A DOZEN REASONS TO VISIT HUNGARY

THINK HUNGARY, MORE THAN EXPECTED
The waters of Hungary come with a magic touch unique in the world. Thermal springs have been discovered throughout the country and there are 118 are in the capital, Budapest. Certain types of thermal waters have been known to alleviate symptoms of all sorts of ailments. Taking the waters is not only be effective for rehabilitation but is also great for prevention or simply for pure enjoyment. Hungary has a 2000-year tradition of using these thermal waters. The historical baths offer the chance for travel in time back to the Roman and Turkish era, and indulgence galore. Hévíz the biologically-active thermal lake can be found only 6 km from Balaton, where visitors can swim in water which never drops below a friendly 23°! The water has curative powers that provide relief from a number of ailments. In the eastern part of the country, the bath complex of Hajdúszoboszló is the largest spa in Europe. The combined effects of the medicinal water, 40 different therapies and other healing factors may help with patients’ full recovery.
Hungary may not be a large country but it packs in a lot of talent, cheer, romance and creativity into its small area. Throughout a thousand years of Hungarian history, this land has been enriched with diverse culture and traditions. The birthplace of world-famous inventors, scientists, explorers, composers and sports stars; it’s a land of true variety, colour and passion. Hungary has more Nobel-prize winners per capita than any other nation. Across the country there are 8 World Heritage Sites, 3518 churches, 103 calvarias and 73 synagogues, we have Europe’s No.1 festival, and you can travel on the 2nd oldest underground in the world. Enjoy famous Hungarian hospitality! Come for a city break or for a longer holiday, travel alone or with friends or even bring the whole family along, Hungary is an ideal choice, one that will satisfy everybody!
Hungary is a rich and thrilling world of culture. From classical to contemporary, through folklore, dance and music to design, you surely will find something for everyone. Budapest is treasure trove of top-class music and art. It has not earned the nickname ‘Paris of the East’ for nothing, and boasts broad boulevards and green parks, grand Art-Nouveau mansions, vibrantly painted churches, a great many museums and galleries, lively cafés. With the homeland of such outstanding composers as Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály, with a world-class opera house and the famous, newly renovated Liszt Academy, Hungarians have a significant role in the international music community. The Budapest Spring Festival is the country’s largest cultural platform, featuring classical and pop music, drama, exhibitions and famous artists annually. The Palace of Arts is a conglomeration of cultural venues, a building with no precedent in 20th century Hungarian architecture and no peers in all of Central Europe.
Hungary offers a vast choice of outstanding natural treasures. Would you believe that in this small country there are 10 national parks, 39 landscape-protection areas and 168 nature conservation areas amounting to 1.3 million acres awaiting environment-loving eco-tourists? The national parks boasts wild rivers, gentle, rolling hills, large lakes, ridgelines covered with dense, natural forests, vast plains, as well as caves and caverns with fantastic treasures underground. If you want to have a special experience in a Hungarian forest, explore it while travelling by one of the 21 forest railway lines of the country. The country also hides some unique venues which present the diversity of the European continent’s natural heritage to tourists. Őrség, Hortobágy National Park, Irottkő Nature Park, Lake Tisza, Mecsek and Kaposvár and the Zselic area are part of the European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN), and they simultaneously represent a friendly invitation and destination that reminds everyone of the primordial harmony of the world.
In its one-thousand-year history, Hungary’s own traditions have been greatly influenced by both Eastern and Western cultural heritage. The cultural influences of east and west can be seen in the monuments, traditions and everyday life. The memories of the Roman Empire, the buildings and baths created during the 150 years of Ottoman rule, the tiny churches and grandiose cathedrals of the Middle Ages, the remains of old fortresses and those magnificent palaces throughout the land, all bear witness to a rich and colourful history. Visit enchanting cities, small towns and villages in the countryside and allow them to capture your imagination. Hungarian history is revived in numerous festivals, in which visitors can participate in real time-travel, and enjoy unforgettable experiences.
Eight Hungarian locations of high cultural importance or outstanding natural beauty have been designated by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites worthy of protection and preservation. The Aggtelek Karst, including the most extensive stalactite cave system of Central Europe, the grassy plain of the Hortobágy, and Lake Fertő, the westernmost of the Eurasian steppe-lakes, and also Europe’s largest saltwater lake are now national parks and protected natural treasures. The other World Heritage Sites include the ancient Christian cemetery with painted sepulchral vaults discovered in Pécs, the thousand-year-old monastery at Pannonhalma, still used today, and the small village of Hollókő, which has preserved its medieval order of settlement, folk architecture and traditions. With its unique geological and geographical characteristics the Tokaj wine region is also on the World Heritage list. Authentic wine producing traditions have been maintained and followed here for over a thousand years. The buildings of Budapest’s riverfront along the Danube and Andrássy Avenue form one of the most attractive skylines in the world, well deserving its World Heritage Status.
The largest fresh-water lake in Central Europe, Balaton is not only a summer holiday resort; smooth water and fresh wines, authentic castles and sleepy villages, beautiful landscapes and crystal clear air, fishing and sailing, partying and relaxing, cycling and golfing, Lake Balaton has it all almost all year round. Family-friendly beaches with great services and excellent water quality are to be found all around the lake. The northern coast is surrounded by volcanic hills and never-ending vineyards providing excellent wines and lots of opportunities for wine-tasting. A few kilometres away from the lake, the exquisite world of special stone formations in the Káli-Basin and rare birds, plants in the “Kis-Balaton” or little Balaton, belonging to the Northern Balaton Uplands National Park are a must for visitors. The church and monastery on the Tihany peninsula date back to around 1100 AD. The oldest town by the lake is Keszthely, has one of the three largest baroque palaces of the country, and the district reminiscent of Reform Era in Balatonfüred or Lake Cave under Tapolca is a must-visit.
AUGUST

BUDAPEST, THE PEARL OF THE DANUBE

Home to 1.8 million people, Budapest is the bustling capital city of Hungary. Budapest offers you the chance of living like a king regardless of your budget. Whether you have traditional tastes or extraordinary demands, Budapest will deliver. It is the city of clichés, surprises and wonders. At first sight, Budapest is not that different from your average European capital with its lively centre, pretty parks, majestic river, tall church spires and lavish spas. At second sight though, Budapest is one of the most exciting cities in the world, full of secrets to uncover, hidden spots to explore and old favourites to revisit. What to see while you're there? Start on the top, with the magnificent Buda Castle and Castle District. Cross the river for the most grandiose building on the Pest embankment, the Parliament. For sacred wonders, visit the tallest building in the city, Saint Stephen's Basilica, and one of the largest synagogues in the world, the Dohány Street Synagogue. Heroes’ Square will give you a peek into the romantic past of the country, and in Memento Park you’ll have a chance to enjoy a modern history lesson in the open.
There are plenty of opportunities to develop your sporting prowess during your stay in Hungary. Explore the famous Great Plains on horseback, swim in the health-giving currents of one of the thermal baths, follow jogging and cycle paths, play golf at several golf courses; unforgettable memories are guaranteed. The country is an ideal place for cycling, and three routes of the EuroVelo network cross it; Route 6 along the River Danube, Route 11 along the River Tisza and Route 13 which follows the trail of the former Iron Curtain. Lake Balaton is a popular spot for water sports and lazing in the sun. Lake Tisza has played a pioneering role in the development of new approaches to exhibiting nature’s treasures. Both offer innovative visitor-friendly services devised to attract hikers, anglers, cyclists, campers and everyone who wishes to enjoy outdoor leisure.
Although Hungarian cuisine is usually known for goulash and heavy use of the spice paprika, there are plenty of high quality meats, freshwater fish, fresh produce and excellent wines to be had here. Hungarian cuisine is undergoing a food revolution. The biggest proof of this trend that three restaurants in Budapest have been awarded Michelin stars in recent years. Have a drink in the popular ruin pub quarter or try some delicious street food downtown, because the sparkling atmosphere and excellent culinary experience are not only trendy but really worthwhile! The country has 22 wine regions and wine-making has been part of Hungarian culture since ancient times; generations of renowned winemaking families and young, ambitious talents do a fine job of keeping the traditions alive. Good food and good wines are very important in Hungarian life, which is illustrated by the many food-related events organised all around the country. There are fisherman’s-soup-cooking and sausage-filling cook-offs, onion and paprika festivals, apple days, melon and cherry festivals, as well as vintage celebrations, wine, champagne and pálinka (spirit) festivals throughout around the year.
Hungary is an extremely colourful country. The greatest evidence for this its varied folk art, based on thousand-year-old traditions. Most of them are connected to religious festivals but the end of winter, the arrival of spring, the summer harvests and the autumn vintage were also seen as occasions to celebrate with festivals. In some villages those traditions are still kept alive and people put on their finest folk costumes to mark the event. The patterns and colours, however, vary greatly from region to region. Perhaps the most famous patterns are from the town of Kalocsa. The singularity of our folk art was recognised internationally in recent years; there are three Hungarian items in UNESCO’s Intangible/Intellectual Cultural Heritage. The Folk art of Matyó is the exquisite embroidery of a traditional community; the Tánczáz method; the Busho Carnival in Mohács which is a winter farewell festival. Today 22 Busho communities keep the tradition alive, verifying the courage of male members of each generation. The most beautiful pieces of folk architecture are exhibited in open-air museums or skansens at several locations around the country.
Whether you are after souvenirs or presents for your friends, or in for some serious shopping, Hungary offers many opportunities. Handmade, painted porcelain, crystal, lace and other pieces of folk art such as woven cloths, embroideries and glazed pottery are all typical Hungarian souvenirs. Hungary’s contemporary design scene is also bustling. Besides the usual flea markets, a monthly organised design market called WAMP promotes Hungarian designers. Budapest is perfect for shopaholics. Walking down leafy Andrássy Avenue is a pleasure in itself, but the glittering flagship stores of international brands also make it a favourite destination for the discerning shopper. But if you’re in for some local colour, leave the shopping centres behind and head to the small streets of the 5th district, where young and innovative Hungarian fashion designer’s shops, such as Nanushka, USE Unused, Suis Belle etc. can be found. Near to Christmas time, Advent fairs await you with mulled wine and plenty ideas for presents under the tree in every major town in the country.