an omelette breakfast here, eat a full-on meal, or just sit down with a coffee or beer and enjoy the atmosphere.

For a cup of coffee in exquisite Art Nouveau surroundings, two places are particularly historical: **Gerbeaud** (Map p362; ☎ 429 9000; V Vörösmarty tér 7; ☎ 9am-9pm; ☎ ☎), Budapest's cake-and-coffee-culture king, serving since 1870. Or sit your bum on the same chairs where Hungary's dreaded ÁVO secret police members sat at **Lukács** (Map p362; ☎ 302 8747; VI Andrássy út 70; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-8pm Sat & Sun), now inside the CIB Bank headquarters.

ENTERTAINMENT

Budapest has a nightlife that can keep you up for days on end. And we don't mean you trying to get to sleep in your hotel room while the club next door pounds its techno against your walls. There are nightclubs, bars, live concerts – classical and folk – Hungarian traditional dancing nights, opera treats, ballet, DJ bars and random Cinetrip (www.cinetrip.hu) club nights at the thermal spas. Yes, you heard us right. It's you, your swimsuit, your mates and a bunch of strangers, wading waist deep in thermal waters to thumping beats, and it's fantastic.

Ticket prices are quite reasonable by Western European standards, and the venues are often stunning. To find out what's on, contact Tourinform (see p360) or ticket offices, or check out the free, bimonthly *Programme Magazine* (available at tourist spots), and the free, weekly *Pesti Est* (available at restaurants and clubs). The weekly *Budapest Sun* (www.budapestsun.com) has a 10-day event calendar online, and Budapest Week Online (www.budapestweek.com) has events, music and movie listings.

Gay & Lesbian Venues

Angyal (Map p362; ☎ 351 6490; VII Szövetség utca 33; ☎ 10pm-5am Fri & Sat) Budapest's flagship gay nightclub has three bars and plays some high-energy dance mixes. Men only on Saturday (admission 800Ft).

Café Eklektika (Map p362; ☎ 266 3054; V Semmelweis utca 21; ☎ noon-midnight Mon-Fri, 5pm-midnight Sat & Sun) The town's only real lesbian venue attracts a mixed, beat-generation-type crowd.

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Menza (Map p362; ☎ 413 1482; V Liszt Ferenc tér 2; mains 890-1990Ft; ☎ 11am-11pm; ☎) Probably the most popular restaurant in Budapest, Menza is a visual and gastronomic delight. The spacious restaurant's design is all retro shapes and colours, futuristic lampshades from the '60s and old plastic-letter wall-hanging menu boards with exquisite offerings such as pumpkin soup garnished with balsamic vinaigrette and toasted pumpkin seeds. One of the best dishes is the roast pork tenderloin with rose lentil purée and roasted potato wedges. The house wine is good. Eat at Menza, we implore you.

Live Music & Theatre

Magyar Állami Operaház (Hungarian State Opera House; Map p362; ☎ 332 8197; www.opera.hu; VI Andrásy út 22) Feel a bit royal and get a box and some binoculars at this amazing, gilt-laden place that was built in 1884. Every opera performance is an event with a capital E. The ballet company performs here as well.

Liszt Ferenc Zeneakadémia (Map p362; ☎ 342 0179; www.musicacademy.hu; VI Liszt Ferenc tér 8; ☎ 10am-2pm Mon-Fri, 2-8pm Sat & Sun for ticket office) You can hear the musicians practising outside this great Art Deco hall, where the 1907 Music Academy hosts excellent classical symphony concerts. Tickets are sold only at the onsite ticket office.

Kalamajka Táncház (Map p362; ☎ 354 3400; www.aranytiz.hu, Hungarian only; V Arany János utca 10; ☎ 9pm-2am Sat) The Kalamajka is an excellent place to hear authentic Hungarian music, especially the Saturday night dance specials where everyone gets up and takes part.

Fonó Budai Zeneház (☎ 206 5300; www.fono.hu; XI Sztregova utca 3; concerts 700-1000ft) The best place in Budapest for folk music of any kind, from Hungarian, Transylvanian or Balkan Romani, to Klezmer, tango and even sometimes a didgeridoo night. Check its website for upcoming events.

Sark (Map p362; ☎ 328 0753; VII Klauzál tér 14; entry 400ft; ☎ 10am-2am Mon-Thu & Sun, to 3am Fri & Sat) For excellent Romani music on Tuesday nights, come here and dance away to Szilvási Gypsy Folk Band (www.szilvasigypsy.hu), a band that has a little following and that gets the crowd doing impressive Hungarian-Romani dances.

Classical concerts are held regularly in the city's churches, including Mátyás Templom (p364) on Castle Hill in Buda.

Useful ticket brokers are **Music Mix** (Map p362; ☎ 266 1655; V Váci utca 33; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat) and **Vigadó Jegyiroda** (Map p362; ☎ 327 4322; V Vigadó tér 6; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Fri).

Nightclubs

Clubbing in Budapest can mean anything from a floor-thumping techno club to a hip place to hang out and listen to jazz. Cover charges range from 200Ft to 1000Ft.

Cha Cha Cha (Map p362; V Kálvin tér metro station; ☎ 11am-5am) Dozens of jeans and corduroy trousers were sacrificed to upholster the furniture in metro station-based Cha Cha Cha, Budapest's hippest bar-club with the city's best DJs playing records until the first morning trains start running, so the punters

can get home. Things don't get started till at least 11pm.

Gödör Klub (Map p362; ☎ 06 20 943 5463; V Erzsébet tér; ☎ 2pm-2am) A large underground club (with a glass ceiling revealing the square above) provides the venue for truly eclectic live music – from world beat to the Doors to jazz – played to a local audience of all ages.

Trafó Bár Tangó (Map p362; ☎ 456 2049; IX Lilliom utca 41; ☎ 6pm-1am) An arty crowd makes the scene beneath the eponymous cultural house and exhibit space. Latin, jazz and disco tunes.

SHOPPING

Apart from the usual folk arts, wines and spirits, food and music, there are a few interesting flea markets and some great young-designer shops. Tons of shops along Váci utca (p365) and stands on the top floor of the Nagycsarnok (p365) sell Hungarian souvenirs, but the real souvenir-shopper's paradise is the old town centre at Szentendre (p374), just 40 minutes away by commuter rail.

Folkart Kézművesház (Map p362; ☎ 318 5143; V Régiposta utca 12; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat) Some of the most authentic handmade folk crafts available in Budapest. You can buy embroidered folk costumes from Kalocsa, leatherwork horsewhips from the plains, and woven items from across the country.

Rózsavölgyi Music Shop (Map p362; ☎ 318 3500; V Szervita tér 5; ☎ 9.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat) Classical and folk music CDs and tapes are on sale here.

Retrock (Map p362; ☎ 318 1007; www.retrock.com; V Ferenc István utca 28; ☎ 10.30am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, to 4.30pm Sat) An excellent designer/vintage clothes shop, where a bunch of young Hungarian and international designers produce kitschy, stylish and always unique clothes at affordable prices.

There's an excellent selection of Hungarian wines at the **Magyar Borok Háza** (House of Hungarian Wines; Map p361; ☎ 212 1031; www.magyarborokhaza.hu; I Szentháromság tér 6; ☎ noon-8pm) in Buda, and of fruit brandies and wine at the **Magyar Palinka Háza** (Map p362; ☎ 235 0488; VIII Rákóczi út 17; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat) in Pest.

Three markets take place in Budapest during the week, each a little different from the other. The closest to the city centre is **Városligeti Bolhapiac** (Map pp358-9; ☎ 7am-2pm Sat & Sun) at Petőfi Csarnok in the City Park. There is junk and antiques, and the best things are to be found early in the morning. The real market

mamma though is the **Ecséri** (XIX Nagykőrösi út 156; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 7am-3pm Sat), on the western edge of town. International antiques dealers come to scout on Saturdays, so things can get pricey. Take bus 52 from Elizabeth Bridge. **Jozsefvárosi piac** (Map pp358-9; VII Kőbányai út 21-23; ☎ 6am-6pm) is a vast Chinese goods market and a world unto itself. Take tram 28 or 37.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

The main international carriers fly in and out of Budapest's **Ferihegy 2 airport** (BUD; ☎ 296 9696), 24km southeast of the centre on Hwy 4; low-cost airlines use the older **Ferihegy 1 airport** (☎ 296 7000), next door. For carriers flying within Eastern Europe, see p408; for more on getting to Budapest from outside Eastern Europe, see p925.

Boat

In addition to its hydrofoils that travel internationally to Bratislava and Vienna (p409), **Mahart PassNave** (Map p362; ☎ 484 4005; www.mahartpassnave.hu; Vigadó tér Pier) ferries depart for Szentendre, Visegrád and Esztergom in the Danube Bend daily, April to October.

Bus

Volánbusz (☎ 219 8080; www.volanbusz.hu), the national bus line, has an extensive list of destinations from Budapest. All international buses and some buses to/from southern Hungary use **Népliget bus station** (Map pp358-9; ☎ 264 3939; IX Üllői út 131). **Stadion bus station** (Map pp358-9; ☎ 252 4498; XIV Hungária körút 48-52) serves most domestic destinations. Most buses to the northern Danube Bend arrive at and leave from the **Árpád híd bus station** (Map pp358-9; ☎ 329 1450, off XIII Róbert Károly körút). All stations are on metro lines, and all are in Pest. If the ticket office is closed, you can buy your ticket on the bus.

For details of international bus services within Eastern Europe, see p408 and p929.

Car & Motorcycle

Car rental is not recommended if you are staying in Budapest. The public transportation network is extensive and cheap, whereas parking is scarce and there are more than enough cars and motor emissions on the congested streets already.

If you want to venture into the countryside, travelling by car may be the best way to go. Daily rates start around €40 per day with kilo-

metres included. If an office is not at the airport, the company will usually provide free pick-up and delivery within Budapest or at the airport during office hours. All the major international chains have branches at Ferihegy 2 airport.

Americana Rent-a-Car (Map pp358-9; ☎ 350 2542; www.americana.matav.hu; XIII Dózsa György út 65; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) Reliable office in the Ibis Volga hotel.

Recent Car (Map pp358-9; ☎ 453 0003; www.recentcar.hu; III Óbudai hajógyári-sziget 131; ☎ 8am-8pm) One of the cheapest.

Train

The Hungarian State Railways, **MÁV** (☎ 461 5400 domestic information, 461 5500 international information; www.elvira.hu) covers the country well and has its schedule online. The **MÁV Ticket Office** (Map p362; ☎ 461 5400; VI Andrásy út 35; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri Apr-Sep, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri Oct-Mar) provides information and sells domestic and international train tickets and seat reservations (you can also buy tickets at the busy stations). To avoid queues go to booths posted 'International Ticket Office' – you can buy domestic tickets here and there might be some English speakers.

The commuter rail, **HÉV**, begins at Batthyány tér in Buda and travels north through the suburbs. If you have a *turista* pass, you still need a supplemental ticket to get to Szentendre, the northern terminus, and towns outside the city limits.

Keleti train station (Eastern; ☎ 333 6342; VIII Kerepesi út 2-4) handles international trains from Vienna and many other points east, plus domestic trains to/from the north and northeast. For some Romanian, German and Slovak destinations, as well as domestic ones to/from the northwest and the Danube Bend, head for **Nyugati train station** (Western; ☎ 349 0115; VI Nyugati tér). For trains bound for Lake Balaton and the south, go to **Déli train station** (Southern; ☎ 375 6293; I Krisztina körút 37). All three train stations are on metro lines.

For details of international trains within Eastern Europe, see p409; for trains travelling to places outside Eastern Europe, see p930.

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

The simplest way to get to town is to take the **Airport Minibus** (☎ 296 8555; one-way/return 2100/3600Ft; ☎ 5am-1am) directly to the place you're staying. Buy tickets at the clearly marked stands in the arrivals halls. The cheapest way is to take the BKV Ferihegy bus (from outside the

baggage claim at Ferihegy 2, or on the main road outside Ferihegy 1) to the end of its run, the Kőbánya–Kispest stop, which is at the M2 blue line metro terminus. Then ride the metro to your destination. The bus ride takes about 25 minutes, as does the metro ride to the central metro hub (Deák tér). You need a 230Ft ticket, available at newsstands or vending machines, which you can validate on the bus and in the metro. If you want to switch metro lines, you'll need a second ticket.

Boat

From May to August, the **BKV passenger ferry** (Map pp358-9; ☎ 06 20 955 3782; www.ship-bp.hu, Hungarian only) departs from Boráros tér Terminus beside Petőfi Bridge, south of the centre, and heads to Pünkösdfürdő Terminus north of Aquincum, with many stops along the way. Tickets (adult/child 500/400Ft from end to end) are usually sold on board. The ferry stop closest to the Castle District is Batthyány tér, and Petőfi tér is not far from Vörösmarty tér, a convenient place to pick up the boat on the Pest side.

Public Transport

Public transport is run by **BKV** (☎ 342 2335; www.bkv.hu). The three underground metro lines (M1 yellow, M2 red, M3 blue) meet at Deák tér in Pest. The HÉV above-ground suburban railway runs north from Batthyány tér in Buda. A *turista* transport pass is only good on the HÉV within the city limits (south of the Békásmegyer stop). There's also an extensive network of buses, trams and trolleybuses. Public transport operates from 4.30am until 11.30pm, and 18 night buses (marked with an 'É') run along main roads.

A single ticket for all forms of transport is 140Ft (60 minutes of uninterrupted travel, no metro line changes). A transfer ticket (230Ft) is valid for one trip with one validated transfer within 90 minutes. The three-day *turista* pass (2200Ft) or the seven-day pass (2600Ft) make things easier, allowing unlimited travel inside the city limits. Keep your ticket or pass handy; the fine for 'riding black' is 2000Ft on the spot, or 5500Ft if you pay later at the **BKV Office** (Map p362; ☎ 461 6544; VII Akácfa utca 22; ☎ 6am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat).

Taxi

Overcharging foreigners (rigged meters, detours...) is common. Never get into a taxi that does not have an official yellow licence plate, the

logo of the taxi firm, and a visible table of fares. If you have to take a taxi, it's best to call one; this costs less than if you flag one down. Make sure you know the number of the landline phone you're calling from as that's how the dispatcher establishes your address (though you can call from a mobile too). Dispatchers usually speak English. **City** (☎ 211 1111), **Fő** (☎ 222 2222) and **Rádió** (☎ 377 7777) are reliable companies.

THE DANUBE BEND

North of Budapest, the Danube breaks through the Pilis and Börzsöny Hills in a sharp bend before continuing into Slovakia. Here medieval kings once ruled Hungary from majestic palaces overlooking the river at Esztergom and Visegrád. East of Visegrád the river divides, with Szentendre and Vác on different branches. Today the easy access to historic monuments, rolling green scenery – and tons of souvenir craft shops – lure many day-trippers from Budapest.

SZENTENDRE

☎ 26 / pop 22,700

Once an artists' colony, now a popular day trip from Budapest (19km north), pretty little Szentendre (*sen-ten-dreh*) has narrow, winding streets and is a favourite with souvenir-shoppers. The charming old centre has plentiful cafés, art and craft galleries, and there are several Orthodox churches that are worth a peek. Expect things to get crowded in summer and at weekends. Outside town is the largest open-air village museum in the country.

Orientation & Information

From the HÉV train and bus stations, walk under the subway and up Kossuth Lajos utca to Fő tér, the centre of the Old Town. The Duna korzó and the river embankment is a block east of this square. The Mahart ferry pier is about 1km northeast on Czöbel sétány, off Duna korzó. There are no left-luggage offices at the HÉV train or bus stations.

Tourinform (☎ 317 965; Dumtsa Jenő utca 22; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) has information about the numerous small museums and galleries in town. The **OTP Bank** (Dumtsa Jenő utca 6) is just off Fő tér, and the **main post office** (Kossuth Lajos utca 23-25) is across from the bus and train stations. **Game Planet** (☎ 505 068; Petőfi Sándor utca

1; ☎ 10am-10pm) is an internet café with access for 300Ft per hour.

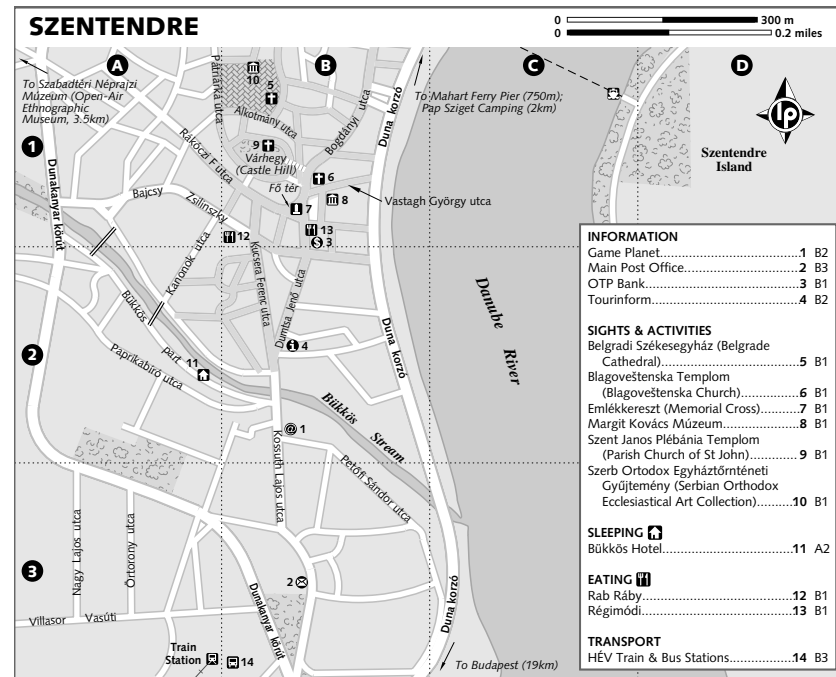
Sights

Begin your sightseeing at the colourful Fő tér, the town's main square. Here you'll find many buildings from the 18th century, including the **Emlék kereszt** (Memorial Cross; 1763) and the 1752 Serbian Orthodox **Blagoveštenka Templom** (Blagoveštenka Church; ☎ 310 554; Fő tér; admission 200Ft; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun), which is small but stunning.

All the pedestrian lanes surrounding the square burst with shops, the merchandise spilling out into displays on the streets. Downhill to the east, off a side street on the way to the Danube, is the **Margit Kovács Múzeum** (☎ 310 244; Vastagh György utca 1; adult/student 600/400Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Feb-Oct). Kovács (1902–77) was a ceramicist who combined Hungarian folk, religious and modern themes to create her much beloved figures. Uphill to the northwest, a narrow passageway leads up from between Fő tér 8 and 9 to Várhegy (Castle Hill) and the **Szent János Plébánia Templom** (Parish Church of St John; Várhegy), rebuilt in 1710, from where you get great views of the town

and the Danube. Nearby, the tall red tower of the Serbian **Belgradi Székesegyház** (Belgrade Cathedral; Pátriárka utca 5), from 1764, casts its shadow. You can hear beautiful chanting wafting from the open doors during services. The **Szerb Ortodox Egyháztörténeti Gyűjtemény** (Serbian Orthodox Ecclesiastical Art Collection; ☎ 312 399; Pátriárka utca 5; adult/student 200/100Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Sun mid-Mar–Oct, 10am-4pm Fri-Sun Nov–mid-Mar) is in the courtyard.

Don't miss the extensive **Szabadtéri Néprajzi Múzeum** (Open-Air Ethnographic Museum; ☎ 502 500; adult/student 800/400Ft; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct) 3.5km outside town. Walking through the fully furnished ancient wooden and stone homes, churches and working buildings brought here from around the country, you can see what rural life was – and sometimes still is – like in different regions of Hungary. The five reconstructed villages of this *skansen* (village museum) are not close to each other, but you can take a wagon ride (500Ft) between them. In the centre of the park stand Roman-era ruins. Frequent weekend festivals give you a chance to see folk costumes, music and dance, as well as home crafts. To get here, take the bus marked 'Skansen' from stand No 7 (100Ft, 20 minutes, hourly).



Sleeping & Eating

Seeing Szentendre on a day trip from Budapest is probably your best bet. The town can be easily covered in a day, even if you spend a couple of hours at the open-air museum. For private rooms in town, head west of the centre around the Dunakanyar körút ring road, and look for 'Zimmer frei' signs. Being a tourist town, there are plenty of places to sit at an outside table and grab a bite to eat.

Pap Sziget Camping (☎ 310 697; www.pap-sziget.hu; camp sites per person €6, caravan sites €15, motel room with shared bathroom €22, 2-bedroom bungalows €32-40; ☞ May-mid-Oct; P) The grounds have large shady trees, a sandy beach and 120 tent and caravan sites. Bungalows are raised on stilts and there's parking below. Take bus 1, 2 or 3 – it's 2km from north of town on Szentendre Island.

Bükkös Hotel (☎ 312 021; Bükkös part 16; s/d €40/45; P) A Maria Theresa yellow exterior and a dark-wood reception hall welcome you to this 16-room hotel in an old building. The location's good, on a stream between the HÉV station and the Old Town.

Rab Ráby (☎ 310 819; Péter Pál utca 1A; mains 700-1200Ft; ☞ 11am-11pm) The locals' favourite for fish.

Crowd-watch on the square at **Régimódi** (☎ 311 105; Dumtsa Jenő utca 2; mains 700-1200Ft; ☞ 11am-11pm), but don't expect very tasty food.

Getting There & Away

The most convenient way to get to Szentendre is to take the commuter HÉV train from Buda's Batthyány tér metro station to the end of the line (497Ft one-way, 45 minutes, every 10 to 15 minutes).

From mid-May to mid-September, three Mahart PassNave ferries travel daily from Budapest's Vigadó tér Pier to Szentendre (950Ft, 1½ hours) at 9am, 10.30am and 2pm. Return trips are at 12.20pm, 4pm and 5pm. The 9am boat continues on from Szentendre to Visegrád at 10.40am. In April and October, only the daily 9am departure from Budapest (continuing on to Visegrád only on weekends) and the 4pm return to Budapest from Szentendre run.

VISEGRÁD

☎ 26 / pop 1500

The spectacular views from the ruins of Visegrád's (*vish-eh-grahd*) 13th-century citadel, high on a hill above a curve in the Danube, are what pulls visitors to this sleepy town. The

first fortress here was built by the Romans as a border defence in the 4th century. Hungarian kings built a mighty citadel on the hill top, and a lower castle near the river, after the 13th-century Mongol invasions. In the 14th century a royal palace was built on the flood plain at the foot of the hills, and in 1323 King Charles Robert of Anjou, whose claim to the local throne was being fiercely contested in Buda, moved the royal household here. For nearly two centuries Hungarian royalty alternated between Visegrád and Buda.

The destruction of Visegrád came first at the hands of the occupying Turks and then at the hands of the Habsburgs, who destroyed the citadel to prevent Hungarian independence fighters from using it. All trace of the palace was lost until 1934 when archaeologists, by following descriptions in literary sources, uncovered the ruins that you can visit today.

The small town has two distinct areas: one to the north around Mahart ferry pier and another, the main town, about 1km to the south. There's a Tourinform office, and there's also a rather confusing website that discusses the town's history in English (www.visegrad.hu; click on Műemlékek).

Sights & Activities

The partial reconstruction of the **Királyi Palota** (Royal Palace; ☎ 398 026; Fő utca 29; adult/student 500/300Ft; ☞ 9am-4.30pm Tue-Sun), 400m south of the Mahart pier, only hints at its former magnificence. Inside, a small museum is devoted to the history of the palace and its excavation and reconstruction.

The palace's original Gothic fountain, along with town-history exhibits, is in the museum at **Salamon Torony** (Solomon's Tower; ☎ 398 233; adult/child 500/300Ft; ☞ 9am-4.30pm Tue-Sun May-Sep), a few hundred metres north of the palace. The tower was part of a lower castle controlling river traffic. From here you can climb the very steep path uphill to the **Visegrád Cittadella** (☎ 398 101; Várhegy; adult/student 800/350Ft; ☞ 9.30am-5.30pm) directly above. While the citadel (1259) ruins themselves are not as spectacular as their history, the view of the Danube Bend from the walls is well worth the climb. From the town centre a trail leads to the citadel from behind the Catholic church on Fő tér; this is less steep than the arduous climb from Solomon's Tower. A local bus runs up to the citadel from the Mahart PassNave ferry pier three times daily (more often in July and August).

Sleeping & Eating

As with the other towns in the Danube Bend, Visegrád is an easy day trip from Budapest, so it's not necessary to stay over if you don't want to. **Visegrád Tours** (☎ 398 160; Rév utca 15; ☞ 8am-5pm), an extremely accommodating travel agency in the town centre, provides information and books private rooms for between 5500Ft and 6500Ft per person, per night.

Jurta Camping (☎ 398 217; camp sites per adult/child/tent 650/400/500Ft; ☞ May-Sep; P) On Mogyoró-hegy (Hazelnut Hill), about 2km northeast of the citadel, this camp sight is pretty and green. There aren't any bungalows, but there are yurt tents for rent with five beds in each. The Kisvillám bus goes to Jurta Camping from the ferry pier at 9.25am, 12.25pm and 3.25pm, June to August.

Hotel Honti Panzió (☎ 398 120; hotelhon@axelero.hu; Fő utca 66; s/d pension €30/35, s/d hotel €40/50; P) Honti is a friendly pension filled with homy rooms. Bigger, more expensive and newer rooms in the adjacent hotel building still have wooden furniture and rose-coloured curtains your aunt might have made.

Rezensánsz (☎ 398 081; Fő utca 11; mains 1200-2400Ft; ☞ noon-10pm) Eating in a tourist trap can be fun if you go in for men in tights and silly hats. This is the attire at this medieval banquet-style restaurant. A royal feast, with pheasant soup, roast meats and unlimited wine costs a mighty 4000Ft.

Two better, more down-to-earth options are the **Grill Udvar** (Rév utca 6; mains 500-1000Ft; ☞ 11am-11pm), for pizzas and grilled meat; and **Gulyás Csárda** (☎ 398 329; Mátyás Király utca; mains 1000-2000Ft; ☞ 11am-10pm). Both are in the town centre and known for reliable Hungarian standards and cymbalom music.

Getting There & Away

Frequent buses go to Visegrád from Budapest's Árpád hid bus station (423Ft, 1¼ hours, at least hourly), the Szentendre HÉV station (302Ft, 45 minutes, every 45 minutes) and Esztergom (302Ft, 45 minutes, hourly). No trains go to Visegrád.

On weekends in late April and during most of October, a ferry runs from Budapest to Visegrád (per person/car 280/1050Ft, 3½ hours) at 9am (via Szentendre), returning to Budapest from Visegrád at 4pm. From mid-May to mid-September that same ferry runs daily. There is an additional departure at 7.30am from late May to August, which continues on to

Esztergom at 10.50am. The return departure from Visegrád to Budapest is at 5.30pm. On weekends from June to August there is also a high-speed hydrofoil service from Budapest to Visegrád (2000Ft, one hour), departing from Budapest at 9.30am and Visegrád at 4.45pm.

ESZTERGOM

☎ 33 / pop 28,900

A town full of ecclesiastic wonders, Esztergom (*es-ter-gohm*) has been the seat of Roman Catholicism in Hungary since the 19th century. The soaring Esztergom Bazilika is home to the Primate of Hungary and surrounding museums contain many Christian treasures.

The significance of this town reaches far back into history. The 2nd-century Roman emperor-to-be Marcus Aurelius wrote his famous *Meditations* while he camped here. In the 10th century, Stephen I, founder of the Hungarian state, was born and crowned at the cathedral. From the late 10th to the mid-13th centuries Esztergom served as the Hungarian royal seat. In 1543 the Turks ravaged the town and much of it was destroyed only to be rebuilt in the 18th and 19th centuries. Many of the old buildings in the centre date from those centuries.

Orientation & Information

The train station is on the southern edge of town, about a 10-minute walk south of the bus station. From the train station, walk north on Baross Gábor út, then along Ady Endre utca to Símor János utca, past the bus station to the town centre. Don't be fooled by the run-down buildings along the walk; the town's true character reveals itself once you get to the hill below the cathedral.

K&H Bank (Rákóczi tér) does foreign exchange transactions. The **post office** (Arany János utca 2) is just off Széchenyi tér. **Gran Tours** (☎ 502 000; Rákóczi tér 25; ☞ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri) is the best source of information in town.

Sights & Activities

The country's largest church is **Esztergom Bazilika** (☎ 411 895; admission free; ☞ 7am-6pm), sitting on a hill above the Danube. The colossal building is easily spotted from the train window en route from Bratislava to Budapest. Reconstructed in the neoclassical style, much of the building dates from the 19th century; the oldest section is the white and red marble **Bakócz Kápolna** (Bakócz Chapel; 1510) that was

moved here. You can climb up the winding steps to the top of the cupola for 200Ft. The **kinchász** (treasury; adult/student 450/220Ft; ☎ 9am-4.30pm mid-Mar-Oct, 11am-3.30pm Mon-Fri & 10am-3pm Sat Nov-mid-Mar) contains priceless objects, including ornate vestments and the 13th-century Hungarian coronation cross. Among those buried in the **altemplom** (crypt; admission 100Ft; ☎ 9am-5pm) under the cathedral is the controversial Cardinal Mindszenty, who was imprisoned by the communists for refusing to allow Hungary's Catholic schools to be secularised.

At the southern end of the hill is the **Vár Múzeum** (Castle Museum; ☎ 415 986; adult/student 460/240Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, to 4pm Nov-Mar), inside the reconstructed remnants of the medieval royal palace (1215), which was built upon previous castles. The earliest excavated sections on the hill date from the 2nd to 3rd centuries.

Southwest of the cathedral along the banks of the Little Danube, narrow streets wind through the **Víziváros** (Watertown) district, home to the **Víziváros Plébánia Templom** (Watertown Parish Church; 1738) at the start of Berényi Zsigmond utca. The **Keresztény Múzeum** (Christian Museum; ☎ 413 880; Berényi Zsigmond utca 2; adult/student

400/200Ft; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Tue-Sun) is in the adjacent Primate's Palace (1882). The stunning collection of medieval religious art includes a statue of the Virgin Mary from the 11th century.

Cross the bridge south of Watertown Parish Church and about 100m further down is **Mária Valéria Bridge**. Destroyed during WWII, it once again connects Esztergom with Slovakia and the city of Štúrovo. **St István Fürdő** (☎ 312 249; Bajcsy-Zsilinszky utca 14; adult/child 550/350Ft; ☎ 9am-6pm May-Sep, indoor pool only 6am-6pm Mon & Sat, 6am-7pm Tue-Fri, 9am-4pm Sun Oct-Apr) backs up to the Little Danube promenade and has outdoor and indoor thermal baths and pools.

Sleeping & Eating

Although frequent transportation connections make Esztergom an easy day trip from Budapest, you might want to stop a night if you are going on to Slovakia. Contact **Gran Tours** (p377) about private rooms, for about 4000Ft per person.

Gran Camping (☎ 411 953; fortanex@alexero.hu; Nagy-Duna sétány 3; camp sites per person 1100Ft, dm/r 1700/6000Ft, bungalows 12,000-16,000Ft; ☎ May-Sep; P) For a camping ground this place has quite a

lot of buildings: elevated bungalows sleep four to six; a dormitory houses about 100 people in four-, five- and eight-bed rooms; and the motel has serviceable doubles. It's a 10-minute walk along the Danube from the cathedral.

Alabárdos Panzió (☎ 312 640; www.alabardospanzio.hu; Bajcsy-Zsilinszky utca 49; s 7500-9500Ft, d 9500-12,000Ft; P) There are some lovely rooms in Alabárdos and some downright dowdy ones, with motley furnishings: some have iron beds, some modular wood veneer. Look before you choose. The location is great if you want to be close to the cathedral – the hotel is at the base of Castle Hill.

Ria Panzió (☎ 313 115; www.riapanzio.com; Batthyány Lajos utca 11; s/d €40/48; P) Doubles are fresh, with white walls, wood floors and royal-blue linen. Relax on the terrace or arrange an adventure through the family owners – rent a bicycle maybe, or take a water-skiing trip on the Danube in summer.

Jáde Forrás Étterem (☎ 400 949; Hősök tere 11; mains 600-1400Ft; ☎ 11am-11pm; X) Jáde does a mean Hunan chicken and has a reduced-price buffet at lunch. A four-course set menu is 1750Ft.

Olasz Vendéglő (☎ 312 952; Lőrincz utca 5; pizzas & pastas 700-1000Ft, mains 1000-1400Ft; ☎ 11am-10pm Sun-Thu, to midnight Fri & Sat; X) Pizzas and pastas at the originally named Italian restaurant are among the few vegetarian options in town. Mains include dishes such as fruit-stuffed chicken breast.

On the way to the cathedral from the bus station, the **piac** (market; Símor János utca; ☎ 7am-4pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat), north of Arany János utca, has fruit and vegetables, and three **food stands** (Bajcsy-Zsilinszky utca, nr Szent István fürdő; snacks 200-600Ft; ☎ 8am-8pm) sell burgers, gyros, falafel and the like.

Getting There & Away

Bus routes to/from Budapest's Árpád híd bus station (579Ft, 1½ hours on shortest route) and to/from Visegrád (302Ft, 45 minutes) at least hourly. Two direct buses a day go from Esztergom to Győr (1160Ft, two hours).

The most comfortable way to get to Esztergom from Budapest is by rail: sleek, EC-approved cars run this route. Trains depart from Budapest's Nyugati train station (512Ft, 1½ hours) more than 20 times a day. Cross the Mária Valéria Bridge into Štúrovo, Slovakia and you can catch a train to Bratislava, which is an hour and a half away.

Mahart PassNave ferries depart from Budapest to Esztergom (via Visegrád, 1200Ft,

5½ hours) once a day from late May through August (7.30am). The daily return trip to Budapest departs from Esztergom at 3.20pm. Weekends from June to August there is also a high-speed hydrofoil service between Budapest and Esztergom (2300Ft, 2½ hours), via Visegrád, departing from Budapest at 9.30am and from Esztergom at 3.20pm. From June through August, a ferry service between Esztergom and Visegrád (700Ft, two hours) departs Esztergom at 9am and returns from Visegrád at 3.30pm.

NORTHWESTERN HUNGARY

The closer you get to the Austrian border, the more prominent the seductive atmosphere of the gilded days of the Austro-Hungarian empire becomes. Northwestern Hungary beyond the Bakony Hills is bounded by the Danube to the east and the Alps to the west. The old quarters of Sopron and Győr are brimming with what were once the residences of prosperous burghers and clerics. Fertőd, outside Sopron, is a magnificent baroque palace and Pannonhalma, outside Győr, is an early Benedictine monastery still in operation.

GYŐR

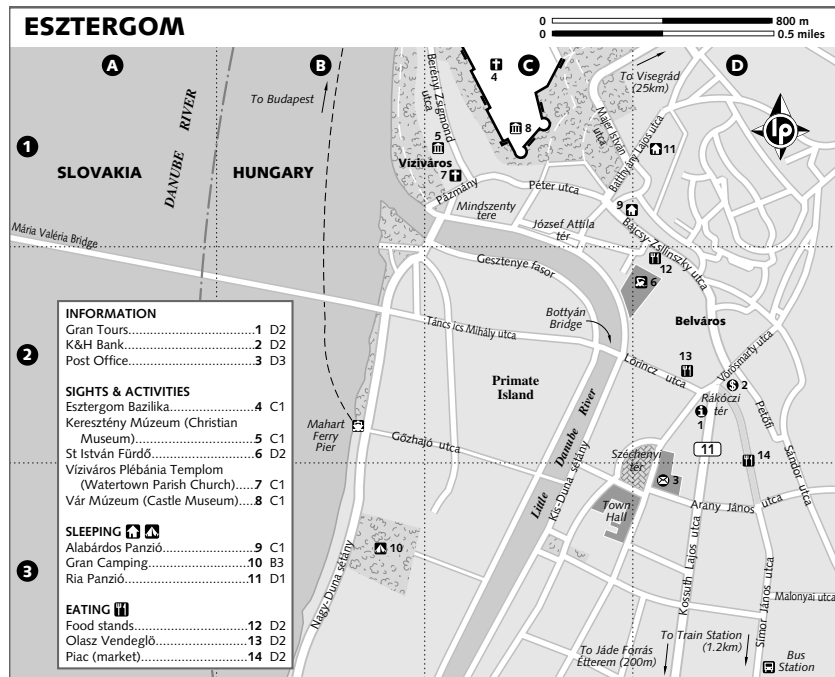
☎ 96 / pop 129,500

A sizable pedestrian centre filled with old streets and buildings make riverside Győr (pronounced, impossibly, jyeur) an inviting place for a stroll – even if there isn't one stand-out attraction. Students hang out at the many pavement cafés in this university town.

Midway between Budapest and Vienna, Győr sits at the point where the Mosoni-Danube, Rábca and Rába Rivers meet. This was the site of a Roman town named Arabona. In the 11th century, Stephen I established a bishopric here, and in the 16th century a fortress was erected to hold back the Turks.

Orientation & Information

The large neobaroque City Hall (1898) rises up to block out all other views across from the train station. Baross Gábor utca, which leads to the old town and the rivers, lies diagonally across from City Hall. Much of central Győr is pedestrianised, making parking difficult.





GYŐR

INFORMATION

| | |
|------------------------|------|
| Ibusz | 1 B3 |
| Main Post Office | 2 D4 |
| OTP Bank | 3 C3 |
| Polarnet Internet Café | 4 C3 |
| Tourinform | 5 C4 |

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

| | |
|---|------|
| Bécs Gyógyszertár Múzeum (Jesuit Pharmacy Museum) | 6 C3 |
| Egyház (Cathedral) | 7 B2 |
| Frigyláda Statue (Ark of the Covenant) | 8 C2 |

| | |
|--|-------|
| Karmelita Templom (Carmelite Church) | 9 B3 |
| Mária Ozlop Statue (Column of the Virgin Mary) | 10 C3 |
| Napoleon Háza (Napoleon House) | 11 B3 |
| Patkó Imre Gyűjtemény (Imre Patkó Collection) | 12 C2 |
| Püspökvár (Bishop's Castle) | 13 B2 |
| Rába Quelle | 14 A2 |
| Szent Ignác Templom (St Ignatius Church) | 15 C3 |
| Xantus János Múzeum (Xantus János Museum) | 16 C2 |

SLEEPING

| | |
|----------------|-------|
| Hotel Klastrom | 17 B4 |
| Pension Kuckó | 18 C4 |
| Pension Pető | 19 A3 |

EATING

| | |
|-----------------|-------|
| Kaiser's | 20 C4 |
| Márka | 21 C4 |
| Muskétás Söröző | 22 A6 |

ENTERTAINMENT

| | |
|-----------------------|-------|
| Győr National Theatre | 23 D4 |
|-----------------------|-------|

Ibusz (☎ 311 700; Kazinczy utca 3; ☎ 8.30am-4pm Mon-Fri) This travel agency arranges private rooms and area tours, including to Pannonhalma.

Main post office (Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út 46)

OTP Bank (Baross Gábor 16)

Polarnet Internet Café (Czuczor Gergely utca 6; per hr 180Ft; ☎ 9am-8pm) Above a clothing shop, with the entrance around the corner in an alleyway.

Tourinform (☎ 311 711; Árpád út 32; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat) Small but helpful; offers currency exchange.

Sights & Activities

The enchanting 1725 **Karmelita Templom** (Carmelite Church; Bécsi kapu tér) and many fine baroque palaces line riverfront Bécsi kapu tér. On the northwestern side of the square are the fortifications built in the 16th century to stop the Turks. A short distance to the east is **Napoleon Háza** (Napoleon House; Király utca 4), where Bonaparte spent his only night in Hungary in 1809. Walk around the old streets and stop in at a pavement café or two.

North up Káptalándomb (Chapter Hill), in the oldest part of Győr, is the solid baroque **Egyház** (Cathedral; Apor Vilmos püspök tere; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-5pm). Situated on the hill, it was originally Romanesque, but most of what you see inside dates from the 17th and 18th centuries. Don't miss the Gothic **Héderváry Chapel** on the southern side of the cathedral, which contains a glittering 15th-century bust of King (and St) Ladislas.

West of the cathedral, the **Püspökvár** (Bishop's Castle; ☎ 312 153; adult/student 400/200Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) houses the Diocesan Treasury. The architecture represents a variety of styles; the tower was constructed in the 14th century, but the building saw a major overhaul in the 18th century. At the bottom of the hill on Jedlik Ányos utca is the **Frigyláda** (Ark of the

Covenant statue) dating from 1731. From here you can head north to a bridge overlooking the junction of the city's three rivers.

In Széchenyi tér, the heart of Győr, is the fine **Szent Ignác Templom** (St Ignatius Church; 1641) and the **Mária Ozlop statue** (Column of the Virgin Mary; 1686). Cross the square to the **Xantus János Múzeum** (Xantus János Museum; ☎ 310 588; Széchenyi tér 5; adult/student 500/250Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), built in 1743, to see exhibits on the city's history. Next door is the **Patkó Imre Gyűjtemény** (Imre Patkó Collection; ☎ 310 588; Széchenyi tér 4; adult/child 300/150Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), a fine small museum in a 17th-century house. Collections include 20th-century Asian and African art. Look out for the highly decorated baroque ceiling at the **Bécs Gyógyszertár Múzeum** (Jesuit Pharmacy Museum; ☎ 320 954; Széchenyi tér 9; admission free; ☎ 7.30am-4pm Mon-Fri).

The water in the pools at thermal bath **Rába Quelle** (☎ 522 646; Fürdő tér 1; adult/student per day 1600/1000Ft; ☎ 8am-10pm) ranges from 29°C to 38°C. This place is almost an entertainment complex. One pool has a huge stone-face waterfall, another a waterslide. There's a restaurant, bar and beauty shop onsite as well as the requisite massage services.

Sleeping & Eating

For private rooms ask at Ibusz (left).

István Széchenyi University (☎ 503 447; Héderváry út 3; dm 2300Ft) Dormitory accommodation is available year-round at this huge university north of the town centre.

Pension Kuckó (☎ 316 260; fax 312 195; Arany János utca 33; s/d/apt 5900/7490/9900Ft; ☎) An old town house fitted out with bright modern trimmings. The two apartments, with small kitchens, and the café on the ground floor are especially attractive. Sister property **Pension**

WORTH THE TRIP

Take half a day and make the short trip to the ancient and impressive **Pannonhalmi Főapátság** (Pannonhalma Abbey; ☎ 570 191; www.osb.hu, no English; Vár 1; adult/student Hungarian tour 1200/500Ft, adult/student foreign-language tour 1900/1200Ft; ☎ closed Mon Oct-May), now a Unesco World Heritage site. Most buildings in the complex date from the 13th to the 18th centuries; highlights include the Romanesque basilica (1225), the Gothic cloister (1486) and the impressive collection of ancient texts in the library. Because it's an active monastery, the abbey must be visited with a guide. From mid-March to mid-November, foreign-language tours in English, Italian, German, French and Russian are conducted at 11.20am, 1.20pm and 3.20pm.

Pannonhalma is best reached from Győr by bus as the train station is 2km southwest of the abbey. A direct bus runs daily from the Győr bus station to the abbey (Pannonhalma, vár főkapu stop) at 8am, 10am and noon (289Ft, 40 minutes), returning at 8.50am, 12.50pm and 5.35pm. Buses go hourly from Győr to the town of Pannonhalma. The abbey is a 15-minute, uphill walk from there.

Pető (☎ 313 412; Kossuth Lajos utca 20; s/d 7200/8900Ft; ☒) is not far across the river.

Hotel Klastrom (☎ 516 910; www.klastrom.hu; Zechmeister utca 1; s/d/tr €55/70/80; ☐ ☒ ☒) Sleep in a Carmelite friary that is more than 250 years old. Vaulted arch ceilings grace many of the public and guest rooms. Dark modern furniture contrasts appropriately with stark white walls. The interior courtyard looks like a formal garden.

Márka (☎ 320 800; Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út 30; mains 450-490Ft; ☒) 11am-3.30pm Mon-Fri) Dine cafeteria-style for lunch. Enter through the pastry shop.

Muskétás Söröző (☎ 317 627; Munkácsy Mihály utca 10; mains 630-790Ft; ☒) 11am-midnight, bar to 1am) Eminent reasonable, this pub and eatery is especially popular with students from the nearby music college. Dine or drink downstairs in the cellar or continue through to the outdoor tables in the courtyard at the rear. The menu includes options such as turkey breast stuffed with a variety of ingredients.

A massive Kaiser's supermarket and department store takes up much of the block at Arany János utca and Aradi vértanúk útja.

Entertainment

In summer there's a month-long festival of music, theatre and dance from late June. In March, Győr hosts many events in conjunction with Budapest's Spring Festival.

Győr National Theatre (☎ 314 800; Czucz Gergely utca 7) The celebrated Győr Ballet and the city's opera company and philharmonic orchestra all perform at the town's main, modern theatre. Tourinform (p381) can help with performance schedules.

Hullám Disco Klub (☎ 315 275; Hédervary utca 22; ☒) 6pm-4am Fri & Sat) House music and guest DJs attracts a twenty-something crowd to this disco.

Getting There & Away

Buses travel to Budapest (1570Ft, two hours, hourly), Pannonhalma (302Ft, 30 minutes, half-hourly), Sopron (1160Ft, two hours, seven daily), Esztergom (1270Ft, two hours, one daily), Balatonfüred (1210Ft, 2½ hours, six daily) and Vienna (3790Ft, two hours, two daily).

Győr is well connected by express train to Budapest's Keleti and Déli train stations (1632Ft, 1½ hours, 15 daily) and to Sopron (1282Ft, 1½ hours, 14 daily). Six daily trains connect Győr with Vienna's Westbahnhof (4750Ft, two hours).

SOPRON

☎ 99 / pop 55,000

Sopron (*shop-ron*) is one of Hungary's most beautiful towns, with a Gothic town centre enclosed by medieval walls, narrow streets and mysterious passages. Many have called it 'little Prague', and rightly so. Sopron, although much smaller, has something of the charm of the Czech capital. Others see it as a 'dental-holiday' destination, with its surprisingly cheap dentists. Austrian day-trippers in particular come here to fix their dentures and brighten their smiles.

The Mongols and Turks never got this far, so unlike many Hungarian cities, numerous medieval buildings remain in use. The town sits on the Austrian border, only 69km south of Vienna. In 1921 the town's residents voted in a referendum to remain part of Hungary, while the rest of Burgenland (the region to which Sopron used to belong) went to Austria. The region is known for producing good red wines such as Kékfrancos, which you can sample in local cafés and restaurants.

Orientation & Information

From the main train station, walk north on Mátyás Király utca, which becomes Várkerület, part of a loop following the line of the former city walls. Előkapu (Front Gate) and Hátsókapu (Back Gate) are the two main entrances in the walls. The bus station is northwest of the old town on Lackner Kristóf utca.

Internet Centrum Sopron (☎ 310 252; Új utca 3; per hr 400Ft; ☒) 11am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat)

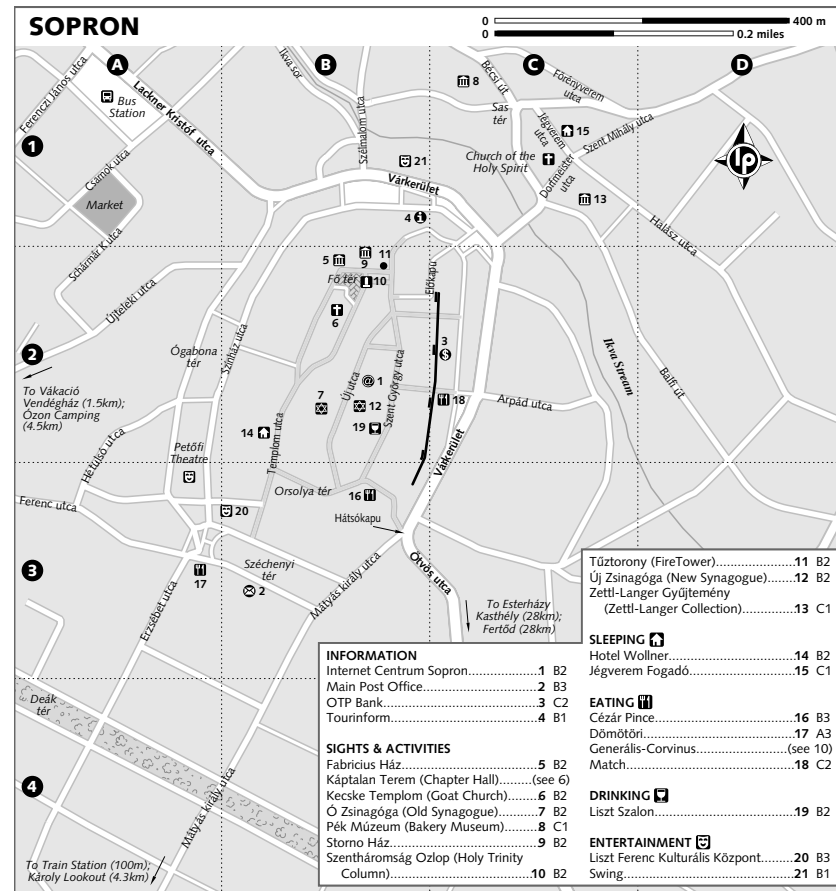
Main post office (Széchenyi tér 7-10)

OTP Bank (Várkerület 96/a)

Tourinform (☎ 338 892; www.sopron.hu; Előkapu 11; ☒) 9am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat)

Sights & Activities

Fő tér is the main square in Sopron; there are several museums, monuments and churches scattered around it. Above the old town's northern gate rises the 60m-high **Tűztorony** (Fire Tower; ☎ 311 327; Fő tér; adult/student 500/250Ft; ☒) 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), run by the Soproni Múzeum. The building is a true architectural hybrid: the 2m-thick square base, built on a Roman gate, dates from the 12th century, the middle cylindrical and arched balcony was built in the 16th century and the baroque spire was added in 1680. You can climb the 154 steps for views of the Alps.



In the centre of Fő tér is the **Szentháromság Ozlop** (Holy Trinity Column; 1701). On the north side of the square is **Storno Ház** (☎ 311 327; Fő tér 8; adult/student 800/400Ft; ☒) 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Aug, ton2pm Tue-Sun Sep-Mar), where King Mátyás stayed in 1482 while his armies lay siege to Vienna. Today it houses a local history exhibition. Upstairs at **Fabricius Ház** (☎ 311 327; Fő tér 6; adult/student 1000/500Ft; ☒) 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Aug, to 2pm Tue-Sun Sep-Mar) walk through rooms recreated to resemble those in 17th- and 18th-century town homes. In the basement see stone sculptures and other remains from Roman times. The back rooms of the ground floor are dedicated to an archaeology exhibit.

Beyond the square is the 13th-century **Kecske Templom** (Goat Church; Templom utca 1), whose

name comes from the heraldic animal of its chief benefactor. Below the church is the **Káptalan Terem** (Chapter Hall; ☎ 338 843; admission free; ☒) 10am-noon & 2-5pm Tue-Sun May-Sep), part of a 14th-century Franciscan monastery, with frescoes and stone carvings.

The **Új Zsinagóga** (New Synagogue; Új utca 11), built in the 14th century, now houses private residences and offices. The medieval **Ó Zsinagóga** (Old Synagogue; ☎ 311 227; Új utca 22; adult/student 400/200Ft; ☒) 10am-6pm Tue-Sun May-Sep), also built in the 14th century, is in better shape than many scattered around the country and contains a museum of Jewish life.

There are many other small museums in town. Two in the Ikva district, northeast of the centre, are quite interesting: the **Zettl-Langer**

Gyűjtemény (Zettl-Langer Collection; ☎ 335 123; Balfi út 11; admission 300Ft; ☎ 10am-noon Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, Fri-Sun only Nov-Mar) containing antiquities, ceramics, paintings and furniture; and the **Pék Múzeum** (Bakery Museum; ☎ 311 327; Bécsi út 5; adult/student 300/150Ft; ☎ 10am-2pm Tue-Sun May-Aug) in a house and shop used by bakers' families from 1686 to 1970.

To visit the hills surrounding Sopron, take bus 1 or 2 to the Szieszta Hotel and hike up through the forest to the 394m-tall **Károly Lookout** (Lóvérek; adult/student 250/150Ft; ☎ 9am-8pm May-Aug, 9am-4pm Sep-Apr) for the view.

Sleeping & Eating

Ózon Camping (☎ /fax 331 144; ozoncamping@sopron.hu; Erdei Malom köz 3; camp sites per large tent/small tent/adult/child 1600/800/1200/850Ft; ☎ mid-Apr-mid-Oct) A lovely, 60-site camping ground, superbly equipped with fridges, washing machines and a pool. Ózon is hidden in a leafy valley 4.5km west of the inner town.

Vákaci Vendégház (☎ 338 502; www.szallasinfo.hu/vakacivendeghaz; Ade Endre út 31; dm 2200Ft; ☎) You can't beat the neatness at this hostel. Many of the guests are Hungarian students. Rooms have two to 12 beds each; there's no kitchen. It's about a 15-minute walk west of the centre.

Esterházy Kastély (☎ 537 640; www.castles.hu/esterhazy; Haydn utca 2, Fertőd; d/tr/q 4900/6400/7200Ft; ☎) Book well in advance if you want to sleep in the Esterházy Palace. Even though the rooms are not too royal in their décor, the setting is fantastic and beds go like hot cakes in the summer. Rooms are furnished in period reproductions and a fine courtyard is available for guests only. Breakfast is not included.

Jégverem Fogadó (☎ 510 113; www.jegverem.hu; Jégverem utca 1; s/d 5000/8000Ft) Citrus yellow walls are a backdrop to plastic plants, and non-

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Hotel Wollner (☎ 524 400; www.wollner.hu; Templom utca 20; s/d/tr 668/75/100; ☎ ☎) The hotel is 300 years old, and the wine cellar a hundred more, with over 110 varieties of delicious wine on offer. Each room is decorated with elegant, simple furniture (some have sleigh beds), the gleaming white walls give a pristine feel, with a slice of the ancient, original wall showing for a peek into the past. Navigate through the multilevel passageways to a raised garden terrace at the back of the property.

descript furniture in five large rooms belies the 18th-century building this pension occupies. The steaming-hot restaurant has generous portions, with multiple variations on the fried-meat cutlet (mains 850Ft to 1890Ft).

Dömötöri (☎ 506 624; Széchenyi tér 13; cakes 165-265Ft; ☎ 7am-10pm Mon-Thu, 7am-11pm Fri & Sat, 8am-10pm Sun) On sunny afternoons, a long line of people wait for ice cream-to-go. Inside, the old-world furnishings are quite Victorian; outside, white wrought-iron tables on the umbrella-shaded terrace are brighter. Either way, the cakes are great.

Cézár Pince (☎ 311 337; Hátsókapu 2; mains 480-890Ft; ☎ 11am-11pm) Wooden platters with a variety of wurst and cheese make a good lunch or snack at this cellar restaurant.

Generális-Corvinus (☎ 505 035; Fő tér 7-8; mains 990-2100Ft; ☎ 9am-11pm) Right in the middle of the inner town's main square, this café-restaurant's outside tables are a wonderful place in spring and summer for a pizza (650Ft to 1700Ft) and a drink.

For self-catering head for the **Match** (Várkerület 100) supermarket.

WORTH THE TRIP

Don't miss **Esterházy Kasthely** (☎ 537 640; Haydn utca 2, Fertőd; adult/student 1000/600Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun mid-Mar-Oct, to 4pm Fri-Sun Nov-mid-Mar), a magnificent, Versailles-style baroque extravaganza 28km outside town in Fertőd. Built in 1766, this 126-room palace was owned by one of the nation's foremost families. You have to put on felt booties and slip around the marble floors under gilt chandeliers with a Hungarian guide, but information sheets in various languages are on hand. From May to October, piano and string quartets perform regularly in the frescoed concert hall where Joseph Haydn worked as court musician to the Esterházy family from 1761 to 1790. The Haydn Festival takes place here in early September. The Tourinform in Győr (p381) can help you with performance schedules.

Fertőd is easily accessible from Sopron by bus (348Ft, 45 minutes, hourly); the town is dominated by the palace and its grounds.

Drinking

Liszt Szalon (☎ 323 407; Szent György utca 12; drinks 190-490Ft; ☎ 10am-10pm) A wonderful, old-world coffeehouse dedicated to Liszt (of course), with the composer's concert posters from all over the world. Good coffee and Aztec chocolate, spiced with chilli.

Entertainment

Liszt Ferenc Kulturális Központ (☎ 517 517; Liszt Ferenc tér 1; ☎ ticket office 9am-5pm Tue-Fri, to noon Sat) A concert hall, café and exhibition space all rolled into one. The information desk has the latest on classical music and other cultural events in town.

Swing (☎ 06 20 214 8029; Várkerület 15; ☎ 5pm-midnight Sun-Fri, to 2am Sat) Live jazz, country, rock or blues play nightly.

Getting There & Away

There are four buses a day to Budapest (2660Ft, four hours), nine to Győr (1160Ft, two hours). Trains to Budapest's Keleti train station (3500Ft, 2½ to three hours, eight daily) depart from Sopron, as do trains to Győr (802Ft to 1282Ft, 1½ hours, 14 daily). To get to Vienna's Südbahnhof the best way is to take the train (€12, 1½ hours, 10 daily). You clear border checks before you get on the train.

LAKE BALATON

The 77km-long Lake Balaton is Hungary's seaside. This, the largest freshwater lake in Europe outside Scandinavia, provides the Hungarians (and foreigners) with fun in both the summer and winter months. During the summer, when the place is at its peak, it's all swimming and outdoor activities, and in winter the locals get their skates on and glide on the frozen lake.

Shallow water, sandy beaches and condominiums attract visitors to the southeastern shore, where the commercialised towns are pretty characterless. More-established towns, trees and rolling hills, deeper water and less sand await on the northwestern shore. Towns on both sides are packed in July and August, and all but deserted from December to February. Many facilities such as museums, pensions and restaurants close for the winter.

Balatonfüred is easily accessed from all points; Tihany peninsula is a nature reserve and a village too cute to be true. Keszthely is really the only town that's a town in its own

right – apart from year-round lake traffic. Nearby Hévíz is a spa centre with a huge thermal *tó* (lake).

BALATONFÜRED

☎ 87 / pop 13,500

Walking the hillside streets, you catch glimpses of the easy grace that 18th- and 19th-century Balatonfüred (*bal-ah-tahn fuhr-ed*) must have enjoyed. Today many of the old buildings could use a new coat of paint and the renowned curative waters can be taken by prescription only. Stick by the lake, where a tree-filled park leads down to the waterfront, the pier and outdoor cafés. The hotels here are a bit cheaper than those on the neighbouring Tihany peninsula, making this a good base for exploring.

Orientation & Information

The adjacent bus and train stations are on Dobó utca 68; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri & to 6pm Sat & Sun Jun-Sep, to 5pm Mon-Fri & to 1pm Sat Mar-May & Oct, to 5pm Mon-Fri Nov-Feb) The main office is inconveniently located 1km northeast of the centre; a second **Tourinform branch** (☎ 580 480; Széchenyi utca 47; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat May-Sep; to 3pm Mon-Fri Oct-Apr) is annoyingly situated about 1.5km to the southwest.

OTP Bank (Petöfi Sándor utca 8)

Post office (Zsigmond utca 14)

Tourinform (☎ 580 480; www.balatonfured.hu; Petöfi Sándor utca 68; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri & to 6pm Sat & Sun Jun-Sep, to 5pm Mon-Fri & to 1pm Sat Mar-May & Oct, to 5pm Mon-Fri Nov-Feb) The main office is inconveniently located 1km northeast of the centre; a second **Tourinform branch** (☎ 580 480; Széchenyi utca 47; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat May-Sep; to 3pm Mon-Fri Oct-Apr) is annoyingly situated about 1.5km to the southwest.

Sights & Activities

The park along the central lakeshore, near the ferry pier, is worth a promenade. You can take a one-hour **pleasure cruise** (☎ 342 230; www.balatonihajozas.hu; Mahart ferry pier; adult/child 1200/600Ft) at 2pm and 4pm daily, May to August. The **disco hajó** (disco boat; ☎ 342 230; www.balatonihajozas.hu; Mahart ferry pier; cruises 1400Ft), a two-hour cruise with music and drinks, leaves at 9pm Tuesday through Sunday, June to August. **Kisfaludy Strand** (Aranyhíd sétány; adult/student 330/190Ft; ☎ 9am-10pm mid-Jun-mid-Sep), along the footpath 800m northeast of the pier, is a relatively sandy beach. A good way to explore the waterfront is to rent a bike from **Tempo 21** (☎ 480 671; Ady Endre utca 52; per hr/day 350/2400Ft; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat).

North of the pier is the renovated 1846 **Kerek Templom** (Round Church; cnr Jókai Mór & Honvéd utca). **Mór Jókai Múzeum** (☎ 343 426; Honvéd utca 1; adult/child 300/150Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun May-Oct) commemorates the life of the acclaimed novelist in what was once his summer house (1871). The heart of the old spa town is Gyógy

tér, where **Kossuth Forrásvíz** (Kossuth Spring, 1853) dispenses slightly sulphurous water that people actually drink for health. Don't stray far from a bathroom afterwards.

Sleeping & Eating

In peak season (late May to early September) tons of guesthouses and private individuals rent rooms. Tourinform (p385) has a long list of such accommodation on its website, or you might just want to look for signs due south of the train and bus stations on Endrődi Sándor utca. **Ibusz** (www.ibusz.hu) travel agency lists private accommodation in the Balaton area on its website.

The eastern end of Tagore sétány is a strip of pleasant bars and terraced restaurants. You'll find a plethora of food stalls west along the lake and on Zákonyi Ferenc utca.

Füred Camping (☎ 580 241; cfured@balatontourist.hu; Széchenyi utca 24; camp sites per tent 1860-5300Ft, adult/child 650-1500Ft/550-1100Ft, motel r 5460-19,970Ft, bungalows 6400-19,970Ft; ☞ Apr-mid-Oct; (P)) This sprawling beachfront complex 1km west of the centre has water-sport rentals, swimming pools, tennis courts, a restaurant, a convenience

shop and daily programmes. Not all tent and caravan sites have shade; site prices are determined by the size, the month and the number of people; bungalows and motel rooms are for a minimum of three persons.

Sport Panzió (☎/fax 340 720; Horváth Mihály utca 35; s/d 3800/7600Ft; (P) ☞) Simple and superior. Request one of the two top-floor rooms for views out onto the lake. Honey-coloured wood is the theme in the bedrooms, restaurant and sauna. One hour on the squash court costs 1900Ft.

Hotel Blaha Lujza (☎ 581 210; www.hotelblaha.hu; Blaha Lujza utca 4; s €37, d €53-58; (P)) Part of this hotel was once the holiday home of the much-loved 19th-century Hungarian actress-singer Blaha Lujza. Her picture and charming old photos of the lake grace the hallway walls. There's a lot of the contemporary wood and maroon-upholstered furniture in the relatively small rooms, but it looks nice.

Stéfanía Vittorlás Étterem (☎ 343 407; Tagore sétány 1; cakes 110-260Ft; ☞ 10am-midnight; ☞) A touristy place with touristy prices but a great lakeside view. Skip the restaurant and enjoy something from the cake and ice-cream shop in the same location.

Halászkert (☎ 043 309; Zákonyi Ferenc utca 3; mains 1000-1500Ft; ☞ 11am-10pm Apr-Sep; ☞) Come here for the *korhely halászlé* (drunkard's fish soup) and other freshwater fish dishes.

Balaton (☎ 481 319; Kisfaludy utca 5; mains 1000-2200Ft; ☞ 11am-11pm; ☞) In the waterfront park sits a shaded terrace full of rustic tables. This may look like just a beer garden, but Balaton serves a full range of Hungarian specialities. Inside the casual restaurant a dead tree bizarrely sticks out of the floor.

Pack a picnic lunch or dinner with supplies from the **Élmiszer Szupermarket** (Jókai Mór utca 16).

Getting There & Away

Buses to Tihany (182Ft, 30 minutes) and Veszprém (302Ft, 30 minutes) leave every 15 minutes or so (except at lunch time) throughout the day. For the northwestern lakeshore towns such as Keszthely (810Ft, 1½ hours, nine daily) take the bus, since you have to switch in Tapolca with the train.

Budapest-bound buses (1390Ft) depart from Balatonfüred four times daily and take between two and three hours to get there. Trains take about the same amount of time (1690Ft, 12 daily). There are a number of towns on the train line with 'Balaton' or 'Füred' somewhere in their name, so double-check which station you're getting off at.

From April to September, **Mahart ferries** (☎ 342 230; www.balatonihajozas.hu; Mahart ferry pier) ply the water from Balatonfüred to Tihany (660Ft, 20 minutes) and Siófok (on the southeastern shore; 1200Ft, 55 minutes) eight times a day in July and August, six times a day from May to June and in September.

TIHANY

☎ 87 / pop 1200

The whole Tihany peninsula, jutting 5km into Lake Balaton, is a nature reserve. Many people consider this the most beautiful place on the lake, especially in March when the almond trees are in bloom. The quaint village of the same name sits on the eastern side of the peninsula's high plateau. Ceramics, embroidery and other folk-craft stores fill the bucolic village houses. Prices are a bargain compared to Budapest or Szentendre, and everyone knows it. You can easily shake off the tourist hordes by going hiking – maybe to the Belső-tó (Inner Lake) or the reedy (and almost dried up) Külső-tó (Outer Lake). Bird-watchers, bring your binoculars: the trails have abundant birdlife.

Orientation & Information

The harbour where ferries to/from Balatonfüred dock is a couple of kilometres downhill from the village of Tihany. Buses pull up in the heart of town, outside the post office on Kossuth Lajos utca.

Tourinform (☎ 448 804; www.tihany.hu; Kossuth Lajos utca 20; ☞ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri & to 6pm Sat & Sun Jun-Aug, to 5pm Mon-Fri & to 3pm Sat May & Sep, to 3pm Mon-Fri Oct-Apr) sells hiking maps and film, and provides tourist information.

Sights & Activities

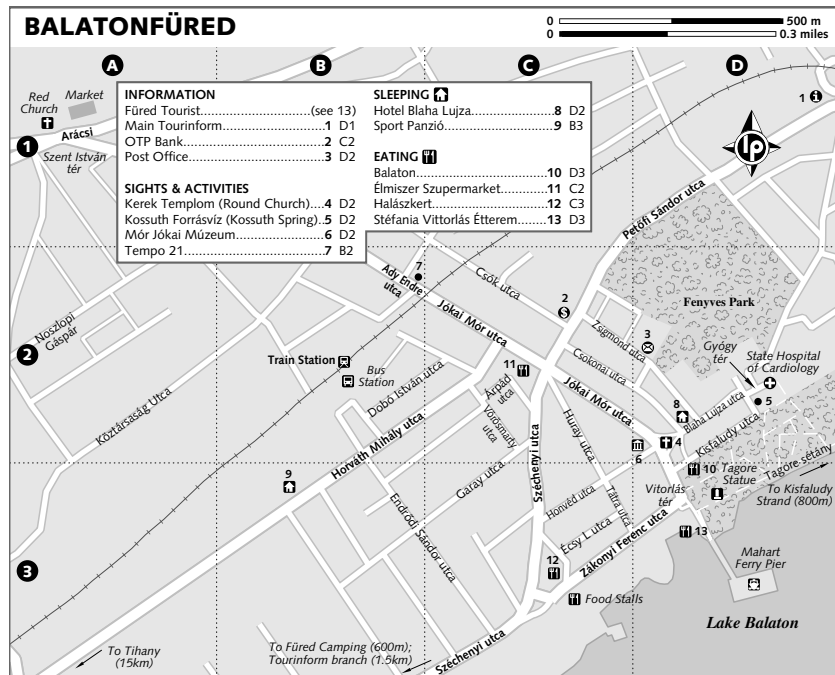
You can spot Tihany's twin-towered **Apát-ság Templom** (Abbey Church; ☎ 448 405; adult/student 500/250Ft; ☞ 9am-6pm May-Sep, 10am-5pm Apr & Oct, 10am-3pm Nov-Mar), dating from 1754, from a long way off. Entombed in the church's crypt is the abbey's founder, King Andrew I. The Deed of Foundation for the abbey is the earliest existing document that contains Hungarian words (now stored at the Pannonhalma Abbey archives near Győr; see p381). The admission fee includes entry to the attached **Apátságú Múzeum** (Abbey Museum; ☎ 448 405; ☞ 9am-6pm May-Sep, 10am-5pm Apr & Oct, 10am-3pm Nov-Mar). The path behind the church leads to outstanding views; it can be quite windy up there.

Follow the pathway along the ridge north from the church in the village and you pass the tiny **szabadtéri néprajzi múzeum** (open-air ethnographical museum; ☎ 714 960; Pisky sétány 10; adult/student 300/150Ft; ☞ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun May-Sep). It's easy to miss the small cluster of fully outfitted folk houses among all the rest of the old houses that are now shops.

Back at the clearing in front of the church, there's a large hiking map with all the trails marked. Following the green trail northeast of the church for an hour will bring you to an Oroszkút (Russian Well) and the ruins of the Óvár (Old Castle), where the Russian Orthodox monks, brought to Tihany by Andrew I, hollowed out cells in the soft basalt walls.

Sleeping & Eating

This is an easy day trip from Balatonfüred. The place is pretty small, so there's no reason to stay over unless you're hiking. The Tihany Tourinform website, www.tihany.hu, lists almost 50 houses that rent private rooms, or you could look for a 'Zimmer frei' sign in one of the windows on the small streets north of the church.



Erika Hotel (☎ 448 010; fax 448 646; Batthyány utca 6; r €60; ☞ May-Sep; (P) ☞ ☞) The pink, 16-room inn is right in the centre of the village. The small swimming pool makes for a refreshing surprise; a cocktail from the bar completes the picture.

Stég Pub (☎ 06 70 503 0208; Kossuth Lajos utca 18; mains 750-980Ft; ☞ 10am-10pm Sun-Thu, to midnight Fri & Sat) Pizzas and salads augment the Hungarian menu at this friendly place. In nice weather, sit in the courtyard.

Of the many touristy eatery options, two have especially good views: the awning-covered back terrace at **Fogas Csárda** (☎ 448 658; Kossuth Lajos utca 9; mains 1450-2400Ft; ☞ 11am-11pm May-Oct) overlooks the Inner Lake and the peninsula's interior; and the terrace at the **Rege Café** (☎ 448 280; Kossuth Lajos utca 22; cakes 330-520Ft; ☞ 10am-6pm), where you can peer down on Lake Balaton and the harbour.

Getting There & Away

Bus travel along the 11km of mostly lakefront road between the centre of Tihany village and Balatonfüred's train station (174 Ft, 30 minutes) about 20 times a day. The advantage here is that you don't have to hike up the hill from the harbour, but the bus does stop there too.

Passenger ferries sail between Tihany and Balatonfüred from April to September (660Ft, 20 minutes, six to eight daily). The Abbey Church is high above the pier; you can follow a steep path up to the village from there.

KESZTHELY

☎ 83 / pop 21,800

Keszthely's amazing Festetics Palace, built in 1745, is a sight worth making the cross-country-and-lake trip for; stroll through the beautifully cultivated lakefront park and it's not long before you find another good reason to be here: a partying public beach. Whether you're seeking history or sun-worshipping hedonism, Keszthely (kest-hay) has at least a little of each. The town lies just over 1km northwest of the lake and with the exception of a few guesthouses, almost everything stays open year-round.

Orientation & Information

The bus and train stations, side by side at the end of Mártírok útja, are fairly close to the ferry pier. Walk northeast on Kazinczy utca and you'll see the water to your right in a few hundred metres. To get to town, turn left and head towards Kossuth Lajos utca.

Tourinform (☎ 314 144; www.keszthely.hu; Kossuth Lajos utca 28; ☞ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri & to 6pm Sat Jul-Aug, to 5pm Mon-Fri & to 1pm Sat Sep-Jun) doles out information on the whole Lake Balaton area. **Keszthely Tourist** (☎ 312 031; Kossuth Lajos utca 25; ☞ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) puts together water-oriented sports and spa packages and represents several private accommodation businesses.

There's a huge **OTP Bank** (Kossuth Lajos utca) facing the park south of the church, and close by is the **main post office** (Kossuth Lajos utca 48).

Sights & Activities

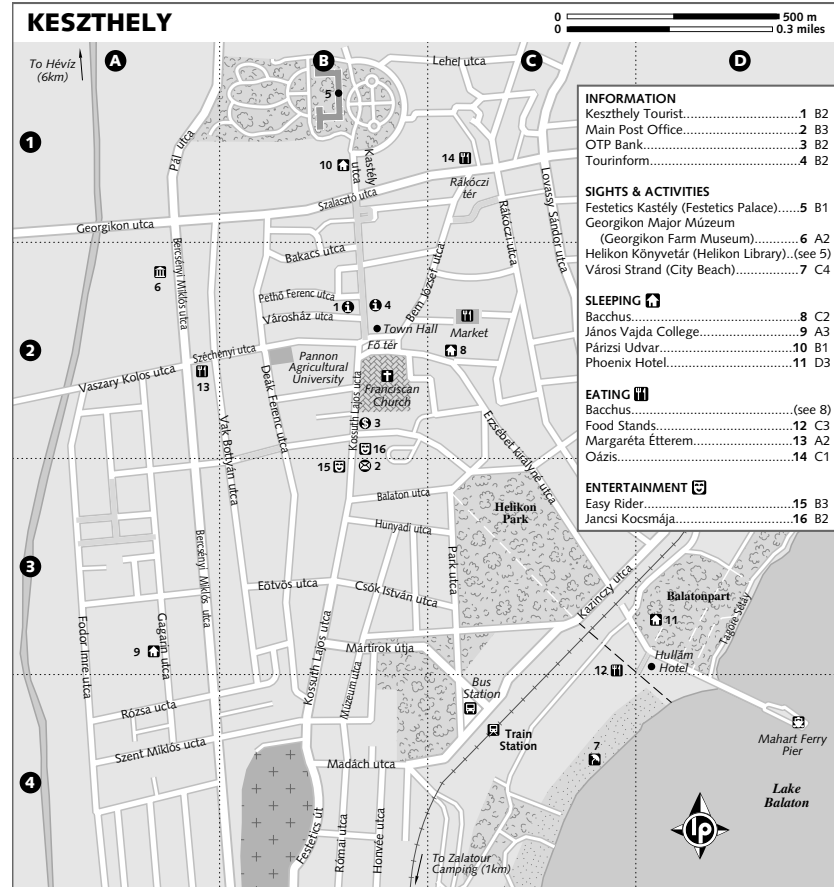
The glimmering white, 100-room **Festetics Kastély** (Festetics Palace; ☎ 312 190; Kastély utca 1; museum adult/student 1300/700Ft; ☞ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) was first built in 1745; the wings were extended out from the original building 150 years later. About a dozen rooms in the one-time residence have been turned into a museum. Many of the decorative arts in the gilt salons were imported from England in the mid-1800s. If you can, take one of the evening candlelight tours that are sometimes offered during summer. To reach the palace, follow Kossuth Lajos utca, the long pedestrian street in the centre of the old town. The **Helikon Könyvtár** (Helikon Library), in the baroque south wing, is known for its 900,000 volumes and its handcarved furniture, crafted by a local artisan.

In 1797 Count György Festetics, an uncle of the reformer István Széchenyi, founded Europe's first agricultural institute, the Georgikon, in Keszthely. Part of the original school is now the **Georgikon Major Múzeum** (Georgikon Farm Museum; ☎ 311 563; Bercsényi Miklós utca 67; adult/student 400/200Ft; ☞ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun May-Oct).

The lakefront area centres on the long Mahart ferry pier, which has a small café near the ferry landing at the end. From April to September you can take a one-hour **pleasure cruise** (☎ 312 093; www.balatonihajozas.hu; Mahart ferry pier; adult/student 1100/500Ft) on the lake at 1pm and 3pm daily. **Városi Strand** (City Beach; Vásár tér; adult/student 500/300Ft; ☞ ticket office 8.30am-7pm, gates to midnight May-Sep) is not far west of the pier, near plenty of beer stands and food booths. There are other beaches you can explore further afield; some hotels have private shore access.

Sleeping

Like most summer-oriented tourist destinations, prices vary dramatically depending on the month. Private rooms can cost a bit more here than in the non-resort areas of Hungary;



Keszthely Tourist (☎ 312 031; Kossuth Lajos utca 25; ☞ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) represents several private lodgings and apartment houses.

Zalatur Camping (☎ 312 782; kesztcamo@zalasam.hu; Ernszt Géza sétány; camp & caravan sites 1450-2400Ft; bungalows 3000-4200Ft, apartments 7900-9300Ft; ☞ mid-Apr-mid-Oct; (P) ☞) About 1km south of town, this waterfront camp has access to a rocky shore and a somewhat reedy beach. The apartments are a bit nicer than the bungalows (both sleep up to four). Don't come here for quiet; facilities include a restaurant, late-night bar, gift shop, sauna and sun beds, and a dog kennel in addition to sports stuff.

János Vajda College (☎ 311 361; Garagin utca 4; dm 1600-3000Ft) This student dorm is open to all from July to August.

Phoenix Hotel (☎ 312 631; Balatonpart 4; s 5500-7300Ft, d 7000-8800Ft; (P)) This is as close as you can get to the water for as little money as you can spend if you're not camping. The low-lying wood building is in a shady grove of trees at the edge of the lakefront park. Bike rental is only 300Ft for an hour and 900Ft for the day.

Bacchus (☎ 510 450; www.bacchushotel.hu; Erzsébet királyné utca 18; s €33-47, d €40-58; (P)) Bacchus is positively Keszthely's best hotel. It has crisp rooms that open up to a little garden on the ground floor and balconies on the top, the staff is super-friendly and the cellar is a **wine museum** (admission free; ☞ 10am-11pm) where wine tastings are available (six/10 types 1500/2400Ft). Not to mention the fabulous restaurant (p390).

Párizsi Udvar (☎ 311 202; www.hotels.hu/parizsi_udvar; Kastély utca 5; d 7900-9900Ft, tr 9600-12,600Ft, 4-bed r 13,000-15,000Ft, 5-bed r 13,500-15,600Ft) Large basic rooms share kitchen facilities in what was once part of the Festetics Kastély complex. The central courtyard adds to the quiet of the place.

Eating

Open-air, self-service restaurant-stands and bars line the trail between Kazinczy utca and the waterfront, west of the ferry pier. In summer, places open between 8am and 10am and close at 10pm or later. Off-season hours vary but there's generally something open from 10am to 8pm. In town, Kossuth Lajos utca has a number of pavement cafés in the pedestrian area. There are a number of small grocery shops just south on the same street.

Oázis (☎ 311 023; Rákóczi tér 3; lunches 430-520Ft; ☎ 11am-4pm Mon-Fri; ☒) A rare vegetarian eatery; the small menu changes daily. It's not gourmet, but it's tasty enough.

Margaréta Étterem (☎ 314 882; Bercsényi Miklós utca 60; mains 600-1240Ft; ☎ 11am-10pm; ☒) Locals come for the good Hungarian food and the casual, convivial vibe. Everyone here is friendly. The patio with red-chequered tablecloths is cheery too.

Entertainment

Numerous cultural performances take place during the Balatonfest in May and the Dance Festival in September. Tourinform has info on events throughout the year.

Away from the waterfront, Kossuth Lajos utca is where to look for pubs: **Jancsi Kocsmája** (Kossuth Lajos utca 46; ☎ noon-midnight Mon-Fri, 6pm-midnight Sat & Sun), with tin advertising signs hanging on the walls, is the most fun and is

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Bacchus (☎ 510 450; www.bacchushotel.hu; Erzsébet királyné utca 18; mains 700-2000Ft; ☎) Most people come to Bacchus for the restaurant. Decorated as a hunter's lodge, with heavy wooden planks for seats and traditionally woven cloths, the cellar restaurant opens to a sunny terrace in the summer. The dishes consist mainly of meat and fish, and is a taste-heaven for lovers of good roasts, like succulent pork and beef surrounded by crisp potato wedges, served on a wood board. The bean soup is the best we've tasted in the whole country!

mainly filled with young people. **Easy Rider** (☎ 319 842; Kossuth Lajos utca 79; ☎ 10am-10pm Sun-Thu, 10am-4am Fri & Sat) turns into a disco at about 10pm on weekends.

Getting There & Away

Buses to Hévíz (133Ft, 15 minutes) leave at least every 30 minutes during the day. Other towns served by buses include Badacsony (363Ft, 30 minutes, six daily), Balatonfüred (810Ft, 1½ hours, seven daily), Veszprém (1040Ft, two hours, 12 daily) and Budapest (2780Ft, three hours, six daily).

Keszthely is on a branch rail line linking the lake's southeastern shore with Budapest (2324Ft, three hours, eight daily). To reach towns along Lake Balaton's northern shore by train, you have to change at Tapolca.

From April to September, Mahart ferries link Keszthely with Badacsonytomaj (1200Ft, two hours, one to three daily) and other, smaller lake towns.

SOUTH CENTRAL HUNGARY

If you've had enough of the strait-laced Habsburg influence and want something a bit more Mediterranean, head to Southern Hungary. Historically, the area bordering Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro has often been 'shared' between Hungary and these countries, and it's here that the remnants of the 150-year Turkish occupation can be most strongly felt. In the Danube village of Mohács, the Hungarian army under King Lajos II was routed by a vastly superior Ottoman force in 1526.

The region is bounded by the Danube River to the east, the Dráva River to the south and west, and Lake Balaton to the north. Generally flat, the Mecsek and Villány Hills rise up in isolation from the plain. The weather always seems to be a few degrees warmer here than in other parts of the country; the sunny climate is great for grape growing, and oak-aged Villány reds are well regarded, if highly tannic.

PÉCS

☎ 72 / pop 158,900

Pécs' (pronounced *paich*) sunny Jókai tér, paved in white marble, makes you think that the sea is close by. This lovely little town, near the southern border of Hungary, is going to be crowned European Culture Capital in 2010. This is where the Turks left their greatest monuments from 150 years of occupation; alongside are imposing churches, a lovely synagogue and more than a dozen galleries and museums, one dedicated entirely to Hungary's answer to Van Gogh, Tivadar Kosztká Csontváry. Green parks and great hiking in the Mecsek Hills only add to the appeal. Harkány is a nearby spa town that is an easy day trip.

History has far from ignored Pécs. The Roman settlement of Sopianae on this site was the capital of the province of Lower Pannonia for 400 years. Christianity flourished here in the 4th century and by the 9th century the town was known as Quinque Ecclesiae for its five churches. In 1009 Stephen I made Pécs a bishopric. The first Hungarian university was founded here in the mid-14th century. City walls were erected after the Mongol invasion of 1241, but 1543 marked the start of almost a century and a half of Turkish domination. In the 19th century the manufacture

of Zsolnay porcelain and other goods, such as Pannonia sparkling wine, helped put Pécs back on the map.

Orientation & Information

The train station is a little over 1km south of the old town centre. Take bus 30 for two long stops from the station to Kossuth tér to reach the centre, or you can walk up Jókai Mór utca. The bus station is a few blocks closer, next to the market. Follow Bajcsy-Zsilinszky utca north to get to the centre.

Tourinform (☎ 213 315; www.pecs.hu; Széchenyi tér 9; ☎ 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat May-Sep, 8am-4pm Mon-Fri Oct-Mar) has internet access (per hour 100Ft) and tons of local info, including a list of museums. The **main post office** (Jókai Mór utca 10) is in a beautiful Art Nouveau building (1904) with a colourful Zsolnay porcelain roof. There are plenty of banks and ATMs scattered around town. **Ibusz** (☎ 212 157; Apáca utca 1; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat) travel agency has a currency exchange booth, rents private rooms and books transport tickets.

Sights & Activities

The bizarrely named 'Mosque Church', which dominates the city's central square, is really quite striking. The **Mecset Templom** (Mosque Church; ☎ 321 976; Széchenyi tér; admission free; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Sat, 11.30am-4pm Sun mid-Apr-mid-Oct, 10am-noon Mon-Sat, 11.30am-2pm Sun mid-Oct-mid-Apr) has no minaret and has been a Christian place of worship for a long time, but the Islamic elements inside, such as the *mihrab* (prayer niche) on the southeastern wall, reveal its original purpose. Constructed in the mid-16th century from the stones of an earlier church, the mosque underwent several changes of appearance over the years – including the addition of a steeple and siding. In the late 1930s the building was restored to its medieval form.

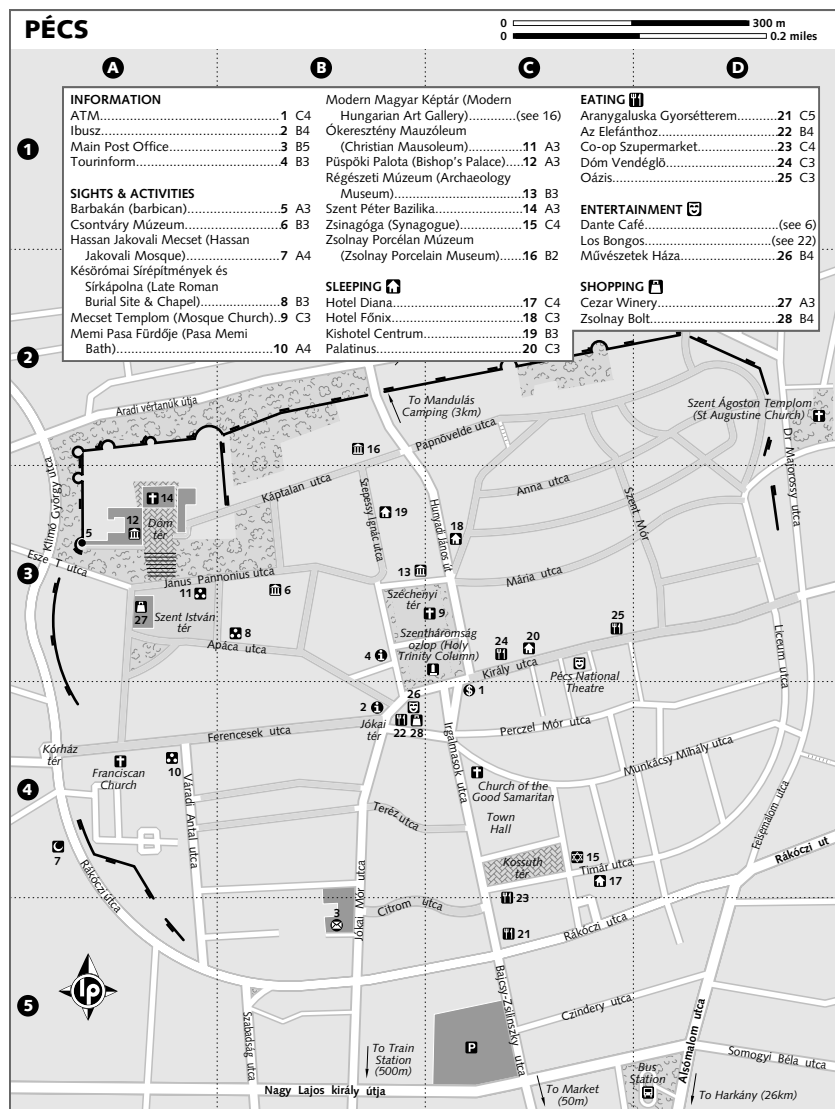
West along Ferencsek utca at No 35, you'll pass the ruins of the 16th-century Turkish **Memi Pasa Fürdője** (Pasa Memi Bath) before you turn south on Rákóczi utca to get to the c 1540 **Hassan Jakovali Mecset** (Hassan Jakovali Mosque; ☎ 313 853; Rákóczi utca 2; adult/student 240/100Ft; ☎ 10am-1.30pm & 2-6pm Thu-Tue Apr-Sep). Though wedged between two modern buildings, this smaller mosque is more intact than its larger cousin and comes complete with a minaret. There's a small museum of Ottoman history inside.

North of Széchenyi tér, the minor **Régészeti Múzeum** (Archaeology Museum; ☎ 312 719; Széchenyi tér

WORTH THE TRIP

Just 6km northwest of Keszthely is the spa town (pop 4200) of **Hévíz** (www.heviz.hu). People have utilised the warm mineral water here for centuries, first for tanning in the Middle Ages and later for curative purposes (it was developed as a private resort in 1795). One of Europe's largest thermal lakes, the five-hectare **Gyógytó** (Parkerdő; admission 3 hr/day 900/1600Ft; ☎ 8.30am-5pm May-Sep, 9am-4pm Oct-Apr) gurgles up in the middle of town. The hot spring is a crater some 40m deep that disgorges up to 80 million litres of warm water a day. The surface temperature here averages 33°C and never drops below 26°C, allowing bathing year-round. You can rent towels, inner tubes and even swimsuits. Both the water and the bottom mud are slightly radioactive; the minerals are said to alleviate various medical conditions.

To get here, take the bus from Keszthely station (127Ft, 15 minutes, every 15 to 30 minutes). The lake park is across Deák tér from the Hévíz bus station. Walk right around the park to get to the closest year-round entrance in the east.



12; adult/student 300/150Ft; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct) contains Roman artefacts found in the area. From here, climb Szepessy Ignéc utca and turn left (west) on Káptalan utca, which is a street lined with museums and galleries. **Zsolnay Porcelán Múzeum** (Zsolnay Porcelain Museum; ☎ 324 822; Káptalan utca 2; adult/student 700/350Ft; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct) is on the eastern end of this strip.

English translations provide a good history of the artistic and functional ceramics produced from this local factory's illustrious early days in the mid-19th century to the present. The excellent **Modern Magyar Képtár** (Modern Hungarian Art Gallery; ☎ 324 822; Káptalan utca 4; adult/child 400/200Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, to 4pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar) is next door, and here you can get a

comprehensive overview of Hungarian art from 1850 till today.

Continue west to Dóm tér and the walled bishopric complex containing the four-towered **Szent Péter Bazilika** (☎ 513 030; Dóm tér; complex ticket adult/student 1000/500Ft; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun). The oldest part of the building is the 11th-century crypt. The 1770 **Püspöki Palota** (Bishop's Palace; admission free; ☎ 2-5pm late-Jun-Aug) stands in front of the cathedral, and a 15th-century **barbakán** (barbican) is the only stone bastion to survive from the old city walls.

The early Christian cemeteries from the Roman town of Sopianae became part of the Unesco World Heritage list in 2000. Two interesting places are the 4th-century **Ókeresztény Mauzóleum** (Christian Mausoleum; ☎ 312 7190; Szent István tér 12; adult/student 350/200Ft; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct) and the **Későrómai Sírépítmenyek és Sirkápolna** (Late Roman Burial Site & Chapel; Apáca utca 8 & 14; adult/student 350/200Ft; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct), which are both richly decorated.

East of the Christian Mausoleum is the **Csontváry Múzeum** (☎ 310 544; Janus Pannonius utca 11; adult/student 600/300Ft; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct), displaying the dreamy work of the wonderful Tivadar Kosztka Csontváry (1853-1919), whose use of vivid colour and texture in landscape painting, as well as his tragic life, has been compared to that of Van Gogh.

Pécs's beautifully preserved 1869 **zsinagóga** (synagogue; ☎ 315 881; Kossuth tér; adult/child 300/200Ft; ☎ 10am-5pm Sun-Fri May-Oct) is south of Széchenyi tér.

Sleeping

Ibusz (☎ 212 157; Apáca utca 1; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat) arranges private rooms for 2540Ft per person.

Mandulás Camping (☎ 515 655; Ángyán János utca 2; camp sites per person 1200Ft, motel/hotel r 3200/5800Ft; ☎ May-Oct) From the centre, take bus 33 or 34 3km up into the Mecsek Hills.

Kishotel Centrum (☎ 311 707; www.hotels.hu/centrum_kishotel; Szepessy Ignéc utca 4; s/d/tr 4500/5800/8750Ft) Paintings cover just about every inch of wall space, bric-a-brac decorates shelves and the furniture is mix-and-match: it's just like staying at a Hungarian *nagy-mama* (grandma's) house. The central hall on the ground floor has a small fridge and a hot plate you can use, but there aren't many other facilities.

Hotel Főnix (☎ 311 680; www.fonixhotel.hu; Hunyadi János út 2; s 5290Ft, d 7990-9490Ft) Odd angles and sloping eaves characterise the asymmetrical Hotel Főnix. Rooms are plain and those on the top floor have skylights. This hotel is second choice to the Diana.

Hotel Diana (☎ 328 594; www.dianahotel.hu, Hungarian only; Timár utca 4A; s/d 7700/11,000Ft; ☎) This small, immaculate hotel right next to the synagogue has rustic accents, such as split-wood chair rails in the guest and breakfast rooms. The rooms on the second floor are better than those on the first. Double room No 5 has a great skylight that opens.

Palatinus (☎ 889 400; palatinus.reservation@danubius-group.hu; Király utca 5; s 658-86, d 666-94; ☎) For some Art Nouveau glamour, Palatinus is the place in Pécs. An amazing, marble reception has a soaring Moorish-detailed ceiling, and the 'ballroom' makes you want to get your most expensive frock/tux on and waltz. It's a shame that the rooms are not as luxurious, but still, in Pécs, it's as good as it gets.

Eating

Pubs, cafés and fast-food eateries line pedestrian Király utca.

Aranygaluska Gyorsétterem (☎ 310 210; Irgalmasok utca 4; mains 430-640Ft; ☎ 7.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat & Sun; ☎) Working-class heroes gather here for the generously portioned, cafeteria meals – some say the best food in town. Office workers know it too: the place is packed at lunch. The *töltött paprika* (stuffed peppers) alone fill you up.

Oázis (☎ 215 367; Király utca 17; mains 500-1000Ft; ☎ 10am-11pm) Unlike most of the kebab shops across Hungary, the owner at this take-away actually hails from the Middle East. You can taste the difference.

Az Elefánthoz (☎ 216 055; Jókai tér 6; mains 1100-2000Ft; ☎ 11am-11pm; ☎) An unatmospheric Italian restaurant that serves really good soups, pastas and pizzas. Salads, like the tuna and onions on lettuce, are meal-sized. The nonsmoking section is only three booths.

Dóm Vendéglő (☎ 210 088; Király utca 3; mains 1300-2500Ft; ☎ noon-11pm; ☎) If you like meat and Art Nouveau décor, Dóm Vendéglő is for you. Beef, venison, pork, turkey and duck, surrounded by turn-of-the-century paintings. Enter at the rear of the courtyard under the Aranyhájó Fogadó hotel.

Get self-catering supplies at **Co-op Szupermarket** (cnr Irgalmasok & Timár utcas).

Entertainment

Pécs has well-established opera and ballet companies as well as a symphony orchestra. **Tourinform** (☎ 213 315; www.pecs.hu; Széchenyi tér 9; ☎ 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat May-Sep, 8am-4pm Mon-Fri Oct-Mar) has schedule information. The free biweekly *Pécsi Est* lists what's on at nightclubs and the cinema.

Művészetek Háza (☎ 315 388; Széchenyi tér 7-8) The Artists' House is a cultural venue that hosts classical musical performances. A schedule is posted outside.

Los Bongos (☎ 06 20 468 9491; Jókai tér 6; admission 390-550Ft; ☎ 6pm-2am Mon-Sat) Fridays are a Latin fiesta, but every night sizzles. This nightclub is on the floor above Az Elefánthoz restaurant.

Dante Café (☎ 210 361; Janus Pannoniuss utca 11; ☎ 10am-1am) An intellectual and student crowd gathers on the ground floor below the Csontváry Múzeum. There's live jazz and other music from Thursday through Saturday.

Shopping

Cezar Winery (☎ 214 490; Szent István tér 12; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri) This building is where the family of Janos Pannoniuss made sparkling wine from 1859 to 1995. You can still buy Pannonia pezsgő (champagne), under new owners, in the onsite shop and view the production facilities through glass walls.

Zsolnay Bolt (☎ 310 172; Jókai tér 2; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun) You can buy a set of kooky porcelain here.

Getting There & Away

Buses from Harkány (484Ft, one hour) leave every 15 minutes throughout the day. At least four buses a day connect Pécs with Budapest (2660Ft, 4½ hours), two with Keszthely (1740Ft, three hours) and eight with Szeged (2310Ft, four hours).

Pécs is on a main rail line with Budapest's Déli train station (2610Ft, 2½ hours, eight daily). One daily train runs from Pécs (8.40pm) to Osijek (1880Ft, two hours) in Horvátország (Croatia).

AROUND PÉCS Harkány

The hot springs at **Harkány** (www.harkany.hu, no English), 26km south of Pécs, have medicinal waters with the richest sulphuric content in Hungary. The indoor and outdoor baths and pools of **Gyógyfürdő** (☎ 480 251; www.harkanyfurdo.hu; Kossuth Lajos utca 7; adult/student 1790/1090Ft; ☎ 9am-10pm mid-Jun-Aug, to 8pm Sun-Thu & to 10pm Fri & Sat Sep-mid-

Jun) range in temperature from 26°C to 33°C in summer and from 33°C to 35°C in winter. You might consider booking a spa service, mud bath or massage. The town is basically the thermal bath complex in a 12-hectare park surrounded by holiday hotels and restaurants. Buses between Harkány and Pécs (484Ft, one hour) depart frequently, about every 15 minutes. The Harkány bus station is at the south-east corner of the park.

SOUTHEASTERN HUNGARY

The mysterious Nagyalföld (Great Plain) is an area that has been central to Hungarian myth and legend for centuries. The Plain, and its horsemen and shepherds, have represented the Hungarian ethos in poems, songs, paintings and stories. It starts at the point where Tisza River drainage basin meets the wide expanse of level *puszta* (prairie or steppe). Much of the *alföld* has been turned into farmland for growing apricots and raising geese, but other parts are little more than grassy, saline deserts sprouting juniper trees. Kiskunsági Nemzeti Park, including the Bugac Puszta, protects this unique environment.

KECSKEMÉT

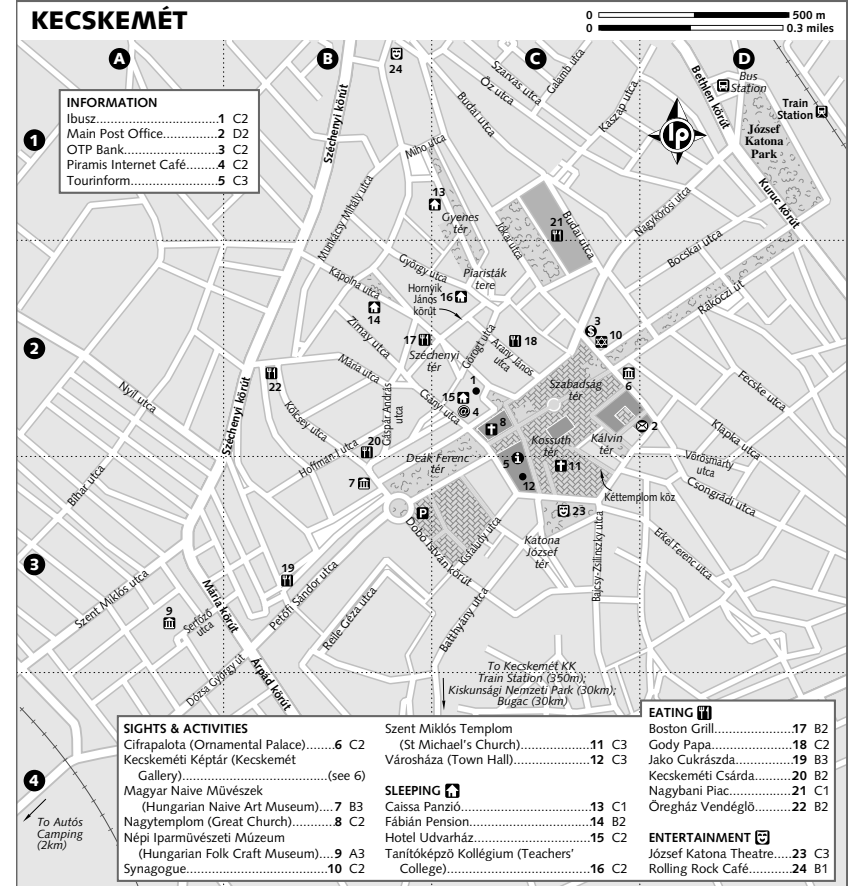
☎ 76 / pop 108,180

Located about halfway between Budapest and Szeged, Kecskemét (*kech-kah-mate*) is a green, pedestrian-friendly city with interesting Art Nouveau architecture. Claims to fame include the locally produced *barack* (apricot) jam and *pálinka* (potent brandy), *libamaj* (goose liver) dishes, and the nearby Kiskunsági Nemzeti Park and horse farms.

Orientation & Information

Central Kecskemét is made up of squares that run into one another, and consequently it's hard to tell them apart. The main bus and train stations are opposite each other in József Katona Park. A 10-minute walk southwest along Nagykörösi utca brings you to the first of the squares, Szabadság tér.

Tourinform (☎ 481 065; www.kecskemetc.hu; Kossuth tér 1; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat Jul-Aug) is in the northeastern corner of the large Town Hall. Staff here can help you with information about Kiskunsági Nemzeti Park. The **OTP**



Bank (Szabadság tér 1/A) is central, does foreign exchange and has an ATM. The **main post office** (Kálvin tér 10) is to the southeast. Surf the Web at **Piramis Internet Café** (☎ 418 134; Csányi utca 1-3; per hr 540Ft; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 1-8pm Sat & Sun), upstairs in the courtyard of a small shopping mall.

Sights

Walk around the park-like squares, starting at Szabadság tér, and admire the eclectic building styles, including the technicolour Art Nouveau of the 1902 **Cifrapalota** (Ornamental Palace; Rákóczi út 1), recently refurbished and covered in multicoloured majolica tiles. Check out the wonderful interiors of the **Kecskeméti Képtár** (Kecskemét Gallery; ☎ 480 776; Rákóczi út 1; adult/child 260/130Ft; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun). Across the street,

the Moorish building is the former **synagogue** (Rákóczi út 2), now an office building and exhibition hall called the House of Technology.

Kossuth tér is dominated by the massive 1897 Art Nouveau **Városháza** (Town Hall; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri), which is flanked by the baroque **Nagytemplom** (Great Church, 1806) and the earlier **Szent Miklós Templom** (St Michael's Church), dating from the 13th century. Nearby is the magnificent 1896 **József Katona Theatre** (☎ 483 283; Katona József tér 5; ☎ performance times only), a neobaroque theatre with a statue of the Trinity (1742) in front of it. All of these churches are open to the public during and around mass times and are free.

The town's museums are scattered around the main squares' periphery. Go first to the

Magyar Naive Művészek (Hungarian Naive Art Museum; ☎ 324 767; Gáspár András utca 11; adult/student 150/50Ft; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Sun), in the Stork House (1730) northwest off Petőfi Sándor utca. It has an impressive small collection; the folk themes are especially noteworthy. Further to the southwest, the **Népi Iparművészeti Múzeum** (Hungarian Folk Craft Museum; ☎ 327 203; Serfőző utca 19a; adult/student 200/100Ft; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) has a definitive collection of regional embroidery, weaving and textiles, as well as some furniture, woodcarving and agricultural tools. A few handicrafts are for sale at the entrance.

Sleeping

Tourinform (p394) can help you locate the numerous colleges that offer dormitory accommodation in July and August; one good choice is the central **Tanítóképző Kollégium** (Teachers' College; ☎ 486 977; Piaristák tere 4; s/d 2000/4000Ft; 🕒 mid-Jun-Aug; 📍). **Ibusz** (☎ 486 955; Kossuth tér 3; 🕒 8am-5pm Mon-Fri Sep-Jun, 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat Jul-Aug) travel agency brokers private rooms from 2000Ft per person, with a four-night minimum.

Autós Camping (☎ 329 398; Csabai Géza körút 5; camp sites 1/2 people 1350/2100Ft, caravan sites 2200Ft, bungalows 5400Ft; 🕒 Apr-Oct) As the name implies, this place is more vehicle- than tent-camping oriented, with big treeless plots. Don't be surprised if it's jammed with caravans and Germanic speakers. Take bus 1 to get southwest of town.

Caissa Panzió (☎ 481 685; www.caissachessbooks.com; Gyenes tér 18, 4th fl; s/d/tr/q 6900/8900/10,300/11,700Ft) If you are a chess lover, stay here, at the Chess Panzió, where the manager has tournaments in the big lounge on the ground floor. The rooms are on several floors in an apartment block, and provide a slightly cheaper, shabby-chic alternative – some with shared bathrooms. There's no breakfast, but you can ask for a key and share the kitchen facilities.

Fábián Pension (☎ 477 677; www.hotels.hu/fabian; Kápolna utca 14; r 7500-9500Ft; 📍) Definitely the town's best place to stay. Fábián is a family-run place, with picture windows, clean rooms and a spacious, flowery garden. Homemade jam and sweets are served along with your cold cuts and bread at breakfast, and mum and daughter will help you plan an independent trip to the national park or to a horse farm. You can also rent bicycles here for 1500Ft per day.

Hotel Udvarház (☎ 413 912; Csányi utca 1-3; s/d/tr 11,900/14,500/17,500Ft; 📍) Curvilinear blond and turquoise wood furnishings define the contemporary style of this hotel on the 1st

floor above a shopping arcade (across from Piramis Internet Café). A few rooms have air-con; ask first, if this is important to you.

Eating

Jako Cukrázsda (☎ 505 949; Petőfi Sándor utca 7; cakes 110-265Ft; 🕒 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat & Sun) Cakes, puddings and strudels tempt from behind a long, modern glass-and-chrome case.

Őrgház Vendéglő (☎ 496 973; Kölcsey utca 3; mains 600-1000Ft; 🕒 11am-10pm; 📍) Get yourself some proper Hungarian roast: the *cigány pecsenye* (literally 'Gypsy's roast') is a mixed grill with tender cutlets of pork and chicken, a piece of bacon and a sausage. Join the friends and families who gather here for Sunday lunches. Blue-and-white *kékfestő* (indigo-dyed) tablecloths and curtains make the place homely and it's completely nonsmoking – a real rarity.

Kecskeméti Csárda (☎ 488 686; Kölcsey utca 7; mains 1290-1990Ft; 🕒 11am-11pm; 📍) This is what a stereotypical Hungarian country inn (*csárda*) restaurant looks like – with a Romani musician and all. It may seem a bit touristy, but it's where residents go to celebrate special occasions. There's courtyard dining.

You can get some decent and cheap quick eats and a beer at **Boston Grill** (☎ 484 444; Kápolna utca 2; burgers 320-550Ft; 🕒 11am-10pm) or **Gody Papa** (☎ 415 515; Arany János utca 3; pizzas 330-550Ft; 🕒 11am-11pm). There is an open-air market, **Nagybani Piac** (Budai utca; 🕒 7am-1pm Mon-Sat) for self-catering.

Entertainment

Tourinform (p394) has a list of what concerts and performances are on, or check out the free *Kecskeméti Est* (www.est.hu, Hungarian only) available at restaurants around town. Nightlife can be a little dull on weekdays outside the summer months, but you can always enjoy a coffee or a glass of wine from one of the cafés on Kossuth tér and watch the people go by.

József Katona Theatre (☎ 483 283; Katona József tér) See operettas and symphony performances in the 19th-century building.

Rolling Rock Café (☎ 506 190; Jókai utca 44; 🕒 noon-5am Thu-Sat, noon-midnight Tue-Wed) The coolest place in town for live music and a beverage.

Getting There & Away

Frequent buses depart for Budapest (1040Ft, two hours, every 40 minutes) and for Szeged (1090Ft, two hours, hourly). A direct rail line links Budapest's Nyugati train station with Kecskemét (1212Ft, 1½ hours, 12 daily) and

Kecskemét with Szeged (1844Ft, 1¼ hours, hourly except at lunch time).

KISKUNSÁG NATIONAL PARK

Totalling 76,000 hectares, **Kiskunsági Nemzeti Park** (Kiskunság National Park; www.knp.hu) consists of half a dozen 'islands' of protected land. Much of the park's alkaline ponds, dunes and grassy 'deserts' with juniper trees are off-limits. **Bugac** (*Boo-gats*) village, about 30km southwest of Kecskemét, is the most accessible part of the park. Here you can see the famous Hungarian cowboys ride at a daily horse show from May to October. The rest of the year, ask at the Kecskemét Tourinform (p394) to see if they know of a tour group you could join.

The company that owns the restaurant **Bugaci Karikás Csárda** (☎ 575 121; Nagybugac 135; mains 1200-2500Ft; 🕒 11am-11pm) runs the **horse show** (adult/student 1000/500Ft; 🕒 1.15pm May-Oct), which is the main attraction in the village. You can take a **wagon ride** (1000Ft; 🕒 12.15pm May-Oct) to go the few kilometres to the **Pásztor Múzeum** (Shepherd Museum; admission free; 🕒 10am-5pm May-Oct) first or just walk down the sand road to the staging ring. Once the show starts, the horse herders crack their whips, race one another bareback and ride 'five-in-hand', a breathtaking performance in which one *csikós* (cowboy) gallops five horses at full speed while standing on the backs of the rear two. And of course you can always stop for some wine and Romani music in the *csárda* afterwards.

The best way to get to Bugac is by bus from Kecskemét (423Ft). The 11am bus from the main terminal gets you to the park entrance around noon. Another option is to take the narrow-gauge train (326Ft) from the Kecskemét KK train station (south of the town centre) to the Móricgát stop (two after the Bugac stop) and walk across the field towards the conical-shaped roof of the Pásztor Múzeum. Departures are at 8am, 2.10pm and 7.50pm daily. After the show, the first bus back to Kecskemét passes by the park entrance at 5.15pm weekdays and 6.35pm weekends (a change at Jakabszállás is required for the last bus). The return train departs from Móricgát at 6.04pm and 11.54pm.

SZEGED

☎ 62 / pop 175,500

Szeged (*seh-ged*) is one of Hungary's best off-the-beaten-track destinations, a place that draws far fewer visitors than it should. A couple of days in this lively college town on the

southern Great Plain, right on the Tisza River just before Serbia, will get you acquainted with the many ornate and colourful one-time palaces that now contain businesses or house several families. The Maros River from Romania enters the Tisza just east of the centre, and flooding is not uncommon. Much of the old town is architecturally homogeneous, as it was rebuilt after the disastrous 1879 flood destroyed large parts of the city.

Orientation & Information

The train station is south of the city centre on Indóház tér; tram 1 rides from it along Boldogasszony sugárút into the centre of town (five stops to Széchenyi tér). The bus station, on Mars tér, is to the west of the centre and is within easy walking distance via pedestrian Mikszáth Kálmán utca.

The **Tourinform** (☎ 488 699; Dugonics tér 2; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) office is hidden in a courtyard. **Matrix Café** (☎ 423 830; Kárász utca 5; per hr 500Ft; 🕒 24hr) has dozens of internet terminals and just as many for game-addict use only.

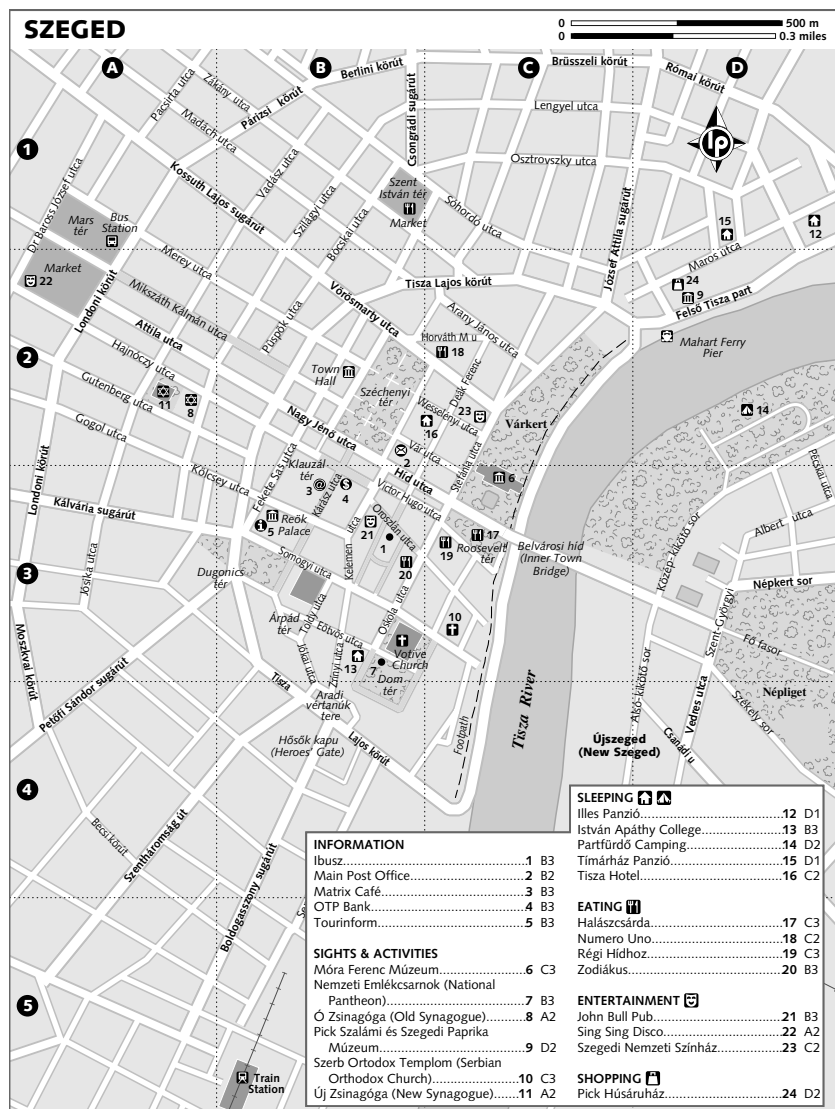
Main post office (Széchenyi tér 1)
OTP Bank (Klauzál tér 4)

Sights & Activities

East of Széchenyi tér, the huge, neoclassical **Morá Ferenc Múzeum** (☎ 549 040; Várkert; adult/student 400/250Ft; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) peers down on the Tisza River. There are interesting exhibits on the Avar people (5th to 8th centuries) who lived in the area, on the area's folk life and art, as well as a room dedicated to the 1879 flood. North of the museum is a long, waterfront park with walking paths and playground equipment.

To the west, the **Új Zsinagóga** (New Synagogue; ☎ 423 849; Gutenberg utca 13; adult/student 250/100Ft; 🕒 10am-noon & 1-5pm Sun-Fri Apr-Sep, 10am-2pm Sun-Fri Oct-Mar) is the most beautiful Jewish house of worship in Hungary and is still in use. An ornate, blue- and gold-painted interior graces the 1903 Art Nouveau building. Free organ concerts here are common on summer evenings. The nearby **ÓZsinagóga** (Old Synagogue; Hajnóczy utca 12; admission free; 🕒 service times) was built in 1843.

The **Szeged Open-Air Festival** is held in Dom tér from mid-July to late August. Running along three sides of the square is the **Nemzeti Emlécsarnok** (National Pantheon), with statues and reliefs of 80 Hungarian notables. One block northeast, inside the **Szerb Ortodox Templom** (Serbian Orthodox Church; cnr Béla & Somogyi utca; adult/student 150/100Ft; 🕒 8am-8pm), have a look at



the fantastic iconostasis – a central gold ‘tree’ with 60 icons hanging off its ‘branches’.

Just north of the Old Town ring road is the **Pick Szalámi és Szegedi Paprika Múzeum** (☎ 421 814; Felső Tisza part 10; adult/student 320/240Ft; ☎ 3-6pm Tue-Fri & 1-4pm Sat). Two floors of exhibits and old photos show traditional methods of salami production. There’s a small gift stand in

the museum and a butcher shop around the corner in this factory building.

Sleeping

Plenty of student accommodation is open to travellers in July and August, including the central **István Apáthy College** (☎ 545 896; Eötvös utca 4; r5000Ft; ☎). Ask Tourinform (p397) for more

information. **Ibusz** (☎ 471 177; www.ibusz.hu; Oroszlán utca 3; per person 4000-5000Ft; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat) travel agency can help with private rooms.

Partfűrdő Camping (☎ 430 843; Közép-kikötő sor; camp sites per person 1200Ft, bungalows 12,000Ft; ☎ mid-May-Sep; P ☎) This green, grassy camp site is across the river in New Szeged. Bungalows sleep up to four people.

Illes Panzió (☎ 315 640; www.illespanzio.fw.hu; Maros utca 37; r5900-7900Ft; P) This newly refurbished old mansion north of the centre has fresh, clean rooms with wood panels, cool tile floors, TVs and polished woodwork.

Tímárház Panzió (☎ 425 486; Maros utca 26; s/d/tr 8200/10,000/17,600Ft; P) Boxy rooms are sparsely furnished with low-lying modern beds and flat-faced armoires.

Tisza Hotel (☎ 478 278; www.tiszahotel.hu; Wesselényi utca 1; s/d €57/67; P ☎) The classy old mamma of Szeged, this 1885 hotel has imposing marble pillars, gilded décor and vast halls with low-hanging chandeliers. You can upgrade to a ‘superior’ room with colonial furniture for under €20 extra. The cheapest deals are rooms with a shower, but the toilet is in a shared restroom down the hall.

Eating

Numero Uno (☎ 424 745; Széchenyi tér 5; mains 360-730Ft; ☎ 11am-11pm Mon-Sat, noon-11pm Sun; ☎) Good pizzas and calzones on the main square. There’s a garden out back.

Régi Hídhöz (☎ 420 910; Oskola utca 4; mains 780-1200Ft; ☎ noon-11pm Sun-Thu, 11am-midnight Fri & Sat; ☎) This is the cheaper version of Halászcserda (below), where many come to try Szeged’s *halászlé* (fish soup). The rustic dining room has faux-treated yellow plaster walls and ceramics hanging as decorations.

Zodiákus (☎ 420 914; Oskola utca 13; mains 890-2100Ft; ☎ 11am-midnight Mon-Thu, 11am-1am Sat, 1-4pm Sun; ☎) Low lighting, barrel ceilings, amber walls and stylised zodiac-sign art make for a sultry, upscale environment. Imaginative entrées include options such as beef tenderloin topped with red currants and cheddar cheese.

Halászcserda (☎ 555 980; Roosevelt tér 14; mains 1500-2000Ft) While in town you have to try Szegedi *halászlé*, the fish soup the area is known for. This is the place that wins all prizes for the local delicacy.

Entertainment

This being a college town means that there is a vast array of bars, clubs and other nightspots,

especially around Dugonics tér. Nightclub programmes are listed in the free *Szegedi Est* magazine.

Szegedi Nemzeti Színház (☎ 479 279; Deák Ferenc utca 12-14) Since 1886, the Szeged National Theatre has been the centre of cultural life in the city. Opera, ballet and drama performances take the stage.

John Bull Pub (☎ 484 217; Oroszlán utca 6; ☎ 10am-midnight Mon-Fri, to 1am Sat & Sun) Join the 20-somethings drinking on the small patio or in the cosy pub – if you can find a free table.

Sing Sing Disco (cnr Mars tér & Dr Baross József utca; ☎ 10pm-4am Wed-Sat) A place where the youngsters let loose on weekends, with guest DJs, rave parties and occasional theme nights (let’s hope none of them include prison outfits). Admission starts at 500Ft, depending on the DJ.

Shopping

Pick Húsáruház (☎ 421 879; Maros utca 21; ☎ 3-6pm Mon, 7am-6pm Tue-Fri, 6am-noon Sat) You can buy a stick of Pick salami, Szeged’s brand product, as well as other meats, right from the factory store.

Getting There & Away

Buses run to Budapest (2430Ft, three hours, six daily), Kecskemét (1090Ft, two hours, hourly) and Pécs (2310Ft, four hours, eight daily), among other destinations. If you’re heading to Serbia, buses make the 1½ hour run to Subotica daily at 10am (800Ft).

Szeged is on the main rail line to Budapest’s Nyugati train station (2324Ft, 2½ hours, 11 daily), stopping halfway along in Kecskemét (1844Ft, 1¼ hours, 11 daily). You have to change in Békéscsaba to get to Arad (2946Ft, 3½ hours, three daily) in Romania. Two daily trains (6.35am and 4.25pm) go direct from Szeged to Subotica (1434Ft, two hours) in Serbia.

NORTHEASTERN HUNGARY

The level plains and grasslands give way to a chain of wooded hills as you head north and east. These are the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains (in modern-day Ukraine and Romania), which stretch along the Hungarian border with Slovakia. Though you’ll definitely notice the rise in elevation, Hungary’s highest peak of Kékes-tető is still only a proverbial bump in the road at 1014m. The microclimates

in several of the hill groupings are quite conducive to wine production. Eger and Tokaj are known worldwide for their red and sweet dessert wines, respectively. Not far north of Eger is Szilvászárud – the Hungarian home of the snow-white Lipizzaner horse makes a good day trip.

EGER

☎ 36 / pop 57,000

After Budapest, Eger (*egg-air*) is probably next on any visitor's list, and the gallons of wine that are at your disposal here definitely have something to do with it. But that's not to say there's nothing else to draw travellers here – on the contrary. This attractive baroque city has a great hilltop castle and a walkable, quaint town centre. And then, of course, there's the wine.

It was here in 1552 that Hungarian defenders temporarily stopped the Turkish advance into Western Europe and helped preserve Hungary's identity. Legend has it that István Dobó fortified his badly outnumbered soldiers with red wine while they successfully defended Eger against the siege. When the Ottomans saw the red-stained beards, rumours circulated that the Hungarians were drinking bull's blood to attain their strength. Thus the name of the region's most famous red wine came to be Egri Bikavér (Eger Bull's Blood). The Ottomans returned in 1596 and captured Eger Castle. They were evicted in 1687.

In the 18th century, Eger played a central role in Ferenc Rákóczi II's attempt to overthrow the Habsburgs, and it was then that a large part of the castle was razed by the Austrians. Credit goes to the bishops of Eger for erecting most of the town you see today. Eger has some of Hungary's finest architecture, especially examples of Copf (Zopf in Hungarian), a transitional style between late baroque and neoclassicism found only in Central Europe. Just a 20-minute walk southwest of the centre, dozens of small wine cellars are to be found carved into the sides of Szépasszony völgy (Valley of the Beautiful Women).

Orientation & Information

The main train station is a 15-minute walk south of town, on Vasút utca, just east of Deák Ferenc utca. Egervár train station, which serves Szilvászárud and other points north, is a five-minute walk north of the castle along Vécseyvölgy utca. The bus station is west of Széchenyi István utca, Eger's main drag.

Egri Est Café (☎ 411 105; Széchenyi István utca 16; ☎ 11am-midnight Sun-Thu, to 4am Fri & Sat) internet access for 500Ft per hour.

OTP Bank (Széchenyi István utca 2)

Post office (Széchenyi István utca 22)

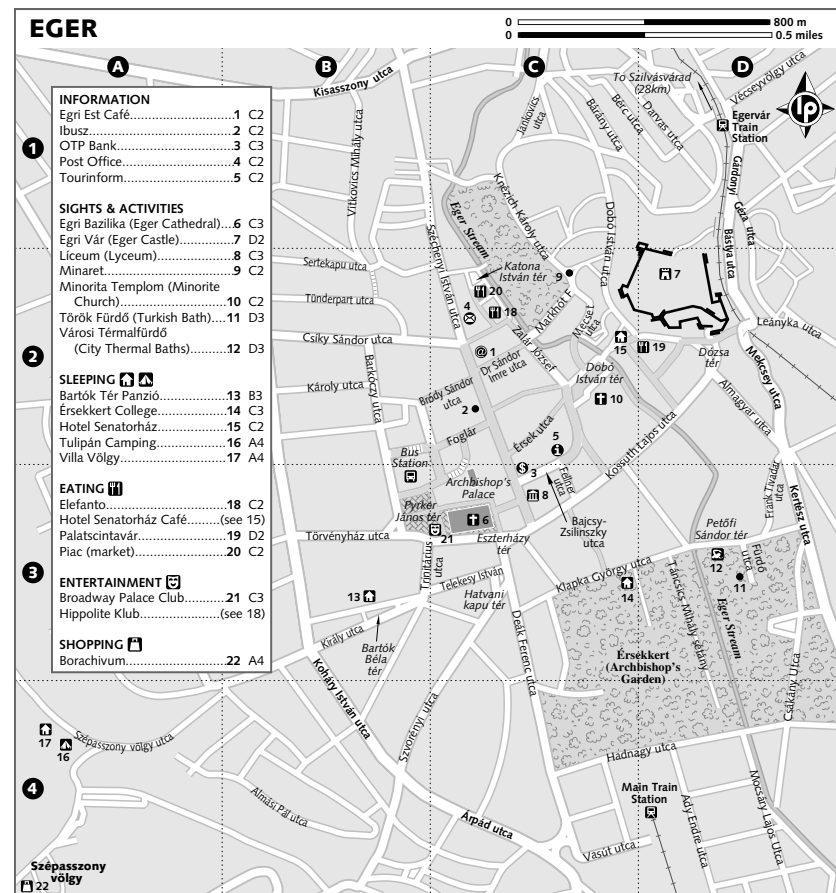
Tourinform (☎ 517 715; www.eger.hu; Bajcsy-Zsilinszky utca 9; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat, to 6pm Mon-Fri Jul-Aug) The helpful staff here has lots of regional information on hand, including an accommodation guide.

Sights & Activities

The most striking attraction and the best views of town are from **Egri Vár** (Eger Castle; ☎ 312 744; Vár 1; adult/student combined ticket 900/450Ft; ☎ 8am-8pm Tue-Sun Apr-Aug, to 7pm Sep, 8am-6pm Oct & Mar, to 5pm Nov-Feb), a huge walled complex at the top of the hill off Dózsza tér. First fortified after an early Mongol invasion in the 13th century, the earliest ruins onsite are the foundations of St John's Cathedral, built in the 12th century and destroyed by the Turks. The excellent **István Dobó Múzeum** (admission included with castle), inside the Bishop's Palace (1470), explores the history and development of the castle and the town. Other exhibits such as the **Panoptikum** (Waxworks; adult/student 350/250Ft) and the **Éremverde** (Minting Exhibit; adult/student 240/120Ft) cost extra. Even on days when the museums are closed, you can walk around the grounds and battlements and enjoy the views if you buy a *sétaljegy* (strolling ticket, adult/child 400/200Ft).

A surprise awaits you west of the castle hill: a 40m-high **minaret** (Knéžich Károly utca; admission 200Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Mar-Oct), minus the mosque, is allegedly Europe's northernmost remains of the Ottoman invasion in the 16th century. The **Minorita Templom** (Minorite Church; Dobó István tér; admission free; ☎ mass times), built in 1771, is a glorious baroque building. In the square in front are statues of national hero István Dobó and his comrades-in-arms routing the Turks in 1552.

The first thing you see as you come into town from the bus or train station is the neoclassical **Egri Bazilika** (Eger Cathedral; Pýrker János tér 1), built in 1836. Directly opposite is the Copf-style **Liceum** (Lyceum; ☎ 520 400; Esterházy tér 1; admission free; ☎ 9.30am-3.30pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, to 1pm Sat & Sun Oct-Mar), dating from 1765, with a 20,000-volume frescoed **könyvtár** (library; adult/student 500/350Ft) on the 1st floor and an 18th-century observatory in the **Csillagászati Múzeum** (Astronomy Museum; adult/student 500/350Ft) on the 6th floor. Climb three more floors up to



the observation deck for a great view of the city and to try out the camera obscura, the 'eye of Eger', designed in 1776 to entertain the locals.

The Archbishop's Garden was once the private reserve of papal princes, but today the park is open to the public. Inside the park, the **Városi Tórmalfürdő** (City Thermal Baths; ☎ 411 699; adult/child 500/350Ft; ☎ 6am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat & Sun May-Sep, 9am-6pm daily Oct-Apr) has open-air, as well as covered, pools with different temperatures (40°C being the hottest) and mineral contents. The **Török Fürdő** (Turkish Bath; Fűrőd utca 3), built between 1610 and 1617, is open only to those with a doctor's order.

The prize for the most deceitful name of any attraction in the world could almost

definitely go to **Szépasszony völgy** (Valley of the Beautiful Women; off Király utca; ☎ 10am-5pm), home to dozens of small wine cellars that truck in, store and sell Bull's Blood and other regional red and white wines. Walk the horseshoe-shaped street through the valley and stop in front of one that strikes your fancy and ask (*'megkosztólhatok?'*) to taste their wares (50Ft per deciliter). If you want wine to go, you can bring an empty plastic bottle and have it filled for about (600Ft per 1½ litres); they'll also sell you a kitschy little plastic barrel full. It's easy to drink a lot here, but remember that there is a zero-tolerance policy for driving in Hungary with any alcohol in your system, so walk the 20 minutes back to the centre or get a taxi (1000Ft).

Sleeping

A number of colleges in town offer accommodation in July and August, including the 132-bed **Érsekkert College** (☎ 413 661; fax 520 440; Klapka György utca 12; dm 1400-2000Ft). **Ibusz** (☎ 311 451; www.ibusz.hu; Széchenyi István utca 9; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat Jun-Sep) can help organise private rooms, starting at 3000Ft a night per person.

Tulipán Camping (☎ 410 580; www.home.zonnet.nl/tulipan); Szépasszony völgy utca 71; camp sites per person 1450Ft, caravan sites with electricity per person 1950Ft, hotel 7680Ft, 4-/5-person bungalows 5500/9900Ft; (P) (X)) The five-person bungalow has one bedroom, a living room, a kitchen and a bathroom. The four-person cabin is just a room (no kitchen or bath). The hotel rooms have minifridges and include breakfast. Some of the caravan sites are in a big, treeless field. It's at a stumbling distance from the valley wine cellars and it's open year-round.

Bartók Tér Panzió (☎ 515 556; fax 515 572; Bartók Béla tér 8; s/d/tr 7000/9000/11,000Ft; (X)) A light, colourful place with basic rooms and skylights, organised around a courtyard in an old town building. The same people operate St Kristof Panzió, at the end of the square, for the same prices (contact Bartók Tér Panzió for details).

Villa Völgy (☎ 321 664; www.hotels.hu/villavolgy; Szépasszony völgy, Tulipánkert utca 5; s/d 8200/13,600Ft; (P) (X)) A stylish, country manor house-type hotel, in the heart of wine-tasting country. The modern interior design uses blonde wood, large colourful prints on the curtains, and graphic art rugs.

Hotel Senatorház (☎ 320 466; www.senatorhaz.hu; Dobó István tér 11; r€56-70; (P) (X)) This 18th-century inn sitting on the cobblestone square, with the lights of Eger Castle glowing above, has the best location in town. The reception is cluttered with tasteful antiques, leather sofas and old photographs, and traditional wood furnishings decorate the well-equipped 11 guest rooms.

Eating

At the base of Szépasszony völgy utca there are numerous small terrace *büfé* (snack bars) that resemble food stands, but employ a waiter to serve you at your picnic table. There are also numerous restaurants and cafés along pedestrian Széchenyi István utca in town. The area is known for its *pisztrang* (trout) dishes.

Piac (market; Katona István tér; ☎ 6am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat, to 10am Sun) Come to the covered market to get fruit, vegetables, meat and bread.

Elefanto (☎ 411 031; Katona István tér 2; mains 1350-2500Ft, pizzas 490-900Ft; ☎ 11am-midnight; (X)) Dine alfresco on the large covered terrace. This is a casual place that sometimes has light music.

Palatsintavár (☎ 413 986; Dobó István utca 9; mains around 1200Ft) This is a pancake-lover's heaven, and a wonderful vegetarian option. The restaurant seems to have been decorated by an obsessive collector of old cigarette packs and other odd and lovely things.

Hotel Senatorház Café (☎ 320 466; Dobó István tér 11; mains 1400-3000Ft; ☎ 11am-midnight; (X)) Sitting in the main square for a meal is delightful. Even better, stop by in the evening for a candlelit dessert.

Entertainment

The Tourinform office can tell you what concerts and musicals are on at theatres in the area, the Liceum and at Eger Cathedral. The free *Egri Est* magazine has nightlife listings.

Broadway Palace Club (Pyker János tér 3; ☎ 10am-6am Wed, Fri & Sat) A good atmosphere for dancing and there are café tables outside.

Hippolite Klub (☎ 411 031; Katona István tér 2; ☎ 10am-4am) A mild-mannered restaurant by day, Hippolite turns funky disco with music starting at 9pm.

Shopping

Buy wine at the source in Szépasszony völgy. Ask a cellar to fill up your plastic jug straight from the cask, or if you insist on having a glass bottle, **Borachivum** (Szépasszony völgy utca 33; ☎ 10am-6pm) sells them.

Getting There & Away

Buses make the trip from Eger to Szilvászár (405Ft, 45 minutes, nine daily). Other destinations include Budapest (1500Ft, two hours, 15 daily), Kecskemét (2080Ft, 4½ hours, three daily) and also Szeged (2660Ft, 5½ hours, three daily). To get to Tokaj by bus, you have to go past it to Nyíregyháza and switch.

Eight trains a day connect Egervár station with Szilvászár (312Ft, one hour). Departing from the main train station, change at Füzesabony to get to Tokaj (1762Ft, two hours, seven daily). Direct trains run from Eger to Budapest's Keleti station (1968Ft, two hours) four times a day.

SZILVÁSZÁRAD

☎ 36 / pop 1850

Horse-lover? Then come this way. The quiet village of Szilvászár, 28km north of Eger,

hides in the Bükk Hills, most of which fall within the 43,000-hectare **Bükk Nemzeti Park**. This is where you can see, ride and be pulled (in a carriage) by the precious white stallions, the Lipizzaner horses. Either make a day trip to the hills or base yourself at the park. Some 250 prize horses are kept in local stables. If you love hiking, you can base yourself at the Lipizzaner centre too, and although there's no tourist office here, the Tourinform in Eger (p400) has information and sells hiking maps.

The bus from Eger will drop you off in the centre on Egri út. Park utca is off Egri, north of the bus stop, Szalajka Völgy is to the south. You get off the train at Szilvászár-Szalajkavölgy, the first of the town's two stations. Follow Egri út east and then north (left) for about 10 minutes into town. At the turn, if you go right instead you'll get to the valley.

Learn more about Lipizzaner horses at the **Lipscai Múzeum** (☎ 355 135; Park utca 8; adult/student 350/250Ft; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-4pm), which has historical exhibits and a few live animals in an 18th-century stable. Call a day ahead to arrange a carriage (from 4300/7400Ft for a two-/four-horse coach seating three people) or a horse-back ride at the **Lipizzaner State Stud Farm** (Lipicai Állami Ménesgazdaság; ☎ 564 400; Fenyves utca; admission adult/child 300/200Ft; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-4pm Thu-Sun; rides 1800/2500Ft per hr in paddock/further afield).

At the beginning of Szalajka Völgy there are restaurants, souvenir shops and tracks where Lipizzaner coaches race some summer weekends. You can park here for 100Ft per hour. Hike from here further into the valley, or take a ride on a **keskeny nyomtávú vasút** (narrow-gauge railway; ☎ 355 197; Szalajka völgy utca 6; one way adult/student 300/150Ft; ☎ May-Sep).

Nine daily buses connect Szilvászár and Eger (405Ft, 45 minutes). Trains to Egervár train station take about an hour (312Ft, eight daily).

TOKAJ

☎ 47 / pop 4650

The region has been on the Unesco World Heritage list since 2002, although grapevines have been grown in the hills surrounding Tokaj village for at least 1000 years. The volcanic soil and unique microclimate promote the growth of *Botrytis cinerea* (noble rot) on the grapes. It's these ugly, shrivelled-up grapes covered with fungus that produce Tokaji Aszú,

a world-class dessert wine. The sweetness is rated from 3 (least) to 6 (the most). Tokaj also produces less sweet wines: Szamorodni (like dry sherry), Furmint and Háselevelű (the driest of all). The village itself spreads out in a valley at the confluence of the Tisza and the Bodrog Rivers. Look for the nesting storks on telephone poles and chimneys from March through September.

Orientation & Information

Trains arrive 1200m south of the town centre; walk north on Baross Gábor utca, turn left on Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út and it turns into Rákóczi út, the main thoroughfare. The bus station is much more convenient, in town, on Seráz utca. **Tourinform** (☎ 552 070; www.tokaj.hu; Serház utca 1; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) is just off Rákóczi út.

Sights & Activities

Start at the **Tokaji Múzeum** (☎ 352 636; Bethlen Gábor utca 13; adult/student 400/200Ft; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun May-Nov), which leaves nothing unsaid about the history of Tokaj, the region and its wines. After you're thoroughly knowledgeable, head to the 600-year-old cellar **Rákóczi Pince** (☎ 352 408; Kossuth tér 15; ☎ 10am-6pm) for a tasting and a tour. Bottles of wine mature underground in the long cave-like corridors (one measures 28m by 10m). A flight of six Tokaj wines costs 2100Ft. The correct order of sampling Tokaj wines is: Furmint, dry Szamorodni, sweet Szamorodni and then the Aszú wines – from three to six *puttony* (the sweetest). If you only want to taste the Aszú, a three-decilitre glass costs 216Ft to 636Ft, with a minimum of four glasses to taste.

There are less formal wine cellars (*pincek*) that offer tastings. They are scattered along the roads leading into town (Tarcali) and out of (Bodorgeresztúri) town. Look for signs on Rákóczi út, on Bem út and on Hegyalja utca (southeast of town off Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út). Other town attractions include the **Tokaji Galéria** (☎ 352 003; Bethlen Gábor utca 17; admission free; ☎ 10am-4pm May-Oct), in an 18th-century Greek Orthodox church, with works by local artists. The **Nagy Zsinagóga** (Great Synagogue; Serház utca 55), has been restored from its crumbling state.

Sleeping & Eating

Tourinform (www.tokaj.hu) lists searchable private accommodation on its website. The newest, nicest pensions are southeast of town and require at least a 20-minute walk to get to the centre.

Lux (☎ 352 145; Serház utca 14; d/tr 5400/7500Ft) This friendly six-room pension has obviously been well loved, and well used, but it is *central*. No breakfast.

Tisza Panzió (☎ 552 008; fax 552 009; Tarcali út 52; s/d 4000/6000Ft; 📍 ☒) This *panzió* has simple and modern rooms, with TV and telephone. Tarcali út is about 25 minutes south of town along Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út (southwest of the train station).

Millennium Hotel (☎ 352 242; www.tokajmillennium.hu; Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út 34; s/d 8800/10,200Ft; 📍 ☒) Sleek décor and up-to-date amenities, such as unlimited wireless internet connection in the guest rooms, live up to the new century name. Use of the wellbeing centre is included, but breakfast is 1100Ft extra. The hotel sits near the confluence of the Bodrog and Tisza Rivers.

Róna (☎ 352 116; Bethlen Gábor utca 19; mains 1300-1900Ft; ☎: 11am-10pm, to 9pm Nov-Feb) The speciality of the house is fish, caught in nearby rivers, but there are other Hungarian options on the menu here as well, although they are nothing fancy.

Degenfeld (☎ 553 050; Kossuth tér 1; mains 1800-2600Ft; ☎: 11.30am-10pm; ☒ ☒) Delight your tastebuds with lemon-tarragon venison or orange-ginger duck breast. The Degenfeld palace was built in 1870 and has lovely white tablecloths, fresh flowers and upholstered French imperial chairs in the dining room. A few rooms upstairs are for rent.

Shopping

You can buy wine at any of the places mentioned for tasting or stop at the **Furmint Vinotéka** (☎ 353 340; Bethlen Gábor utca 12; ☎: 9am-5pm) wineshop for a large local selection.

Getting There & Away

No direct buses connect Tokaj with Budapest or Eger. Two buses a day go to Nyíregyháza (463Ft, 40 minutes), where you can connect to either.

Four express trains a day travel to and from Budapest's Keleti station (2610Ft, two hours 45 minutes) and one local to Budapest's Nyugati (2762Ft, 4½ hours). Change at Füzesabony to get to Eger (1762Ft, two hours, five daily). Up to 18 trains a day connect Tokaj with Nyíregyháza (442Ft, 40 minutes), from where you can take a train to the Hungarian border town of Záhony and into Csop, in the Ukraine.

HUNGARY DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

Budapest has the widest variety of lodging prices, but even in provincial towns you can find camping grounds, hostels and private rooms in the budget range; *panziók* (pensions), guesthouses and small hotels in the midrange; and multiamenity hotels at the top end. Reviews in this chapter are ordered according to price. Hungary's more than 400 camping grounds are listed in Tourinform's *Camping Hungary* map/brochure (www.camping.hu). Facilities are generally open May to October and difficult to reach without a car.

The **Hungarian Youth Hostel Association** (Map pp358-9; Mellow Mood Ltd; ☎ 1-413 2065; www.youthhostels.hu; VII Baross tér 15, 3rd fl, Budapest) keeps a list of year-round hostels throughout Hungary. In general, year-round hostels have a communal kitchen, laundry and internet service, sometimes a lounge, and a basic bread-and-jam breakfast may be included. Having a HI card is not required, but it may get you a 10% discount. From July to August, students vacate college and university dorms and administration opens them to travellers. Local Tourinform offices can help you locate such places.

Renting a private room in a Hungarian home is a good budget option and can be a great opportunity to get up close and personal with the culture: you generally share a bathroom with the family. Prices outside Budapest run from 2200Ft to 5500Ft per person per night.

Midrange accommodation may or may not have a private bathroom, satellite TV and in-room phone, but all top-end places do. A cold breakfast buffet is usually included in the price at pensions, and there are hot breakfasts included at hotels. A reasonable place might bill itself as a *kishotel* (small hotel) because it has satellite TV and a minibar. Air-conditioning is scarce nationwide, but you're more likely to find it at higher-priced establishments.

An engaging alternative is to stay in a rural village or farm house, but only if you have wheels – most places are truly remote. Contact Tourinform, the **National Association of Village Tourism** (Map p362; FAOS; ☎ 1-268 0592; VII Király utca 93) or the **Centre for Rural Tourism** (Map pp358-9; FTC; ☎ 1-321 4396; www.ftur.hu; VII Dohány utca 86) in Budapest.

ACTIVITIES

Hungary has more than 100 thermal baths open to the public and many are attached to hotels with wellbeing packages. Two thermal baths in Budapest, one at Harkány (p394) and the large thermal lake at Hévíz (p390) are covered in this chapter. Request the Hungarian National Tourist Office (HNTO) brochure *Water Tours in Hungary* from Tourinform; it's a gold mine of information for planning spa itineraries.

There's also a helpful HNTO *Riding in Hungary* booklet on equestrian tourism, or you could contact the **Hungarian Equestrian Tourism Association** (Map p362; MLTSZ; ☎ 1-456 0444; www.equi.hu; IX Ráday utca 8, Budapest). **Pegazus Tours** (Map p362; ☎ 1-317 1644; www.pegazus.hu; V Ferenciek tere 5, Budapest) organises horse-riding tours, and occasionally bicycle tours as well.

Hiking enthusiasts may enjoy the trails around Tihany at Lake Balaton, the Bükk Hills north of Eger or the plains at Bugac Puszta south of Kecskemét. Hiking maps usually have yellow borders. Bird-watchers could explore these same paths or take a tour with **Birding Hungary** (☎ 70-214 0261; www.birdinghungary.com; PF 4, Budapest 1511).

All admission prices in this chapter are listed as they are quoted on signs in Hungary (adult/student). Usually, children and pensioners can get into places for the same discounted price.

BOOKS

Not to be modest, an excellent overall guidebook is Lonely Planet's *Hungary*, while the *Budapest* guide takes an in-depth look at the capital. For an easy introduction to the nation's past, check out *An Illustrated History of Hungary* by István Lázár. Read László Kontler's *A History of Hungary* for a more in-depth, but easy-to-read, study.

BUSINESS HOURS

With some rare exceptions, opening hours (*nyitvatartás*) are posted on the front door of establishments; *nyitva* means 'open' and *zárva* is 'closed'. Large, chain grocery stores are usually open from 7am to 6pm Monday through Friday, and to 1pm on Saturday. Smaller ones, especially in Budapest, may be open on Sunday or holidays as well. Most towns have a 'nonstop' convenience store, and many have supermarkets, such as Tesco, that are open 24 hours. Main post offices are open 8am to 6pm weekdays, and to noon or 1pm Saturday.

Bank hours are from 8am to 4pm Monday to Thursday and 8am to 1pm on Friday. Hospitality opening hours vary between bigger and smaller towns, but generally restaurants open from 11am to 11pm, and bars and cafés open from 8am to midnight.

COURSES

The granddaddy of all Hungarian language schools, **Debreceni Nyári Egyetem** (Debrecen Summer University; ☎ 52-489 117; www.nyariegyetem.hu; Egyetem tér 1, PO Box 35, Debrecen 4010), in eastern Hungary, is the most well known and the most well respected. It organises intensive two- and four-week courses during July and August and 80-hour, two-week advanced courses during winter. The **Debrecen Summer University Branch** (Map p362; ☎ 1-320 5751; XIII Jászai Mari tér 6) in Budapest puts on regular and intensive courses.

CUSTOMS

You can bring and take out the usual personal effects, 200 cigarettes, 1L of wine or champagne and 1L of spirits. You are not supposed to export valuable antiques without a special permit; this should be available from the place of purchase. You must declare the import/export of any amount of cash exceeding 1,000,000Ft.

DISABLED TRAVELLERS

Most of Hungary has a long way to go before it becomes accessible to the disabled, although audible traffic signals are becoming more common and there are Braille markings on the higher-denominated forint notes. For more information, contact the **Hungarian Disabled Association** (Map pp358-9; MEOSZ; ☎ 1-388 5529; meosz@matavnet.hu; III San Marco utca 76, Budapest).

DISCOUNT CARDS

Those planning extensive travel in Hungary might consider the **Hungary Card** (☎ 1-266 3741; www.hungarycard.hu), which gives 50% discounts on seven return train fares; three 33%-off one-way train trips; 50% off some bus and boat travel; free entry to some museums and attractions outside Budapest; up to 25% off selected accommodation; and 20% off the price of the Budapest Card (p360). Available at Tourinform and Volánbusz offices, larger train stations, some newsagents and petrol stations throughout Hungary, the card costs 7935Ft and is valid for one year.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

To find out more about Hungarian embassies around the world, or foreign representation in Hungary, contact the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** (☎ 1-458 1000; www.kum.hu).

Hungarian Embassies & Consulates

Hungarian embassies around the world include the following.

Australia (☎ 02-6282 2555; 17 Beale Cres, Deakin, ACT 2600)

Canada (☎ 613-230 9614; 299 Waverley St, Ottawa, Ontario K2P 0V9)

France (☎ 01 5636 0754; 7-9 Sq Vergennes, 75015 Paris)

Germany (☎ 030-203 100; Unter den Linden 76, 10117 Berlin)

Ireland (☎ 01-661 2902; 2 Fitzwilliam Pl, Dublin 2)

Netherlands (☎ 70-350 0404; Hogeweg 14, 2585 JD Den Haag)

UK (☎ 020-7235 5218; 35 Eaton Pl, London SW1X 8BY)

USA (☎ 202-362 6730; 3910 Shoemaker St NW, Washington, DC)

Embassies & Consulates in Hungary

Embassies in Budapest (phone code ☎ 1) include the following.

Australia (Map pp358-9; ☎ 457 9777; XII Királyhágó tér 8-9; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Thu, to 2pm Fri)

Austria (Map p362; ☎ 479 7010; VI Benczúr utca 16; ☎ 8am-10am Mon-Fri)

Canada (Map pp358-9; ☎ 392 3360; XII Zugligeti út 51-53; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri)

Croatia (Map p362; ☎ 269 5854; VI Munkácsy Mihály utca 15; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri)

France (Map pp358-9; ☎ 374 1100; VI Lendvay utca 27; ☎ 9am-noon Mon-Fri)

Germany (Map p362; ☎ 488 3500; I Űri utca 64-66; ☎ 9am-noon Mon-Fri)

Ireland (Map p362; ☎ 302 9600; V Szabadság tér 7-9; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 2-4pm Mon-Fri)

Netherlands (Map pp358-9; ☎ 336 6300; II Füge utca 5-7; ☎ 10am-noon Mon-Fri)

Romania (Map pp358-9; ☎ 348 0271; XIV Thököly út 72; ☎ 9.30am-noon, closed Wed)

Serbia (Map pp358-9; ☎ 322 9838; VI Dózsa György út 92/b; ☎ 10am-1pm Mon-Fri)

Slovakia (Map pp358-9; ☎ 460 9011; IV Stefánia út 22-24; ☎ 9.30am-noon Mon-Fri)

Slovenia (Map pp358-9; ☎ 438 5600; II Cseppkő utca 68; ☎ 9am-noon Mon-Fri)

South Africa (Map pp358-9; ☎ 392 0999; II Gárdonyi Géza út 17; ☎ 9am-12.30pm Mon-Fri)

UK (Map p362; ☎ 266 2888; V Harmincad utca 6;

☎ 10.30am-1.30pm & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri)

Ukraine (Map pp358-9; ☎ 422 4120; XIV Stefánia út 77; ☎ 9am-noon Mon-Wed & Fri by appointment only)

USA (Map p362; ☎ 475 4400; V Szabadság tér 12;

☎ 8.15am-5pm Mon-Fri)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

The best annual events include the following.

Budapest Spring Festival (Mar)

Balaton Festival (May) Based in Keszthely.

Hungarian Dance Festival (late Jun) In Győr.

Sopron Festival Weeks (late Jun-mid-Jul)

Győr Summer Cultural Festival (late Jun-late Jul)

Hortobágy International Equestrian Days (Jul)

Szeged Open-Air Festival (Jul-Aug)

Kőszeg Castle Theatre Festival (mid-late Jul)

Pepsi Sziget Music Festival (late Jul-early Aug) On Óbudai hajógyári-sziget (Óbuda Shipbuilding Island) in Budapest.

Hungaroring Formula One Grand Prix (mid-Aug) At Mogyoród, 24km northeast of Budapest

Budapest Autumn Festival (mid-Oct-early Nov)

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

There is no openly antigay sentiment in Hungary, but neither is there a large openly gay population. The organisations and nightclubs that do exist are generally in Budapest. For up-to-date information on venues, events, groups etc, contact **GayGuide.Net** (☎ 06 30 932 3334; http://budapest.gayguide.net).

HOLIDAYS

Hungary's 10 public holidays:

New Year's Day 1 January

1848 Revolution Day 15 March

Easter Monday March/April

International Labour Day 1 May

Whit Monday May/June

St Stephen's Day 20 August

1956 Remembrance Day 23 October

All Saints' Day 1 November

Christmas Day 25 December

Boxing Day 26 December

LANGUAGE

Hungarians speak Magyar (Hungarian), and unlike the vast majority of tongues you'll hear in Europe, it is not an Indo-European language. It is traditionally categorised as Finno-Ugric, distantly related only to Finnish and Estonian. Many older Hungarians, particularly in the western part of the country, can understand German and many young people, particularly in Budapest, speak some English. Any travel-related business will have at least one staff member who can speak English.

Hungarians always put surnames before given names, in writing and in speech. But don't worry, no one expects foreigners to reverse their names upon introduction.

MEDIA

Budapest has two English-language weeklies: the expat-oriented *Budapest Sun*, with a useful 'Style' arts and entertainment supplement, and the *Budapest Business Journal* (550Ft). Some Western English-language newspapers, including the *International Herald Tribune*, are available on the day of publication in Budapest and in other large western Hungary cities. Many more newspapers, mainly British, French and German, are sold a day late. International news magazines are also widely available.

MONEY

The unit of currency is the Hungarian forint (Ft). Coins come in denominations of one, two, five, 10, 20, 50 and 100Ft, and notes are denominated 200, 500, 1000, 2000, 5000, 10,000 and 20,000Ft. ATMs are quite common throughout the country, including train stations, and they accept most credit and cash cards. Banks usually offer exchange services as well as ATMs. Branches can be found around the main square in an Old Town centre, or on the main thoroughfare leading to it. Bank hours are from 8am to 4pm Monday to Thursday and 8am to 1pm on Friday. Visa and MasterCard are the most widely accepted credit cards, but some smaller lodgings still only accept cash. Some businesses quote prices in euros; prices in this chapter conform to quotes of individual businesses.

POST

A postcard costs 50Ft within Hungary, 110Ft within Europe, and 150Ft to the rest of the world. A *légiposta* (airmail) letter costs 190Ft within Europe, 380Ft to the rest of the world for up to 20g. Although you can buy stamps at some youth hostels and hotels, go to a post office to actually send your letter or card. If you put it in a post box on the street, it may languish for weeks. Otherwise, service is pretty speedy – a few days to Europe and about a week to the US.

Mail addressed to *poste restante* in any town or city will go to the main post office (*főposta*). When collecting *poste-restante* mail, look for the sign '*postán maradó küldemények*'. If you hold an Amex credit card or are carrying their travellers cheques, you

can have your mail sent to **American Express** (Map p362; V Deák Ferenc utca 10, Budapest), where it will be held for one month.

TELEPHONE & FAX

Hungary's country code is ☎ 36. To make an outgoing international call, dial ☎ 00 first. To dial city-to-city (and all mobile phones) within the country, first dial ☎ 06 (dialling in from out of the country, leave off the 06), wait for the second dial tone and then dial the city code and phone number. All localities in Hungary have a two-digit city code, except for Budapest, whose code is ☎ 1. Mobile phone numbers all start with the prefix ☎ 06 but are countrywide numbers (ie they have no city code). Budapest numbers have seven digits, most others six digits.

The best place to make international telephone calls is from a phone box with a phone card, which you can buy at newsstands in 2000Ft and 5000Ft denominations. Some cards, such as Neophone, get you an international call for as little as 19Ft per minute. Buy a Matáv *telefonkártya* at newsstands (800Ft) to make domestic calls at card-operated machines. Some pay phones still take coins. Telephone boxes with a black-and-white arrow and red target on the door and the word '*Visszahívható*' display a telephone number, so you can be phoned back.

TOURIST INFORMATION

The HNTO has a chain of 120 **Tourinform** (☎ hotline 30 30 30 600; www.tourinform.hu, www.hungary.com) information offices across the country and is represented in 19 countries abroad. These are the best places to ask general questions and pick up brochures. The HNTO also operates a Tourinform hotline in Hungarian, English and German.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

- General emergency ☎ 112 (English spoken)
- Police ☎ 107
- Fire ☎ 105
- Ambulance ☎ 104
- English-language crime hotline ☎ 1-438 8000
- Car assistance (24 hours) ☎ 188

If your query is about private rooms, flights or international train travel, you may have to ask a commercial travel agency; most towns have at least a couple. The oldest, Ibusz, is arguably the best for private accommodation.

VISAS

To enter Hungary, everyone needs a valid passport, or for citizens of the European Union, a national identification card. Citizens of virtually all European countries, the USA, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand and Australia do not require visas to visit Hungary for stays of up to 90 days within a six-month period. UK citizens do not need a visa for a stay of up to six months. South Africans, however, do require a visa. Check with the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** (☎ 1-458 1000; www.kum.hu) for an up-to-date list of which country nationals require visas.

Visas are issued at Hungarian consulates or missions, most international highway border crossings, Ferihegy airport and the International Ferry Pier in Budapest. However, visas are never issued on trains and rarely on buses.

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Some Hungarian men can be very sexist in their thinking, but they are also big on being polite, so women do not suffer any particular form of harassment.

For assistance and/or information ring the **Women's Line** (Nővonal; ☎ 06 80 505 101) or **Women for Women against Violence** (NANE; ☎ 1-267 4900), which operates from 6pm to 10pm daily.

WORK

Working legally in Hungary always involved a Byzantine paper chase and it looks like it will get harder given EU membership requirements. The government has announced it will crack down on illegal workers. No-one thinks they're going to target English teachers, but the work situation for foreigners is in a state of flux.

TRANSPORT IN HUNGARY

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

From Budapest's Ferihegy 2 airport you can reach destinations in Eastern and Western Europe, the UK, Russia and connect to places beyond. Malév is the Hungarian national airline. Low-cost airlines fly from Ferihegy 1 to

off-market airports in Western Europe, such as London Stansted.

Vienna's Schwechat airport is only about three hours from Budapest by bus, less to western Hungary, and often has less expensive international airfares since it handles more traffic.

Aeroflot (code SU; ☎ 318 5955; www.aeroflot.com)

Flights to Russia.

Austrian Airlines (code OS; ☎ 327 9080; www.aua.com)

Less than an hour's flight to Vienna.

ČSA (code OK; ☎ 318 3175; www.czech-airlines.com)

At least three flights daily to/from Prague.

Lot Polish Airlines (code LO; ☎ 266 4772; www.lot.com)

Budapest direct to Warsaw and connecting to other Polish and Russian cities.

Malév Hungarian Airlines (code MA; ☎ 235 3888; www.malev.hu) Flights to Vienna, Kyiv and Odesa in Ukraine, Timișoara in Romania, Split and Dubrovnik in Croatia, Varna and Sofia in Bulgaria, Prague in the Czech Republic, Kraków and Warsaw in Poland, and Moscow in Russia.

Sky Europe (code NE; ☎ 777 7000) A low-cost airline that flies daily to Warsaw and three days a week to Split and Dubrovnik.

Tarom Romanian Air Transport (code RO; ☎ 235 0809; www.tarom.ro) Direct flights to and from Bucharest.

Land

Hungary has excellent land transport connections with its neighbours. Most of the departures listed are from Budapest, though other cities and towns closer to the various borders can also be used as springboards.

BICYCLE & WALKING

Cyclists may have a problem crossing at Hungarian border stations since bicycles are banned on motorways and national highways with single-digit route numbers.

If you're heading north, there are three crossings to and from Slovakia where you should not have any problems. Bridges link Esztergom with Štúrovo and Komárom with Komárno. At Sátoraljaújhely, northeast of Miskolc, there's a highway border crossing over the Ronyva River that links the centre of town with Slovenské Nové Mesto.

BUS

Most international buses arrive at the Népliget bus station (p373) in Budapest. **Eurolines** (☎ 1-219 8080; www.eurolines.com), in conjunction with its Hungarian affiliate, **Volánbusz** (☎ 1-219 8080; www.volanbusz.hu), is the international bus company of Hungary. There's a 10% youth discount for those under 26. Useful inter-

national buses include those from Budapest to Vienna city centre (5490Ft, 3½ hours, four daily), Bratislava, Slovakia (Pozsony; 4400Ft, four hours, one daily), Subotica in Serbia (Szabátka; 3300Ft, four hours, daily), Rijeka in Croatia (7900Ft, 10 hours, one weekly), Prague in the Czech Republic (9500Ft, eight hours, five weekly), and Sofia in Bulgaria (12,500Ft, 15 hours, four weekly).

Four buses a day (7.30am, 11.15am, 5.15pm and 7.15pm) run from Vienna International Airport in Austria to the Népliget bus station in Budapest (€28). **Mitch's Tours** (☎ 06 70 588 306; www.mitchstours.com; adult/student €32/29) runs a shuttle-bus service between Deák tér or several hostels in the Budapest area and the airport or hostels in Vienna (departs Vienna 8.30am, departs Budapest 1.30pm).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Border controls between Hungary and her EU neighbours (as of 1 May, 2004), Slovakia and Austria, were not scheduled to be removed at the time of research, but there will be no more customs checks at these points. Third-party insurance is compulsory for driving in Hungary. If your car is registered in the EU, it's assumed you have it. Other motorists must show a Green Card or buy insurance at the border.

HITCHING

In Hungary, hitchhiking is legal except on motorways. Hitchhiking is never an entirely safe way to travel and we don't recommend it, but if you're willing, **Kenguru** (Map p362; ☎ 1-266 5837; www.kenguru.hu; VIII Köfaraág utca 15, Budapest; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat) is an agency that matches riders with drivers. Hitch a ride to Amsterdam (11,000Ft), Munich (5500Ft) or Paris (11,700Ft), among other destinations.

TRAIN

The Hungarian State Railways, **MÁV** (☎ international information 1-461 5500; www.elvira.hu Hungarian only, www.mav.hu) links up with international rail networks in all directions and its schedule is available online. MÁV sells Inter-Rail passes to European nationals (or residents of at least six months). Hungary is in Zone D along with the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Croatia. The price for any one zone is €226/158/113 for adult/youth (12-26)/child (four-12). There are big discounts on return fares only between Hungary and former communist countries: up to 65% to Slovakia, Slovenia and Croatia; 70%

to Romania; 40% to Serbia; 40% to the Czech Republic and Poland; and 50% to Ukraine, Bulgaria, Belarus and Russia. For tickets to Western Europe you'll pay the same as everywhere else unless you're aged under 26 and qualify for the 30% to 50% BJJ discount. For tickets or more information about passes and discounts, ask at the MÁV Ticket Office (p373) in Budapest.

Eurail passes are valid, but not sold, in Hungary. EuroCity (EC) and Intercity (IC) trains require a seat reservation and payment of a supplement. Most larger train stations in Hungary have left-luggage rooms open at least 9am to 5pm. There are three main train stations in Budapest, so always note the station when checking a schedule online; for more information see p373.

Some direct connections from Budapest to neighbouring countries include Vienna (6600Ft, 3½ hours, five daily); Bratislava, Slovakia (Pozsony; 5600Ft, 2½ hours, eight daily); Arad (7400Ft, 4½ hours, six daily) and Bucharest, Romania (18,600Ft, 13 to 15 hours, five daily); Csop (7600Ft, 4½ hours, two daily) and Kyiv, Ukraine (18,400Ft, 24 hours, one daily), continuing to Moscow (25,400Ft, 37 hours, one daily); Zagreb, Croatia (9000Ft, 5½ to 7½ hours, three daily); Belgrade, Serbia (9400Ft, seven hours, two daily); Ljubljana, Slovenia (13,700Ft, 8½ hours, three daily).

Other direct train destinations in Eastern Europe include Prague, Czech Republic (14,850Ft, nine hours, two daily); Kraków, Poland (13,500Ft, 10½ hours, one daily); Sofia, Bulgaria (18,200Ft, 18 to 26 hours, two daily). Fares listed are for second-class tickets without seat reservation; first-class tickets are usually 50% more. For information on international destinations outside Eastern Europe, see the main Transport chapter of this book (p924).

River

There's an international Mahart PassNave hydrofoil service on the Danube daily from April to early November between Budapest and Vienna (5½ hours), stopping in Bratislava (four hours). Adult one-way/return fares for Vienna are €75/99, for Bratislava €69/93. Students with ISIC cards pay €59/84. Boats leave from the Nemzetközi hajóállomás (International Ferry Pier), next to the **Mahart PassNave Ticket Office** (Map p362; ☎ 484 4013; www.mahartpassnave.hu; Belgrád rakpart). The ticket office in Vienna is **Mahart PassNave Wien** (☎ 01-72 92 161; Handelskai 265).

GETTING AROUND

Air

Hungary does not have any scheduled internal flights.

Bicycle

Hungary now counts 2500km of dedicated bicycle lanes around the country, with more on the way. For information and advice, contact the helpful **Hungarian Bicycle Touring Association** (MKTSZ; Map p362; ☎ 1-311 2467; mktsz@enternet.hu; VI Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út 31) in Budapest.

Boat

In summer there are regular passenger ferries on Lake Balaton and on the Danube from Budapest to Szentendre, Visegrád and Esztergom. Details of the schedules are given in the relevant destination sections.

Bus

Domestic buses, run by **Volánbusz** (☎ 1219 8080; www.volanbusz.hu) cover an extensive nationwide network. The buses are generally relatively new, and everybody and their grandmother takes them, so they are safe. Bus fares average 1270Ft per 100km.

Timetables are posted at stations and stops. Some footnotes you could come across include *naponta* (daily), *hétköznap* (weekdays), *munkanapokon* (on work days), *munkaszüneti napok kivételével naponta* (daily except holidays), and *szabad és munkaszüneti napokon* (on Saturday and holidays). A few large bus stations have luggage rooms, or a bathroom attendant who you pay to watch your bags, but these generally close by 6pm.

Car & Motorcycle

Limited access Motorways (M1, M3, M7) require toll passes (10-day, 2000Ft) that can be purchased at petrol stations and at some motorway entrances. Check with your rental company; the car may already have an annual pass.

Many cities and towns require that you 'pay and display' when parking. The cost averages about 100Ft an hour in the countryside, and up to 180Ft on central Budapest streets.

AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATIONS

The so-called 'Yellow Angels' of the Hungarian Automobile Club do basic breakdown repairs for free if you belong to an affiliated organisation such as AAA in the USA or AA

in the UK. You can telephone 24 hours a day on ☎ 188 nationwide.

DRIVING LICENCE

Your normal, home country driving licence is sufficient for driving in Hungary.

FUEL & SPARE PARTS

Unleaded (*ólommentes*) petrol (*benzin*) in 95 and 98 octane is available all over the country and costs from 285 per litre, respectively. Most stations also have diesel fuel (*gázolaj*) costing around 240Ft per litre. You can pay by credit card. The Hungarian Automobile Club can assist with repairs.

HIRE

In general, you must be at least 21 years old and have had your licence for at least a year to rent a car. Drivers under 25 often have to pay a surcharge.

INSURANCE

Third-party insurance is compulsory. If your car is registered in the EU, it's assumed you have it. Other motorists must show a Green Card or buy insurance at the border. Rental cars come with Green Cards.

ROAD RULES

The most important rule to remember is that there's a 100% ban on alcohol when you are driving, and this rule is *very* strictly enforced. (Police even stalk the parking lots of expensive, outlying restaurants.) Do not think you will get away with one glass of wine at lunch; if caught with 0.001% alcohol in your blood, you will be fined up to 30,000Ft. If your blood alcohol level is high, you will be arrested and your licence taken away.

Using a mobile phone while driving is prohibited in Hungary. *All* vehicles must have their headlights switched on throughout the day outside built-up areas. Motorcyclists must have their headlights on at all times.

Local Transport

Public transport is efficient and extensive, with city bus and, in many towns, trolleybus services. Budapest and Szeged also have trams, and there's an extensive metro (underground or subway) and a suburban commuter railway in Budapest. Purchase tickets at newsstands before travelling and validate them once aboard. Inspectors do

check tickets, especially on the metros in Budapest.

Train

MÁV (☎ domestic information 1-461 5400; www.elvira.hu Hungarian only, www.mav.hu) operates reliable train services on its 8000km of tracks. Schedules are available online and computer information kiosks are popping up at rail stations around the country. Second-class domestic train fares are 824Ft per 100km, 1st-class fares are usually 50% more. IC trains are express trains, the most comfortable and the newest. *Gyorsvonat* (fast trains) take longer and use older cars; *személyvonat* (passenger trains) stop at every village along the way. Seat reservations (*helyjegy*) cost extra and are required on IC and some fast trains; these are indicated on the timetable by an 'R' in a box

or a circle. (A plain 'R' means seat reservations are available.)

In all stations a yellow board indicates departures (*indul*) and a white board arrivals (*érkezik*). Express and fast trains are indicated in red, local trains in black. In some stations, large black-and-white schedules are plastered all over the walls. To locate the timetable you need, first find the posted railway map of the country, which indexes the route numbers at the top of the schedules.

Most train stations have left-luggage offices that are open at least from 9am to 5pm.

You might consider purchasing a Hungarian Rail Pass before entering the country. The cost is US\$76 for five days of 1st-class travel within 15 days and US\$95 for 10 days within a month. You would, however, need to use it a lot to get your money's worth.

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