

# Hostelworld Guide for Budapest

Budapest is a city that still bears the scars of communism but one that is constantly developing into one of the world's greatest capitals. Split in two by the grand River Danube, on one side you have the Buda, the hilly side dominated by the castle and Royal Palace. On the other you have the Pest, a flat side where you will find the city's financial district, high street shops and its most popular bars. But something you can find anywhere in the city are its public baths...don't leave without treating yourself to a dip in one.

## In this Guide...

- Useful Information
- After Dark
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- Top Attractions
- Budget Tips
- Where to Shop

## The Essentials

### Getting There

**By plane:** Budapest's Ferihegy International Airport is ten miles outside the city and has two terminals. An efficient minibus service connects it to the city centre, costing 3,200HUF one-way/5,500HUF return.

**By train:** Budapest is connected by rail to 25 capital cities. All arrive in either Keleti pályaudvar, Nyugati pályaudvar or Déli pályaudvar stations and all are stops on the underground network.

**By bus:** Buses arrive and depart at Népliget Coach Station in Pest.

### Getting Around

**On foot:** Budapest is quite a large city (525 sq. km) so you'll have to utilise its public transport network at some stage. It is divided into 23 districts. These are referred to with Roman numerals in the address.

**By metro:** There are three metro lines in operation, one of which was the first underground line in mainland Europe. They are punctual, easy to use and operate between 4.30am and 11pm.

**By bus/tram:** Buses/trams cover all parts of the city that the metro doesn't. They are the only modes of transport to certain parts of Buda.

### Useful phrases

- Hello:** Szia
- Goodbye:** Szia
- Please:** Kérlek
- Thank you:** Köszönöm
- You're welcome:** Szívesen
- Yes:** Igen
- No:** Nem
- Of course:** Természetesen
- Excuse me:** Elnézést
- How are you?:** Hogy vagy?
- Open:** Nyitva
- Closed:** Zárva
- What is your name?:** Hogy hívnak?
- My name is...:** Az én nevem...
- How much?:** Mennyibe kerül?
- May I have the bill?:** Kérhetném a számlát?

## Climate

The Hungarian capital has a temperate, continental climate and all seasons are very well defined. The warmest months are July and August when temperatures can rise to 30°C and there are over eight hours of sunshine a day. Naturally, December and January are the coldest months. Temperatures have been known to plummet to as low as -15°C in some cases so if you are visiting in winter (and even up to as late as March) make sure to pack your winter woollies.

### Useful Information

- Language:** Hungarian
- Currency:** Forint (HUF)
- Electricity:** 220 Volts, AC/50Hz
- Area Code:** +36 (Hungary) 01 (Budapest)
- Emergency Codes:** Ambulance 104 / Fire 105 / Police 107
- Time Zone:** Central European Time (GMT +1)
- Central Post Office:** V Petőfi Sándor utca 13-15 or V Városház utca 18
- Main Tourist Office:** V. Sütő u. 2. (Deák Square)

### Embassies

- USA:** +36 (0)1 475 4400
- UK:** +36 (0)1 266 2888
- Canada:** +36 (0)1 392 3360
- Australia:** +36 (0)1 457 9777
- South Africa:** +36 (0)1 392 0999
- Ireland:** +36 (0)1 301 4960
- Germany:** +36 (0)1 488 3500
- Spain:** +36 (0)1 342 9992
- Italy:** +36 1 460 6200
- New Zealand:** +49 (0)30 206 210 (NZ embassy in Germany)
- France:** +36 (0)1 374 1100

## Cheap Eats

**Café Vian, V Liszt Ferenc tér 9** Don't let the English menu here put you off. This ultra-cool bar/restaurant serves a mainly Hungarian clientele who come to enjoy the laid-back vibe and good food, with mains costing 1,600HUF and up. The warm red décor simply complements the vibe. *Open daily from 9am-midnight.*

**Kicsi a Világ, VII Madách útca 11** Tucked down a quiet street across from Deák Ferenc tér, this cosy teahouse attracts students and locals who read newspapers, chat with friends or browse the web. It's a good place to go in the morning as they have 5 set breakfasts to choose from. *Open Mon-Fri 7.30am-10.30pm, Sat & Sun 9am-10.30pm.*

**Durcin Sandwich Bar, V Október 6 útca 15** Portions in this extremely central sandwich bar may not be the most generous, but what do you expect for less than 150HUF? Take your pick from open-face salmon, pepperoni, beef, egg and other sandwiches. The perfect place for lunch on the run. *Open Mon-Fri 8am-5pm and Sat 9am-1pm.*

## Great building, great food

**Great Market Hall, IX Fővám tér** This hugely impressive building at the end of Budapest's premier shopping street Váci útca is one of five market halls in Budapest but easily the most popular. The bottom floor is where locals come to stock up on fruit and meat, while upstairs you will find the tourists tanking up on delightful Hungarian delights for around 600HUF. *Open daily from 6am-6pm.*

**Főzelék Bar, VI Nagymező útca 18** If you like to try out local specialities, visit this food bar close to the State Opera House which specialises in 'fozelek' - a mix of anything from potatoes to peas mixed in a broth with fried spam/eggs in a bowl. Hungarians love the stuff as it's cheap and filling. Try it. *Open Mon-Fri 9am-10pm, Sat 10am-5pm.*

## After Dark

**Becketts Irish Bar, VI Bajcsy Zsilinszky útca 72** Located on the outskirts of the city centre, Becketts is a lively Irish bar in every sense. Here you will find rusty bicycles hanging aimlessly from the rafters and dusty signposts proclaiming how far it is to Tipperary (it's a long way, don't you know). A bit of a trek from Central Pest but worth it on Fridays when it really gets going. *Open Mon-Thurs & Sun 12 noon, Fri and Sat 12 noon-3am.*

**Morrison's Music Pub, VI Révay útca 25** This nightclub's name may trigger thoughts of various tracks by The Doors blaring from the speakers but this isn't the case. Instead you're more likely to hear dance tunes banging away until the early hours. There's also a small dancefloor for you to bust a move. *Open nightly from 9pm-4am.*

## Gay / Lesbian Budapest

Budapest's gay scene is thriving but has only really come into itself over the last decade or so. Most bars can be found on the Pest side of the city in districts VI, IV, VII and IX. **Mystery Bar** (V Nagysándor József útca 3) was Budapest's first gay bar, opening in 1990. As a result it is one of the city's most popular. **Chaos Music Pub & CoXx Club** (VII Dohány útca 38) is another popular spot while **Angyal Bár** (VII Dohány útca 28) is Budapest's biggest gay club, attracting thousands at the weekend.

**Café Zuccas, V Hercegprímás útca 15** With its wooden décor and friendly staff, Café Zuccas is an inviting, cosy pub where friends unwind over a few quiet beers and exchange their stories from the week. It's a good place to catch live sports events too. *Open Mon-Thurs and Sun from 9am-midnight, Fri and Sat 12 noon-midnight.*

**Fat Mo's Music Club, V Nyári Pál útca 11** Open since 1927, Fat Mo's is one of Budapest's most famous live music venues. It can get stuffy on weekends but with 14 beers on draught, it's worth the visit. *Open Mon-Fri 12 noon to 2am/3am/4am, Sat & Sun 6pm-4am/2am.*

**E-Klub, VIII Népligeti útca 2** Buried deep in Népligeti (one of Budapest's city centre parks) south-east of the city centre, E-Klub is that club you can hear the bass booming from hundreds of yards away and the one that draws thousands every weekend. With four areas to check out, you're bound to find something that tickles your fancy. *Open Tues-Sun 9pm-5am.*

## Don't Miss

**Heroes Square, XIV Andrásy útca** Built in 1896 to celebrate the millennial anniversary of the Magyar conquest, Heroes Square is the entrance to City Park and the grandest square in Budapest. Its centrepiece is a 118ft column with the Archangel Gabriel perched atop, while statues of historically significant Hungarians line the back of the square.

## Fancy a dip?

**Budapest's Baths, various locations** Thanks to 118 natural or specially drilled springs beneath Budapest, 70 million litres of water are delivered to the Hungarian capital every day, with temperatures reaching 78°C. As a result there are baths and pools dotted all over the city. The best known are the **Gellert Baths** and the **Szechenyi Baths**. If you're having difficulties deciding where to bath, keep in mind that the Szechenyi Baths attract a younger clientele.

**Parliament, V Kossuth Lajos tér 1-3** It's hard to think of a building as pleasing on the eye as Hungary's Parliament. Based on a creation by Imre Steindl after he won a competition to design it, this imposing Gothic building of 365 spires is best viewed from the Buda side of the Danube. *English guided tours depart at 10am, 12 noon & 2pm. Price: 2,520 HUF.*

**St. Stephen's Basilica, V Szent István tér** Built between 1851 and 1905, St. Stephen's Basilica is Budapest's largest church. Don't leave without seeing St Stephen's actual hand in the Holy Right Chapel. *Open 9am-6pm; admission free.*

**Castle Hill/Royal Palace, I** Looming over Pest from the Buda side, you could spend an entire day exploring Castle Hill and the Royal Palace. This is where you will encounter the National Gallery and the History Museum, Mathias Church and Fisherman's Bastion, a viewing platform that boasts unforgettable views over the Hungarian capital.

## Mark Your Calendar

**March - Budapest Spring Festival** This is the largest cultural event held in Hungary with over 200 events staged. Expect everything from film screenings to orchestral concerts to jazz gigs.

**June - Danube Carnival** First held in 1996, this is the city's biggest folklore festival with most of the festivities taking place on Margaret Island.

**June - Bridge Festival** The birthday of the Chain Bridge, the oldest bridge to cross the Danube, is celebrated at this festival. All sorts of performances take place on the famous bridge, entertaining the thousands who attend.

**June - Budapest Búcsú (Farewell)** Celebrating the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary in 1991, City Park and Vörösmarty Square are where to be for this festival on the final weekend in June.

**June/July - Summer in Károlyi Gardens** Each weekend in June and July, in the immaculate gardens of the Károlyi Palace, classical music, theatre and dance performances can be caught.

**July - Danube Festival** Different to the Danube Carnival, this festival commemorates the defending of Europe along the banks of the Danube in the summer of 1456.

**August - Sziget Festival** Europe's largest outdoor music festival attracts thousands of revellers from across the globe who come to live in a campsite for a week and listen to music.

**August - Hungarian Grand Prix** The Hungarian Grand Prix is one of the most exciting sporting events to take place in Hungary and is held at the Hungaroring, 24km from the city centre.

**September - Budapest Marathon** Athletes from all over the world travel to Budapest for this annual race. Starting at Heroes Square, the race passes all the city's main sights along the River Danube.

**October - Budapest Autumn Festival** Not as high profile as the Spring Festival, the city's Autumn Festival still sees many performances take place throughout the city.

**December - Christmas Markets** If you are lucky enough to find yourself in Budapest over the festive season, don't leave without visiting Vörösmarty Square. Here you will find one of Europe's most enchanting Christmas markets.

## Get Connected

**Yellow Zebra, V Sütő útca 2, Deák Square** Yellow Zebra is a backpacker centre where internet access is just one of the facilities offered. Here you can also book yourself on to their bike tours, store your luggage, and more. *Open daily from 10am-7pm; 15 mins 100HUF, 60 mins 400HUF.*

**Internet Coffee, V 40 Vaci útca** Yes, you're right - the proprietor here didn't exactly rack his brains when conjuring up a name but at least he decided to leave his cybershop open later than most in the area. Close to the Great Market Hall, web access here is speedy. *Open daily from 9am-midnight; 15 mins 200HUF, 60 mins 700HUF.*

**Internet Office and Center, V Vaci útca 11/b** You have to tell the cashier how long you're going to spend online before you log on here which can be annoying, but on the plus side this internet café is right in the middle of Budapest's busiest street. *Open daily from 10am-7pm; 10 mins 100HUF, 20 mins 200HUF and so on.*

**Electric Café, VII Dohány útca 37** Found in the Jewish Quarter, this is one of the cheapest internet cafés in the city. They offer speedy broadband access plus a selection of coffees for 100HUF. *Open daily from 9am-midnight; 60 mins 200HUF.*

**Internet a Hattyúházban, II Hattyú útca 14** This is one of the cheapest places to access the internet on the Pest side. All machines have MSN and Yahoo while many other services are offered too. *Open daily from 9am-2am; 60 mins 200HUF.*

### www.

[www.budapestinfo.hu](http://www.budapestinfo.hu)  
[www.festivalcity.hu](http://www.festivalcity.hu)  
[www.sziget.hu](http://www.sziget.hu)  
[www.budapestfortravelers.com](http://www.budapestfortravelers.com)

## Retail Therapy

**Vaci útca, V** Rolling through the heart of the Pest side, Vaci útca is Budapest's flagship shopping street and is occupied with everything from sports shops to music shops to shops selling all sorts of tourist kitsch. Pedestrianised and tree-lined, it is a pleasant street to stroll down even if you're not intent on inflicting damage to your flexible friend.

**Ecseri Piac Flea Market, XIX** This enormous flea market on the outskirts of the Hungarian capital is one of the biggest of its kind in Central Europe. At this bustling market you can pick up everything from jewellery to old vinyl to retro clothing to ornaments. The busiest day is Saturday and to get there take bus #54 from the Pest. *Open Tues-Sat 6am-2pm.*

### A mall you could get lost in

**Westend City Center, Vaci útca 1-3** Located on a different Vaci útca north of the aforementioned one, getting lost in this monstrous shopping centre could prove to be easier than finding what you set out for in the first place. Every day thousands of shop assistants serve customers to the sound of cash registers ringing in one of 400 outlets. *Open daily from 9am-8pm.*

**Chinese Markets, XIII Köbányai útca** Feeling sorry for yourself because you can't afford all the designer clothes you're seeing in the high street stores? Still want to treat yourself? If so, this is the place to be. Thousands of counterfeit designer goods can be got here meaning you don't have to splurge to look splendid. *Open daily from 7am-6pm.*

**Mammut, II Széna tér** Here you'll find everything you'd expect to find in a mall. But along with being Buda's largest shopping mall, Mammut is where you will also stumble across a bowling alley, amusement arcade, casino, restaurants and more. *Open Mon-Sat 10am-9pm, Sun 10am-6pm.*

## Budget Tips

**Save money at Budapest's baths** Entrance to Budapest's baths can cost anything up to 2,500HUF. But in many baths (namely the Gellert Baths and Széchenyi Baths) you receive money back if you leave within a certain amount of time. So if you pay 2,300HUF into the Széchenyi Baths, leave within 2 hours and you will receive 700HUF on the way out. Simple!

**Visit Budapest's free museums** If you're a citizen of the EEA, and under 26, you can gain free entrance to many museums on the third Saturday of the month. These include **The Museum of Fine Arts, The National Museum** and **The Hungarian National Gallery**. **The Military Museum** has free admission on the last Sunday of every month for persons under 26. Check with the tourist office for a full list.

**Explore Margaret Island** Found right in the middle of the Danube, Margaret Island is a 2.5km long island covered primarily by parkland. Jump aboard bus #26 outside Westend City Center, take the bus to the top of the island and wander the whole way back the tree-lined paths, passing thermal spas, landmark monuments and ancient ruins. The single journey will set you back just 170HUF.

### The best view in Budapest

**Gellert Hill** As unforgettable as the views are from Fisherman's Bastion, the views from Gellert Hill are unrivalled and will take your breath away, day or night. The journey takes about 30 minutes on the way up, then ten on the way down. To get there take tram #49 to Móricz Zsigmond tér, then bus #27 to...well, just ask the bus driver.

**Visit Budapest's free churches** Many of Budapest's churches are free, or at the most a small entrance fee. This includes the city's best known place of worship **St Stephen's Basilica**, **Cave Church** on Gellert Hill, the **Roman Catholic Parish Church** on Church Hill and the **Inner City Parish Church** at Március 15. tér 2.

## A Day in Budapest...

Start your day at Fishermen's Bastion in Castle Hill in Buda, taking in the view of Parliament among other buildings. Afterwards visit Mathias Church.

Spend the rest of the morning exploring Castle Hill and the imposing grounds of the Royal Palace before making your way over to the Pest side.

Take bus #16 to Pest and go for lunch in Budapest's famous Great Market Hall. Have something typically Hungarian for your lunch like Hungarian sausage and goulash.

Mosey on down Vaci útca, Budapest's flagship shopping street. This tree-lined street is pleasant to stroll down, whether you are shopping or not.

Take the metro from Deák Square to Oktagon. Stroll up Andrásy Av, Budapest's answer to the Champs Elysees, before ending up in Heroes Square.

No visit to Budapest is complete without a visit to the baths. Széchenyi Baths are close to this square. Spend at least two hours there to fully appreciate them.

After freshening up in your hostel, go for something to eat in one of the cafés around Liszt Ferenc Square. Café Vian does good Hungarian food at decent prices.

This same square is always a good place for a few relaxed beers. If you need a change of scenery from Café Vian, check out Café Miro Grande next door.

Finish the night off partying away in Morrison's Music Club, one of Budapest's most popular after dark haunts.