

EUROPE · CITY BREAKS · HISTORY · ARCHITECTURE · FOOD · WINE · NIGHTLIFE

 *Hungary*

Hungary contrasts Budapest's floodlit Danube panorama, Ottoman-era baths and ruin bars with a countryside of wine hills and lakes: Tokaj's sweet aszú, Eger's castle and cellars, and Lake Balaton's summer resorts. Distances are short, trains run almost everywhere from the capital, and an afternoon soaking in a thermal pool is the classic way to recover from sightseeing.

 Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Hungary and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 23 September 2026.

|                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  CAPITAL<br>Budapest                     |  CURRENCY<br>Hungarian forint (HUF)<br>£1 ≈ HUF 434 |  LANGUAGE<br>Hungarian                                   |  BEST TIME<br>Apr–Jun, Sep–Oct       |
|  DAILY BUDGET<br>£50–£220<br>££ Moderate |  PLUGS<br>Type C, F<br>230V · adapter needed        |  FLIGHT FROM LONDON<br>2h 25m direct<br>~£60–£230 return |  TIME ZONE<br>UTC+1<br>standard time |

Hungary sits in the Carpathian Basin, split by the Danube, which also divides Budapest into hilly Buda and flat, grand Pest. Most first trips start with three or four days in the capital, adding a day on the Danube Bend at Szentendre, Visegrád and Esztergom. From there, routes fork: south-west to Lake Balaton and the spa town of Hévíz, or north-east into the Bükk and Zemplén hills for Eger and Tokaj, continuing to Debrecen and the Hortobágy puszta. Pécs, with its Ottoman mosque-turned-church and early Christian tombs, rewards a detour south.

Budapest gets busy, particularly at weekends and in summer, and prices have risen sharply in recent years, though eating out still undercuts Vienna. Outside the capital the pace drops: trains are slow but cheap, small-town restaurants serve generous paprika-red cooking, and thermal water is everywhere. The country has more than a thousand hot springs, and Hévíz is one of the world's largest swimmable thermal lakes. Hungarian, unrelated to its neighbours' languages, can feel impenetrable, yet younger people widely speak English. It suits city-breakers, wine lovers and slow travellers, and the grandeur of its 19th-century architecture surprises many.

Top 5 highlights

-  ARCHITECTURE

**Buda Castle and the Danube panorama**

Walk up to the Castle District for Matthias Church, Fisherman's Bastion and views over the Chain Bridge to Parliament, then return after dark, when the whole UNESCO-listed riverfront is floodlit.
-  CULTURE

**Széchenyi and Rudas thermal baths**

Soak in Széchenyi's neo-baroque outdoor pools, where locals play chess in the steam even in winter, or under the domed 16th-century Ottoman pool at Rudas, whose rooftop pool overlooks the Danube.

3

## NATURE

**Lake Balaton and Tihany**

Central Europe's largest lake has shallow, warm water along its southern shore and wine villages on the volcanic hills of the north; the Tihany peninsula adds a hilltop abbey, lavender fields and sweeping views.

4

## HISTORY

**Eger**

Baroque town below the castle where defenders held off a huge Ottoman army in 1552, with a slender Turkish minaret and cellars in the Valley of the Beautiful Women pouring Egri Bikavér (Bull's Blood).

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## FOOD

**Tokaj wine region**

UNESCO-listed hills in the north-east where volcanic soils and autumn mists produce Tokaji aszú, the sweet wine Louis XIV reputedly called the wine of kings; taste it in cellars tunnelled into the rock.

**Biggest cities**

## LARGEST CITY

**Budapest**

≈ 3 million people

Two cities in one: Buda's castle hill and Pest's boulevards, Parliament, ruin bars and coffee houses. Give it three days, with evenings on the Danube embankment.

## 2ND LARGEST CITY

**Debrecen**

≈ 200,000 people

Capital of the eastern plain, centred on the vast yellow Reformed Great Church; a relaxed base for Hortobágy National Park and the Flower Carnival each August.

## 3RD LARGEST CITY

**Szeged**

≈ 160,000 people

A sunny university city on the Tisza, rebuilt in grand style after the 1879 flood; known for paprika, fish soup and the twin-towered Votive Church.

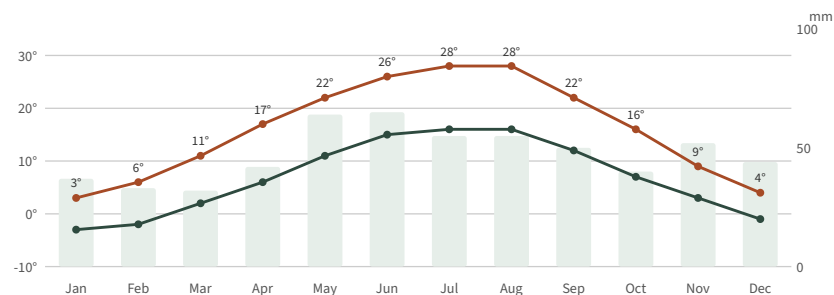
Ranked by urban-area population where available. Figures are rounded estimates, and sources define city limits differently, so rankings of similar-sized cities can vary.

**When to go to Hungary**

Best time: **Apr–Jun, Sep–Oct.**

**Average climate in Budapest**

— High °C — Low °C — Rain (mm)

**Festivals & events**

Feb–Mar

**Busójárás**

Mohács's UNESCO-listed carnival before Lent, when men in carved wooden masks and sheepskins parade through town and across the Danube to scare away winter.

Aug

### St Stephen's Day

Hungary's national day on 20 August honours its first king with fireworks over the Danube in Budapest and a folk-crafts festival in the Castle District.

Nov–Dec

### Budapest Christmas markets

From mid-November, Vörösmarty tér and St Stephen's Basilica host stalls of mulled wine, chimney cake and crafts, with light shows projected on the basilica's façade.

## How much does Hungary cost?

|                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <div>SHOESTRING</div> <div>£50</div> <div>per person / day</div> <div>≈ HUF 21,676</div> <div>hostels, street food, buses</div> | <div>MID-RANGE</div> <div>£110</div> <div>per person / day</div> <div>≈ HUF 47,687</div> <div>3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis</div> | <div>COMFORTABLE</div> <div>£220</div> <div>per person / day</div> <div>≈ HUF 95,375</div> <div>4-star+, guided trips, private transfers</div> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

## Food to try

### Gulyás

Hungarian goulash is a soup, not a stew: beef, onion, potatoes and plenty of sweet paprika, traditionally cooked in a kettle over an open fire.

### Halászlé

Fiery paprika fisherman's soup made with river fish such as carp; Szeged and Baja each claim the definitive version, and it is the classic Christmas Eve dish.

### Lángos

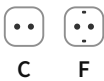
Deep-fried dough slathered with garlic, sour cream and grated cheese, the essential snack at Lake Balaton beaches and Budapest markets.

## Getting around

Hungary's rail network radiates from Budapest's Keleti, Nyugati and Déli stations, with frequent MÁV trains to Lake Balaton, Eger, Debrecen and Szeged; Volánbusz coaches fill the gaps. In Budapest, the metro, trams 4 and 6 and night buses cover the city, with tickets on the BudapestGO app. Bolt works with licensed taxis; Uber does not operate. A hire car helps in the wine regions, but motorways require an e-vignette.

## Practical information

### PLUGS & VOLTAGE



230V — bring a UK-to-C/F adapter

### DIALLING CODE

+36

### TAP WATER

Generally safe to drink

### TIPPING

Leave 10–15% in restaurants unless a service charge (szervízdíj) is already on the bill; tell the server the total you want to pay rather than leaving money on the table.

### EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Telephone: **112** (ambulance, fire, police)

Source: FCDO “Getting help”

### TIME ZONE

UTC+1 (standard time)

### DRIVING

On the right

ETIQUETTE

Greet shopkeepers with 'jó napot'. Some older Hungarians still avoid clinking beer glasses, a custom linked to the Austrian execution of rebel generals in 1849.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Budapest Ferenc Liszt International Airport (BUD), Budapest; Debrecen International Airport (DEB), Debrecen

Visas & entry for Hungary

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can travel without a visa to the Schengen area, which includes Hungary, for up to 90 days in any 180-day period. This applies if you travel: as a tourist; to visit family or friends; to attend business meetings, cultural or sports events; for short-term studies or training.

The requirements for working in Hungary are different.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations

See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Rabies Tick-borne encephalitis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Hungary

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

|                 |                                       |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|
| Fri 23 Oct 2026 | National Day                          |
| Sun 1 Nov 2026  | All Saints' Day                       |
| Thu 24 Dec 2026 | Day off (substituted from 12/12/2026) |
| Fri 25 Dec 2026 | Christmas Day                         |
| Sat 26 Dec 2026 | Second Day of Christmas               |
| Fri 1 Jan 2027  | New Year's Day                        |

|                 |                      |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| Mon 15 Mar 2027 | National Day         |
| Fri 26 Mar 2027 | Good Friday          |
| Sun 28 Mar 2027 | Easter               |
| Mon 29 Mar 2027 | Easter Monday        |
| Sat 1 May 2027  | Labour Day           |
| Sun 16 May 2027 | Pentecost            |
| Mon 17 May 2027 | Pentecost Monday     |
| Fri 20 Aug 2027 | State Foundation Day |

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

## Useful phrases in Hungarian

| ENGLISH           | HUNGARIAN       | SAY IT               |
|-------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Hello             | Jó napot        | yoh NAH-poht         |
| Thank you         | Köszönöm        | KUR-sur-nurm         |
| Please            | Kérem           | KAY-rem              |
| Excuse me         | Elnézést        | EL-nay-zaysht        |
| How much is this? | Mennyibe kerül? | MEN-nyi-beh KEH-rewl |

## Know before you go

Pay in forints and decline 'dynamic currency conversion' on card machines and ATMs; avoid Euronet cash machines and airport exchange kiosks, whose rates are poor.

Buy an e-vignette (e-matrica) online before driving on any motorway; cameras read number plates and fines are issued automatically.

On Budapest transport, validate paper tickets or buy through the BudapestGO app, as inspectors are frequent; ordinary tickets aren't valid on the 100E airport bus, which needs its own ticket.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice ([gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](https://gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)) and TravelHealthPro ([travelhealthpro.org.uk](https://travelhealthpro.org.uk)). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.