



Discover

BUDAPEST

A Journey Through a Historic City

By Dara Rubin

B

udapest (pronounced Buda-pesht), the capital of Hungary, is a city initially composed of three different cities: Buda and Óbuda on the west side of the Danube River, and Pest on the east side. In 1873, the three came together as one to form Budapest. The old city has many famous and historic landmarks, ranging from statues and bridges to monuments and castles.

“Budapest was one of the most unique cities I have been to. The architecture, the history, the way of life, and the food were absolutely fantastic. The local people were so very nice as well,” said Matt Parkhurst, who traveled to Budapest in August.

“Overall, I really enjoyed Budapest. Walking around and seeing the city and sights was very interesting, and the hop-on hop-off buses helped us see a lot of the landmarks. Also, the food was delicious - and cheap - and there was lots of interesting nightlife that didn’t stop early,” said Jason Mantzouranis. Mantzouranis also visited Budapest this past summer.

Leanne Haddad visited Budapest with her husband in 2013 before their son was born.

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A view of the Pest side
of the city from the
Gellért Hill.



Hungarian Parliament



Országház

Hungarian Parliament

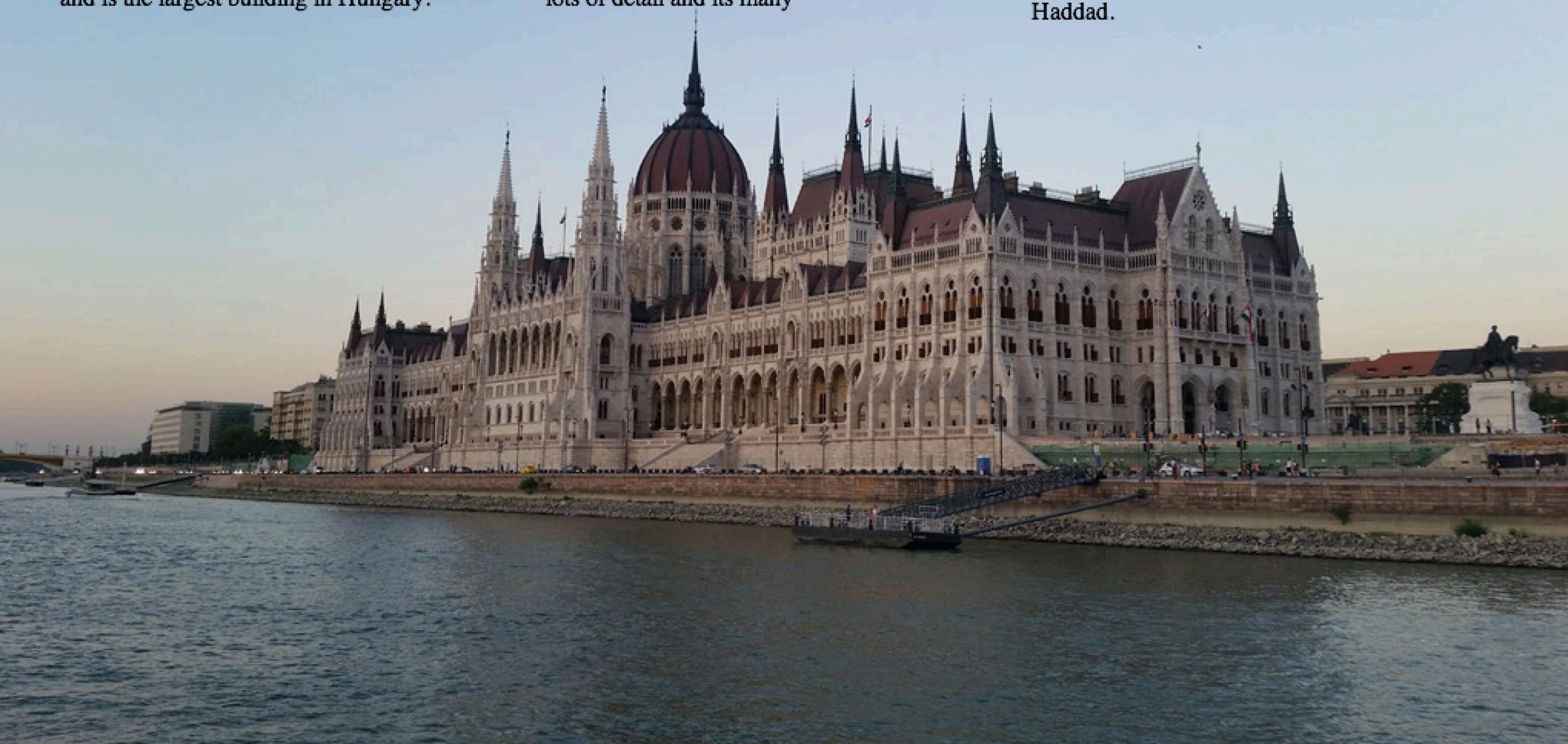
Located right on the edge of the Danube River, the Parliament Building is impossible to miss. Construction of Parliament began in 1885 and was completed in 1904. It is one of Europe's oldest legislative buildings, and is the largest building in Hungary.

Országház means "House of the Country" or "House of the Nation."

"The Parliament Building right on the river was beautiful and imposing, especially when lit up at night. It seemed delicately built with lots of detail and its many

spires," said Mantzouranis.

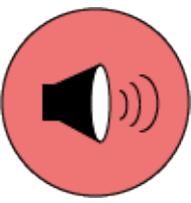
"We saw this first from the other [Buda] side of the Danube. What a spectacular building! It was evening and the lighting was magnificent. We did not go inside, but did walk around it on our tour of the city," said Haddad.



Országház

Hungarian State Opera House

Magyar Állami Operaház



The Interior of *Magyar Állami Operaház*

*Click the photos
to enlarge*



The Hungarian State Opera House was built in 1884 and is located in central Budapest, on Andrassy út. The Opera House was designed by Miklós Ybl.

"Our tour walked past this and [our guide] explained its history. We saw that the ballet, *Romeo and Juliet* was playing that evening and we went back right after the tour and got two of the last tickets! They didn't have seats together but we wanted to see the inside and experience a performance there. The theater was stunning! So ornate and beautiful. The ballet was wonderful and

we were so happy we made the impulsive decision to go," said Haddad.

"The Opera House was just awesome. To go in there and see the ornaments and boxes, it was an amazing view being inside the opera. On the tour, looking at the murals and wood carvings in the other rooms, they were very impressive and beautifully done," said Schwartz.

After the tour of the Opera House, guests have an opportunity to see a small concert performed by an opera singer.

"The singer, she sang two arias, and those happened to be my favorite arias. I was totally absorbed," Schwartz said.

The Interior of *Magyar Állami Operaház*



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The mural on the domed ceiling of the auditorium

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St. Stephen's Basilica

Szent István-bazilika



St. Stephen's Basilica, a Roman Catholic basilica, was built in honor of St. Stephen, the first King of Hungary. This basilica is the largest church in Budapest. It took 54 years for St. Stephen's to be completed due to the collapse of the dome in 1868. The Basilica had to be completely reconstructed and was finished in 1905.

"Absolutely beautiful church, inside and out! It contains a relic of St. Stephen — his hand. We sat outside in the square for a while gazing at the cathedral and people watched, which is always fun to do!" said Haddad.

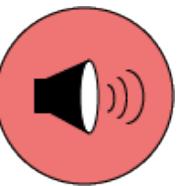
"The dome was just spectacular," said Schwartz. "There's so much to view there, and the centerpieces inside were incredible, just beautiful."

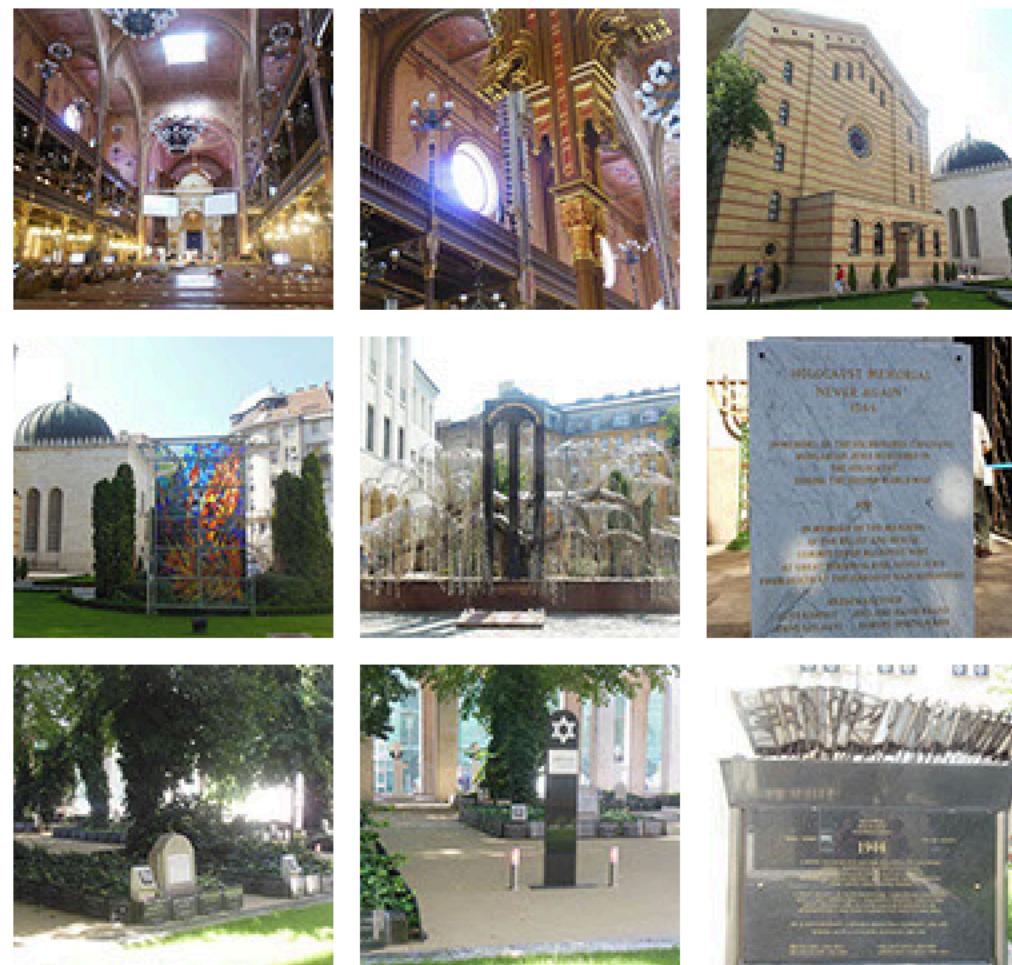


Photo courtesy of Joanne Haddad

The Dohány Street Synagogue

Dohány utcai zsinagóga



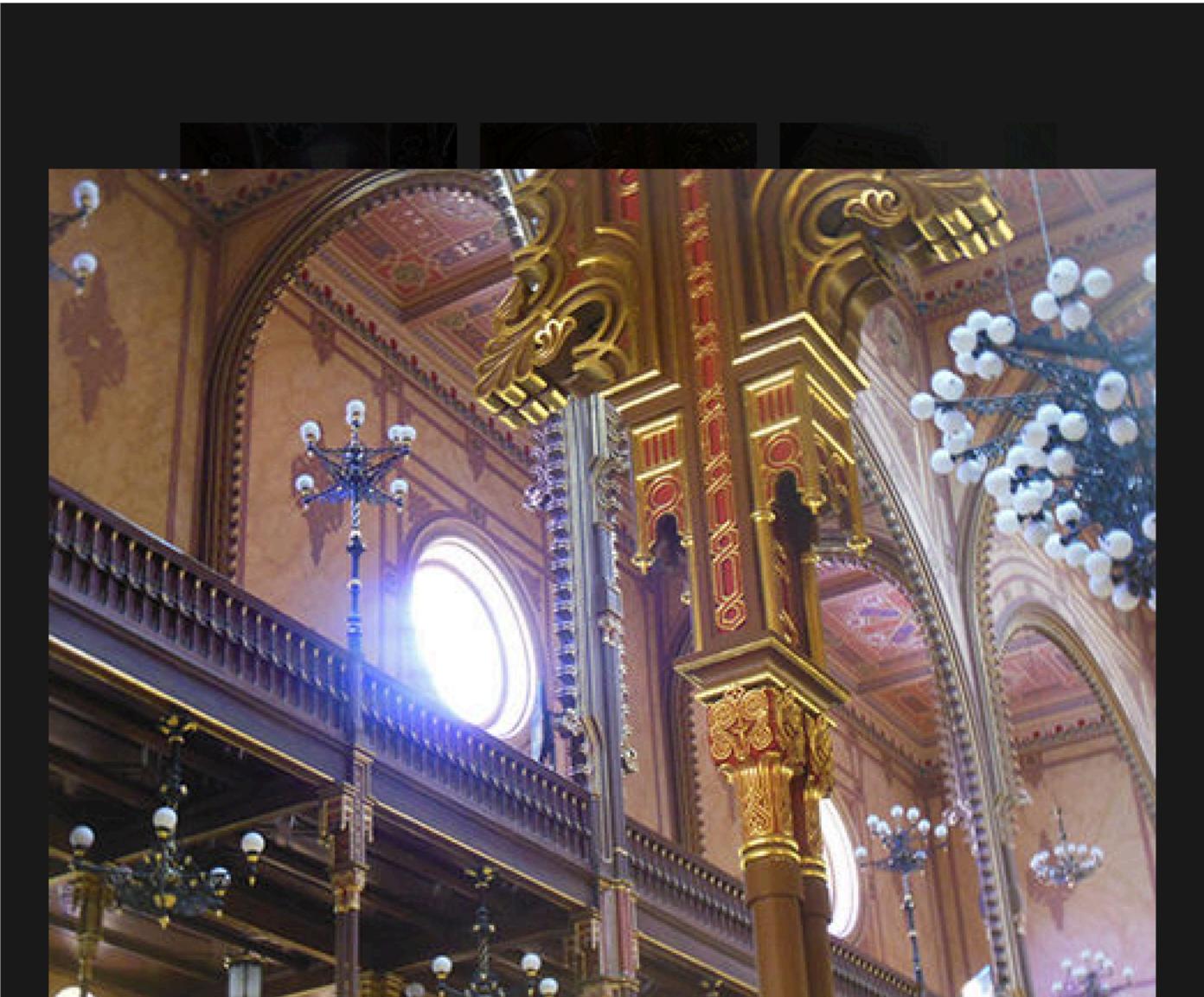


The Dohány Street Synagogue is the largest synagogue in Europe and is located on the Pest side. The Dohány Synagogue consists of several parts: the Great Synagogue, the graveyard, the Heroes' Temple, the Memorial and the Jewish Museum. The temple was designed by Viennese architect Ludwig Förster and was completed in 1859.

"I was amazed by how big it was — it's one of the biggest

synagogues in the world. Just going in and seeing the different levels of balconies and hearing the concert going on inside was great. I also remember the happiness and sadness. Going out and seeing the mounds of unidentified people and the chills it gave me — the gravestones were quite sad," said Schwartz.

"This was the largest and most beautiful synagogue I have visited. As a descendant of Hungarian Jews, this building had a large impact on me because it could have been where my ancestors prayed," said Parkhurst.



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The Chain Bridge
Széchenyi Lánchíd





Eight bridges cross the river, which separate the Buda Side and the Pest Side. All of these bridges were unique, the most famous being the Chain bridge which led to the Funicular which took us up to the Buda Castle," said Parkhurst.

The Chain Bridge was designed by Englishman William Tierney Clarke and opened in 1849. The four lions on each end of the bridge were carved into stone by sculptor János Marschalkó.

"What a beautiful bridge, especially the lions. We did walk across it. It is formally named the Széchenyi Chain Bridge after the

man who was a major advocate of the project," said Haddad.

"I also remember the chain bridge well because of the large lion statues and the impressive view of the parliament building," Mantzouranis said. The Chain Bridge was the first permanent bridge to span the Danube River.

Unfortunately, during World War II, the Chain Bridge was blown up by the Germans during the "Siege of Budapest," and only the towers remained. The bridge was rebuilt and reopened four years later in 1949.





The Citadel *Citadella*

Across the river on the Buda side and located atop the Gellért Hill is the Citadella. Following the Hungarian Revolution of 1848, the Citadella (which is the Hungarian word for “citadel” or “fortress”) was built over the next six years by Julius Jacob von Haynau. The tallest statue in the center is known as the Liberty Statue, or Szabadság-szobor. The monuments were designed by Zsigmond Kisfaludi Stróbl.

“The citadel was impressive, not just due to the Liberty Statue that towered over the area, but also because of the beautiful view of the city,” said Mantzouranis.

Schwartz didn’t make it all the way to the top of the Citadella to view the statues, but was impressed nonetheless.

“It was quite a climb to go up the path and all the stone steps, but it was a beautiful look-out. I was able to look over the wall and down below to see the view of Pest. It was the first time I was able to see the city from that vantage point, and it was an interesting view looking down over the flat terrain of Pest – that’s what impressed me,” he said.