

A GUIDE TO SHORT BREAKS IN BUDAPEST



Noted as the most beautiful city in Central Europe, Budapest has a lot to offer. Ranging from natural beauty and spa to historical sights, Budapest is the right place for any tourists.

Split into two by the Danube River, Budapest is really two cities: Buda and Pest. This duality is replicated in much of the city's character and style; peaceful and bustling, old and new, modern and historical, peaking hills and low fields, married together as seamlessly as the city's name.

Noted as the most beautiful city in Central Europe, Budapest has a lot to offer. The natural beauty of the city is embellished with stunning architecture and activities will interest both the history-buff and late night party-goer.

From the UK, fly direct to Budapest with British Airways, EasyJet and Jet2. Delta and American Airlines provide connections from the US. The airport is located 16 km (10 miles) southeast of the city and you can catch the railway into Budapest Nyugati Railway Station in the centre of the city in less than 30 minutes.

Finding a hotel in Budapest can be daunting, with all that is on offer. Medium to high end travelers will find something that will suit their needs: from the luxurious to the comfortable, the historical to modern, as well as relaxing spa breaks and bustling city centre locations. If you're on more of a budget, the city has various options for you.

Hungary's currency is the forint (Ft). ATMs can be found throughout the city and standard credit cards are widely accepted. One British pound buys you 318 Ft, 1 euro gets you 269 Ft and 1 US dollar just short of 200 Ft.

Many of the city's top attractions are UNESCO World Heritage Sites: the view of the Danube embankments, the Buda Castle District, Andrassy Avenue with Heroes' Square and the Millennium Underground Railway. The Hungarian Parliament Building, the biggest building in Hungary, sits on the edge of the Pest side of the river overlooking the Danube and offers guided tours of the Gothic Revival style building. Within walking distance is the neoclassical St Stephen's Basilica. With its 96 meter high dome, you can navigate to it from almost anywhere in the city.

Much of the city is accessible on foot, but the trams are also a scenic way to get around when your feet need a little rest. A third alternative is to sightsee from one of the numerous boats cruising up and down the Danube River.

Swimming in the river itself may not be advisable, but a must when visiting Budapest is dipping into one of the city's 80 geothermal springs. Famed for its healing water springs, Budapest has been, since the 1930s, titled the "Spa City". Indeed, if you're looking for a relaxing break at a spa in Hungary, you can find some great resorts that offer the wellness treatment you are looking for.

For the cultured tourist, a trip to the State Opera House for a performance is a treat and, in addition, Budapest offers a range of theatre and music shows throughout the year. Another evening alternative is a visit to the Danube bridges that overflow with market stands and entertainment come nightfall.

Whatever you end up doing during your stay in Budapest, you're certain to leave with the conviction that, when it comes to stunning attractions, relaxing spas and affordable luxury hotels, Hungary can't be beaten.

By Dan Aldulescu

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