

EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE PÉCS: THE MORE YOU LOOK THE MORE YOU FIND



This year's choice of a European Capital of Culture has surprised many - though only on first hearing. The Hungarian Pécs is one of the most fascinating cities in Europe, well worthy of the 2010 honor.

When the three European Capitals of Culture were announced for 2010, no one considered Essen and Istanbul a strange choice, but when it came to Pécs, many had to brush up on their knowledge of Europe. This small city located on the slopes of Mecsek Mountains in the south-western part of Hungary holds many surprises.

It all started with the Celts, who occupied this area before the Roman invasion. However, Turkish influence has been very strong as well as Croatian, Balkan, and even German. While its population is very small, only 160,000, there are nine ethnic minorities living in this mesmerizing blend of architectural styles and heritage sites. **The early Christian necropolis has become a major lure for tourists; it is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site.**

The numerous monuments and buildings which date back to the Ottoman period are among the most popular attractions. The mosque of Pasha Gazi Kaseem, the Pasha Memi baths, and the minaret of Yakovali Hassan are well worth a visit. In May, the city will host a festival Journey around the Turkish Crescent Moon to honor the Turkish influence and heritage.

This year, numerous festivals will honor the local on-going art and music tradition. Fishing on Orfu, a festival on the banks of local beautiful lake, and the Folk & Rock festival will kick-off the summer festive season in June. July will introduce a Rockmaraton in the charming setting of Malomvolgy Botanical Garden and August promises an art exhibition of Bauhaus, a major 20th century school of art.

All the culture and charm is topped up by local delicious cuisine, divine wine and warm-hearted folk who never hesitate to welcome another visitor. Pécs is full of surprises and the more one looks, the more one finds.

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