

# Sights

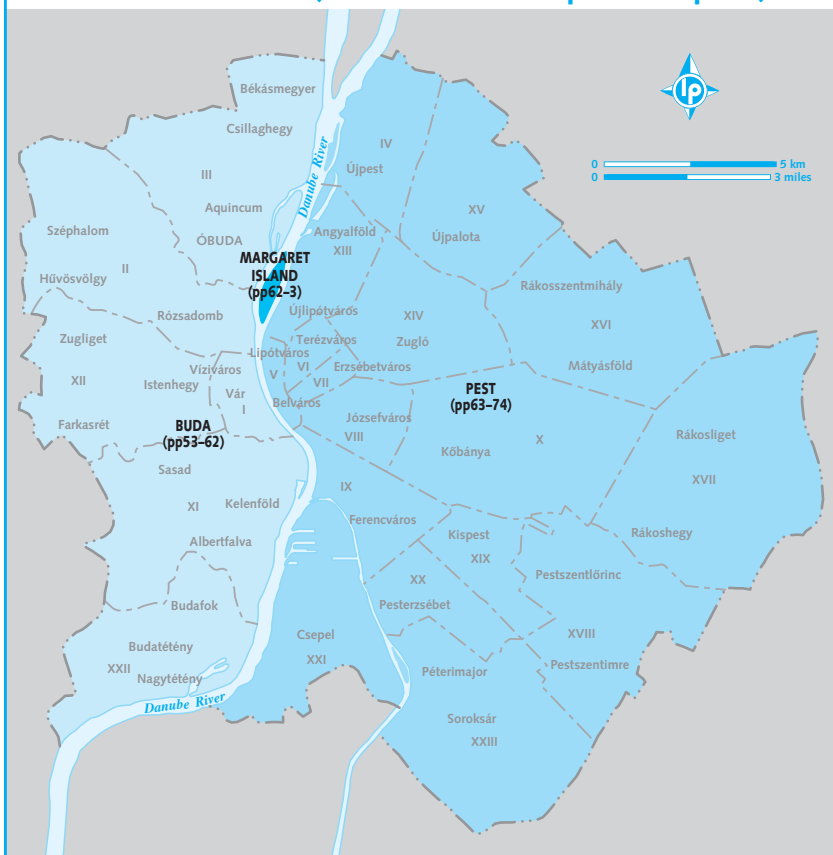
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# Sights

Budapest spreads over 525 sq km. Its borders are Csepel Island in the Danube River to the south, the start of the Danube Bend to the north, the Buda Hills to the west and the start of the Great Plain to the east. With few exceptions (the Buda Hills, City Park and some excursions), however, the areas beyond the Nagykörút (literally the 'Big Ring Road') in Pest and west of Moszkva tér in Buda are residential or industrial and of little interest to visitors. It is a well laid-out city, so much so that it is difficult to get lost here. For more information see page p182.

If you look at a map of Budapest you'll see that two ring roads – Nagykörút and the semicircular Kiskörút (the 'Little Ring Road') – more or less link all of the most important bridges across the Danube and define central Pest. The Nagykörút consists of the contiguous Szent István körút, Teréz körút, Erzsébet körút, József körút and Ferenc körút. The Kiskörút comprises Károly körút, Múzeum körút and Vámház körút. Important boulevards such as Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út, leafy Andrassy út, Rákóczi út and Üllői út fan out from these ring roads, creating large squares and circles.

## BUDAPEST DISTRICTS (See also Colour Map Section p215)



Buda, on the other hand, is dominated by Castle and Gellért Hills; the main square on this side is Moszkva tér. Important roads are Margit körút (the only part of either ring road to cross the river), Fő utca and Attila út on either side of Castle Hill, and Hegyalja út and Bartók Béla út running west and southwest.

Budapest is divided into 23 *kerület*, or districts, which usually also have traditional names such as Lipótváros (Leopold Town) in district XIII or Víziváros (Watertown) in district I. The Roman numeral appearing before each street address signifies the district.

## ITINERARIES

If you want a general overview of Budapest before striking out on your own, take one of the tours described in this chapter (below). At least you'll be sure to see the highlights even on a very brief visit.

### One Day

If you've just got one day in Budapest – what *were* you thinking? – spend most of it on **Castle Hill** (p53), taking in the views and the sights and visiting a museum or two. In the afternoon ride the **Sikló** (p53) down to Clark Ádám tér and, depending on the day of the week, make your way to the **Király** (p136) or the **Gellért Baths** (p136) for a relaxing soak. In the evening head for **Liszt Ferenc tér** for drinks and dinner at **Menza** (p114) and perhaps attend a performance at the **Ferenc Liszt Academy of Music** (p131).

### Three Days

With another couple of days to look around the city, concentrate first on the two icons of Hungarian nationhood and the places that house them: the **Crown of St Stephen** (p65) in the **Parliament** (p65) and the saint-king's mortal remains in the **Basilica of St Stephen** (p64). Take a late-afternoon coffee (and cake) break at **Gerbeaud** (p125) in Vörösmarty tér and stop in at the **Hungarian State Opera House** (p71) before going clubbing. The next day, consider taking a **walking tour** (p76), such as the one up Andrassy út, stopping off and visiting whatever interests you along the way – be it the **House of Terror** (p71) or the **Museum of Fine Arts** (p71). The **Lukács** (p126) cake shop is conveniently located en route and you could take the waters at the **Széchenyi Baths** (p136) in City Park. **Robinson** (p119) or **Bagolyvár** (p119) are convenient places for an evening meal. Then take a well-watered tour of the city's best 'gardens' (p129).

### One Week

If you have a full week in Budapest you could manage to see a good many of the sights listed in this chapter, including 'secondary' gems such as **Gül Baba's Tomb** (p58) and the **Ferenc Hopp Museum of East Asian Art** (p70), markets like the **Nagycsarnok** (p149) and **Ecseri Piac** (p150) and do a little shopping. You could also make trips to places further afield, such as **Statue Park** (p62), and take a ride up into the Buda Hills on the **Cog Railway** (p61) for a ramble. You might even leave Budapest for a couple of days' excursion to the Danube Bend, Lake Balaton or the Great Plain (for tours of these regions, see p169).

## ORGANISED TOURS

### Boat

**LEGENDA** Map p224

☎ 317 2203, 06 30 944 5216; [www.legenda.hu](http://www.legenda.hu);

V Vigadó tér, pier 7; M1 Vörösmarty tér

This long-established operator has both day (3600Ft) and night (4200Ft) cruises on the Danube, with taped commentary in up to 30 languages. The night lights of the city

rising to Buda Castle, Parliament, Gellért Hill and the Citadella make the evening trip far more attractive than the afternoon one. Check Legenda's website for the schedule.

**MAHART PASSNAVE** Map p224

☎ 484 4013, 318 1223; [www.mahartpassnave.hu](http://www.mahartpassnave.hu);

V Belgrád rakpart; ☎ 2 or 2/a

This outfit offers 1½- to two-hour river cruises (1900/950Ft per adult/child under

12) daily at noon and 7.30pm from early May to mid-September. In the low season, from April to early May and mid-September to mid-October, only the evening cruise sails (1600/800Ft) and it's on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. A ticket with a meal on board costs 2800/1400Ft, except in the evening in high season when it's 3200/1600Ft and there's music and dancing on board.

## Bus

### BUDATOURS Map p224

☎ 353 0558, 374 7070; [www.budatours.hu](http://www.budatours.hu);

VI Andrásy út 2; M1/M1/2/3 Deák tér Budatours runs nine city bus tours (4300/3000Ft per adult/student) daily in both open and covered coaches in July and August (between three and eight the rest of the year) from VI Andrásy út 3 across the street from its main office. It's a two-hour tour with one stop (Gellért Hill) and with taped commentary in 16 different languages.

### CITYRAMA Map p222

☎ 302 4382; [www.cityrama.hu](http://www.cityrama.hu); V Báthory utca 22;

M3 Arany János utca

Cityrama offers three-hour city tours with three stops from 7000/3000Ft per adult/child under 12.

### HUNGARY PROGRAM CENTRUM

Map p224

☎ 317 7767, 06 20 944 9091; [www.programcentrum.hu](http://www.programcentrum.hu); V Erzsébet tér 9-10

With an office next to the Le Meridien Budapest hotel, this operator has similar tours to those offered by Cityrama, but they're a wee bit cheaper (eg 6500/3250Ft per adult/child for the three-hour city tour) – at least for adults.

### QUEENYBUS Map p216

☎ 247 7159, 06 70 338 1159;

[queenybus@queenybus.hu](mailto:queenybus@queenybus.hu); XI Törökbalinti út 28;

☎ 8

Queenybus has buses departing three times daily (10am, 11am and 2.20pm) from in front of the Basilica of St Stephen (Map p224; V Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út) for three-hour city tours (6000/3000/3200Ft per adult/child under 14/student, open deck 4300/1500/3000Ft).

## Cycling

### YELLOW ZEBRA BIKES Map p224

☎ 266 8777, 06 30 211 8861; [www.yellowzebrabikes.com](http://www.yellowzebrabikes.com); V Sütő utca 2; M1/M1/2/3 Deák Ferenc tér Run by the same people behind Absolute Walking Tours (below), Yellow Zebra has cycling tours (5500/5000Ft per adult/student) of Budapest by day at 11am May to October with an additional departure at 4pm in July and August. Tours take in Heroes' Sq, City Park, inner Pest and Castle Hill and include the bike and a drink. They depart from in front of the yellow Calvinist church in V Deák Ferenc tér (Map p224) and last 3½ to four hours. There is an Opera House branch (Map p222; ☎ 269 3843; VI Lázár utca 16; M1 Opera), from where it also runs City Segway Tours ([www.citysegwaytours.com](http://www.citysegwaytours.com)), which though not on bicycles involve two-wheeled, electric-powered conveyances. Segway tours (12,500Ft), which follow an abbreviated version of the bike tour's Pest route and last three to 3½ hours, depart from the Opera branch at 10.30am daily year-round and at 6.30pm daily April to October. You must book 72 hours in advance via the web (24 hours ahead by phone) for these tours.

## Walking

### ABSOLUTE WALKING TOURS Map p224

☎ 266 8777, 06 30 211 8861; [www.absolutetours.com](http://www.absolutetours.com); V Sütő utca 2; M1/M1/2/3 Deák Ferenc tér This very reliable outfit has, among other tours, a 3½-hour guided promenade (4000/3500Ft per adult/student or under-26) through City Park, central Pest and Castle Hill. Tours depart at 9.30am and 1.30pm daily from mid-May to September and at 10.30am daily the rest of the year from the steps of the yellow Calvinist church on V Deák Ferenc tér (Map p224). Cracker specialist tours include the Hammer & Sickle Tour (6000/5000Ft) and the Hungaro Gastro Food & Wine Tour (6500/5500Ft).

### HUNGÁRIA KONCERT

☎ 317 2754, 201 5928; [www.ticket.info.hu](http://www.ticket.info.hu) Focusing on Budapest's Jewish heritage, this operator has a 2½-hour tour available at 10.30am and 1.30pm most weekdays year-round and at 11.30am on Sunday. The tour includes a visit to the Great and Orthodox Synagogues, the Jewish Museum, a

walking tour of the ghetto and a nonkosher snack for 5600/5100Ft per adult/student (4900/4300Ft without the snack), including transport to the Great Synagogue. Tickets are available from locations throughout the city, including the Duna Palota (Map p224; V Zrínyi utca) entertainment centre and at the entrance to the Great Synagogue (Map p224; VII Dohány utca 2-8).

### PAUL STREET TOURS

☎ 06 20 933 5240; [taylorj@mail.datanet.hu](mailto:taylorj@mail.datanet.hu)

These very personal walking tours cover the Castle District (about two hours), less-explored areas of Pest, such as the Jewish Quarter and Andrásy út (two to three hours), the Little Ring Road, the parks and gardens of Budapest and shopping, with lots of anecdotal information on architecture and social history, especially life in and around the *udvar* (courtyards) of *fin-de-siècle* Pest. Tours are available by appointment year-round in English or Hungarian and cost €25 per hour regardless of size.

## BUDA

Eating p94; Sleeping p154; Shopping p142

Leafy and unpolluted, Buda is more than just a 'pretty face' seen from the Pest side of the Danube. Its more majestic western side fronting the Danube contains some of Budapest's most important and historical landmarks (eg Castle Hill, the Citadella) and museums (eg National Gallery, Budapest History Museum) and, to the north, the original Roman settlement at Aquincum.

## CASTLE HILL

Várhegy (Castle Hill; Map p220) is a limestone plateau 1km long and towering 170m above the Danube. It contains Budapest's most important medieval monuments and museums and is a Unesco World Heritage Site. It is the premier sight in the capital, and with its grand views and so many things to see, you should start here. Below is a 28km network of caves formed by thermal springs that were supposedly used by the Turks for military purposes, as air-raid shelters during WWII, and as a secret military installation during the Cold War.

The walled area consists of two distinct parts: the Old Town to the north, where commoners lived in the Middle Ages (the

present-day owners of the coveted burgher houses here are anything but 'common'); and the Royal Palace, the original site of the castle built in the 13th century, now housing two important museums.

The easiest way to get to Castle Hill from Pest is to take bus 16 from Deák Ferenc tér to Dísz tér, midway between the Old Town and the Royal Palace. Much more fun, though, is to stroll across Chain Bridge and board the Sikkó (uphill/downhill ticket adult 650/550Ft, child aged 3-14 flat fare 350Ft; ☎ 7.30am-10pm, closed 1st and 3rd Monday of each month), a funicular railway built in 1870 that ascends from Clark Ádám tér to Szent György tér near the Royal Palace.

Alternatively, you can walk up the Király lépcső, the 'Royal Steps' that lead northwest from Clark Ádám tér, or the wide staircase that goes to the southern end of the Royal Palace from I Szarvas tér.

Another option is to take metro M2 to Moszkva tér, walk up the steps in the north-eastern part of the square and along I Várfoke utca to the Vienna Gate; a minibus with a logo of a castle and labelled 'Várbusz' (or 'Dísz tér') follows the same route from the start of Várfoke utca.

### BUDA CASTLE LABYRINTH Map p220

Budavári Labirintus; ☎ 489 3280; [www.labirintus.com](http://www.labirintus.com); entrances at I Úri utca 9 & Lovas út 4; adult/child 1400/1100Ft; ☎ 9.30am-7.30pm; ☎ 16 or Várbusz The labyrinth, a 1200m-long cave system some 16m under the Castle District, looks at how the caves have been used – from prehistoric times – in nine halls and chambers.

## BUDA TRANSPORT

Bus 7 to Gellért Hill & the Tabán; 16 to Castle Hill; 27 to Gellért Hill & the Tabán; 34, 42 to Óbuda & Aquincum; 60 to Víziváros; 86 to Gellért Hill & the Tabán, Víziváros and Óbuda & Aquincum; 158 to Buda Hills; Várbusz to Castle Hill

Funicular Sikkó to Castle Hill

HÉV To Víziváros and Óbuda & Aquincum

Metro M2 to Castle Hill, Víziváros and Buda Hills

Tram 1, 1/a to Óbuda & Aquincum; 4, 6 to Víziváros; 17 to Víziváros and Óbuda & Aquincum; 18 to Gellért Hill & the Tabán and Buda Hills; 19 to Gellért Hill & the Tabán and Víziváros; 47, 49 to Gellért Hill & the Tabán; 56 to Buda Hills

## BUDA TOP FIVE

- Aquincum Museum (p59)
- Fishermen's Bastion (below)
- Hungarian National Gallery (right)
- Kiscelli Museum & Municipal Gallery (p60)
- Matthias Church (opposite)

The admission fee is very high by Budapest standards, but it's all good fun and a relief from the heat and the crowds above on a hot summer's day.

### BUDAPEST HISTORY MUSEUM

Map p220  
 Budapesti Történeti Múzeum; ☎ 225 7815, 375 7533; Royal Palace, Wing E; adult/student or child/family 900/450/1500Ft, audioguide 800Ft; 🕒 10am-6pm daily mid-May–mid-Sep, 10am-6pm Wed-Mon Mar–mid-May & mid-Sep–Oct, 10am-4pm Wed-Mon Nov-Feb; 🚶 16 or Várbusz

Also known as the Castle Museum (Vár Múzeum), the history museum traces the 2000 years of the city on three floors of rather jumbled exhibits. Restored palace rooms dating from the 15th century can be entered from the basement, which contains a display on the Royal Palace in medieval Buda. In the basement three vaulted halls, one with a magnificent door frame in red marble bearing the seal of Queen Beatrice and tiles with a raven and a ring (the seal of her husband King Matthias Corvinus), lead to the Gothic Hall, the Royal Cellar and the 14th-century Tower Chapel. On the ground floor is an exhibit entitled 'Budapest in the Middle Ages', as well as Gothic statues of courtiers, squires and saints discovered during excavations in 1974. The presentation on the 1st floor – 'Budapest in Modern Times' – traces the history of the city from the expulsion of the Turks in 1686 to Hungary's entry into the EU. On the 2nd floor you'll learn about Budapest from prehistoric times to the arrival of the Avars in the late 6th century.

### FISHERMEN'S BASTION

Map p220  
 Halászbástya; adult/child 330/165Ft; 🕒 9am-11pm; 🚶 16 or Várbusz

The bastion is a neo-Gothic masquerade that most visitors (and Hungarians) believe to be much older. But who cares? It looks medieval and still offers among the best views in Budapest. Built as a viewing platform in 1905 by Frigyes Schulek, the

bastion's name was taken from the guild of fishermen responsible for defending this stretch of the wall in the Middle Ages. The seven gleaming white turrets represent the Magyar tribes that entered the Carpathian Basin in the late 9th century.

### GOLDEN EAGLE PHARMACY

MUSEUM Map p220

Arany Sas Patikamúzeum; ☎ 375 9772; I Tárnok utca 18; admission free; 🕒 10.30am-5.30pm Tue-Sun mid-Mar–Oct, 10.30am-3.30pm Tue-Sun Nov–mid-Mar; 🚶 16 or Várbusz

Just north of Dísz tér on the site of Budapest's first pharmacy (1681), this branch of the Semmelweis Museum of Medical History (p57) contains an unusual mixture of displays, including a mock-up of an alchemist's laboratory and a small 'spice rack' used by 17th-century travellers for their daily fixes of herbs.

### HOUSE OF HUNGARIAN WINES

Map p220

Magyar Borok Háza; ☎ 212 1030; www.winehouse.hu; I Szentháromság tér 6; wine tasting 3800Ft; 🕒 noon-8pm; 🚶 16 or Várbusz

This wine centre offers a crash course in Hungarian viticulture in the heart of the Castle District. But with over 700 wines on display from Hungary's 22 wine regions and up to 50 to try, 'crash' may soon become the operative word. Do what the pros do and try not to swallow.

### HUNGARIAN NATIONAL GALLERY

Map p220

Magyar Nemzeti Galéria; ☎ 201 9082, 06 20 439 7325; Royal Palace, Wings B, C & D; admission free, special exhibitions adult/child/family 1500/800/3000Ft; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; 🚶 16 or Várbusz  
 The Hungarian National Gallery is an overwhelmingly large collection over four floors that traces the development of Hungarian art from the 10th century to the present day. The largest collections include medieval and Renaissance stonework, Gothic wooden sculptures and panel paintings, late Gothic winged altars, and late Renaissance and baroque art. Do not miss the restored altar of St John the Baptist from Kisszebes (now in Romania) or the 16th-century painted wooden ceiling in the next room.

The museum also has an important collection of Hungarian paintings and sculpture from the 19th and 20th centuries. You may not recognise many names, but keep an eye open for the harrowing depictions of war and the dispossessed by László Mednyánszky, the unique portraits by József Rippl-Rónai, the mammoth canvases by Tivadar Csontváry, the paintings of carnivals by the modern artist Vilmos Aba-Novák and works by the realist Mihály Munkácsy, the 'painter of the *puszta*' (Great Plain).

### MATTHIAS CHURCH

Map p220  
 Mátyás-templom; ☎ 355 5657; www.matyas-templom.hu; I Szentháromság tér 2; adult/child/family 600/300/1000Ft, audioguide 300Ft; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat, 1-5pm Sun; 🚶 16 or Várbusz

Parts of Castle Hill's landmark church date back some 500 years, notably the carvings above the southern entrance. But basically the church (so named because King Matthias Corvinus married Beatrice here in 1474) is a neo-Gothic creation designed by the architect Frigyes Schulek in 1896.

The church has a colourful tiled roof and a delicate spire; the interior is remarkable for its stained-glass windows, frescoes and wall decorations by the Romantic painters Károly Lotz and Bertalan Székely. There are organ concerts in the church on certain evenings, continuing a tradition that began in 1867 when Franz Liszt's *Hungarian Coronation Mass* was first played here for the coronation of Franz Joseph and Elizabeth as king and queen of Hungary. A US\$20 million restoration of the church under-

taken by the government is expected to be complete in 2007.

Steps to the right of the main altar inside the church lead to the crypt. The Matthias Church Collection of Ecclesiastical Art (Mátyás-templom Egyházművészeti Gyűjteménye; ☎ 488 0717), which is included in the church admission fee and keeps the same hours, contains ornate monstrances, reliquaries, chalices and other church plate.

### MEDIEVAL JEWISH PRAYER HOUSE

MAP p220

Középkori Zsidó Imaház; ☎ 225 7815; I Táncsics Mihály utca 26; adult/student or child 400/150Ft; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Sun May-Oct; 🚶 16 or Várbusz  
 With parts dating from the 14th century, this medieval Jewish house of worship contains documents and items linked to the Jewish community of Buda, as well as Gothic stone carvings and tombstones from the Great Synagogue (p68) in Pest.

### HUNGARIAN MUSEUM OF

COMMERCE & CATERING

Map p220  
 Magyar Kereskedelmi és Vendéglátóipari Múzeum; ☎ 375 6249; I Fortuna utca 4; adult/child/family 400/200/1000Ft; 🕒 10am-5pm Wed-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun; 🚶 16 or Várbusz

The catering section of this museum, to the left as you enter the archway, contains an entire 19th-century cake shop in one of its three rooms, complete with a pastry kitchen. There are moulds for every occasion, a marble-lined icebox and an antique ice-cream maker. Much is made of the great confectioners Emil Gerbeaud of *cukrászda*

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 NOT AVAILABLE  
 IN PICK & MIX



(café) fame and József Dobos, who gave his name to *Dobos torta* (p29). The commerce collection traces retail trade in the capital. Along with advertisements and electric toys that still work, there's an exhibit on the hyperinflation that Hungary suffered after WWII when a basket of money would buy no more than four eggs.

**MILITARY HISTORY MUSEUM** Map p220  
**Hadtörténelmi Múzeum**; ☎ 356 9522; I Tóth Árpád sétány 40; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar; 🚶 16 or Várbusz

Loaded with weaponry from before the Turkish conquest, the Military History Museum also does a good job with uniforms, medals, flags and battle-themed fine art. Exhibits focus on the 1848-49 War of Independence and the Hungarian Royal Army under Admiral Miklós Horthy (1918-43).

**TELEPHONY MUSEUM** Map p220  
**Telefónia Múzeum**; ☎ 201 8188; www.postamuzeum.hu; I Úri utca 49 & Országház utca 30; adult/child 200/100Ft; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun; 🚶 16 or Várbusz  
 This museum, set within a lovely backstreet garden, documents the history of the telephone in Hungary since 1881, when the world's first switchboard – a 7A1 Rotary still working and the centrepiece of the exhibition – was set up in Budapest. Other exhibits pay tribute to Tivadár Puskás, a Hungarian associate of Thomas Edison, and of the latter's fleeting visit to Budapest in 1891.

**GELLÉRT HILL & THE TABÁN**  
 Gellért-hegy (Gellért Hill; Map p220 and Map pp228-9), a 235m-high rocky hill southeast of the Castle District, is crowned with a fortress of sorts and the Independence Monument, Budapest's unofficial symbol. From Gellért Hill, you can't beat the views of the Royal Palace or the Danube and its fine bridges, and Jubilee Park on the south side is an ideal spot for a picnic. The Tabán (Map p220), the leafy area between Gellért and Castle Hills, and stretching northwest as far as Déli train station, is associated with the Serbs, who settled here after fleeing from the Turks in the early 18th century. Plaques on I Döbrentei utca mark the water level of the Danube during two devastating floods in 1775 and 1838.

This neighbourhood later became known for its restaurants and wine gardens – a kind of Montmartre for Budapest. Most of these burned to the ground at the turn of the 20th century. All that remains is a lovely little renovated building with a fountain designed by Miklós Ybl in 1879 known as the **Castle Garden Kiosk** (Várkert Kioszk; I Ybl Miklós tér 2-6), which was once a pump house for Castle Hill and is now a casino. The dilapidated steps and archways across the road, is all that is left of the **Castle Bazaar** (Várbaáz) pleasure park.

Today Gellért Hill and the Tabán districts are given over to private homes, parks and three thermal spas that make good use of the hot springs gushing from deep below Gellért Hill: the recently renovated Rudas Baths (Map p224; p137) and the Gellért Baths (Map pp228-9; p137); the Rác Baths (Map p220), designed by Miklós Ybl around a much older Turkish bath, was still under renovation at the time of writing. If you don't like getting wet you can try a 'drinking cure' by visiting the **pump room** (*ivócsarnok*; Map p224; ☎ 11am-6pm Mon, Wed & Fri, 7am-2pm Tue & Thu), which is within sight of the Rudas Baths just below the western end of Elizabeth Bridge. A half-litre/litre of the hot smelly water – meant to cure whatever ails you – is just 15/25Ft.

**CAVE CHAPEL** Map pp228-9  
**Sziklakápolna**; ☎ 385 1529; ☎ 9am-9pm; 🚶 47 or 49

This chapel on a small hill directly north of the landmark Gellért Hotel was built into a cave in 1926. It was the seat of the Pauline order until 1951 when the priests were arrested and imprisoned by the communists and the cave was sealed off. It was reopened and reconsecrated in 1992. Behind the chapel is the monastery, with its neo-Gothic turrets visible from Independence Bridge.

**CITADELLA** Map pp228-9  
 ☎ 365 6076; www.citadella.hu; ☎ 24hr; 🚶 27  
 The Citadella atop St Gellért Hill is a fortress that never did battle. Built by the Habsburgs after the 1848-49 War of Independence to 'defend' the city from further insurrection, by the time it was ready in 1851 the political climate had changed and the Citadella had become obsolete. It was given to the city in the 1890s and parts of it were symbolically blown to pieces. Today

## BUDAPEST'S BRIDGES

The city's bridges, both landmarks and delightful vantage points over the Danube, are stitches that have bound Buda and Pest together since well before the two were linked politically in 1873. There are a total of nine spans, including a railroad bridge, but the four in the centre stand head and shoulders above the rest.

**Margaret Bridge** (Margit híd; Map pp218-19) This span introduces the Big Ring Road to Buda. It is unique in that it doglegs in order to stand at right angles to the Danube at its confluence at the southern tip of Margaret Island. It was originally built by French engineer Ernest Gouin in 1876; the branch leading to the island was added in 1901.

**Széchenyi Chain Bridge** (Széchenyi láncíd; Map p220) A twin-towered structure to the south, this is the city's oldest and arguably its most beautiful bridge. It is named in honour of its initiator, István Széchenyi (p42), but was actually built by Scotsman Adam Clark. When it opened in 1849, Chain Bridge was unique for two reasons: it was the first permanent dry link between Buda and Pest; and the aristocracy – previously exempt from all taxation – had to pay a toll like everybody else to use it.

**Elizabeth Bridge** (Erzsébet híd; Map p224) This gleaming white (though rather generic-looking) suspension bridge further downstream enjoys a special place in the hearts of many Budapesters as it was the first newly designed bridge to reopen after WWII (1964). (The original span, erected in 1903, was too badly damaged to rebuild.) Boasting a higher arch than the others, it offers dramatic views of both Castle and Gellért Hills and, of course, the more attractive bridges to the north and south.

**Independence Bridge** (Szabadság híd; Map pp228-9) Opened for the 1896 millenary exhibition, Independence Bridge has a *fin-de-siècle* cantilevered span. Each post of the bridge, which was originally named after Habsburg emperor Franz Joseph, is topped by a mythical *turul* bird (p37) ready to take flight. It was rebuilt in the same style in 1946.

the Citadella contains some big guns and dusty displays in the central courtyard, the new **1944 Waxworks** (1944 Panoptikum; ☎ 279 1963; admission 1200Ft; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, 8am-10pm Sat, 8am-9pm Sun) inside a WWII bunker, a hotel/hostel (p154), a restaurant and a dance club.

## INDEPENDENCE MONUMENT

Map pp228-9  
**Szabadság-szobor**; 🚶 27

The charming lady with the palm frond proclaiming freedom throughout the city from atop Gellért Hill is just east of the Citadella. Some 14m high, it was erected in 1947 in tribute to the Soviet soldiers who died liberating Budapest in 1945, but the victims' names in Cyrillic letters on the plinth and the statues of the Soviet soldiers were removed in 1992. In fact, the monument had been designed by the politically 'flexible' sculptor Zsigmond Kisfaludi Strobl much earlier for the ultraright government of Admiral Miklós Horthy. After the war, when procommunist monuments were in short supply, Kisfaludi Strobl passed it off as a memorial to the Soviets. If you walk west for a few minutes along Citadella sétány north of the fortress, you'll come to what is arguably the best vantage point in Budapest.

## SEMMELEIS MUSEUM OF

**MEDICAL HISTORY** Map p220  
**Semmelweis Orvostörténelmi Múzeum**; ☎ 201 1577; I Apród utca 1-3; adult/child 300/150Ft; ☎ 10.30am-5.30pm Tue-Sun mid-Mar–Oct, 10.30am-3.30pm Tue-Sun Nov–mid-Mar; 🚶 19

This museum traces the history of medicine from Graeco-Roman times through medical tools and implements and photographs, and yet another antique pharmacy makes an appearance. Ignác Semmelweis (1818-65), the 'saviour of mothers' who discovered the cause of puerperal (or childbirth) fever, was born in this house.

## STATUES & BRIDGES

Szent Gellért tér faces **Independence Bridge** (Szabadság híd; Map pp228-9; 🚶 47 or 49), which opened for the millenary exhibition in 1896.

Looking down on **Elizabeth Bridge** (Erzsébet híd; Map p224; 🚶 7) from Gellért Hill is **St Gellért** (Map p220; 🚶 7), an Italian missionary invited to Hungary by King Stephen to convert the natives. The monument marks the spot from where the bishop was hurled to his death in a spiked barrel in 1046 by pagan Hungarians resisting the new faith.

North of the bridge and through the underpass is a **statue of Elizabeth** (Map p224; 🚶 7), the Habsburg empress and Hungarian

queen and the consort of Franz Joseph much beloved by Magyars because, among other things, she learned to speak Hungarian. Sissi, as she was affectionately known, was assassinated by an Italian anarchist in Geneva in 1898.

## VÍZIVÁROS

The suburb of Víziváros (Watertown; Map p220) is the narrow area between the Danube and Castle Hill that widens as it approaches Óbuda to the north and Rózsadomb (Rose Hill) to the northwest, spreading west to Moszkva tér, one of Buda's main transport hubs. Under the Turks many of the district's churches were used as mosques, and baths were built, one of which is still functioning.

Víziváros begins at Clark Ádám tér, that is named after the 19th-century Scottish engineer who supervised the building of the Széchenyi Chain Bridge (p57), leading east from the square. Clark also designed the all-important tunnel (*alagút*) under Castle Hill (p53), which took eight months to carve out of the limestone. The curious sculpture, which looks like a elongated doughnut, hidden in the bushes to the south is the **0km stone**; all Hungarian roads to and from the capital are measured from this exact spot.

## FŐ UTCA

🚶 86

Fő utca is the 'Main Street' running through Víziváros and dates from Roman times. At the former **Capuchin church** (Map p220; I Fő utca 30-32), used as a mosque during the Turkish occupation, you can see the remains of two Islamic-style ogee-arched doors and windows on the southern side. Around the corner there's the seal of King Matthias Corvinus – a raven and a ring – and the little square with the delightful **Louis Fountain** (Lajos kútja; 1904; Map p220) is called **Corvin tér**. The Eclectic building on the north side is the **Buda Concert Hall** (Budai Vigadó; Map p220; Corvin tér 8). The **Iron Stump** (Vastuskó; Map p220; cnr I Vám utca & Iskola utca) to the north is the odd-looking tree trunk into which itinerant artisans and merchants would drive a nail to mark their visit.

Batthyány tér (Map p220), a short distance to the northeast, is the centre of Víziváros and the best place to snap a picture of the Parliament building across the river. In the centre of this rather shabby square is the entrance to both metro M2 and the

HÉV suburban line to Szentendre. On the southern side is **St Anne's Church** (Szent Anna templom; Map p220; II Batthyány tér 7), with one of the most eye-catching baroque interiors of any church in Budapest.

A couple of streets north is **Nagy Imre tér**, with the enormous former **Military Court of Justice** (Map pp218–19; II Fő utca 70-78) on the northern side. Here Imre Nagy and others were tried and sentenced to death in 1958 (p47). It was also the site of the notorious **Fő utca prison** where many other victims of the regime were incarcerated and tortured.

The **Király Baths** (Király Gyógyfürdő; Map pp218–19; II Fő utca 82-86), parts of which date from 1580, is one block to the north (see p136). Across pedestrianised Ganz utca is the Greek Catholic **St Florian Chapel** (Szent Florián kápolna; Map pp218–19; II Fő utca 88-90), built in 1760 and dedicated to the patron saint of firefighters.

## FOUNDRY MUSEUM Map pp218-19

Öntödei Múzeum; ☎ 202 5011, 201 4370; II Bem József utca 20; admission free; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun; 🚶 4 or 6

This museum is housed in the Ganz Machine Works foundry that was in use until the 1960s, and the massive ladles and cranes still stand, anxiously awaiting use. The exhibits include cast-iron stoves, bells and street furniture.

## FRANKEL LEÓ ÚT Map pp218-19

🚶 17

At Bem József tér, Fő utca turns into Frankel Leó út, a tree-lined street of antique shops and boutiques. At its northern end is the **Lukács Bath** (Lukács Gyógyfürdő; II Frankel Leó út 25-29), which caters to an older and quite serious crowd of thermal enthusiasts (see p136). A short distance north and tucked away in an apartment block is the **Újlak Synagogue** (Újlaki zsinagóga; ☎ 326 1445; II Frankel Leó út 49), built in 1888 and the only functioning synagogue left on the Buda side.

## GÜL BABA'S TOMB Map pp218-19

Gül Baba Türebéje; ☎ 326 0062; II Türeb tér 1; adult/child 500/250Ft; 🕒 10am-6pm Mar-Oct, 10am-4pm Nov-Feb; 🚶 17

This overly reconstructed tomb contains the remains of one Gül Baba, an Ottoman Dervish who took part in the capture of Buda in

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1541, and is known in Hungary as the 'Father of Roses'. The tomb is a pilgrimage place for Muslims, especially from Turkey, and you must remove your shoes before entering the tomb. There's a pleasant café here with fine views. To reach the tomb from Török utca, which runs parallel to Frankel Leó út, walk west along steep (and cobbled) Gül Baba utca to the set of steps just past No 16. You can also reach here along Mecset utca, which runs north from Margit tér.

## MILLENNIUM PARK Map pp218-19

Millenáris Park; ☎ 438 5312; www.millenaris.hu; II Kis Rókus utca 16-20 & Lövház utca 37; 🕒 6am-1am; 🚶 M2 Moszkva tér

One of the more successful urban redevelopment projects on either side of the Danube in the past decade, this 'park' is a large landscaped complex behind the Mammut shopping mall comprising fountains, ponds, little bridges, a theatre and the **Millennium Exhibition Hall** (Millenáris Kiállítócsarnok; ☎ 438 5335; admission varies; 🕒 10am-6pm or 8pm), which hosts some unusual cultural exhibitions.

## ÓBUDA & AQUINCUM

Ó means 'ancient' in Hungarian; as its name suggests, Óbuda (Map pp226–7) is the oldest part of Buda. The Romans established Aquincum, a key military garrison and civilian town north of here at the end of the 1st century AD (see p36), and it became the seat of the Roman province of Pannonia Inferior in AD 106. When the Magyars arrived, they

named it Buda, which became Óbuda when the Royal Palace was built on Castle Hill and turned into the real centre.

Most visitors on their way to Szentendre (p170) on the Danube Bend are put off by what they see of Óbuda from the highway or the HÉV commuter train. Prefabricated housing blocks seem to go on forever, and the Árpád Bridge flyover splits the heart of the district (Flórián tér) in two. But behind all this are some of the most important Roman ruins in Hungary, noteworthy museums and small, quiet neighbourhoods that still recall *fin-de-siècle* Óbuda.

Aquincum (Map pp226–7), the most complete Roman civilian town in Hungary and now a museum, had paved streets and fairly sumptuous single-storey houses with courtyards, fountains and mosaic floors, as well as sophisticated drainage and heating systems. Not all that is apparent today as you walk among the ruins, but you can see its outlines as well as those of the big public baths, market, an early Christian church and a temple dedicated to the god Mithra, the chief deity of a religion that once rivalled Christianity in its number of believers (see p61).

## AQUINCUM MUSEUM Map pp226-7

Aquincumi Múzeum; ☎ 250 1650, 430 1081; www.aquincum.hu; III Szentendrei út 139; archaeological park adult/child 400/150Ft, park & museum adult/child/family 700/300/1200Ft; 🕒 park/museum 9/10am-6pm Tue-Sun May-Sep, 9/10am-5pm Tue-Sun 15-30 Apr & Oct; HÉV Aquincum

In the centre of what remains of the Roman civilian settlement, the Aquincum Museum tries to put the ruins in perspective, with some success. Most of the big sculptures and stone sarcophagi are outside to the left of the museum or behind it in the lapidary. Keep an eye open for the replica of a 3rd-century portable organ called a *hydra* (and the mosaic illustrating how it was played), pottery moulds, floor mosaics from the governor's palace across the river on Óbuda Island and a mock-up of a Roman bath.

## HERCULES VILLA Map pp226-7

Herkules Villa; ☎ 250 1650; III Meggyfa utca 19-21; admission free; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun May-Sep, 10am-5pm Tue-Sun 15-30 Apr & Oct; 🚶 86 Hercules Villa, in the middle of a vast housing estate northwest of Fő tér, is the name

given to some reconstructed Roman ruins. The name is derived from the astonishing 3rd-century floor mosaics of Hercules' exploits found in what was a Roman villa.

### IMRE VARGA EXHIBITION HOUSE

Map pp226-7

Varga Imre Kiállítóháza; ☎ 250 0274; III Laktanya utca 7; adult/child 500/250Ft; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; 🚶 86

This exhibition space includes sculptures, statues, medals and drawings by Varga (1923–), one of Hungary's foremost sculptors. Like others before him, notably Zsigmond Kisfaludi Strobl (see p57), he seems to have sat on both sides of the fence politically for decades – sculpting Béla Kun and Lenin as dextrously as he did St Stephen, Béla Bartók and even Imre Nagy (see p66). A short distance southwest of the museum is more of Varga's work: a group of metal sculptures of rather worried-looking women holding umbrellas in the middle of the road.

### KASSÁK MUSEUM

Map pp226-7

☎ 368 7021; III Fő tér 1; admission free, temporary exhibitions adult/child 150/100Ft; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; 🚶 86

Sharing the same building as the Vasarely Museum (right) but facing the inner courtyard, the Kassák Museum contains some real gems of early-20th-century avant-garde art as well as the complete works of the artist and writer Lajos Kassák (1887–1967). It is a three-hall art gallery on the 1st floor.

### KISCELLI MUSEUM & MUNICIPAL GALLERY

Map pp226-7

Kiscelli Múzeum; ☎ 388 8560, 250 0304; III Kiscelli utca 108; adult/child/family 600/300/1000Ft;

🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Nov-Mar; 🚶 17

Housed in an 18th-century monastery, later a barracks that was badly damaged in WWII and again in 1956, the exhibits at this museum southwest of Flórián tér attempt to tell the story (from the human side) of Budapest since liberation from the Turks. The museum counts among its best displays a complete 19th-century apothecary moved here from Kálvin tér, ancient signboards advertising shops and other

concerns and rooms furnished with Empire, Biedermeier and Art Nouveau furniture and bric-a-brac. The Municipal Gallery (Fővárosi Képtár), with its impressive art collection (József Rippl-Rónai, Lajos Tihanyi, István Csók, Béla Czöbel etc), is upstairs.

### ROMAN MILITARY AMPHITHEATRE

Map pp226-7

Római Katonai Amfiteátrum; III Pacsirtamező utca; admission free; 🕒 24hr; 🚶 86

Built in the 2nd century for the Roman garrisons, this amphitheatre about 800m south of Flórián tér could accommodate up to 15,000 spectators and was larger than the Colosseum in Rome. The rest of the military camp extended north to Flórián tér. Archaeology and classical-history buffs taking the 86 bus to Flórián tér should descend at III Nagyszombat utca. HéV passengers should get off at Timár utca.

### VASARELY MUSEUM

Map pp226-7

☎ 388 7551; III Szentlélek tér 6; admission free, temporary exhibitions adult/child 400/200Ft; 🕒 10am-5.30pm Tue-Sun; 🚶 86

In the crumbling Zichy Mansion, this museum (part of the Museum of Fine Arts; p71) contains the works of Victor Vasarely (or Vásárhelyi Győző before he emigrated to Paris in 1930), the late 'father of op art'. The works, especially ones like *Dirac* and *Tinko-F*, are excellent and fun to watch as they swell and move around the canvas. On the 1st floor are exhibits of works by Hungarian artists working abroad.

### ZSIGMOND KUN FOLK ART COLLECTION

Map pp226-7

Kun Zsigmond Népművészeti Gyűjtemény; ☎ 368 1138; III Fő tér 4; adult/child 300/200Ft; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; 🚶 86

This charming small museum displays folk art amassed by a wealthy ethnographer in his 18th-century townhouse. Most of the pottery and ceramics are from Mezőtúr near the Tisza River, but there are some rare Moravian and Swabian pieces as well as Transylvanian furniture and textiles. The attendants are very proud of the collection so be prepared for some lengthy explanations. And don't ask about the priceless tile stove that a workman knocked over a couple of years back (unless you want to see a grown man cry).

## BUDA HILLS

With 'peaks' reaching over 500m, a comprehensive system of trails and no lack of unusual conveyances, the Buda Hills (Map p216) make up what is the city's playground, and they're a welcome respite from hot, dusty Pest in the warmer months. Indeed, some well-heeled Budapest families have summer homes here. If you're planning to ramble, take along a copy of Cartographia's 1: 30,000 *A Budai-hegység* map (No 6; 900Ft), available from bookshops and newsstands throughout the city. Apart from the Béla Bartók Memorial House (right), there are very few sights per se, though you might want to poke your head into one of the Buda Hills' several caves (p138).

With all the unusual transport options, heading for the hills is more than half the fun. From the Moszkva tér metro station on the M2 line in Buda, walk west along Szilágyi Erzsébet fasor for 10 minutes (or take tram 18 or 56 for two stops) to the circular high-rise **Hotel Budapest** (Map p216; II Szilágyi Erzsébet fasor 47). Directly opposite is the terminus of the **Cog Railway** (Fogaskerekű vasút; ☎ 355 4167; admission 1 BKV ticket or adult/child 170/85Ft; 🕒 up 5am-11pm, down 5.20am-11.30pm). Built in 1874, the cog climbs for 3.6km in about 16 minutes to Széchenyi-hegy (427m), one of the prettiest residential areas in the city.

At Széchenyi-hegy, you can stop for a picnic in the park south of the old-time station or board the narrow-gauge **Children's Railway** (Gyermekvasút; ☎ 397 5394; www.gyermekvasut.com; adult/child 300/100Ft; 🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9.45am-5.30pm Sat

& Sun mid-Mar-late Oct, 10am-4pm Tue-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun late Oct-mid-Mar), two minutes to the south on Hegyhát út. The railway was built in 1951 by Pioneers (socialist Scouts) and is staffed entirely by schoolchildren aged 10 to 14 – with the exception of the engineer. The little train chugs along for 12km, terminating at Hűvösvölgy (Chilly Valley). There are walks fanning out from any of the stops along the way, or you can return to Moszkva tér on tram 56 from Hűvösvölgy. The train operates about once an hour (every 45 minutes at the weekend in peak season).

A more interesting way down from the hills, though, is to get off at János-hegy, the fourth stop on the Children's Railway and the highest point (527m) in the hills. About 700m due east is the **chair lift** (*libegő*; ☎ 394 3764; adult/child 500/200Ft; 🕒 9.30am-5pm mid-May-mid-Sep, 9.30am-4pm mid-Sep-mid-May), which will take you down to Zugligeti út. (Note the chair lift is closed on the Monday of every even-numbered week.) From here bus 158 returns to Moszkva tér (last one is just after 10.15pm).

### BÉLA BARTÓK MEMORIAL HOUSE

Map p216

Bartók Béla Emlékház; ☎ 394 2100; II Csálán út 29; adult/child 500/250Ft; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Sun; 🚶 29

North of Szilágyi Erzsébet fasor but still very much in the Buda Hills, this recently renovated house is where the great composer resided from 1932 until 1940, when he emigrated to the USA. Among other things on display is the old Edison recorder

## MITHRA & THE GREAT SACRIFICE

Mithraism, the worship of the god Mithra, originated in Persia. As Roman rule extended into Asia, the religion became extremely popular with traders, imperial slaves and mercenaries of the Roman army and spread rapidly throughout the empire in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. In fact, Mithraism was the principal rival of Christianity until Constantine came to the throne in the 4th century.

Mithraism was a mysterious religion with its devotees sworn to secrecy. What little is known of Mithra, the god of justice and social contract, has been deduced from reliefs and icons found in sanctuaries and temples, such as the one at Aquincum. Most of these portray Mithra clad in a Persian-style cap and tunic, sacrificing a white bull in front of Sol, the sun god. From the bull's blood sprout grain and grapes and from its semen animals. Sol's wife Luna, the moon, begins her cycle and time is born.

Mithraism and Christianity were close competitors partly because of the similarity in many of their rituals. Both involve the birth of a deity on 25 December, shepherds, death and resurrection, and a form of baptism. Devotees knelt when they worshipped and a common meal – a 'communion' of bread and water – was a regular feature of both liturgies.



(complete with wax cylinders) that Bartók used to record Hungarian folk music in Transylvania, as well as furniture and other objects he collected.

## OUTER BUDA DISTRICTS

Worth a visit are a number of unusual sights further afield in southwest Buda. Whether you're into socialist icons, exquisite European furniture or tropical fish in formation, they're all an easy bus ride away.

### NAGYTÉTÉNY CASTLE MUSEUM

Nagyttényi Kastélymúzeum; ☎ 207 5462, 207 0005; XXII Kastélypark utca 9-11; admission free, special exhibitions adult/child 600/300Ft; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; 🚶 3 from XI Móricz Zsigmond körtér in Pest

In a baroque mansion in deepest south Buda, Nagytétény Castle Museum contains an exhibition from the Applied Arts Museum (p69) tracing the development of European furniture – from the Gothic to Biedermeier styles (approximately 1450 to 1850) – with some 300 items on display in more than two dozen rooms.

### STATUE PARK Map p216

Szoborpark; ☎ 424 7500; www.szoborpark.hu; cnr XXII Szabadkai út & Balatoni út; adult/child 600/400Ft; 🕒 10am-dusk; 🚶 for Diósd-Érd Home to more than 40 busts, statues and plaques of Lenin, Marx, Béla Kun and 'heroic' workers that have ended up on trash heaps in other former socialist countries, Statue Park is a truly mind-blowing place to visit. Ogle at the socialist realism and try to imagine that at least four of these monstrous monuments were erected as recently as the late 1980s; a few of them, including the Béla Kun memorial of our 'hero' Varga (p60), were still in place when this author moved to Budapest in early 1992.

To reach this socialist Disneyland, take tram 19 from I Batthyány tér in Buda, tram 49 from V Deák Ferenc tér in Pest or renumbered bus 7 from V Ferenciek tere in Pest to the terminus at XI Etele tér. From the square catch a yellow Volán bus from stand 7 to Diósd-Érd; you'll want to get off at the fifth stop.

A direct bus costing 1950/1350Ft per adult/child return departs from in front of

the Le Meridien Budapest hotel on V Deák Ferenc tér daily at 11am year-round, with an extra departure at 3pm March to October and additional ones at 10am and 4pm in July and August.

### TROPICARIUM-OCEANARIUM

☎ 424 3050; www.tropicarium.hu; XXII Nagytétényi út 37-45; adult/child 1700/1000Ft; 🕒 10am-8pm; 🚶 3 from XI Móricz Zsigmond körtér

This vast aquarium complex at the Campona shopping centre in south Buda measures 3000 sq metres and is apparently the largest in Central Europe. Don't expect just to see snazzy neon-coloured tropical examples, however; this place prides itself on its local specimens too.

## MARGARET ISLAND

Sleeping p158

Neither Buda nor Pest though part of district XIII, 2.5km-long Margaret Island (Margitsziget; Map pp226-7 and Map pp218-19) in the middle of the Danube was always the domain of one religious order or another until the Turks arrived and turned what was then called the Island of Rabbits into – appropriately enough – a harem, from which all 'infidels' were barred. It's been a public park since the mid-19th century.

Like the Buda Hills, Margaret Island is not overly endowed with important sights and landmarks. But boasting a couple of large complexes, a thermal spa, gardens and shaded walkways, the island is a lovely place to head on a hot afternoon.

Margaret Island is a great spot for sports and other activities, and you could spend the entire day here cycling, swimming or just pampering yourself at the Danubius Grand Hotel Margitsziget (p158), one of the most modern spas in Budapest.

Margaret Island has two popular swimming pools on its western side. The first is the indoor/outdoor **Alfréd Hajós National Sports Pool** (Nemzeti Sportuszoda; Map pp218-19; XIII Margit-sziget), officially named after

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the Olympic swimming champion and later architect Alfréd Hajós, who won the 100m and 1200m events at the first modern Olympiad in 1896 and who actually built the place. Further north is the renovated **Palatinus** (Map pp226-7; XIII Margit-sziget) complex of outdoor pools, huge water slides and *strand* (beaches). For more on these pools see p137 and p137.

You can hire a bicycle from one of several stands, including **Sétacikli** (Map pp218-19; ☎ 06 30 966 6453; 3-speed per half-hour/hour/day 400/600/1800Ft, pedal coach for 3/5 people per hour 1800/2700Ft; 🕒 10am-dusk Mar-Oct), next to the athletic stadium as you walk from Margaret Bridge. **Bringóhintó** (Map pp226-7; ☎ 329 2073, 06 30 881 0983; www.bringohinto.hu; mountain bike per half-hour/hour 590/990Ft, pedal coach for 4 people 1480/3380Ft, inline skates 880/1480Ft; 🕒 8am-dusk year-round) rents out equipment from the refreshment stand near the Japanese Garden in the northern part of the island.

A twirl around the island in one of the horse-drawn **carriages** (Map pp226-7), stationed just south of the Bringóhintó bike-rental stand, costs from about 2000Ft per person.

## PEST

Eating p111; Sleeping p158; Shopping p143

While Buda can often feel like a garden, Pest is an urban jungle, with a wealth of architecture, museums, historic buildings and broad boulevards that are unmatched on the other side of the Danube. And while there's nothing like the Buda Hills here, there's no

shortage of green 'lungs' either – City Park at the end of Andrásy út is the largest park in Budapest and is filled with various sights and diversions.

## INNER TOWN

Belváros (Inner Town; Map p224) is the heart of Pest and contains the most valuable commercial real estate in the city. The area north of busy Ferenciek tere is particularly full of flashy boutiques and well-touristed bars and restaurants; you'll usually hear more German, Italian, Spanish and English spoken here than Hungarian.

The Inner Town contains four important 'centres': V Deák Ferenc tér, a busy square in the northeast corner of the Inner Town and the only place where all three metro lines (M1/2/3) converge; touristy V Vörösmarty tér, which is on the M1 metro at the northern end of V Váci utca; V Ferenciek tere on metro M3, which divides the Inner Town at Szabadsajtó út (Free Press Ave); and V Egyetem tér (University Sq), a five-minute walk south along V Károly Mihály utca from Ferenciek tere and 250m northwest of Kálvin tér on the M3 metro along leafy V Kecskeméti utca.

Semipedestrianised IX Ráday utca, which leads south from V Kálvin tér into Ferencváros, is full of cafés, clubs and restaurants where university students entertain themselves these days.

## PEST TRANSPORT

**Bus** 7 to the Inner Town, 15 to the Inner Town, Inner North Town and Józsefváros & Ferencváros; 16, 105 to the Inner North Town

**Metro** M1 to the Inner Town, Northern Inner Town, Szent István & Terézváros, Erzsébetváros, Andrásy út and City Park; M2 to the Inner Town, Northern Inner Town, Erzsébetváros, Józsefváros & Ferencváros and Andrásy út; M3 to the Inner Town, Northern Inner Town, Szent István & Terézváros, Józsefváros & Ferencváros and Andrásy út

**Tram** 2, 2/a to the Inner Town, Inner North Town and Szent István & Terézváros; 4, 6 to the Inner North Town, Szent István & Terézváros, Erzsébetváros, Józsefváros & Ferencváros and Andrásy út; 47, 49 to Józsefváros & Ferencváros

**Trolleybus** 70, 72 to City Park; 74 to Erzsébetváros; 76, 78, 79 to Szent István & Terézváros and City Park

## MARGARET ISLAND TRANSPORT

**Bus** 26 to Árpád Bridge from Nyugati train station  
**Tram** 4 or 6 to Margaret Bridge



## PEST TOP FIVE

- Basilica of St Stephen (right)
- House of Terror (p71)
- Hungarian State Opera House (p71)
- Museum of Fine Arts (p71)
- Parliament (opposite)

## INNER TOWN PARISH CHURCH

Map p224

**Belvárosi plébániatemplom; V Március 15 tér 2;**

🚶 2 or 2/a

On the eastern side of Március 15 tér, sitting uncomfortably close to the Elizabeth Bridge flyover is where a Romanesque church was first built in the 12th century within a Roman fortress. You can still see a few bits of the fort, *Contra Aquincum*, in the small park to the north. The present church was rebuilt in the 14th and 18th centuries, and you can easily spot Gothic, Renaissance, baroque and even Turkish elements both inside and out.

## UNDERGROUND RAILWAY MUSEUM

Map p224

**Földalatti Vasúti Múzeum; ☎ 461 6500; 1 BKV ticket or adult/child 170/85Ft; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar;**

🚶 M1/2/3 Deák Ferenc tér

In the pedestrian subway beneath V Deák Ferenc tér and next to the main ticket window, the Underground Railway Museum traces the history of the capital's three underground lines and displays plans for the future. Much emphasis is put on the little yellow metro (M1), Continental Europe's first underground railway, which opened for the millenary celebrations in 1896 and was completely renovated for the millennium 100 years later.

## NORTHERN INNER TOWN

The Northern Inner Town (Map p224 and Map p222), which is more accurately called Lipótváros (Leopold Town), is full of offices, government ministries, 19th-century apartment blocks and grand squares. Its confines are, in effect, Szent István körút to the north, V József Attila utca to the south, the Danube to the west and, to the east, V Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út, the arrow-straight boulevard that stretches from central Deák Ferenc tér

and Nyugati tér, where Nyugati train station (Nyugati pályaudvar) is located.

## BASILICA OF ST STEPHEN Map p224

**Szent István Bazilika; ☎ 311 0839, 338 2151; V Szent István tér; 🕒 9am-5pm & 7-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm & 7-8pm Sat, 1-5pm & 7-8pm Sun;**

🚶 M2 Arany János utca

Budapest's cathedral was built over the course of half a century and completed in 1905. Much of the interruption had to do with the fiasco in 1868 when the dome collapsed during a storm, and the structure had to be demolished and rebuilt from the ground up. The basilica is rather dark and gloomy inside, but take a trip to the top of the dome (adult/child 500/400Ft; 🕒 10am-4.30pm Apr & May, 9.30am-6pm Jun-Aug, 10am-5.30pm Sep & Oct), which can be reached by lift and 146 steps and offers one of the best views in the city.

To the right as you enter the basilica is a small treasury (*kinctár*; 🕒 9am-5pm Apr-Sep, 10am-4pm Oct-Mar) of ecclesiastical objects. Behind the main altar and to the left is the basilica's major drawing card: the Holy Right Chapel (Szent Jobb kápolna; 🕒 9am-4.30pm Mon-Sat, 1-4.30pm Sun May-Sep, 10am-4pm Mon-Sat, 1-4.30pm Sun Oct-Apr). It contains the Holy Right (also known as the Holy Dexter), the mummified right hand of St Stephen and an object of great devotion. It was returned to Hungary by Habsburg empress Maria Theresa in 1771 after it was discovered in a monastery in Bosnia. Like the Crown of St Stephen, it too was snatched by the bad guys after WWII but was soon, er, handed over to the rightful (ugh) owners.

English-language guided tours of the basilica (with/without dome visit 2000/1500Ft) depart weekdays at 9.30am, 11am, 2pm and 3.30pm and on Saturday at 9.30am and 11am.

## ETHNOGRAPHY MUSEUM Map p222

**Néprajzi Múzeum; ☎ 473 2400; www.hem.hu; V Kossuth Lajos tér 12; admission free, temporary exhibitions adult/child/family from 500/200/1000Ft;**

🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; 🚶 M2 Kossuth Lajos tér

Visitors are offered an easy introduction to traditional Hungarian life here, with thousands of displays in 13 rooms on the 1st floor. The mock-ups of peasant houses from the Órség and Sárköz regions of Western

and Southern Transdanubia are well done, and there are some priceless objects collected from Transdanubia. On the 2nd floor, most of the temporary exhibitions deal with other peoples of Europe and further afield. The building itself was designed in 1893 to house the Supreme Court; note the ceiling fresco of *Justice* by Károly Lotz.

## PARLIAMENT Map p222

**Országház; ☎ 441 4904, 441 4415; V Kossuth Lajos tér 1-3, Gate X; admission free for EU citizens, other nationalities adult/child 2300/1150Ft; English-language tours 🕒 10am, noon, 1pm, 2pm & 6pm daily; 🚶 M2 Kossuth Lajos tér**

The Eclectic Parliament, designed by Imre Steindl and completed in 1902, has about 700 sumptuously decorated rooms but you'll only get to see three on a guided tour of the North Wing: the main staircase and Domed Hall, where the Crown of St Stephen (below), the nation's most important national icon, is on display, along with the ceremonial sword, orb and the oldest object among the coronation regalia, the 10th-century Persian-made sceptre with a crystal head depicting a lion; the Loge Hall; and the Congress Hall, where the House of Lords of the one-time bicameral assembly sat until 1944. The building is a blend of many architectural styles – neo-Gothic, neo-Romanesque, neobaroque – and overall works very well. Unfortunately what was spent on the design wasn't matched in the building materials. The ornate structure was surfaced with a porous form of limestone that does not resist pollution very well. Renovations began almost immediately after it opened and will continue until the

## THE CROWN OF ST STEPHEN

Legend tells us that it was Asztrik, the first abbot of the Benedictine monastery at Pannonhalma in Western Transdanubia, who presented a crown to Stephen as a gift from Pope Sylvester II around the year 1000, thus legitimising the new king's rule and assuring his loyalty to Rome over Constantinople. It's a nice story but has nothing to do with the object on display in the Parliament building. That two-part crown, with its characteristic bent cross, pendants hanging on either side and enamelled plaques of the Apostles, dates from the 12th century. Regardless of its provenance, the Crown of St Stephen has become the very symbol of the Hungarian nation.

The crown has disappeared several times over the centuries – purloined or otherwise – only to reappear later. During the Mongol invasions of the 13th century, the crown was dropped while being transported to a safe house, giving it that slightly skewed look. More recently, in 1945, Hungarian fascists fleeing ahead of the Soviet army took the crown to Austria. Eventually it fell into the hands of the US army, which transferred it to Fort Knox in Kentucky. In January 1978 the crown was returned to Hungary with great ceremony – and relief. Because legal judgments had always been handed down 'in the name of St Stephen's Crown' it was considered a living symbol and had thus been 'kidnapped'.

## LIFT US THIS DAY

One of the strangest public conveyances you'll ever encounter can still be found in a few office and government buildings in Budapest. They're the *kőröfogó* (rotator) lifts or elevators, nicknamed 'Pater Nosters' for their supposed resemblance to a large rosary. A Pater Noster is essentially a rotating series of individual cubicles that runs continuously. You don't push a button and wait for a door to open; you hop on just as a cubicle reaches floor level and you jump out – quickly – when you reach your desired floor. If you were wondering what happens at the top, stay on and find out. Don't worry – you'll live. The lift simply descends to the ground floor in darkness to begin its next revolution. The most central Pater Noster – that you may or may not be able to ride – is in the government building at V Vigadó utca 6 (Map p224).

building crumbles. Members of Parliament sit in the National Assembly Hall in the South Wing from February to June and again from September to December. Tours are available in six languages other than Hungarian and English.

## ROOSEVELT TÉR Map p224

🚶 2 or 2/a

Roosevelt tér, named in 1947 after the long-serving (1933–45) American president, is at the foot of Chain Bridge and offers among the best views of Castle Hill in Pest. Reach it from Buda on bus 16 or 105.

On the southern end of the square is a statue of Ferenc Deák, the Hungarian minister largely responsible for the Compromise of

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IN PICK & MIX

1867, which brought about the Dual Monarchy of Austria and Hungary (p44). The statue on the western side is of an Austrian and a Hungarian child holding hands in peaceful bliss. The Magyar kid's hair is tousled and he is naked; the Osztrák is demurely covered by a bit of the patrician's robe and his hair neatly coiffed.

The Art Nouveau building with the gold tiles to the east is **Gresham Palace** (V Roosevelt tér 5-6), built by an English insurance company in 1907. After a major overhaul, it now houses the sumptuous Four Seasons Gresham Palace Hotel (p159), arguably the city's finest hostelry. The **Hungarian Academy of Sciences** (Magyar Tudományos Akadémia; V Roosevelt tér 9), founded by Count István Széchenyi (p42), is at the northern end of the square.

### STATUES & MONUMENTS

Map p222  
Southeast of V Kossuth Lajos tér is a statue of **Imre Nagy** (V Vértanúk tere; M2 Kossuth Lajos tér), the reformist communist prime minister executed in 1958 for his role in the Uprising two years earlier (p47). It was unveiled with great ceremony in the summer of 1996.

Further south from the same square is a new monument to Hungarian Jews shot and thrown into the Danube by members of the fascist Arrow Cross Party (p46) in 1944 entitled **Shoes on the Danube** (V Pesti alsó rakpart; 2 or 2/a) by sculptor Gyula

Pauer. It's a simple affair – 60 pairs of old-style boots and shoes in cast iron, tossed higgledy-piggledy on a bank of the river – but it is one of the most poignant monuments yet unveiled in this city of so many tears. And when you've had your look around, considered how the authorities managed to round up so many Jews so very quickly – you mean there were actually snitches and informants among the brave and heroic souls of Budapest?!? – and wondered what it must have been like to hit the water, drowning, with a bullet in your guts, look up to open sky and do something the detainees of the 'glorious 1000-year' Reich could not do. Don't say, but shout: 'Never! Never! Never again!' Whoever wasn't listening 60 years ago just might have tuned in by now (but don't count on it).

### SZABADSÁG TÉR

Map p222

15  
'Independence Square', one of the largest in the city, is a few minutes' walk northeast of Roosevelt tér. In the centre is a memorial to the Soviet army, one of the very few still left in Budapest.

At the eastern side of the square is the fortress-like **US Embassy** (V Szabadság tér 12), now cut off from the square by high metal fencing and concrete blocks. It was here that Cardinal József Mindszenty sought refuge after the 1956 Uprising and stayed for

15 years until departing for Vienna in 1971 (below). The embassy backs onto Hold utca (Moon St), which, until 1990, was named Rosenberg házaspár utca (Rosenberg Couple St) after the American husband and wife Julius and Ethel Rosenberg who were executed as communist spies in the USA in 1953.

On that street south of the embassy you'll find the sensational former **Royal Postal Savings Bank** (V Hold utca 4), a Secessionist extravaganza of colourful tiles and folk motifs built by Ödön Lechner (p21) in 1901. It is now part of the **National Bank of Hungary** (Magyar Nemzeti Bank; V Szabadság tér 8) next door, which has reliefs that illustrate trade and commerce through history: Arab camel traders, African rug merchants, Chinese tea salesmen – and the inevitable solicitor witnessing contracts.

## SZENT ISTVÁN KÖRÚT & TERÉZVÁROS

Szent István körút (Map p222), the northernmost stretch of the Big Ring Road in Pest, runs in a westerly direction from Nyugati tér to Margaret Bridge and the Danube. It's an interesting street to stroll along, with many fine Eclectic-style buildings decorated with Atlases, reliefs and other details. The neighbourhood to the north of it, Újlipótváros (New Leopold Town; Map p222 and Map pp218–19), so called to distinguish it from Lipótváros (Leopold Town) in the Northern Inner Town – Archduke Leopold was the grandson of Habsburg empress Maria

Theresa – is especially rewarding to explore on foot (p82).

Teréz körút carries on from Szent István körút after the Nyugati train station. The neighbourhood on either side of this section of the ring road – district VI – is known as Terézváros (Teresa Town; Map p222) and was named in honour of Maria Teresa. It extends as far as VI Király utca and the start of VII Erzsébet körút.

### HOUSE OF HUNGARIAN PHOTOGRAPHERS

Map p222  
**Magyar Fotográfusok Háza**; ☎ 473 2666;  
VI Nagymező utca 20; adult/senior & student  
500/200Ft; ☎ 2-7pm Mon-Fri, 11am-7pm Sat &  
Sun; M1 Opera

The House of Hungarian Photographers is an extraordinary venue in the city's theatre district with top-class photography exhibitions. It is in delightful Mai Manó Ház, which was built in 1894 as a photo studio and has the bizarre meaning 'Modern Devil House'.

### NYUGATI TRAIN STATION

Map p222  
Nyugati pályaudvar; ☎ 349 0115; VI Teréz körút  
55-57; M3 Nyugati pályaudvar

The large iron and glass structure on Nyugati tér (known as Marx tér until the early 1990s) is the Nyugati train station, built in 1877 by the Paris-based Eiffel Company. In the early 1970s a train actually crashed through the enormous glass screen on the main façade when its brakes failed, coming to rest at the 4 and 6 tram line.

## CARDINAL MINDSZENTY

Born József Pehm in the village of Csehimindszent near Szombathely in 1892, Mindszenty was politically active from the time of his ordination in 1915. Imprisoned under the short-lived regime of communist Béla Kun in 1919 and again when the fascist Arrow Cross came to power in 1944, Mindszenty was made archbishop of Esztergom (and thus primate of Hungary) in 1945 and cardinal the following year.

When the new cardinal refused to secularise Hungary's Roman Catholic schools under the new communist regime in 1948, he was arrested, tortured and sentenced to life imprisonment for treason. Released during the 1956 Uprising, Mindszenty took refuge in the US embassy on Szabadság tér when the communists returned to power. There he would remain until 1971.

As relations between the Kádár regime and the Holy See began to thaw in the late 1960s, the Vatican made several requests for the cardinal to leave Hungary, which he refused to do. Following the intervention of US president Richard Nixon, Mindszenty left for Vienna, where he continued to criticise the Vatican's relations with the regime in Hungary. He retired in 1974 and died the following year. But as he had vowed not to return to Hungary until the last Russian soldier had left Hungarian soil, Mindszenty's remains were not returned until May 1991. This was actually several weeks before that pivotal date.

## ERZSÉBETVÁROS

The Big Ring Road slices district VII, also called Erzsébetváros (Elizabeth Town; Map p222 and Map p224), in half between two busy squares: Oktogon and Blaha Lujza tér. The eastern side is a rather poor area (though developing fast) with little of interest to travellers except the Keleti train station (Keleti pályaudvar; Map pp218–19) on Baross tér. The western side, bounded by the Little Ring Road, has always been predominantly Jewish, and this was the ghetto where Jews were forced to live behind wooden fences when the Nazis occupied Hungary in 1944.

### GREAT SYNAGOGUE Map p224

Nagy zsinagóga; VII Dohány utca 2-8; admission 300Ft; ☎ 10am–5pm Mon–Thu, 10am–2pm Fri, 10am–2pm Sun mid–Apr–Oct, 10am–3pm Mon–Thu, 10am–2pm Fri, 10am–2pm Sun Nov–mid–Apr; 🚶 M2 Astoria

The Great Synagogue is the largest Jewish house of worship in the world outside New York City and can seat 3000 of the faithful. Built in 1859, it contains both Romantic-style and Moorish architectural elements. Concerts are held here in summer.

In an annexe of the synagogue is the Jewish Museum (Zsidó Múzeum; ☎ 342 8949; VII Dohány utca 2; synagogue & museum adult/student & child 1000/400Ft; ☎ same), which contains objects related to religious

and everyday life, and an interesting handwritten book of the local Burial Society from the 18th century. The Holocaust Memorial Room relates the events of 1944–45, including the infamous mass murder of doctors and patients at a hospital on Maros utca. English-language tours (adult/student & child 1900/1600Ft) are available hourly from 10.30am to 1.30pm or 3.30pm Monday to Thursday and 10.30am to 12.30pm Friday and Sunday.

On the synagogue's north side, the Holocaust Memorial (Map p224; VII Wesselényi utca) stands over the mass graves of those murdered by the Nazis in 1944–45. On the leaves of the metal 'tree of life' are the family names of some of the 400,000 victims.

### HUNGARIAN ELECTROTECHNOLOGY MUSEUM Map p224

Magyar Elektrotechnikai Múzeum; ☎ 322 0472; VII Kazinczy utca 21; admission free; ☎ 11am–5pm Tue–Sat; 🚶 M2 Astoria

This place doesn't sound like everyone's cup of tea, but the staff are very enthusiastic and some of the exhibits are unusual enough for a visit. Its collection of 19th-century generators, condensers, motors and – egad – the world largest supply of electricity-consumption meters is not very inspiring, but the staff will show you how the alarm system of the barbed-wire fence between Hungary and Austria once

worked. There's also a display on the nesting platforms that the electric company kindly builds for storks throughout the country so they won't try to nest on the wires and electrocute themselves.

### MIKSA RÓTH MEMORIAL HOUSE

Map pp218–19  
Róth Miksa Emlékház; ☎ 341 6789, 413 6147; VII Nefelejcs utca 26; adult/child 200/100Ft; ☎ 2–6pm Tue–Sat; 🚶 M2 Keleti pályaudvar

This fabulous museum exhibits the work of the eponymous Art Nouveau stained-glass maker Róth (1865–1944) on two floors of the house and workshop where he lived and worked from 1911 until his death. Less well known are the master's stunning mosaics. Roth's dark brown, almost foreboding, living quarters stand in sharp contrast to the lively, technicolour creations that emerged from his workshop.

## JÓZSEFVÁROS & FERENCVÁROS

From Blaha Lujza tér, the Big Ring Road runs through district VIII, also called Józsefváros (Joseph Town; Map p222 and Map pp218–19). The western side of the district transforms itself from a neighbourhood of lovely 19th-century townhouses and villas around the Little Ring Road to a large student quarter. East of the boulevard is the once rough-and-tumble district so poignantly described in the Pressburger brothers' *Homage to the Eighth District* (p23), and where much of the fighting in October 1956 took place. Today it is being developed at breakneck speed and the reverberation of pile-drivers is constant.

The neighbourhood south of Üllői út is Ferencváros (Francis Town; Map pp218–19 and Map pp228–9), home of the city's most popular football team, Ferencvárosi Torna Club (Ferencváros; p140), and many of its tough, green-and-white-clad supporters.

### APPLIED ARTS MUSEUM Map pp218–19

Iparművészeti Múzeum; ☎ 456 5100; www.imm.hu; IX Üllői út 33–37; admission free, temporary exhibitions adult/child 600/300Ft; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun; 🚶 M3 Ferenc körút

This stunning building, designed by Ödön Lechner and decorated with Solnay cer-

amic tiles, was completed for the Millenary Exhibition (1896) but was badly damaged during WWII and again in 1956. The galleries of the Applied Arts Museum, which surround a central hall of white marble supposedly modelled on the Alhambra in southern Spain, usually contain a wonderful array of Hungarian furniture dating from the 18th and 19th centuries, Art Nouveau and Secessionist artefacts, and objects related to the history of trades and crafts (glass making, bookbinding, gold-smithing, leatherwork etc). However, the last time we visited there were only temporary exhibitions on display and the permanent collections were closed. Nice way to rake in the dosh; instead, visit the museum's European furniture exhibit at Nagytétény Castle Museum (p62).

### HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL CENTER

Map pp228–9  
Holokauszt Emlékközpont; ☎ 455 3348; www.hdke.hu; IX Páva utca 39; admission free; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun; 🚶 M3 Ferenc körút

This centre, housed in a striking modern building in a working-class neighbourhood of Ferencváros, opened in 2004 on the 60th anniversary of the start of the holocaust in Hungary. Both a museum and an educational foundation, the centre displays pages from the harrowing 'Auschwitz Album', an unusual collection of photographs documenting the transport, internment and extermination of Hungarian Jews that was found by a camp survivor after liberation. In the central courtyard, a sublimely restored synagogue designed by Leopold Baumhorn and completed in 1924 hosts temporary exhibitions.

### HUNGARIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM

Map p224  
Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum; ☎ 338 2122, 317 7806; www.mnm.hu; VIII Múzeum körút 14–16; admission free, temporary exhibitions adult/child 700/350Ft; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun; 🚶 47 or 49

The National Museum contains Hungary's most important collection of historical relics in a large neoclassical structure purpose-built in 1847. On the 1st floor exhibits trace the history of the Carpathian Basin from earliest times to the arrival of the Avars during the 9th century; 2nd-floor displays deal with the Magyar people to 1849 and Hungary in the 19th and 20th centuries.

## RAOUL WALLENBERG, RIGHTEOUS GENTILE

Of all the 'righteous gentiles' honoured by Jews around the world, the most revered is Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat and businessman who rescued as many as 35,000 Hungarian Jews during WWII.

Wallenberg, who came from a long line of bankers and diplomats, began working in 1936 for a trading firm whose president was a Hungarian Jew. In July 1944 the Swedish Foreign Ministry, at the request of Jewish and refugee organisations in the USA, sent the 32-year-old Wallenberg on a rescue mission to Budapest as an attaché to the embassy there. By that time, almost half a million Jews in Hungary had been sent to Nazi death camps.

Wallenberg immediately began issuing Swedish safe-conduct passes (called 'Wallenberg passports') from the former Swedish embassy (Map pp228–9; Minerva utca 3a/b; 🚶 27) on Gellért Hill, which bears a plaque attesting to the heroism of Wallenberg and the less well-known diplomats Carl-Ivan Danielsson (1880–1963) and Per Anger (1913–2002). He also set up a series of 'safe houses' flying the flag of Sweden and other neutral countries where Jews could seek asylum. He even followed German 'death marches' and deportation trains, distributing food and clothing and actually pulling some 500 people off the cars along the way.

When the Soviet army entered Budapest in January 1945, Wallenberg went to report to the authorities but in the wartime confusion was arrested for espionage and sent to Moscow. In the early 1950s, responding to reports that Wallenberg had been seen alive in a labour camp, the Soviet Union announced that he had in fact died of a heart attack in 1947. Several reports over the next two decades suggested Wallenberg was still alive, but none was ever confirmed. Many believe Wallenberg was executed by the Soviets, who suspected him of spying for the USA. A statue called the *Serpent Slayer* in honour of Raoul Wallenberg by Pál Pátzay stands in XIII Szent István Park (Map pp218–19).



Look out for: the enormous 3rd-century Roman mosaic from Balácapuszta, near Veszprém in Central Transdanubia, at the foot of the central staircase; the crimson silk royal coronation robe (or mantle) stitched by nuns at Veszprém; the reconstructed 3rd-century Roman villa from Pannonia; the treasury room with pre-Conquest gold jewellery; a second treasury room with later gold objects (including the 11th-century Monomachus crown); a stunning baroque library; and Beethoven's Broadwood piano.

## HUNGARIAN NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

Map pp228-9

Magyar Természettudományi Múzeum; ☎ 210 1085; www.nhms.hu; VIII Ludovika tér 2-6; admission free, temporary exhibitions adult/child 1000/600Ft; 🕒 10am-6pm Wed-Mon; 🚶 M1 Klinikák Just one metro stop southeast of the Ferenc körút station, the Natural History Museum has lots of hands-on interactive displays over three floors. The geological park in front of the museum is well designed and there's an interesting exhibit focusing on both the natural resources of the Carpathian Basin and the flora and fauna of Hungarian legends and tales.

## LUDWIG MUSEUM OF

### CONTEMPORARY ART

Map pp228-9

Kortárs Művészeti Múzeum; ☎ 555 3444; www.ludwigmuseum.hu; IX Komor Marcell utca 1; admission free, temporary exhibitions adult/child 1000/500Ft; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue, Fri & Sun, noon-6pm Wed, noon-8pm Thu, 10am-8pm Sat; 🚶 2 Budapest's most important collection of contemporary art has moved from the Royal Palace on Castle Hill to the palatial (and equally controversial) Palace of Arts (Művészetek Palotája; p131) opposite the National Theatre. The museum is the only one collecting and exhibiting international contemporary art, and shows works by American, Russian, German and French artists from the past 50 years and Hungarian, Czech, Slovakian, Romanian, Polish and Slovenian works from the 1990s onward.

## NATIONAL THEATRE

Map pp228-9

Nemzeti Színház; ☎ 476 6800; www.nemzeti-szinhaz.hu; IX Bajor Gizi park 1; 🚶 2 The National Theatre by the Danube in southwestern Ferencváros opened in 2002 to much controversy. The design, by archi-

tect Mária Siklós, is supposedly 'Eclectic' to mirror other great Budapest buildings of that style (Gellért Hotel, Gresham Palace, Parliament). But in reality it is a pick-and-mix jumble sale of classical and folk motifs, porticoes, balconies and columns on the outside that just does not work and certainly will date fast. But then they said that about the Parliament building in 1902. Particularly odd is the ziggurat-like structure outside whose ramps lead to nowhere.

## ZWACK UNICUM MUSEUM & VISITOR CENTRE

Map pp228-9

Zwack Unicum Múzeum és Látogató Központ; ☎ 476 2383; www.zwackunicum.hu in Hungarian; IX Dandár utca 2; adult/child 1500/850Ft; 🕒 1-5pm Mon-Fri; 🚶 2

If you really can't get enough of Unicum, the thick brown medicinal-tasting bitter aperitif made from 40 herbs and weighing in at 42% alcohol – and supposedly named by Franz Joseph himself (see p30), visit this very commercial museum tracing the history of the product since it was first made in 1790 and inviting visitors to buy big at its *mintabolt* (sample store).

## ANDRÁSSY ÚT

Andrássy út (Map pp218-19 and Map p222), listed as a Unesco World Heritage Site, starts a short distance north of Deák Ferenc tér and stretches for 2.5km to the northeast, ending at Hősök tere and Városliget, Pest's sprawling 'City Park'. Andrássy út is such a pretty boulevard and there's so much to enjoy en route that the best way to see it is on foot (p86), though the M1 metro runs beneath Andrássy út from Deák Ferenc tér as far as the City Park if you tire out.

## ASIAN ART MUSEUMS

Map pp218-19

### 🚶 M1 Bajza utca

The Andrássy út area has two fine museums devoted to Asian arts and crafts within easy walking distance of one another. The Ferenc Hopp Museum of East Asian Art (Hopp Ferenc Kelet-Ázsiai Művészeti Múzeum; ☎ 322 8476; VI Andrassy út 103; adult/child 400/200Ft; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) is in the former villa of its benefactor and namesake. Founded in 1919, the museum has a good collection of Indonesian *wayang* (shadow) puppets, Indian statuary and Lamaist sculpture and scroll paintings from Tibet.

Most of the Chinese and Japanese collection of ceramics and porcelain, textiles and sculpture is housed in the György Ráth Museum (Ráth György Múzeum; ☎ 342 3916; VI Városligeti fasor 12; adult/child 400/250Ft; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), in a gorgeous Art Nouveau residence a few minutes south down Bajza utca.

## FRANZ LISZT MEMORIAL MUSEUM

Map p222

Liszt Ferenc Emlékmúzeum; ☎ 322 9804; VI Vörösmarty utca 35; adult/child 400/250Ft; 🕒 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat; 🚶 M1 Vörösmarty utca This museum is in the building where the great composer lived in a 1st-floor apartment from 1881 until his death in 1886. The four rooms are filled with his pianos (including a tiny glass one), the composer's table, portraits and personal effects.

## HOUSE OF TERROR

Map p222

Terror Háza; ☎ 374 2600; www.terrorhaza.hu; Andrassy út 60; adult/child 1200/600Ft; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-7.30pm Sat & Sun; 🚶 M1 Vörösmarty utca

This museum, housed in the same building that served as headquarters of the dreaded ÁVH secret police (p47), purports to focus on the crimes and atrocities committed by both Hungary's fascist and Stalinist regimes, but the latter, particularly the years after WWII leading up to the 1956 Uprising, gets the lion's share of the exhibition space (almost three dozen rooms, halls and corridors over three floors). The tank in the cen-

tral courtyard is a jarring introduction, and the wall displaying many of the victims' photos speaks volumes. But even more harrowing are the reconstructed prison cells and the final Perpetrators' Gallery, featuring photographs of the turncoats, spies, torturers and 'cogs-in-the-wheel', many of them still alive, who allowed or caused these atrocities to take place.

## HUNGARIAN STATE OPERA HOUSE

Map p222

Magyar Állami Operaház; ☎ 332 8197; www.operavisit.hu; VI Andrassy út 22; adult/student 2400/1200Ft; 🕒 English-language tours 3pm & 4pm; 🚶 M1 Opera

The neo-Renaissance Hungarian State Opera House, among the city's most beautiful buildings, was designed by Miklós Ybl in 1884. If you cannot attend a concert or an opera, join one of the guided tours, which usually includes a brief musical performance. Tickets are available from the souvenir shop on the eastern side of the building facing Hajós utca.

## MILLENNARY MONUMENT

Map pp218-19

### Ezeréves Emlékmű; 🚶 M1 Hősök tere

In the centre of Hősök tere (Heroes' Sq), which is at the northern end of Andrássy út and in effect forms the entrance to City Park, is this 36m-high pillar backed by colonnades to the right and left. Topping the pillar is the Angel Gabriel, who is holding the Hungarian crown and a cross. At the base are Árpád and the six other Magyar chieftains who occupied the Carpathian Basin in the late 9th century. The 14 statues in the colonnades are of rulers and statesmen – from King Stephen on the left to Lajos Kossuth on the right. The four allegorical figures atop are (from left to right): Work and Prosperity; War; Peace; Knowledge and Glory.

## MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

Map pp218-19

Szépművészeti Múzeum; ☎ 469 7100, 363 2675; www.szepmuveszeti.hu; XIV Dózsa György út 41; admission free, temporary exhibitions adult/child 1200/600Ft; 🕒 10am-5.30pm Tue-Sun; 🚶 M1 Hősök tere

The city's outstanding collection of foreign art works is housed in this renovated building dating from 1906. The Old Masters collection is the most complete, with

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thousands of works from the Dutch and Flemish, Spanish, Italian, German, French and British schools between the 13th and 18th centuries, including seven paintings by El Greco. Other sections include Egyptian and Graeco-Roman artefacts and 19th- and 20th-century paintings, watercolours, graphics and sculptures, including some important impressionist works. Free tours of key galleries are available in English at 11am Tuesday to Friday.

### MŰCSARNOK

Map pp218-19  
Palace of Art; ☎ 460 7014, 363 2671; www.mucsarnok.hu; XIV Dózsa György út 37; 3-D film adult/child 1000/500F, exhibitions & film 1500/500F;

🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; 🚗 M1 Hősök tere Múcsarnok is the among the city's largest exhibition spaces and hosts temporary exhibitions of works by Hungarian and foreign artists in fine and applied art, photography and design. Concerts are sometimes staged here as well. A 3-D film that whisks you around Hungary in 25 minutes (with commentary available in seven languages) is screened continuously from 10am to 5pm Tuesday to Sunday mid-March to September and from 10am to 4.30pm Friday to Sunday from October to mid-March.

### POSTAL MUSEUM

Map p224  
Postamúzeum; ☎ 269 6838; VI Andrásy út 3; adult/child 200/150F; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; 🚗 M1 Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út

The museum exhibits the contents of original 19th-century post offices – old uniforms and coaches, those big curved brass horns etc – that probably won't do much for you. But the museum is housed in the seven-room apartment of a wealthy late-19th-century businessman and is among the best-preserved in the city.

### ZOLTÁN KODÁLY MEMORIAL

#### MUSEUM

Map p222  
Kodály Zoltán Emlékmúzeum; ☎ 352 7106; VI Kodály körönd 1; adult/child 200/100F; 🕒 10am-4pm Wed, 10am-6pm Thu-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun; 🚗 M1 Kodály körönd

In the flat where the great composer lived from 1924 until his death in 1967 is the Zoltán Kodály Memorial Museum, with four rooms bursting with furniture, furnishings and other personal items. One room is devoted to Kodály's manuscripts.

## CITY PARK

Városliget (City Park; Map pp218-19) is Pest's green lung, an open space measuring almost a square kilometre that hosted most of the events during Hungary's 1000th anniversary celebrations in 1896. It's not so cut and dried, but in general museums lie to the south of XIV Kós Károly sétány, while activities of a less cerebral nature – including the Municipal Great Circus (opposite), Funfair Park (opposite) and Széchenyi Baths (p136) – are to the north.

### CITY ZOO & BOTANICAL GARDEN

Map pp218-19

Városi Állatkert és Növénykert; ☎ 273 4900, 363 3701; www.zoobudapest.com; XIV Állatkerti út 6-12; adult/child/student/family 1300/900/1000/4100F; 🕒 9am-6.30pm Mon-Thu, 9am-7pm Fri-Sun May-Aug, 9am-5.30pm Mon-Thu, 9am-6pm Fri-Sun Apr & Sep, 9am-5pm Mon-Thu, 9am-5.30pm Fri-Sun Mar & Oct, 9am-4pm daily Nov-Feb

The large zoo and Botanical Garden, a five-minute walk northeast of Hősök tere along Állatkerti út, has a collection of some 3700 animals (big cats, rhinos, hippopotamuses), but some visitors come here just to look at the Secessionist animal houses built in the early part of the 20th century, such as the Elephant House (1912) with pachyderm heads in beetle-green Zsolnay ceramic and the Palm House (admission 300Ft extra, including aquarium), which was erected by the Eiffel Company of Paris.

### HUNGARIAN AGRICULTURAL

#### MUSEUM

Map pp218-19  
Magyar Mezőgazdasági Múzeum; ☎ 422 0765, 363 50997; www.mmgm.hu; XIV Vajdahunyad sétány; admission free, temporary exhibitions adult/child 550/300F; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Sun mid-Feb–mid-Nov, 10am-4pm Tue-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun mid-Nov–mid-Feb; 🚗 M1 Hősök tere

This rather esoteric museum is housed in the stunning baroque wing of Vajdahunyad Castle, built for the 1896 millenary celebrations on the little island in the park's lake and modelled after a fortress in Transylvania (but with Gothic, Romanesque and baroque wings and additions to reflect architectural styles from all over Hungary). Here you'll find Europe's largest collection of things agricultural (fruit production, cereals, wool, poultry, pig slaughtering, viticulture etc).

## BUDAPEST FOR CHILDREN

Budapest abounds in places and sights that will delight children, and there is always a special child's entry rate to paying attractions (though ages of eligibility may vary).

Kids love transport and the city's many unusual forms of conveyance – from the Cog and Children's Railways (p61) in the Buda Hills and the SIKLÓ (p53) funicular climbing up to Castle Hill to the trams, trolleybuses and little M1 metro – will fascinate and entertain. And don't forget the Transport Museum (below). It has got an embarrassment of hands-on displays for kids of all ages.

Specific places to take children include the following:

**Budapest Eye** (Budapest Kilátó; Map p222; ☎ 238 7623; VI Váci út 1-3; adult/child/student & senior/family 3000/1000/2000/6000F; 🕒 10am-10pm Sun-Thu, 10am-midnight Sat & Sun; 🚗 M3 Nyugati pályaudvar) This attraction exaggerates just a titch when it claims 'The Budapest Eye is to Budapest what the Eiffel Tower is to Paris and the London Eye to London'. Huh? In reality, it's just a hot-air balloon tethered to ropes in a lot between the Nyugati train station and the West End City Center mall that is allowed to ascend to 150m for some hair-raising views over Budapest. But the kids will love it.

**Budapest Puppet Theatre** (Budapesti Bábszínház; Map p222; ☎ 342 2702, 321 5200; www.budapest-babszinhaz.hu; VI Andrásy út 69; tickets 500-1100F; 🚗 M1 Vörösmarty utca) The puppet theatre, which usually doesn't require fluency in Hungarian, presents shows designed for children on weekdays (usually at 10am or 10.30am and 4pm) and folk programmes for adults occasionally in the evening.

**Funfair Park** (Vidámpark; Map pp218-19; ☎ 363 8310, 363 2660; www.vidampark.hu; XIV Állatkerti körút 14-16; under/over 120cm free/300F; rides 300-600F; 🕒 10am-8pm daily Jul & Aug, 11am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-8pm Sat & Sun May & Jun, 11am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun Apr & Sep, 11am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6.30pm Sat & Sun Mar & Oct; 🚗 M1 Széchenyi fürdő) This 150-year-old luna park sits on 2.5 hectares of land next to the Municipal Great Circus. There's a couple of dozen thrilling rides, including the heart-stopping Ikarus Space Needle, the looping Star roller coaster and the Hip-Hop freeroll tower, as well as go-karts, dodgem cars and a carousel built in 1906.

**Municipal Great Circus** (Fővárosi Nagycirkusz; Map pp218-19; ☎ 344 6008, 343 8300; www.maciva.hu in Hungarian; XIV Állatkerti körút 7; adult 1200-1900F, child 900-1500F; 🚗 M1 Széchenyi fürdő) Performances at Budapest's circus, Europe's only permanent big top, are at 3pm from Wednesday to Sunday, with additional shows at 10.30am on Saturday and Sunday and at 7pm on Saturday.

**Palace of Miracles** (Csodák Palotája; Map pp218-19; ☎ 350 6131; www.csodapalota.hu; XIII Váci út 19; adult/child/family 800/700/2300F; 🕒 10am-6pm Jul & Aug, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Sep-Jun; 🚗 M3 Lehel tér) This is a wonderfully thought-out interactive playhouse for children of all ages with 'smart' toys and puzzles, most of which have a scientific bent.

**Planetarium** (Map pp228-9; ☎ 263 1811, 265 0725; www.planetarium.hu in Hungarian; X Népliget; adult/child 940/840F; 🕒 shows 9.30am, 11am, 1pm, 2.30pm & 4pm Tue-Sun; 🚗 M3 Népliget) This large planetarium has star shows as well as 3-D films and cartoons.

### STATUES & MONUMENTS

Map pp218-19  
City Park boasts a number of notable statues and monuments. Americans (and collectors of greenbacks) will be amused to see a familiar face in the park south of the lake. The statue of George Washington (Washington György sétány) was erected by Hungarian Americans in 1906. The little church opposite Vajdahunyad Castle (ie the agricultural museum) is called Ják Chapel (Jáki kápolna) because its intricate portal was copied from the 13th-century Abbey Church in Ják in Western Transdanubia.

The statue of the hooded figure south of the chapel is that of Anonymous, the unknown chronicler at the court of King Béla

III who wrote a history of the early Magyars. Note the pen with the shiny tip in his hand; writers (both real and aspirant) touch it for inspiration.

### TRANSPORT MUSEUM

Map pp218-19  
Közlekedési Múzeum; ☎ 273 3840; XIV Városligeti körút 11; admission free, temporary exhibitions adult/child 400/200F; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun May-Sep, 10am-4pm Tue-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun Oct-Apr; trolleybus 72 or 74  
In an old and a new wing, this museum has scale models of ancient trains (some of which still run), classic late-19th-century automobiles and lots of those old wooden

bicycles called 'bone-rattlers'. There are a few hands-on exhibits and lots of show-and-tell from the attendants. Outside are pieces from the original Danube bridges that were retrieved after the bombings of WWII and a café in an old MÁV coach. The museum's air and space-travel collection is housed in the **Aviation Museum** (Repülési Múzeum; Map pp218–19; ☎ 363 4016; XIV Zichy Mihály utca 14; admission free; 🕒 10am–5pm Tue–Fri, 10am–6pm Sat & Sun mid-May–mid-Oct; trolleybus 72) in the nearby Petőfi Csarnok (p133).

## OUTER PEST DISTRICTS

Unusual sights and museums in several of Pest's outer districts will be of interest to lager louts, train spotters, rock hounds and necrophiliacs.

### DREHER BREWERY & BEER MUSEUM

Dreher Sörmúzeum; ☎ 432 9700, 432 9850; www.dreher.hu; X Jászberényi utca 7-11; museum/museum & film/museum, film & beer tasting 300/800/1300Ft; 🕒 9am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–4pm Sat & Sun; 🚆 M3 Őrs vezér tere then 🚶 85 Budapest's – and Hungary's – largest beer maker has a museum at its brewery where you can look at displays of brewing and bottling over the centuries, watch a film about beer-making and/or get stuck into a generous tasting session. The brewery is about 7km east of the city centre.

### HUNGARIAN RAILWAY HISTORY

**PARK** Map pp226–7  
Magyar Vasúttörténeti Park; ☎ 428 0180, 450 1497; www.lokopark.hu; XIV Tatai út 95; adult/child/family 900/300/1800Ft; 🕒 10am–6pm Tue–Sun Apr–Oct, 10am–3pm Tue–Sun Nov–mid-Dec & mid-Mar–Apr; 🚶 30, 🚶 14  
This mostly outdoor museum contains more than 100 locomotives (most of them still working) and an exhibition on the history of the railroad in Hungary. There's a wonderful array of hands-on activities – mostly involving getting behind the wheel – for kids. From early April to late October a vintage

diesel train leaves Nyugati train station for the park four times a day at 9.45am, 10.45am, 1.45pm and 3.45pm and returns at 1.13pm and 3.13pm. The fare is included in the admission price.

### KEREPESE CEMETERY

Map p216  
Kerepesi temető; ☎ 333 9125, 314 1269; Fiumei út 16; 🕒 7am–8pm May–Jul, 7am–7pm Apr & Aug, 7am–6pm Sep, 7am–5pm Oct–Mar; 🚶 24  
About 500m southeast of Keleti station is the entrance to Budapest's equivalent of Highgate or Père Lachaise cemeteries, which was established in 1847. Some of the mausoleums in this 56-hectare necropolis, which is also called the National Graveyard (Nemzeti Sírkert), are worthy of a pharaoh, especially those of statesmen and national heroes such as Lajos Kossuth, Ferenc Deák and Lajos Batthyány. Other tombs are quite moving (eg those of the actress Lujza Blaha and the poet Endre Ady). Plot 21 contains the graves of many who died in the 1956 Uprising. Near the huge mausoleum for party honchos, which is topped with the words 'I lived for Communism, for the people', is the simple grave of János Kádár, who died in 1989 (p48). Near the entrance is the new **Tribute Museum** (Kegyeleti Múzeum; 🕒 10am–3pm Mon–Thu, 10am–1pm Fri, every 2nd Sat & Sun in Jul & Aug), which looks (grimly) at the Hungarian way of death.

### NEW MUNICIPAL CEMETERY

Új Köztemető; ☎ 265 2458; X Kozma utca; 🕒 8am–7pm; 🚶 28  
This huge city cemetery, reached by tram from Blaha Lujza tér, is where Imre Nagy, prime minister during the 1956 Uprising, and 2000 others were buried in unmarked graves (plots 300–301) after executions in the late 1940s and 1950s. Today, the area has been turned into a moving **National Pantheon** and is about a 30-minute walk from the entrance; follow the signs pointing the way to '300, 301 parcela'. At peak periods you can take a microbus marked 'temető járat' around the cemetery or hire a taxi at the gate.

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