

Budapest



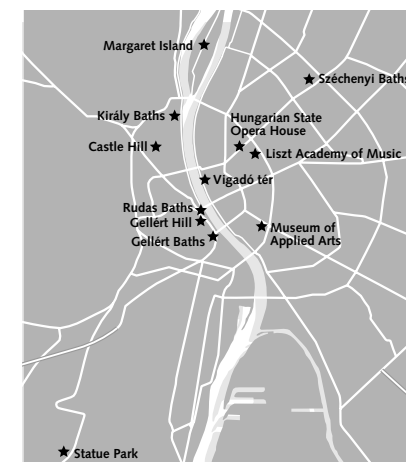
Budapest is unique in Hungary. No other city is as beautiful, as rich, as well endowed in fine art and architecture or, frankly, as crowded. As Hungary's *főváros* (main city or capital), it is the administrative, business and cultural centre; virtually everything in Hungary starts, finishes or is currently taking place here.

Straddling a curve in the Danube River (Duna), Budapest is flanked by the Buda Hills on the western bank and what is essentially the start of the Great Plain to the east. And the human legacy is just as remarkable as Mother Nature's. Architecturally, Budapest is a gem, with a surfeit of baroque, neoclassical, Eclectic and Art-Nouveau (or Secessionist) buildings. Overall, however, Budapest has a *fin-de-siècle* feel to it, for it was then – during the industrial boom and the capital's 'golden age' in the late 19th century – that most of today's city was built.

To retain its well-deserved title of *világváros* (world-class city), Budapest has taken on all the baggage that such a status usually demands: organised crime, faceless modern architecture, a mobile phone at the ear of every 'suit', international fast-food eateries at every corner. Yet Budapest remains Hungarian: exotic, sometimes inscrutable, often passionate, with its two feet firmly planted in Europe, but with a glance every now and then eastward to the spawning grounds of its citizens. It is unmissable.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Taking views of the Danube while above it (from **Castle Hill**, p69, or **Gellért Hill**, p71), while on it (from **Vigadó tér**, p102) or while in it (from **Margaret Island**, p75)
- Letting your mind wander over the sinuous curves and asymmetrical forms of the city's incomparable Art-Nouveau architecture, such as the **Museum of Applied Arts** (p94)
- Soaking the afternoon away in a thermal bath – Turkish-style (**Rudas**, p99, or **Király**, p97), in a 'cathedral' (**Gellért**, p97) or while playing board games afloat (**Széchenyi**, p97)
- Taking in an evening of music at the **Hungarian State Opera House** (p95) or the **Liszt Academy of Music** (p93)
- Sizing up the monumental socialist mistakes on display at **Statue Park** (p127)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 1

■ POPULATION: 1.75 MILLION

■ AREA: 525 SQ KM

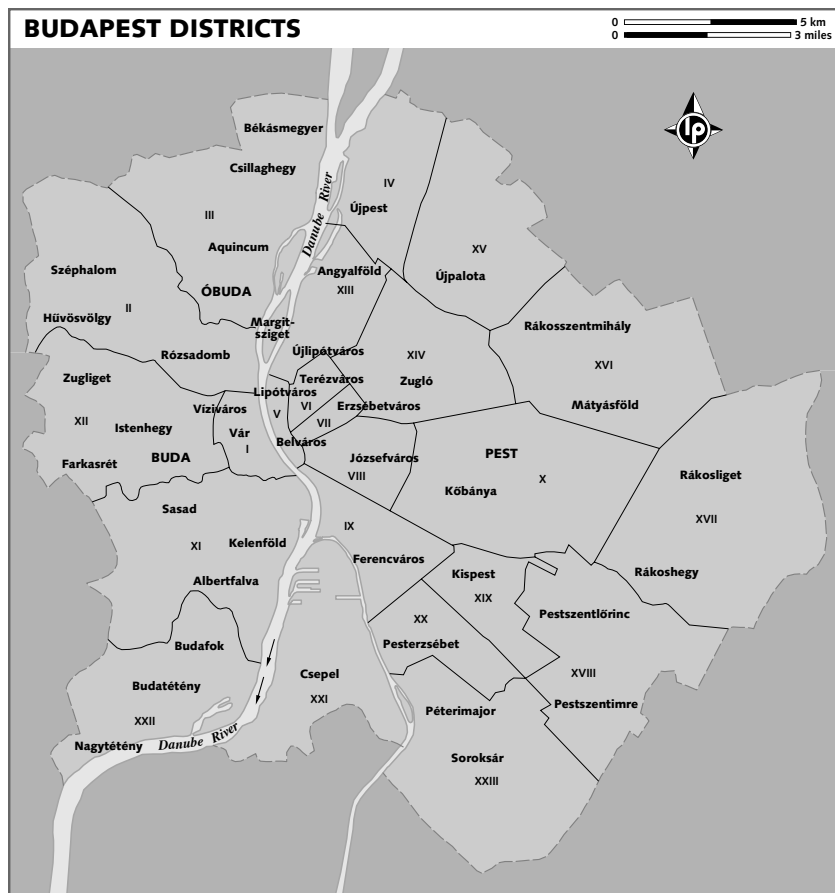
HISTORY

Strictly speaking, the story of Budapest begins only in 1873 when hilly, largely residential Buda and historic Óbuda on the western bank of the Danube merged with flat, industrial Pest on the eastern side to form what was at first called Pest-Buda. But like so much in Hungary, it's not that simple.

The Romans had an important colony here called Aquincum until the 5th century, when they were forced to flee the settlement by the Huns. The Magyars arrived nearly half a millennium later, but Buda and Pest were no more than villages until the 12th century, when foreign merchants and tradespeople settled. In the late 13th century King Béla IV built a fortress in Buda,

but it was King Charles Robert (Károly Róbert) who moved the court from Visegrád to Buda 50 years later. His son Louis the Great (Nagy Lajos) began the construction of a royal palace.

The Mongols had burned Buda and Pest to the ground in 1241–42, and thus began a pattern of destruction and rebuilding that would last until the 20th century. Under the Turks the two towns lost most of their populations, and when the Turks were defeated by the Habsburgs in the late 17th century Buda Castle was in ruins. The 1848 Revolution, WWII and the 1956 Uprising all took their toll. In 1944–45, for example, the retreating Germans even blew up every bridge spanning the Danube.



ORIENTATION

Budapest lies in the north-central part of Hungary, some 250km southeast of Vienna. The Danube River, the city's historical artery, is crossed by nine bridges that link hilly, historic Buda with bustling, commercial and very flat Pest.

It's a large, sprawling city but, with few exceptions (the Buda Hills, City Park and some excursions), the areas beyond the Nagykörút (literally, '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 almost difficult to get lost.

If you look at a map of the city you'll see that two ring roads – the Nagykörút and the semicircular Kiskörút ('Little Ring road') – more or less link all of the most important bridges across the Danube and define central Pest. The Nagykörút consists of 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, Andrassy út, Rákóczi út and Üllői út, fan out from the ring roads, creating large squares and circles.

Buda is dominated by Castle and Gellért Hills; its busiest square is Moszkva tér. Important roads on this side 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 westerly and southwesterly.

Budapest is divided into 23 *kerülete*, or districts, which usually also have traditional names, such as Lipótváros (Leopold Town) in district V or Víziváros (Water-town) in district I. The Roman numeral

appearing before each street address indicates the district.

For information on getting to/from Budapest's Ferihegy International Airport, 24km southeast of the city centre, see p123.

Maps

Lonely Planet's *Budapest City Map* covers the more popular parts of town in detail.

The best folding maps of the city are Cartographia's 1:22,000 (690Ft) and 1:28,000 (570Ft) ones. If you plan to explore the city thoroughly, the *Budapest Atlas*, also from Cartographia, is indispensable. It comes in the same scale (1:20,000) but two sizes: a smaller format (1950Ft) and a larger one (2600Ft). There is also a 1:25,000 pocket atlas of just the Inner Town available for 1210Ft.

Many bookshops, including Libri Könyv-palota (p66), stock a wide variety of maps. **Cartographia** (Map p84; ☎ 312 6001; www.cartographia.hu; VI Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út 37; ☎ 10am–6pm Mon–Fri; 🚇 M3 Arany János utca) has its own outlet in Budapest, but it's not self-service, which can be annoying. A better bet is **Terékpirál** (Map King; Map p84; ☎ 472 0505; VI Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út 23; ☎ 10am–6pm Mon–Fri; 🚇 M3 Arany János utca) or the smaller **Párisi Udvar Könyvesbolt** (Párisi Udvar Bookshop; Map p86; ☎ 235 0379; V Petőfi Sándor utca 2; ☎ 9am–7pm Mon–Fri, 10am–2pm Sat; 🚇 M3 Ferenciek tere) in the Párisi Udvar.

INFORMATION Bookshops

Bestsellers (Map p86; ☎ 312 1295; V Október 6 utca 11; ☎ 9am–6.30pm Mon–Fri, 10am–5pm Sat, 10am–4pm Sun; 🚇 M1/2/3 Deák Ferenc tér) Top of the pops for English-language books in Budapest is this recently expanded bookshop, which has novels, travel guides and lots of Hungarica, as well as a large selection of magazines and newspapers.

A STREET BY ANY OTHER NAME

After WWII most streets, squares and parks were renamed after people, dates or political groups that have since become anathema to an independent and democratic Hungary. From April 1989 names were changed with a determination that some people felt was almost obsessive; Cartographia's street atlas of Budapest lists almost 400 street name changes in the capital alone. Sometimes it was just a case of returning a street or square to its original (perhaps medieval) name – from Lenin útja, say, to Szent korona útja (Street of the Holy Crown). Other times the name was new.

The new (or original) names are now in place after more than a decade and a half; the old street signs with a red 'X' drawn across them have all but disappeared, and virtually no one refers to Ferenciek tere (Sq of the Franciscans) in the capital, for example, as Felszabadulás tér (Liberation Sq), which honoured the Soviet Army's role in liberating Budapest in WWII.

Central European University Bookshop (Map p86;

☎ 327 3096; V Nádor utca 9; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri; ☎ 15) Under the same management as Pendragon is this two-floor bookshop at the Central European University, which has a good selection of academic and business titles with a regional focus, as well as some second hand stock.

Írók Boltja (Writers' Bookshop; Map p84; ☎ 322 1645; VI Andrásy út 45; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat; ☎ M1 Oktogon, ☎ 4 or 6) For Hungarian authors in translation, this is the place to go.

Központi Antikvárium (Map p86; ☎ 317 3514; V Múzeum körút 13-15; ☎ 10am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat; ☎ M3 Kálvin tér) For antique and second-hand books in Hungarian, German and English try the 'Central Antiquarian', which was established in 1885 and is the largest antique bookshop in Budapest.

Libri Könyvpalota (Map p84; ☎ 267 4844; VII Rákóczi út 12; ☎ 10am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat; ☎ M2 Astoria) Huge and spread over two floors, the 'Book Palace' has a selection of English-language novels, art books, guidebooks, maps, music and a café on the 1st floor.

Libri Stúdium (Map p86; ☎ 318 5680; V Váci utca 22; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun; ☎ M3

Ferenciek tere) For books in English and other languages on Hungarian subjects, the more central Stúdium is among the best bets.

Pendragon (Map pp80-1; ☎ 340 4426; XIII Pozsonyi út 21-23; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat; ☎ 4 or 6) This English-language bookshop has an excellent selection of books and guides (including Lonely Planet titles).

Red Bus (Map p86; ☎ 337 7453; V Semmelweis utca 14; ☎ 11am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat; ☎ M2 Astoria) Below the popular hostel (p104) of the same name, this is the only shop in town selling used English-language books.

Szőnyi Antikváriuma (Map p84; ☎ 311 6431; www.szonyi.hu; V Szent István körút 3; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat; ☎ 4 or 6) This long-established antiquarian bookshop has an excellent selection of antique prints and maps (look in the drawers), as well as books.

Világsajtó Háza (World Press House; Map p86; ☎ 317 1311; V Városház utca 3-5; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 7am-2pm Sat, 8am-noon Sun; ☎ M3 Ferenciek tere) This is the best place in Budapest for foreign-language newspapers, magazines and other periodicals.

BUDAPEST IN ...**Two Days**

If you've got just a couple of days in Budapest spend most of the first day on **Castle Hill** (p69), taking in the views and sights and visiting a museum or two. In the afternoon ride the **Sikló** (p69) down to Clark Ádám tér and, depending on the day of the week, make your way to the **Király Baths** (p97) or **Gellért Baths** (p97) for a relaxing soak. In the evening head for Liszt Ferenc tér for drinks and dinner at **Menza** (p111). The following day concentrate on the two icons of Hungarian nationhood and the places that house them: the **Crown of St Stephen** (p91) in the Parliament building and the saint-king's mortal remains in **St Stephen's Basilica** (p91). Take a late afternoon coffee (and cake) break at **Gerbeaud** (p113) in Vörösmarty tér, and try to attend a performance at the **Liszt Academy of Music** (p93) or the **Hungarian State Opera House** (p95).

Four Days

With another couple of days to look around the city, consider taking our walking tour (p100) up Andrásy út, stopping off and visiting whatever interests you along the way – be it the **House of Terror** (p95) or the **Museum of Fine Arts** (p96). **Lukács** (p113), the café and cake shop, is conveniently located en route, and you could take the waters at the **Széchenyi Baths** (p97) in City Park. **Robinson** (p111) or **Bagolyvár** (p111) are convenient places for an evening meal. The following day why not take in destinations further afield, such as **Statue Park** (p127), a ride up into the Buda Hills on the **Cog Railway** (p75) or a hike? Be back in time for a farewell pub and club crawl or, if it's the right season, a well-watered tour of the city's best 'gardens' (p117).

One Week

If you have a week in Budapest you could manage to see most of the sights listed in this chapter, including 'secondary' gems, such as the **Tomb of Gül Baba** (p73) and the **Ferenc Hopp Museum of East Asian Art** (p95), or markets like the **Nagycsarnok** (p114) and **Ecseri Piac** (p120), and do a little shopping (p120). You could even leave Budapest for a couple of days' excursion to the **Danube Bend** (p131), **Lake Balaton** (p186) or even the **Hortobágy** (p238) on the Great Plain.

DISCOUNT CARDS

The **Budapest Card** (☎ 266 0479; www.budapestinfo.hu; per 48/72hr 4700/5900Ft) offers free or reduced admission to 60 museums and other sights in the city, unlimited travel on all forms of public transport, and discounts on organised tours, on car rental, at thermal baths, and at selected shops and restaurants. It is sold at Tourinform offices, travel agencies, hotels and main metro stations. The national equivalent is the Hungarian Card (p370).

Emergency

If you need to report a crime or a lost or stolen passport or credit card, first call the **central emergency number** (☎ 112), the **police** (☎ 107) or the **English-language crime hotline** (☎ 8am-8pm 438 8080, 8pm-8am 06 80 660 044). Any crime must then be reported at the police station of the district you're in. In central Pest that would be the **Belváros-Lipótváros Police Station** (Map p84; ☎ 373 1000; V Szalay utca 11-13; ☎ 15). If possible, bring along a Hungarian speaker.

Other useful numbers:

Ambulance (☎ 105)

Fire (☎ 104)

Internet Access

Ami Internet Coffee (Map p86; ☎ 267 1644; www.amicoffee.hu in Hungarian only; V Váci utca 40; per 15/30/60min 200/400/700Ft, per 5/10hr 3250/6400Ft; ☎ 9am-2am; ☎ M3 Ferenciek tere) This Internet café in the university area has 40 terminals.

Electric Cafe (Map p84; ☎ 413 1803; www.electric.cafe.hu; VII Dohány utca 37; per 30/60min 100/200Ft; ☎ 9am-midnight; ☎ M2 Blaha Lujza tér) This place is very popular with travellers.

Narancs (Map p84; ☎ 413 6071; VII Akácfa utca 5; per 30/60min 100/200Ft; ☎ 10am-midnight; ☎ M2 Blaha Lujza tér) This is a small but charming French-run 'neighbourhood' Internet café.

Parknet (Map p86; ☎ 270 2249; www.parknetcafe.hu; V Váci utca 23; per 15/30/60min 170/270/500Ft, per 5/10hr 1800/3000Ft; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-8pm Sun; ☎ M3 Ferenciek tere) This place is about as central as you'll find in Pest.

Private Link (Map pp80-1; ☎ 334 2057; www.private-link.hu; VIII József körút 52; per 1/5/10hr 690/2000/3500Ft; ☎ 24hr; ☎ M3 Ferenc körút) This is Budapest's largest and most comfortable Internet café, and one of the very few open round the clock.

Internet Resources

For Hungarian websites with Budapest links, see p15.

Budapest Sun Online (www.budapestsun.com) Popular English weekly online, with local news, interviews and features.

Budapest Tourism Office (www.budapestinfo.hu) Budapest's best overall website.

Budapest Week (www.budapestweek.com) An excellent source for events, arts and entertainment.

Pestiside (www.pestiside.hu) Subtitled 'The Daily Dish of Cosmopolitan Budapest', this acerbic and often very funny take on the capital (and nation, for that matter) will have you culturally and politically fluent before you even arrive.

Visitors' Guide Budapest (www.visitorsguide.hu) This is the *Budapest Sun's* very own website for visitors.

Left Luggage

Budapest's three major train stations, two bus stations and Ferihegy International Airport (Terminal 2B) all have left-luggage offices or lockers. For more information, see the appropriate sections in the Transport chapter (p378).

Medical Services**CLINICS**

FirstMed Centers (Map p83; ☎ 224 9090; www.firstmedcentres.com; I Hattyú utca 14, 5/F; ☎ appointments 8am-7pm Mon-Thu, 8am-6pm Fri, urgent care 24hr; ☎ M2 Moszkva tér) This is a modern private medical clinic with round-the-clock emergency treatment, but it's not cheap: a basic consultation costs 12,600/25,200Ft for up to 10/20 minutes.

SOS Dental Services (Map p86; ☎ 267 9602, 269 6010; VI Király utca 14; ☎ 24hr; ☎ M1/2/3 Deák Ferenc tér) This dental surgery charges 2000Ft for a consultation, 5000Ft to 6000Ft for extractions and 6000Ft to 10,000Ft for fillings.

PHARMACIES

All of Budapest's 23 districts have a rotating all-night pharmacy; a sign on the door of any pharmacy will help you locate the nearest 24-hour place. Other conveniently located pharmacies:

Csillag Patika (Map p84; ☎ 314 3695; VIII Rákóczi út 39; ☎ 7.30am-9pm Mon-Fri, 7.30am-2pm Sat; ☎ M2 Blaha Lujza tér)

Déli Gyógyszertár (Map pp80-1; ☎ 355 4691; XII Alkotás utca 1/b; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat; ☎ M2 Déli pályaudvar)

Teréz Patika (Map p84; ☎ 311 4439, 475 0295; VI Teréz körút 41; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat; ☎ M3 Nyugati pályaudvar)

Money

There are ATMs everywhere in Budapest, including in the train and bus stations, and quite a few foreign-currency exchange machines, too.

K&H bank (Map p86; V Váci utca 40; ☎ 8am–5pm Mon, 8am–4pm Tue–Thu, 8am–3pm Fri; ☎ M3 Ferenciek tere) Conveniently located on the main shopping drag; offers fairly good rates.

OTP bank (Map p86; V Deák Ferenc utca 7-9; ☎ 7.45am–6pm Mon, 7.45am–5pm Tue–Fri; ☎ M1/2/3 Deák Ferenc tér) The National Savings Bank offers among the best exchange rates for cash and travellers cheques, but arrive at least an hour before closing to ensure the bureau de change counter is still open.

Post

Main post office (Map p86; V Petőfi Sándor utca 13-15; ☎ 8am–8pm Mon–Fri, 8am–2pm Sat; ☎ M1/2/3 Deák Ferenc tér) A few minutes' walk from Deák Ferenc tér and the main Tourinform office, the main post office is where you can buy stamps, mail letters, and send packages and faxes all from the same place.

Main post office annexe (Map p86; V Városház utca 18; ☎ 8am–8pm Mon–Fri, 8am–2pm Sat; ☎ M1/2/3 Deák Ferenc tér) Poste restante service around the corner from the main post office.

Post office Keleti train station (Map pp80-1; VIII Kerepesi út 2-6; ☎ 7am–9pm Mon–Fri, 8am–2pm Sat; ☎ M2 Keleti pályaudvar); Nyugati train station (Map p84; VI Teréz körút 51-53; ☎ 7am–9pm Mon–Sat, 10am–5pm Sun; ☎ M3 Nyugati pályaudvar)

Telephone & Fax

You can buy SIM cards and rent hand units from various mobile-phone outlets throughout the city:

Pannon GSM (Map p86; ☎ 311 8416; www.pgsm.hu; V Arany János utca 17; ☎ 9am–8pm Mon–Fri, 9am–2pm Sat; ☎ M3 Arany János utca)

T-Mobile (Map p86; ☎ 266 5723; www.t-mobile.hu; V Petőfi Sándor utca 12; ☎ 9am–7pm Mon–Fri, 10am–1pm Sat; ☎ M3 Ferenciek tere)

Vodafone (Map p84; ☎ 238 7281; www.vodafone.hu; West End City Centre, VI Váci út 3; ☎ 10am–9pm Mon–Sat, 10am–6pm Sun; ☎ Nyugati pályaudvar)

Tourist Information

Budapest Tourist Office (BTO; ☎ 266 0479; www.budapestinfo.hu; Castle Hill Map p83; ☎ 488 0475; I Szentháromság tér; ☎ 9am–8pm May–Sep, 10am–7pm Oct–Apr; ☎ 16 or Várbusz; Nyugati train station Map p84; ☎ 302 8580; Nyugati pályaudvar, platform No 10; ☎ 9am–7pm Apr–Oct, 9am–6pm Nov–Mar; ☎ M3 Nyugati pályaudvar; Oktogon Map p84; ☎ 322 4098;

VI Liszt Ferenc tér 11; ☎ 9am–7pm Apr–Oct, 10am–6pm Nov–Mar; ☎ M1 Oktogon) These are less frantic options than Tourinform for tourist information. BTO also maintains offices at Ferihegy International Airport's Terminals 1, 2A (arrivals) and 2B (departures).

Tourinform (Map p86; ☎ 438 8080, 24hr information hotline 06 80 630 800; www.tourinform.hu; V Sütő utca 2; ☎ 8am–8pm; ☎ M1/2/3 Deák Ferenc tér) This is usually the single best source of information on Budapest, and it can get hopelessly crowded in summer, and the staff are not always very patient or even helpful.

Travel Agencies

Many of the offices listed here also provide information, and dispense brochures and maps. For details on commercial outfits that can book private accommodation, see Private Rooms (p104).

Express (Map p86; ☎ 327 7290, 266 3277; www.express-travel.hu; V Semmelweis utca 4; ☎ 8.30am–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–1pm Sat; ☎ M2 Astoria) The main office of this youth- and student-orientated agency can book accommodation in Budapest, particularly hostels and colleges, and sells transport tickets.

Ibusz (Map p86; ☎ 485 2700; www.ibusz.hu; V Ferenciek tere 10; ☎ 9am–6pm Mon–Fri, 9am–1pm Sat; ☎ M3 Ferenciek tere) The main office of this travel-agency giant supplies travel brochures, changes money, books all types of accommodation and accepts credit-card payments.

Mellow Mood (Map p86; ☎ 411 2390; www.youthhostels.hu, www.mellowmood.hu; V Molnár utca 3; ☎ 9am–6pm Mon–Fri; ☎ M3 Ferenciek tere) This new kid on the block run by the hostel group of the same name (p104) can organise accommodation in private rooms and hostels, book tours, sell you discounted air tickets etc.

Vista (Map p86; ☎ 429 9751; www.vista.hu; VI Paulay Ede utca 2; ☎ M1/2/3 Deák Ferenc tér; ☎ 9am–6.30pm Mon–Fri, 9am–2.30pm Sat) Vista is an excellent one-stop shop for all your travel needs, both outbound (air tickets, package tours etc) and incoming (room bookings, organised tours, study and ecological tours in Hungary etc).

Wasteels (Map pp80-1; ☎ 210 2802, 343 3492; VIII Kerepesi út 2-6; ☎ 8am–8pm Mon–Fri, 8am–6pm Sat; ☎ M2 Keleti pályaudvar) This agency at the top of platform No 9 at Keleti train station sells Billet International de Jeunesse (BIJ) tickets (p381), but you must have a student or youth card (p370) to get the discounted fares.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

No parts of Budapest are 'off limits' to visitors, although some locals now avoid Margaret Island after dark during the low season, and both residents and visitors give the dodgier parts of the VIII and IX districts (areas of prostitution) a wide berth.

Pick pocketing is most common in markets, the Castle District, Váci utca and Hősök tere, near major hotels, and on certain popular buses (eg 7) and trams (2, 4, 6, 47 and 49).

Catching a taxi in Budapest can be an expensive and even unpleasant experience. Never hail a taxi on the street; instead order one from a phone – private, mobile or public – and give the number (almost always posted somewhere in the phone box) to the dispatcher. For more information about taxis, see p127.

If you've left something on any form of public transport in Budapest, contact the **BKV lost & found office** (Map p84; ☎ 267 5299; VII Akácfa utca 18; ☎ 8am–5pm Mon & Tue, Thu & Fri, 8am–6pm Wed; ☎ M2 Blaha Lujza tér).

Scams

Scams involving attractive young women, glibble guys, expensive drinks in nightclubs and a frog-marching to the nearest ATM by gorillas-in-residence have been all the rage in Budapest for a decade now, and we get stacks of letters from male readers complaining they've been ripped off. Guys, please, do us all a favour. If it seems too good to be true, it is. Trust us and the mirror; such vanity has cost some would-be Lotharios hundreds, even thousands, of dollars.

SIGHTS

For more details on the many museums and other sights listed here, see the **Museums in Hungary** (www.museum.hu) website.

Buda

Leafy and unpolluted, Buda as seen from Pest isn't just a pretty face. The city's more majestic western side fronting the Danube has some of its most important and historical landmarks (eg Castle Hill, the Citadella) and museums (National Gallery, Budapest History Museum) and, to the north, the original Roman settlement at Aquincum.

CASTLE HILL

Castle Hill (Várhegy), also called the Castle District, a 1km-long limestone plateau towering 170m above the Danube, contains Budapest's most important medieval monuments and museums, and is a Unesco World Heritage Site. Below it is a 28km-long network of caves formed by thermal springs.

The walled area consists of two distinct parts: the Old Town, where commoners lived in the Middle Ages (today's owners of the burgher houses here are anything but 'common'), and the Royal Palace, the original site of the castle built in the 13th century.

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 **Sikló** (☎ 7.30am–10pm, closed 1st & 3rd Mon of month), a funicular railway (uphill/downhill ticket adult 650/550Ft, child aged three to 14 350Ft) 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 from Clark Ádám tér to the northwest, 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, go up the stairs in the north-eastern part of the square and walk up I Várfook utca to Vienna Gate. A minibus with a logo of a castle and labelled 'Várbusz' (or 'Dísz tér') follows the same route from the start of Várfook utca.

Vienna Gate

The medieval entrance to the Old Town, **Vienna Gate** (Map p83; Bécsi kapu; ☎ 24hr) was rebuilt in 1936 to mark the 250th anniversary of the retaking of the castle from the Turks. You can climb to the top at any time. It's not all that huge, but when children in Budapest are loquacious or noisy, their parents tell them: 'Your mouth is as big as the Vienna Gate!'

Medieval Jewish Prayer House

The **Medieval Jewish Prayer House** (Középkori Zsidó Imaház; Map p83; ☎ 225 7815; I Táncsics Mihály utca 26; adult/child 400/150Ft; ☎ 10am–5pm Tue–Sun May–Oct), parts of which date from the 14th century, contains documents and items linked to the Jewish community of Buda, as well as Gothic stone carvings and tombstones from the Great Synagogue in Pest.

Museum of Military History

The **Museum of Military History** (Hadtörténeti Múzeum; Map p83; ☎ 356 9522; I Tóth Árpád sétány 40; admission free; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun Apr–Sep, 10am–4pm

Tue-Sun Oct-Mar), loaded with weaponry dating from before the Turkish conquest, also does a pretty 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).

Buda Castle Labyrinth

The **Buda Castle Labyrinth** (Budavári Labirintus; Map p83; ☎ 489 3281; www.labirintus.com; cnr 1 Üri utca 9 & Lovas út 4; adult/child 1400/1100Ft; ☎ 9.30am–7.30pm), a 1200m-long cave system some 16m under the Castle District, looks at how the caves have been used since prehistoric times in nine halls and chambers. 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.

House of Hungarian Wines

The **House of Hungarian Wines** (Magyar Borok Háza; Map p83; ☎ 212 1030; www.winehouse.hu; 1 Szentháromság tér 6; sampling 3800Ft; ☎ noon–8pm) offers the chance of 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 as many as 55 to sample, 'crash' may soon become the operative word.

Matthias Church

Parts of the **Matthias Church** (Mátyás-templom; Map p83; ☎ 355 5657; www.matyas-templom.hu; 1 Szentháromság tér 2; adult/child/family 600/300/1000Ft, audioguide 300Ft; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–1pm Sat, 1–5pm Sun) date back some 500 years, notably the carvings above the southern entrance. But basically the church (so named because King Matthias Corvinus married Beatrix here in 1474) is a neo-Gothic creation designed by the architect Frigyes Schulek in 1896. In April 2005 the government began a US\$20 million restoration of the church that will last two years.

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; Map p83; ☎ 488 0717), which is included in the church admission fee, has ornate monstrances, reliquaries, chalices and other church plates, as well as a copy of the coronation regalia. There are some interesting views of the chancel from high up in the Royal Oratory.

Fishermen's Bastion

The **Fishermen's Bastion** (Halászbástya; Map p83; adult/child 330/165Ft; ☎ 9am–11pm) is another neo-Gothic masquerade that most visitors (and Hungarians) believe to be much older. But who cares? It looks medieval and still offers views that are among the best in Budapest. Built as a viewing platform in 1905 by 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. In front of the bastion is an ornate equestrian **statue of St Stephen** by sculptor Alajos Stróbl.

Golden Eagle Pharmacy Museum

The **Golden Eagle Pharmacy Museum** (Arany Sas Patikamúzeum; Map p83; ☎ 375 9772; 1 Tárnok utca 18; admission free; ☎ 10.30am–5.30pm Tue–Sun mid–Mar–Oct, 10.30am–3.30pm Tue–Sun Nov–mid–Mar), just north of Dísz tér on the site of Budapest's first pharmacy (1681), contains an unusual mixture of displays on medieval medicine, including a mock-up of an alchemist's laboratory.

Royal Palace

The former Royal Palace (Budavári Palota; Map p83) has been burned, bombed, razed, rebuilt and redesigned at least a half-dozen times over the past seven centuries. Béla IV established a royal residence here in the mid-13th century and subsequent kings either rebuilt their own residences or added on to them. The palace was destroyed in the battle to rout the Turks in 1686; the Habsburgs rebuilt it, but spent very little time here. Today the Royal Palace contains not royal residences but two museums (the Hungarian National Gallery and the Budapest History Museum) and the **National Széchenyi Library**.

There are two entrances to the Royal Palace. The first is via the **Habsburg Steps**, southeast of Szent György tér and through an ornamental gateway dating from 1903. The other way in is via **Corvinus Gate** (☎ 6am–midnight), with its big black raven symbolising King Matthias Corvinus, southwest of the square.

The **Hungarian National Gallery** (Magyar Nemzeti Galéria; Map p83; ☎ 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)

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.

The museum also has an important collection of Hungarian paintings and sculpture from the 19th and 20th centuries. You won't 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 Csonstváry, the paintings of carnivals by the modern artist Vilmos Aba-Novák and works by the realist Mihály Munkácsy, the 'painter of the *puszta*'.

The **Budapest History Museum** (Budapesti Történeti Múzeum; Map p83; ☎ 225 7815, 375 7533; Royal Palace, Wing E; adult/child/family 900/450/1500Ft, audioguide 800Ft; ☎ 10am–6pm mid–May–mid–Sep, 10am–6pm Wed–Mon Mar–mid–May & mid–Sep–Oct, 10am–4pm Wed–Mon Nov–Feb), also known as the Castle Museum (Vár Múzeum), traces the 2000 years of the city on three floors of jumbled exhibits. Restored palace rooms dating from the 15th century can be entered from the basement, which contains an exhibit on the Royal Palace in medieval Buda.

In the basement three vaulted halls, one with a magnificent Renaissance door frame in red marble bearing the seal of Queen Beatrix 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 discovered during excavations in 1974. The exhibit 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 the exhibits reach way back – Budapest from prehistoric times to the arrival of the Avars in the late 6th century.

GELLÉRT HILL & THE TABÁN

Gellért-hegy (Map p83), 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 and the Danube. The Tabán (Map p83), the leafy area between Gellért and Castle Hill, is associated with the Serbs, who settled here after fleeing from the Turks in the early 18th century. Later it became known for its restaurants and wine gardens – a kind of Montmartre for Budapest. Most of them burned to the ground at the turn of the 20th century.

Today Gellért Hill and the Tabán 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 **Gellért Baths** (Map pp80–1) are open to the public (see p97); the **Rác Baths** (Map p83) were still under renovation at the time of writing.

Szent Gellért tér

Szent Gellért tér faces **Independence Bridge** (Szabadság hid; Map pp80–1 and Map pp88–9) and is dominated by the **Danubius Gellért Hotel** (Map pp80–1), an Art-Nouveau pile (1918) and the city's favourite old-world hotel and spa.

Cave Chapel (Sziklakápolna; Map pp80–1; ☎ 385 1529; ☎ 9am–8pm), on a small hill directly north of the 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 sealed off. It was reopened in 1992 and consecrated. The chapel is closed to the public during Mass services.

Gellért tér can be reached from Pest on bus 7 or tram 47 or 49, and from the Buda side on bus 86 and tram 18 or 19.

Citadella

The **Citadella** (Map pp80–1; ☎ 365 6076; www.citadella.hu; ☎ 24hr) 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 (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 the Citadella contains some big guns and dusty displays in the central courtyard, the new **1944 Wax-works** (1944 Panoptikum; Map pp80–1; ☎ 279 1963; admission 1200Ft; ☎ 9am–9pm Mon–Fri, 8am–10pm Sat,

8am-9pm Sun) inside a bunker used during WWII, a hotel/hostel (p105), a restaurant and a dance club.

To get here from Pest cross Elizabeth Bridge and take the stairs leading up behind the statue of St Gellért, or cross Independence Bridge and follow Verejték utca through the park starting at the Cave Chapel. Bus 27 runs almost to the top of the hill from Mórícz Zsigmond körtér, southwest of the Danubius Gellért Hotel (and accessible on trams 18, 19, 47 and 49).

Independence Monument

The **Independence Monument** (Szabadság-szobor; Map pp80-1), the lovely lady with the palm frond proclaiming freedom throughout the city, is to the east of the Citadella. Some 14m high, it was erected in 1947 in tribute to the Soviet soldiers who died liberating Budapest in 1945.

Statues & Bridges

The **Elizabeth Bridge** (Erzsébet híd; Map p86) is the gleaming white (though rather generic-looking) suspension bridge north-east of Gellért Hill. It enjoys a special place in the hearts of Budapesters, as it was the first newly designed bridge to reopen after WWII (1964).

Looking down on Elizabeth Bridge from Gellért Hill is the **St Gellért statue** (Map p83), an Italian missionary invited to Hungary by King Stephen to convert the natives. The monument marks the spot where the bishop was hurled to his death in a spiked barrel in 1046 by pagan Hungarians resisting the new faith.

To the north of the bridge and through the underpass is a **Queen Elizabeth statue** (Map p86), the Habsburg empress and Hungarian queen. The consort of Franz Joseph, she was much-loved 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

Víziváros (Watertown; Map p83 and Map pp80-1) 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 as far west as Moszkva tér, one of Buda's

main transport hubs. In the Middle Ages those involved in trades, crafts and fishing lived here. Under the Turks many of the district's churches were used as mosques, and baths were built, one of which is still functioning. Víziváros is today the heart of urban Buda.

You can reach Víziváros on foot from the metro M2 Batthyány tér stop by walking south along the river or via tram 19, which links the neighbourhood with Szent Gellért tér. Bus 16 from Deák Ferenc tér stops here on its way to/from Castle Hill.

Clark Ádám tér

Clark Ádám tér (Map p83) is named after the 19th-century Scottish engineer who supervised the building of the **Széchenyi Chain Bridge** (Széchenyi láncíd; Map p83), leading from the square, and who designed the **tunnel** (*alagút*; Map p83) under Castle Hill, which took eight months to carve out of the limestone. The bridge was actually the idea of Count István Széchenyi – see p171 – and when it opened in 1849 it was unique for two reasons: it was the first dry link between Buda and Pest; and the aristocracy, previously exempt from all taxation, had to pay the toll like everybody else. The curious sculpture, which looks like an elongated doughnut, hidden in the bushes to the south is the **Okm stone** (Map p83); all Hungarian roads to and from the capital are measured from this exact spot.

Fő utca

Fő utca (Map p83) is the 'Main Street' running through Víziváros and dates from Roman times. At the former **Capuchin church** (Map p83; 1 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) is called **Corvin tér**. The Eclectic building on the north side is the **Buda Concert Hall** (Budai Vigadó; Map p83; Corvin tér 8).

Batthyány tér (Map p83 and Map pp80-1), 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 Ana templom; Map p83; 11 Batthyány tér 7), with one of the loveliest baroque interiors of any church in Budapest.

A couple of streets north is **Nagy Imre tér** (Map pp80-1), with the enormous **Military Court of Justice** (Map pp80-1; 11 Fő utca 70-78) on the northern side. Here Imre Nagy and others were tried and sentenced to death in 1958 (see p32). 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 pp80-1; 11 Fő utca 82-86), parts of which date from 1580, are one block to the north (see p97). Across pedestrianised Ganz utca is the Greek Catholic **St Florian Chapel** (Szent Flórián kápolna; Map pp80-1; 11 Fő utca 88-90), built in 1760 and dedicated to the patron saint of fire-fighters.

Millennium Park

One of the more successful urban redevelopment projects on either side of the Danube in the past decade, **Millennium Park** (Millenáris Park; Map pp80-1; ☎ 438 5312; www.millanaris.hu; 11 Kis Rókus utca 16-20 & Lövház utca 37; ☎ 6am-1am; 🚇 M2 Moszkva tér, 🚶 4 or 6) 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 exhibits.

Frankel Leó út

At Bem tér, Fő utca turns into Frankel Leó út, a tree-lined street of antique shops and boutiques. At its northern end is the **Lukács Baths** (Lukács Gyógyfürdő; Map pp80-1; 11 Frankel Leó út 25-29; 🚶 17, 🚶 60 or 86), which caters to an older and quite serious crowd of bath enthusiasts (see p97). A short distance north and tucked away in an apartment block is the **Újlak Synagogue** (Újlaki zsinagóga; Map pp80-1; 11 Frankel Leó út 49), built in 1888 on the site of an older prayer house and not open to the public.

Tomb of Gül Baba

The overly reconstructed **Tomb of Gül Baba** (Gül Baba türbeje; Map pp80-1; ☎ 326 0062; 11 Türbe tér 1; adult/child/student 500/250/500Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Mar-Oct, 10am-4pm Nov-Feb; HÉV station Margit híd, 🚶 4, 6 or 17) contains the remains of one Gül Baba, an

Ottoman Dervish who took part in the capture of Buda in 1541, and is known in Hungary as the 'Father of Roses'. To reach it 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 utca. The tomb is a pilgrimage place for Muslims, especially from Turkey, and you must remove your shoes before entering. There's a pleasant café here with fine views.

ÓBUDA

'Ó' means 'ancient' in Hungarian; as its name suggests, Óbuda is the oldest part of Buda. The Romans settled at Aquincum north of here (see p21) and when the Magyars arrived, they named it Buda, which became Óbuda when the Royal Palace was built on Castle Hill.

You can reach the heart of Óbuda on the HÉV commuter train – get off at the Árpád híd stop – from Batthyány tér, which is on the M2 metro line, or bus 86 from Fő utca and other points along the Danube on the Buda side. If you're near City Park (Városliget) in Pest, walk southeast to the intersection of Hungária körút and Thököly út and catch the No 1 tram, which avoids Buda and crosses Árpád Bridge into Óbuda.

Flórián tér & Surrounds

Flórián tér (Map pp78-9), split in two by the Árpád Bridge flyover and encircled by mammoth housing blocks, is not the best introduction to Óbuda, but it remains the district's historic centre.

The yellow baroque **Óbuda Parish Church** (Óbudai plébániatemplom; Map pp78-9; 111 168 Lajos utca), built in 1749 and dedicated to Sts Peter and Paul, dominates the easternmost side of Flórián tér. There's a massive rococo pulpit inside. To the south, the large neoclassical building beside the Corinthia Aquincum Hotel is the former **Óbuda Synagogue** (Óbudai zsinagóga; Map pp78-9; 111 Lajos utca 163), dating from 1821. It now houses the sound studios of MTV (Hungarian TV).

Opposite, the **Budapest Gallery Exhibition House** (Budapest Galéria Kiállítóháza; Map pp78-9; ☎ 388 6771; 111 Lajos utca 158; adult/child 400/200Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) hosts some of the most interesting avant-garde exhibitions in town. It also has a standing exhibit of works by

Pál Pátzay, whose sculptures can be seen throughout the city (eg the fountain on Tárnok utca in Buda's Castle District and the *Serpent Slayer* in honour of Raoul Wallenberg in Szent István Park in Pest).

To explore the **Roman Military Amphitheatre** (Római katonai amfiteátrum; Map pp78-9; Pacsirtamező utca), built in the 2nd century for the garrisons, archaeology and classical history buffs taking bus 86 to Flórián tér should get off at Nagyszombat utca (for HÉV passengers, it's the Tímár utca stop), about 800m south of Flórián tér. The amphitheatre could accommodate up to 15,000 people and was larger than the Colosseum in Rome. The rest of the military camp extended north to Flórián tér.

Housed in an 18th-century monastery, later a barracks that was badly damaged in WWII and again in 1956, to the southwest of Flórián tér, the exhibits at the **Kiscell Museum** (Kiscelli Múzeum; Map pp78-9; ☎ 388 8560, 250 0304; III Kiscelli utca 108; adult/child 600/300Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Nov-Mar; ☎ 17, ☎ 60) attempt to tell the story (from the human side) of Budapest since liberation from the Turks. The museum counts among its best exhibits a complete 19th-century apothecary moved here from Kálvin tér, ancient signboards advertising shops and other concerns, and rooms furnished in 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 Czóbel etc) is housed upstairs.

Szentlélek tér & Fő tér

Two contiguous squares lying east of Flórián tér – Szentlélek tér (Holy Spirit Sq; Map pp78-9), a transport hub, and Fő tér (Main Sq; Map pp78-9), a quiet restored square of baroque houses, public buildings and restaurants – contain Óbuda's most important museums.

The **Vasarely Museum** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 388 7551; III Szentlélek tér 6; admission free, temporary exhibitions adult/child 400/200Ft; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Tue-Sun), housed in the crumbling Zichy Mansion, is devoted to the works of Victor Vasarely (or Vásárhelyi Győző before he emigrated to Paris in 1930), the late 'Father of Op Art'. The works 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.

The **Imre Varga Exhibition House** (Varga Imre kiállítóháza; Map pp78-9; ☎ 250 0274; III Laktanya utca 7; adult/child 250/100Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), part of the Budapest Gallery, includes sculptures, statues, medals and drawings by Varga (1923-), one of Hungary's foremost sculptors, who 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 (p91). En route to the museum from Fő tér, you'll pass some of Varga's work: a group of odd metal sculptures of rather worried-looking women holding umbrellas in the middle of the road.

AQUINCUM

The most complete Roman civilian town in Hungary and now a museum, Aquincum (Map pp78-9) 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 easily apparent today as you walk among the ruins, but you can see its outlines, as well as those of the big public baths, the market, an early-Christian church and a temple dedicated to the god Mithra. Across the road to the northwest is the **Roman Civilian Amphitheatre** (Római polgári amfiteátrum; Map pp78-9; Szentendrei út), about half the size of the one reserved for the garrison.

You can reach Aquincum on the HÉV (Aquincum stop) or on bus 34 or 42 from Szentlélek tér.

The **Aquincum Museum** (Aquincumi Múzeum; Map pp78-9; ☎ 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 9am-6pm Tue-Sun May-Sep, 9am-5pm Tue-Sun 15-30 Apr & Oct, museum 10am-6pm Tue-Sun May-Sep, 10am-5pm Tue-Sun 15-30 Apr & Oct), in the centre of what remains of this Roman civilian settlement, puts 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. Look out for the replica of a 3rd-century portable organ called a hydra (and the mosaic illustrating how it was played) and the mock-up of a Roman bath.

BUDA HILLS

With 'peaks' reaching over 500m, a comprehensive system of trails and no lack of

unusual conveyances, the Buda Hills (Map p77) are the city's playground and a welcome respite from hot, dusty Pest in the warmer months; some families actually 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). Apart from the Béla Bartók Memorial House, under renovation at the time of writing, there are few sights, though you might want to poke your head in one of the Buda Hills' pair of caves (p99).

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 westward along Szilágyi Erzsébet fasor for 10 minutes (or take tram 18 or 56 for two stops) to the circular high-rise Hotel Budapest at Szilágyi Erzsébet fasor 47. Directly opposite is the terminus of the **Cog Railway** (Fogaskerekű vasút; Map p77; ☎ 355 4167; admission 1 BKV ticket; ☎ 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 attractive park south of the old-time station or board the narrow-gauge **Children's Railway** (Gyermekvasút; Map p77; ☎ 397 5394; 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 – the engineer excepted. 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 on weekends in 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 **chairlift** (libegő; ☎ 394 3764; adult/child 450/200Ft; ☎ 9.30am-5pm mid-May-mid-Sep, 9.30am-4pm mid-Sep-mid-May), which will take you down to Zugliger út. (Note the chairlift is closed on the Monday of every even-numbered week.) From here bus 158 returns to Moszkva tér (last one just after 10.15pm).

Margaret Island

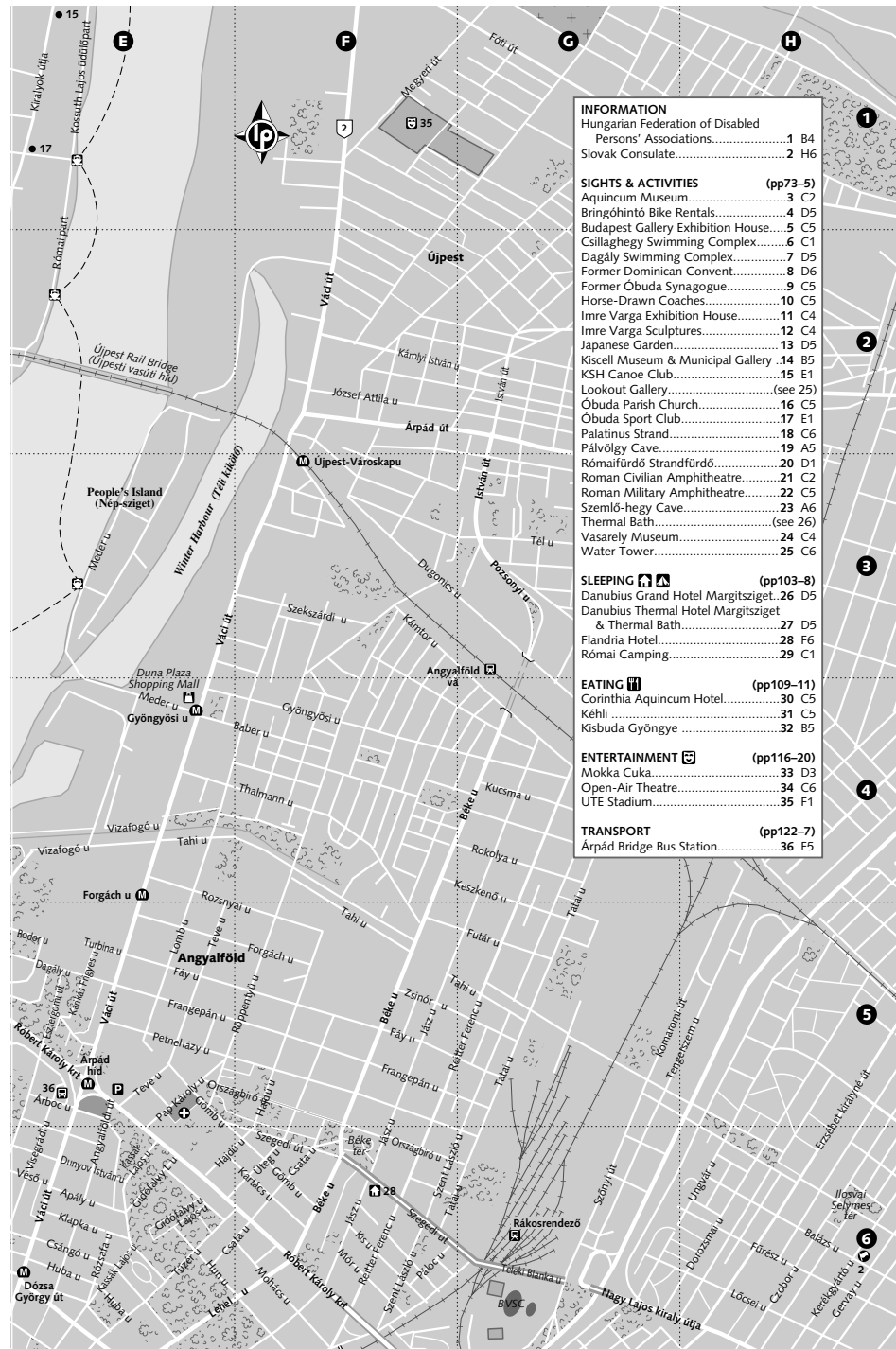
Neither Buda nor Pest, 2.5km-long Margaret Island (Margit-sziget; Map pp80-1 and Map pp78-9) in the middle of the Danube River was always the domain of one religious order or another until the Turks came and turned what was then called the Island of Rabbits into – appropriately enough – a harem, from which all 'infidels' were barred. It's been a public park open to everyone since the mid-19th century.

Cross over to Margaret Island from Pest or Buda via trams 4 or 6. Bus 26 covers the length of the island as it makes the run between Nyugati train station (Nyugati pályaudvar) and Árpád Bridge bus station. Cars are allowed on Margaret Island from Árpád Bridge only as far as the two big hotels at the northeastern end; the rest is reserved for pedestrians, cyclists and horse-drawn carriages.

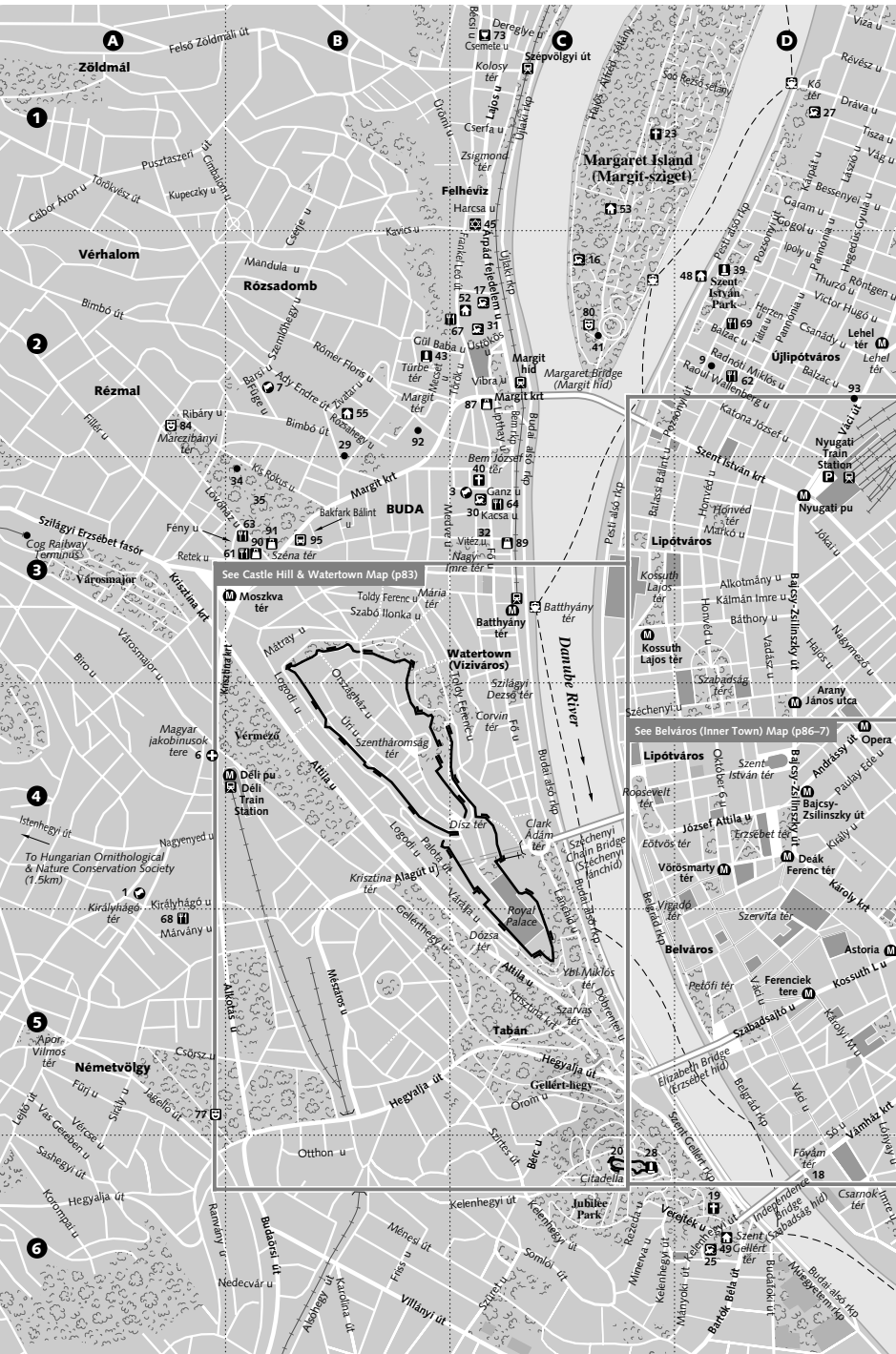
MEDIEVAL RUINS

The ruins of the **Franciscan church and monastery** (Ferences templom és kolostor; Map pp80-1) – no more than a tower and a wall dating from the late 13th century – are almost in the exact geographical centre of Margaret Island. The Habsburg archduke Joseph built a summer residence here when he inherited the island in 1867. It was later converted into a hotel that operated until 1949.

The former **Dominican convent** (Domonkos kolostor; Map pp78-9) lies to the northeast of the Franciscan church and monastery. It was built by Béla IV, whose scribes played an important role in the continuation of Hungarian scholarship. Its most famous resident was Béla's own daughter, St Margaret (1242-71). As the story goes, the king promised to commit his daughter to a life of devotion in a nunnery if the Mongols were driven from the land. They were and she was – at nine years of age. Still, she seemed to enjoy it – if we're to believe the *Lives of the Saints* – especially the mortification-of-the-flesh parts and never bathing above her ankles. St Margaret, not canonised until 1943, commands something of a cult following in Hungary. A red marble sepulchre cover surrounded by a wrought-iron grille marks her original resting place, and there's a much visited shrine with votives nearby.



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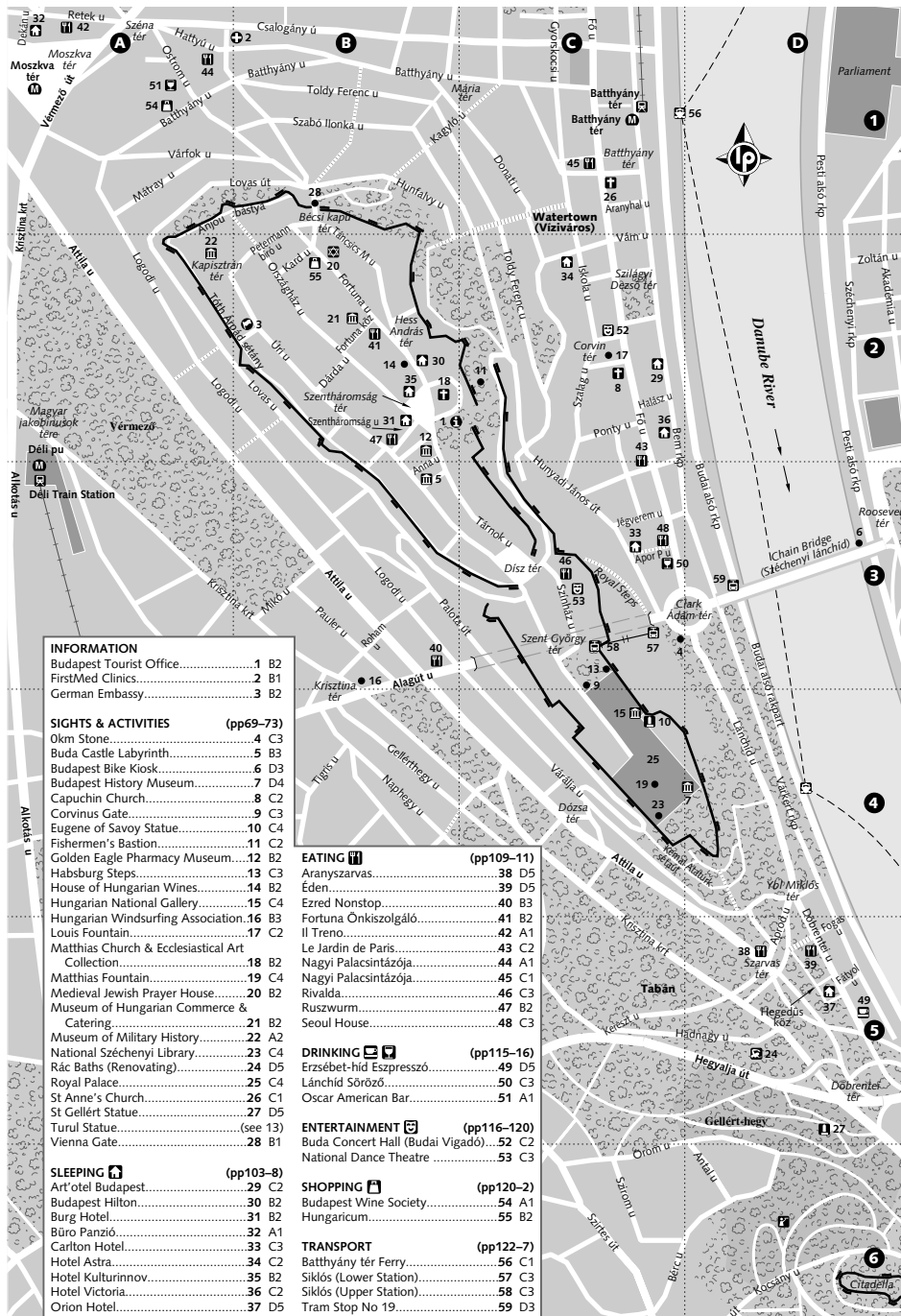
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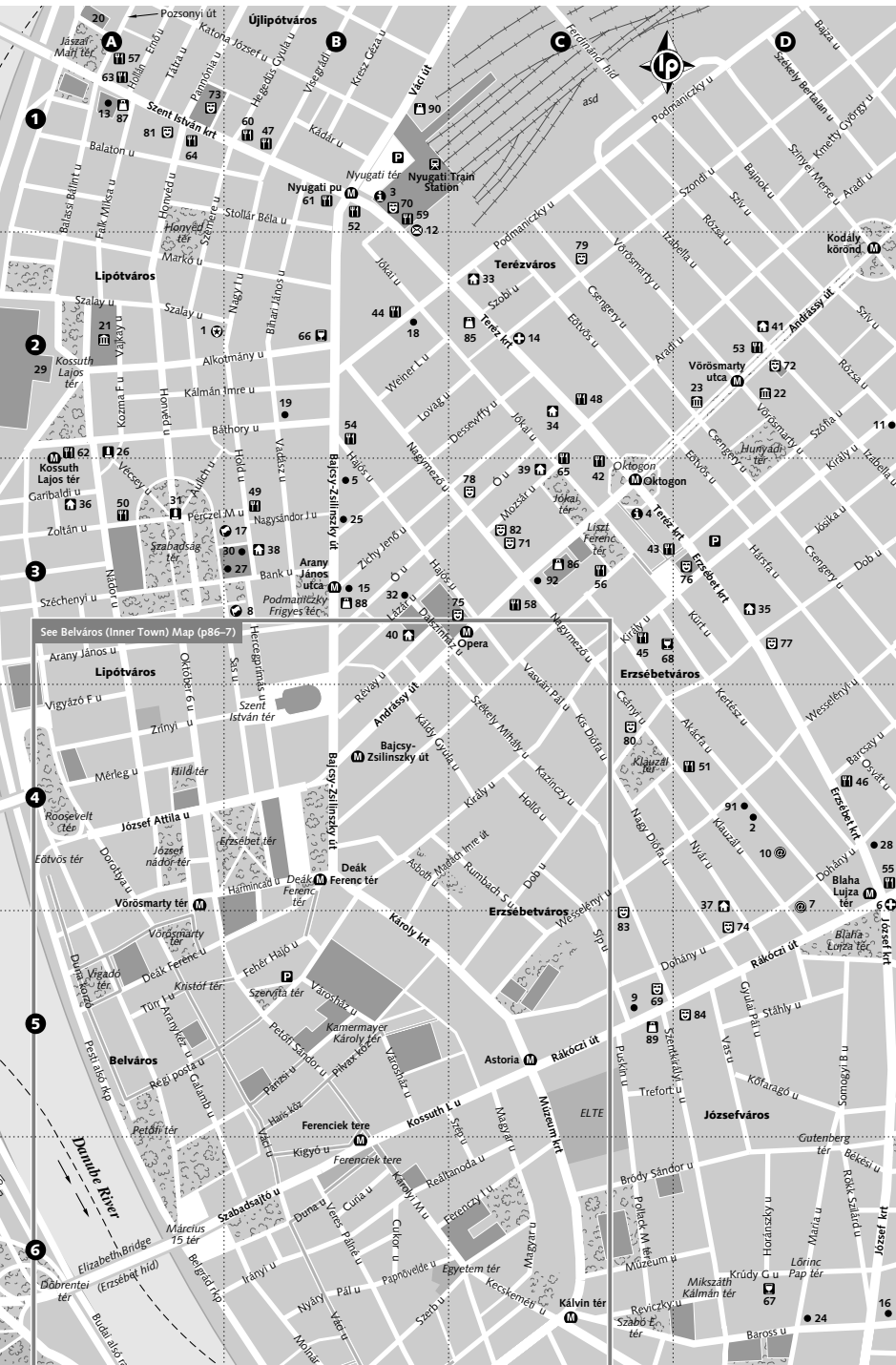
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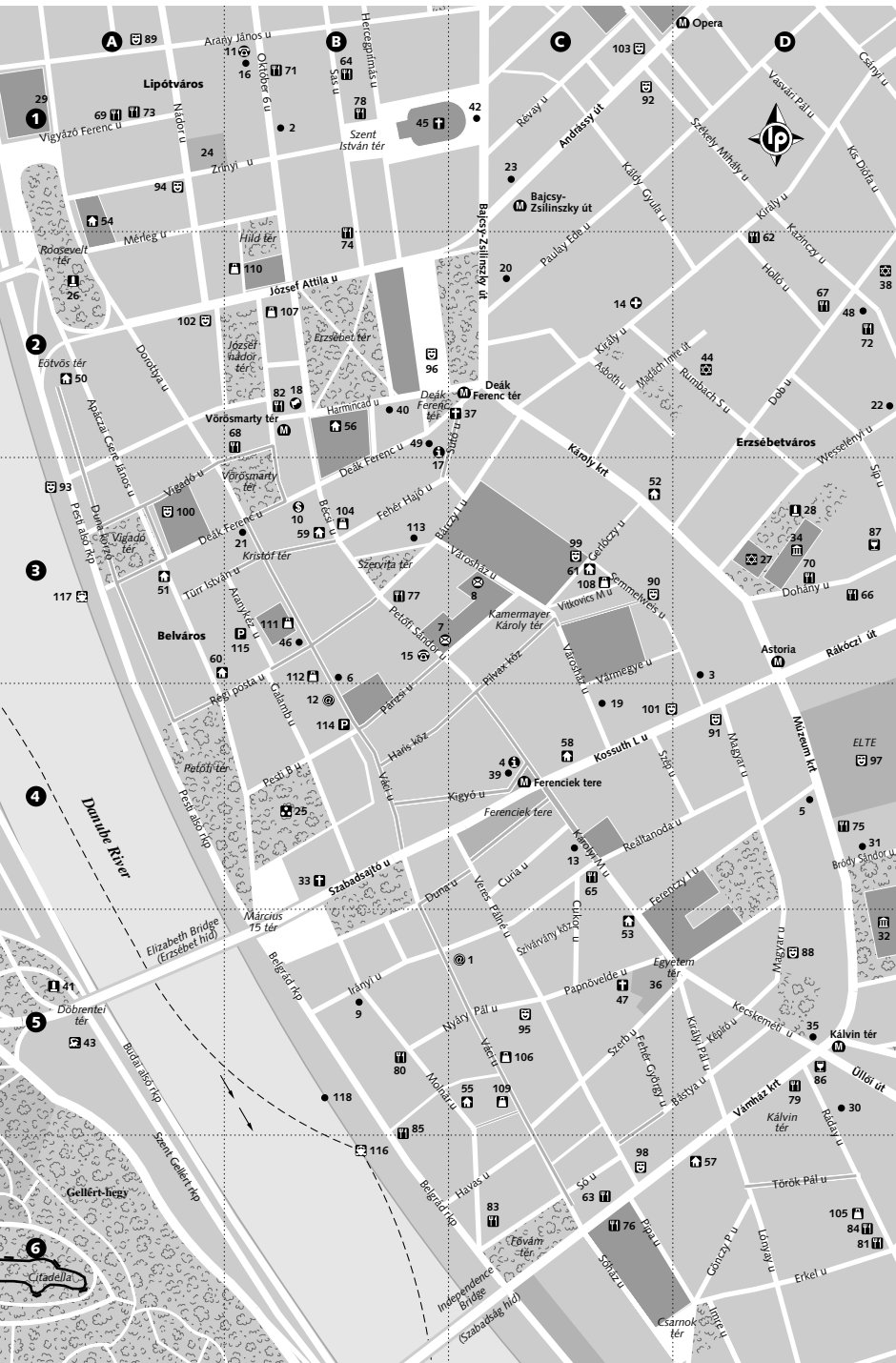
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access from Ferenciek tere, walk through **Párisi Udvar** (Parisian Court; Map p86; V Ferenciek tere 5), a gem of a Parisian-style arcade built in 1909, and into tiny Kigyó utca. Váci utca is immediately to the west.

Many of the buildings on Váci utca are worth closer inspection, but as it's a narrow street you'll have to crane your neck or walk into one of the side streets for a better view.

Thonet House (Map p86; V Váci utca 11/a) is a masterpiece built by Ödön Lechner (1890) and the flower shop called **Philanthia** (Map p86; V Váci utca 9) has an original Art-Nouveau interior.

Vörösmarty tér & Surrounds

Váci utca ends at Vörösmarty tér (Map p86), a large square of smart shops, galleries, cafés and, depending on the season, an outdoor market with stalls selling tourist schlock, and artists who will draw your portrait or caricature suitable for framing (maybe).

In the centre is a statue of the 19th-century poet after whom Vörösmarty tér was named. The statue is made of Italian marble and is protected in winter by a bizarre plastic 'iceberg' that kids love sliding on. The first – or last – stop of the little yellow (or Millennium) metro line designated the M1 is also in the square, and at the northern end is **Gerbeaud** (Map p86; p113), Budapest's most famous café and cake shop.

South of Vörösmarty tér is the sumptuous **Bank Palace** (Bank Palota; Map p86; Deák utca 5), built in 1915 and now housing the Budapest Stock Exchange. The **Pesti Vigadó** (Map p86; V Vigadó tér 1), the Romantic-style concert hall built in 1865, but badly damaged during WWII, faces the river to the west of Vörösmarty tér.

Duna korzó

An easy way to cool down on a warm afternoon (and enjoy the best views of Castle Hill across the river) is to stroll along the Duna korzó (Map p86), the riverside 'Danube Promenade' between Chain Bridge and Elizabeth Bridge and above Belgrád rakpart. It's full of cafés, musicians and handcraft stalls, and leads into **Petőfi tér** (Map p86), named after the poet of the 1848–49 War of Independence and the scene of political rallies (both legal and illegal) over subsequent years. **Március 15 tér** (Map p86),

which marks the date of the outbreak of the revolution, abuts it to the south.

On the eastern side of Március 15 tér, sitting uncomfortably close to the Elizabeth Bridge flyover, is the **Inner Town parish church** (Belvárosi plébániatemplom; Map p86; V Március 15 tér 2), where a Romanesque church was first built in the 12th century within a Roman fortress. You can see a few bits of the fort, **Contra Aquincum** (Map p86), in the small park to the north. The 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.

NORTHERN INNER TOWN

This district, also called Lipótváros (Leopold Town; Map p84 and Map p86), is full of offices, government ministries, 19th-century apartment blocks and grand squares.

Roosevelt tér

Roosevelt tér (Map p86; ☎ 16 or 105, ☎ 2 or 2/a), 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.

On the southern end of the square is a **statue of Ferenc Deák** (Map p86), the Hungarian minister largely responsible for the Compromise of 1867, which brought about the Dual Monarchy of Austria and Hungary. The statues on the western side are of an Austrian and a Hungarian child holding hands in peaceful bliss.

The Art-Nouveau building with the gold tiles to the east is the **Gresham Palace** (Map p86; V Roosevelt tér 5-6), built by an English insurance company in 1907. Following a total overhaul, it now houses the sumptuous **Four Seasons Gresham Palace Hotel** (Map p86; p108), arguably the city's finest hostelry. The **Hungarian Academy of Sciences** (Magyar Tudományos Akadémia; Map p86; V Roosevelt tér 9), founded by Count István Széchenyi, is at the northern end of the square.

Szabadság tér

'Independence Sq' (Map p84; ☎ 15), one of the largest squares in the city, is a few minutes' walk northeast of Roosevelt tér. In the centre is a **monument to the Soviet army** (Map p84), one of the very few still left in Budapest.

South of the US embassy is the former **Royal Postal Savings Bank** (Map p84; V Hold utca 4),

a Secessionist extravaganza of colourful tiles and folk motifs built by Ödön Lechner in 1901 and now part of the **National Bank of Hungary** (Map p84; Magyar Nemzeti Bank; V Szabadság tér 8) next door.

Kossuth Lajos tér

Northwest of Szabadság tér is Kossuth Lajos tér (Map p84; ☎ M2 Kossuth Lajos tér), the site of Budapest's most photographed building and the best museum in the country for traditional arts and crafts. Southeast of the square in Vértanúk tere is a **statue of Imre Nagy**, the reformist Communist prime minister executed in 1958 for his role in the Uprising two years before (see p32). It was unveiled with great ceremony in the summer of 1996.

The Eclectic **Parliament** (Országház; Map p84; ☎ 441 4904, 441 4415; V Kossuth Lajos tér 1-3, Gate X; admission free for EU citizens, other adult/child 2300/1150Ft; ☎ M2 Kossuth Lajos tér), designed by Imre Steindl and completed in 1902, has almost 700 sumptuously decorated rooms, but you'll only get to see three on a guided tour of the North Wing: the main staircase and landing, where the **Crown of St Stephen** (see boxed text, below), the nation's most important national icon, is on display; 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 architectural styles – neo-Gothic, neo-Romanesque, neobaroque – and in sum works very well. Members of Parliament sit in the National Assembly Hall in the South Wing from February to June and again

from September to December. Tours of the North Wing depart at 10am, 12pm, 1pm, 2pm and 6pm.

The **Ethnography Museum** (Néprajzi Múzeum; Map p84; ☎ 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), opposite the Parliament building, offers visitors an easy introduction to traditional Hungarian life, with thousands of displays in 13 rooms on the 1st floor. The mock-ups of peasant houses from the Őrség 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 temporary exhibitions deal with other peoples of Europe and further afield.

BAJCSY-ZSILINSZKY ÚT

Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út (Map p84 and Map p86) is the arrow-straight boulevard that stretches from central Deák Ferenc tér, the only place in the city where all three metro lines converge, and Nyugati tér, where the Nyugati train station is located.

St Stephen's Basilica

The neoclassical **St Stephen's Basilica** (Szent István Bazilika; Map p86; ☎ 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), built over the course of half a century, was not completed until 1905. Much of the interruption had to do with the fiasco in 1868 when the dome collapsed during a storm,

THE CROWN OF ST STEPHEN

Legend tells us that it was Asztrik, the first abbot of the Benedictine monastery at Pannonhalma (p161), who presented a crown to Stephen as a gift from Pope Sylvester II around AD 1000, thus legitimising the new king's rule and assuring his loyalty to Rome over Constantinople. It's a nice story, but it 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, only to appear again later. During the Mongol invasions of the 13th century the crown was dropped while being transported to a safe house, giving it that slightly jaunty, skewed look. More recently in 1945 Hungarian fascists fleeing the Soviet army took it to Austria. Eventually the crown 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 in Hungary had always been handed down 'in the name of St Stephen's Crown', it was considered a living symbol and had thus been 'kidnapped'.

and the structure had to be demolished and rebuilt. 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, 1am–4.30pm Sun May–Sep, 10am–4pm Mon–Sat, 1am–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. To view it, you have to put a 100Ft coin into a little machine in front of it, which lights up the glass casket containing the relic.

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

SZENT ISTVÁN KÖRÚT

Szent István körút (Map p84), the northernmost stretch of the Big Ring road (Nagykörút) 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. Don't hesitate to explore the inner courtyards here and further on.

You can reach Jászai Mari tér (Map p84), at the western end of Szent István körút, on tram 4 or 6 from either side of the river or via tram 2 from the Inner Town in Pest. The eastern end of the boulevard is best reached by metro (M3 Nyugati pályaudvar).

Újlipótváros

The area north of Szent István körút is known as Újlipótváros (New Leopold Town; Map pp80–1 and Map p84) to distinguish it from Lipótváros (Leopold Town) in the Northern Inner Town. (Archduke Leopold was the grandson of Empress Maria Theresia.) The area was upper middle class and Jewish before the war, and many of the 'safe houses' organised by the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg during WWII were here (see boxed text, below). A street named after this great man, two blocks to the north, bears a commemorative plaque, and a **statue of Wallenberg** (Map pp80–1) doing battle with a snake, was erected in Szent István Park in 1999.

ERZSÉBETVÁROS

The Big Ring road slices district VII – also called Erzsébetváros (Elizabeth Town; Map p84 and Map p86) – in half between two busy squares: Oktogon and Blaha Lujza tér.

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 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 in Germany and Poland.

Wallenberg immediately began issuing Swedish safe-conduct passes (called 'Wallenberg passports') and set up '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 to be a spy for the USA.

The eastern side is a rather poor area, with little of interest to travellers except the Keleti train station (Map pp80–1) 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.

Oktogon is on the M1 metro line, Blaha Lujza tér on the M2. You can also reach this area via trams 4 and 6 from both Buda and the rest of Pest.

Liszt Academy of Music

The **Liszt Academy of Music** (Liszt Zeneakadémia; Map p84; ☎ 342 0179; VI Liszt Ferenc tér 8; ☑ M2 Oktogon), one block southeast of Oktogon, was built in 1907. It attracts students from all over the world and is one of the top venues for concerts in Budapest. The interior, with large and small concert halls richly embellished with Zsolnay porcelain and frescoes, is worth a look even if you're not attending a performance.

Jewish Quarter

The heart of the old Jewish quarter, **Klauzál tér** (Map p84; ☑ 4 or 6), and its surrounding streets retain a feeling of prewar Budapest. Signs of a continued Jewish presence are still evident – in a **kosher bakery** (Map p86; Kazinczy utca 28), the **Frölich cake shop** (Map p86; Dob utca 22), which has old Jewish favourites, and a **wigmaker** (Map p86; Kazinczy utca 32).

There are about half a dozen synagogues and prayer houses in the district, which were reserved for different sects and ethnic groups: conservatives, the Orthodox, Poles, Sephardics and so on. The **Orthodox Synagogue** (Ortodox zsinagóga; Map p86; VII Kazinczy utca 29–31; ☑ 4 or 6), which is also accessed from Dob utca 35, was built in 1913 for Budapest's Orthodox community, and the Moorish **Rumbach Sebestyén utca Synagogue** (Rumbach Sebestyén utcai zsinagóga; Map p86; VII Rumbach Sebestyén utca 11; ☑ M1/2/3 Deák Ferenc tér) in 1872 by Austrian Secessionist architect Otto Wagner for the conservatives.

The **Great Synagogue** (Nagy zsinagóga; Map p86; VII Dohány utca 2–8; ☑ M2 Astoria) is the largest Jewish house of worship in the world outside New York City and can seat 3000 of the faithful. Built in 1859 and containing both Romantic-style and Moorish architectural elements, the copper-domed synagogue was

renovated with funds raised by the Hungarian government and a New York-based charity headed by the actor Tony Curtis, whose parents emigrated from Hungary in the 1920s. In an annex of the synagogue is the **Jewish Museum** (Zsidó Múzeum; Map p86; ☎ 342 8949; VII Dohány utca 2; synagogue admission 300Ft, synagogue & museum adult/child 1000/400Ft; ☎ 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), 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 – dark and sombre – relates the events of 1944–45, including the infamous mass murder of doctors and patients at a hospital on Maros utca.

On the synagogue's north side, the **Holocaust Memorial** (Map p86; 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.

Blaha Lujza tér & Rákóczi út

The subway (underpass) below Blaha Lujza tér (Map p84), the square named after a leading 19th-century stage actress, is one of the liveliest in the city, with hustlers, beggars, peasants selling their wares, musicians and, of course, pickpockets. Just north of the square is the Art-Nouveau **New York Palace** (New York Palota; Map p84; VII Erzsébet körút 9–11), erstwhile home of the celebrated **New York Kávéház**, scene of many a literary gathering over the years. It has been almost completely restored and will soon reopen as a hotel.

Rákóczi út (Map pp80–1 and Map p84), a busy shopping street, cuts across Blaha Lujza tér and ends at Baross tér and Keleti train station (Keleti pályaudvar; Map pp80–1), built in 1884 and renovated a century later.

JÓZSEFVÁROS & FERENCVÁROS

From Blaha Lujza tér, the Big Ring road runs through district VIII, also called Józsefváros (Joseph Town; Map pp80–1 and Map p84). The western side 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 where much of the

fighting in October 1956 took place. Today it is being developed at breakneck speed and the sound of bulldozers is constant nowadays.

The neighbourhood south of Üllői út is Ferencváros (Francis Town; Map pp80–1), home of the city's most popular football team, Ferencvárosi Torna Club (p120), and many of its tough, green-and-white-clad supporters. Most of the area was washed away in the Great Flood of 1838. Today there is a tremendous amount of building going on in Ferencváros too.

The Józsefváros and Ferencváros districts are best served by trams 4 and 6.

Hungarian National Museum

The **Hungarian National Museum** (Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum; Map p86; ☎ 338 2122, 317 7806; www.mnm.hu; VIII Múzeum körút 14-16; admission free, temporary exhibitions adult/child 700/350Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; M3 Kálvin tér, ☐ 47 or 49) contains the nation's most important collection of historical relics in a large neoclassical building 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 in the 9th century, and on the 2nd floor of the Magyar people to 1849 and of Hungary in the 19th and 20th centuries. Look out for the enormous 3rd-century Roman mosaic from Balácapuszta, near Veszprém, at the foot of the central staircase; the crimson silk royal coronation robe (or mantle) stitched by nuns at Veszprém in 1031; 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); the Turkish tent; the stunning baroque library; and Beethoven's Broadwood piano.

Museum of Applied Arts

The galleries of the **Museum of Applied Arts** (Iparművészeti Múzeum; Map pp80-1; ☎ 456 5100; IX Üllői út 33-37; admission free, temporary exhibitions adult/child 600/300Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; M3 Ferenc körút), 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, goldsmithing, leatherwork etc). However, the last time we visited there were only temporary exhibitions on display and the permanent collections were closed. The building, designed by Ödön Lechner and decorated with Zsolnay ceramic tiles, was completed for the Millenary Exhibition (1896), but was badly damaged during WWII and again in 1956.

Holocaust Memorial Center

The new **Holocaust Memorial Center** (Holokauszt Emlékközpont; Map pp88-9; ☎ 455 3348; www.hdke.hu; IX Páva utca 39; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), 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, such as a recent one on the genocide of the Roma people during WWII.

Ludwig Museum (Museum of Contemporary Art)

Just across from the National Theatre, the **Ludwig Museum**, which is also called the **Museum of Contemporary Art** (Kortárs Művészeti Múzeum; Map pp88-9; ☎ 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 or 2/a) and was until 2005 housed in the Royal Palace on Castle Hill, is clearly enjoying its new and vastly expanded exhibition space in the equally architecturally controversial **Palace of Arts** (Művészetek Palotája; p118). The museum is the only one collecting and exhibiting international contemporary art and works by American, Russian, German and French contemporary artists over the past 50 years, and Hungarian, Czech, Slovakian, Romanian, Polish and Slovenian works from the 1990s onward. In the past dozen years the museum has held some 150 temporary exhibitions, many of them on the cutting edge.

ANDRÁSSY ÚT

Andrássy út (Map pp80-1 and Map p84) starts a short distance north of Deák Ferenc tér and stretches for 2.5km to the north-east, ending at Heroes' Sq (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 (see p100), although the M1 metro runs beneath Andrássy út from Deák Ferenc tér as far as the City Park.

Hungarian State Opera House

The neo-Renaissance **Hungarian State Opera House** (Magyar Állami Operaház; Map p84; ☎ 332 8197; www.operavisit.hu; VI Andrássy út 22; adult/student 2400/1200Ft; M1 M1 Opera) was designed by Miklós Ybl in 1884 and is among the city's most beautiful buildings. If you cannot attend a concert or an opera at least join one of the guided tours (held at 3pm and 4pm), which include a brief musical performance. Tickets are available from the souvenir shop on the eastern side of the building facing Hajós utca.

House of Terror

The **House of Terror** (Terror Háza; Map p84; ☎ 374 2600; www.terrorhaza.hu; Andrássy út 60; adult/child 1200/600Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-7.30pm Sat & Sun; M1 M1 Vörösmarty utca), in what was once the headquarters of the dreaded ÁVH secret police (p31), 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 central 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. May they never forget their crimes.

Franz Liszt Memorial Museum

The **Franz Liszt Memorial Museum** (Liszt Ferenc Emlékmúzeum; Map p84; ☎ 322 9804; VI Vörösmarty utca 35; adult/child 400/250Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri,

9am-5pm Sat; M1 M1 Vörösmarty utca) is situated 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.

Asian Art Museums

This 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; Map pp80-1; ☎ 322 8476; VI Andrássy út 103; adult/child 400/200Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; M1 Bajza utca) is in the former villa of its benefactor and namesake. Founded in 1919, the museum has a good collection of Indonesian *wayang* puppets, Indian statuary, and lamaist sculpture and scroll paintings from Tibet. There's an 18th-century Chinese moon gate in the back garden, but most of the Chinese and Japanese collection of ceramics and porcelain, textiles and sculpture is housed in the **György Ráth Museum** (Ráth György Múzeum; Map pp80-1; ☎ 342 3916; VI Városligeti fasor 12; adult/child 400/250Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; M1 Bajza utca), in a gorgeous Art-Nouveau residence a few minutes' walk southwards down Bajza utca.

HEROES' SQUARE

Andrássy út ends at Heroes' Sq (Hősök tere; Map pp80-1), which in effect forms the entrance to City Park and is on the M1 metro line (Hősök tere stop).

Millenary Monument

In the centre is the Millenary Monument (Ezeréves emlékmű; Map pp80-1), a 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 behind are of rulers and statesmen – from King Stephen on the left to Lajos Kossuth on the right. The reliefs below show a significant scene in the honoured man's life. The four allegorical figures atop are (from left to right): Work & Prosperity, War, Peace and Knowledge & Glory.

Museum of Fine Arts

The **Museum of Fine Arts** (Szépművészeti Múzeum; Map pp80-1; ☎ 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), on the northern side of the square, houses the city's outstanding collection of foreign art works in a renovated building dating from 1906. The Old Masters collection is the most complete, with 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 Greco-Roman artefacts and 19th- and 20th-century paintings, watercolours, graphics and sculpture, including some important impressionist works. Free tours of key galleries are available in English at 11am Tuesday to Friday.

Palace of Art

The **Palace of Art** (Múcsarnok; Map pp80-1; ☎ 460 7014, 363 2671; www.mucsarnok.hu; XIV Dózsa György út 37; 3-D film adult/child 1000/500Ft, exhibitions & film 1500/500Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) is 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, too. 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 from mid-March to September and from 10am to 4.30pm Friday to Sunday from October to mid-March.

CITY PARK

City Park (Városliget; Map pp80-1) 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 dry, 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 (p120) and the Széchenyi Baths (opposite) are to the north.

City Park is served by the M1 metro (Széchenyi fürdő stop), as well as by trolleybuses 70, 72, 75 and 79.

Transport Museum

The **Transport Museum** (Közlekedési Múzeum; Map pp80-1; ☎ 273 3840; XIV Városligeti körút 11; admission free, temporary exhibitions adult/child 400/200Ft; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun May-Sep, 10am-4pm Tue-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun Oct-Apr) may not sound like a crowd pleaser, but it is one of the most enjoyable in Budapest and great for children. In an old and a new wing there are scale models of ancient trains (some of which run), classic late-19th-century automobiles and lots of those old wooden bicycles called 'bone-shakers'. 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.

City Zoo & Botanical Garden

The large **City Zoo and Botanical Garden** (Városi Állatkert és Növénykert; Map pp80-1; ☎ 273 4900, 363 3701; www.zoobudapest.com; XIV Állatkerti út 6-12; adult/child/student/family 1300/900/1000/4100Ft; ☎ 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 Nov-Feb) has a good collection of 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 with pachyderm heads in beetle-green Zsolnay ceramic and the Palm House (with aquarium 300Ft extra) erected by the Eiffel Company of Paris.

Funfair Park

The **Funfair Park** (Vidámpark; Map pp80-1; ☎ 363 8310, 363 2660; www.vidampark.hu; XIV Állatkerti körút 14-16; admission free or 300Ft, rides 300-600Ft; ☎ 10am-8pm 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-6.30 Sat & Sun Mar & Oct) is a 150-year-old luna park on 2½ hectares next to the Municipal Great Circus. There are a couple of dozen thrilling rides, including the heart-stopping Ikarus Space Needle, the looping Star roller coaster and the Hip-Hop freefall tower, as well as go-karts, dodgem cars and a carousel built in 1906.

ACTIVITIES

Though Budapest may not seem like a destination for activities, it is chock-a-block

with things to keep you occupied outdoors. From swimming, taking the waters and cycling to caving and canoeing, it's all within easy access of the capital.

Thermal Baths

Budapest lies on the geological fault separating the Buda Hills from the Great Plain; more than 30,000 cubic metres of warm to scalding (21°C to 76°C) mineral water gush forth daily from some 120 thermal springs. As a result, the city is a major spa centre and 'taking the waters' at one of the many *gyógyfürdő* (thermal baths) is a real Budapest experience. Some baths date from Turkish times, some are Art-Nouveau wonders and others are spick-and-span modern establishments.

Generally, entry to those baths without a deposit or voucher system (such as Gellért, Lukács and Széchenyi) allows you to stay for two hours on weekdays and 1½ hours on weekends, though this rule is not always enforced. Most of the baths offer a full range of serious medical treatments, plus more indulgent treatments, like massage (15/30 minutes 1900/2700Ft) and pedicures (2000Ft). Specify what you want when buying your ticket.

The procedure for getting into the warm water is similar to the one for swimming pools (p98), though in Budapest's baths you will sometimes be given a number and will have to wait until it is called or appears on the electronic board. Though some of the local spas and baths look a little rough around the edges, they are clean and the water is changed regularly. You might consider taking along a pair of plastic sandals or flip-flops, however. Most bathhouses now require you to wear a bathing suit and no longer distribute those strange draw-string loincloths. Most hire out swimming costumes (around 800Ft) if you don't have your own.

Please note that some of the baths become gay venues on male-only days – especially the Király. Not much actually goes on, except for some intensive cruising, but those not into it may feel uncomfortable.

An excellent source of information is **Budapest Spas and Hot Springs** (www.spasbudapest.com).

Soaking in the Art-Nouveau **Gellért Baths** (Gellért Gyógyfürdő; Map pp80-1; ☎ 466 6166;

XI Kelenhegyi út 4; admission deposit before/after 3pm 3000/2800Ft; ☎ 6am-7pm May-Sep, 6am-7pm Mon-Fri, 6am-5pm Sat & Sun Oct-Apr; ☎ 18, 19, 47 or 49), open to both men and women in separate sections, has been likened to taking a bath in a cathedral. The pools maintain a constant temperature of 44°C, and the water, high in calcium, magnesium and hydrogen carbonate, is good for pains in the joints, arthritis and blood circulation. The entrance fee is actually a kind of deposit; you get back 700/400/200Ft if you leave within two/three/four hours before 3pm, and 500/200Ft if you exit within two/three hours after 3pm. Just make sure you hold on to your receipts.

The four pools at the **Király Baths** (Király Gyógyfürdő; Map pp80-1; ☎ 202 3688, 201 4392; II Fő utca 84; admission 1100Ft; ☎ men 9am-8pm Tue, Thu & Sat, women 7am-6pm Mon, Wed & Fri; ☎ 60 or 86), with water temperatures of between 26°C and 40°C, are genuine Turkish baths erected in 1570 and they have a wonderful skylit central dome.

The **Lukács Baths** (Lukács Gyógyfürdő; Map pp80-1; ☎ 326 1695; II Frankel Leó út 25-27; admission deposit locker/cabin 1500/1700Ft; ☎ 6am-7pm May-Sep, 6am-7pm Mon-Fri, 6am-5pm Sat & Sun Oct-Apr; ☎ 17, ☎ 60 or 86), housed in a sprawling, 19th-century complex, are popular with older, very keen spa aficionados, and include everything from thermal and mud baths (temperatures 22°C to 40°C) to a swimming pool. The thermal baths are open to men on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, and women on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. You get back 500/300/100Ft if you leave two/three/four hours after you enter.

At the northern end of City Park, the **Széchenyi Baths** (Széchenyi Gyógyfürdő; Map pp80-1; ☎ 363 3210; XIV Állatkerti út 11; admission deposit before/after 3pm 2300/1400Ft; ☎ 6am-7pm; ☎ M1 Széchenyi fürdő) is unusual for three reasons: its immense size (a dozen thermal baths and three swimming pools); its bright, clean atmosphere; and its water temperatures (up to 38°), which really are what the wall plaques say they are. It's open to both men and women at all times, and you get back 800/500/200Ft on your deposit if you leave within two/three/four hours before 3pm and 600/300Ft if you exit within two/three hours after 3pm.

The **Thermal Bath** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 889 4737; XIII Margit-sziget; admission Mon-Fri 5200Ft, Sat & Sun 6300Ft; ☎ 6.30am-9.30pm; ☎ 26) is a modern-style

thermal spa in the Danubius Grand Hotel Margitsziget on leafy Margaret Island. The baths are open to men and women in separate sections.

Cycling

Parts of Budapest, including City and Népliget Parks, Margaret Island and the Buda Hills, are excellent places for cycling. At present dedicated bike lanes in the city total about 140km, including the path along Andrassy út, but that number is expected to double in the next decade. To contact Budapest-based cycling associations for information and advice, see p50.

For places to rent bicycles on Margaret Island, see boxed text p76).

Long-established and very reliable **Yellow Zebra Bikes** (Deák Ferenc tér Map p86; ☎ 266 8777, 06 30 211 8861; www.yellowzebrabikes.com; V Sütő utca 2; per hr/half-day/day 500/2000/3000Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Nov-Mar, 9am-8pm Apr-Oct; M1/2/3 Deák Ferenc tér; Opera House Map p84; ☎ 269 3843; VI Lázár utca 16; ☎ 10am-5pm Nov-Mar, 9.30am-7.30pm Apr-Oct; M1 Opera) rents out bikes year-round from outlets just behind the Tourinform office and the Opera House.

Budapest Bike (Erzsébetváros Map p86; ☎ 06 30 944 5533; www.budapestbike.hu; VII Wesselényi utca 18; per 2hr/half-day/day 600/1500/3000Ft; ☎ 9am-midnight; ☎ 4 or 6 or trolleybus 74; Inner Town Map p83; ☎ 06 30 944 5533; V Lánchíd; ☎ 9am-midnight May-Sep) rents bikes from its main outlet, as well as from a kiosk at the Pest end of Chain Bridge. Another outfit is **Bike Base** (Map p84; ☎ 269 5983, 06 70 625 8501; www.bikebase.hu; VI Podmaniczky utca 19; per 1/2/3 days €8/12/16; ☎ 9am-7pm; M3 Nyugati pályaudvar).

Frigoria (www.frigoriakiado.hu) publishes a number of useful guides and maps, including one called *Kerékpárral Budapest környékén* (By Bike around Budapest; 2200Ft) that takes in the surrounding areas and describes 30 different routes. The tourist offices distribute the free but less ambitious *Budapest & Surroundings Bicycle Route Map*, with 20 recommended tours that range in length from 24km to 177km.

Bicycles can be transported on the HÉV, all Mahart boats and the Cog and Children's Railways, but not on the metro, buses or any trams.

Swimming

Every town of any size in Hungary has at least one indoor and outdoor *úszoda*

(swimming pool), and Budapest boasts dozens. They're always excellent places to get in a few laps (if indoor), cool off on a hot summer's day (if outdoor) or watch all the posers strut their stuff.

The system inside is similar to that at the baths, except that rather than a cabin or cubicle you store your gear in lockers. Get changed and call the attendant, who will lock it, write the time on a chalkboard and hand you a key. Many pools require the use of a bathing cap, so bring your own or wear the plastic one provided or sold for a nominal fee. Most pools rent bathing suits and towels.

Following are the best outdoor and indoor pools in the city. Some are attached to thermal baths reviewed previously, others part of hotel wellness centres.

The popular **Csillaghegy swimming complex** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 250 1533; III Pusztakúti út 3; adult/child 1000/800Ft; ☎ 9am-7pm mid-May-Sep, 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 7am-5pm Sat, 7am-4pm Sep-mid-May; HÉV Csillaghegy) north of Óbuda is the oldest open-air bath in Budapest. There are three pools in a 90-hectare terraced park; in winter they are covered by a heated canvas tent.

The huge **Dagály swimming complex** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 452 4500; XIII Népfürdő utca 36; adult admission deposit 1800/1500Ft with/without cabin, child admission deposit 1300Ft; ☎ outdoor pools 6am-7pm May-Sep, indoor pools 6am-7pm Mon-Fri, 6am-5pm Sat & Sun Oct-Apr; M3 Árpád híd, ☎ 1) has a total of 10 pools, with plenty of grass and shade. If you leave the complex two/three hours after entering you get 500/300Ft back.

The indoor pools at the **Gellért Baths** (Gellért Gyógyfürdő; Map pp80-1; ☎ 466 6166; XI Kelethegyi út 4; admission deposit to swimming pool & thermal baths with locker/cabin 2500/3000Ft, 2400/2800Ft after 5pm May-Sep, after 5pm Mon-Fri & after 2pm Sat & Sun Oct-Apr; ☎ 6am-7pm May-Sep, 6am-7pm Mon-Fri, 6am-5pm Sat & Sun Oct-Apr; ☎ 18, 19, 47 or 49) are the most beautiful in Budapest. The outdoor pools (May to September) have a wave machine and nicely landscaped gardens.

The pools at the **Alfréd Hajós swimming complex** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 450 4214, 340 4946; XIII Margit-sziget; adult/child 900/550Ft; ☎ outdoor pools 6am-7pm May-Sep, indoor pools 6am-7pm Mon-Fri, 6am-5pm Sat & Sun Oct-Apr; ☎ 4 or 6, ☎ 26), one indoor and three outdoor, form the National Sports Pool where Olympic swimming and water-polo teams train.

The ultramodern **Helia swimming and spa centre pool** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 889 5800; XIII Kárpát

utca 62-64; admission before/after 3pm Mon-Fri 3500/4500Ft, Sat & Sun 4900Ft; ☎ 7am-10pm; M3 Dózsa György út or trolleybus 79), in the four-star Danubius Helia Hotel on the Danube, boasts three pools, sauna and steam room.

The **Béla Komjádi Swimming Pool** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 212 2750; II Árpád fejedelem útja 8; adult/child 900/550Ft; ☎ 6am-7pm; ☎ 17, ☎ 60 or 86) is used by very serious swimmers and fitness freaks so don't come here for fun and games.

Use of the three swimming pools at the **Lukács Baths** (Lukács Gyógyfürdő; Map pp80-1; ☎ 326 1695; II Frankel Leó út 25-27; ☎ 6am-7pm May-Sep, 6am-7pm Mon-Fri, 6am-5pm Sat & Sun Oct-Apr; ☎ 17, ☎ 60 or 86) is included in the general admission price (p97).

The largest series of pools in the capital, the **Palatinus Strand** (Palatinus Beach; Map pp78-9; ☎ 340 4505; XIII Margit-sziget; adult/child locker 1500/1300Ft, admission with cabin 1900Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat & Sun May & Jun, 9am-7pm Mon-Sun Jul & Aug; ☎ 26) on Margaret Island has a total of 11 pools (two or three with thermal water), wave machines, water slides etc.

The outdoor pools at the **Rómaifürdő Strandfürdő** (Rómaifürdő Beach; Map pp78-9; ☎ 388 9740; III Rozgonyi Piroksa utca 2; adult/child locker 1200/1000Ft, admission with cabin 1600Ft; ☎ 9am-7pm May-Aug; HÉV Rómaifürdő or ☎ 34) are just north of Aquincum.

The indoor pools at the **Rudas Baths** (Map p86; ☎ 356 1322, 356 1010; I Döbrentei tér 9; admission with locker/cabin 900/1100Ft; ☎ 6am-6pm Mon-Fri, 6am-1pm Sat & Sun; ☎ 18 or 19, ☎ 7 or 86), close to the river, were built by the Turks in 1566 and retain a strong Turkish atmosphere. The thermal baths are currently under renovation.

Use of the three enormous thermal swimming pools at the **Széchenyi Baths** (Széchenyi Gyógyfürdő; Map pp80-1; ☎ 363 3210; XIV Állatkerti út 11; ☎ 6am-10pm May-Sep, 6am-7pm Oct-Apr; M1 Széchenyi-fürdő) is included in the baths' general admission fee (p97).

Hiking

Budapest is an excellent springboard for hiking. If you plan on doing any walking in the Buda Hills, get hold of a copy of Cartographia's 1:30,000 *A Budai-hegység* map (No 6; 900Ft).

The tourist offices distribute a useful free map called *Budapest & Surroundings Hiking Tours*, with a dozen hikes and walks from the capital.

Caving

Budapest has a number of caves, two of which are open for walk-through guided tours in Hungarian. **Pálvölgy Cave** (Pálvölgyi-barlang; Map pp78-9; ☎ 325 9505; II Szépvölgyi út 162; adult/child 750/450Ft; ☎ 65 from Kolosy tér in Óbuda), the second-largest cave in Hungary, is noted for its stalactites and bats; be advised that the 500m route involves climbing some 400 steps and a ladder, so it may not be suitable for children. Hourly tours depart between 10am and 4pm Tuesday to Sunday.

A more beautiful cave, with stalactites, stalagmites and weird grapelike formations, is **Szemlő-hegy Cave** (Szemlőhegyi-barlang; Map pp78-9; ☎ 325 6001; II Pusztaszeri út 35; adult/child 650/400Ft; ☎ 10am-4pm Wed-Mon; ☎ 29 from Ill Kolosy tér), about 1km southeast of Pálvölgy Cave.

Boating

The best place for canoeing and kayaking in Budapest is on the Danube at Római-part (Map pp78-9); take the HÉV suburban line to Rómaifürdő (Map pp78-9) and walk eastwards towards the river. Two reliable places to rent kayaks and/or canoes are from **Óbuda Sport Club** (ÓSE; Map pp78-9; ☎ 240 3353; III Rozgonyi Piroksa utca 28; canoes per day 1400Ft; ☎ 8am-6pm) and the **KSH canoe club** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 368 8967; III Királyok útja 31; canoes per day 1000/1300Ft, 1-2-person kayaks per day 1300/1500Ft, 3-4-person canoes per day 1800/1900Ft; ☎ 8am-6pm mid-Apr-mid-Oct).

Horse Riding

The Hungarian Equestrian Tourism Association (Map p86; p48) has a list of recommended riding schools within striking distance of Budapest, but bear in mind that Hungary has just introduced a new system of rating riding schools and centres, and things are (to say the least) in a state of flux.

One of the closest riding schools to Budapest is the long-established **Petneházy Lovascentrum** (☎ 397 5048, 06 20 588 3571; petnehazy@net.hu; Feketeferő utca 2-4; ☎ 9am-4pm Sat & Sun; ☎ 63 from Hűvösvölgyi út) at Adyliget near Hűvösvölgy. It may have resumed lessons, paddock practice and trail riding by the time you read this. In the meantime there are pony rides (1500Ft per 15 minutes) for the kiddies and carriage rides (15,000Ft per 30 minutes for eight people).

Pegazus Tours (☎ 317 1644; www.pegazus.hu; V Ferenciek tere 5) can book riding programmes

(for details, see p48), as can the highly respected **Favorit Lovarda** (☎ 257 1065, 06 30 966 9992; XVI Mókus utca 23; HÉV Szabadságtelep) in the Csömör district.

WALKING TOUR

This is a fairly straightforward walk that starts just a little north of Deák Ferenc tér and follows Andrassy út, the most attractive boulevard in Budapest, to Heroes' Sq (Hősök tere) and the enormous City Park (Városliget). It's not a very long walking tour, but there's a tremendous amount to see and do along the way so choose judiciously unless you want to make a whole day of it. The little yellow metro (M1) runs just beneath the boulevard, so if you begin

WALK FACTS

Start M1 Opera
End M1 Hősök tere
Distance 2.6km
Duration Two hours (or more)
Fuel Stop Művész or Lukács café

to lose your stamina, just go down and jump on.

Andrassy út splits away from Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út some 200m north of Deák Ferenc tér. This section of Andrassy út is lined with plane trees – cool and pleasant on a warm day. The first major sight is the **Hungarian State Opera House** (1; p95). The interior, which can be visited on tour, is especially lovely and sparkles after a total overhaul in the 1980s.

Opposite the Opera House, the so-called **Drechler House** (2; VI Andrassy út 25), was designed by Art-Nouveau master builder Ödön Lechner in 1882. Until recently it housed the Hungarian State Dance Institute but it now stands empty, another victim of 'development' that never happened. For something even more magical, walk down Dalszínház utca to the **New Theatre** (3; Új Színház; ☎ 351 1406; VI Paulay Ede utca 35), a Secessionist gem embellished with monkey faces, globes and geometric designs that opened as the Parisiana music hall in 1909.

The old-world café **Művész** (4; p113) is in the next block. The next cross street is

Nagymező utca, 'the Broadway of Budapest', counting a number of theatres, such as the **Budapest Operetta** (5; p119) at No 17 and, just opposite, the **Thália** (6; ☎ 331 0500; VI Nagymező utca 22-24), lovingly restored in 1997.

On the right-hand side of the next block, the so-called **Fashion House** (7; Divatcsarnok; VI Andrassy út 39), the fanciest emporium in town when it opened as the Grande Parisienne (or Párisi Magyarház in Hungarian) in 1912, contains the ornate Ceremonial Hall (Diszterem) on the mezzanine floor, a room positively dripping with gilt, marquetry and frescoes by Károly Lotz. It is currently being redeveloped, so it may be closed when you pass by.

Andrassy út meets the Nagykörút – the Big Ring road – at Oktogon, a busy intersection full of fast-food outlets, shops, honking cars and pedestrians. Just beyond it, the former secret police building, which now houses the **House of Terror** (8; p95), has a ghastly history, for it was here that many activists of whatever political side was out of fashion before and after WWII were taken for interrogation and torture (including Cardinal Mindszenty; see boxed text, p147). The walls were apparently double thickness to mute the screams. A plaque on the outside of this house of shame reads in part: 'We cannot forget the horror of terror, and the victims will always be remembered.' The **Franz Liszt Memorial Museum** (9; p95) is diagonally opposite.

Along the next two blocks you'll pass some very grand buildings housing such institutions as the **Budapest Puppet Theatre** (10; p119) at No 69, the **Academy of Fine Arts** (11; Magyar Képzőművészeti Egyetem; VI Andrassy út 71) and the headquarters of **MÁV** (12; V Andrassy út 73), the national railway. The **Lukács** (13; p113) café and cake shop is just opposite.

The next square (more accurately a circus) is **Kodály körönd** (14), one of the most beautiful in the city, with the façades of the four neo-Renaissance townhouses still in desperate need of a massive face-lift.

The last stretch of Andrassy út and the surrounding neighbourhoods are packed with stunning old mansions that are among the most desirable addresses in the city. It's no surprise to see that embassies, ministries, multinationals and even political parties (eg FIDESZ-MPP at VI Lendvay utca 28) have moved in.

The **Ferenc Hopp Museum of East Asian Art** (15; p95) is in the former villa of its eponymous collector and benefactor at No 103. More of the collection is on display at the nearby **György Ráth Museum** (16; p95), a few minutes' walk southwest.

Andrassy út ends at **Heroes' Sq** (17; Hősök tere; p95), which leads to City Park. The city's most flamboyant monument and two of its best exhibition spaces are in the square.

The **Millenary Monument** (18; Ezeréves emlékmű; p95) in effect defines Heroes' Sq. Beneath the tall column and under a stone slab is an empty coffin representing the unknown insurgents of the 1956 Uprising. To the north of the monument is the **Museum of Fine Arts** (19; p96) and its rich collection while to the south is the ornate **Palace of Art** (20; Műcsarnok; p96), which was built around the time of the millenary exhibition in 1896 and renovated a century later.

The M1 Hősök tere metro stop is conveniently just across the square.

COURSES

Language

The most prestigious Hungarian-language school in the country, the Debrecen Summer University (p368) now has a **Budapest branch** (Map p84; ☎ 320 5751; www.nyariegyetem.hu/bp; Jászai Mari tér 6, 2/F), with intensive courses lasting three weeks (60 hours) for €282 and regular evening classes of 72/96 hours for €236/322.

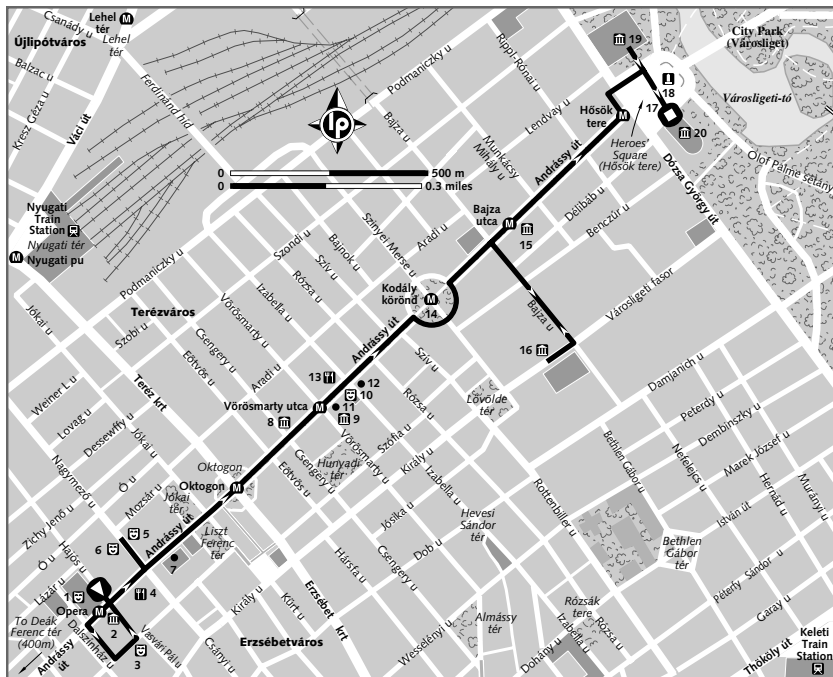
In addition, the following Hungarian-language schools are recommended for either classroom study or one-to-one instruction. **Hungarian Language School** (Map p86; ☎ 266 2617; www.hls.hu; VIII Brody Sándor utca 4, 1/F)

InterClub Hungarian Language School (Map pp88-9; ☎ 279 0831; www.interclub.hu; XI Bertalan Lajos utca 17)

International House (Map pp80-1; ☎ 212 4010; www.ih.hu; II Bimbó út 7)

BUDAPEST FOR CHILDREN

Budapest abounds in places that will delight children and there is always a special child's entry rate to paying attractions (though ages of eligibility may vary). Family visits to many areas of the city can be designed around a rest stop (or picnic) at, say, City Park, on Margaret Island or along the Danube.



Kids love transport and the city's many (some might say unusual) forms of conveyance – from the **Cog Railway** (p75) and **Children's Railway** (p75) in the Buda Hills and the **Sikló** (p69) funicular climbing up to Castle Hill, to the trams, trolleybuses and M1 metro – will fascinate and entertain. Specific places to take children include the **Municipal Great Circus** (p120), the **Funfair Park** (p96), the **City Zoo** (p96) and the **Budapest Puppet Theatre** (p119). And don't forget the **Transport Museum** (p96). It's got an embarrassment of hands-on displays for kids of all ages.

Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* by Cathy Lanigan includes all sorts of useful information and advice for those travelling with their little ones.

TOURS

Boat

From early May to mid-September **Mahart PassNave** (Map p86; ☎ 484 4013, 318 1223; www.mahartpassnave.hu; V Belgrád rakpart) has 1½- to two-hour cruises at noon and 7.30pm along the Danube (adult/child under 12 high season 1900/950Ft, low season 1600/800Ft). In the low season, from April to early May and mid-September to mid-October, only the evening cruise sails (on Friday and the weekend). A ticket with a meal on board costs 2800/1400Ft per adult/child, except in the evening in high season when it costs 3200/1600Ft, with music and dancing on board.

There are other, more expensive, cruises that also operate on the river, including those offered by **Legenda** (Map p86; ☎ 266 4190, 06 30 944 5216; www.legenda.hu; V Vigadó tér, pier No 7), which runs tours by day (3600Ft) and night (4200Ft), with taped commentary in up to 30 languages. Check the website for its schedule.

Bus

Many travel agencies, including **Cityrama** (Map p84; ☎ 302 4382; www.cityrama.hu; V Báthory utca 22) and **Program Centrum** (Map p86; ☎ 317 7767, 06 20 944 9091; www.programcentrum.hu; V Erzsébet tér 9-10), next to Le Meridien Budapest, offer three-hour city tours with three stops from 6500/3000Ft per adult/child under 12. They also have trips to the Danube Bend, Lake Balaton, the Great Plain, the Eger wine region etc. For more information, see p387.

Budatours (Map p86; ☎ 353 0558, 374 7070; www.budatours.hu; VI Andrassy út 2) runs nine city

bus tours daily in both open and covered coaches in July and August (between three and eight buses the rest of the year) from V Andrassy út 3 across the street (adult/student 4300/3000Ft). It's a two-hour tour with one stop (Gellért Hill) and with taped commentary in 16 different languages.

Queenibus (Map p77; ☎ 247 7159; queenibus@queenibus.hu; XI Törökbalinti út 28) has buses departing three times daily (10am, 11am and 2.20pm) from in front of St Stephen's Basilica on V Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út (Map p86) for three-hour city tours (adult/student/child under 14 6000/3200/3000Ft, open-deck 4300/3000/1500Ft).

Cycling

Run by the same people behind Absolute Walking Tours (below), **Yellow Zebra Bikes** (Map p86; ☎ 266 8777, 06 30 211 8861; www.yellowzebra.bikes.com; V Sütő utca 2; ☎ M1/2/3 Deák Ferenc tér) has cycling tours (adult/student 5500/5000Ft) of the city that take in Heroes' Sq, City Park, inner Pest and Castle Hill. Tours include the bike and a drink, and depart from in front of the yellow Lutheran church in Deák Ferenc (Map p86) at 11.30am in May, June, September and October, and 11.30am and 4pm in July and August.

Walking

Among other tours, **Absolute Walking Tours** (☎ 266 8777, 06 30 211 8861; www.absolutetours.com) has a 3½-hour guided promenade through City Park, central Pest and Castle Hill (adult/student or under 26 4000/3500Ft). Tours depart at 9.30am and 1.30pm from mid-May to September and at 10.30am the rest of the year from the steps of the yellow Lutheran church on Deák Ferenc tér (Map p86). It also has some cracker specialist tours, including the Hammer & Sickle Tour (6000/5000Ft) and the Hungaro Gastro Food & Wine Tour (6500/5500Ft).

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Many festivals and events are held in and around Budapest; look out for the tourist board's annual *Events Calendar* for a complete listing.

January

New Year Concert (www.hungariaconcert.hu) This is an annual event usually held in Pesti Vigadó (Map p86; p119) on January 1 to herald the new year.

February

Opera Ball (www.operabal.com) This annual, very prestigious event is held at the Hungarian State Opera House (Map p84 p95).

March

Budapest Spring Festival (www.festivalcity.hu)

The capital's largest (200 events at 60 venues) and most important cultural event takes place at venues throughout the city.

April

Spring Marathon (www.marathon.hu) Marathon between Budapest and Visegrád.

May

Budapest Early Music Forum (www.festivalcity.hu) A festival focusing on ancient music – classical music as it was played when first composed at the Liszt Academy of Music (Map p84; p93) and at churches around Budapest.

June

Budapesti Búcsú (www.festivalcity.hu) City-wide 'Budapest Fair' festival of concerts and street theatre marking the departure of Soviet troops from Hungarian soil in 1991.

Danube Folklore Carnival (www.dunart.hu)

Pan-Hungarian international 10-day carnival of folk and world music and modern dance held in Vörösmarty tér (Map p86; p90) and on Margaret Island.

August

Formula One Hungarian Grand Prix (www.hungaroring.hu) Hungary's prime sporting event held in Magyaróvár, 24km northeast of the capital.

Sziget Music Festival (www.sziget.hu) Now one of the biggest and most popular music festivals in Europe, held on Budapest's Óbuda Island (Map pp78–9; p73).

September

Budapest International Wine & Champagne Festival (www.winefestival.hu) Hungary's foremost winemakers introduce their wine to festival goers in the Castle District (Map p83; p69).

October

Budapest International Marathon (www.budapestmarathon.com) Eastern Europe's most celebrated foot race goes along the Danube and across its bridges.

December

New Year's Gala & Ball (www.viparts.hu) Gala dinner and ball held at the Hungarian State Opera House (Map p84) on 31 December.

SLEEPING

Budapest accommodation options run the gamut from basic but comfortable hostels cobbled from a couple of old apartments high above the Big Ring road to five-star palaces staring at (or down on) the Danube.

Budget

In Budapest budget accommodation – hostels, private rooms, *pensions* and camp sites – costs anything under 12,000Ft (€49).

HOSTELS

Hostelling International (HI) cards or their equivalents (p369) are not required at any hostels in Budapest, but they'll often get you a discount of up to 10%; make sure to ask beforehand. Prices almost always include a simple (continental) breakfast.

Hostels usually have laundry facilities (1000Ft to 1500Ft for a wash and dry), a fully equipped kitchen, storage lockers, TV lounge, no curfew and computers for Internet access (free or from about 10Ft per minute).

While you can go directly to all the hostels mentioned here, the Express and Mellow Mood travel agencies (p68) are the best contact for budget accommodation information. In fact, the latter, which is affiliated with HI, runs two year-round hostels and budget hotels, as well as a half-dozen hostels that are open in summer only. Mellow Mood also maintains three kiosks at **Keleti train station** (Map pp80-1; VIII Kerepesi út 2-4; ☎ M3 Keleti pályaudvar), where staff make bookings, and can advise you about transport from there or arrange it for you:

Platform No 9 kiosk (☎ 353 2722; ☎ 7am-6pm)

Rail/Bus office (☎ 461 0948; ☎ 6am-10pm) Along platform No 6.

U Tours travel agency (☎ 303 9818; www.utours.hu; ☎ 7am-8pm) At the end of platform No 6.

Buda

Martos Hostel (Map pp88-9; ☎ 209 4883, 06 30 911 5755; reception@hotel.martos.bme.hu; XI Sztoczek József utca 5-7; s 4000Ft, d/tr/q 5000/7500/10,000Ft, apt 15,000Ft; ☎ 4 or 6) Though primarily a summer hostel with 200 beds, the independent Martos has around 20 beds available year-round. It's reasonably well located, near the Danube, and just a few minutes' walk from Petőfi Bridge.

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Back Pack Guesthouse (Map pp88-9; ☎ 385 8946; www.backpackbudapest.hu; XI Takács Menyhért utca 33; bed in large/small dm 2500/3000Ft, d 7000Ft; 🚻 black-numbered 7 or 7A, 🚻 19 or 49; 📺) The laid-back Back Pack is in a colourfully painted suburban 'villa' in south Buda and is relatively small, with a mere 50 beds (large dormitories with between seven and 11 beds, and small ones with four to five), but therein lies its charm. There is a super garden in the back, with a Thai-style lounging/sleeping platform – they call it a gazebo – as well as hammocks. Internet access is free and there is low-cost massage available. The upbeat attitude of the friendly, much travelled manager seems to permeate the place and the welcome is always warm.

Best

Red Bus Hostel (Red Bus I Map p86; ☎ 266 0136; www.redbusbudapest.hu; V Semmelweis utca 14, 1/F; dm 2800-3000Ft, s & d 7900Ft, tr 11,000Ft; 📺 M2 Astoria; Red Bus II Map pp80-1; ☎ 321 7100; VII Szövetség utca 2, 2/F; dm 2800Ft; trolleybuses 73, 74 or 76; 📺) Red Bus Hostel is a very friendly, central and well-managed place, with four large and airy rooms with four to five beds, as well as private rooms for up to three people. The new Red Bus II has four rooms of four to five beds.

Green Bridge Hostel (Map p86; ☎ 266 6922; www.greenbridgehostel.com; V Molnár utca 22-24; bed in 8-bed dm €11-14, bed in 2/3/4/5-bed dm €25/19/18/17; 📺 M3 Kálvin tér; 📺) Few hostels truly stand out in terms of comfort, location and reception, but Green Bridge has it all – in spades. Bunks are nowhere to be seen, it's on a quiet street just one block in from the Danube and coffee is on offer gratis throughout the day.

Station Guesthouse (Map pp80-1; ☎ 221 8864; www.stationguesthouse.hu; XIV Mexikói út 36/b; bed in 14-/8-bed dm 2300/2800Ft, d & t per person 3600Ft, q per person 3800Ft; red-numbered 📺 7, 📺 1 or 1A; 📺) This guesthouse in suburban Zugló is a real party place, with a 24-hour bar, pool table and occasional live entertainment. It has between 42 and 56 beds, depending on the season. For those intending to stay a while, rates drop by 100Ft a night from the second to the sixth night.

Best Hostel (Map p84; ☎ 332 4934; www.besthostel.hu; VI Podmaniczky utca 27, 1st fl; dm 3000Ft, d/q per

person 4200/3600Ft; 📺 M3 Nyugati pályaudvar; 📺) This is a six-room hostel put together from several apartments, with parquet floors, very high ceilings and big, airy rooms. It's a quiet place with a fair number of rules (drugs, booze or tobacco), so don't expect to party here.

Caterina Hostel (Map p84; ☎ 269 5990, 06 20 992 8854; www.caterinahostel.hu; VI Teréz körút 30, 3rd fl; bed in 6-/8-/10-bed dm 2800/2600/2500Ft, s/d/t per person 6800/3400/3400Ft, 5-bed apt per person 3200Ft; 📺 M1 Oktogon; 📺) Long a key player on the Budapest budget accommodation scene, this hostel has moved from Oktogon in the past year or so, but continues to offer reliable, cheap accommodation in a 3rd-floor, 27-bed walk-up apartment above the celebrated Művész Cinema.

Hostel Marco Polo (Map p84; ☎ 413 2555; www.marcolohostel.com; VII Nyár utca 6; bed in 12-bed dm €20, s €54, d/tr/q per person €38/28/26; 📺 year-round; 📺 M2 Blaha Lujza tér; 📺) The Mellow Mood group's very central flagship hostel is a swish, powder-blue, 47-room place, with telephones and TVs in all the rooms, except the dorms, and a lovely courtyard. Even the five spotless dorms (one reserved for women during the low season) are 'private', with beds separated by lockers and curtains.

Mellow Mood Central Guesthouse (Map p86; ☎ 411 1310; www.mellowmoodhostel.com; V Bécsi utca 2; bed in 6-/8-bed dm 5000/4500Ft, d/tr/q per person 6800/5700/5400Ft; 📺 M1/2/3/Deák Ferenc tér; 📺) This place will put you right in the heart of town. With 179 beds on four floors, it's the largest hostel in Budapest, so don't expect the personal treatment. Still, it's clean and upbeat, and there's a 24-hour bar.

PRIVATE ROOMS

Private rooms in Budapest generally cost 4500Ft to 6000Ft for a single, 6500Ft to 8000Ft for a double and 8000Ft to 15,000Ft for a small apartment. There's usually a 30% supplement on the first night if you stay less than four nights. To get a room in the city centre, you may have to try several offices. You might need an indexed city map (p65) to find the block where your room is located, though.

Tourinform in Budapest does not arrange private accommodation, but will send you to a travel agency, such as **To-Ma** (Map p86; ☎ 353 0819; www.tomatour.hu; V Október 6 utca 22; 📺 9am-noon & 1-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun; 📺 M1/2/3 Deák Ferenc tér). Among the best places to try for

private rooms are Ibusz and Vista (p68), and U Tours (p103) in Keleti train station.

After hours, try the imaginatively named **Nonstop Hotel Service** (Map p86; ☎ 266 8942; www.non-stophotelservice.hu; V Apáczai Csere János utca 1; 📺 9am-10pm; 📺 M1 Vörösmarty tér) near the Budapest Marriott Hotel.

PENSIONS & GUESTHOUSES

Budapest has scores of *panzió* (pensions and guesthouses), but most of them are in the outskirts of Pest or in the Buda Hills and not very convenient unless you have your own (motorised) transport.

Pest

Dominik Panzió (Map pp80-1; ☎ 460 9428; dominikpanzio@axelero.hu; XIV Cházár András utca 3; s/d/5-bed apt €28/36/75; 📺 7) Just off Thököly út and located beside a large church, Dominik Panzió is on a leafy street lined with 19th-century villas and just two stops northeast of Keleti train station by bus. The 36 rooms, which could use an upgrade, come with shared bathroom and there is a five-person apartment available.

Garibaldi Guesthouse & Apartments (Map p84; ☎ 302 3457, 06 30 951 8763; garibaldiguest@hotmail.com; V Garibaldi utca 5, 5th fl; s/d €28/32, apt per person €25-45; 📺 M2 Kossuth Lajos tér) Arguably the most welcoming hostel-cum-guesthouse in Budapest, the Garibaldi has five rooms with shared bathroom and kitchen in a flat just around the corner from Parliament. In the same building, the gregarious owner has at least a half-dozen apartments available.

HOTELS

A room in a budget (ie one- or two-star) hotel will cost more than a private room, though the management won't mind if you stay only one night.

Buda

Papillon Hotel (Map pp80-1; ☎ 212 4750; www.hotels.hu/papillon; II Rózsashegy utca 3/b; s/d/tr €38/48/58, apt for 3/5 people €60/75; 📺 4 or 6; 📺) One of Buda's best-kept accommodation secrets, this small 20-room hotel in Rózsadomb has a delightful back garden with a small swimming pool. There are also two apartments available in the block just across the road.

Hotel Császár (Map pp80-1; ☎ 336 2640; www.caszarhotel.hu; II Frankel Leó utca 35; s/d/q €42/53/84, ste €116; 📺 17, 📺 86; 📺) The huge yellow

building in which the 'Emperor' is located was built in the 1850s as a convent, which might explain the size of the 34 cell-like rooms. Request one of the larger superior rooms that look onto the nearby outdoor Olympic-size pools of the huge Béla Komjádi Swimming Pool (p99).

Hotel Citadella (Map pp80-1; ☎ 466 5794; www.citadella.hu; XI Citadella sétány; dm 2200Ft, s & d with shared shower/shower/bath 10,000/11,000/12,000Ft; 📺 27; 📺) This hotel in the fortress atop Gellért-hegy is pretty threadbare and though most of the dozen guestrooms share their facilities, they are extra large and retain some of their original features. The one dorm room with 14 beds is usually booked by groups a week ahead, so call in advance.

Margaret Island

Hotel Margitsziget (Map pp80-1; ☎ 329 2949; www.hotelmisz.hu; XIII Margit-sziget; s €43-53, d €45-55; 📺 26; 📺) This 11-room budget hotel in the centre of Margaret Island is surrounded by greenery and feels almost like a resort. If you really want to get away from it all on a budget but remain within easy striking distance of the action, choose this place.

Pest

KM Saga Guest Residence (KM Saga I Map pp80-1; ☎ 217 1934; www.km-saga.hu; IX Lónyay utca 17, 3rd fl; s €38-63, d €50-75; 📺 15, 📺 47 or 49; KM Saga II Map p86; ☎ 217 1934; IX Várház körút 11, 6th fl; 📺) This unique place has five themed rooms, an eclectic mix of 19th-century furnishings and a hospitable, multilingual Hungarian-American owner. It's essentially a gay B&B, but everyone is welcome. KM Saga II is somewhat more modern but less atmospheric and has three rooms.

Radio Inn (Map pp80-1; ☎ 342 8347; www.radioinn.hu; VI Benczúr utca 19; s/d €52/75, 2-room apt €92; 📺 M1 Bajza utca; 📺) Just off leafy Andrassy út, this place is a real find, with 33 large one-bedroom apartments with bath and kitchen, 10 with two bedrooms and one with three bedrooms measuring between 44 and 60 sq metres, all spread over five floors. The garden courtyard is a delight.

Flandria Hotel (Map pp78-9; ☎ 350 3181; hotel.flandria@axelero.hu; XIII Szegedi út 27; s/d/tr/q with wash basin 5100/6300/7400/8600Ft, with shower 9500/9500/12,000/14,000Ft; 📺 4; 📺) The Flandria is a classic example of a former workers' hostel that has been turned into a budget hotel.

Don't expect anything within a couple of light years of luxury, but the 116 guestrooms, which have from one to four beds, a TV and refrigerator, are both clean and serviceable.

CAMPING

Buda

Római Camping (Map pp78-9; ☎ 388 7167; www.hotels.hu/romaicamping; III Szentendrei út 189; camp sites per person/tent/site/campervan/caravan 990/2250/2390/3580Ft, 1st-class cabins for 6 people 15,000Ft, 2nd-/3rd-class cabins per person 2500/1800Ft; 📍 site & cabins year-round; 📍 📍) Located in a leafy park north of the city opposite a popular swimming complex, Római is the city's largest camp site. To get there, take the HÉV suburban railway from the Batthyány tér metro station in Buda to the Rómaifürdő station, which is almost opposite the camp site. Use of the adjacent strand and swimming pool is included.

Zugligeti Niche Camping (☎ 200 8346; www.campingniche.hu; XII Zugligeti út 101; camp sites per person/tent/caravan 1200/3800/4600Ft; 📍 year-round; 📍 📍) This is a small camp site in the Buda Hills for 200 campers at the bottom station of the chairlift.

Midrange

Budapest is not bereft of midrange options altogether, but they are not as plentiful as in Western European cities. Midrange – usually *pensions* and hotels – means anything between 12,500Ft (€50) and 25,000Ft (€102) during any season.

BUDA

Hotel Astra (Map p83; ☎ 214 1906; www.hotelastra.hu; I Vám utca 6; s/d/ste €90/105/135; 📍 M2 Batthyány tér, 📍 86) Tucked away in a small street just west of Fő utca and just below the Castle District is this hotel-cum-guesthouse in a centuries-old townhouse. It has seven double rooms, two suites and a family apartment – essentially two doubles separated by a shared bathroom.

IBS Garden Hotel (Map p77; ☎ 274 2088; www.ibsgardenhotel.hu; II Tároगतó út 2-4; s & d €59; 📍 29, 📍 56; 📍 📍) This newly opened midrange hotel on the way to the Buda Hills, with 100 rooms spread over five floors, is an excellent option for those who want to be very close to the city but not exactly in it.

Orion Hotel (Map p83; ☎ 356 8583; www.best-western-ce.com/orion; I Döbrentei utca 13; s/d/tr/ste

€88/112/132/150; 📍 18 or 19) Hidden away in the Tabán district, this is a cosy place with a relaxed atmosphere and within easy walking distance of the Castle District. The 30 rooms are bright and of a good size.

Beatrix Panzió (Map p77; ☎ 275 0550; www.beatrixhotel.hu; II Szeher út 3; s/d/tr €60/65/75, apt €75-90; 📍 5, 📍 56; 📍 📍) Up in the Buda Hills but easily accessible by public transport, this is an attractive *pension* with 18 rooms. Surrounding the *pension* is a lovely garden with fishpond, sun terraces and a grill; you might even organise a BBQ during your stay.

Burg Hotel (Map p83; ☎ 212 0269; www.burghotelbudapest.com; I Szentháromság tér 7-8; s/d €105/115, 2-person ste €127; 📍 16 or Várbusz; 📍 📍) This place with all the mod cons is in the Castle District, just opposite Matthias Church. The 26 rooms are no more than just ordinary but, as they say, location is everything and midrange options are as scarce as hen's teeth on Castle Hill.

Carlton Hotel (Map p83; ☎ 224 0999; www.carltonhotel.hu; I Apor Péter utca 3; s/d/tr €90/115/126; 📍 86; 📍 📍) A total revamp at the start of 2005 has given this 95-room hotel at the foot of Castle Hill and at the end of a narrow cul-de-sac in Víziváros a cleaner, fresher look and an extra star.

Hotel Victoria (Map p83; ☎ 457 8080; www.victoria.hu; I Bem rakpart 11; s/d/tr €102/107/148; 📍 86, 📍 19; 📍 📍) This hotel has 27 comfortable and spacious rooms with larger-than-life views of Parliament and the Danube. It gets special mention for its friendly service and facilities, despite its small size. The best rooms are on floor Nos 7 to 9.

Hotel Kulturinnov (Map p83; ☎ 224 8102, 06 20 544 5396; www.mka.hu; I Szentháromság tér 6; s/d/tr €64/80/100; 📍 16 or Várbusz; 📍 📍) A 16-room hotel in the former Finance Ministry, a neo-Gothic structure dating back to 1904, the Kulturinnov can't be beat for location and price in the Castle District. The guestrooms, though clean and with private bathrooms, are not as nice as the opulent public areas.

Büro Panzió (Map p83; ☎ 212 2929; http://buro-panzio.Internettudakozo.hu; II Dékán utca 3; s/d/tr/q 8000/12,000/16,000/20,000Ft; 📍 M2 Moszkva tér) A *pension* just a block off the northern side of Moszkva tér, this place looks basic from the outside, but its 10 rooms are comfortable and have TV and telephone. They were recently renovated, so they retain that just-off-the-assembly-line look.

PEST

Hotel Hold (Map p84; ☎ 472 0480; www.hotelhold.hu; V Hold utca 5; s/d €88/99, ste €121-165; 📍 M3 Arany János; 📍 📍) Housed in what was once a Jewish school, the 'Moon' is an excellent choice if you want to stay in an affordable and romantic hotel right in the city centre. The 28 rooms on two floors – there is no lift – look down onto a central covered courtyard or onto Hold utca.

Hotel Sissi (Map pp88-9; ☎ 215 0082; www.hotel.sissi.hu; IX Angyal utca 33; s/d €110/120, ste from €195; 📍 M3 Ferenc körút; 📍 📍) Named in honour of Elizabeth, the Habsburg empress, Hungarian queen and consort of Franz Joseph much beloved by Hungarians, the Hotel Sissi is decorated in a minimalist-cum-elegant sort of style, and the 44 guestrooms spread over six floors are of a good size.

Hotel Baross (Map pp80-1; ☎ 461 3010; www.barossotel.hu; VII Baross tér 15; s/d/tr/q €78/90/102/114, apt for 4/6/8 people €120/145/160; 📍 M2 Keleti pályaudvar; 📍 📍) The flagship hotel of the Mellow Mood hostel group (p104), the Hotel Baross is a comfortable, 40-room caravanserai conveniently located directly opposite Keleti train station. The bluer-than-blue inner courtyard is a delight, and reception, which is on the 5th floor, is clean and bright, with a dramatic central staircase.

Leó Panzió (Map p86; ☎ 266 9041; www.leopanzio.hu; V Kossuth Lajos utca 2/a, 2nd floor; s/d/tr €66/82/108; 📍 M3 Ferenciek tere) This place would be a 'find' just on the strength of its central location, but when you factor in the low cost, this B&B is a 'discovery'. A dozen of its 14 immaculate rooms look down on busy Kossuth Lajos utca, but they all have double-glazing and are quiet.

Boat Hotel Fortuna (Map pp80-1; ☎ 288 8100; www.fortunahajo.hu; XIII Szent István Park, Pesti alsó rakpart; s/d/tr with washbasin €20/30/40, with shower €65/80/100; trolleybuses 76 or 79; 📍 📍) Sleeping on a one-time river ferry anchored in the Danube that goes nowhere may not be everyone's idea of a good time, but it's a unique experience. This 'boatel' has 44 single and double rooms with shower and toilet at water level, and 14 rooms with two or three beds and wash basin below deck.

Erzsébet Hotel (Map p86; ☎ 889 3700; www.danubiushotel.com/erzsebet; V Károlyi Mihály utca 11-15; s €75-95, d €95-105; 📍 M2 Ferenciek tere; 📍 📍) One of Budapest's first independent hotels, the Erzsébet is in a very good location in the centre of the

university district, and within easy walking distance of the pubs and bars of Ráday utca. The 123 guestrooms – mostly twins – spread across eight floors are small and dark, with generic hotel furniture.

Carmen Mini Hotel (Map p86; ☎ 352 0798; carmen@axelero.hu; Károly körút 5/b, 2nd floor; s/d/tr €50/60/75; 📍 M1/2/3 Deák Ferenc tér; 📍 📍) With nine rooms, this hotel is about the closest thing to a B&B in Budapest. It's very close to Deák Ferenc tér and convenient to all forms of transport.

Benczúr Hotel (Map pp80-1; ☎ 479 5650; www.hotelbenczur.hu; VI Benczúr utca 35; s €49-79, d €69-99; 📍 M1 Bajza utca; 📍 📍) This rather faded place done up in creams and oranges has 96 serviceable rooms (some of which look down on a leafy garden) spread over seven floors. It's just minutes away from Andrásy út, Heroes' Sq and City Park.

Hotel Medosz (Map p84; ☎ 374 3001; www.medoszhotel.hu; VI Jókai tér 9; s/d/tr €55/65/77, ste from €93; 📍 M1 Oktogon) One of the most central cheap hotels in Pest, the Medosz is just opposite the restaurants and bars of Liszt Ferenc tér. The 67 rooms are well worn but clean, and have private bath and satellite TV; the best ones are in the main block, not in the labyrinthine wings.

Thomas Hotel (Map pp88-9; ☎ 218 5505; www.hotels.hu/hotelthomas; IX Liliom utca 44; s €55-65, d €75-85; 📍 M3 Ferenc körút; 📍 📍) A brightly coloured place in an odd location, this hotel has 45 rooms and is a real bargain for its location in up-and-coming Ferencváros. Some rooms – including No 14 – have balconies looking onto an inner courtyard.

Star Hotel (Map pp80-1; ☎ 479 0400; www.starhotel.hu; VII István utca 14; s/d/tr/apt €64/80/90/120 late Mar-Oct, €50/64/90/120; trolleybus 74 or 79; 📍 📍) A recent addition to the Mellow Mood hostel group's stable is this 48-room midrange hotel just a few minutes' walk north of Keleti train station. The ground floor lobby is quite spacious and a popular meeting place for travellers; most of the guestrooms are doubles spread over four floors.

Top End

Double-room rates at top-end hotels start at around 25,500Ft. From there the sky's the limit.

BUDA

Art'otel Budapest (Map p83; ☎ 487 9487; www.artotel.hu; I Bem rakpart 16-19; s/d/ste €198/218/298, with

Danube view €218/238/318; 📞 86, 📠 19; 📺 📺 📺) The Art'otel is a minimalist hotel that would not look out of place in London or New York. But what makes this 165-room place unique is that it cobbles together a seven-story modern building (views of the Castle District and the Danube) and an 18th-century baroque building; they're separated by a leafy courtyard-cum-atrium.

Danubius Gellért Hotel (Map pp80-1; 📞 889 5500; www.danubiushotel.com/gellert; XI Szent Gellért tér 1; s €75-130, d €170-210, ste €270; 📠 18, 19, 47 or 49; 📺 📺 📺) Budapest's *grande dame* is a 234-room, four-star hotel with loads of character. The gorgeous thermal baths are free for guests, but overall its other facilities are forgettable. Prices depend on which way your room faces and what sort of bathroom it has.

PEST

Andrássy Hotel (Map pp80-1; 📞 462 2195; www.andrassyhotel.com; VI Andrássy út 111; standard s & d €134-240, ste from €161; 📞 M1 Hősök tere; 📺 📺 📺) This stunning, five-star hotel just off leafy Andrássy út has 70 tastefully decorated rooms (almost half of which have balconies) in a listed building. The lobby and ground-floor restaurant were renovated in 2004; the use of etched glass and mirrors as well as wrought iron is inspired.

Kempinski Hotel Corvinus (Map p86; 📞 429 3777; www.kempinski-budapest.com; V Erzsébet tér 7-8; s €260-410, d €300-450, ste from €570; 📞 M1 M1/2/3 Deák Ferenc tér; 📺 📺 📺) Essentially for business travellers on hefty expense accounts, the Kempinski Hotel has European service, American efficiency and Hungarian charm. A recent (and very thorough) renovation has given both the hotel's public areas and 369 guestrooms and suites a fresh new look and colour scheme.

Corinthia Grand Hotel Royal (Map p84; 📞 479 4000; www.corinthia.hu; VII Erzsébet körút 43-49; s €180-240, d €220-280, ste from €300; 📠 4 or 6; 📺 📺 📺) The erstwhile Royal Hotel on the Big Ring road has reopened as a very grand 414-room, five-star hotel, and its lobby – a double atrium with massive marble staircase – is among the most impressive in the capital. The hotel truly is 'a legend reborn'.

Four Seasons Gresham Palace Hotel (Map p86; 📞 268 6000; www.fourseasons.com/budapest; V Roosevelt tér 5-6; s €250-740, d €280-770, ste from €950; 📞 M1 Vörösmarty tér, 📠 15; 📺 📺 📺) After much

angst and sweat, this magnificent 179-room hotel has been created out of the long derelict Art-Nouveau Gresham Palace (1907). No expense was spared to piece back together the palace's Zsolnay tiles, famous wrought-iron Peacock Gates and splendid mosaics, and the hotel is truly worthy of its name.

K+K Hotel Opera (Map p84; 📞 269 0222; www.kkhoteles.com/hotel_HO_en.aspx; VI Révay utca 24; s/d/ste from €168/209/336; 📞 M1 Opera; 📺 📺) This upbeat, Austrian-owned place just behind the Hungarian State Opera House has 206 rooms spread over seven floors. They're on the smallish side and decorated in unusually cheerful colours – predominantly yellows, blues and reds – which raises the tenor of the whole place.

MARGARET ISLAND

Danubius Grand Hotel Margitsziget (Map pp78-9; 📞 889 4700; www.danubiushotel.com/grandhotel; XIII Margit-sziget; s/d/ste €153/168/198; 📠 26; 📺 📺 📺) Built in the late 19th century on Margaret Island, this comfortable (rather than grand) and tranquil hotel has 164 rooms with all the mod cons, and is connected to the Danubius Thermal Hotel Margitsziget, via a heated underground corridor, where you can take the waters for free.

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Residence Izabella (Map p84; 📞 475 5900; www.residenceizabella.com; VI Izabella utca 61; 1-bedroom apt €180-330, 2-bedroom apt €440-605; 📞 M1 Vörösmarty utca; 📺 📺 📺) Beg, borrow and/or steal to stay at this fabulous conversion of a 19th-century Eclectic building with 38 apartments just off swanky Andrássy út. The apartments, measuring between 45 and 97 sq metres, surround a delightful and very tranquil central courtyard garden, and the décor mixes materials such as wood, terracotta and basketry to great success. Some might find the colour scheme of the guestrooms a tad too 'oatmeal with cream', but we love the use of wrought-iron furniture and room dividers to increase the feeling of spaciousness. The kitchenettes have everything – did we notice a potato peeler? – and the deluxe units are equipped with washing machines and dishwashers. Long-term rentals earn big discounts.

EATING

Very roughly, a two-course sit-down meal for one person with a glass of wine or beer for under 2500Ft in Budapest is 'cheap', while a 'moderate' meal will cost up to 5000Ft. There's a big jump to an 'expensive' meal (5000Ft to 7500Ft), and 'very expensive' is anything above that. Most restaurants are open from 10am or 11am to 11pm or midnight; if there are no times listed under a particular entry, you can expect the place to be open between those hours. It's always best to arrive by 9pm or 10pm at the latest, though, to ensure being served. It is advisable to book tables at medium-priced to expensive restaurants.

Buda

HUNGARIAN RESTAURANTS

Kisbuda Gyöngye (Map pp78-9; 📞 368 6402; III Kenyeres utca 34; soups 880-1180Ft, starters 920-2980Ft, mains 2380-4880Ft; 📺 noon-midnight Mon-Sat; 📠 60, 📠 17) This is a traditional and very elegant Hungarian restaurant in Óbuda; the antique-strewn dining room and attentive service manage to create a *fin-de-siècle* atmosphere. Try the excellent goose liver dishes (around 3400Ft) and more pedestrian items, like *csirke paprikás* (chicken paprika; 2380Ft).

Aranyszarvas (Golden Stag; Map p83; 📞 375 6451; I Szarvas tér 1; soups 150-890Ft, starters 1100-2900Ft, mains 2180-3500Ft; 📺 noon-11pm; 📞 86, 📠 19) Set in an old 18th-century inn literally at the foot of Castle Hill, this place serves – what else? – game dishes. There's piano music on Thursday to Saturday evenings. The covered outside terrace is lovely in summer, when grills are available.

Kéhli (Map pp78-9; 📞 250 4241; III Mókus utca 22; soups 580-880Ft, starters 800-2880Ft, mains 1480-6280Ft; 📺 noon-midnight; HÉV Árpád híd) A rustic but stylish place in Óbuda, Kéhli has some of the best traditional Hungarian food in town. In fact, one of Hungary's best-loved writers, the novelist Gyula Krúdy (1878–1933), who lived in nearby Dugovits Titusz tér, moonlighted as a restaurant critic and enjoyed Kéhli's bone marrow on toast (980Ft as an entrée – and better than it sounds!) so much, he included it in one of his novels.

Kacsá (Map pp80-1; 📞 201 9992; II Fő utca 75; soups 450-750Ft, starters 800-2300Ft, mains 1200-3600Ft; 📺 noon-midnight; 📠 86) 'Duck' is the place to go 'quackers', though you need not restrict yourself to duck dishes (2200Ft to 2800Ft).

It's a fairly elegant place, with art on the walls and piano music in the evening.

INTERNATIONAL RESTAURANTS

Rivalda (Map p83; 📞 489 0236; I Színház utca; starters 975-1800Ft, mains 3000-4500Ft; 📺 11.30am-11.30pm; 📠 16 or Várbusz) An international café-restaurant in an old convent next to the National Dance Theatre with some modern Hungarian favourites, Rivalda has a thespian theme and delightful garden courtyard. This is one of the very few places we'd choose to visit in the generally touristy and expensive Castle District.

Remiz (Map p77; 📞 275 1396; II Budakesi út 5; soups 780-1240Ft, starters 980-2620Ft, mains 1980-3220Ft; 📺 9am-midnight; 📠 22, 📠 56) Next to an old *remiz* (tram depot) in the Buda Hills, this virtual institution remains excellent for its food (try the grilled dishes, especially the ribs; 1980Ft to 2880Ft), prices and verdant garden terrace.

FRENCH RESTAURANTS

Le Jardin de Paris (Map p83; 📞 201 0047; II Fő utca 20; soups 900-1900Ft, starters 1500-3000Ft, mains 1950-4650Ft; 📺 noon-midnight; 📠 86) A regular haunt of staff from the French Institute across the road (who should know their *cuisine française*), 'The Parisian Garden' is in a wonderful old townhouse abutting an ancient castle wall. The back garden ablaze in fairy lights is a delight in summer.

ITALIAN RESTAURANTS

Marcello (Map pp88-9; 📞 466 6231; XI Bartók Béla út 40; soup 450Ft, pizza & pasta 820-950Ft, mains 1680-2880Ft; 📺 noon-10pm Mon-Sat; 📠 18, 19, 47 or 49) Popular with students from the nearby university since it opened some 15 years ago, this father-and-son-owned eatery has good Italian fare at affordable prices. The salad bar (large/small 780/580Ft) is great value and the lasagne (950Ft) is legendary in these parts.

Sole d'Italia (Map p86; 📞 483 0186; V Molnár utca 15; pizza & pasta 990-1790Ft, mains 1190-2380Ft; 📺 11am-10pm; 📠 15) This place has super-friendly service, good, inexpensive pizza and pasta dishes and – wait for it – some of the cleanest toilets in town. It's convenient to the nightlife strip along Ráday utca.

ASIAN RESTAURANTS

Seoul House (Map p83; 📞 201 9607; I Fő utca 8; soups 400-1000Ft, rice & noodle dishes 2200Ft, mains 2100-2700Ft;

☞ noon-3pm & 6-11pm Mon-Sat; ☎ 86) This place serves excellent Korean food from barbecue grills to spicy *kimchi* cabbage. Not the most atmospheric place in town, but very authentic.

Mongolian Barbecue (Map pp80-1; ☎ 212 1859, 212 3743; XII Márvány utca 19/a; buffet before 5pm 2590Ft, after 5pm & Sat & Sun 4390Ft; ☞ noon-5pm & 6pm-midnight; ☎ 61) This is one of those all-you-can-eat pseudo-Asian places, but this one includes as much beer and wine as you can sink for the price. In summer seating is also available in an attractive, tree-filled courtyard.

VEGETARIAN RESTAURANTS

Éden (Map p83; ☎ 375 7575; I Döbrentei utca 9; soups 590-690Ft, mains 990-1490Ft; ☞ noon-11pm Sun-Thu; ☎ 86) This place in a mid-18th century townhouse below Castle Hill must have the classiest location of any vegetarian restaurant anywhere. Seating is in the 1st-floor dining room or, in warmer months, in the lovely courtyard.

CAFÉS & TEAHOUSES

For the past two centuries Budapest has been as famous as Vienna for its cafés, cake shops and café culture; at the start of the 20th century the city counted more than 500 cafés, but by the time of the change in 1989 (ie the collapse of communism) there were scarcely a dozen left. The majority of the traditional cafés are in Pest, but Buda can still lay claim to several.

Surprisingly, teahouses have made a big splash in recent years in Budapest, the capital of a country not normally associated with that beverage.

Auguszt (Map pp80-1; ☎ 356 8931; II Fény utca 8, 1st fl; cakes 150-350Ft; ☞ 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat; ☎ M2 Moszkva tér) Tucked away on the 1st floor of a building behind the Fény utca market and Mammut shopping mall, this is the original Auguszt café (there are imitators), and only sells its own cakes, pastries and biscuits.

Ruszwurm (Map p83; ☎ 375 5284; I Szentháromság utca 7; cakes 190-440Ft; ☞ 9am-8pm; ☎ 16 or Várbusz) This is the perfect place for coffee and cakes in the Castle District, though it can get pretty crowded and it's almost always impossible to get a seat.

Angelika (Map pp80-1; ☎ 212 3784; I Batthyány tér 7; salads 490-1490Ft, sandwiches 750-850Ft, cakes 310Ft;

☞ 9am-2am; ☎ M2 Batthyány tér) Angelika is another charming café – this time attached to an 18th-century church – with a lovely terrace overlooking the Danube. The food is just so-so; come here for the cakes and the views.

Demmer's Teaház (Buda Map pp80-1; 345 4150; II Lövház utca 12; teas 180-400Ft; ☞ 9.30am-7.30pm; ☎ M2 Moszkva tér; Pest Map p84; ☎ 302 5674; VI Podmaniczky utca 14; ☞ 11am-9pm Mon-Sat, 1-9pm Sun; ☎ M3 Nyugati pályaudvar) This cosy little tea-house next to the Mammut shopping mall is the place to come in Buda if you're serious about your cuppa cha. There's also a branch in Pest.

QUICK EATS

International fast-food places are a dime a dozen in Budapest, but old-style self-service restaurants, the mainstay of both white- and blue-collar workers in the old regime, are disappearing fast. As everywhere else, pizzerias are on an upward spiral.

Fortuna Önkiszolgáló (Fortuna Self-Service Restaurant; Map p83; ☎ 375 2401; I Fortuna utca 4; soups 200-300Ft, mains 500-700Ft; ☞ 11.30am-2.30pm Mon-Fri; ☎ 16 or Várbusz) You'll find cheap and quick weekday lunches in the Castle District at this very basic but clean and cheerful self-service restaurant. Reach it via the stairs on the left side as you enter the Fortuna Passage.

Íz-É Faloda (Drink-Eat Snack Bar; Map pp80-1; ☎ 345 4130, 238 0282; II Lövház utca 12; soups 250-380Ft, mains 320-590Ft; ☞ 11am-6pm Mon-Fri, 11am-4pm Sat; ☎ M2 Moszkva tér) This is a clean, modern and very cheap self-service place in the Fény utca market next to the Mammut shopping mall. It has excellent *főzelék* dishes (comfort food; when peas, green beans, lentils or marrow are fried or boiled and then mixed into a roux with milk).

Nagy Palacsintázója (Granny's Palacsinta Place; Buda Map p83; ☎ 201 5321; I Hattyú utca 16; set menus 780-1060Ft; ☞ 24hr; ☎ M2 Moszkva tér; Buda Map p83; ☎ 212 4866; I Batthyány tér 5; ☞ 24hr; ☎ M2 Batthyány tér; Pest Map p86; ☎ 418 0721; V Petőfi Sándor tér 17-19; ☞ 24hr; ☎ M1/2/3 Deák Ferenc tér) This place, with branches in Buda and another across the river in Pest, serves Hungarian pancakes – both the savoury (218Ft to 398Ft) and sweet (118Ft to 398Ft) varieties – round the clock and is always packed.

Il Treno (Map p83; ☎ 356 2846; II Retek utca 12; pizza 820-1790Ft, pasta 990-1290Ft; ☞ 11am-11pm; ☎ M2 Moszkva tér) With a cheap set menu (950Ft),

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Malomtó (Map pp80-1; ☎ 336 1830; II Frankel Leó utca 48; soups 750-1100Ft, starters 1400-2100Ft, mains 2400-4200Ft; ☞ noon-10pm; ☎ 17) The 'Mill Lake', north of Margit körút in Buda and just across from the Lukács Baths, is a welcome arrival, with up-to-date, fresh décor, and an inspired menu of modern Hungarian and international – especially game and seafood – dishes, many with an Asian spin. But its major draw is its unique position at the foot of a tiny lake filled with water lilies and croaking green frogs; a seat on the terrace in the warmer months is not just recommended, it's mandatory. We especially liked the goose-liver sampler with the bird's organ prepared in three different ways, the Japanese pork wrap with plum and the lamb duet (minced wrapped in cabbage and grilled chops). The roaring fire in winter is a nice touch. It's obviously a place for all seasons and we'll keep going back.

a half-dozen branches throughout the city and a thriving **takeaway service** (☎ 814 1414), Il Treno is one of the most popular pizzerias in town. Seating at this branch is in the neighbouring Trombitás restaurant or, in warmer months, a positive oasis of a courtyard off busy Moszkva tér.

MARKETS & SELF-CATERING

Budapest counts some 20 large food markets, with the lion's share of them in Pest. **Fény utca market** (Fény utcai piac; Map pp80-1; II Fény utca; ☞ 6am-6pm Mon-Fri, 6am-2pm Sat), one of the largest in Buda, is just next to the Mammut shopping mall.

Supermarkets and 24-hour nonstop shops selling everything from cheese and cold cuts to cigarettes and beer abound in Buda. Following are two central ones:

Ezred Nonstop (Map p83; I Attila utca 57; ☞ 24hr)

Kaiser's Supermarket (Map pp88-9; cnr XI Október 23 utca & Bercsényi utca; ☞ 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, 7am-4pm Sat, 8am-3pm Sun; ☎ 4)

Pest

HUNGARIAN RESTAURANTS

Múzeum (Map p86; ☎ 338 4221, 267 0375; VIII Múzeum körút 12; soups 700-800Ft; starters 1400-3400Ft, mains 2400-4400Ft; ☞ noon-midnight Mon-Sat; ☎ 47 or 49) This is the place to come if you like to dine

in old-world style. It's a café-restaurant that is still going strong after more than a century at the same location near the National Museum. There's a good selection of Hungarian wine.

Firkász (Hack; Map pp80-1; ☎ 450 1118; Tátra utca 18; soups 590-790Ft, starters 1150-1690Ft, mains 1990-3600Ft; ☞ noon-midnight; ☎ 15) Set up by former journalists (thus the name), this is a retro Hungarian restaurant with lovely old mementoes on the walls, excellent home cooking and a great wine list.

Móri Kisvendéglő (Map pp80-1; ☎ 349 8390; XIII Pozsonyi út 37; dishes 480-1500Ft; ☞ 10am-8pm Mon-Thu, 10am-3pm Fri; trolleybuses 76 or 79) This simple *borozó* (wine bar) and restaurant, a short walk north of Szent István körút, has some of the best home-cooked Hungarian food in Budapest. But, as the owner warns our 'dear readers', get here by 3pm if you want to eat *főzelék*.

Menza (Map p84; ☎ 413 1482; VI Liszt Ferenc ter 2; soups 590-650Ft, starters 990-1390Ft, mains 1390-2790Ft; ☞ 10am-midnight; ☎ 4 or 6) This upmarket Hungarian restaurant on Budapest's most lively square takes its name from the Hungarian for a drab school canteen – something it is anything but. Book a table; it's fabulously stylish and always packed by diners who come for its simply but perfectly cooked Hungarian classics with a modern spin. Weekday two-course set lunches are a snip at 790Ft.

Bagolyvár (Map pp80-1; ☎ 468 3110; XIV Állatkerti út 2; soups 500-880Ft, mains 1330-2400Ft; ☞ noon-11pm; ☎ M1 Hősök tere) With reworked Hungarian classics that make it a winner, the 'Owl's Castle' attracts the Budapest cognoscenti, who leave its sister restaurant next door, Gundel, to the expense-account brigade.

INTERNATIONAL RESTAURANTS

Robinson (Map pp80-1; ☎ 422 0222; XIV Városligeti-út; soups 790-890Ft, starters 1990-2890Ft, mains 2790-4800Ft; ☞ noon-4pm & 6pm-midnight; ☎ M1 Hősök tere) Located in leafy City Park, Robinson is the place to secure a table on the lake-side terrace on a warm summer's evening. Starters include sliced goose liver (2890Ft) and home-made venison pâté, and mains feature *fogas* (Balaton pike-perch; 3790Ft), grilled tuna and smoked duck breast cooked on lava stones.

Café Kör (Map p86; ☎ 311 0053; V Sas utca 17; salads 730-2110Ft, mains 1590-3190Ft; ☞ 10am-10pm Mon-Sat; ☎ 15) Just behind St Stephen's Basilica, the

'Circle Café' is a great place for a light meal at any time, including late breakfast (460Ft to 590Ft). Salads, desserts and daily specials are very good; there is also a three-/four-course wine-tasting menu for 4900/6900Ft.

Mokka (Map p86; ☎ 328 0081; V Sas utca 4; soups 890-960Ft, mains 2450-5950Ft; ☺ noon-midnight; ☑ 15 or red-numbered 4) It's 'ethno-cuisine' here, with a mishmash of dishes; you'll need a map to read the menu. But we love the space and the great African décor, and there's a good wine list. The three-course set menu (7000Ft), including wine, is good value.

Marquis de Salade (Map p84; ☎ 302 4086; VI Hajós utca 43; soups 800-1700Ft, salads 1200-1600Ft, mains 2500-3400Ft; ☺ 11am-1am; trolleybuses 72 or 73) This is a serious hybrid of a place, with dishes from Russia and Azerbaijan as well as Hungary. There are lots of quality vegetarian choices, too, in the basement restaurant.

Soul Café (Map p86; ☎ 217 6986; IX Ráday utca 11-13; starters 590-1890Ft, mains 1980-2980Ft; ☺ noon-11.30pm; ☑ M3 Kálvin tér) One of the better choices along a street heaving with so-so restaurants and iffy cafés, the Soul has inventive Continental food and décor, and you can order anything from a sandwich (850Ft) or a pizza (890Ft to 1500Ft) to a full meal, including many vegetarian dishes (590Ft to 1890Ft). It has a great terrace.

FRENCH RESTAURANTS

Lou Lou (Map p86; ☎ 312 4505; V Vigyázó Ferenc utca 4; soups 800Ft, starters 1600-2800Ft, mains 2300-4400Ft; ☺ noon-3pm & 7-11pm Mon-Fri, 7-11pm Sat; ☑ 15) One of the most popular places with expatriate *français* in Budapest is this lovely bistro with excellent daily specials. Two signature dishes are the marinated grilled breast of duck with orange and Arabica coffee sauce (3100Ft), and the rack of lamb with garlic and haricots verts (3600Ft).

ITALIAN RESTAURANTS

Trattoria Toscana (Map p86; ☎ 327 0045; V Belgrád rakpart 13; starters 990-3200Ft, pasta & pizza 1350-2690Ft, mains 1500-3390Ft; ☺ noon-midnight; ☑ 15) Hard by the Danube, this trattoria serves rustic and very authentic Italian and Tuscan food, including *ribollito alla chiantigiana*, a hearty vegetable soup stewed with *canellini* (white Tuscan beans) and Parmesan cheese. The focaccia is excellent, too.

Fausto's (Map p86; ☎ 269 6806; VII Dohány utca 5; soups 1300-3300Ft, starters 2400-4200Ft, mains 3200-6400Ft;

☺ noon-3pm & 7-11pm Mon-Sat; trolleybus 74) Still the most upmarket (and expensive) Italian restaurant in town, Fausto's has brilliant pasta dishes, daily specials and desserts; there are lots of choices for vegetarians. The yellow walls and antique furniture provide an elegant touch, and the Italian wine selection is huge.

Okay Italia (Pest Map p84; ☎ 349 2991; XIII Szent István körút 20; pizza 1320-1790Ft, pasta 1460-2290Ft, mains 1680-3050Ft; ☺ 11am-midnight Mon-Fri, noon-midnight Sat & Sun; ☑ 4 or 6; Nyugati tér Map p84; ☎ 332 6960; V Nyugati tér 6; ☑ M3 Nyugati pályaudvar) This is a perennially popular place run by Italians, with a nearby Nyugati tér branch serving just pasta and pizza. Most people come just for either of those, in any case. Both restaurants have terraces.

GREEK & MIDDLE EASTERN RESTAURANTS

Al-Amir (Map p86; ☎ 352 1422; VII Király utca 17; meze 650-850Ft, mains 1490-2300Ft; ☺ noon-11pm; ☑ M1 Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út 17) Arguably the most authentic Middle Eastern (in this case, Syrian) place in town, and light years from the gyros and falafel outlets found along the Big Ring road. It has a window selling takeaway gyros (500Ft) and falafels (450Ft), too, but we're talking quality here.

Taverna Pireus Rembetiko (Map p86; ☎ 266 0292; V Fővám tér 2-3; starters 590-1590Ft, mains 1690-2290Ft; ☺ noon-midnight; ☑ 47 or 49) Overlooking a patch of green and facing the Nagycsarnok (Great Market), this place serves reasonably priced and pretty authentic Greek fare. *Rembetiko* is a folk music school and a style of traditional Greek music; there are live performances on Friday and Saturday evening.

SPANISH & MEXICAN RESTAURANTS

Pata Negra (Map p86; ☎ 215 5616; IX Kálvin tér 8; tapas 250-650Ft, plates 500-1200Ft; ☺ 11am-midnight Mon-Wed, 11am-1am Thu & Fri, noon-1am Sat, noon-midnight Sun; ☑ M3 Kálvin tér) The 'Black Foot' (it's a kind of ham) is a new cellarlike Spanish tapas bar and restaurant at the (almost) top of trendy Ráday utca. Good cheese and an excellent wine selection, too.

Iguana (Map p84; ☎ 331 4352; V Zoltán utca 16; starters 430-1590Ft; mains 1890-3990Ft; ☺ 11.30am-12.30am; ☑ 15) Iguana serves decent-enough Mexican food (not a difficult task in this *cantina* desert), but it's hard to say whether the pull is the chilli (1050Ft to 1490Ft), the enchilada

and burrito combination *platos* (plates; 2090Ft to 2290Ft), or the frenetic and boozy 'we-party-every-night' atmosphere.

JEWISH & KOSHER RESTAURANTS

Kinor David (David's Harp; Map p86; ☎ 512 8783; VII Dohány utca 10; soup 800-1300Ft, mains 2800-3200Ft; ☺ 11am-11pm Mon-Fri & Sun, noon-2pm Sat; ☑ M2 Astoria or trolleybus 74) Budapest's largest kosher restaurant is a cut above the usual. There are special fish dishes (3000Ft to 4500Ft) and Israeli treats (2600Ft to 3100Ft). You pay in advance for Friday dinner and Saturday lunch.

ASIAN RESTAURANTS

Bangkok House (Map p86; ☎ 266 0584; V Só utca 3; soups & Thai salads 550-2250Ft, mains 1450-4550Ft; ☺ noon-11pm; ☑ 47 or 49) Bangkok House is done up in kitsch, Asian-esque décor that recalls takeaway places on any UK High St. The Thai and Laotian-inspired dishes are acceptable, and service all but seamless. A tourist menu (1460Ft) is available from noon to 4pm.

Sushi An (Map p86; ☎ 317 4239; V Harmincad utca 4; sushi 300-600Ft per piece, hand rolls 900-1400Ft, sets 1900-3900Ft; ☺ noon-10pm; ☑ M1/2/3 Deál tér) A tiny sushi bar next to the British embassy in central Pest. It's great for sushi and sashimi, but even better for Japanese sets served with miso soup.

VEGETARIAN RESTAURANTS

Napfényes ízek (Map pp80-1; ☎ 351 5649; VII Rózsa utca 39; soups 450-850Ft, pasta & pizza 1190-1490Ft, mains 1190-1650Ft; ☺ 10am-11pm Mon-Fri, 12-10.30pm Sat & Sun; trolleybuses 73 or 76) 'Sunny Tastes' is a bit out of the way (unless you're staying near Andrassy út), but the wholesome foods and the speciality cakes are worth the trip. There is an organic shop here, too.

Govinda (Map p86; ☎ 269 1625, 473 1309; V Vigyázó Ferenc utca 4; soups 350Ft, dishes 240-450Ft; ☺ noon-9pm Mon-Sat; ☑ 15) Run by a Buddhist and blessed by the Dalai Lama, Govinda is in a basement near Chain Bridge. As well as wholesome salads, soups and desserts, it serves a daily set menu plate (large/small 1600/1280Ft).

CAFÉS & TEAHOUSES

Along with traditional cafés in Pest, a new breed of café has emerged on the scene – all polished chrome, halogen lighting and

straight lines. Leafy VI Liszt Ferenc tér is surrounded by these hip cafés, and there are a few on IX Ráday utca and V Szent István tér behind St Stephen's Basilica.

Lukács (Map p84; ☎ 302 8747; VI Andrassy út 70; cakes 200-500Ft; ☺ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-8pm Sat & Sun; ☑ M1 Vörösmarty utca) This café is dressed up in the finest of divine decadence – all mirrors and gold and soft piano music (on weekday evenings), with a nonsmoking section, too. The selection of cakes is small but good; try the creamy Lukács *szelet*.

Művész (Map p84; ☎ 352 1337; VI Andrassy út 29; cakes 280-480Ft; ☺ 9am-11.45pm; ☑ M1 Opera) Almost opposite the State Opera House, this is a more interesting place to people-watch than most (especially from the terrace), though its cakes are not what they used to be, with the exception of the *almás torta* (apple cake).

Centrál Kávéház (Map p86; ☎ 266 4572, 266 2110; V Károlyi Mihály utca 9; cakes 290-350Ft, mains 1990-3590Ft; ☺ 8am-midnight; ☑ M3 Ferenciek tere) This *grande dame* that reopened a couple of years ago after extensive renovations is still jostling to reclaim her title as *the* place to sit and look intellectual in Pest. It serves meals as well as lighter fare, like sandwiches (750Ft to 1190Ft) and omelettes (890Ft to 990Ft).

Gerbeaud (Map p86; ☎ 429 9020; V Vörösmarty tér 7-8; cakes 580-850Ft; ☺ 9am-9pm; ☑ M1 Vörösmarty tér) This is the most famous of the famous cafés in Budapest – bar none. Founded in 1858, it has been a fashionable meeting place for the city's elite on the northern side of Pest's busiest square since 1870. It serves a Continental breakfast (2880Ft) and sandwiches (1300Ft to 2500Ft).

Café Vian (Map p84; ☎ 268 1154; VI Liszt Ferenc tér 9; cakes 300-470Ft; ☺ 9am-1am; ☑ M1 Oktogon) This comfortable café – done up in warm peach tones and serving breakfast all day – remains the anchor tenant on the sunny side of 'the tér' and the court of Pest's arty aristocracy.

Negro (Map p86; ☎ 302 0136; V Szent István tér 11; breakfast 320-908Ft; ☺ 8am-1am Mon-Wed, 8am-3am Thu & Fri, 8am-4am Sat, 8am-midnight Sun; ☑ 15) This stylish café just behind the basilica (views!) attracts Budapest's über trendy crowd, dressed to the nines (or did we see 10s?) and sipping whatever is the latest concoction.

Teaház a Vörös Oroszlánhoz (Jókai tér Map p84; ☎ 269 0579; VI Jókai tér 8; teas 480-630Ft; ☺ 11am-11pm

Mon-Fri, 3-11pm Sat, 5-11pm Sun; **M1** Oktogon; Ráday utca Map p86; ☎ 215 2101; IX Ráday 9; ☎ 11am-11pm Mon-Sat, 3-11pm Sun) This serene place with a mouthful of a name (it just means 'Tea-house at the Sign of the Red Lion') and two branches is a funky and quite serious tea-house north of Liszt Ferenc tér.

QUICK EATS

Middle Eastern fast-food is as popular in Budapest as Indian is in London and Chinese in New York.

Szeráj (Map p84; ☎ 311 6690; XIII Szent István körút 13; salads & meze 200-400Ft, mains 1100-1250Ft; ☎ 9am-5am; ☎ 4 or 6) A very inexpensive self-service Turkish place for felafels and kebabs (700Ft), with some 10 varieties on offer.

Három Testvér (Erzsébet körút Map p84; ☎ 342 2377; VII Erzsébet körút 17; salads 350-450Ft, gyros & kebabs 500-900Ft; ☎ 9am-3am; Szent István körút Map p84; ☎ 329 2951; XIII Szent István körút 20-22; ☎ 9am-3am Sun-Wed, 9am-4am Thu, 9am-5am Fri & Sat; ☎ 4 or 6; Teréz körút Map p84; ☎ 312 5835; VI Teréz körút 60-62; ☎ 9am-3am; ☎ 4 or 6) Great any time but especially for a late-night snack or post-club bit of blotter, the 'Three Brothers' has branches throughout Pest, including these three on the Big Ring road.

If you're looking for places like McDonald's, Burger King and KFC, you'll find them everywhere in Pest – especially around Oktogon. Much better are the new-style self-service restaurants that cater to students and office workers, including **Pick Ház** (Map p84; ☎ 331 7783; V Kossuth Lajos tér 9; sandwiches & salads 140-180Ft, mains 210-580Ft; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri; **M2** Kossuth Lajos tér), above the famous salami manufacturer's central showroom near Parliament, and **Central European University cafétéria** (Map p86; ☎ 327 3000; V Nádor utca 9; soups 190-235Ft, pizza 220-250Ft, mains 380-495Ft; ☎ 11.30am-4pm Mon-Fri; ☎ 15), which is open to all.

Much more interesting places serving tastier dishes are the little restaurants called *étkezdék* – canteens not unlike British 'cafs' that serve simple dishes that change every day. A meal can easily cost under 1000Ft. Some of the better ones:

Kádár (Map p84; ☎ 321 3622; X Klauzál tér 9; soups 400Ft, mains 580-1100Ft; ☎ 11.30am-3.30pm Tue-Sat; ☎ 4 or 6) In the Jewish area and probably the most popular of its type in town.

Kisharang (Map p86; ☎ 269 3861; V Október 6 utca 17; soups 145-230Ft, mains 290-850Ft; ☎ 11am-8pm Mon-Fri, 11.30am-4.30pm Sat & Sun; ☎ 15)

The centrally located 'Little Bell' is popular with students and staff of the nearby Central European University.

Frici Papa Kifőzdéje (Papa Frank's Canteen; Map p84; ☎ 351 0197; VI Király utca 55; soups 279-439Ft, mains 429-529Ft; ☎ 11am-9pm Mon-Sat; ☎ 4 or 6) Excellent *főzélék* dishes cost 289Ft to 339Ft.

MARKETS & SELF-CATERING

Most of Budapest's 20-odd food markets are in Pest. The vast majority are closed on Sunday, and Monday is always very quiet (if the market isn't closed altogether). Two of the better ones are the **Rákóczi tér market** (Map pp80-1; VIII Rákóczi tér 8; ☎ 6am-4pm Mon, 6am-6pm Tue-Fri, 6am-1pm Sat; ☎ 4 or 6) and the **Hold utca market** (Map p84; V Hold utca 11; ☎ 6am-5pm Mon, 6.30am-6pm Tue-Fri, 6.30am-2pm Sat; **M3** Arany János utca) near V Szabadság tér. Following are two much larger and very colourful markets.

Nagycsarnok (Great Market; Map p86; IX Vámház körút 1-3; ☎ 6am-5pm Mon, 6am-6pm Tue-Fri, 6am-2pm Sat; ☎ 47 or 49) This is Budapest's biggest market, though it has become a bit of a tourist trap since its renovations in 1996. Still, plenty of locals head here for fruit, vegetables, deli items, fish and meat. There are good food stalls on the west side of the 3rd level.

Lehel Csarnok (Map pp80-1; XIII Lehel tér; ☎ 6am-6pm Mon-Fri, 6am-2pm Sat, 6am-1pm Sun; **M3** Lehel tér) This is one of Pest's more interesting traditional markets, recently rehoused in a hideous boatlike structure designed by László Rajk, son of the Communist Minister of the Interior executed for 'Titoism' in 1949. This is apparently his revenge.

Mézes Kuckó (Map p84; XIII Jászai Mari tér 4; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri year-round, 9am-1pm Sat Oct-May; ☎ 4 or 6) The 'Honey Nook' is the place to go if you've got the urge for something sweet; its nut and honey cookies (180Ft per 10dg) are to die for. A colourfully decorated *mézeskalács* (honey cake) in the shape of a heart (400Ft to 600Ft) makes a lovely gift.

Butterfly (Map p84; VI Teréz körút 20; 90Ft per scoop; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat; ☎ 4 or 6) The Butterfly – and *not* the pastry shop next door called *Vajassütemények boltja* – is the place in Pest for ice cream, as you'll be able to deduce from the queues outside.

Large supermarkets are everywhere in Pest. We recommend:

Match Supermarket (Map p84; VIII Rákóczi út; ☎ 6am-9pm Mon-Fri, 7am-8pm Sat, 7am-3pm Sun; **M3** Blaha Lujza tér) This supermarket faces Blaha Lujza tér.

Kaiser's Supermarket (Map p84; VI Nyugati tér 1-2;

☎ 7am-8pm Mon-Sat, 7am-4pm Sun; **M3** Nyugati pályaudvar) Opposite Nyugati train station.

Rothschild Supermarket (Map p84; XIII Szent István körút 4; ☎ 24hr; ☎ 4 or 6) Sells a good supply of kosher products.

There are nonstop shops open till very late or even 24 hours in Pest. Recommended shops:

Nyugati ABC (Map p84; track No 13; ☎ 24hr; **M3** Nyugati pályaudvar) Located at the Nyugati train station.

Keleti Csarnok (Map pp80-1; VIII Baross tér 3; ☎ 6am-midnight; **M2** Keleti pályaudvar) Near Keleti train station.

DRINKING

Budapest – particularly Pest – is loaded with pubs and bars and there are enough to satisfy all tastes. In summer the preferred drinking venues are the outdoor *kertek* (see boxed text, p117).

Buda

Lánchíd Söröző (Map p83; ☎ 214 3144; I Fő utca 4; ☎ 10am-midnight; ☎ 86) The 'Chain Bridge Pub' has a wonderful retro Magyar feel to it, with old movie posters and advertisements on the walls and red-checked cloths on the tables. Friendly service, too.

Erzsébet-híd Eszpresszó (Map p83; ☎ 214 2785; I Döbrentei tér 1; ☎ 10am-10pm; ☎ 19, ☎ 86) If you're in the mood for a relaxing drink in simple surrounds, the 'Elizabeth Bridge Espresso Bar' is a wonderful old dive with a large terrace under a big plane tree and views of the bridge.

Oscar American Bar (Map p83; ☎ 212 8017; I Ostrom utca 14; ☎ 5pm-2am Sun-Thu, 5pm-4am Fri & Sat; **M2** Moszkva tér) The décor is cinema-inspired – film memorabilia on the wood-panelled walls, leather directors' chairs on the floor – and the beautiful crowd often act like they're on camera. Not to worry – the powerful cocktails (some 150, in fact) go down a treat. There's music most nights.

Café Rolling Rock (Map pp80-1; ☎ 368 2298; III Bécsi út 53-55; ☎ 9am-1am Mon-Thu, 9am-2am Fri, 9am-4am Sat, noon-midnight Sun; ☎ 17 or HÉV Szépvölgyi út) If you find yourself in Óbuda in need of a libation, you could do worse than this place, a revamped pub where the trendies of Óbuda (not necessarily a contradiction in terms) gather for some of the peculiar American brew in the little green bottles.

Pest

Kultiplex (Map pp80-1; ☎ 219 0706; IX Kinizsi utca 28; ☎ 10am-5am; **M3** Ferenc körút) This huge complex has something for everyone – performance space, cinema, grill restaurant – and a simple inside/outside bar where you can enjoy an unreconstructed drink.

Szimpla (Map p84; ☎ 342 1034; VII Kertész utca 46; ☎ noon-midnight Jun-Aug, 10am-2am Sep-May; ☎ 4 or 6) This is a distressed-looking, very unflashy place, just a hop, skip and a tumble from the stiletto south of Liszt Ferenc tér. There's live music three nights a week.

Paris, Texas (Map pp80-1; ☎ 218 0570; IX Ráday utca 22; ☎ 10am-1am Sun & Mon, 10am-3am Tue-Sat; **M3** Kálvin tér) One of the original bars on the Ráday utca nightlife strip, this place has a coffee-house feel to it with old sepia-tinted photos on the walls and pool tables downstairs. The cocktail list is huge.

Darshan Udvar (Map p84; ☎ 266 5541; VIII Krúdy utca 7; ☎ 11am-1am Mon-Fri, 6pm-1am Sat & Sun; ☎ 4 or 6) This cavernous complex of two bars, a restaurant and a courtyard terrace vegetarian café with décor that combines Euro-techno with Eastern flair is a great escape from the bars of VI Liszt Ferenc tér and the dull sophistication of IX Ráday utca.

Becketts (Map p84; ☎ 311 1033; V Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út 72; ☎ 10am-1am Sun-Thu, 10am-3am Fri & Sat; **M3** Nyugati pályaudvar) Of the capital's ubiquitous 'Irish' pubs, this is the best (and largest) of the lot, with all-day breakfast (1600Ft), as well as sandwiches (850Ft to 1700Ft) and salads (1200Ft to 1300Ft). The new cocktail bar in the rear is an added attraction.

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Cha Cha Cha (Map p86; ☎ 215 0545; ☎ 8am-3am Mon-Thu, 10am-4am Fri & Sat Sep-May, 9am-11pm Jun-Aug; **M3** Kálvin tér) Located in the underpass at the Kálvin tér metro, this is a campy, groovy café-bar, with stripy, distressed-looking chairs, faux-leather armchairs, and a *very* – and we're talking *Star Wars* here – mixed crowd that really bops at week's end. It's a great place to meet people, and it probably gets busier here in the wee hours than the entire station does during the day. In the past everyone went island-hopping in summer – to Cha Cha Cha Terasz (see boxed text, p117) at the tip of Margaret Island.

Champs Sport Pub (Map p86; ☎ 413 1655; VII Dohány utca 20; 🕒 noon-midnight Sun-Thu, noon-2am Fri & Sat; 📍 M2 Astoria) Owned by five Olympic medallists, Champs is the place for sports fans and the vicarious, with two huge screens and 35 TVs. The menu tells you how many calories and how much fat each dish contains – and what you need to do to lose it.

ENTERTAINMENT

For a city of its size, Budapest has a huge choice of things to do and places to go after dark – from opera and folk dancing to jazz and mee(a)t-market clubs. It's usually not difficult getting tickets or getting in; the hard part is deciding what to do.

Your best sources of information for what's on in the city are the weekly freebie **PestiEst** (www.est.hu in Hungarian), published every Thursday, and available at bars, cinemas and fast-food joints; and the more thorough weekly – with everything from clubs and films to art exhibits and classical music – **Pesti Műsor** (Budapest Program; www.pesti.musor.hu in Hungarian), also called *PM Program Magazin*, available at newsstands every Thursday for 149Ft.

Other freebies include the vastly inferior (though English- and German-language) *Programme in Ungarn/in Hungary* and its scaled-down monthly version for the capital, *Budapest Panorama*. The free *Koncert Kalendárium*, published monthly (bimonthly in summer), has more serious offerings: concerts, opera, dance etc. A welcome arrival is *Mr Gordonsky's Budapest City Spy Map*, a hip little publication with all sorts of insider's tips. It's available free at pubs and bars.

Booking Agencies

The most important and/or useful booking agencies in Budapest include those listed here. You can book almost anything online at www.jegymester.hu and www.kultur.info.hu.

Ticket Express (Inner Town Map p86; ☎ information 312 0000, bookings 06 30 303 0999; www.tex.hu; Andrásy út 18; 🕒 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri; 📍 M1 Opera; József-főútvonal Map p84; ☎ 334 0369; MCD Zeneáruház, VIII József körút 50; 🕒 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri; 📍 4 or 6) The largest ticket-office network in the city, with eight outlets.

Central Ticket Office (Központi Jegyiroda; Map p86; ☎ 267 9737, 267 1267; VI Andrásy út 15; 📍 M1 Opera;

🕒 10am-6pm Mon-Fri) This is the busiest theatrical ticket agency, with tickets to plays and other events at theatres around Budapest.

Symphony Ticket Office (Szimfonikus Jegyiroda; Map p84; ☎ 302 3841; VI Nagymező utca 19; 📍 M1 Opera; 🕒 10am-7pm Mon-Fri) Come here for tickets to the philharmonic and other classical-music concerts.

Nightclubs

Piaf (Map p84; ☎ 312 3823; VI Nagymező utca 25; 🕒 7pm-6am; 📍 M3 Arany János utca or trolleybuses 70 or 78) Piaf is the place to go when everything else slows down. There's dancing and action well into the new day. Most of the action – and characters – are in the smoky cavern below.

Sark (Map p84; ☎ 06 30 282 9625; VII Klauzál tér 14; 🕒 10am-3am Sun-Thu, 10am-5am Fri & Sun; 📍 4 or 6) This popular alternative music pub and club on three floors has a big cellar with a dance floor, where bands occasionally perform. It's all a bit student-clubbish.

Süss Fél Nap (Map p84; ☎ 374 3329; V Honvéd utca 40; 🕒 5pm-5am; 📍 4 or 6) This cellar club attracts a student crowd, and hosts lots of student bands and visiting talent. It's a lot of fun and less expensive than many of the other clubs.

Közgáz Pince Klub (Map pp80-1; ☎ 215 4359, 218 6855; IX Fővám tér 8; 🕒 9pm-5am Tue-Sat; 📍 47 or 49) With few frills and cheap covers at the Economics University, this is the pick-up venue of choice for many a student. Avoid Wednesday unless you like karaoke.

Kaméleon (Map pp80-1; ☎ 345 8547; Mammut II, 4th fl, II Lovóház utca 2-6; 🕒 5pm-midnight Sun-Thu, 5pm-3am Fri & Sat; 📍 M3 Moszkva tér) This throbbing club in the newer wing of Buda's massive Mammut shopping mall is a true chameleon, with a different party every night – from La Noche Cubana on Friday to live bands on Monday.

Bank Dance Hall (Map p84; ☎ 06 20 344 4888; VI Teréz körút 55; 🕒 10pm-4am Sun-Thu, 10pm-5am Fri & Sat; 📍 M3 Nyugati pályaudvar) In the southern wing of Nyugati train station next to McDonald's, this enormous disco has rhythm and blues on the 1st floor, house and trance on the 2nd, Dance on the 3rd and funk-house (a Hungarian thing) on the 4th.

Gay & Lesbian Venues

Angel (Map p84; ☎ 351 6490; VII Kazinczy utca 2; 🕒 10pm-5am Fri-Sun; 📍 M2 Astoria) Also known by its Hungarian name, Angyal, this is

THE HEAT IS ON

During Budapest's (usually) very long and very hot summer, so-called *kertek*, literally 'gardens' but in Budapest any outdoor spot that has been converted into an entertainment zone (including courtyards and any available stretch along the river), empty out even the most popular indoor bars and clubs. The venues (and their locations) can change from year to year and a definitive list is usually not available until about May; the best single source of information is **Pestiside** (www.pestiside.hu). Some of the venues listed under Drinking (p115) and Nightclubs (opposite) have their own outside equivalent – 'gardens' that only blossom in summer. Some of the more popular ones in recent years:

Café del Rio (Map pp88-9; ☎ 06 30 297 2158; www.rio.hu in Hungarian; XI Goldman György tér; 🕒 2pm-4.30am; 📍 4 or 6) On the northern side of Petőfi Bridge on the Buda side, Rio is stylish but not up itself, with a pseudo tropical/carnival theme.

Cha Cha Cha Terasz (Map pp80-1; ☎ 215 0545; www.chachacha.hu in Hungarian; XIII Margit-sziget; 🕒 4pm-4am; 📍 26, 📍 4 or 6) In the stadium at the southern tip of Margaret Island, Cha Cha Cha Terasz is an attitude-free venue, with great music and dance space.

Holdudvar (Map p86; ☎ 485 5270; VIII Múzeum körút 6-8; 🕒 8am-4am; 📍 M2 Astoria) A large courtyard on the grounds of the city's largest university has a predictably split personality: earnest and coffee-drinking, wild and out of control.

Mokka Cuka (Map pp78-9; ☎ 453 2120; www.mokkacuka.hu; III Óbudai-sziget; 🕒 24hr; HÉV Filatorigát) On the island that attracts the capital's beautiful people, Mokka Cuka is a leading outdoor underground venue showcasing great indie DJs.

Szimpla Kert (Map p84; ☎ 321 5880; www.szimpla.hu; VII Kazinczy 14; 🕒 noon-midnight; trolleybus 74) One of the capital's first *kertek*, Szimpla is just that – a simple, low-key affair that keeps itself to itself.

Szóda Udvar (Map p86; ☎ 461 0007; V József nádor tér 1; 🕒 noon-late; 📍 M1/2/3 Deák Ferenc tér) This rather well-heeled venue – a former bank headquarters – pulls in a subdued crowd that lets loose on the basement dancefloor in the wee hours.

Tűzraktár (Map pp88-9; ☎ 06 70 523 1593; www.tuzraktar.hu; IX Tüzoltó utca 54-56; 🕒 5pm-3am; 📍 3 Klinikák) This abandoned factory building called the Fire Warehouse and its big courtyard plays host to all sorts of cultural and party events.

Zöld Pardon (Map pp88-9; www.zp.hu; XI Goldman György tér; 🕒 9am-6am; 📍 4 or 6) What bills itself as the 'world's longest summer festival' is a rocker's paradise just opposite the Café del Rio.

Budapest's flagship gay club. It welcomes girls on Friday and Sunday.

Coxx (Map p84; ☎ 344 4884; VII Dohány utca 38; 🕒 9pm-4am Sun-Thu, 9pm-5am Fri & Sat; 📍 7 or 7/a) This cellar bar has a DJ and small dance floor, but it's more of a pub than a club. There's a gallery and **Internet café** (🕒 noon to 4am Mon-Fri, 9pm-4am Sat & Sun) at street level just to let you know this place has a serious side, too.

Action (Map p86; ☎ 266 9148; V Magyar utca 42; 🕒 9pm-4am; 📍 M3 Kálvin tér) Action is where to head if you want just that. Take the usual precautions and have a ball.

There are no specific girl bars in Budapest, though we recommend:

Café Eklektika (Map p86; ☎ 266 1226; V Semmelweis utca 21; 🕒 47 or 49; 🕒 noon-midnight Mon-Fri, 5pm-midnight Sat & Sun) Attracts a mixed crowd.

Candy (Map p86; ☎ 789 2130, V Kossuth Lajos utca 17; 📍 M2 Astoria) Lesbian parties are held on the last Saturday of the month.

Jailhouse (Map pp88-9; ☎ 06 30 989 4905, 218 1368; IX Tüzoltó utca 22; 📍 M3 Ferenc körút) Lesbian parties are held on the first Friday of the month. For more details, see below.

Live Music ROCK & POP

Wigwam Rock Blues Club (Map pp88-9; ☎ 208 5569; XI Fehérvári utca 202; 🕒 8pm-5am; 📍 41 or 47) This place is one of the best of its kind in Hungary, and hosts some big-name Hungarian rock and blues bands on Friday and Saturday.

Gödör Klub (Map p86; ☎ 06 20 943 5464; V Erzsébet tér; 🕒 9am-late; 📍 M1/2/3 Deák Ferenc tér) This new arrival in the old bus bays below Elizabeth Sq in central Pest is a real mixed bag, offering everything from folk and jazz but especially rock.

Jailhouse (Map pp88-9; ☎ 06 30 989 4905, 218 1368; IX Tüzoltó utca 22; 🕒 10pm-5am Fri & Sat; 📍 M3 Ferenc körút) A small venue next to the Trafó House

of Contemporary Arts (opposite), with a friendly atmosphere, underground DJs and live music.

Budapest Sportcsarnok (Map pp80-1; ☎ 422 2600; www.budapestarena.hu; XIV Stefánia út 2; M2 Stadionok) This new arena named after the Hungarian pugilist László Papp is where the likes of Phil Collins, Duran Duran, Rod Stewart and Simply Red warble.

Petőfi Csarnok (Map pp80-1; ☎ 363 3730, 251 7266; www.petoficsarnok.hu; XIV Zichy Mihály út 14; M1 M1 Széchenyi fürdő or trolleybuses 72 or 74) The city's main youth centre, in City Park, is the place for smaller rock concerts as the hall is intimate enough to get really close to the performers.

JAZZ & BLUES

Columbus Jazzklub (Map p86; ☎ 266 9013; V Pesti alsó rakpart; ☎ noon-midnight; ☎ 2 or 2/a) This place located on a boat moored in the Danube, just north of V Vigadó tér opposite the Budapest Inter-Continental Hotel, has transformed itself from being 'just another Irish pub' to a jazz club of note with big-name local and international bands.

Fat Mo's Music Club (Map p86; ☎ 267 3199; V Nyáry Pál utca 11; ☎ noon-2am Mon & Tue, noon-3am Wed, noon-4am Thu & Fri, 6pm-4am Sat, 6pm-2am Sun; M3 Ferenciek tere, ☎ 15) With a speakeasy 1920s Prohibition theme, this club has jazz (and sometimes country) from 9pm or 9.30pm. DJs take over at midnight Thursday to Saturday.

Jazz Garden (Map p86; ☎ 266 7364; V Veres Pálné utca 44/a; ☎ 6pm-1am Sun-Thu, 6pm-2am Fri & Sat; ☎ 47 or 49) A sophisticated venue with traditional, vocal and Latin jazz, and odd décor: a faux cellar 'garden' with street lamps and a night 'sky' bedecked with blinking stars. Book a table (starters 1420Ft to 2250Ft, mains 2250Ft to 3490Ft) in the dining room; music starts at 9.30pm.

FOLK & TRADITIONAL

Authentic *táncház*, literally 'dance house' but really folk-music workshops, are held at various locations throughout the week, but less frequently in summer. Times and venues often change; consult one of the publications earlier in this section (p116) or check out **Dance House Guild** (www.tanchaz.hu). The best local *klezmer* (Jewish folk music) is the **Budapest Klezmer Band** (www.budapestklezmer.hu).

Fonó Buda Music House (Fonó Budai Zenéhez; Map pp88-9; ☎ 206 5300; www.fono.hu; XI Sztregova

utca 3; ☎ 41 or 47) This place has regular programmes – always at 8pm on Wednesday and the second Friday of each month, as well as other days. Consult its website.

Almássy tér Recreation Centre (Almássy téri Szabadidő Központ; Map pp80-1; ☎ 352 1572; VII Almássy tér 6; trolleybus 74) This is a venue for just about anything that's in and/or interesting, from rock and blues to folk music. There's Hungarian dance house every second Saturday at 7.30pm.

Pótkulcs (Spare Key; Map p84; ☎ 269 1050; VI Csengery utca 65/b; M3 M3 Nyugati pályaudvar) This wonderful little venue, with a varied menu of music most nights, has dance house at 8pm every Tuesday.

Two city cultural houses in Buda have frequent folk programmes.

Municipal Cultural House (Fővárosi Művelődési Háza; Map pp88-9; ☎ 203 3868; XI Fehérvári út 47; ☎ 41 or 47) The Folklor Centrum based here has folk music every Friday at 7.30pm and a children's dance house hosted by the incomparable Muzsikás (p42) every Tuesday from 5pm to 6.30pm.

Marczibányi tér Cultural Centre (Marczibányi téri Művelődési Központ; Map pp80-1; ☎ 212 0803, 212 2820; II Marczibányi tér 5/a; ☎ 4, 6 or 49) Offers Hungarian, Moldavian and Slovakian dance and music every Wednesday from 8pm.

Aranytíz Cultural Centre (Aranytíz Művelődési Központ; Map p86; ☎ 354 3400, 311 2248; V Arany János utca 10; ☎ 15) At this new cultural centre in Pest the wonderful Kalamajka Táncház has programmes from 5pm on Saturday that frequently run to well after 2am.

CLASSICAL

The *Koncert Kalendárium* highlights all concerts in Budapest monthly. The main concert halls are the National Concert Hall (Nemzeti Hangversenyterem) and the smaller Festival Theatre (Fesztivál Színház) at the new **Palace of Arts** (Művészetek Palotája; Map pp88-9; ☎ information 555 3000, tickets 555 3301; www.mupa.hu; IX Komor Marcell utca; ☎ ticket office 1-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun; ☎ 2 or 2/a) and the stunning **Liszt Academy of Music** (Liszt Zeneakadémia; Map p84; ☎ 342 0179; www.zeneakademia.hu; VI Liszt Ferenc tér 8; ☎ ticket office 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 2-8pm Sat & Sun; M2 M2 Oktogon) in Pest, and the modern **Budapest Congress Centre** (Budapesti Kongresszusi Központ; Map pp80-1; ☎ information 372 5700, tickets 372 5429; www.bcc.hu; XII Jagelló út 1-3; ☎ 8 or 112) in Buda, which has just had a total renovation.

The **Pesti Vigadó** (Map p86; ☎ 318 9903, 318 9167; V Vigadó tér 2; M1 M1 Vörösmarty tér, ☎ 2 or 2/a) and the **Duna Palota** (Map p86; ☎ 235 5500, 317 2790; V Zrínyi utca 5; ☎ 15) have light classical music, and touristy musical revues in summer.

Opera

Hungarian State Opera House (Magyar Állami Operaház; Map p84; ☎ information 353 0170, tickets 332 7914; www.opera.hu; VI Andrássy út 22; ☎ ticket office 11am-7pm Mon-Sat, 4-7pm Sat & Sun; M1 M1 Opera) The opera house should be visited at least once – to admire the incredibly rich decoration inside as much as to view a performance and hear the perfect acoustics.

Erkel Theatre (Erkel Színház; Map pp80-1; ☎ 333 0540; VIII Köztársaság tér 30; ☎ ticket office 11am-7pm Tue-Fri, 11am-3pm Sat, 10am-1pm & 4-7pm Sun; M2 Keleti pályaudvar, ☎ 7 or 7/a) Budapest's modern (and ugly) second opera house is southwest of Keleti train station.

Budapest Operetta (Budapesti Operettszínház; Map p84; ☎ 472 2030, 269 3870; www.operettszinhaz.hu; VI Nagymező utca 17; ☎ ticket office 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 1-7pm Sat & Sun; M1 M1 Opera) This theatre presents operettas – always a riot, especially campy ones like the *Queen of the Csárdás* by Imre Kálmán.

Dance

CLASSICAL

Budapest's two so-so ballet companies – the Hungarian National and the Hungarian Festival Ballet troupes – perform at the Hungarian State Opera House, the Erkel Theatre and at the National Dance Theatre.

For modern dance fans there are several good options, including the **Trafó House of Contemporary Arts** (Trafó Kortárs Művészetek Háza; Map pp88-9; ☎ information 456 2040, tickets 215 1600; www.trafo.hu; IX Liliom utca 41; M3 Ferenc körút), which presents the cream of the crop, including a good pull of international acts, as well as the **Central Europe Dance Theatre** (Közép-Európa Táncszínház; Map pp80-1; ☎ 342 7163, 06 30 526 1024; www.cedt.hu; VII Bethlen Gábor tér 3; trolleybuses 74 or 78).

FOLK

The 30 dancers of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble (Magyar Állami Népi Együttes) perform at the **Buda Concert Hall** (Budai Vigadó; Map p83; ☎ 201 3766 I Corvin tér 8; ☎ 86, ☎ 19) in Buda on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday from May to mid-October, and on Saturday and/or Sunday only the rest of the year. In

addition the Rajkó Folk Ensemble (Rajkó Népi Együttes) stages folk-dance performances at the Budapest Puppet Theatre (below) on Saturday, and the Duna Folk Ensemble (Duna Népi Együttes) dances at the Duna Palota (left) just off Roosevelt tér in Pest on Monday and Wednesday. The 1½-hour programmes begin at 8pm, and tickets cost from 4600/4200Ft per adult/student. Contact **Hungaria Koncert** (☎ 317 2754, 201 5928; www.ticket.info.hu) for information and bookings.

National Dance Theatre (Nemzeti Táncszínház; Map p83; ☎ information 201 4407, tickets 375 8649; www.nemzetitanctanzinhaz.hu; I Színház utca 1-3; ☎ ticket office 1-6pm; ☎ 16 or Várbusz) The National hosts at some point every troupe in the city, including the two ballet companies and the Honvéd Ensemble, one of the city's best folk troupes and now experimenting with modern choreography as well.

Theatre

Merlin Theatre (Map p86; ☎ 317 9338, 266 4632; www.merlinszinhaz.hu; V Gerlőczy utca 4; M1 M1/2/3 Deák Ferenc tér, ☎ 47 or 49) This theatre, in Pest, stages numerous plays in English, often performed by the Merlin's Atlantis Company and the local Madhouse troupe. Usually pretty serious stuff, with little scenery and few props.

International Buda Stage (IBS; Map p77; ☎ 391 2525; www.ibs-b.hu; II Tárogató út 2-4; ☎ 56, ☎ 29) Further afield in Buda, the Buda Stage is a more recent arrival, with occasional performances – often comedies – in English.

National Theatre (Nemzeti Színház; Map pp88-9; ☎ information 476 6800, tickets 476 6868; www.nemzetiszhaz.hu; IX Bajor Gizi park 1; ☎ ticket office 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 2-6pm Sat & Sun; ☎ 2 or 2/a) This rather eclectic venue is the place to go if you want to brave a play in Hungarian or just check out the bizarre architecture (p94).

Budapest Puppet Theatre (Bábszínház; Map p84; ☎ information 342 2702, 321 5200; www.budapest-babszinhaz.hu; VI Andrássy út 69; tickets 500-1100Ft; M1 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.

Cinemas

A couple of dozen cinemas screen English-language films with Hungarian subtitles.

Consult the listings in the *Budapest Sun* newspaper, *Pesti Est* or *Pesti Műsor* (p116).

Corvin Film Palace (Corvin Filmpalota; Map pp80-1;

☎ 459 5050; VIII Corvin köz 1; (M) M3 Ferenc körút

This cinema, which saw a lot of action during the 1956 Uprising, has been fantastically renovated and is worth a visit. Note the two wonderful reliefs outside.

Örökmozgó Film Museum (Örökmozgó Filmmúzeum; Map p84; ☎ 342 2167; VII Erzsébet körút 39; ☎ 4 or 6) Part of the Hungarian Film Institute, this cinema (whose name vaguely translates as 'moving picture') screens an excellent assortment of foreign classic films in their original languages.

Művész (Map p84; ☎ 332 6726; VI Teréz körút 30;

(M) M1 Oktogon, ☎ 4 or 6) Shows artsy and cult films.

Puskin (Map p86; ☎ 429 6080; V Kossuth Lajos utca 18; ☎ 7 or 7/a) Screens a mix of arthouse and popular releases.

Uránia National Cinema (Uránia Nemzeti Filmszínház; Map p84; ☎ 486 3413; VIII Rákóczi út 21; ☎ 7 or 7/a) This all-Art Deco/neo-Moorish extravaganza is a tarted-up film palace. It has an excellent café.

Circus

Municipal Great Circus (Fővárosi Nagycirkusz; Map pp80-1; ☎ 343 8300, 343 6002; www.maciva.hu in Hungarian; XIV Állatkerti körút 7; adult 1200-1900Ft, child 900-1500Ft; (M) Széchenyi-fürdő) Europe's only permanent big top has everything one would expect from a circus, including acrobats, dare devils on horseback and ice shows in season. Performances are at 3pm Wednesday to Sunday, with additional shows at 10.30am on Saturday and Sunday and at 7pm on Saturday.

Sport

WATER POLO

The **Hungarian Water Polo Association** (MVL SZ; ☎ 412 0041; www.waterpolo.hu in Hungarian) is based at the Alfréd Hajós swimming complex (p98) on Margaret Island. Matches take place here and at two other pools: the Béla Komjádi Swimming Pool (p99) in Buda and the **BVSC** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 251 3888; XIV Szónyi út 2; trolleybuses 74 or 74/a) in Pest from September to May. If you want to see a match or watch the lads in training in summer, call the MVL SZ for times and dates, or get someone to check schedules for you in the daily *Nemzeti Sport* (National Sport; 99Ft) available at newsstands everywhere.

FOOTBALL

Hungary's descent from the top of the heap of European football to a *béka segge alatt* –

literally, 'under the arse of the frog' as the Hungarians describe something *really* far down – remains as great a mystery as the allure of Cliff Richard. Hungary's defeat of the England team both at Wembley (6-3) in 1953 and at home (7-1) the following year, are still talked about as if the winning goals were scored yesterday.

There are four premier league football teams in Budapest out of a total of 12 nationwide, including: Kispest-Honvéd, which plays at **József Bocsik Stadium** (☎ 282 9791, 282 9789; XIX Új temető út 1-3; ☎ 36), accommodating 15,000 spectators; MTK at **Hungária Stadium** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 219 0300; VIII Salgótarjáni utca 12-14; ☎ 1 or 1/a), accommodating 8000 spectators; and UTE at **UTE Stadium** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 369 7333; IV Megyeri út 13; ☎ 47 or 96), accommodating 15,000 fans. But no club dominates Hungarian football like Ferencváros (FTC), the country's loudest and brashiest team, and its only hope. You either love the Fradi boys in green and white or you hate them. Watch them play at **FTC stadium** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 215 1013; IX Könyves Kálmán körút 26; (M) M3 Népliget), with space for 18,000 spectators. Check *Nemzeti Sport* for game schedules.

HORSE RACING

The descendants of the nomadic Magyars are keen on horse racing. **Kincsem Park** (Map p77; ☎ 433 0522; www.kincsempark.com; X Albertirői út 2; (M) M2 Pillangó utca) is the place to go for both *ügető* (trotting) and *galopp* (flat racing). Schedules can change, but in general three trotting meetings of 10 to 11 races take place weekly, usually 3pm on Saturday and Sunday, and 4pm or 5pm on Wednesday. Flat racing usually takes place from 2pm on Thursday and Sunday between May and early November.

SHOPPING

Budapest is a great place to satisfy that urge to buy, and you'll find all the products described in the Directory (p375) in full supply here. But some people consider the city's flea markets their highlight – not just as places to indulge their vice, but as the consummate Budapest experience.

Flea markets

Ecséri Piac (Map pp88-9; ☎ 282 9563; XIX Nagykőrösi út 156; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 6am-3pm Sat, 8am-1pm Sun) Often called the *piac* (market), it's one

of the biggest and best flea markets in Central Europe, selling everything from antique jewellery and Soviet army watches to Fred Astaire-style top hats. Saturday is said to be the best day to go. To get there, take bus 54 from Boráros tér in Pest or, better, the red express bus 54 from the Határ utca stop on the M3 metro line and get off at the Fiume utca stop. Then follow the crowds over the pedestrian bridge.

City Park flea market (Városligeti bolhapiac; Map pp80-1; ☎ 363 3730, 251 7266; www.bolhapiac.com; XIV Zichy Mihály utca 14; ☎ 7am-2pm Sat & Sun; ☎ 1 or 1/a or trolleybuses 70, 72 or 74) This is a huge outdoor flea market – a kind of Hungarian boot or garage sale – held next to the Petőfi Csarnok (p118) in City Park. The usual diamonds-to-rust stuff is on offer – from old records and draperies to candles, honey and herbs. Sunday is the better day to visit.

If you don't have time to get to the Ecséri or City Park flea markets, check out any of the **BÁV stores** (Bizományi Kereskedőház és Záloghite; ☎ 325 2600; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat), essentially a chain of pawn and second-hand shops with many branches around town. Try the **VI Andrassy út branch** (Map p84; ☎ 342 9143; VI Andrassy út branch 43; (M) M1 Opera) for old jewellery, watches and silver; the **V Bécsi utca branch** (Map p86; ☎ 318 4403; V Bécsi utca 1-3; (M) M1/2/3 Deák Ferenc tér) for knick-knacks, porcelain and glassware; the **XIII Szent István körút branch** (Map p84; ☎ 473 0666; XIII Szent István körút 3; ☎ 4 or 6) for chinaware, textiles and artwork; and the **II Margit körút branch** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 315 0417; II Margit körút 4; ☎ 4 or 6) for furniture, lamps and fine porcelain.

Gifts & Souvenirs

Holló Atelier (Map p86; ☎ 317 8103; V Vitkovics Mihály utca 12; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon Sat; (M) M1/2/3 Deák Ferenc tér) Off the northern end of Váci utca, this place sells attractive folk art with a modern look and remains a personal favourite place to shop for gifts.

Hungaricum (Map p83; ☎ 487 7306; I Fortuna utca 1; ☎ 9am-9pm; ☎ 16 or Várbusz) This shop conveniently located in the Castle District sells quality Hungarian handicrafts, as well as foodstuffs (eg potted goose liver and honey), wines and *pálinka* (brandy).

Intuita (Map p86; ☎ 266 5864; V Váci utca 67; ☎ 11am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat; ☎ 15) You're not about to find painted eggs and *pálinka* here, but modern Hungarian folk craft, like

handmade glasses, ceramics and bound books.

Folkart Centrum (Népművészet; Map p86; ☎ 318 5840; V Váci utca 58; ☎ 10am-7pm; ☎ 15) This is a large shop where everything Magyar-made is available – folk costumes, dolls, painted eggs, embroidered tablecloths – and prices are clearly labelled. The staff are very helpful and will advise.

Glassware & Porcelain

Herend (Map p86; ☎ 317 2622; V József nádor tér 11; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat; (M) M1 Vörösmarty tér) For both contemporary and traditional fine porcelain, there is no other place but Herend.

Herend Village Pottery (Map pp80-1; ☎ 356 7899; II Bem rakpart 37; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat; (M) M2 Batthyány tér) Stocks hard-wearing pottery and dishes decorated with bold fruit patterns; an unusual alternative to what some might describe as rather prissy (and fragile) Herend flatware.

Zsolnay (Map p86; ☎ 266 6305; V Váci utca 19-21; ☎ 10am-7pm; (M) M3 Ferenciek tere) For both contemporary and traditional fine Zsolnay porcelain from Pécs, check out this place. We like the iridescent green frogs.

Haas & Czjzek (Map p84; ☎ 311 4094; VI Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út 23; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat; (M) M3 Arany János utca) Just up from Deák Ferenc tér, this chinaware and crystal shop sells Zsolnay, as well as more affordable Hungarian-made Hollóháza and Alföldi porcelain.

Ajka Kristály (Map p84; ☎ 332 4541; VI Teréz körút 50; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat; (M) M3 Nyugati pályaudvar) Established in 1878, Ajka has Hungarian-made lead crystal pieces and stemware. Most of it is very old fashioned, but there are some more contemporary pieces.

Wine & Spirits

Budapest Wine Society (Batthyány utca Map p83; ☎ 212 2569; www.bortarasag.hu; I Batthyány utca 59; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat; (M) M2 Moszkva tér; Ráday utca Map p86; ☎ 219 5647; IX Ráday utca 7; ☎ noon-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat; (M) M3 Kálvin tér) This society has retail outlets with an exceptional selection of fine Hungarian wines. No-one, but no-one, knows Hungarian wines like these guys do.

La Boutique des Vins (Map p86; ☎ 317 5919; V József Attila utca 12; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri,

10am-3pm Sat; **M1** M1/2/3 Deák Ferenc tér) Owned by the former sommelier at Gundel, the ingeniously named 'Wine Shop' (sounds better than 'Bor Boltja') has an excellent selection of Hungarian wines. Ask the staff to recommend a label if – when – you feel lost.

Hungarian Pálinka House (Magyar Pálinka Ház; Map p84; ☎ 338 4219; www.magyarpalinkahaza.hu; VIII Rákóczi út 17; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat; **M2** Astoria) If you're into Hungarian *pálinka*, the exquisite brandy flavoured with everything from apricot and sour cherry to (be still, our heart) raspberry, make a beeline for this place. It stocks hundreds of varieties.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

The main **Malév Customer Service Centre** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 235 3222; www.malev.hu; XIII Váci út 26; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun; **M3** Nyugati pályaudvar) is 100m northwest of Nyugati train station. Malév also has ticket-issuing desks at **Terminal 2A** (☎ 296 7211; ☎ 5am-11pm) and another one at **Terminal 2B** (☎ 296 5767; ☎ 6am-8.30pm). For contact telephone numbers and websites of other carriers with offices in the capital, see p378.

Boat

Hydrofoils to Bratislava and Vienna run by **Mahart PassNave** (Map p86; ☎ 484 4013; www.mahartpassnave.hu; V Belgrád rakpart; ☎ 8am-6pm) arrive at and depart from the **International Ferry Pier** (Nemzetközi hajóállomás; Map p86; V Belgrád rakpart). For more information, see p383.

From April to late October Mahart Pass Nave also runs excursion boats on the Danube from Budapest to Szentendre, Vác, Visegrád and Esztergom, and between late May and early September hydrofoils from Budapest to Visegrád, Nagymoros and Esztergom. Boats usually leave from the **Legenda Boat Tours Office & pier** (Map p86; ☎ 318 1223; **M1** Vörösmarty tér) off V Vigadó tér on the Pest side, and sometimes pick up and discharge passengers from the ferry stop at I Batthyány tér (Map p83) on the Buda side, which is on the M2 metro line.

Bus

All international buses and some – but not all – domestic ones (especially to/from north and north-central Hungary) arrive at and depart from **Népliget bus station** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 219 8080; IX Üllői út 131; **M3** Népliget) in

Pest. The **international ticket office** (☎ 6am-6pm Mon-Fri Sep-May, 6-8pm Mon-Fri Jun-Aug, 6am-4pm Sat & Sun) is upstairs. **Eurolines** (☎ 219 8021; www.eurolines.com) is represented here, as is its Hungarian associate **Volánbusz** (☎ 382 0888; www.volanbusz.hu). There's a **left-luggage office** (☎ 6am-9pm) downstairs that charges 190Ft per piece per day.

Stadionok bus station (Map pp80-1; ☎ 251 0125; XIV Hungária körút 48-52; ☎ ticket office 6am-6pm Mon-Fri, 6am-4pm Sat & Sun; **M3** Stadionok) serves cities and towns to the east of Budapest. The ticket office and the **left-luggage office** (☎ 6am-7pm; per piece 200Ft) are on the ground floor. Buses to southwest Hungary use **Etele tér bus station** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 382 4900; XI Etele tér; ☎ 6am-6pm; red **M7**) in Buda.

The **Árpád Bridge bus station** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 329 1450; XIII Róbert Károly körút; ☎ ticket office 6am-8pm; **M3** Árpád hid) on the Pest side of Árpád Bridge, is the place to catch buses for the Danube Bend and parts of the Northern Uplands (eg Balassagyarmat, Szécsény, Salgótarján etc). The small **Széna tér bus station** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 201 3688; I Széna tér 1/a; ☎ ticket office 6.30am-4.30pm; **M3** Moszkva tér) in Buda handles some traffic to and from the Pilis Hills and towns northwest of the capital, with a half-dozen departures to Esztergom (from bay No 5) as an alternative to the Árpád Bridge bus station.

For details of international bus services, see p380.

Car & Motorcycle

All the international car-rental firms have offices in Budapest, but don't expect many bargains. An Opel Corsa from **Avis** (Map p86; ☎ 318 4158; www.avis.hu in Hungarian; V Szervita tér 8; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat; **M1** 1/2/3 Deák Ferenc tér), for example, costs €33/198 per day/week, plus €0.33 per kilometre and €23 Collision Damage Waiver (CDW) and theft protection insurance. The same car with unlimited kilometres and insurance costs from €99/88 per day/weekend. The 25% ÁFA (value-added tax) doesn't apply to nonresidents paying with foreign currency or credit card.

One of the cheapest and most reliable outfits for renting cars is **Anselport** (☎ 362 6080, 06 20 945 0279; www.anselport.hu; XXII V utca 22; ☎ 9am-6pm; **M14** or 114) in south Buda. Its Suzuki Swift costs €19 to €43 per day, including unlimited mileage and insurance,

depending on the length of the rental (one day to three weeks). Another good bet is **Fox Autorent** (☎ 382 9000; www.fox-autorent.com; XXII Nagytérenyi út 48-50; ☎ 8am-8pm; **M3** 3, 14 or 114), which charges from €46/230 per day/week for a Fiat Seicento, €55/320 for a Smart car and €59/349 for a Fiat Punto (kilometres and insurance included).

Assistance and/or advice for motorists is available from the **Hungarian Automobile Club** (Magyar Autóklub; Map pp80-1; ☎ 212 2821, 24hr helpline 345 1755; II Rómer Flóris utca 4/a; **M4** 4 or 6) off Margit körút near Margaret Bridge. Motorists anywhere in Hungary can call the automobile club on ☎ 188 for assistance.

For information on traffic and public road conditions in the capital, ring **Főinform** (☎ 317 1173).

Hitching

The ride service **Kenguru** (Map p84; ☎ 266 5837, 483 0105; www.kenguru.hu; VIII Kőfaragó utca 15; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) matches up drivers and riders for a fee – mostly to points abroad. Sample destinations and approximate one-way fares include Amsterdam (14,200Ft), London (15,700Ft), Munich (7500Ft), Paris (14,900Ft), Prague (8600Ft) and Vienna (3000Ft).

Train

Budapest has three main train stations. Most international trains arrive and depart from **Keleti train station** (Keleti train station; Map pp80-1; ☎ 313 6835; VIII Kerepesi út 2-6; **M3** Keleti pályaudvar). Trains to certain destinations in the east (eg Romania) leave from **Nyugati train station** (Western train station; Map p84; ☎ 349 0115; VI Teréz körút 55-57; **M3** Nyugati pályaudvar), while **Déli train station** (Southern train station; Map p83; ☎ 375 6293, 355 8657; I Krisztina körút 37; **M2** Déli pályaudvar) handles trains to some destinations in the south (eg Osijek in Croatia and Sarajevo in Bosnia). These are not hard-and-fast rules, so always make sure you check which station your train leaves from when you buy a ticket. The handful of secondary train stations are of little importance to long-distance travellers. Occasionally, though, a through train will stop at **Kelenföldi train station** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 203 1687; XI Etele tér 5-7; **M19** or 49) in Buda. For 24-hour information on international train services call ☎ 461 5500 in Budapest or ☎ 06 40 49 49 49 nationwide.

The train stations are generally pretty dismal places, with unsavoury-looking characters hanging about day and night, but all have some amenities. The left-luggage office at **Keleti train station** (☎ 24hr) is next to platform No 6. At **Nyugati train station** (☎ 4am-midnight) and **Déli train station** (☎ 3.30am-11.30pm) it's beside the information and ticketing hall. They charge 150/300Ft for a normal/large piece for six hours and 300/600Ft per day. You'll also find post offices and grocery stores that are open late or even round the clock.

The three main train stations are on metro lines and night buses serve them when the metro is closed. If you need to take a taxi, avoid the sharks hovering around the stations. At Déli train station, cross over to I Alkotás utca and hail one there. At Keleti train station, get into one of the legal taxis at the rank on VIII Kerepesi út, just south of the Eastern (Keleti) train station. Nyugati tér is a major intersection, so you'll have no problem finding a legitimate taxi there.

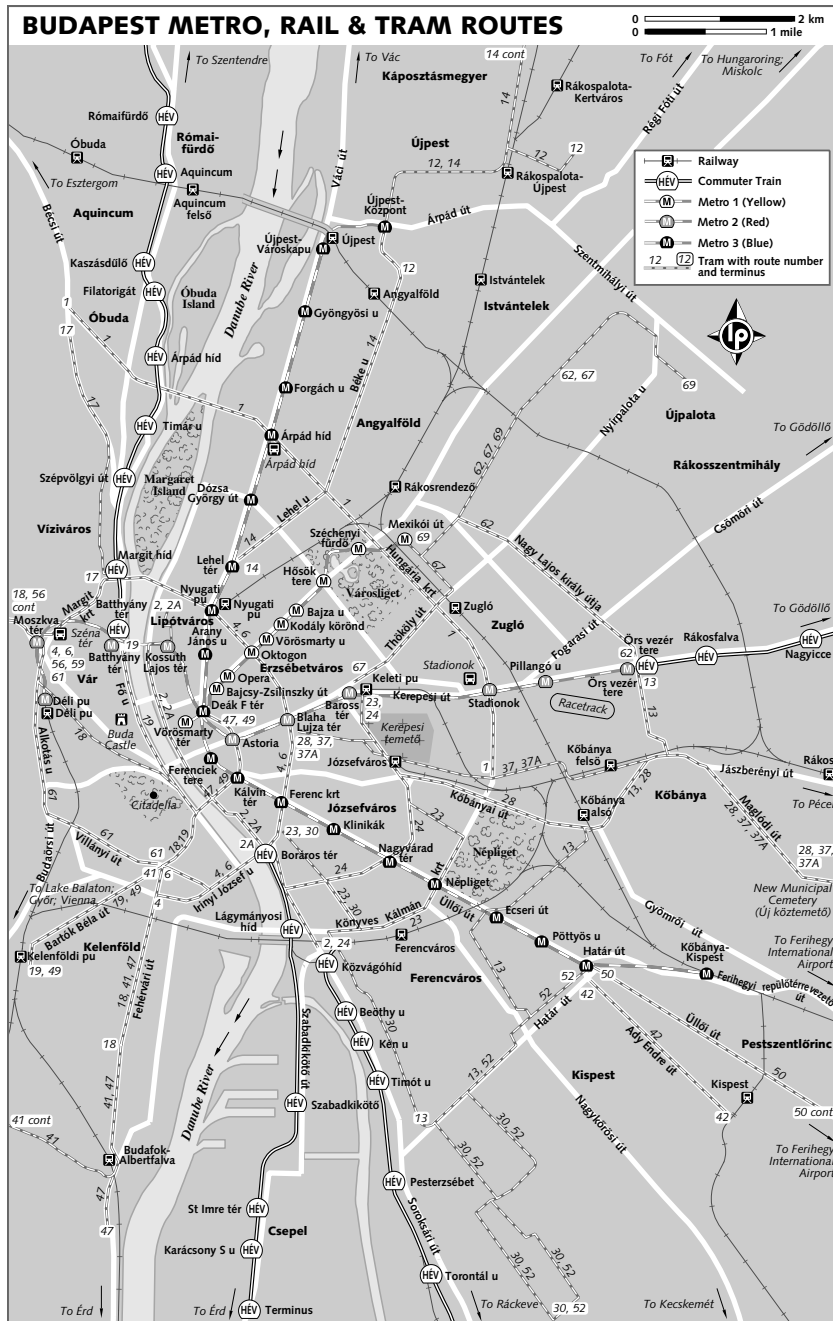
You can buy tickets at the three international train stations in Budapest, but the queues are often long, passengers are in a hurry and sales staff are not the most patient in the city. It's easier at the **MÁV international information and ticket centre** (Map p84; ☎ 461 5500, 352 2800; www.mav.hu in Hungarian; VI Andrásy út 35; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri Apr-Sep, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri Oct-Mar). For fares, check www.elvira.hu.

For more information on international train travel, see p381.

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

Budapest's **Ferihegy International Airport** (☎ 296 7000; www.bud.hu), 24km southeast of the city centre, has two modern terminals side by side and within easy walking distance of one another, and an older one about 5km to the west. For information on which airlines use which terminal, see p378. Terminal 2B has an **OTP bank** (☎ 5.30-10pm) and an ATM, seven car-rental desks, a hotel booking office, a **post office** (☎ 8am-3.30pm Mon-Fri) and a **left-luggage office** (☎ 24hr), which charges 350/1050/1400Ft for one/three/six hours, 2200/6500Ft per day/week.

With much cheaper options for getting to/from Ferihegy, it would be senseless to take a taxi and risk a major rip-off. If you want to take a taxi, do *not* hail one



from outside. Instead call one of the recommended companies (p127) with a mobile phone or from a phone box at arrivals (dispatchers understand English) and expect to pay about 5000Ft. Several taxi companies have a flat, discounted fare to/from Ferihegy. **Tele 5** (☎ 355 5555) charges 3490Ft between the airport and Pest, and 3990Ft between Ferihegy and Buda. Its taxis are just down the road waiting for your call.

The **Airport Minibus Service** (☎ 296 8555; minibus@bud.hu) ferries passengers in eight-seater vans from all three of the airport's terminals directly to their hotel, hostel or residence (one way/return 2300/3900Ft). Tickets are available at a clearly marked desk in the arrival halls. You need to book your journey to the airport 24 hours in advance, but remember that, with up to seven pickups en route, this can be a nerve-wracking way to go if you're running late.

The cheapest way – but probably the most time-consuming – to get into the city centre is to take the airport bus (look for the stop marked 'BKV Plusz Reptér Busz' on the footpath between terminals 2A and 2B), which terminates at the Kőbánya-Kispest metro station. From there take the M3 metro into the city centre. The total cost is 320Ft.

Bicycle

More and more cyclists are seen on the streets and avenues of Budapest these days, taking advantage of the growing network of bike paths. The main roads in the city might be a bit too busy and nerve-wracking to allow enjoyable cycling, but the side streets are fine and there are some areas (City Park, Margaret Island etc) where cycling is positively ideal. For ideas on where to cycle and information on where to rent bikes, see p98.

Boat

Between May and mid-September passenger ferries run by **BKV** (Budapest Transport Company; ☎ 369 1359; www.bkv.hu) depart from IX Boráros tér (Map pp88–9) beside Petőfi Bridge between six and eight times daily and head for III Rómaifürdő and Csillaghegy in Óbuda, a two-hour trip with 10 stops along the way. Tickets (adult/child 600/300Ft from end to end or between 500/250Ft and 200/150Ft for intermediate stops) are sold on board. The ferry stop

closest to the Castle District is I Batthyány tér (Map p83), and V Petőfi tér is not far from the pier just west of Vörösmarty tér (Map p86), a convenient place to pick up the boat on the Pest side. Transporting a bicycle costs 500Ft.

For information on river cruises, see p102.

Car & Motorcycle

Though it's not so bad at night, driving in Budapest during the day can be a nightmare: ongoing road works reduce traffic to a snail's pace; there are more serious accidents than fender-benders; and parking spots are difficult to find. The public transport system is good and cheap. Use it.

Parking costs 120Ft to 400Ft on the street, generally between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday and 8am and noon Saturday. There are 24-hour covered car parks charging up to 500/5000Ft per hour/day at V Váci utca 25 (below the Millennium Center; Map p86); V Szervita tér 8 (Map p86) and at V Aranykéz utca 4–6 (Map p86) in the Inner Town, and at VII Nyár utca 20 (Map p84).

Illegally parked cars are not normally towed in Budapest these days but 'booted'. If you are trying to trace a vehicle you believe has been towed, ring ☎ 383 0700 or 383 0770. To have a boot removed, which is going to cost you 15,000Ft, ring the telephone number on the sticker placed on the windscreen or ☎ 313 0810.

Drink-driving is taken very seriously in Hungary; see p372.

Public Transport

Budapest has an ageing but safe, efficient and inexpensive public transport system that will never have you waiting more than five or 10 minutes for any conveyance. There are five types of vehicle in general use: metro trains on three city lines, green HÉV trains on four suburban lines, blue buses, yellow trams and red trolleybuses. All are run by **BKV** (Budapest Transport Company; ☎ 342 2335, 06 80 406 688; www.bkv.hu). Anyone planning to travel extensively by public transport in Budapest should invest in the invaluable *Budapesti Közlekedési Hálózata Térképe* (Budapest Transport Network Map; 380Ft) available at most metro ticket booths.

Daytime public transport in Budapest runs from about 4.30am to between 9pm and 11.30pm, depending on the line. From 11.30pm to 4am a network of some 30 night buses kicks in, running every 10 to 60 minutes, again depending on the line.

FARES & TRAVEL PASSES

To ride the metro, trams, trolleybuses, buses and the HÉV (as far as the city limits, which is the Békásmegyer stop to the north) you must have a valid ticket, which you can buy at kiosks, newsstands or metro entrances. Children up to the age of six travel free when accompanied by an adult. Bicycles can only be transported on the HÉV.

The basic fare for all forms of transport is 185Ft (1665/3145Ft for a block of 10/20 tickets), allowing you to travel as far as you like on the same metro, bus, trolleybus or tram line without changing. A ticket allowing unlimited stations with one change within 1½ hours costs 320Ft.

On the metro exclusively, the base fare drops to 130Ft if you are just going three stops within 30 minutes. For 200Ft you can travel five stops and transfer at Deák Ferenc tér to another metro line within one hour. Unlimited stations travelled with one change within one hour costs 300Ft.

You must always travel in one continuous direction on any ticket; return trips are not allowed. Tickets have to be validated in machines at metro entrances and aboard other vehicles – inspectors will fine you for not validating your ticket.

Life will most likely be much simpler if you buy a travel pass. Passes are valid on all trams, buses, trolleybuses, HÉV (within the city limits) and metro lines, and you don't have to worry about validating your ticket each time you get on. The most central places to buy them are ticket offices at the Deák Ferenc tér metro station (Map p86), the Nyugati pályaudvar metro station (Map p84) and the Déli pályaudvar metro station (Map pp80–1), all of which are open from 6am to 8pm daily.

A one-day pass is poor value at 1150Ft, but the three-day pass (*touristajegy*, or tourist ticket) for 2500Ft and seven-day pass (*hetijegy*, or one week) for 3400Ft are worthwhile for most people. You'll need a photo for the fortnightly/monthly passes (4500/6900Ft). All but the monthly passes are valid from

midnight to midnight, so buy them in advance and specify the date(s) you want.

Travelling 'black' (ie without a valid ticket or pass) is risky; with increased surveillance (especially in the metro), there's an excellent chance you'll get caught. (NB: Tickets are *always* checked by a conductor on the HÉV.) The on-the-spot fine is 2500Ft, which rises to 7000Ft if you pay at the **BKV office** (Map p84; ☎ 461 6800; VII Akácfa utca 22; ☎ 6am–8pm Mon–Fri, 8am–1.45pm Sat; 🚗 M2 Blaha Lujza tér) up to 30 days later and 14,000Ft after that.

METRO & HÉV

Budapest has three underground metro lines that converge (only) at Deák Ferenc tér: the little yellow (or Millennium) line designated M1 that runs from Vörösmarty tér to Mexikói út in Pest; the red M2 line from Déli train station in Buda to Őrs vezér tere in Pest; and the blue M3 line from Újpest-Központ to Kőbánya-Kispest in Pest. A possible source of confusion on the M1 is that one station is called Vörösmarty tér and another, five stops later, is Vörösmarty utca. The HÉV suburban train line, which runs on four lines (north from Batthyány tér in Buda via Óbuda and Aquincum to Szentendre, south to both Csepel and Ráckeve and east to Gödöllő), is almost like an additional above-ground metro line.

BUS, TRAM & TROLLEYBUS

An extensive system of trams, trolleybuses and buses serve greater Budapest. On certain bus lines the same number bus may have a black or a red number. In such cases, the red-numbered one is an express, which makes limited stops and is, of course, faster.

Buses and trams are much of a muchness, though the latter are often faster and generally more pleasant for sightseeing. Trolleybuses go along cross streets in central Pest and are of little use to most visitors, with the sole exception of the ones to City and Népliget Parks.

Following are the most important tram lines (always marked with red lines on a Budapest map, while a broken red line signifies a trolleybus).

Nos 2 & 2/a Scenic trams that travel along the Pest side of the Danube as far as V Jászai Mari tér.

Nos 4 & 6 Extremely useful trams that start at XI Fehérvári út and XI Móricz Zsigmond körtér in south Buda, respectively, and follow the entire length of the Big Ring road in Pest before terminating at II Moszkva tér in Buda.

No 18 Runs from southern Buda along XI Bartók Béla út through the Tabán to II Moszkva tér.

No 19 Covers part of the same route as No 18, but then runs along the Buda side of the Danube to I Batthyány tér.

Nos 47 & 49 Link V Deák Ferenc tér in Pest with points in southern Buda via the Little Ring road.

No 61 Connects XI Móricz Zsigmond körtér with Déli train station and II Moszkva tér in Buda.

Some buses (always shown with a blue line on a Budapest map) you might find useful: **Black No 4** Runs from northern Pest via VI Hősök tere to V Deák Ferenc tér (the red No 4 follows the same route but crosses over Chain Bridge into central Buda).

No 7 Cuts across a large swathe of central Pest from XIV Bosnyák tér and down VII Rákóczi út before crossing Elizabeth Bridge to Kelenföld train station in southern Buda.

No 86 Runs the length of Buda from XI Kosztolányi Dezső tér to Óbuda.

No 105 Goes from V Deák Ferenc tér to XII Apor Vilmos tér in central Buda.

Night bus 906 Follows tram 6's route along the Big Ring road.

Night bus 907 Traces an enormously long route from Őrs vezér tere M2 metro stop in Pest to Kelenföld train station in Buda.

Taxi

Taxis in Budapest are still not expensive compared with other European countries, but with such an excellent public transport network available, you don't really have to use them very often. We've heard from many readers who were grossly overcharged and even threatened by taxi drivers in Budapest, so taking a taxi in this city should be approached with caution. However, the reputable firms we've listed have caught on to the concept of customer service and take complaints very seriously nowadays.

Avoid taxis with no name on the door and only a removable taxi light box on the roof; these are just guys with cars and the ones most likely to rip you off. Never get into a taxi that does not have a yellow licence plate and an identification badge displayed on the dashboard (as required by law), the logo of one of the reputable taxi firms on the side doors and a table of fares clearly visible.

Not all taxi meters are set at the same rates, and some are much more expensive

than others, but there are price ceilings under which taxi companies are free to manoeuvre. From 6am to 10pm the highest flag-fall fee that can be legally charged is 300Ft, the per-kilometre charge 240Ft and the waiting fee 60Ft. From 10pm to 6am the equivalent fees are 420/330/80Ft.

Budapest residents – local or foreign – rarely flag down taxis on the street. They almost always ring for them, and fares are actually cheaper if you book over the phone. Make sure you know the number of the landline phone you're calling from, as that's how they establish your address (though you can, of course, call from a mobile phone, too).

Following are the telephone numbers of reputable taxi firms:

Buda ☎ 233 3333

City ☎ 211 1111

Fó ☎ 222 2222

Rádió ☎ 377 7777

Tele 5 ☎ 355 5555

AROUND BUDAPEST

Let's be honest: an awful lot in Hungary is 'around Budapest', and many of the towns and cities in the Danube Bend, Transdanubia, Northern Uplands and even the Great Plain could be relatively easy day trips from the capital. You can be in Szentendre (19km) in half an hour, for example, and Gyöngyös, the gateway to the bucolic Mátra Hills, is only 80km to the east. Here are several easy day or even half-day trips from the capital.

STATUE PARK

A truly mind-blowing excursion is a visit to **Statue Park** (Szoborpark; Map p77; ☎ 424 7500; www.szoborpark.hu; cnr XXII Szabadkai út & Balatoni út; adult/child 600/400Ft; ☎ 10am–dusk), 10km southwest of the city centre. It's home to more than 40 busts, statues and plaques of Lenin, Marx, Béla Kun and 'heroic' workers that have ended up on rubbish heaps in other former socialist countries, but get an airing here to remind everyone how tawdry and dishonest the *ancien régime* was. 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' in a crowd by fence-sitting sculptor Imre Varga (p74), were still in place when one of us moved to Budapest in early 1992. The museum shop sells fabulously kitsch communist memorabilia – statues, pins, CDs of revolutionary songs etc.

To reach this socialist Disneyland, take tram 19 from I Batthyány tér in Buda, tram 49 from V Deák Ferenc tér in Pest or red-numbered bus 7 from V Ferenciek tere in Pest to the terminus at XI Etele tér. From there catch a yellow Volán bus from stand No 7 to Diósd/Érd (133Ft, 15 minutes, 8km, every 15 to 20 minutes); you'll want the fifth stop.

A direct bus (adult/child return 1950/1350Ft) departs from in front of the Le Meridien Budapest Hotel on Deák Ferenc tér at 11am year-round, with an extra departure at 3pm from March to October, and at 10am and 4pm as well in July and August.

SZÁZHALOMBATTA

☎ 23 / pop 17,500

Some 28km southwest of Budapest in the unattractive town of Százhalombatta, site of a huge heat and power plant, is **Archaeological Park** (Régészeti Park; ☎ 350 537; <http://matrixa.battanet.hu>; István király út 4; park adult/child/family 600/300/1600Ft, park & museum 805/415/2070Ft; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun Apr–Oct), the only open-air prehistoric museum in Hungary. The six-hectare park sits in the middle of Iron Age tumuli – Százhalombatta means '100 Mounds' – and is still undergoing excavation and expansion. What can be seen at present are reconstructed Bronze and Iron Age settlements, plus replicas of pottery, cooking utensils, musical instruments and clothing. The highlight of the park is a 2700-year-old oak-timber burial mound that houses an incredibly detailed 5.5 sq m burial chamber rebuilt from archaeological finds and floor plans. An 18-minute film (in English, Hungarian and German) briefly delves into the history of the Bronze and Iron Age in Central Europe, before moving onto the burial process and a step-by-step explanation of the reconstruction of the burial crypt.

The **Matrica Museum** (☎ 354 591; www.matrixa.battanet.hu; Gesztenyés út 1-3; adult/child/family 415/210/1035Ft; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun Apr–Oct, 10am–4pm Tue–Fri, 10am–6pm Sat & Sun Nov–Mar), part of the Archaeological Park but closer to town,

traces the history of the settlement from prehistoric times till today.

Getting There & Away

Over two dozen trains leaving Budapest's Déli and Kelenföld train stations for Pécs every day stop at Százhalombatta (248Ft, 40 minutes, 28km, every 20 minutes); the last train returns at just before 10.30pm. A bus links the train station at Százhalombatta with the park, but it's rather infrequent – the last leaves for the station at around 4pm.

Buses bound for Százhalombatta (363Ft, 45 minutes, 28km, half-hourly) leave frequently throughout the day from the Kelenföld train station at XI Etele tér in southern Buda.

RÁCKEVE

☎ 24 / pop 9250

The lures of this attractive town on the southeastern end of Csepel Island, the long island in the Danube south of Budapest, are its pretty riverside park and strand, a Gothic Serbian Orthodox church (*rač* is the old Hungarian word for 'Serb') and the former Savoy Mansion, now a lovely hotel. **Tourinform** (☎ 429 747; www.tourinform.rackeve.hu; Kossuth Lajos utca 51; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Sat mid-Jun–mid-Sep, 8am–4pm Mon–Fri mid-Sep–mid-Jun) is in the Karóly Ács Cultural Centre, about 1km south of the train station.

Sights

SAVOY MANSION

From the HÉV station in Ráckeve, walk south along Kossuth Lajos utca to the **Savoy Mansion** (Savoyai-kastély; ☎ 485 253; Kossuth Lajos utca 95), now a 30-room hotel facing the Ráckeve-Danube River branch. The domed manse with two wings was finished in 1722 in the baroque style for Prince Eugene of Savoy, who drove out the last of the Turkish occupiers from Hungary at the Battle of Zenta in 1697, by an Austrian architect who would later go on to design Schönbrunn Palace in Vienna. The mansion was completely renovated and turned into a pricey hotel and conference centre in 1982. Concerts are held here in July and August.

ÁRPÁD MUSEUM

This small **museum** (☎ 485 364; Kossuth Lajos utca 34; adult/child 400/200Ft; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun mid-Mar–Oct, 10am–4pm Mon–Fri Nov–mid-Mar), a couple

of hundred metres south of the mansion, has exhibits focusing on the Danube, with an emphasis on water mills of various types, along with a lot of old photographs.

SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

From Kossuth Lajos utca you can't miss the blue clock tower of the **Serbian Orthodox Church** (Görög-keleti szerb templom; Viola utca 1; ☎ 10am–noon & 2–5pm Tue–Sat, 2–5pm Sun) to the southeast. The late Gothic church was originally built in 1487 by Serbs who fled their town of Keve ahead of the invading Turks, and many street signs in this area are in Serbian. It was enlarged in the following century. The free-standing clock tower was added in 1758.

The walls and ceiling of the church interior are covered with colourful frescoes painted by a Serbian master from Albania in the mid-18th century. The walls depict scenes from the Old and New Testaments and a panoply of saints; they were meant to teach the Bible to illiterate parishioners. The first section of the nave is reserved for women; the part beyond the separating wall is for men. Only the priest and his servers enter the sanctuary beyond the iconostasis, the richly carved and gilded gate festooned with icons.

Eating

Savoyai Kastély (☎ 424 189; Kossuth Lajos utca 95; soups 350–450Ft, starters 600–2200Ft, mains 1200–3500Ft; ☎ noon–11pm) This cellar restaurant at the Savoy Mansion is one of the better eateries in Ráckeve. Dining here is a good way to get a look at the mansion's interior without actually staying there.

Cadran (☎ 485 470; Hősök tere 1; pizza 520–980Ft; ☎ 10am–10pm Mon–Sat, 12.30–10pm Sun) A popular pizzeria and pub in the centre of town and facing the Árpád Bridge, Cadran is recommended for a lunch stop before or after visiting the Serbian church. There's outside seating in a back courtyard.

Getting There & Away

The easiest way to reach Ráckeve is on the HÉV suburban train (520Ft, 70 minutes, 40km, half-hourly), departing from the Vágóhid HÉV terminus in district IX on the Pest side. You can get to that train station from the Inner Town on tram 2 or from Keleti train station on tram 24.

The last HÉV train back to Budapest leaves Ráckeve at 10.30pm.

GÖDÖLLŐ

☎ 28 / pop 32,400

Just 27km northeast of the Inner Town and easily accessible on the HÉV, Gödöllő (pronounced – roughly – *good-duh-ler*) is an easy day trip from the capital. The main draw here is the Royal Mansion, which rivalled Esterházy Palace at Fertőd in Western Transdanubia (p169) in splendour and size when it was completed in the 1760s, and is the largest baroque manor house in Hungary. But the town itself, full of lovely baroque buildings and monuments and home to the seminal Gödöllő Artists Colony (1901–20), is worth the trip in itself.

Tourinform (☎ 415 402; www.godollotourinform.hu; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun Apr–Oct, 10am–5pm Tue–Sun Nov–Mar) has an office just inside the entrance to the Royal Mansion.

Sights

The **Royal Mansion** (Királyi Kastély; ☎ 410 124; www.kiralyikastely.hu; Szabadság tér 1; adult/child/family 1400/700/2800Ft; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun Apr–Oct, 10am–5pm Tue–Sun Nov–Mar), sometimes called the Grassalkovich Mansion after its commissioner, Antal Grassalkovich (1694–1771), count and confidante of Empress Maria Theresa, was designed by Antal Mayerhoffer in 1741. After the formation of the Dual Monarchy, the mansion (or palace) was enlarged as a summer retreat for Emperor Franz Joseph, and soon became the favoured residence of his consort, the much beloved Habsburg empress and Hungarian queen, Elizabeth (1837–98), affectionately known as Sissi. Between WWI and WWII the regent, Admiral Miklós Horthy, also used it as a summer residence, but after the communists came to power part of the mansion was used as a Soviet barracks, as an old people's home and as temporary housing. The rest was left to decay.

Partial renovation of the mansion began in 1994, and today some 26 rooms are open to the public as the Palace Museum on the ground and 1st floors. The rooms have been restored (some would say with too much enthusiasm) to when the imperial couple were in residence, and on the 1st floor Franz Joseph's suites, done up in 'manly' greys and golds, and Sissi's lavender-coloured

private apartments are impressive, if not as evocative of the past as the rooms at the Esterházy Palace. Check out the **Decorative Hall**, all gold tracery and chandeliers, where chamber-music concerts are held throughout the year but especially in late June and early July during the **Palace Concerts Chamber Music Festival**; the **Queen's Salon**, with a Romantic-style oil painting of Sissi patriotically repairing the coronation robe of King Stephen with needle and thread; and the **Study Annex**, with a restored ceiling painting and an 18th-century tapestry of the huntress Diana.

A number of other recently opened rooms and buildings can be visited on a guided tour only at extra cost, including the baroque **Palace Theatre** (adult/child 960/550Ft or 2500Ft with museum) in the southern wing; the **Royal Hill Pavilion** (admission 2750Ft with theatre & museum) in the park built in the 1760s; and the **Royal Baths** (adult/child 1200/700Ft with theatre & pavilion, 2600/1250Ft with museum, theatre & pavilion).

Eating

Tourinform at the palace has sample menus from restaurants around town and also distributes discount vouchers.

Pizza Palazzo (☎ 420 688; Szabadság tér 2; pizza & pasta 750-1250Ft, mains 950-1590Ft; ☎ 11am-11pm) This popular pizzeria with some more substantial

main courses is conveniently attached to the Szabadság tér HÉV station.

Mei Shi Lin (☎ 412 658; Kossuth Lajos utca 33; rice & noodle dishes 450-1680Ft, mains 950-2150Ft; ☎ 11am-10pm Sun-Thu, 11am-11pm Fri & Sat) This pleasant eatery, to the northwest of the mansion, serves surprisingly good Chinese food.

Kastélykert (☎ 527 020; Szabadság tér 4; starters 480-1990Ft, mains 1000-1840Ft; ☎ noon-11pm) The 'Castle Garden', situated in a lovely old baroque house opposite the mansion (and still apparently on its grounds) is an excellent and much more upmarket choice for an evening meal.

Getting There & Away

HÉV trains from Örs vezér tere at the terminus of the M2 metro link Budapest with Gödöllő (326Ft, 40 minutes, 27km, half-hourly) throughout the day. Make sure you get off at the Szabadság tér stop, which is the third from the last stop. The last train leaves this stop for Budapest just before 10.45pm.

In addition, buses from Stadionok bus station in Budapest also serve Gödöllő (302Ft, 23km, 40 minutes, half-hourly). The last bus back is just after 7.15pm Monday to Friday (shortly after 8pm on Saturday and Sunday). The bus station is due east of the Szabadság tér HÉV station next to the colossal cultural centre.