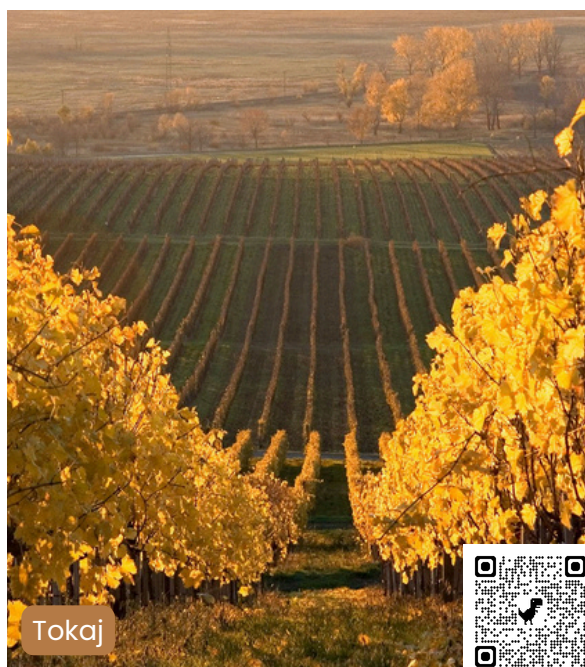
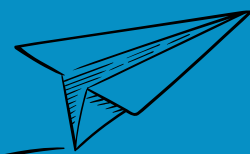


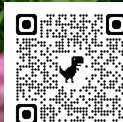
DEBRECEN UNPACKED



Tokaj



Hollókő Skanzen – UNESCO



Exploring Hungary Beyond Debrecen

The Ultimate Travel Guide

Looking for a weekend escape beyond Debrecen? Hungary is full of amazing spots that offer something for everyone! Whether you're seeking relaxation in a wellness hotel, exploring hiking trails that will take your breath away (especially if you are as 'fit' as I am), or stepping back in time at historic castles and forts, there's no shortage of adventures to be had.

You can get a glimpse of Hungarian culture in museums, unwind in Hungary's beautiful national parks, or enjoy family-friendly fun at zoos. Whether you're a nature lover, history enthusiast, or thrill-seeker, there's always a new experience waiting for you.

And let's not forget—this issue is the ultimate space for non-sponsored advertisements. 😊

In this week's issue we will unpack:

Weekend Getaways:
Exploring Hungary Beyond Debrecen

- castles and forts
- national parks
- hiking spots
- zoos
- World Heritage sites
- "the Hungarian sea"
- vineyards
- thermal baths



Nagyvázsony



Gyula



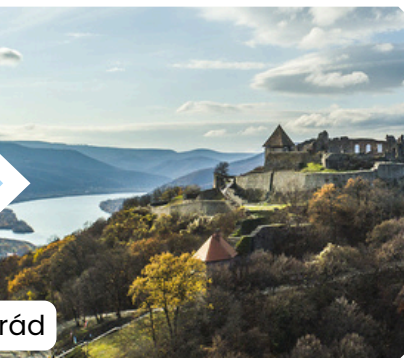
Szigliget



Tata



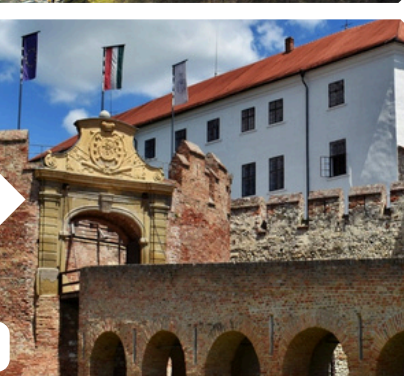
Sümege



Visegrád



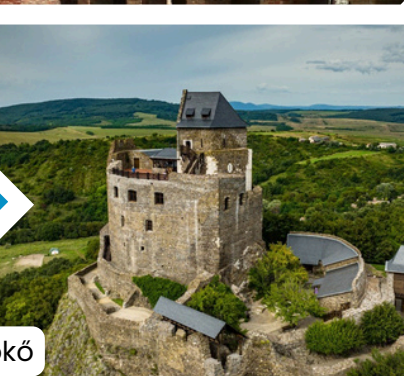
Sirok



Siklós



Diósgyőr



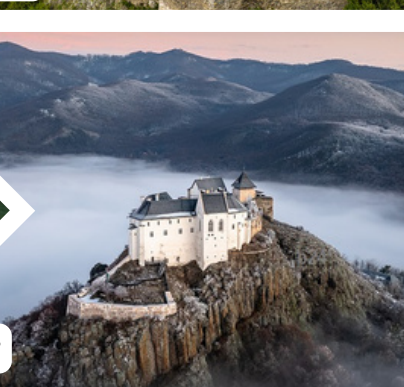
Hollókő



Eger



Sárospatak



Füzér



Salgó & Somoskő



Regéc



Boldogkőváralja

FORTS

If you're a fan of castles and forts, Hungary is a treasure trove! These historic sites were once vital as the first line of defense against invaders, each with its own fascinating story to tell. Today, many of these forts have been restored to their former grandeur, such as the magnificent **fort of Füzér** and **Diósgyőr**, where you can step back in time and truly experience their past.

Other forts have been thoughtfully renovated, balancing modern conveniences and accessibility with a sense of history, allowing visitors to immerse themselves in the charm of these ancient structures while still feeling the weight of centuries gone by. Good examples for this are fort of **Regéc**, **Boldogkőváralja** and **Hollókő**.

Fort of Eger, well-known for its victory against the Ottoman siege in 1552 and commemorated by Géza Gárdonyi in the novel *Eclipse of the Crescent Moon* as well as the movie produced in 1968 based on the novel.

For a special experience, visit the Osman-Style Tent Café near the Végvári Vitézek Square. Designed like a Turkish leader's tent, it offers rich Turkish tea, coffee, and shisha in a cozy, historic setting. A perfect spot to relax and soak in the atmosphere!



It is also worth to keep your eyes open during holidays as many of the forts organize castle tournaments that really bring back medieval customs, clothing, food and music. If you have kids, you absolutely need to check these out!

North Hungary

Hollókő (the nearby town is an UNESCO site)

Sirok

Salgó & Somoskő (are very close, beware the trail up to the castle takes you to Slovakia)

Sárospatak

South Hungary

Gyula (town well-known fr its wellness complex)

Siklós (famous for *The Captain of the Outlaws* series that was filmed there)

Near Lake Balaton

Sümege

Szigliget (has a panoramic view over the Lake Balaton)

Nagyvázsony

East-North Hungary

Boldogkőváralja (with medieval-themed restaurant nearby)

Regéc

Füzér

Diósgyőr (temporarily closed due to renovations)

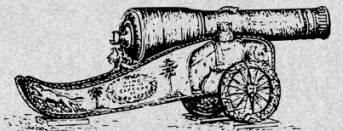
Eger



West-North Hungary

Visegrád (with medieval-themed restaurant nearby)

Tata



**The list is non exhaustive
Hungary has more forts to offer!**

CASTLES

For those who prefer a more elevated scene than the middle ages the castles scattered throughout Hungary's provinces might just be the perfect addition to your itinerary. Dive into the daily lives of prominent families like the Esterházys or the Andrássys. These grand estates showcase the luxurious lives of the noble families who once (and a few of them still) called them home.

Many of the castles have been beautifully restored and are now open to the public, allowing visitors to explore their history. Some even serve as unique destinations, functioning as hotels (castle of Szirák, palace of Lillafüred) for a truly immersive experience, or hosting unexpected events, like crime reality shows (such as the Nádasdy Castle) or Netflix series such as Shadow and Bone (Keszthely - Festetics Castle). Each castle offers its own distinct charm to the grand public.

Non exhaustive list of castles

Tura - [Schossberger Castle](#)

Martonvásár - [Brunszvik Castle](#)

Fertőd - [Esterházy Castle](#)

Tata - [Esterházy Castle](#)

Dég - [Festetics Castle](#)

Gödöllő - [Grassalkovich Castle](#)

Keszthely - [Festetics Castle](#)

Szécsény - [Forgách Castle](#)

Füzérradvány - [Károlyi Castle](#)

Fehérvárcsurgó - [Károlyi Castle](#)

Edelény - [L'Huillier-Coburg Castle](#)

Nádasdladány - [Nádasdy Castle](#)

Tiszadob - [Andrassy Castle](#)

Nagycenk - [Széchenyi Castle](#)

Szabadkígyós - [Wenckheim Castle](#)

Szirák - Teleki-Degenfeld Castle

Tiszadob



Andrassy Castle

Fertőd



Esterházy Castle

Nagycenk



Széchenyi Castle

Szabadkígyós



Wenckheim Castle

Gödöllő



Grassalkovich Castle

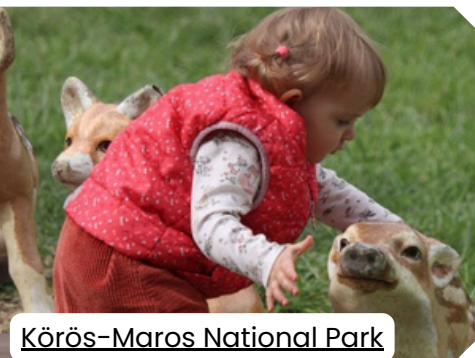
Keszthely



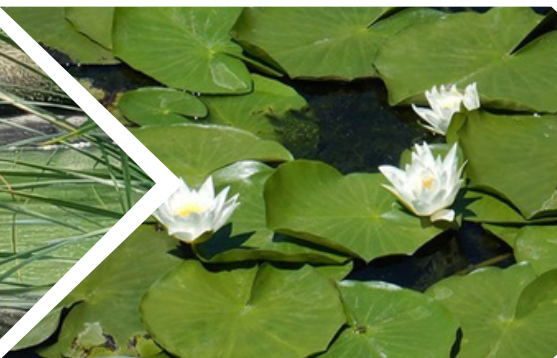
Festetics Castle



Órségi National Park



Körös-Maros National Park



HIKING



Aggteleki National Park



Balaton-felvidéki National Park

NATIONAL PARKS



Duna-Dráva National Park



Bükk National Park



Hortobágy National Park



NATIONAL PARKS

Hungary's national parks are a testament to the country's rich and diverse natural heritage. The first of these parks, Hortobágy National Park, was founded in 1979, marking the beginning of Hungary's commitment to environmental preservation. Since then, nine more national parks have been established, each representing the country's diverse natural wonders.

These parks protect a variety of landscapes, from the expansive plains of Hortobágy, famous for its traditional Hungarian wildlife and birdlife, to the majestic mountain ranges hiding limestone caves. The parks encompass a wide range of ecosystems, including riversides, wetlands, forests, and grasslands, each fostering a distinct flora and fauna. Whether it is the diverse plant species in the Bükk National Park's forests or the exceptional karst landscapes in Aggtelek, each national park in Hungary plays a crucial role in conserving biodiversity and providing a sanctuary for wildlife.

Official website of National Parks below.

Magyar Nemzeti Parkok | Magyar Nemzeti Parkok

Magyar Nemzeti Parkok

 magyarnemzetiparkok.hu

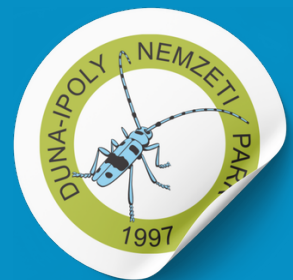
Each year Hungary hosts the *Varázslatos Magyarország Photography Contest* and created a website to present the stunning landscapes captured by participants all around Hungarian national parks. Feel free to explore their website for inspiration:



Varázslatos Magyarország

Az ország legrangosabb természetfotó pályázata ablakot nyit nemzeti parkjaink élővilágára. A verseny győztese nyeri el A magyar természetfotó nagydíját és az Arany Daru...

 [varazslatosmagyarorszag.hu /](http://varazslatosmagyarorszag.hu/)



HIKING – KÉKTÚRA

Kéktúra, also known as National Blue Trail, is Hungary's longest continuous trail, stretching a remarkable 2585km. The National Blue Trail is composed of three longer sections Országos Kéktúra (1173 km), Alföldi Kéktúra (870 km) and Rockenbauer Pál Dél-Dunántúli Kéktúra (542 km).



The terrain, the atmosphere, geological and cultural values are so much varied that each section and each day gives unforgettable experiences. For a more detailed description in English, you can visit Természetjáró.hu.

To document your progress, there are a total of 296 stamp locations along the trail, marking the completion of various sections of the Kéktúra. After collecting all the stamps for a section, your name will be listed among other nature enthusiasts who have completed the trail. For more information about the trail, its sections, and the stamp locations, you can visit the official Kéktúra website below.



Főoldal

Az Országos Kékkör, gyakran egyszerűen csak Kékkör, három önálló túraútvonalat: az Országos Kéktúrát, a Rockenbauer Pál Dél-dunántúli Kéktúrát és az Alföldi...

MTSZ



Tokaj isn't just for wine lovers—it's perfect for nature enthusiasts too! Kayak or canoe along the Bodrog River and take in the stunning scenery. For a guided experience, check out Tokaji Vízi Túraközpont. Their expert guides will share fascinating facts about the local flora and fauna while you paddle through the peaceful waters.

Vizituraközpont

If you're a paddling enthusiast, **Tisza-tó** is a must-visit! Kitti highly recommends Chili Outdoors, especially Zsigmond Tóth as a tour guide. Zsigmond is not only one of the nicest guys you'll ever meet, but his perfect English and impressive knowledge of the lake's history and wildlife make for an unforgettable experience. Check out Chili Outdoors for an adventure you won't forget!

Lake Tisza



Lillafüred



Narrow-Gauge railway

Lillafüred is a nature lover's paradise, with trails, waterfalls, a limestone cave, a boat ride, and a charming narrow-gauge railway. For more adventure, visit the **Valley of Szalajka** nearby, where you'll find a similar railway, more waterfalls, and caves. For the best views, go after it has rained to see the waterfalls at their most spectacular!

Visegrád is a must-visit for nature and culture lovers alike! Wander through scenic trails around the historic fort, enjoy thrilling bobsled rides, or test your skills at the Adventure Park. After an action-packed day, indulge in locally caught trout at Ördögmalom Étterem—making it the perfect blend of adventure and relaxation!

Visegrád



Canopy Visegrád

Sátoraljaújhely



Zemplén Adventure Park

For thrill-seekers, Hungary is a bobsled paradise! Race down exciting tracks surrounded by nature at stunning locations like Sopron, Visegrád, Balatonfüzfő, Balatonboglár, Gyöngyös, Miskolc, Szilvásvárad, and Sátoraljaújhely.

Explore the stunning crystal-clear quarry lakes of **Tarcal**, **Rudabánya**, **Jósvafő** and **Megyer**, perfect for a peaceful escape.

Megyer Mountain provides a rewarding hike with a moderate elevation gain. The effort is well worth it, as you'll be treated to stunning views from the observation tower, including - in clear weather - the Tokaj Mountain. After your hike, enjoy delicious dinner at Harsányi Winery and Dűlőbistro.

Tip from Dóri: The road to the lake can get pretty muddy, so don't be surprised if you end up channeling your inner ice (or mud?) skater. Bring a spare change of clothes—you'll definitely want to swap out the mud for something a little less... earthy!

Megyer Mountain



Panorama from the observation tower

Megyeri Tengerszem



Szarvas



Szarvas offers a delightful mix of outdoor activities, from kayaking, dragonboating and paddleboarding on the Körös River to fishing in its tranquil waters. The Szarvas Arboretum is a beautiful spot for a peaceful stroll, while the Mini Magyarország park showcases miniature Hungarian landmarks. Don't miss a relaxing boat ride to fully take in the area's natural beauty!

For a mix of ancient ruins and a scenic walk, the temple ruins of **Zelemér, Zsámbék or Nyíradony with its Gúti Temple ruin** are ideal spots to explore.

Nyíradony



Gúti Temple Ruin

Esztergom



If you're after well-preserved temples or an archabbey, **Tihany, Esztergom** (with its view over Slovakia and the option to climb the Basilica's roof after visiting the Treasury), **Pannonhalom**, and **Ják** are must-see destinations.

Hungary's famous lavender gardens, like those in **Tihany, Létavértes, Kaposvár and Dörgicse**, are a vibrant treat for the senses. In Tihany, you can stroll through fields overlooking Lake Balaton, while Létavértes and Dörgicse offer stunning views of endless purple blooms.

Tihany



Kékestető



Kékestető also offers some outdoor experiences, whether you're hiking the scenic trails of the Mátra Mountains or enjoying stunning views from Hungary's highest peak.

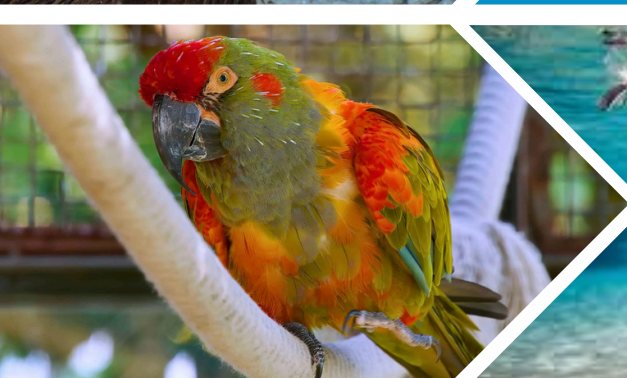
You can visit the Kékestető Tower for panoramic vistas, or explore the nearby nature reserve. In winter, the area becomes a popular ski destination. During the summer, it's perfect for cycling, with routes like the Mátra Mountain Bike Trail.



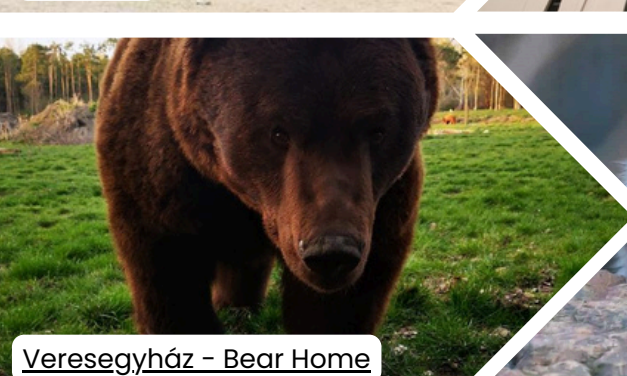
Nyíregyháza - Sóstó Zoo



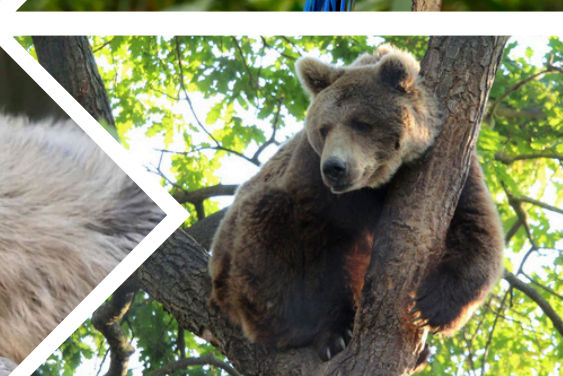
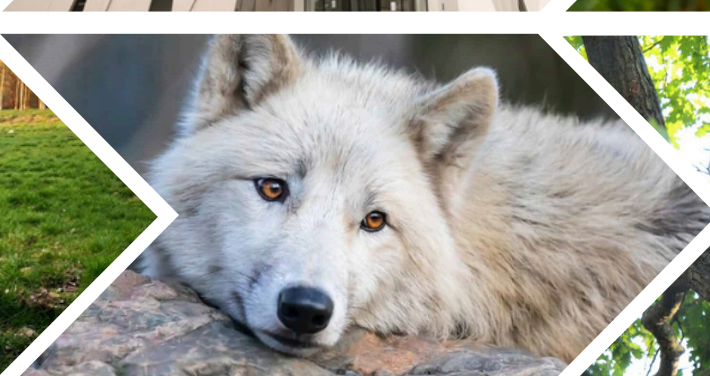
Budapest Zoo



Pécs Zoo



Veresegyház - Bear Home



POPULAR ZOOS IN HUNGARY

Budapest Zoo & Botanical Garden – One of the oldest zoos in the world (opened in 1866), located in the city center with diverse animals and a historic atmosphere.

Nyíregyháza Zoo – Often considered Hungary's best zoo, featuring spacious enclosures and a strong focus on animal welfare.

Veszprém Zoo – Located near Lake Balaton, offering a scenic zoo experience.

Szeged Zoo – Known for its modern, naturalistic enclosures.

Opening Hours

Most zoos are open year-round but have different hours in summer and winter.

Language & Signage

Most signs are in Hungarian, but many also include English and German translations. Staff may speak English, especially in Budapest, but less so in smaller cities.

Rules & Etiquette

Feeding animals is strictly prohibited unless in designated areas. Respect barriers—Hungarian zoos emphasize safety and animal welfare. Some zoos allow pet dogs on a leash, but check beforehand.

Best Time to Visit

Spring and autumn offer mild weather and fewer crowds. Summer is busiest but has the most activities and shows. Winter visits are possible, though some animals may be less active.



WORLD HERITAGE SITES



Lake Fertő Austrian Side



Fertő-Hanság National Park



Castle District



Fisherman's Bastion



Pannonhalma Archabbey



Pannonhalma Archabbey



Sopianoe



Széchenyi tér



Pécs

Limestone Caves



Aggtelek



National Park

Aggtelek

Tokaj



Tokaj Vineyard

Hollókő



Hollókő Village



Tokaj Aszú Wine

Hortobágy



Hortobágy Stud Farm



Easter Tradition



Hungarian Grey Cattle

Balaton a riviéra...

Lake Balaton, often referred to as the **"Hungarian Sea"**, is the largest lake in Central Europe and one of Hungary's most iconic destinations. It's a place of contrast—both in geography and in public opinion. Hungarians either adore it or dismiss it entirely, making it one of the country's most debated locations.

A Unique Atmosphere

Balaton has a charm that is hard to define but instantly recognizable. There's a Mediterranean-like vibe here—people seem more relaxed, life slows down, and the warm summer air is filled with the scent of lake breezes and delicious food from lakeside restaurants. It's a place where visitors can unwind, enjoy a slower pace, and soak in the stunning views.

The Luxury of Balaton

Despite its laid-back feel, Balaton is also one of the most, if not the most, expensive areas in Hungary. Property prices around the lake have skyrocketed in recent years, and dining at the best restaurants can rival Budapest's fine dining scene in both quality and price. The lake has become a symbol of luxury for some, while others see it as overpriced and overrated.

Culinary Delights

Balaton has seen a boom in high-quality restaurants, offering everything from traditional Hungarian fish soup (halászlé) to gourmet fine dining experiences. The region is also famous for its wineries, particularly around the Badacsony area, where visitors can enjoy some of Hungary's best white wines with a panoramic view of the lake.



Balaton a riviéra...

North vs. South

The lake's two sides offer quite different experiences. The northern shore is known for its deeper, cleaner waters and picturesque vineyards, while the southern shore is much shallower, meaning the water warms up quickly but can also become murky. Families with small children often prefer the south because of the gradual depth, whereas those seeking clearer water tend to favor the north.

However, the **North vs. South debate** runs deep, and strong opinions abound:

"What's so great about the northern shore? That it's impossible to reach? If you take the train, you have to wait an hour at Fehérvár just for them to change the locomotive, and there's no highway! In Füred, you even have to pay if you stop at a red light, let alone for parking! And all those show-off yacht owners! Every beach has an entry fee, every Sunday there's a traffic jam, and either the water engulfs you the second you step in, or you have to stumble over sharp shells until you reach the disgustingly muddy part! The northern shore? I'd rather die!"

"Oh, come on! There's only one good thing about the southern shore: the view of the north! It's just a flatland full of rowdy people in Siófok, and if I want to take a swim, I have to walk 300 meters just for the water to reach my waist! If the wind blows, you can't even stay on the beach—and we all know it always blows on the southern shore! Thanks for the sand-covered lángos! No way I'm going to the southern shore, end of discussion!"

Source: random keyboard warriors on the internet

Love It or Hate It

For many Hungarians, Balaton is a beloved summer retreat, filled with childhood memories and idyllic sunsets. For others, it's an overcrowded, overpriced, and overhyped tourist trap. Either way, it remains a cultural touchstone—whether you go for the lake, the food, or just to see what all the fuss is about.



WINE TASTING

Hungary has 22 wine regions, but these are the most famous:

Tokaj – Famous for sweet Tokaji Aszú wines (a favorite of kings!).

Eger – Known for the bold "Bikavér" (Bull's Blood) red blend.

Villány – The "Bordeaux of Hungary," with full-bodied reds.

Szekszárd – Elegant reds, similar to Villány but softer.

Balaton Region – Beautiful lake views with crisp whites and rosés.

Best Time to Go

Spring & Summer (April–September): Ideal for vineyard tours, outdoor tastings, and festivals.

Autumn (September–October): Harvest season with special events.

Winter: Cozy indoor tastings and Tokaj wine cellars are great in cold weather.

Language & Communication

In popular wine regions, hosts often speak English and sometimes German.

Learning a few Hungarian wine terms helps:

"Egészségedre!" (Cheers!)

"Szárász" (Dry), "Félédés" (Semi-sweet), "Édes" (Sweet)

"Fehérbor" (White wine), "Vörösbör" (Red wine), "Rozé" (Rosé)

Etiquette & What to Expect

Tastings are relaxed – no rush, and winemakers often share stories.

Expect to taste 4–8 wines per session.

Spitting is okay – Many wineries provide spit buckets if you don't want to drink every sample.

Some tastings come with cheese, bread, or charcuterie, but it's good to eat before.

Wine Festivals to Check Out

Budapest Wine Festival (September) – Held at Buda Castle.

Eger Bikavér Festival (July) – Focuses on Eger's famous red wine.

Villány Red Wine Festival (October) – Celebrates Hungary's best reds.



Angyal Borászat és Panzió offers unforgettable wine-tasting and harvest weekends each autumn. Join the grape harvest, sip pálinka as locals share winemaking secrets, and, if you're daring, hop into a bucket to stomp grapes the old-fashioned way. After a day of hands-on fun, unwind in their wellness area and indulge in delicious meals. Kitti had a fantastic girls' weekend there last October—and she's already planning her next visit!



Kovács Margit Museum



Hollókő



Zsolnay Cultural Quarter



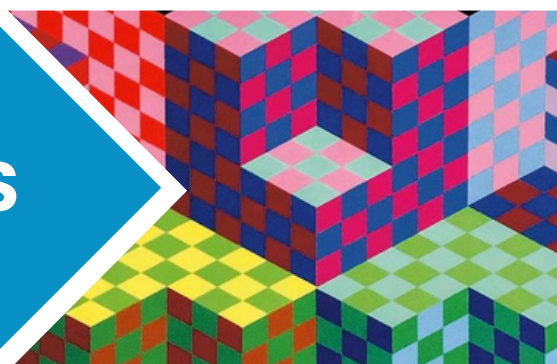
MUSEUMS



Vasarely Museum



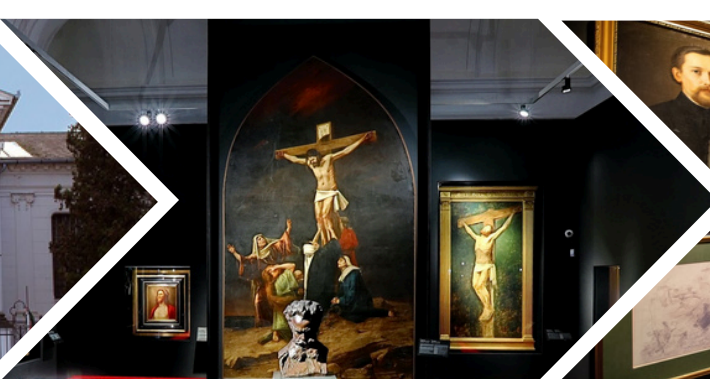
SKANZENS



Csontváry Museum



Munkácsy Museum



MUSEUMS SKANZENS

There are many beloved museums and open-air museums (skanzens) that are worth a visit if you wish to learn about Hungary's rich art and traditions.

While hidden gems can often be discovered while exploring a new place, we've compiled a list of a few that might particularly interest you.

Pécs was named the European Capital of Culture in 2010 due to its rich history, which spans from its time as part of the Turkish Empire to its extensive collection of art by **Victor Vasarely**, a key figure in the op art movement. The **Zsolnay Cultural Quarter**, famous for its extraordinary porcelain (which can be found on many building around the country like Castle Garden Bazaar in Budapest), is certainly worth a visit, as is the search for the meaning behind the letters scattered on **Csontváry's** paintings at its museum.

Pécs



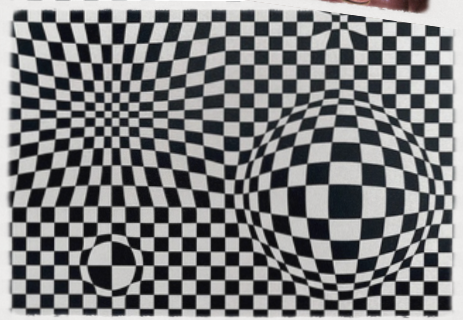
Csontváry Museum

Pécs



Zsolnay Cultural Quarter

Pécs



Vasarely Museum

Ópusztaszer



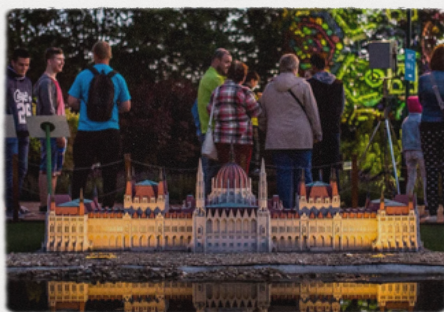
Feszty Cyclorama

Szentendre



Kovács Margit Museum

Szarvas



Mini Magyarország

At **Ópusztaszer** one can learn about the Hungarian history in the permanent exhibitions and also visit *The Arrival of the Hungarians*, a large cyclorama by Árpád Feszty and his assistants, depicting the beginning of the Hungarian conquest of the Carpathian Basin in 895.

Szentendre is a charming town near Budapest, located on the Danube River. It offers a cultural experience, including the **Kovács Margit Museum**, which showcases the works of the renowned Hungarian ceramist and sculptor. Visitors can also explore the **Skanzen Museum**, offering a glimpse into traditional Hungarian life and architecture.

Some might recognize the Szentendre from the series - like Moon Knight - that are often filmed there.

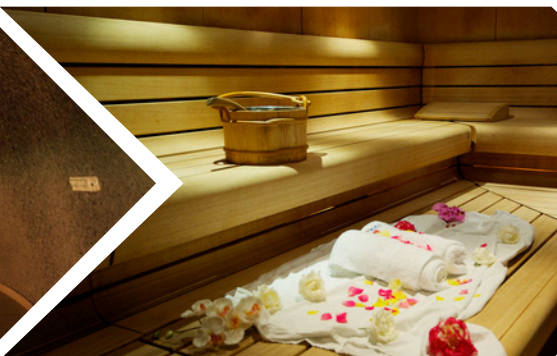
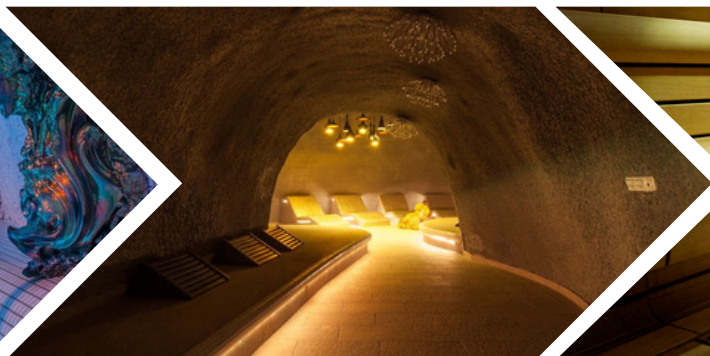
For those who want to experience nearly all of Hungary's major sights without travelling much, a trip to **Szarvas** is a must. Here, you can find miniature replicas of many of the country's landmarks, set in a picturesque location next to the city's riverside arboretum.



Egerszalók - Thermal Bath



Demjén - Cave Bath



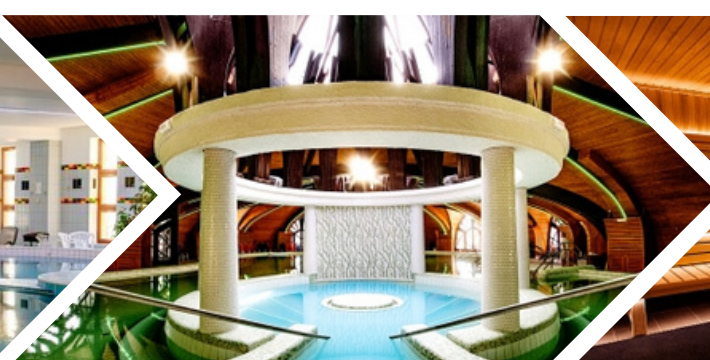
Lake Hévíz - Medicinal water



Aquaticum Debrecen



Zalakaros Spa



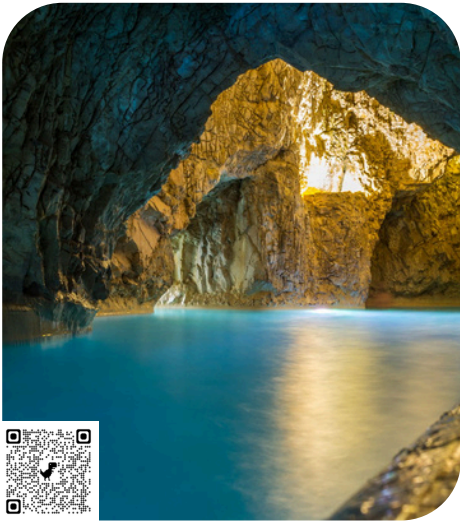
Hungarospa Hajdúszoboszló



MEDICINAL WATERS OF HUNGARY

Lake Hévíz – Europe's Largest Natural Thermal Lake

Just outside the city of Keszthely, Lake Hévíz is an extraordinary natural wonder and a must-visit for those seeking a thermal experience. The lake's warm, mineral-rich waters (around 25–30°C in winter and up to 38°C in summer) are believed to help with a wide range of conditions. The mud in the lake is also famed for its healing properties.



Miskolc – The Cave Bath Experience

For something truly uncommon, Miskolc offers the Cave Bath—a thermal spa set inside natural cave systems. The experience of bathing in warm, mineral-laden waters within the cave's cool, rocky walls is unlike anything else. The cave's waters have medicinal properties, particularly helpful for those with respiratory problems, and the environment is deeply relaxing and soothing.

The spa was recently renovated, though we haven't been back yet, so we can't confirm whether the changing rooms and restrooms have finally shed their lingering communist-era "charm".

Hajdúszoboszló

Located in eastern Hungary, Hajdúszoboszló is famous for its therapeutic thermal waters, especially for joint and musculoskeletal issues. The Hajdúszoboszló Thermal Spa offers a variety of pools, including outdoor adventure and wave pools. The mineral-rich waters are ideal for treating arthritis and stress, with medical treatments like mud therapy and hydrotherapy available. It's a relaxing and family-friendly destination.



Zalakaros – A Hidden Gem

Situated in western Hungary, Zalakaros is a peaceful spa town known for its healing thermal waters. The Zalakaros Thermal Spa is rich in calcium and magnesium, perfect for improving circulation and relieving stress. The modern spa offers a range of wellness services, including physical therapy and mud packs. Zalakaros is also great for families, with child-friendly pools and a calm atmosphere.

MEDICINAL WATERS OF HUNGARY

Practical Tips

Stay Hydrated

Thermal waters can be quite hot, so it's essential to drink plenty of water before and after bathing to stay hydrated. Avoid alcoholic beverages, as they can dehydrate you.

Start Slow

Begin with the cooler pools before gradually moving to the hotter ones to allow your body to adjust to the temperature. Take breaks in between to avoid overheating.

Enjoy the Variety of Pools

Many thermal spas offer pools with different temperatures and mineral compositions. Explore them all to experience the full range of therapeutic benefits.

Don't Rush

Thermal baths are about relaxation, so take your time. Spend 15–20 minutes in each pool, followed by a short break, and repeat if desired.

Mind Your Health

If you have any medical conditions, especially heart or circulatory issues, check with a doctor before using thermal baths. The hot water can affect blood pressure and circulation.

Explore the Spa's Surroundings

Many thermal spas are in beautiful locations with gardens or nearby attractions. Take time to explore the surroundings for a more complete experience.

Age limit

In Hungary, children under the age of 14 are legally forbidden from entering thermal bath pools due to health and safety concerns. The high temperatures of thermal waters can pose risks such as dehydration, overheating, and circulatory strain, which young children are more vulnerable to. Additionally, the mineral content in thermal baths may not be suitable for their developing bodies. These regulations aim to protect children's well-being and ensure a safe environment for all visitors.



NEXT TIME, WE WILL UNPACK...

Weekend Getaways: Exploring Budapest

- **sights**
- **the parliament**
- **castle district**
- **festivals**
- **museums**
- **parks**
- **cafes and restaurants**
- **night life**

SEE YOU NEXT TIME

