

Too Good to Miss Seeing in Budapest, Hungary

Budapest is divided into two parts- Buda and Pest which use to be two separate cities. The dividing line is the beautiful Danube River. Buda is hilly and where the Castle District is located. Pest is more flat and industrial. There are two main railway stations in Budapest that have connections all over Europe, but always know which one you are coming and going from so that you don't end up at one and need to be at the other. One train station is called Nyugati and one is called Keleti.

Get yourself a good map of Budapest, a 1-3 day metro/bus pass and metro map, a pair of walking shoes and have a great time. It's fun to become familiar with the Budapest metro (underground), tram and bus system. You can get just about anywhere using this system and should not need to rely on the airport mini bus or a taxi unless you are getting to or from the Ferihegy Airport which is about 20-30 minutes away. The Budapest Card is also sold at many outlets and is a 2 or 3-day card which gives you discounts to various sites. Check it out and see if it is worth your money.

Consider taking a bus tour during your first morning in Budapest. You'll have an overall view of the city and can return to various sites that need a bit more investigating. A boat tour on the Danube is a great way to see and learn about the city also. There are excellent nightly concerts, also.

Here are the sights that I would try and see if I had 1-3 days in Budapest:

Pest Side:

St. Stephen's Basilica- the inside of this church is amazing and climb to the top for one of the best views in town.

National Museum- built in 1847, lots of historic relics and info on Hungarian history.

Heroes' Square- erected in 1896. Features statues and monuments to the heroes of Hungary. There is a City Park right behind Heroes' Square with a zoo, castle, ponds, museums, and the Szechenyi Baths and Swimming Pools (some inside and some outside) plus beautiful grounds to stroll.

Terror Haza (House)- a must see if you want to understand what the Hungarian people have gone through during their times of occupation by the Nazis and the Soviets. This is a very unique political museum dealing with terrorism (not terror like in Frankenstein). Allow a couple of hours. It is newer and may not be on every map- it's located at Andrássy Ut 60. English handouts in each room of the museum for description.

Jewish Synagogue and Museum- largest functioning synagogue in Europe. Lots of areas around this are fun to explore also.

Great Market- located between the Danube and Kalvin Square metro stop on Vamhaz korut street. 3 stories of shopping- fresh fruits and vegetables, meats, paprika, cookies, pastries, etc. on the 1st floor and TONS of beautiful Hungarian crafts and merchandise. Good place to buy Hungarian gifts to take home. Hungarians shop here which says something.

Parliament- home of the crown of St. Stephen. Beautiful building close to the Danube built in 1904.

State Opera House- check out when the operas are when you first get there. Try and see one. The interior is wonderful. Nice gift shop too.

HungariaKoncert is geared toward tourists and offered almost daily but is professional and very enjoyable. Concerts are at 8 pm. There are also concerts/cruises/dinners available. Here's the website:

<http://www.ticket.info.hu/index.php?module=staticpage&id=43&lang=1> The Danube Palace is located

11/20/2010

near St. Stephen's Basicalla. Vendors pass out notices about the concerts on all of the main streets during the day. Make reservations during the day of the concert.

Walking Pedestrian area called Vaci Street. Lots of fun restaurants, high end stores, tourist shops, and people.

Buda Side:

Castle Hill- consists of many sites. Nice to walk through and great little restaurants for eating. Wonderful pastry shop called Ruszwurm Pastry Shop, built in 1600s. The hill also has art galleries and gift bazaars tucked away here and there. Little spendier than the Pest side. There are also many museums on Castle Hill that you might enjoy including the National Archives, the Museum of Military History, Budapest History Museum. Take the small tram ride up the side of the hill to the top of Castle Hill.

Matthias Church- rebuilt in 1896. Colorful tiled roof. Franz Liszt composed the Hungarian Coronation Mass for the coronation of Franz Joseph and Elizabeth in 1867. Worth paying a small fee to go inside. Hopefully you will catch a choir singing or practicing.

Fishermen's Bastion- looks old but built in the late 1890s. Great views of Parliament Building and the Danube.

National Gallery- many Hungarian works of art

Citadella- Fortress built in 1848 but never really used much as a fort. We actually slept there during our first trip in 1993.

Independence Monument is up near the Citadella and is the statue of a woman overlooking the city with a palm representing freedom. Erected as a memory of Soviet soldiers but most names in Cyrillic letters have been removed.

Gellert Baths- most famous thermal bath in Budapest. Many small hot baths plus an outdoor swimming pool. Call first.

Statue Park- SW of Buda. A park which now contains all the gigantic communist statues and busts that once adorned the streets of Budapest.

On The Danube Bend- Szentendre

If you have time for part of or an entire day, take a train or boat to Szentendre, a small town (population about 20,000) down the Danube River. This is a very quaint town with small winding streets and lots of arts and craft galleries. It is a tourist destination, but it still is lots of fun to visit and is also a favorite place for artists and sculptors.

Compiled by Alice Rampton
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