

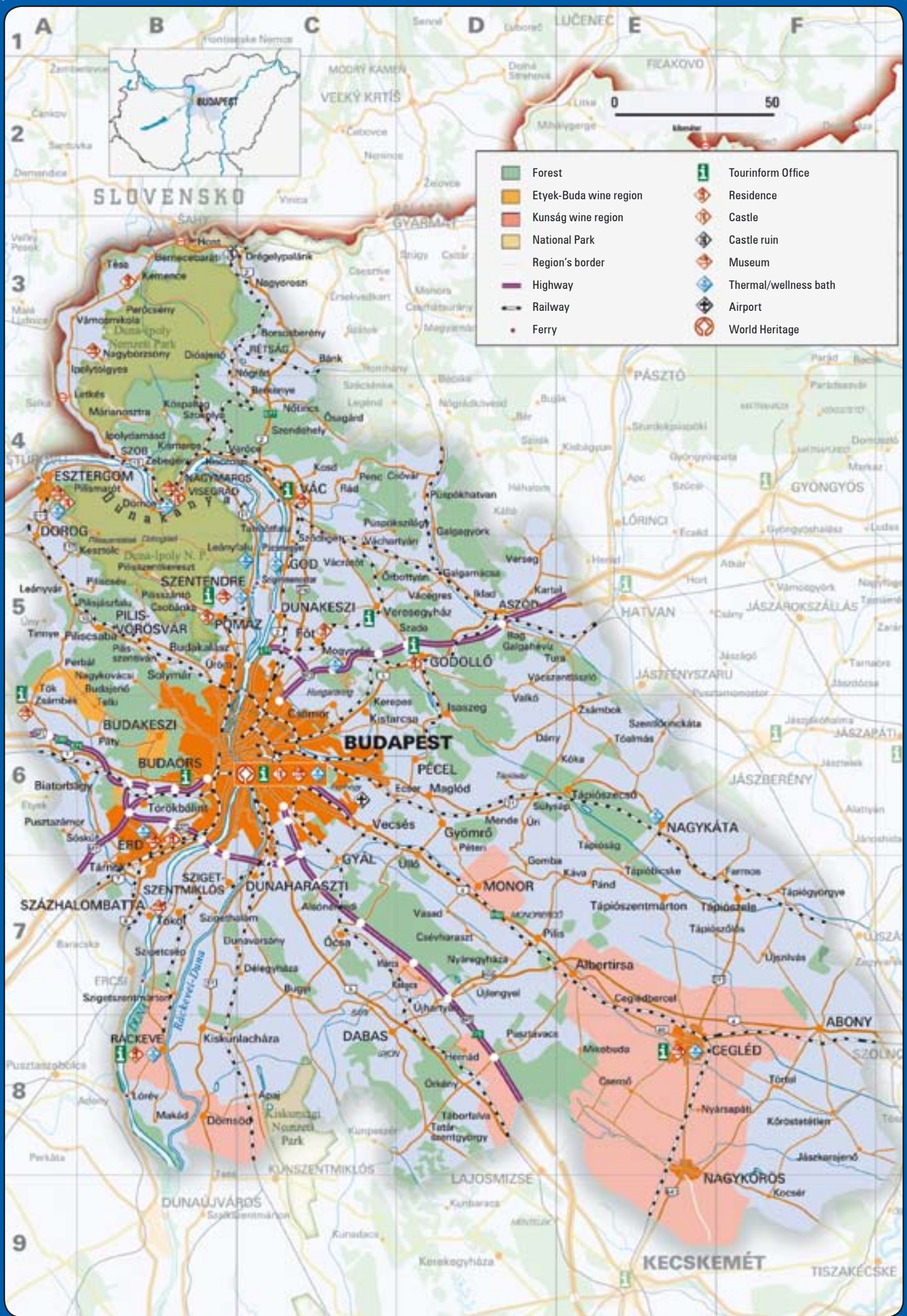
Touristic areas of the **Budapest** and Central Danube Region



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MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

BUDAPEST



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EL GRECO, VELÁZQUEZ,
MURILLO, GOYA,
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MANET, MONET,
CÉZANNE, GAUGUIN,
TOULOUSE - LAUTREC,
KOKOSCHKA...

Touristic areas of the
Budapest and
Central Danube Region



“Why Budapest and its surrounding area?”

This is the obvious question holiday makers will ask when planning their travels, and we hope to provide the answer.

Budapest because:

- it is the cultural, political and transportation centre of Hungary;
- it is built on both side of the Danube, the great European river that is registered as a World Heritage panorama;
- nature is safeguarded in two national parks and a number of environmental protection areas;
- it has represented a “multicultural Europe” for centuries – over 200 nearby villages are populated by Hungarians, Serbs, Slovaks and Germans (Swabians);
- it has a strong artistic and cultural heritage;
- there’s always something happening: festivals, concerts, theatre performances, sports competitions, exhibitions, church events, wine celebrations or handicraft fairs;
- there are many outdoor activities to enjoy: trekking, rock climbing, biking, horse riding, golf, rowing, swimming, potholing or flying;
- its restaurants offer not only Hungarian cuisine – and wine and palinka – but food from all over the world.

Don’t hesitate – come to Budapest, the centre of things!

*(We have marked our suggested “**must-see**” destinations with ***. However, these are naturally subjective selections, and we hope that our guests will find their own three-star experiences.)*

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Budapest, Heroes' Square



Széchenyi Thermal Baths



Visegrád Castle Games





Budapest



Buda Castle and Chain Bridge

When you arrive in Budapest, head to the centre and drink in the view of the city's two parts, divided by the Danube and linked by the bridges that cross it. Choose a look-out point – whether the terrace on Gellért Hill, the arcades of the Fishermen's Bastion, the Danube shore, the cupola of the Basilica or the girders of Margaret Bridge – and you'll see sights to remember forever.

A lot of water had flowed along the Danube before the year 1873, when the three separate cities of Buda, Óbuda and Pest were joined to form the metropolis of today.

Prehistoric man was probably less attracted by the panorama than by the river and the hills providing fish, game and shelter. The history of settlement on the site of present-day Budapest began during the Roman age. By AD106, Aquincum, the flourishing Roman camp and was the "capital" of the colony of Pannonia Inferior. ("Aq" is a Celtic stem word meaning "water"; it is possibly the earliest reference to the thermal springs near the Danube that later came to feed the city's spas.) The conquering Hungarian tribes also decided to stop here, seeing that the area had natural resources and strategic advantages, and probably because there were still surviving ruins from the



Roman period. From the 13th century onwards, the royal and civil settlement in this area had a growing importance, but Esztergom and Székesfehérvár still maintained their leading role. The “town of three” was formed that still represents the core of the city: Buda, situated on Castle Hill and surrounded by walls, and with the Royal Palace next to it; Pest, the commercial and handicrafts town on the plain area, also surrounded by walls; and Óbuda, the town of queens, with palaces and churches. Unfortunately, remains of this age can only be found in museums and in certain parts of the Castle District or in the Gothic sanctuary of the Downtown Parish Church.

In the 16th century, the Christian cross was replaced by a new symbol in Hungary – the crescent. Ottoman occupation lasted 140 years. The development of the cities slowed and took new directions. The affluent, Western-style settlements turned into noisy, bustling, Eastern-style cities. Very few new buildings were erected in this period, although many of the existing ones collapsed. The rare cultural heritage left from this time is again linked to the waters – in the form of Turkish characterful bathhouses like the Rudas, Rác, Király and Lukács.

Following the end of Turkish occupation in 1686, life began to flourish again. The golden days, however, didn’t come until the 19th century. The cityscape of Pest was formed by nature, more specifically by the water. The flooding of 1838 washed away the provincial, one-storey mud houses and cleared the space for the characteristic palaces and multi-level residential homes.

The partial political autonomy gained through the 1867 Compromise triggered rapid development and the birth of a new capital. Budapest at this point had 300,000 inhabitants; within 20 years this figure had doubled, and the avenues and ring boulevards had been built. The turn of the 19th and 20th century and the first third of the new century were characterised by an individual development of the national identity. It was reflected in the “Secessionist” style – a Hungarian form of Art Nouveau – that appeared in arts and architecture.

World War II caused just as much destruction as the 150 years of Turkish occupation. Though the reconstruction started soon afterwards, some of the wounds inflicted by the war can still be seen. Many of the ugly constructions dating from the socialist period can also be considered “wounds” on the city. Luckily, the city was able to conserve its friendly, human features and an atmosphere that reminds us of the “happy times



Pest-Buda statue



Király Bath



Vajdahunyad Castle



Andrassy Avenue



Parliament



Matthias Church

of peace". These features are appreciated by 1.7 million residents – and by millions of guests.

The capital of Hungary harbours many unique treasures. Its most important value, however, is its splendid location. The section **of the Danube** here, surrounded by Castle Hill in Buda and the old buildings of Pest, and with its atmospheric bridges, was the first Hungarian sight to be added to the **UNESCO World Heritage** list. This panorama can be enjoyed from many viewing points in the city. Budapest's most-elegant road – **Andrassy Avenue***** – is also a World Heritage Site. The Opera, the old Music Academy, the Academy of Fine Arts, Kodály körönd (ornamented with statues), and Heroes' Square (with its Millennium Monument) can all be found on Andrassy Avenue.

There are many ways to explore the city. You can go sightseeing by bus, boat or taxi. You could get a ride from a friend or take a long walk on foot. However, a tram is an especially good option in Budapest. The **Danube side panorama***** can be best appreciated from tram No 2. Let's board at the Jászai Mari Square terminal on the Pest side of Margaret Bridge (avoiding the morning or afternoon rush hours) and take a seat next to the window on the right-hand side. We will soon arrive at **Kossuth Square** with its statues, memorials and **Parliament*****, a huge palace in Neo-Gothic style. After leaving the square, we'll proceed to the Danube shore where we can admire the **panorama of Buda**, with the churches of **Víziváros (Water town)** and the **Castle District**, where the slim tower of Matthias Church reaches to the skies. On the journey between the historical **Chain Bridge***** and the modern **Elizabeth Bridge**, you'll see the impressive **Castle Palace** and **Gellért Hill's** steep wall of rock. The Saint Gellért Statue is perched on the side of the hill,



Wine festival in the Buda Castle





Castle Quarter

and above it sits the **Citadel**. At the southern foot of the hill, another amazing structure, the **Liberty Bridge**, connects the two shores. We'll alight from the tram and walk over to the **Hotel Gellért**. Here we can refresh ourselves with thermal water from the fountain beneath the cupola. On the opposite side of the river, we can see **Corvinus University's Faculty of Economy** and the **Central Market Hall***** with its colourful top.

Now let's take tram No 19 towards Batthyány Square. Try to find a seat on the right-hand side of the tram for the best views of the Pest panorama, with the Baroque towers of the **Downtown Parish Church*****, the hotels on the Danube shore, the "**Vigadó**" building and the boats docking at the riverside. We can see the **Hungarian Academy of Science** and the Secessionist-style **Gresham Palace**, which now functions as a luxury hotel. At the tram's terminus, we can study the **Parliament** building up close, its dome reflected in the water, and stroll around the square before taking the underground to Deák Square. From here, let's take continental Europe's oldest **underground train** line (which has been running since 1896) to Andrásy Avenue and **Heroes' Square*****. There are regular stops at which we can emerge to enjoy some of the sights along the road above.



Market Hall



Heroes' Square



Fisherman's Bastion





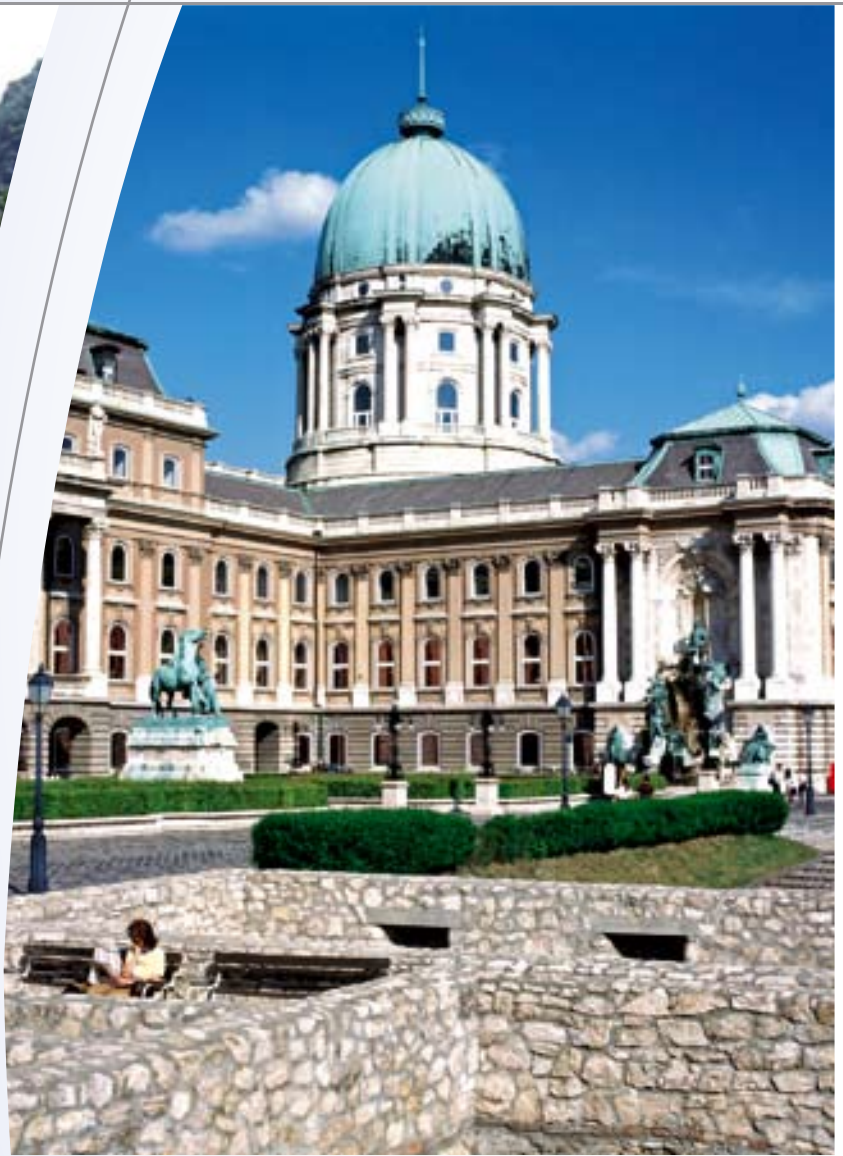
Tabán



Museum of Fine Arts



Children's railway



Buda Castle

Castle Hill*** deserves at least a full day. If you allow enough time, you can visit the most important sights like **Matthias Church*****, the **Fishermen's Bastion***** and the former **Royal Palace*****. However, we can also take a walk around the narrow streets with their Baroque houses that were originally built in medieval times. After stopping at the **Telephone Museum** and exploring the **Labyrinth**, we can have an ice cream or a cake at the traditional **Ruszwurm Café**.

To get a proper feel for the city's colour and energy, we should take tram Nos 4–6 and cross the 4km-long Great Boulevard (Nagykörút) from Margaret Bridge to Petőfi Bridge. If you prefer a less-conventional form of transport, try taking the **Funicular** up Castle Hill, or go into the Buda Hills via the **Cogwheel Railway**, the Chairlift or the **Children's Railway**. If you fancy travelling by water, we could take a boat trip to **Margaret Island*****, one of the biggest parks in the city.

There are many cultural attractions for us to enjoy. The **Museum of Fine Arts***** and the **Hungarian National Gallery***** have a range of top-notch exhibitions, and there are many annual events like the **Spring and Autumn festivals**, the **Island Festival** and the **Celebration of Crafts**. Listen to a performance at the **Opera House** or a concert at the **Palace of Arts**. Alongside the main venues, there are a number of small theatres, stages, clubs and underground pubs. **Liszt Ferenc Square** and **Ráday Street** are good places to start.

The city has some other rare and special features. It is, for example, the only metropolis in the world where you'll find 80 hot-water springs. The thermal water has been feeding spas here for almost 2,000 years. The **Rudas*****, **Király (Royal)** and **Császár (Imperial) spas** – with their splendid cupolas – are among the few surviving examples of Turkish architecture. The Neo-Baroque **Széchenyi Thermal Baths***** – located in **City Park (Városliget)***** – is the biggest spa complex in Europe; however, you also shouldn't miss the Secessionist-style **Gellért Baths*****. There are many options for those who prefer some active recreation. Armed with helmet and torch, you can visit some **dripstone and aragonite caves*****; alternatively, you might take a pleasant walk in the Buda Hills. There are several tourist trails and lovely parks like Margaret Island, City Park and Shipyard (Hajógyári) Island. These places can be reached on foot or along cycling routes. After you've strolled in the parks, you can go shopping on **Váci Street***** or at the **Westend City Center** shopping hall. Finish the day off with a coffee at a café terrace or a more substantial meal at one of the many enticing restaurants.



House of the Opera, interior



Elisabeth Lookout Tower



Margaret Island



The right-hand side of the Danube



Szentendre, Main Square

The landscape to the north of Budapest is shaped by the river and the hills. You can easily get out into the countryside along the winding main road that follows the former Roman Limes, or by taking one of several cycling routes that are being constructed. But the best way to appreciate the river and its sights is to board a boat travelling from Budapest through the Szentendre Danube branch as far as Visegrád.

Szentendre (C/5)***, a pearl of the Danube Bend, can easily be reached on the “HÉV” train from Budapest’s Batthyány Square. The green train carriages carry passengers between the capital and many smaller settlements beyond. Many people live in these towns and villages and commute to work in Budapest.

Szentendre is at the end station of the HÉV. Walk along its narrow, cobbled alleys and its winding steps. Serbs settled here after fleeing from the Turks, and they transformed a village into a town with a genuine Mediterranean atmosphere. They constructed a number of churches, and Szentendre has been the cultural and religious



Visegrád, panorama

centre for Hungary's Serb population since the 17th century. You can get a feel for their heritage at the **Serbian Orthodox Ecclesiastical Art Collection***** and the **Serbian Episcopal Belgrade Cathedral**. Examples of contemporary orthodox ecclesiastical art and life can be found in the Baroque-Rococo **Blagovesztenszka Church**, which has a golden altar screen, soft church music and the smell of incense. The view is beautiful from the hilltop near the **Roman Catholic Parish Church** – a vivid picture of red rooftops, white walls and yellow churches. For over a century, Szentendre has attracted writers, painters and sculptors. It has dozens of **museums** and art galleries displaying the works of well-known Hungarian artists, including **Jenő Barcsay**, **Margit Kovács*****, **János Kmetty** and **Károly Ferenczy**. On the outskirts of the town is the **Open-Air Museum*****, which covers 50 acres of territory and guides you through the heritage and traditions of those who lived in the Hungarian countryside. Here you can try your hand at traditional crafts like **pottery**, **baking** and **weaving**. These activities were part of the everyday life of rural families. If you are interested in other arts like music and acting, be sure to visit the town during the **"Szentendre Summer"** festival.

If you fancy exploring the hills, we can get off the HÉV at Pomáz and take the local "yellow" bus or travel on foot to the 700m-high peaks of the Pilis. We can take a short break at **Pomáz (B/5)**, and admire the cultural heritage of the town once inhabited by Serbs and later repopulated



Szentendre, street



Szentendre, Danube shore





Visegrád Castle Games



Szentendre, Open Air Museum, agricultural city of Felföld



Apátkút valley



Visegrád, Royal Palace

by Germans and Slovaks. However, Pomáz is also a great starting point for trips to typical villages of the Pilis like **Csobánka (B/5)** (with its hill chapel), **Pilisszentkereszt (B/5)** (with the ruins of a 12th-century Cistercian Abbey), and the legendary **Dobogókő (B/5)***** (where, according to the Dalai Lama, “the world’s heart beats”). Many trails begin or end at Dobogókő, and there is a museum dedicated to the traditions of hiking. The **Duna-Ipoly National Park** region is a haven for lovers of the great outdoors. Here rock climbers can take advantage of the **Oszoly Rock**, paragliders can launch themselves from a hill peak, and hikers and mountain bikers can follow marked paths running through **Dera Canyon**, **Vaskapu Strait** and **Holdvilág Dyke**. The daring can climb down steep rock walls to reach the Danube, while families can instead make their descent along gentle valleys (such as **Apátkúti Valley** and **Áprily Valley**).



North of Szentendre is the 31km-long and 3–4km-wide **Szentendre Island**, which is great for cycling. You can cross the river onto the island by ferry, or via the only bridge at **Tahitótfalu (C/4)**. Old willow trees line the island's shore, which was formed by the alluvia of the river. Feather grass blankets the inner sandy areas of the island in white at springtime; the bays and shoreline attract hundreds of teal throughout the year, as well as other species of bird from time to time. The island is a place of relaxation. You can step back in time at **Bodor Farm**, which is home to ancient breeds of farm animal. You can also play golf, go **horse riding** or **fishing**, and try various **watersports**. Be sure to stop at **Leányfalu (C/5)**, whose thermal spa is open to guests between May and October. The Csódi Hill stone mine is a geological curiosity at **Dunabogdány (B/4)**.

As the narrow river valley broadens once more, you'll arrive at one of the most picturesque Danube settlements – the former capital of Hungary, **Visegrád (B/4)*****. Here is the **royal palace*****, built in the 14th century by King Charles Robert (Róbert Károly) and reconstructed in Renaissance style in the 15th century by King Matthias. The palace remains in perfect condition, and is famous throughout Europe. **Fellegvár** (Upper Castle) was built in the 13th century on the hill above Visegrád. It played an important role in the city's history at times of peace and war alike. You can enjoy **the Danube Bend's most beautiful panorama***** from the terrace of the castle. The third part of the monument complex is **Solomon's Tower**, a residential fortification built in the 13th century; today it is a venue for exhibitions. Stay a little longer and pay a visit to the **Tourist Centre and Yurt Camp on Sibirik Hill**, shoot down the **summer and winter bob-sleigh track**, have a go at **mini golf** and join one of the countless marked **tourist paths**. When there's winter snow, grab your skis and try the **ski lift** at the nearby Nagyvillám. The neighbouring Park Forest of Pilis is an important **hunting range**, as well as being popular with hikers.



Visegrád, Solomon's Tower



Szentendre, Open Air Museum, room interior



Dobogókő



Visegrád, bob-sleigh track





Esztergom and its surroundings



Esztergom, Basilica

The stretch of the Danube Bend between Esztergom and Visegrád is one of the prettiest in the country. It took thousands of years for the river to forge its way through the volcanic hills, today known as Visegrád Hill and Börzsöny Mountain, forming an S-shaped valley as it did so. The area had already attracted prehistoric man, probably less for its panorama than for its fertile ground. It is no coincidence that the conquering Hungarian tribes also chose this site for their first royal capital. **Esztergom (A/4)***** is the “Cradle of Hungary”, its oldest city and its capital for 250 years.

From a distance, the huge cupola of the Basilica guides your way to the centre. Saint Stephen, founder of the state, was born and crowned here. Esztergom’s archbishop is the head of the Hungarian Roman Catholic Church.

Let’s start our visit on **Castle Hill (Várhegy)**. The biggest church in Hungary, the Classicist-style **Basilica***** – with its stunning Renaissance **Bakócz Chapel** of 1511 – can be found on the hill. There are historic graves in its crypt from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance period, while the martyred **Cardinal József Mindszenty**





Mária-Valéria Bridge

(1892–1975) was also buried here. There is an ecclesiastical collection of immense value in its **treasury*****. The reconstructed **medieval royal palace** is situated between the 14th-century walls, complete with some original details and a stimulating history exhibition inside. From the walls of Castle Hill and Miklós Melocco's **Saint Stephen Statue** there are splendid **views** of the Danube valley, of the neighbouring Párkány (Sturovo, Slovakia) and the reconstructed **Mária Valéria Bridge** over the river. At the foot of the hill, you'll find the **Christian Museum***** in the Eclectic building of the archbishop's palace. Inside are medieval Hungarian altar screens, statues and a unique collection of figurative art. Do not hurry; take time to look around the city's **main square**, which is famous for its historical atmosphere. Also pay a visit the **Bálint Balassi Museum** or the special **Danube Museum**. We could even climb up the hill to try a wine cellar or to visit the **Babits Memorial House**. Prímás Island is the centre of local water life and an important **port** for yachts navigating on the river or making the **International Danube Trip**. At the **Aqua Island Baths**, everyone can take to the water.

There are two ways of reaching Esztergom from Budapest. Most people choose the main road that winds alongside the **Danube Bend**, but others arrive on cruise ships or speedy hydrofoils. Visitors coming by car can rest at **Dömös (B/4)**, where the ships also dock. You can take a walk to the reconstructed walls of the 12th-century provosts' residence and crypt. Energetic visitors can follow tourist paths that start here and lead to exciting sights on the hill like **Rám-szakadék*****, **Lukács-árok**, **Dobogókő**, the **Vadálló stones**, and **Prédikálószték** (639m). You can also enjoy a spectacular view over the whole Danube Bend; note, though, that the walks up are fairly strenuous.

The second-fastest main road to Esztergom goes around **Dorog (A/4–5)**. The rocky sides of the **Pilis** above **Kesztölc (B/5)** and the **Nagy-Gete Peak** of Gerecse Hill make the journey even more beautiful. There is also an attractive world underneath the surface: visit the **Legény** and **Leány caves**, or the **Strázsa Hill Cave**. A third alternative is to travel from Budapest to Esztergom aboard the scheduled classic steam train, which offers a wonderfully nostalgic experience.



Dömös, provostry



Bakócz Chapel



Palace



The left-hand side of Danube



Vác, Main Square

Those living on the right-hand side of the Danube often say that the best thing about the left-hand side is the view across to the other side of the river. It is true that there are no sights to compete with Visegrád or Esztergom on the left side. However, it has worthy sights of a different sort – the **Gödöllő Hills**, **Lower Cserhát** and **Galga Valley**, former volcanoes (South Börzsöny, Csóvár), a limestone mine at **Naszály**, the **Somlyó Hill** of **Fót** (famous for its grapes), Danube oxbows with wonderful fauna and even a slice of the **Great Plain**.

Although you can take the quick main road by car on this side of the Danube Bend, it's far more pleasant to travel aboard a **ferry** or a train – the latter along the country's **oldest piece of railway track**, opened in 1846 between Budapest and Vác.



Vác (C/4)*** is the left side's answer to Esztergom. It may be slightly younger, and be an episcopate rather than a primacy, but it was nevertheless still founded by Hungary's first king, Saint Stephen. It is one of the country's most beautiful Baroque/Classicist cities. The downtown has historic importance. It was built by Bishop Kristóf Migazzi between 1760 and 1785, and it was during this period that the new **cathedral, bishop's palace** and other splendid buildings were unveiled. The fresco of the cupola of the late-Baroque/early-Classicist cathedral was prepared by one of the greatest Central European Baroque painters, **F A Maulbertsch**. You should also take a look inside the city's other churches, where you'll find valuable pieces of art from the 18–19th centuries. The treasures of the episcopate can be seen in the **Ecclesiastical Art Museum** in the provost's palace. The "**Memento Mori**"*** is a unique exhibition, even by European standards; inside are burial relics from the crypt of the Dominican church that date back 200–300 years. The most peculiar secular monument is the Classicist, late-Baroque **Victory Arch**, which was built specially to honour the visit of Maria Theresa. Nature lovers should visit the **flood plains** near Vác, where you can find waterbirds like the grey heron and the cormorant. Conclude your sightseeing tour with a **walk** along the Danube bank, a swim in the superb local **swimming pool**, and an authentic **fish soup** in a local restaurant (such as the Pokol Csárda on Szentendre Island).

Following the Danube north from Vác, we next arrive at **Verőce (B/4)**. During the early 20th century, the town was a refuge for poets, writers and musicians, and the villas facing the river were built at this time. At Kismaros, a settlement adjacent to Verőce, we can take a trip on the **Forest Train*****. This takes us to the valley of Morgó Creek, and after crossing Szokolya and Kóspallag, we reach one of the most beautiful tourist centres in the Börzsöny – **Királyrét**. Ferenc Rákóczi II and **Ádám Mányoki**, the official painter of Augustus II "the Strong", Elector of Saxony, were both born in **Szokolya (B/4)**. Mányoki's life and works are presented in the local museum, together with those of another great painter from Szokolya, **János Visky**.

If you are more interested in romantic village life and traditional handicrafts – for example the making of goat's cheese – you should visit the Kaczár farm.

Nagymaros (B/4) is best known for its Gothic, octagonal **church tower**. From the 15th century, the settlement's hills were covered with chestnut trees and grapevines. Unfortunately, the region was



Vác Cathedral



Vác, Victory Arch





Kismaros, narrow gauge railway



Fóti Cathedral

struck by a vine pest at the end of the 19th century which destroyed the grapes; nevertheless, some of the **old cellars** can still be found here. Szív Street – running above the cellars – is famous for offering the very best **panoramic view of Visegrád*****, something that inspired several of the country's artists.

Vác is a good launchpad for trips by train away from the Danube. The first place to visit is the **Botanic Garden of Vácraótó (C/5)*****; here you'll find one of the best Hungarian plant collections in the garden of the former Vigyázó Castle. **Órbottyán (C/5)** is not far away, where (upon registration) you can see the only **bell-foundry** workshop in the country. The village of **Penc (C/5)** in the Cserhát Hills has a charming **Village Museum**, and some picturesque **castle ruins** next to **Csóvár (D/4)**.

Fót (C/5) can be reached from Budapest. Its romantic **Catholic church***** was built by Miklós Ybl, a famous architect of the 19th century. The church – which often hosts prestigious concerts – can be visited with a guide. The crypt of the Károlyi family is also in the church.

If you fancy doing something active, head for the **watersport centres** on the Danube shore. Szódliget and Göd (C/5) have **yacht ports**, and the latter also has an 18-hole **golf course*****. The neighbouring hills have **tourist trails** and **shelters** for hikers. Those who prefer extreme sports can go to Dunakeszi or Szokolya for **air sports** and **lawn skiing**. **Anglers** can try their luck along the Danube river bank.



Vácraótó Arboretum



Along the Ipoly



Nagybörzsöny, Saint Stephen's Church

The **Ipoly** (Ipel) – a river running along the border with Slovakia – is a feeder for the **Danube**. It embraces **Börzsöny**, the mountain that – together with Visegrád – characterises the Danube Bend. The volcanic, 900m-high mountain is covered with typical Hungarian woodland: oak, beech and hornbeam. The **Danube-Ipoly National Park** contains a diverse range of flora and fauna, including 70 protected plant species and more than a hundred protected types of bird. Snow settles for a long time on the former volcanic cone and the valleys, and the region is popular with lovers of **winter sports**. From spring to autumn, **hikers** and **hunters** come here, the latter for the stocks of deer and wild boar.

Zebegény (B/4) is one of the nicest settlements along the Danube, and is known as the gateway to the Danube Bend. It has a Hungarian Secessionist-style **parish church***** designed by the leading architects of the age, **Károly Kós** and **Béla Jánszky**, in 1908. A road leads to **Kálvária Hill through Sziklaszentély (Rock Sanctuary)**,





Kemence, narrow gauge railway



Márianosztra, baroque church



Nagybörzsöny, water mill

where you'll find a heroes' monument (the Trianon Memorial). There are splendid **panoramic views***** of the Danube valley from a lookout tower. The famous Post-Impressionist artist **István Szőnyi** regularly depicted the Zebegény landscape in his paintings, and his former house now contains a **museum** dedicated to his life and art. The **Collection on Nautical History** offers a unique experience; it was gathered together by Vince Farkas, a retired ship captain. There are many marked paths leading to other peaks of the Börzsöny from Zebegény.

Szob (B/4), the railway crossing point into Slovakia, is situated where the Danube and Ipoly rivers meet. The **Börzsöny Museum** contains an exhibition devoted to the nature of the mountain and the history of Szob and the surrounding villages. A track from Szob leads us to a 14th-century Pauline monastery. The settlement of **Márianosztra (B/4)** grew up around the monastery, and is today well known for its **village fairs*****. The monumental Baroque church, which was built on medieval foundations, has a Gothic sanctuary containing an 18th-century copy of the **sacred Czestochowa painting**.

North of Szob lies **Nagybörzsöny (B/3)**, famous for its gold and ore mines, and one of the oldest settlements in the Ipoly valley. The local **Saint Stephen's Church***** is a superb example of an Árpád Age monument surviving from the 13th century. There used to be many **water mills** in the area, but today only one still functions – as a **museum**. The Gothic-style **Miner's Church**, which dates from the 15th century, is also an important sight. The **Nagybörzsöny Forest train***** has resumed operation after a long time out of service; at present it travels only to Nagyirtáspuszta, but it is hoped that in the future it will reach Márianosztra and even Szob.

The surrounding settlements (**Ipolytölgyes, Vámosmikola [A/3], Bernecebaráti and Perőcsény [B/3]**) harbour charming little churches and village gates. The local "Palóc" people are always ready to show their hospitality. The area's hub is **Kemence (B/3)**, which contains a **regional museum** showcasing the lives and traditions of the "Palóc" people. In summer, you can go **horse riding**, travel on the **Kemence Forest Museum Train**, sunbathe on the beach, go **angling** in the Ipoly or pick **mushrooms** in the nearby forests. In winter, ski lifts carry you up the snowy slopes, while the settlement is also a starting point for **hunting** and **hiking** in the Börzsöny.

The Nógrád region



Drégelypalánk

As we leave the **Ipoly valley**, we can see the eastern peaks of Börzsöny Mountain and the **Nógrád Basin**. The mountains are gentler here than on the Danube side, and this is the easiest point at which to reach the highest peak (**Csóványos 939 m^{***}**) along a marked tourist trail. The woods are populated with beech, oak and hornbeam trees, and we can also take walks among the alders of Drégelypalánk or the larches of Diósjenő. The area is rich in game, and there are more than a hundred protected bird species living here.

Because of its location and infrastructure, **Rétság (C/3)** makes an ideal starting point for visits to the surrounding area. East of here, at the foot of the Börzsöny, are the ruins of the partly reconstructed **Nógrád Castle (B/3–4)^{***}** after which the entire county was named. The fortress was built in the 11–12th centuries; it is one of the oldest stone castles in Hungary. The Turks took over the castle in the 16–17th centuries but it was finally destroyed in 1685 – ironically by lightning.





Nógrád Castle



Bánk Lake



Slovak House, Bánk



Díósjenő Lake

The nearby **Díósjenő (B/3)** is not only among the most important sights of the Eastern Börzsöny, but also a popular centre for watersports and angling with its 27-acre **Jenői Lake*****.

Going north over the volcanic cone near **Drégelypalánk (C/3)**, we find **Drégely Castle**, built in the 13th century. There used to be a couple of dozen castles in the area; Nógrád Castle was the largest, but Drégely Castle had the most significant role in Hungarian history. The latter has become a European symbol of self-sacrificing heroism during fighting against the Turks. In 1552, 12,000 Ottoman soldiers besieged the castle, but the 146 defenders led by **György Szondi** held the fortress for six days. They defended their fort to the last man, and only after they had all died did it fall to the Turks. The **stone sarcophagus** in the village is another reminder of this historic event.

A two-hour walk from **Hont (B/3)**, next to Drélypalánk, brings you to **Hont Edge*****. This valley is rich in animal fossils from the Pleistocene Age. It is thought that Ipoly's original watercourse used to be here.

Bánk (C/3) lies to the east of Rétság. In the local **Slovak House**, you can learn about the traditional clothing and tools of the Slovaks living in the area. The main attraction is the seven-acre lake with hundreds of resort houses dotted around its shore. Not only can you **boat and bathe** on the lake, but during "**Bánk Summer**" there are folk concerts, dance shows and other cultural events.



Gödöllő and surroundings



Gödöllő Royal Palace

Leaving the mountains, we can see an area of plains and smaller hills (250–350m) between Fót and Mogyoród, and the **Gödöllő Hills** covered with loess on sand. These hills form a Nature Preservation Area. The **hunting** here is also legendary, and used to be a favourite of kings, governors and party presidents. Today, carefully chosen tourist paths guide “ordinary people” across the region. The area can be reached by car via the M3 highway or on slower byways; alternatively you can take the Gödöllő HÉV or other trains that leave from Budapest Eastern Railway Station.

Gödöllő (D/5)*** – or, more precisely, the **Gödöllő Royal Palace***** – is a tourist “must-see”. The palace is one of the greatest achievements of Hungarian Baroque architecture. The stunning building served as the summer residence for Franz Joseph I and Queen Elizabeth (Sissi) between 1867 and 1916. The 26 halls that once made





Pécel, Ráday Castle



Máriabesnyő Pilgrimage Church, crypt



Mogyoród, Aquarena

up the suites of the royal couple have been faithfully reconstructed, and there is a **Queen Elizabeth exhibition** and another presenting the history of the Grassalkovich family that commissioned the palace's construction. A performance in the perfectly renovated **Baroque theatre** offers a unique experience. The castle is not merely a museum – it is also a venue for elegant receptions, historical fashion shows and other events. Visitors may enjoy the café, visit the souvenir shop and visit the ornamental plant garden in the former palm house. Don't miss the 28-acre **palace park** either. The oldest building in the town hosts the **City Museum of Gödöllő**. Its permanent exhibition displays the workshop of the **Gödöllő Artist Colony**, where some of the leading works of Hungarian Secessionism were produced. The town also holds museums devoted to **agricultural tools and machines** and **bee-keepers**. It's also worth mentioning that most localities in the region have a village museum or "regional house" where you can gain insight into the everyday life, history and art of the local people.

Gödöllő has an extremely important pilgrimage site. The **Máriabesnyő Pilgrimage Church***** sees tens of thousands of visitors arrive each year to see the ivory statue of Mary and Jesus that dates back to the 12th century. The adjacent cemetery has also become a place of "pilgrimage" because it holds the grave of **Count Pál Teleki**.

Szárítópuszta, next to Gödöllő, hosts equestrian parades that replicate the fighting skills of the original Hungarian conquering tribes. At the nearby **Domonyvölgy (D/5)*****, you can see the World Champion carriage-driving Lázár brothers who demonstrate the extent to which Hungary is an "equestrian nation".

If you prefer four wheels to four hooves, pay a visit to Mogyoród – especially in August. Here you'll find the **Hungaroring (C/5)**, the only Formula-1 circuit in Central Europe. Though the circuit is for the professionals, the 2,100-square-metre **Hungarokart Centre** is open to anyone who wishes to test his go-kart driving abilities. You don't have to drive in **Aquaréna***** – just relax, have fun, jump, roll, slide, fall, and then come back to the water surface.

Gödöllő is also an ideal centre for tours – there are many attractions to discover around it. Margita Hill (344m) stands to the northwest. We can take a short break at **Szada (C–D/5)** to visit the museum

of **Bertalan Székely**, an extraordinary figure in the history of 19th-century historical painting. The neighbouring **Veresegyháza (C/5)** has a beautiful lake where bathing and fishing are possible in summer. The adjacent **thermal bath** is open all year long. One of the town's special attractions is the unique **Bear asylum***** – a 3.5-acre territory protected with fences that provides shelter for dozens of bears and wolves.

At the foot of the Gödöllő Hills is a small, traditional village called **Isaszeg (D/6)**. The local **Catholic church** evokes the atmosphere of the 15th century, while the **Village Museum** introduces us to more recent events in the area's history. Isaszeg is a household name in Hungary because this was the site of the most glorious battle of the 1848–49 Hungarian Revolution. The **soldier statue memorial** and the **Peace and Freedom Memorial Church** recall the battle of 6 April 1849, as do the the hussar parade and battle games during the Isaszeg History Days. If we continue on our way, we arrive at **Pécel (D/6)**, a village next to the capital. **Ráday Castle** has also been rediscovered and reconstruction works are ongoing.

Crossing the hills in an easterly direction, we reach the plains of the **Galga River valley**. **Aszód (D/5)** is the most populated settlement in the area. Visitors can pay tribute to one of Hungary's greatest poets at the **Petőfi Museum**, close to the **Lutheran church*****. We can admire pictures by **Juli Vankóné Dudás** at **Galgamácsa (D/5)** that depict typical local folk costumes and customs. The traditional **Zsámbok Feasts (E/6)** are still organised, although today only for the pleasure of tourists. Despite that, the event hasn't changed much: it includes everything you could want for a real feast, including a best man, an eloping bride, traditional soup and a cake... **Tura (E/5)** is famous for the remarkably beautiful **Schossberger Castle**; designed by Ybl, it is awaiting restoration work to bring it to life once more.

Going southwest towards Budapest, we come across **Kerepes, Kistarcsa, Nagytarcsa** and **Csömör (C/6)**. These settlements conserve their distinct cultures and values. You can visit the **Village Museum** (Nagytarcsa), and take part in local celebrations such as the **Kistarcsa Days** or the famous **Lord's Day Procession at Csömör*****, when the streets around the church are covered with a carpet of flowers. Also consider the traditional **Pentecostal Festival** and the **Feast Meeting**.



Veresegyház, bear asylum



Csömör, Lord's Day Procession



Aszód, Petőfi Museum





The Monor region



Gyömrő, Teleki Castle

We reach a smooth, flat region – the **Pest Plain** – where even the smallest hills are known as “mountains” by the locals. The area holds many forests typical of the Great Plain which are usually now protected areas. Road No 4 connects this place to Budapest and the country (a railway also runs parallel with it), but you can also get here via the M5 motorway. Cyclists enjoy taking tours here; there are some excellent bike routes, and the byways see only light traffic.

Where Budapest ends, **Vecsés (C/6)** begins. The name of the village is associated with **sour cabbage*****. The settlement was de-populated during the period of the Turkish occupation, but Germans repopulated it in the second half of the 18th century. They rebuilt it and started vegetable farming – more specifically, cabbage growing. The method for making the cabbage sour is passed on from generation to generation, and forms a staple of Hungarian cuisine. At the nearby **Üllő-Dóramajor (D/6–7)** you can see all the typical **Hungarian domestic animals** – they have a kindergarden for animals! – and you can also go **horse riding**. In the Reformed church at **Gyömrő (D/6)**, there is a Carrara marble **relief***** carved by one of the greatest European Classicist sculptors, **Antonio Canova**. Teleki Castle, a masterpiece of Hungarian Classicist architecture by József Hild, is also an exciting sight. The nearby **Péteri** is a perfect place for **fishing**, with its 6.5 acres of moorland lake water.

The centre of the region – in geographic and administrative terms – is **Monor (D/7)**, where **grape growing** and **wine making** have been a way of life for centuries. On Strázsa Hill (strázsa means sentinel, as the locals posted guards on the hill to observe the Turkish troops) there is a **cellar village***** with over 900 buildings. It is of immense value not only to the town but to the region as a whole. The hill plays an important role in the annual Orbán Day Celebrations.

West of main road No 4, next to **Csévharaszt (D/7)**, is Lily Oak Forest (a protected area since 1939) and **Ancient Juniper***** park (protected since 1940). The latter is very important for its aspen stock. Both areas can be visited without restriction along the marked tourist paths. The park at the 15th-century church ruins is a pleasant place to visit for locals and tourists alike.

Pilis (D/7) – not to be confused with the hill of the same name – once lent its name to the entire county. The “plain” Pilis is where one of the rare Great Plain springs originates – **Gerje Creek**. The spring flows into the River Tisza; at its source there is a vast nine-acre park with three lakes and a lovely promenade. Artificial islands sit at the centres of the lakes, and are home to ducks, wild geese and storks. This is the site of the **Mille-centenary Park**, containing one of the country’s largest wooden crosses at 8.5m tall. You should also visit the 18th-century **Evangelical church**, with its unique pulpit altar.



Monor, evangelical church



Monor, Strázsa Hill



Péteri, fishing lake



Gyömrő, lake bath





Tápió Side



Tápiószéle, Blaskovich Museum

At the point at which the Great Plains and the Gödöllő Hills meet to the east of Budapest, there is an area still unknown to tourists. The landscape is dominated by hills fashioned by the Ancient Danube which flowed in a northwest–southeast direction. The hillsides contain valleys and plains typical of the Great Plain area. The upper and lower branches of Tápió Creek join together at Tápiószentmárton and flow into Zagyva.

The **Tápió Side** is a paradise for hikers and tourists. There are **70 protected plant species** and nearly **180 species of protected animal** in the area. It is also rich in birdlife; two-thirds of the protected animals are birds. The fertile valley and the hillsides belonging to the Gödöllő Hills hide many settlements that can easily be reached by road (primarily on main road No 31 running towards Jászberény), but the Budapest–Nagykáta–Szolnok railway also crosses the region.

If you want to cycle around the region, alight from the train at Süllysáp or Nagykáta. If you'd rather take an excursion by car, it is best to arrive from the direction of Monor and take the winding roads to the hills surrounding the Tápió Valley from the west. At springtime the acacia is in blossom, while during the summer the flowers of the poppy fields cover the region. The area between **Pánd, Káva (E/7)** and **Bénye** is rich in smaller game – **hunters** worship Goddess Diana here. The **Lake of Gomba** and **Farkasd (D/7)** are ideal places for the “sons of Saint Peter” (the **anglers**) to try their luck. After a good dinner, you can also try the wine from the **grape gardens of Bénye and Gomba** – an official wine region of Hungary.



Starting from **Nagykáta (E/6)**, before taking the road to Bicske, it's also worth walking around the town to see the **Keglevich Chapel**, the **Patrona Hungariae** statue and the memorials of the 1848–49 Revolution. The memorial dedicated to the victorious battle and the reconstructed **bridge***** – which had a decisive role in the fights of 4 April 1849 – are situated a couple of kilometres from **Tápióbicske (E/7)**. The locals commemorate the fights for freedom with a special tradition that dates back to 1882: on 4 April each year they re-create the “bridge battle” in original costume. Each child taking part in the performance used to get a roll as a reward, but today “patriot’s cakes” are given out instead. At the bridge of the Lower Tápió we can turn towards **Tápióság**. Here stands the “**Riedesel Cross**”, which is prominent in Hungarian literature. We can continue on to **Tápiószecső (E/6)**, a stronghold of Hungarian **carriage driving**; you can have a go at carriage driving or horse riding yourself. The main sights in the region are the noble mansions, but the nearby **Tóalmás (E/6)** has a real palace as well. It used to belong to the Andrassy family, and its 54 acres of **protected park***** were designed by the chief gardener to Palatine József. (The park can only be visited with permission.) The local **thermal beach** offers refreshment in summert. We can stay a bit longer in Tápióbicske and make our way from the Baroque Catholic church in the direction of the cemetery to see one of the most beautiful domestic birds, the **Bee-eater**. The next stop is only 5km away: **Tápiószentmárton (E/7)**. The village has become increasingly popular for its **Attila Hill**. Don't forget to visit the **Kincsem equestrian park***** and the **Kincsem Museum**. There are good hotels and restaurants, and superb opportunities for lovers of equestrian sports. The hills give way to plains, and the roads are ideal for **horse riding**. Those who fancy seeing a spot of nature should also head for the **Göbolyjárás Wetland** next to Farnos Road and the **Szik study path** at Farnos.

There are seven settlements whose names derive from that of the creek. The best known of them is **Tápiószele (F/7)**. Its **Blaskovich Museum***** recalls the atmosphere of 19th-century noble mansions. The house of the noble Blaskovich family was built in the early 19th century, and its beautifully furnished rooms contain collections of weaponry, trophies, paintings, jewellery and pipes. In one of the rooms, we can also see the **relics of Kincsem*****, the **wonderful horse** from the stud of the Blaskovich family. Kincsem won all of its 54 races during a four-year career.

On leaving the **Ethnography House**, we can proceed along the **Fehér gólya (white stork) study path**, and then take a comfortable dirt road. Our goal is **Tápiógyörgye (F/7)**, where we find the Györgye residence with its **protected park***** (you need to ask for a permission to enter). The old teachers' house is the home of the **Village Museum**. Unsurprisingly, there's yet another thermal bath where we can enjoy some rest and recuperation.



Tápiószentmárton, Kincsem equestrian park



Nagykáta, Freedom fight memorial



Tápiógyörgye, protected park of the Györgye residence



South Pest County



Cegléd, Classicist reformed church

In the southeastern angle of the Central Danube Region (about 100 kilometres from the capital), the traveller will find a typical Great Plain area with rich flora and fauna. The meadows and pastures, hills and valleys, are the backdrop to a rural world that is becoming increasingly rare on the Great Plains. You can learn more about the history, life and culture of the characteristic agricultural towns of the region. Furthermore, this portion of the country is readily accessed, served as it is by main roads and railways.

Cegléd (E/8), with its 40,000 inhabitants, remains the “**city of Lajos Kossuth**” despite the trappings of our modern age. Since he made his famous recruiting speech on 24 September 1848, everything in the city is dedicated to the “Governor”. This is where one of the country’s most beautiful **Kossuth statues** was erected (by János Horvay) – indeed, it was the model for the Kossuth statue in New York. In addition to the valuable archaeological, historical and ethnographical exhibits, the **Kossuth Museum***** displays the most complete collection of Kossuth arte-



Cegléd, Kossuth Museum

facts in existence. The **Kossuth Balcony** – moved from Bratislava to Cegléd – is on show in the garden of the Reformed church. Needless to say, in this town the Kossuth name is everywhere – there is a Kossuth Square, a Kossuth Street and a Kossuth School. The **Classicist reformed church*****, built to the plans of József Hild between 1835 and 1870, has a 60m-high cupola that makes it the tallest reformed church in Central Europe. The **Sports Museum** and the **Drum Museum** also guarantee special experiences; the latter also plays a prominent role during the International Drum and Percussion Gala. The town's newest attractions are the **Thermal Bath and Leisure Centre** (with its ten pools, and **leisure, medical and wellness** programmes) and the **Aqua Centrum***** (whose old buildings are like a medieval castle and where visitors can go time travelling through 17 slides).

If Cegléd “belongs to” Lajos Kossuth, then **Nagykőrös (E/8–9)** “belongs to” **János Arany**. A **bust** of the poet stands near his former home in the garden of the church. The Secessionist-style secondary school was named after him, as was the museum. Inside are various exhibitions devoted to literature, ethnography and history. The **School History Museum** re-creates the atmosphere and “smell” of the 19th- and 20th-century schools. The gigantic **reformed church**, which can hold 2,500 worshippers, was originally built in the 15th century. It has exceptional acoustics and a wonderful organ that is played during concerts. The former importance of the agricultural town is reflected in the 150–200-year-old **noble mansions** that are evident during a short walk.

Following in the footsteps of Arany and recalling his poems, we arrive at **Kőröstetétlen (F/8)**; it was from here, according to tradition, that



Cegléd, thermal bath



Nagykőrös, János Arany Museum



Abony, city gate





Jászkarajenő, Church of Our Lady



Csemő, the flowery village



Cegléd, Drum Museum

Prince Árpád started out on his conquests. On the hill made famous by the poem we can see the **Millennium Memorial**, built in 1896 to commemorate the historic event.

“**Hey, in Nagyabony...**” there are only two towers to be seen, according to the piece (János Háry) by Zoltán Kodály. It is still true that there are only two towers in **Abony (F/8)**, but there are plenty of other things to see. One of them is the **Saint Stephen Church**, furnished in a Classicist style. The Baroque **reformed church**, the Classicist **synagogue** and **Vigyázó Castle** and several 19th-century mansions are also exciting sights. A granary built in about 1750 hosts the **Lajos Abonyi Museum**, which covers the lives of the local people and the tools they used for farming. The **Wildlife and Leisure Park** presents the autochthonous animals of the country and offers **horse riding**. Outside the town, you can also go **fishing** and **hunting**, while the campsite next to the **thermal beach** allows you to spend more time in the area. As well as the towns, it is well worth taking a look at the smaller settlements as well.

In the **Village House of Albertirsa (E/7)** you can learn about the Slovak population that arrived in the 18th century, as well as acquainting yourself with the works of the most famous local personality, the botanist **Sámuel Tessedik** (1742–1820). The thermal water of the local **bath** is medicinal as well as refreshing.

Csemő (E/8) won the title for being the “most floral town in Hungary” in 1998, and came third in Europe as a whole. Flowers were important to the town before and they remain so today.

Ceglédbercel (E/7) has a **Village Museum** and some good fishing at the settlement border. The town is situated in the Kunság **wine region**, and its equestrian centre and horse-jumping events also attract visitors. Lovers of horse sports will also enjoy a warm welcome at Jászkarajenő (F/8) and Kocsér (F/9).



Equestrian Days in Jászkarajenő

The “centre” and its surroundings



Ócsa Reformed Church

The Danube-Tisza Interfluvium and the areas near the capital were shaped by the Ancient Danube River. The present-day surface of the region resembles the Great Plains, and was formed by alluvium and pebble reefs covered with loess and sand that formed along the edges of the Danube's winding watercourses. The watercourses left moorlands – called “**turjános**” – near Alsónémedi and Ócsa, and these are valuable environmental protection areas. The region can be reached by rail and main roads (including the M5 motorway from the direction of Budapest), but it is also an ideal excursion for bikers.

The most important tourist attraction of the region is the **Ócsa Nature Preservation Area** with its unique natural architectural features. The **reformed church (C/7)***** of Ócsa is one of the leading Romanesque monuments in the country. Built in the early 13th century, it has two towers on its façade, three ships and a sanctuary decorated with frescos. Wonderful concerts are hosted inside the ancient walls during the **Ócsa Culture Days**. The Old Hill holds around a hundred specially designed cellars covered with thatched roofs. Don't miss the village's reformed cemetery, which contains 500 **carved graveyard markers**. The greatest treasure of the local landscape is its





Ócsa, Open Air Museum



Ócsa Nature Preservation Area



Pusztavacs, geographical centre of the country



Dabas, Móricz Halász mansion

moorland. Rare plant and animal species live here in abundance – as do mosquitoes! If you wish to know more about the beauties of this area, your first stop should be the guesthouse of the Natural Reserve Area beside the reformed church. The guesthouse and the 100–150-year-old farmhouses help to paint a picture of the everyday life and celebrations of the local residents. The guesthouse even runs courses in certain popular crafts like **matting and basketwork**. You can also learn a lot about the life and behaviour of the region’s birds at the **bird watch** and in the new **bird observation tower**.

The nearby **Alsónémedi (C/7)** is a popular destination for naturalists too, with its marshes and **rare plants**. **Bugyi (C/7)** is situated on the northern edge of Kiskunság. There are a number of **stone-mine lakes** for the enthusiastic **angler**, while hunters may shoot small game.

The biggest settlement in the area is situated south from Ócsa, next to main road No 5. **Dabas (C/8)** is the “city of mansions”. At the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, many **manor houses and mansions** were built here. Most of them – for example the Jenő Halász and Móricz Halász mansions – are characterised by the columnar porch and the columnar hall with a pediment. The father of **Lajos Kossuth** lived in one of the 200-year-old up until his death. The **moorland of Dabas** is reminiscent of the moors of the Great Plains. There are lots of rare plants on the moorlands, marshes and wet meadows – Fly- and Spider Orchids, Military Orchid, Siberian Iris and Common Gladiolus – but the endangered meadow viper also hides among these flowers. While there are many special orchids in the area, it is the **Woodcock orchid***** that features in the city’s crest. You’ll need permission to visit the highly protected area. Dabas is a perfect place for excursions as well. You can travel in a southerly direction to **Örkény (D/8)**, where you can see the **Village Museum** and learn about the historical, archaeological and ethnographical findings in the area. From here, we can direct our way to the **geographical centre of the country*****. **Pusztavacs (D/8)** is within an hour’s travel of Budapest; standing in a clearing surrounded by acacia and birch trees, there is an 11m-tall octagonal pyramid structure that marks the famous spot – northern latitude 47°11’, eastern longitude 19°30’. If we go eastwards from Dabas, we may come across some “living” ethnography at the German-nationality events held in **Újhartyán (D/7)**, at the concerts of the Borvirág ensemble in **Kakucs(D/7)**, at the grape-harvest festivals in **Inárcs (D/7)**, or at the Maria Day Festivals. **Fishing, hunting and horse riding** are possible in many of these settlements.

By the Danube at Ráckeve



Ráckeve, Savoyai Castle

In the past, the landscape here was shaped by the Danube – and the river continues to shape it today. But it doesn't only determine the panorama; it also affects the everyday lives and celebrations of the local inhabitants. When the people in this area refer to the Danube, they mean this 50km-long tract regulated by sluice gates to the north and south. These are the **Soroksár or Ráckeve Danube branches**, with Csepel Island on its western (right-hand) shore and Kiskunság on its eastern (left-hand) shore. In addition to the ferries, these days bridges also connect the island with the "main land" – the bridges in Budapest, the bridges of the M0 motorway, and those of Taksony and Ráckeve. The island's settlements can be easily reached from Budapest on the HÉV train that travels as far





Ráckeve



Dömsöd, Danube shore



Ráckeve, Church of the Blessed Virgin

as Ráckeve, while the settlements on the shore are served by the HÉV, the railway and public roads. The waters are rich in fish and the reeds harbour rare waterfowl; the branches of the river are also thick with water plants. The area is ideal for bikers. You can take pretty and safe cycling tours along the island's dikes and bike paths. Because of the sluices, the Ráckeve-Danube is practically a still water and as such it is much loved by **anglers** and **paddlers**, as well as tens of thousands of **bathers** drawn to its warm water during the summer. Csepel Island is 247 square kilometres – in the Middle Ages it was called “Magna Insula” (Big Island) – and has always played an important role in Hungarian history. In the period of the conquests, it became the main base for the princes. The island was named after Csepel bailiff, equerry of Prince Árpád, who is believed to have settled here. In later centuries it was a queenly estate. The most interesting settlement in the area is **Ráckeve (B/8)*****. It was founded in the 15th century by Serbs fleeing the Turks, and developed into a flourishing town. Its most important monument is the late-Gothic **Church of the Blessed Virgin** (Boldogasszony templom)***, built in 1487. This is the only Byzantine-style medieval Serb Orthodox church whose walls are decorated with pictures. The town's early **Baroque castle** was constructed for Jenő Savoyai – the prince who defeated the Turks between 1702 and 1718 – by the famous Austrian architect, Johann Lucas Hildebrandt. The building is used for events and conferences today. According to the legend, it was Árpád's tribe who settled in this area during the period of the conquests; this legend is reflected in the **Árpád Statue**, and the name of the conquering prince was borrowed for the **museum** and for the century-old bridge. A legendary citizen of the town was **János**



Nepomuki Horváth, who inspired Sándor Petőfi's most famous literary hero: János Vitéz (John the Valiant). His figure appears in the secco of the Roman Catholic church painted by László Pataky, and on the ornamental well in front of the school.

On the way from the capital to Ráckeve, it's worth stopping at **Halásztelek (B/7)** to admire the special shape of its **Roman Catholic church** – an important work of modern Hungarian organic architecture. The Danube shore at **Szigethalom (B/7)** is picturesque, and makes an ideal fishing spot. The beautiful **Tököl Forest** is also within reach. Szigetcsép contains an 18th-century Serb Orthodox church whose interior structure includes rendered wooden-coved vaulting. **Szigetszentmiklós (B/7)** is famous for a **memorial house** dedicated to the composer Jenő Ádám, and for the **Municipal Local History Collection**. The **Zither collection** is also unique. Szigetbecse lies south of Ráckeve; its most famous sight is the **André Kertész Memorial House***** where you can see 120 photos and some personal objects belonging to the renowned photographer who lived in the United States.

East of the Danube's Soroksár tract, **Dunaharaszti (C/7)** is located on the Great Plain side of the river. After the havoc wreaked by the Turks, this settlement was also rebuilt by German and Serb settlers. The village was entirely German for 200 years. Since the early 20th century, it has been a popular holiday resort for people living in Budapest. Guests may enjoy the **Danube oxbow sports port** and camping, as well as **water skiing** in the nearby mine lake. Waterbabies will doubtless be excited by the 200-acre **lake area** belonging to **Délegyháza**, south of Dunavarsány. There are six lakes open to holiday makers – the beach at lake No 5 is given over to **naturists**.

Kiskunlacháza (B/8) and its surroundings is a true equestrian paradise where guests may try out superb horses at a covered riding school. The **motocross track** at the border of the locality attracts thousands of visitors during international races, but many also come for the Kiskun Cultural Days and the Pereg Fair.

Dömsöd (B/8) is associated with **Sándor Petőfi**, who wrote some of his poems in the town while visiting his parents living there in the spring of 1846. There's an exhibition in the thatched farmhouse that he rented for this period. Every year, the poet is remembered during the **Dömsöd Days**. The celebration features folk art programmes and a handicraft fair. **Dömsöd Island** is the territory between the oxbow of the Danube and the Ráckeve-Danube branch. This is the **Danube beach** with the best water quality, and there are various options for lovers of water- and other sports.

Recalling the world of the Great Plain "puszta", **Apaj (C/8)** hosts an important event each year: the **Kiskunság Shepherd and Equestrian Days**. During this festival, the old shepherd and herder traditions are revived. The village also offers a riding school, and is popular for hiking and cycling tours.



Szigetbecse, André Kertész House



Dömsöd, Petőfi exhibition



Apajpuszta





South Buda



Biatorbágy, viaduct

Two hundred million years ago, the southwest border of present-day Budapest was covered by sea. The sea sediment petrified into thick layers of limestone and dolomite, which were later affected by tectonic movements – some were pushed upwards and others downwards. These geological events created the characteristic surface structures that mark the region’s picturesque panorama.

After the ravages of the Ottoman occupation, small villages around the capital – originally founded during the Middle Ages – were revived by mostly German settlers. These settlements developed into huge sleeping towns and commercial centres. Those descendants who cared about their roots, however, were able to conserve the remains of the past. Some of the settlements can be reached by local “blue” buses, but coaches and suburban



trains can also get you there quickly – as can the three motorways that cross the region (M0, M1, M7).

The bilingual **Budaörs/Wudersch (B/6)** road sign at the border of the capital is a clue to the fact that the locality still takes pride in its German traditions. The modern residential areas, villas and village-style old houses are situated amid the pretty **Csiki Hills***** (part of the Buda Hills). The landscape is rocky with a few pine groves here and there. It is a perfect place for excursions to protected spots where iris, wind flower and primrose grow in springtime. **Kálvária Hill**, with its huge iron cross and Golgotha statue, is the venue for **passion plays** performed at Easter. The **Ferenc Riedl Local History Collection** deals with the traditions and history of the local German population. The name of Budaörs is strongly linked with the history of Hungarian civil flying; the **airport** has operated since 1937, and remains open for small planes from all over the world.

On the southern side of the valley is **Törökbálint (B/6)**, already on the **Tétény Plateau**. Since 2005, ten marked **study paths** have guided hikers. The protected forest around the settlement attracts **picnickers** and **mushroomers** alike, while the **Anna lookout tower** provides a splendid view of the Buda Hills and Budaörs.

Érd (B/6), the second-biggest settlement in the region (after Budapest), is situated on a plateau divided by parallel valleys. Until 1979, Érd was known as the “biggest village in Europe”. The ancient village is surrounded by a modern city centre and the garden area. The old part hides a reconstructed **Turkish minaret***** that offers a lovely panorama. Not far from it, a **hotel** and **thermal bath** were opened feeding on water rich in sodium-hydrogen carbonate, chloride and fluoride. In the city centre, there is a 150-year-old mansion hosting the **Hungarian Geographical Museum**; inside we are introduced to famous explorers like Sándor Kőrösi Csoma, Pál Teleki and Jenő Cholnoky. The neighbouring **Diósd (B/6)** has a unique **Radio and Television Museum**.

The Benta Creek Valley, north of Érd, is characterised by limestone and sandstone rocks. The stone mines of **Sóskút (B/6)** provided the raw material that went into Budapest’s most famous buildings (Parliament, the Opera House, etc). The sheer size of the abandoned **stone mines** is quite astonishing. The **Equestrian Club** is a favourite of local riders and a venue for many races.



Érd, Hungarian Geographical Museum



Érd, Minaret





Panorama from the Csiki Hills



Százhalombatta, Makovecz church



Százhalombatta, Archaeology Park

Pusztazámor (A/6) in the creek's valley is famous for a **hermit chapel** built in 1758 on the ruins of a Romanesque church.

Biatorbágy (B/6) is not far from here. The most important sight of the settlement is its monumental **viaduct*****. South from Biatorbágy, **Iharos Hill** offers great territory for hikers, holding the rocks of Kőhegy (Stone Hill), as does the **Nyakas stone** facing the Benta Creek Valley. Some of the 100–150-year-old **wine cellars** carved into the hillside are still used for storing good-quality white wine. The 83-acre Bia fishing lake is the preserve of professional fishermen; amateur anglers can use the smaller **pond** next to Sósút Road, which is also full of fish.

South from Érd, a loess wall forms a natural border between **Százhalombatta (B/6)** and Érd. The huge chimneys of Dunamenti Power Plant and the tanks, pipes and burning gas torches of the oil refinery may not seem particularly attractive for tourists, but you would regret not visiting the city of the "hundred piles". The history of the city (named after the 100 ancient piles from the times of the Hallstatt culture) is presented in the **Matrica Museum**, whose name in turn refers to the Roman name of the settlement. The **Archaeology Park***** has reconstructed houses from the Bronze and Iron ages. Visitors can get a taste of everyday life in the former village during handicraft shows, when they can try their hands at **making pots and jewellery, weaving and spinning, or preparing ancient food**. In one of the reconstructed 2,700-year-old pile graves you can watch a **multimedia-show***** (with sound and light effects) that describes the burial traditions of the former inhabitants. The Serb Church in the Óváros (Ancient city), built in 1750, is an important monument, but one should not miss the Catholic church in the city centre either. It was built by the best exponent of Hungarian organic architecture, Imre Makovecz. Colourful events in the city include the "**Summerfest**" **International Folk Dance Festival** in August and the **International Winds Festival**.



Mushroom "booty"



Zsámbék Basin



Zsámbék

South of the Pilisvörösvár Dike – which is tectonic in origin – you'll find some of the Buda Hills and the neighbouring Zsámbék and Nagykovácsi Basin. It is an area of plentiful flora and fauna falling under two environmental protection areas managed by the **Danube-Ipoly National Park**: that of Pilis and Buda. The majority of settlements can be accessed on public roads and buses run here from Budapest, but the villages of Pilis can also be reached by taking the train on the Budapest–Esztergom line.

Though **Zsámbék (A/6)** is on the edge of the region and basin named after it, the locality has a central role in culture and tourism. The settlement by the former Via Imperialis, the imperial road connecting Esztergom and Székesfehérvár, is renowned for its hilltop **church ruins*****. These are visible from a long distance. The architectural masterpiece erected by the Premontre Order in the 13th century is 38m long, 24m wide, has three ships, a nice façade and two late-Romanesque towers. The interior is Gothic in style. The church was reconstructed after the





Zsámbék, church ruin detail



Zsámbék, Lamp Museum



Nagy-Kopasz, Pál Csergezán lookout tower

ravages of the Turkish occupation, but was subsequently destroyed by an earthquake in 1763. The “**Saturdays of Zsámbék**” events (from June to late August) started 20 years ago. The picturesque ruins play an important role, as does the **Zsámbék Theatrical Base**, a theatre founded on the site of a former rocket base.

The 16th-century Turkish well ranks among the locality’s significant sights, as does the 18th-century Baroque castle built from the stones of the castle of Aynard Knight, a knight of French origin who lived during the time of the Turkish occupation. The castle is currently owned by the Saint Cross Sisters of Mercy and functions as a school. The **Lamp Museum***** also attracts many visitors; it has a unique collection charting the history of lighting. Zsámbék, like the neighbouring Tök, is perfect for **horse riding**. There are many high-quality equestrian programmes to enjoy before or after a wine tour in the **protected cellars** of Szőlő (Grape) Hill.

Páty (B/6) is located at the southernmost edge of Zsámbék Basin. It has some charming 19th-century **cellars and press houses**, and the traditional Cellar Days take place here every year late in May. Two riding schools in the village cater for those interested in equestrian pursuits.

Budakeszi (Wudigess) (B/6) is surrounded by the forests of the Buda Hills. You can reach its 390-acre **Wildlife Park***** by taking the “blue” city bus No 22 from Budapest. In the park you can observe the game animals that inhabit Hungarian forests (deer, wild boars, etc) in their natural environment. The village used to be inhabited by Germans, and was one of the favourite holiday resorts of the residents of Budapest. One of the best-known owners of a weekend house here was the composer **Ferenc Erkel**. The bi-annual Erkel Music Days are organised in his honour; Erkel composed the music for the national anthem, and the **Anthem Monument** stands at the border between Budapest and Budakeszi. At the edge of the forest is the **Makkosmária Relics Church**, favoured by those seeking a place for quiet contemplation.

There are many marked tourist trails leading from Budakeszi (or the nearby Telki and Budajenő) to the peaks of the Buda Hills. The highest peak is **Nagy-Kopasz** (559m) where you can enjoy a beautiful all-round panorama from atop the new **Pál Csergezán lookout tower*****. Descending from the hills, we arrive at **Nagykovács**, where the Buda Preservation Area offers a selection of touring routes to Nagy-Szénás, Remete Hill and Zsíros Hill.

Solymár (B/5) lies to the side of the Buda Hills, its houses facing the wide valley of the Pilisvörösvár Dike and the nearby Pilis Hills. The

settlement has a 15th-century castle, **Szarkvár**, a Baroque **Pilgrimage Church** and the **Dr Jablonkay István Local History Collection**. Those who like romantic – and taxing – cave excursions can visit certain parts of the 3km-long **Ördöglyuk Cave***** in Solymár. You'll need first to register, wear appropriate clothing and receive guidance from the experienced potholers.

The close proximity of the Pilis Hills is clear from the names of the surrounding settlements. The closest to the capital is **Pilisborosjenő (B/5)**. From this direction, you can reach the rocky hills of Kevélyek, which is home to pine groves and beech trees. **Pilisvörösvár (B/5)** is still occupied by descendants of the German population that arrived here in the 18th century. There are bilingual signs, restaurants serving the best German dishes and local events that celebrate the local German culture. The small villages around it are much loved by Budapest's **anglers**. **Rock climbers** like to practise their skills on the 31m-high Ördögtorony, which is in the Buda Hills near **Pilisszentiván (B/5)**. The **National Blue Route**, the longest and best-known of the area's hiking roads, leads through **Piliscsaba (B/5)**. The village is famous for the **Pázmány Péter Catholic University**, which was founded after the regime change in 1989. The university buildings are superb examples of the organic architectural style favoured by **Imre Makovecz** and his workshop. The Baroque-style Roman Catholic Church in the centre of Piliscsaba – with its enormous interior – is used as a venue during the **Ecclesiastical Music Days**.



Solymár, pilgrimage church



Piliscsaba, Catholic University



Budakeszi, Anthem statue



Dr István Jablonkay Local History Collection



Monuments

- **Cegléd**
Reformed Church
H-2700 Cegléd, Iskola u. 1. | Tel.: +36 53/311-340
Saint Cross Catholic Church
H-2700 Cegléd, Kossuth tér 3. | Tel.: +36 53/311-144
- **Érd**
Minaret
H-2030 Érd, Mecset u.
- **Esztergom**
Archbishop's palace
H-2500 Esztergom, Berényi Zsigmond u. 2 | Tel.: +36 33/313-878
Esztergom Basilica, Treasury
H-2500 Esztergom, Szent István tér 2. | Tel.: +36 33/411-895
Castle
H-2500 Esztergom, Szent István tér 1.
Saint Thomas Hill Calvary and Chapel
2500 Esztergom, Szent Tamás hegy
- **Fót**
Immaculate Conception Parish Church
H-2151 Fót, Vörösmarty tér 2. | Tel.: +36 27/358-083
- **Gödöllő**
Gödöllő Royal Castle – Grassalkovich Castle
H-2100 Gödöllő, Királyi Kastély | Tel.: +36 28/410-124
- **Márianosztra**
Our Lady of Hungary Church Parish Church
H-2629 Márianosztra, Rákóczi tér 1. | Tel.: +36 27/370-315
- **Nógrád**
Castle ruins
H-2642 Nógrád, Hunyadi János út
- **Ócsa**
13th century Monument Basilica
H-2364 Ócsa, Békési Panyik Andor utca 2. | Tel.: +36 30/247-5465
- **Ráckeve**
Greek Orthodox Serb Church
H-2300 Ráckeve, Viola u. 1.
Savoya Castle
H-2300 Ráckeve, Kossuth Lajos u. 95.
- **Szentendre**
Blagovesztenszka Church
H-2000 Szentendre, Fő tér | Tel.: +36 26/312-399
Cathedral – Belgrade Church
H-2000 Szentendre, Alkotmány u. – Pátriárka u.
Tel.: +36 26/312-399
Pozsarevaczka Church
H-2000 Szentendre, Kossuth Lajos u. 1. | Tel.: +36 26/310-554
Preobazsenszka Church
H-2000 Szentendre, Bogdányi u. 42.
City centre
H-2000 Szentendre, Duna korzó
Dumtsa House
H-2000 Szentendre, Péteri Pál u. 6
Mátyás Ráby House
2000 Szentendre, Rab Ráby tér 1.
- **Vác**
Our Lady of Victory Church – Felsőváros Roman Catholic Church
H-2600 Vác, Március 15. tér 22. | Tel.: +36 27/311-275
Seven Chapels
H-2600 Václiget, Road 2 leading towards Budapest
Derecske dűlő 2.
Stone Gate (victory arch)
H-2600 Vác, Köztársaság u. 69.
Bishop's Palace
H-2600 Vác, Migazzi tér 1. | Tel.: +36 27/315-124
Roman Catholic Chapel – former Order of Mercy Convent
H-2500 Vác, Március 15. tér 7–9.

Roman Catholic Church – former Franciscan Church
H-2600 Vác, Géza király tér

Roman Catholic Church – former Piarist Church
H-2600 Vác, Szentháromság tér

Cathedral
H-2600 Vác, Konstantin tér

City Centre Monuments' Area
H-2600 Vác, Március 15. tér – Géza király tér

Synagogue
H-2600 Vác, Eötvös utca

- **Visegrád**
Lower Castle – Salamon Tower
H-2025 Visegrád | Tel.: +36 26/398-233

Fellegvár (fortress)
H-2025 Visegrád, Várhegy | Tel.: +36 26/398-025

Round Bastion
H-2025 Visegrád, Fő u. 9–13.

Ruins of Royal Palace
H-2025 Visegrád, Fő u. 27–29.

- **Zsámbék**
Former Premontre Provostry – Church and Cloister ruins
H-2072 Zsámbék, Régi Templom u.
Former Castle
H-2072 Zsámbék, Zichy Miklós tér

Museums

- **Bánk**
Slovak House
H-2653 Bánk, Petőfi u. 98. | Tel.: +36 35/342-314
- **Cegléd**
Kossuth Museum
H-2700 Cegléd, Múzeum út 5. | Tel.: +36 53/310-637
Drum Museum
H-2700 Cegléd, Szabadság tér 5. | Tel.: +36 53/321-068
- **Érd**
Hungarian Geographical Museum
H-2030 Érd, Budai út 4. | Tel.: +36 23/356-132
- **Esztergom**
Esztergom Castle Museum
H-2500 Esztergom, Szent István tér 1. | Tel.: +36 33/415-986
Cathedral Treasury
H-2500 Esztergom, Szent István tér 1. | Tel.: +36 33/402-354
Christian Museum
H-2500 Esztergom, Mindszenty Hercegprímás tér 2.
Tel.: +36 33/413-880
Panopticon of Kings
H-2500 Esztergom, Szent István tér 1. | Tel.: +36 33/400-103
- **Gödöllő**
Gödöllő Royal Castle – Grassalkovich Castle
H-2100 Gödöllő, Királyi Kastély | Tel.: +36 28/410-124
Gödöllő Art Gallery
H-2100 Gödöllő, Szabadság tér 8. | Tel.: +36 28/418-691
Municipal Museum
H-2100 Gödöllő, Szabadság tér 5. | Tel.: +36 28/422-003
- **Kemence**
Kemence Forest Museum Train
Kemence, Csarnavölgyi út 45. | Tel.: +36 20/388-5743
- **Nagybörzsöny**
Water mill
H-2634 Nagybörzsöny, Hunyadi tér 10. | Tel.: +36 20/572-3771
- **Nógrád**
Regional House
H-2642 Nógrád, Sallai u. 26. | Tel.: +36 35/362-210

Representations of the Hungarian National Tourist Office

- **Ócsa**
Regional House and Ethnographic Collection
H-2364 Ócsa, Békési Panyik Andor utca 4–6. | Tel.: +36 30/948-9150
- **Ráckeve**
Municipal Gallery
H-2300 Ráckeve, Kossuth L. u. 26.
- **Százhalombatta**
Matrica Museum
H-2440 Százhalombatta, Gesztenyés u. 1–3.
Tel.: +36 23/354-591; +36 23/359-848
Archaeology Park
H-2440 Százhalombatta, István Király út | Tel.: +36 23/354-591
- **Szentendre**
Doll Museum
H-2000 Szentendre, Sas u. 18. | Tel.: +36 26/316-468
Barcsay Collection
H-2000 Szentendre, Dumtsa Jenő u. 10.
Czóbel Museum
H-2000 Szentendre, Templom tér 1. | Tel.: +36 26/312-721
Dobos Sweets Museum
H-2000 Szentendre, Bogdányi u. 2. | Tel.: +36 26/311-660
Ferenczy Museum
H-2000 Szentendre, Fő tér 6. | Tel.: +36 26/310-244
Margit Kovács Museum
H-2000 Szentendre, Vastagh György u. 1. | Tel.: +36 26/310-244
Art Mill
H-2000 Szentendre, Bogdányi út 32. | Tel.: +36 26/319-128
House of Folk Arts
H-2000 Szentendre, Rákóczi u. 1. | Tel.: +36 26/310-244
Open Air Ethnographic Museum (Skanzen)
H-2000 Szentendre, Sztaravodai út | Tel.: +36 26/502-500
Serb Orthodox Ecclesiastical Art Collection
H-2000 Szentendre, Pátriárka u. 5. | Tel.: +36 26/312-399
- **Szob**
Börzsöny Museum
H-2628 Szob, Szent László u. 14. | Tel.: +36 27/370-037
- **Tápiószéle**
Blaskovich Museum
H-2766 Tápiószéle, Múzeum u. 13. | Tel.: +36 53/380-061
- **Tura**
Village Museum
H-2194 Tura, Rákóczi út 28. | Tel.: +36 28/467-885
- **Vác**
Medieval Cellar
H-2600 Vác, Széchenyi u. 3–7. | Tel.: +36 27/500-750
Memento Mori/ Crypt findings from the Dominican Church
H-2600 Vác, Március 15. tér 19. | Tel.: +36 27/500-750
Hincz Collection
H-2600 Vác, Káptalan u. 16. | Tel.: +36 27/313-463
- **Visegrád**
Fellegvár (fortress)
H-2050 Visegrád, Várhegy | Tel.: +36 26/398-101
Ruins of the Royal Palace – King Matthias Museum
Tel.: +36 26/398-026
Salamon Tower
H-2025 Visegrád | Tel.: +36 26/398-233
- **Zebegény**
István Szónyi Memorial Museum
H-2627 Zebegény, Bartóky út 7. | Tel.: +36 27/370-104
- **Zsámbék**
Lamp Museum
H-2072 Zsámbék, Magyar u.18.
War History Museum
H-2072 Zsámbék, Szomori út, Old Missile Base
Saint Vendel Embossing Folk House (German Folk House)
H-2072 Zsámbék, Bicskei u.

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www.gotohungary.com

Public transport:

BKV

www.bkv.hu

Ferihegy Airport

Tel.: +36-1-296-7000
Fax.: +36-1-296-6000

Malév

Tel.: +36-1-235-3888
www.malev.hu

Airport minibus

Tel.: +36-1-296-8555

Mahart

1056 Budapest, Belgrád rakpart
Tel.: +36-1-484-4000
Fax: +36-1-484-4013
www.mahartpassnave.hu

MÁV

www.mav.hu, www.elvira.hu

Budapest, Southern Railway Station

1120 Budapest, Krisztina krt. 37/A
Tel.: +36-1-375-6593

Budapest, Eastern Railway Station

1077 Budapest, Baross tér

Budapest, Western Railway Station

1060 Budapest, Nyugati tér
Tel.: +36-1-349-8503

Volanbus

www.volan.hu

Bus Stations:

Public Park, 1091 Budapest, Üllői út 131.
Tel.: +36-1-219-8080

People's Stadium, 1143 Hungária krt. 46/48.
Tel.: +36-1-251-0125

Árpád Bridge, 1130 Budapest
Tel.: +36-1-329-1450

Useful information about Budapest and its surroundings: www.budapest-regio.hu, www.budapestinfo.hu

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