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HUNGARY THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

JANUARY

THE LAND OF THERMAL WATERS



Hévíz

The waters of Hungary possess a magic touch, which makes them unique in the world. Thermal springs can be found all over the country; there are 118 only in the capital city. Certain types of these thermal waters have been known to alleviate medical symptoms of all sorts. Bathing in these waters is not only effective for rejuvenation, but is also great for preventing illnesses or simply for enjoyment. Hungary has a 2000-year old tradition of using these thermal waters. The historical baths offer the chance to travel back in time to the Roman and Turkish era, and experience their customs! Hévíz, the biologically-active thermal lake, can be found only 6 km from Balaton, where visitors can swim in water which never drops below a friendly 23 Celsius! The water has curative powers that have been known to provide relief from a number of ailments. The bath complex of Hajdúszoboszló is located in the eastern part of the country, which is the largest spa in Europe. The combination of the medicinal water, along with 40 various therapy treatments and other healing factors may help patients to a full recovery.

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FEBRUARY

COLOURFUL FOLK ART



Hollókő

Hungary is an extremely colourful country. The main evidence for this is its varied folk art, originating from its thousand-year old traditions. Most of these are connected to religious festivals, but the end of winter, the arrival of spring, the summer harvests and the autumn vintage were also seen as occasions to celebrate with festivals. In some villages, these traditions are still alive and people put on their finest folk costumes in celebration of the event. The patterns and colours, however, vary greatly from region to region. Perhaps the most famous patterns are from the town of Kalocsa. The singularity of our folk art was recognised internationally in recent years; there are three Hungarian items in UNESCO's Intangible/Intellectual Cultural Heritage list. The Folk art of Matyó is the exquisite embroidery of a traditional community; The Busó Festival of Mohács, which is a winter farewell festival. Today 22 Busó communities keep the tradition alive, demonstrating the courage of male members of each generation. The most beautiful pieces of folk architecture are displayed in open-air museums or at skanzens found throughout the country.

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MARCH

EXCITING CULTURAL LIFE



Hungarian State Opera House, Budapest

Hungary offers a rich and thrilling world of culture. From classical to contemporary, from folklore, dance, music to design, you are sure to find something for every taste. Budapest is a treasure chest of top-class music and art. It has not earned the nickname 'Paris of the East' for nothing; it offers broad boulevards and green parks, grand Art-Nouveau mansions, vibrantly painted churches, a great many museums, stunning galleries and lively cafés. In the homeland of outstanding composers such as Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály, with a world-class opera house, the famous, newly renovated Liszt Academy, and the Budapest Music Centre, a relatively new, splendid imprint for Hungarian music, Hungarians play a significant role in the international music community. The Budapest Spring Festival is the country's largest annual cultural platform, featuring classical and pop music, exhibitions and famous artists. The Palace of Arts (Müpa) is a conglomeration of cultural venues, a building with no precedent in 20th century Hungarian architecture and no peers in all of Central Europe.

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APRIL

UNSPOILED NATURE



Visegrád

Hungary offers a vast choice of outstanding natural treasures. Would you believe that in this small country there are 10 national parks, 39 landscape-protection areas and 168 nature conservation areas, amounting to 1.3 million acres awaiting environment-loving eco-tourists? The national parks boast wild rivers, gentle, rolling hills, large lakes, ridge lines covered with dense, natural forests, vast plains, as well as caves and caverns with fantastic treasures underground. If you want to have a special experience in a Hungarian forest, explore it while travelling on one of the country's 21 forest railway lines. The country also offers some unique, hidden venues which represent the diversity of the European continent's natural heritage to tourists. Órség, Hortobágy National Park, Irottkő Nature Park, Lake Tisza, Mecsek and Kaposvár and the Zselic area are part of the European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN), and they simultaneously represent a friendly invitation and destination that reminds everyone of the primordial harmony of the world.

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MAY

CULTURE OF A THOUSAND YEARS



Gödöllő

In its one-thousand-year history, Hungary's own traditions have been greatly influenced by both Eastern and Western cultural heritages. The cultural influences of east and west can be seen in the monuments, traditions and everyday life. You don't want to miss the Hungarian Open-Air Museum in Szentendre, which amounts to a time travel into the folk architecture, lifestyle and farming of the Hungarian linguistic area of Central Europe. A similarly comprehensive presentation of the 19th century world of Hungarian villages and farmsteads is waiting for you to discover it in the Opusztaszer National Heritage Park. The memories of the Roman Empire, the buildings and baths created during the 150 years of Ottoman rule, the tiny churches and grandiose cathedrals of the Middle Ages, the remains of old fortresses and those magnificent palaces throughout the land, all bear witness to a rich and colourful history. Hungary offers a plethora of majestic palaces, once the home of major noble families in the history of Hungary. These stately buildings include the Esterházy Palace (dubbed "the Hungarian Versailles") of Fertőd, the Royal Palace (or "Grassalkovich Palace") of Gödöllő and the Festetics Palace of Keszthely. Visit enchanting cities, small towns and villages in the countryside and allow them to capture your imagination. Hungarian history is revived in numerous festivals, in which visitors can participate in real time-travel, and enjoy unforgettable experiences. You will find traditional festivities throughout the year and the country; you definitely won't want to leave Hungary without paying a visit to the Festival of Folk Arts/Crafts in the Buda Castle, the Easter Fest of Hollókő or the Badacsony Wine Weeks.

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JUNE

WORLD HERITAGE SITES

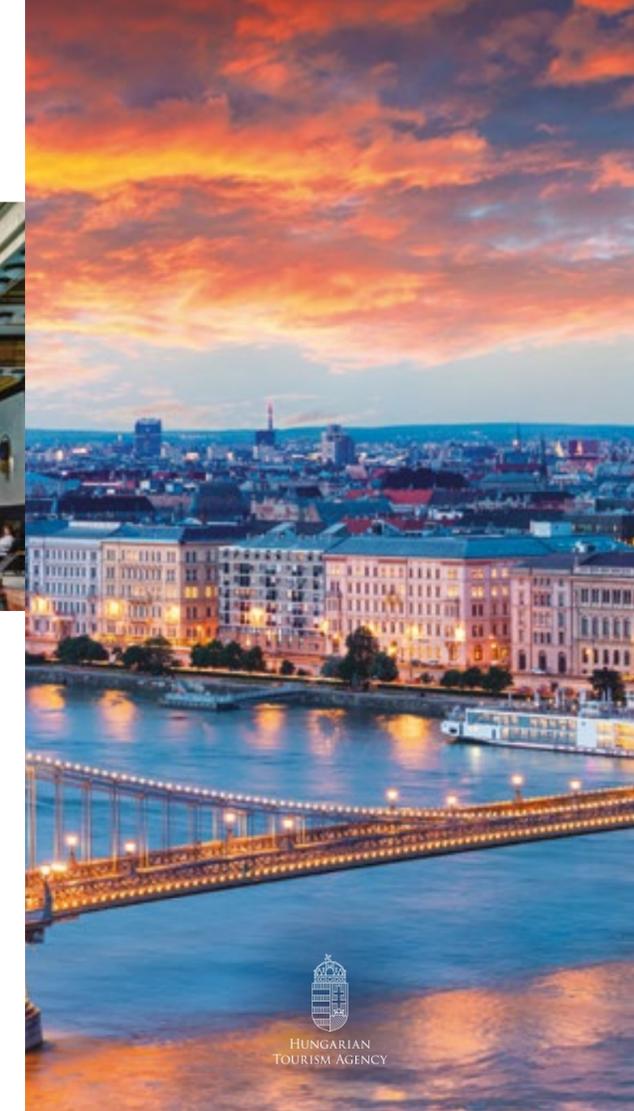


Gellért Thermal Bath, Budapest

Eight Hungarian locations of high cultural importance or outstanding natural beauty have been chosen by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites worthy of protection and preservation. The Aggtelek Karst, including the most extensive stalactite cave system in Central Europe, the grassy plain of the Hortobágy, and Lake Fertőd, the westernmost of the Eurasian steppe-lakes and also Europe's largest saltwater lake, are now national parks and protected natural treasures. Other World Heritage Sites include the ancient Christian cemetery with painted sepulchral vaults discovered in Pécs, the thousand-year-old monastery at Pannonhalma, still used today, and the small village of Hollókő, which has preserved its mediaeval order of settlement, folk architecture and traditions. With its unique geological and geographical characteristics, the Tokaj Wine Region is also on the World Heritage list. Authentic wine producing traditions have been maintained and followed here for over a thousand years. The buildings of Budapest's riverfront along the Danube and Andrassy Avenue form one of the most attractive skylines in the world, well deserving its World Heritage Status.

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Discover the wonders of Hungary in 360° degrees



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JULY
LAKE
BALATON



Balaton

The largest fresh-water lake in Central Europe, Balaton, has so much to offer; calm water and fresh wines, authentic castles and sleepy villages, beautiful landscapes and crystal-clear air, fishing and sailing, partying and relaxing, cycling and golfing. Lake Balaton has something for everyone, all year round! Family-friendly beaches with great services and excellent water quality are to be found all around the lake. The northern coast is surrounded by volcanic hills and never-ending vineyards providing excellent wines and lots of opportunities for wine tasting. A few kilometres away from the lake, the exquisite world of special stone formations in the Káli Basin and the rare birds and plants in the „Kis-Balaton” or little Balaton, part of the Northern Balaton Uplands National Park, are a must for visitors. The church and monastery on the Tihany peninsula date back to around 1100 AD. The oldest town by the lake is Keszthely, which has one of the three largest baroque palaces of the country, and the district, reminiscent of the Reform Era, found in Balatonfüred along with the Lake Cave under Tapolca are all an obligatory visit.

AUGUST
BUDAPEST, QUEEN
OF THE DANUBE



Budapest

Home to about 1.8 million people, Budapest is the bustling capital city of Hungary. Whether you have traditional tastes or extraordinary demands, Budapest will deliver. At first sight, Budapest is not that different from your average European capital, with its lively centre, pretty parks, majestic river, tall church spires. At second sight though, Budapest is one of the most exciting cities in the world, full of secrets to uncover, hidden spots to explore and old favourites to revisit – not to mention our 4-5 hundred years old, lavish spas! What to see while you're visiting? Start at the top, with the magnificent Buda Castle and its District, then cross the river for the most grandiose building along the Pest riverbank, the Parliament. For sacred wonders, visit the second tallest building in the city, Saint Stephen's Basilica, and one of the largest synagogues in the world, the Dohány Street Synagogue. Heroes' Square will give you a peek into the romantic past of the country, and in Memento Park you'll have a chance to enjoy a modern history lesson in the open. Take a walk on Margaret Island, also called the 'Lung of the City', where Steven Spielberg shot a wonderful scene for his movie "München." Visit the Japanese Garden, and if you have your children with you, make sure you go to the Wildlife Park. On August 20th, the country celebrates the anniversary of its foundation with spectacular fireworks, live concerts and performances.

SEPTEMBER
ACTIVITIES, SPORTS,
RECREATION



Countryside

There are plenty of opportunities to further develop your sporting skills during your stay in Hungary. Explore the famous Great Plains on horseback, swim in one of the rejuvenating thermal baths, jog or cycle along forests trails, play golf at various golf courses; unforgettable memories are guaranteed. The countryside is an ideal place for cycling and three routes of the EuroVelo network cross it; Route 13 follows the trail of the former Iron Curtain, which separated Europe into two areas from the end of World War II until 1991. The second route is around the perimeter of Lake Balaton, which is a popular spot for water sports and lazing in the sun. Last but not least, Lake Tisza has played a pioneering role in the development of new approaches to exhibiting nature's treasures. Both lakes offer innovative visitor-friendly services devised to attract hikers, fishermen, cyclists, campers and everyone, who wishes to enjoy outdoor leisure. Autumn is also the time for the increasingly popular Budapest Marathon, which „with its level running course” is the ideal event for breaking records, with more than 30,000 runners. If you are looking for relaxation, take your pick of the many high-quality baths in Hungary; Hévíz, Bükkfürdő, Sárvár or Egerszalók all offer visitors at least half a dozen indulgence services.

OCTOBER
EXCELLENT
WINES



Wines for every occasion

A hundred years ago Hungary was among the most important wine producers of the continent. Royal courts in Europe clinked glasses filled with precious gold Tokaj wine, while other lush Hungarian whites and reds were lauded and enjoyed by the wealthy. Hungary is gaining back its nearly forgotten fame and glory thanks to the countless small wineries, owning estates replanted and carefully cultivated by the new generation of winegrowers. Beautiful wines from these vineyards are the result of traditional winemaking culture mixed with modernity and improvements. If Hungarian products were to be placed in a wine shop according to their flavor profile, they would be found in every corner of the store. Our wines represent a unique variety, and the wines of Eger, Tokaj, Villány or Somló have a very distinctive taste and structure. Yet all these wines reflect their shared history and hundreds of years of tradition. The balanced wines of Eger, the complex sweets of Tokaj, the structured reds of Szekszárd and Villány, and the ashy whites of Somló: Hungary indeed boasts an amazing spectrum of wine varieties, all exciting, authentic and waiting to be rediscovered.

NOVEMBER
CHARACTERISTIC
DISHERS



Hungarian Cuisine

The renewal of Hungarian gastronomy over the past few years has put the country on the international stage: Hungary's first Michelin-star restaurant was followed by four more just in a few years. Besides our finest restaurants, unique ingredients – such as Mangalica pork, goose or duck liver – and exciting creations attract foodies and connoisseurs from all over the world. Here is a list with some of our authentic meals one should not miss when visiting Hungary: **starters:** foie gras, sausages (hurka, kolbász), pancake Hortobágyi style, cold ones include paprika cheese spread (körözött) with a crescent roll (kifli) or soft scone (pogácsa), **soups:** gulyás, fish soup (halászlé), broth/consommé (húsleves), cold fruit soup, **snacks:** deep fried flat bread with garlic/sour cream/cheese (lángos), chimney cake (kürtőskalács), **main dishes:** stuffed cabbage with sour cream (töltött káposzta), stew (pörkölt) made from beef/chicken/gizzard/pork/venison or even vegetable stew (lecsó), **side dishes:** potato in various forms, small dumplings like noodles (nokedli), egg barley (tarhonya) and in addition to these, pickles (savanyúság), **when it comes to extras,** sour cream, hot/sweet paprika are also on the table, **desserts:** cottage cheese dumplings, dumplings filled with plums (túró/szilvágombóc), Gundel pancake (palacsinta), strudel (rétes) with apple/quark/poppy seed/cherry filling, Somlói trifle (Somlói galuska), chestnut purée (gesztenyepüré). Last but not least when bumping into a dessert bar named "Túró Rudi" (a cottage cheese bar coated with chocolate), don't walk away, it is worth a try!

DECEMBER
MAGICAL
CHRISTMAS MARKETS



St. Stephen's Square, Budapest

Whether you are after souvenirs or presents for your friends, or in for some serious shopping, Hungary offers many opportunities. Handmade, painted porcelain, crystal, lace and other pieces of folk art such as woven cloths, embroideries and glazed pottery, are all typical Hungarian souvenirs. Hungary's contemporary design scene is also bustling. Beyond the usual flea markets, a monthly design fair called WAMP is open every Sunday of December, with products of some 200 Hungarian brands. Walking down leafy Andrassy Avenue is a pleasure itself, but the glittering flagship stores of international brands also make it a favourite destination for the discerning shopper. You may also want to visit the brand stores of Nanushka in Váci street, Aeron in Fashion Street or NUBU on Andrassy Avenue. Or, you can spend some time discovering the myriad of multi-brand fashion stores: MONO Art & Design, Treasure Budapest, Wonderlab and Lucky Shepherd, just to name a few of those wonderful places where you will surely discover real specialities. Around Christmas time, the city is covered in festive holiday decorations and some of the most interesting of these are on the city's trams, which are covered in 30,000 bright blinking LED lights. Advent fairs, like the one next to St. Stephen's Basilica - voted the 4th best European fair this year - also await you with mulled wine and plenty of ideas for presents under the tree in every major town in the country.



UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE

AIRPORT

THERMAL BATH