

Lake Balaton Region



Lake Balaton, often called the 'Hungarian Sea', is the country's substitute for a coastline, a place where many locals (and Germans) escape Europe's summer heat. At 78km long, 15km across at its widest point and covering 600 sq km, it's Europe's largest body of fresh water and an aqua-playground big enough to cater to most holiday-makers.

The lake itself is a tale of two shores. Its southern coast is essentially only long resorts: from Siófok to Fonyód you'll find high-rise hotels, small sandy beaches jammed with sun worshippers, tacky stalls selling imitation wares and greasy *lángos* (deep-fried treats), and clubs attracting international DJs and night-crawlers. Here the water is shallowest and safest for kids (the lake's depth averages only 3m and the temperature is 26°C May to October).

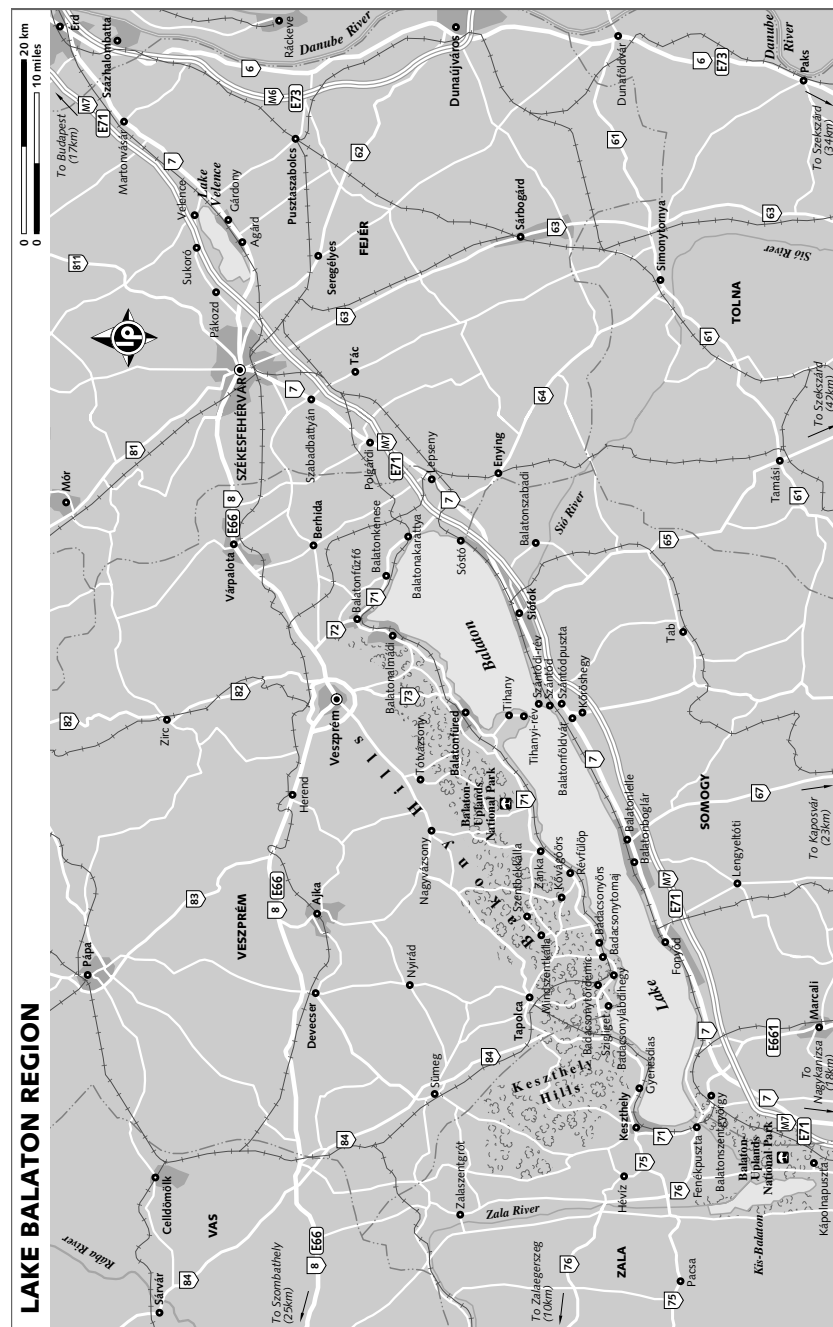
Its northern side is as refined as its southern is brash, with pretty towns such as Keszthely, Badacsony and Balatonfüred catering to a more mature crowd looking for some quiet respite alongside splashing about in the sun. Tihany, a unique peninsula cutting the lake almost in half, is home to an important historical church and some of Balaton's deepest beaches while the thermal lake at Hévíz (Europe's largest) is a natural wonder. Hills create a backdrop to the north's reedy beaches, and vineyards, woods, castles and hiking trails all vie for their rightful land space. Easy day trips from the lake include historic towns such as Veszprém and Székesfehérvár, where seminal moments at the very beginning of Magyar settlement took place.

Balaton won't appeal to everyone's tastes with its shallow, silky waters, but when its surface appears a kaleidoscope of colours, changing shades before your very eyes, it's easy to fall under its hypnotic spell like so many artists and holiday-makers have over the centuries.

LAKE BALATON REGION

HIGHLIGHTS

- Gazing at the Church of the Ascension's wonderful frescoes and the hilltop Sümeg Castle in **Sümeg** (p203)
- Watching the setting sun change Lake Balaton's silky surface from pink to orange to dark blue. **Siófok's lakeside campgrounds** (p191) are a good spot for sunset views
- Soaking up the thermal goodness at Europe's largest thermal lake in **Hévíz** (p197)
- Meandering up Castle Hill to World's End in **Veszprém** (p215)
- Exploring Tihany's hilly peninsula and ochre-coloured **Abbey Church** (p208)



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History

The area around Lake Balaton was settled as early as the Iron Age and the Romans, who called the lake Pelso, built a fort at Valcum (now Fenékpuszta), south of Keszthely, in the 2nd century AD. Throughout the Great Migrations (see p21), Lake Balaton was a reliable source of water, fish, reeds for thatch and ice in winter. The early Magyars found the lake a natural defence line, and many churches, monasteries and villages were built in the vicinity. In the 16th century the lake served as the divide between the Turks, who occupied the southern shore, and the Habsburgs to the northwest, but before the Ottomans were pushed back they had already crossed the lake and razed many of the towns and border castles in the northern hills. Croats, Germans and Slovaks resettled the area in the 18th century, and the subsequent building booms gave towns such as Sümeg, Veszprém and Keszthely their baroque appearance.

Balatonfüred and Hévíz developed early as resorts for the wealthy, but it wasn't until the late 19th century that landowners, their vines destroyed by phylloxera lice, began building summer homes to rent out to the burgeoning middle classes. The arrival of the southern railway in 1861 and the northern line in 1909 increased the tourist influx, and by the 1920s resorts on both shores welcomed some 50,000 holiday-makers each summer. Just before the outbreak of WWII that number had increased fourfold. After the war, the communist government expropriated private villas and built new holiday homes for trade unions. Many of these have been turned into hotels, greatly increasing the accommodation options.

Activities

The main pursuits for visitors at Lake Balaton – apart from **swimming**, of course – are **boating** (p52) and **fishing** (p52). Motorboats running on fuel are banned entirely, so 'boating' here means sailing, rowing and windsurfing. Fishing is good – the indigenous *fogas* (pike-perch) and the young version, *süllő*, being the prized catch – and edible *harcsa* (catfish) and *ponty* (carp) are in abundance.

You can get a fishing licence for 500/2000Ft per day/week from **Siotour** (opposite), in Siófok, or the **National Federation of Hungarian Anglers** (MOHOSZ; ☎ 1-248 2590; www.mohosz.hu; XII Korompai utca 17) in Budapest.

One of the big events of the year at the lake is the **Cross-Balaton Swimming Race** from Révfülöp to Balatonboglár in late July.

Lake cruises are a popular pastime over the summer months and range from one hour (adult/child 1200/600Ft) to three hours (2800/1400Ft) in length. The table below shows some of ports of departure.

Getting There & Away

Trains to Lake Balaton usually leave from Déli or Kelenföld train stations in Budapest, and buses from Népliget bus station. If you're travelling north or south from the lake to towns in Western or Southern Transdanubia, buses are usually preferable to trains.

Getting Around

Railway service on both the northern and southern sides of the lake is fairly frequent. A better way to see the lake up close, though, is on a ferry run by the **Balaton Shipping Co** (Balatoni Hajózási Rt; ☎ 84-310 050; www.balatonihajozas.hu; Krúdy sétány 2, Siófok). Ferries operate on the Siófok–Balatonfüred–Tihany–Balatonföldvár route, and from Fonyód to

BARGAINS GALORE

The number of visitors to Lake Balaton is dropping as Hungarians take advantage of cheap flights to sunnier climes and attack the Croatian coastline in swarms. This is of course disastrous for the local economy, but a blessing for those looking for bargains. While prices remain high in July and August, arrive in late May to early June or September and you'll more than likely land yourself a whopping discount on accommodation, particularly at the camping grounds.

If this isn't enough of an incentive to save some cash, then the newly-launched **Balaton Card** may very well be. The Standard (1499Ft; valid one season) variety offers discounts of anything between 5% to 25% on selected hotels, restaurants, special events and sports equipment rental, while the 4-Day card (6500Ft) includes, among other things, entry to museums, tickets on public transport in selected towns and even a fishing licence. A 10-Day card should also be available by the time you read this. Cards are sold at all Tourinform offices on the lake; check www.balatoncard.com for online information.

the Badacsony, up to four times daily in April/May and September/October, with many more frequent sailings from June to August. From late May to early September, ferries ply the lake from Balatonkenese to Keszthely and Révfülöp to Balatonboglár. There is also a regular car ferry between Tihanyi-rév and Szántódi-rév (from early March to late November). There are no passenger services on the lake in winter, ie from November to March.

Adults pay 720Ft for distances of one to 10km, 1020Ft for 11km to 20km and 1240Ft for 21km to 70km. Children pay half-price and return fares are slightly less than double the one-way fare. To transport a bicycle it costs 400/700Ft one way/return.

The car ferries charge 360/150/550/1040Ft per person/bicycle/motorcycle/car.

SIÓFOK

☎ 84 / pop 22,700

Siófok typifies the resorts of the southern shore: it's loud, brash and crowded in July and August. Dedicated pursuits here are eating, drinking, sunbathing, swimming and sleeping – and whatever comes in between. It is the largest of the lake's resorts and is jammed at the height of summer – so much so that it is officially allowed to call itself 'Hungary's summer capital'.

Orientation

Greater Siófok stretches for some 17km, as far as the resort of Balatonvilágos (once reserved exclusively for communist honchos) to the east and Balatonszéplak to the west. The dividing line between the so-called Aranypart, or Gold Coast, in the east, where

most of the big hotels are, and the less-developed Silver Coast (Ezüstpart) to the west is the lake-draining Sió Canal, which runs in a southeasterly direction to the Danube River.

Szabadság tér, the centre of Siófok, is to the east of the canal and about 500m south-east of the ferry pier. The bus and train stations are in Millennium Park just off Fő utca, the main drag.

Information

Main post office (Fő utca 186)

OTP bank (Szabadság tér 10/a) Has a currency-exchange machine and ATM.

Siotour (☎ 310 806; www.siotour.hu; Batthyány Lajos utca 2/b) A commercial agency that handles all the large camp sites along the southern shore.

Tourinform (☎ 310 117; siofok@tourinform.hu; Szabadság tér; ☎ 8am–8pm mid-Jun–mid-Aug; 9am–6pm Mon–Fri, 9am–noon Sat mid-Aug–mid-Sep; 9am–4pm Mon–Fri, 9am–noon Sat mid-Sep–mid-Jun) Has an office at the base of the old *víztorony* (water tower) which dates from 1912.

www.siofok.hu More information on the town.

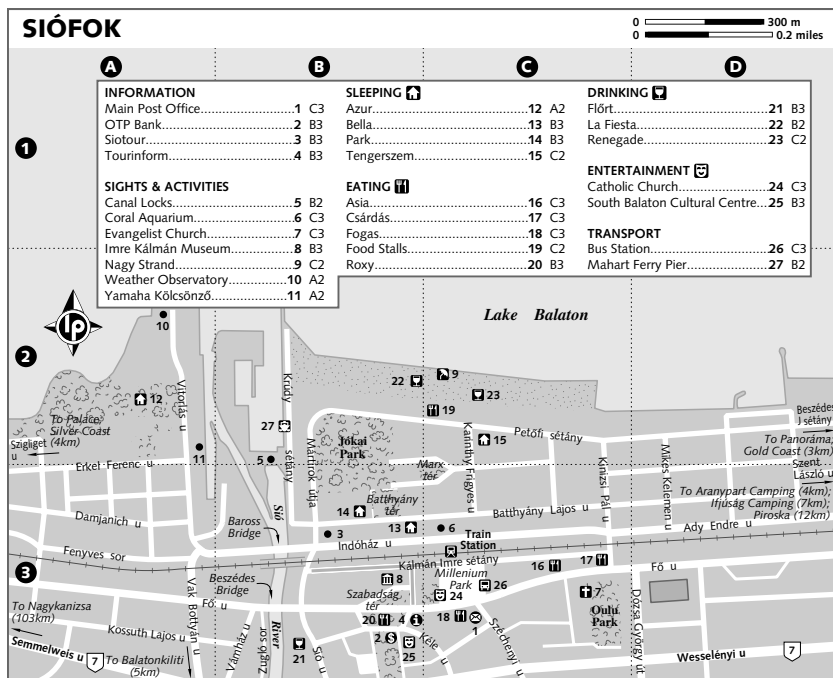
Sights

There's not a whole lot to see of cultural or historical importance in a place where the baser instincts tend to rule. The shark aquarium at the **Coral Aquarium** (☎ 311 036; Batthyány Lajos utca 22; adult/child 600/400Ft, shark show extra 300Ft; ☎ 10am–6pm Apr–Oct, 10am–4pm Nov–Mar) is the largest of its kind in Hungary, but it seems out of place next to shallow Lake Balaton.

The **canal locks** system, which was partly built by the Romans in AD 292 and used extensively by the Turks in the 16th and 17th centuries, can be seen from Krúdy sétány, the walkway near the ferry pier, or Baross

LAKE CRUISES TIMETABLE

Town	Departures Jul–Mid-Aug	Departures Mid-Aug–Mid-Sep
Badacsony	4pm Tue, Wed, Fri, Sat, Sun; 8pm Mon, Fri	
Balatonfüred	10am, 12.30pm, 2pm, 4pm, 6pm, 8pm Mon–Wed, Fri, Sun	11am, 12.30pm, 2pm, 4pm Mon, Tue, Thu, Sat
	10am, 12.30pm, 2pm, 4pm Thu & Sat	10am, 12.30pm, 2pm, 4pm Wed, Fri & Sun
Keszthely	every 2hr 11am–7pm	every 2hr 11am–5pm
Siófok	every 2hr 11am–5pm	10.30am, 2pm, 4.30pm, 6.30pm Mon & Wed–Sun
		10.30am, 2pm, 6.30pm Tue



Bridge to the south. Nearby are the headquarters of the Hungarian navy. The tower on the western tip of the canal entrance is the **weather observatory** of the National Meteorological Service (Országos Meteorológiai Szolgálat). Believe it or not, Lake Balaton can actually get quite rough when the wind picks up and there's a system of warning signals.

If you walk north on narrow Hock János köz, you'll reach the **Imre Kálmán Museum** (☎ 311 287; Kálmán Imre sétány 5; adult/child 250/150Ft; ☞ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 9am-4pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar). It is devoted to the life and works of the composer of popular operettas, Imre Kálmán, who was born in Siófok in 1882.

East of Szabadság tér in Oulu Park, Hungary's maverick architect Imre Makovecz strikes again with his winged and 'masked' **Evangelist church** (Evangélikus templom), which bears a strong resemblance to an Indonesian *garuda* (mythical bird).

Activities

Nagy Strand (adult/child 700/350Ft), Siófok's 'Big Beach', is east of the observatory and just

north of Petőfi sétány; there's often free concerts here on summer evenings. There are many more 'managed' **swimming** areas along the Gold and Silver Coasts where it costs 700/350Ft per adult/child for a day pass and 3500/1750Ft for a weekly pass.

There are rowing boats and sailing **boats** for hire at various locations along the lake, including the Nagy Strand. See Activities (p188) for information on **lake cruises**. On the canal's western bank you'll find **Yamaha Kölcsonzó** (Vitolás utca; ☞ mid-May-mid-Oct) where you can hire bicycles for 400/1600Ft per hour/day and mopeds for 1000/4000Ft.

Horse riding is another popular pastime in these parts; **Kersák** (☎ 322 819; Töltényi utca 2/b) in nearby Balatonkiliti has lessons for 2500Ft per hour, and accommodation.

Sleeping

Siófok is one of the few places on the lake where you might have trouble finding accommodation from late July to August – during this time, it is worth booking ahead. Also note that many small establishments only open during this time.

Tourinform and Siotour can both find you a private room (€10 to €20 per person) and an apartment for slightly more. Singles are rare and those staying only one or two nights are generally unwelcome; if you want to do it alone, check for 'Zimmer frei' signs along Erkel Ferenc utca and Damjanich utca on the Silver Coast, and Petőfi sétány and Beszédés József sétány on the Gold Coast.

BUDGET

There are over two dozen camp sites on Balaton's southern shore, and Siófok has nine, most with bungalows sleeping up to four people. They are open from May to September; the highest rates apply during most of July and August.

Tengerszem (☎ 310 146; Petőfi sétány 24; s/d 6000/8500Ft; ☞ Jun-Sep; ☞) In an old house close to the town's beach, Tengerszem has comfy rooms and a homely feel.

Aranypart Camping (☎ 353 399; aranypart@siotour.hu; Szent László utca 183-185; camp sites per tent 1140-1660Ft, person 1190-1870Ft, bungalows 3060-23,460Ft; ☞) Four kilometres east of the centre in Balatonszabadi is this camping ground with its own beach, restaurant, and bungalows which are basically small apartments.

Ilfűság Camping (☎ 352 571; ifjusag@siotour.hu; Pusztatorony tér 1; camp sites per tent 590-920Ft, person 770-1080Ft, bungalows 11,000-18,000Ft, cabins 2300-3570Ft; ☞) This place in Sóstó, 7km east of Siófok between tiny 'Salt Lake' and Lake Balaton, is good for fishing, swimming and generally kicking back. Choose from bungalows with bathroom and kitchen or wood cabins with shared facilities.

Piroska (☎ 584 521; cpiroska@balatontourist.hu; Aligai út 15; camp sites per tent 860-1500Ft, adult 795-1025Ft, child 625-820Ft, bungalows 9570-18,950Ft; ☞) For those who like to camp *au naturel*, there's a nudist site at Balatonakarattyá at the northeastern end of the lake about 12km northeast of Siófok. It is within easy walking distance of the Balatonakarattyá train station, which is on the line running along the lake's northern shore.

MIDRANGE

Bella (☎ 510 078; www.siofokbella.hu; Batthyány Lajos utca 14/a; r 6500-15,000Ft; ☞) This new block has modern, compact apartments with kitchen and balcony, and is on a fairly quiet street within easy walking distance of the beach.

Park (☎ 310 539; www.hotel-net.hu/Park-Siofok; Batthyány Lajos utca 7; s €25-60, d €30-70; ☞) Park is a small house not far from the lake. Its sizable rooms are done up in pastel colours with natural-wood furniture and bare-wood floors.

Panoráma (☎ 311 638; www.panoramahotel-siofok.hu; Beszédés József sétány 80; s €46-61, d €57-74; ☞) This high-rise four-star hotel is a very modern complex with large rooms overlooking the lake; unfortunately it doesn't have its own private beach, but it does have a pool.

TOP END

Ázur (☎ 501 413; www.hotelazur.hu; Vitorlás utca 11; s €64-116, d €72-135; ☞) After recently enjoying a complete makeover, Ázur is now Siófok's premier hotel. Its rooms are not only styled to create a warm and cosy atmosphere but also to bring you all the mod-cons you'll likely need, and the wellness and fitness centres are top-rate. There's also a private beach for guest use.

Eating

Quantity, not quality, is the word used to describe the eating options in Siófok. At least you won't starve...

Fogas (☎ 311 405; Fő utca 184; mains 1000-2000Ft; ☞ Mar-Oct) While the décor of Fogas is fairly standard, the same cannot be said for its fish selection, which is one of the largest, and best, in town.

Asia (☎ 312 546; Fő utca 93; mains 1000Ft) This is one of the very few places in town serving Asian food, and has a bright, open conservatory out front in which to enjoy it.

Csárdás (☎ 310 642; Fő utca 105; mains 1000-2000Ft; ☞ mid-Mar-Oct) An old-fashioned place attracting tours by the boatload with hearty Hungarian cuisine and live Gypsy music. Its garden towards the rear is a good spot to sample the regional white wine from Balatonboglár, which is usually light and not very distinctive (though the Chardonnay isn't bad).

Roxy (☎ 506 573; Szabadság tér; pizzas 570-1000Ft) This pseudo-rustic restaurant-pub on busy Szabadság tér attracts diners with a wide range of pizzas and a lively atmosphere. It may be hard to find a table after 9pm though.

For quick eats, attack one of a bunch of **food stalls** (Petőfi sétány) by the Nagy Strand.

Drinking & Entertainment

South Balaton Cultural Centre (☎ 311 855; Fő tér 2) Siófok's main cultural venue stages concerts, dance performances and plays.

Catholic church (Váradi Adolf tér) This church often hosts organ recitals over the summer months.

Siófok is the region's club central; try any of the following for a long, boozy and loud night out.

Flórt (☎ 20-333 3303; www.flort.hu; Sió utca 4) Well-established club with trippy light shows, carnival girls and queues.

Palace (☎ 351 295; www.palace.hu; DeákFerenc utca 2) Hugely popular club on the Silver Coast, which has begun to attract quality international DJs; accessible by free bus from outside Tourinform between 9pm and 5am daily from May to mid-September.

La Fiesta (Petőfi sétány 3-5) A veritable drinker's den overlooking the beach; the place to end the night either on or under the table.

Renegade (Petőfi sétány 9) A thumping pub packed with young folk looking to enjoy every minute of their summer holiday.

Getting There & Away

BOAT

From late March to late October, four daily Mahart ferries run between Siófok and

Balatonfüred, three of which carry on to Tihany. Up to nine ferries follow the same route in July and August. See also Getting Around (p188) for more details about other routes and frequencies for ferry services.

BUS

Buses serve a lot of destinations from Siófok, but compared with the excellent train connections, they're not very frequent. The exceptions are to Kaposvár (1030Ft, two hours, 85km), with hourly departures. Other destinations include Budapest (1330Ft, 1½-three hours, 108km, seven daily), Harkány (1930Ft, 3¼ hours, 160km, one daily), Hévíz and Keszthely (968Ft, 1½ hours, 78km, three daily), Pécs (1690Ft, 3 hours, 134km, three daily), Szekszárd (1210Ft, 2¼ hours, 96km, five daily) and Veszprém (605Ft, 1¼ hours, 48km, five daily).

TRAIN

The main railway line running through Siófok carries trains to Székesfehérvár (430Ft, 55 minutes, 48km), to Déli and Kelenföld train stations in Budapest (1212Ft, two hours, 115km), to the other resorts on the lake's southern shore and Nagykanizsa (1212Ft, two hours, 106km) up to 26 times daily in each direction. Only one daily train

from Budapest to Zagreb stops at Siófok. Local trains run south from Siófok to Kaposvár three times daily (1004Ft, two hours, 95km).

Getting Around

Leaving the bus station, just outside the train station buses 1 and 2 run to the Silver Coast and Gold Coast, respectively. There are also taxis (☎ 317 713) around town.

KESZTHELY

☎ 83 / pop 22,400

Keszthely, occupying a prime position at the western end of Balaton, is the only town on the lake not entirely dependent on tourism; in fact, it generally goes about life without an overbearing concern for its watery neighbour and its accompanying tourist forints. It's a pleasant town of grand houses, trees, cafés and enough to see and do to hold you for a spell.

History

The Romans built a fort at Valcum (now Fenékpuzshta) 5km to the south, and their road north to the colonies at Sopron and Szombathely is today's Kossuth Lajos utca. The town's former fortified monastery and Franciscan church on Fő tér were strong enough to repel the Turks in the 16th century.

In the middle of the 18th century, Keszthely and its surrounds (including Hévíz) came into the possession of the Festetics family, progressives and reformers very much in the tradition of the Széchenyis. In fact, Count György Festetics (1755–1819), who founded Europe's first agricultural college, the Georgikon, here in 1797, was an uncle of István Széchenyi.

Orientation

The centre of town is Fő tér, from where Kossuth Lajos utca, lined with colourful old houses, runs to the north (pedestrian only) and south. The bus and train stations are opposite one another near the lake at the end of Mártírok útja. From the stations, follow Mártírok útja up the hill, then turn north into Kossuth Lajos utca to reach the centre. The ferry docks at a stone pier within sight of the Hullám hotel. From here, follow the path past the hotel. Erzsébet királyné utca, which flanks Helikon Park, leads to Fő tér.

Information

Keszthely Tourist (☎ 314 288; Kossuth Lajos utca 25)

Main post office (Kossuth Lajos utca 46-48)

OTP bank (Kossuth Lajos utca 38)

Stone's (Kisfaludy utca 17; per min 15Ft; ☎ 10am-midnight Mon-Sat, 5pm-midnight Sun) Small bar with Internet access.

Tourinform (☎ 314 144; keszthely@tourinform.hu; Kossuth Lajos utca 28; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat mid-Jun-mid-Sep; 9am-5pm or 6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat mid-Sep-mid-Jun) An excellent source of information on Keszthely and the entire Balaton area.

Sights

FESTETICS PALACE

The **Festetics Palace** (Festetics kastély; ☎ 312 190; Kastély utca 1; adult/student 1300/700Ft; ☎ 9am-6pm Jul-Aug, 9am-5pm Tue-Sun Sep-Jun), built in 1745 and extended 150 years later, contains 100 rooms in two sprawling wings. The 19th-century northern wing houses a music school, city library and conference centre; the **Helikon Palace Museum** (Helikon Kastélymúzeum) and the palace's greatest treasure, the renowned **Helikon Library** (Helikon Könyvtár) are in the baroque south wing.

The museum's rooms (about a dozen in all, each in a different colour scheme) are full of portraits, bric-a-brac and furniture, much of it brought from England by Mary Hamilton, a duchess who married one of the Festetics men in the 1860s. The library is renowned for its 90,000-volume collection, but just as impressive is the golden oak shelving and furniture carved in 1801 by local craftsman János Kerbl. Also worth noting are the Louis XIV Salon with its stunning marquetry, the rococo music room and the private chapel (1804).

If you have time take a peek at the attached **Coach Museum** (adult/child 600/400Ft), with coaches and sleighs fit for royalty. To visit both the palace and coach museum costs 1600/800Ft per adult/child, and a one-hour guided tour of everything in one of four languages costs 'only' 6500/3500Ft.

GEORGIKON FARM MUSEUM

The **Georgikon Farm Museum** (Georgikon Major-múzeum; ☎ 311 563; Bercsenyi Miklós utca 67; adult/child 400/200Ft; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun May-Oct) is housed in several early-19th-century buildings of what was the Georgikon's experimental farm. It contains exhibits on the history of the college and the later

HIGHWAY PROSTITUTION

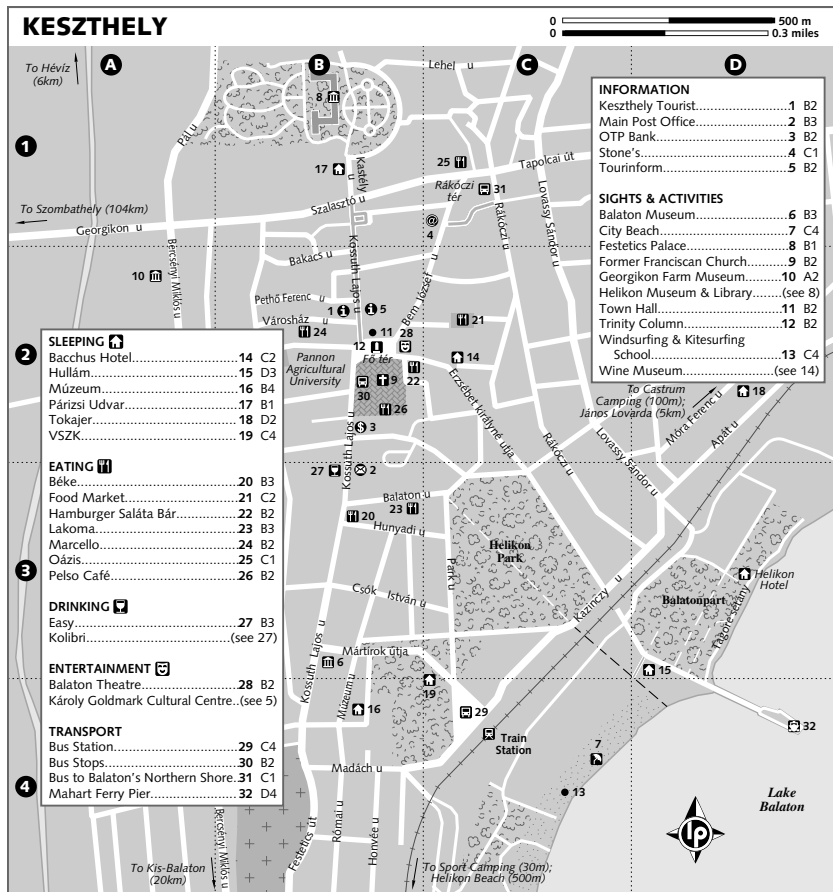
Prostitutes lining the major thoroughfares throughout much of Eastern Europe are a fairly common sight – particularly close to border crossings – and Hungary is no exception. Take Rd 7 along the southern coast of Lake Balaton and the sight of women standing in the middle of nowhere, coyly waving as you drive by, is not uncommon.

Prostitution is legal in Hungary, but it is illegal to prostitute others (ie, pimp). However, it is illegal to prostitute yourself within a hundred metres of a number of public institutions (municipal buildings, schools, kindergartens, churches, etc) and major country roads (highways and roads with a one- or two-digit number). Therefore women lining Road No 7 are breaking the law, and whether it is just to make some extra cash or because force is being used is unfortunately not clear.

Official statistics on street prostitution and trafficking in women don't exist, but unofficial police estimates state that in summer up to 50% of sex workers in Hungary are from abroad. Once again, it is unclear whether these women are being trafficked across international borders or are just in Hungary looking for work. There is also the problem of trafficking within the country for sexual exploitation, which amounts to the lion's share of trafficked persons. The consenting age in Hungary is 14, so some women may have been involved in trafficking rings from a very early age.

The present government is in favour of further legalisation of the sex industry, resulting in more organised prostitution, such as brothels. This will provide law enforcers with more control in the area, but it remains to be seen how much this line of action will affect the trafficking in human beings.

For more information, check out **NANE** (www.nane.hu), the Hungarian Women's Rights Association.



Pannon Agricultural University (now a few blocks to the southeast on the corner of Széchenyi utca and Deák Ferenc utca), viticulture in the Balaton region and traditional farm trades such as those performed by wagon builders, wheelwrights, coopers and blacksmiths.

OTHER SIGHTS

Fő tér is a colourful square with some lovely buildings, including the late-baroque **Town Hall** on the northern side, the **Trinity Column** (1770) in the centre and the former **Franciscan church** (Ferenccs templom) in the park to the south. The church was originally built in the Gothic style in the late 14th century for Franciscan monks, but many

alterations were made in subsequent centuries, including the addition of the steeple in 1898. The Gothic rose window above the porch remains, though, as do some faded 15th-century frescoes in the sanctuary and on the southern wall. Count György and other Festetics family members are buried in the crypt below.

The **Balaton Museum** (☎ 312 351; Múzeum utca 2; adult/child 500/200Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sat May-Oct, 9am-5pm Tue-Sat Nov-Apr) was purpose-built in 1928 and contains much on the Roman fort at Valcum (Fenekpuszta) and traditional life around Lake Balaton. Also of interest are exhibits depicting the history of navigation on the lake and the photos of summer frolickers at the start of the 20th century.

The **Kis-Balaton** (Little Balaton) region to the south of Keszthely falls under the protection of the **Balaton Uplands National Park** (Felvidéki Nemzeti Park; www.bfnpi.hu) and is a great place to enjoy the wildlife of the area. A bird-ringing camp run by the **Hungarian Ornithological & Nature Conservation Society** (MME; ☎ 1-275 6247 in Budapest; www.mme.hu in Hungarian; admission free) in Fenékpuszta near the delta of the Zala River has very knowledgeable staff and can fill you in on bird species on and around the lake. The camp is one stop on the train heading for Balatonszentgyörgy; if you're driving from Keszthely, the exit is at the 111km stone on Rte 71. At the southern end of Kis-Balaton is a **Buffalo Reserve** (☎ 87-555 291; adult/child 500/200Ft), which is home to some 200 water buffalo; the best time to visit is late afternoon, when the buffalo gather near the reserve headquarters. It's more than a trek to get there by public transport, so the only real option is under your own steam; the reserve is near the tiny village of Kápolnapuszta.

Activities

Keszthely has two beaches that are OK for **swimming** or **sunbathing**: City Beach (Városi Strand), which is good for kids and close to the ferry pier, and reedy Helikon Beach further south. They do, however, have a unique view of both the north and south shores of the lake. There's a **windsurfing** and **kitesurfing** school at City Beach in summer. (See Activities p188 for information on lake cruises.)

There are several **horse-riding** schools in the area, including **János Lovarda** (☎ 30-401 6691) in Sömogye-dűlő, northeast of Keszthely.

For wine tastings, try the **Wine Museum** (☎ 510 450; Erzsébet királyné utca 18; admission free; ☎ 10am-11pm) in the Bacchus hotel (right) where wine tastings are available (6/10 sorts 1500/2400Ft).

Festivals & Events

The biggest annual cultural event in Keszthely is the **Balaton Festival** (music and street theatre) held throughout May.

Sleeping

Keszthely Tourist can help find private rooms (from 2500Ft per person) whereas Tourinform will only supply you with a list. Otherwise, strike out on your own (particularly along Móra Ferenc utca) and keep an

eye out for 'szoba kiadó' or 'Zimmer frei' (Hungarian and German, respectively, for 'room for rent') signs.

BUDGET

Múzeum (☎ 313 182; Múzeum utca 3; s/d 3000/6000Ft) Ignore the effervescent smell of stale air and dog on entering – rooms here are well-aired and very clean, and the whole place has a homey feel; it's an easy walk to the stations.

VSZK (☎ 515 300; Mártírok útja; s/d 2500/5000Ft; ☎ Jul-Aug; ☎) This large, concrete block of a student dorm has stripped-back rooms with a bed and sink, and is within easy walking distance of transport connections.

Castrum Camping (☎ 312 120; Móra Ferenc utca 48; camp sites per adult/child/tent from €3/2.40/4.20; ☎ Apr-Oct; ☎) North of the stations, this place is more suited to caravans and the lake is across the railway tracks, but it's large and has a plethora of facilities.

Sport Camping (☎ 313 777; Csárda utca; camp sites per tent/person 990/990Ft, bungalows 6000Ft; ☎) This lush and green camping ground may look to some an unkempt jungle, but it does have its fair share of wilderness charm. Unfortunately it's a bit close to the train tracks, but the lake is only a minute away.

MIDRANGE

Bacchus (☎ 510 450; www.bacchushotel.hu; Erzsébet királyné utca 18; s €33-47, d €40-58; ☎) Bacchus wins the 'Best in Show' award with its warm and welcoming staff, immaculate rooms and more than handy location to the town centre. The cellar is given over to a wine museum (left) and there's a good restaurant.

Tokajer (☎ 319 875; www.pensioatokajer.hu; Apát utca 21; s €26-31, d €22-50; ☎) Spread over four buildings in a quiet area of town, Tokajer has rooms in excellent condition, some with balcony and kitchen. Added extras include three pools, free use of bicycles and fitness room, and a mini wellness centre. Price depends on season and room facilities.

Hullám (☎ 312 644; www.hotelhullam.hu; Balatonpart 1; s €32-52, d €43-66; ☎ Apr-Oct; ☎) Built in 1892, this old-worldly hotel still exudes plenty of charm even though it looks a bit down on its luck. Rooms are large and many look directly onto the lake, and guests can use the swimming pool and sports centre at the nearby Helikon Hotel.

Párizsi Udvar (☎ 311 202; Kastély utca 5; r from 7900Ft; ☎) A good choice near Festetics Palace is

this small *pension* which takes up part of the original palace complex. Its handful of apartments are huge.

Eating & Drinking

Lakoma (☎ 313 129; Balaton utca 9; midday menu 450Ft, mains from 800Ft) With a good vegetarian selection (for Hungarian-restaurant standards), grill/roast specialities and a back garden which transforms itself into a leafy dining area in the summer months, it's hard to go wrong with Lakoma. Surprisingly, there is only a small selection of fish dishes.

Oázis (☎ 311 023; Rákóczi tér 3; mains 800-1000Ft; ☎ 11am-4pm Mon-Fri) A vegetarian restaurant near the palace. It has buckets of good energy and healthy pickings during the mid-week lunch-hour rush.

Béke (☎ 318 219; Kossuth Lajos utca 50; midday menu 600-900Ft, mains from 1000Ft) This half bar, half restaurant hybrid is a colourful, lively spot with plenty of fish choices, a large inner courtyard and live music on weekends.

Bacchus (☎ 510 450; Erzsébet királyné utca 18) The imaginative selection of Hungarian dishes on the Bacchus hotel menu is complimented by game and fish dishes. Needless to say, its accompanying wine is top-rate.

Marcello (☎ 313 563; Városház utca 4; pizzas from 650Ft) This cool cellar restaurant has a summer patio and a large selection of made-to-order pizzas and salads.

Pelso Café (☎ 315 415; coffee & cake from 250Ft; ☎ 9am-9pm) This café is in a two-level modern tower-like structure in the park just south of the Catholic church, a fine spot to take cake and coffee and watch the world go by.

Hamburger Saláta Bár (Erzsébet királyné utca; burgers from 350Ft) If you're looking for a bite on the run, or a quick sit-down meal, this place will fill you up with burgers and salads.

Keszthely's lively food market combines the best and worst of Hungary's markets, with homemade honeys and jams alongside T-shirts with Indians on Harleys.

There are several interesting places for a drink south of the centre on Kossuth Lajos utca, including:

Easy (Kossuth Lajos utca 79) Attracts local young bloods.

Kolibri (Kossuth Lajos utca 81) Cocktail bar more suited to an older crowd.

Entertainment

Károly Goldmark Cultural Centre (☎ 515 251; Kossuth Lajos utca 28) This is where you can catch

Hungarian folk dancing in the courtyard over the summer months.

Balaton Theatre (☎ 515 230; Fő tér 3) The latest in theatre performances can be seen at this new theatre on the main square.

Festetics Palace (Festetics kastély; ☎ 312 190; Kastély utca 1) Concerts are often held in the music room during the summer.

Getting There & Away

BUS
Destinations served by more than 10 daily buses from Keszthely are Hévíz (133Ft, 15 minutes, 8km), Sümeg (423Ft, 50 minutes, 31km), Tapolca (363Ft, 35 minutes, 28km) and Veszprém (968Ft, 1¼ hours, 77km); there are about six to Nagykanizsa (725Ft, 1½ hours, 57km). Other towns served by bus include Badacsony (363Ft, 35 minutes, 27km, seven daily), Budapest (2300Ft, three to four hours, 190km, six daily) and Pécs (3½ hours, 152km, four daily). Some of these buses – including those to Hévíz, Nagykanizsa and Sümeg – can be boarded at the bus stops in front of the Catholic church on Fő tér.

For buses to the lake's northern shore (Badacsony, Nagyvácszony and Tapolca), you can catch the bus along Tapolcai út.

TRAIN

Keszthely is on a branch line linking Tapolca and Balatonszentgyörgy, from where up to seven daily trains continue along the southern shore to Székesfehérvár (1420Ft, 2¾ hours, 125km) and to Keleti or Déli train stations in Budapest (2030Ft, three to four hours, 190km). To reach Szombathely (1420Ft, three hours, 126km), you must change at Tapolca and sometimes at Celldömölk, too; for towns along Lake Balaton's northern shore, a change at Tapolca is required.

From mid-June to late August, **MÁV Nostalgia** (☎ 318 162; www.mavnostalgalgia.hu) runs a vintage steam-train from Keszthely to Badacsonytomaj (1¼ hours) at 10am from Tuesday to Sunday, returning at 2.50pm. Verify this service with MÁV Nostalgia by phone or check the website before making plans.

Getting Around

Buses run from the train and bus stations to the Catholic church on Fő tér, but unless there's one waiting on your arrival it's just as easy to walk. You can also make a booking for a **taxi** (☎ 333 333).

HÉVÍZ

☎ 83 / pop 4310

If you enjoy visiting spas and taking the waters, you'll love Hévíz, site of Gyógy-tó, Europe's largest thermal lake. The people of this town some 7km northwest of Keszthely have made use of the warm mineral water for centuries, first in a tannery in the Middle Ages and later for curative purposes. The lake was first developed as a private resort by Count György Festetics of Keszthely in 1795.

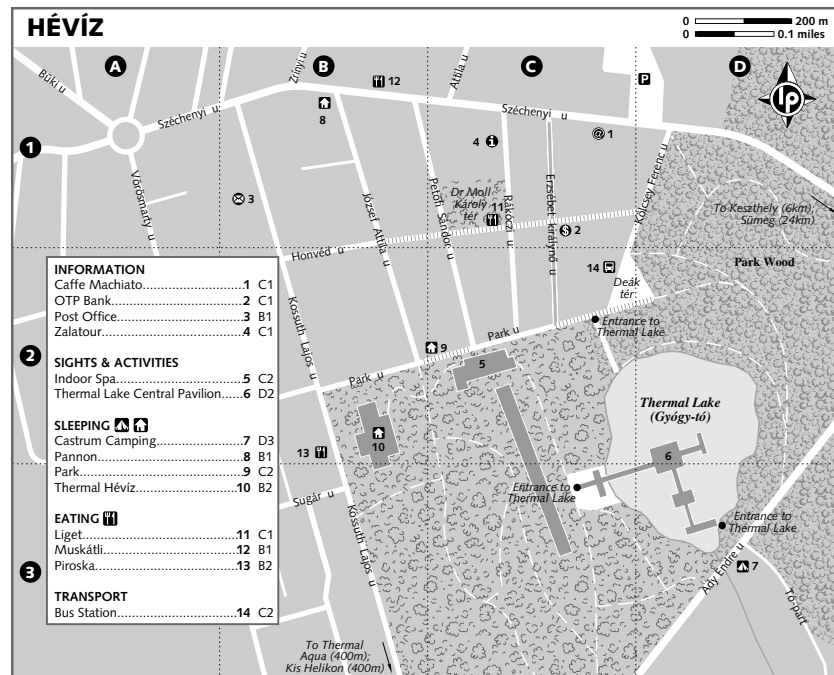
Orientation

The centre of Hévíz is Park Wood (Parkerdő) and its thermal lake. The bus station (Deák tér) is a few steps from the northern entrance to the lake; the small commercial centre lies to the west of the bus station. Kossuth Lajos utca, where most of the big hotels are located, forms the western boundary of the Park Wood.

Information

Caffe Machiato (Széchenyi utca 7; per hr 600Ft;

☎ 9am-1pm) Internet access.



OTP bank (Erzsébet királyné utca 7) Has ATM and money-exchange machine.

Post office (Kossuth Lajos utca 4)

Zalatur (☎ 341 048; Rákóczi utca 8) A source for information on the town.

Activities

Thermal Lake (Gyógy-tó; Park Wood; 3 hr/4 hr/5 hr/whole day 900/1200/1400/1600Ft, rubber-ring hire 300Ft; ☎ 8.30am-5pm in summer, 9am-4.30pm in winter) is an astonishing sight: a surface of almost 5 hectares in the Park Wood, covered for most of the year in pink and white lotuses. The source is a spring spouting from a crater some 40m below ground that discharges up to 80 million litres of warm water a day, renewing itself every 48 hours or so. The surface temperature averages 33°C and never drops below 26°C in winter, allowing bathing throughout the year, even when there's ice on the fir trees of the Park Wood.

A covered bridge leads to the thermal lake's *fin-de-siècle* **central pavilion**, from where catwalks and piers fan out. You can swim protected beneath these or make your way to the small rafts and 'anchors' further

out on rubber rings. There are some piers along the shore for sunbathing as well.

If you're looking for treatments, head to the **indoor spa** (adult/child 600/300Ft; ☎ 7am-5pm) which offers every kind of thermal remedy imaginable. **Zalatur** (☎ 341 048; Rákóczi utca 8) rents bikes for 800Ft per day.

Sleeping

Most hotels have specials for stays of one week or more, and the rates vary depending on the season.

Zalatur can find you a private room (€20 to €25 per double), though things could be tight in summer and you may be charged an extra fee for stays of less than three nights. You'll see a lot of signs reading 'Zimmer frei' and 'szoba kiadó' along Kossuth Lajos utca and Zrínyi utca, where you can make your own deals directly.

Kis Helikon (☎ 340 754; kishelikonhotel@axelero.hu; Kossuth Lajos utca 72; s €30-44, d €36-72; (P)) Kis Helikon is a small, privately-run hotel with large, modern rooms (some with balcony and separate lounge), a middle-of-the-road restaurant and its own wellness centre. Prices depend on the season and include breakfast.

Pannon (☎ 340 482; Széchenyi utca 23; s €20-22, d €34-44; (P)) Rooms at this former trade-union holiday home don't match the exuberance of the foyer, but they're more than adequate for sleeping and the hotel has the added advantage of a health centre on site.

Park (☎ 341 190; postmaster@betapark.axelero.net; Petőfi Sándor utca 26; s €42-62, d €58-83; (P)) In elegant Kató Villa (1927), this hotel has seen better days but it still has a proud and serene air. The price includes breakfast and full use of the hotel's wellness facilities.

Thermal Hévíz (☎ 889 400; thermalheviz.reservation@danubiusgroup.com; Kossuth Lajos utca 9-11; s €61-94, d €86-148; (P)) This may look rather dire from the outside, but its 210 rooms are in good condition and it has indoor and outdoor pools, a sauna, solarium, gym and tennis courts.

Thermal Aqua (☎ 889 500; aqua.reservation@danubi.usgroup.com; Kossuth Lajos utca 13-15; s €51-78, d €72-116; (P)) This is another of Hévíz's massive hotels with a fitness and wellness centre and comfy rooms; the actual building – a large, communist block – leaves a lot to be desired, unfortunately.

Castrum Camping (☎ 343 198; camping@hevizcas.trum.axelero.net; Tó-part; camp sites per tent 730-10,400Ft,

adult 780-1250Ft, child 620-990Ft; pension s/d 8200/9900Ft; ☎ year-round; (P)) Only a short walk from the lake is this very green and very large camp site, with a range of accommodation options and Fort Knox-like security.

Eating

Muskáti (☎ 341 475; Széchenyi utca 30; mains around 1000Ft) An extensive fish selection among a heavy-laden Hungarian menu is Muskáti's most appealing aspect; its pretty terrace and relaxed ambience follow close behind.

Piroska (☎ 30-687 4348; Kossuth Lajos utca 10; mains 1000-1500Ft) If you're into shady terraces, live folk music and fish dishes, then Piroska will probably fit the bill.

Liget (Dr Moll Károly tér; pizzas & mains 1000-1200Ft) The décor here hasn't changed since Khrushchev was in power, but that doesn't seem to bother the regular patrons who enjoy its sunny terrace and standard Hungarian fare.

Getting There & Away

Hévíz isn't on a train line, but buses travel east to Keszthely (133Ft, 15 minutes, 8km) almost every half-hour from stand No 3 at the bus station. There are at least 10 daily departures to Sümeg (302Ft, 35 minutes, 23km) and less to Badacsony (423Ft, 45 minutes, 35km, seven daily), Balatonfüred (908Ft, 1½ hours, 75km, eight daily) and Veszprém (1210Ft, two hours, 96km, eight daily). Other buses run to Budapest (2540Ft, 3¼ hours, 205km, five daily), Pápa (1030Ft, 1¼ hours, 84km, five daily) and Sopron (1570Ft, 2½ to three hours, 129km, one or two daily).

BADACSONY

☎ 87 / pop 2300

Four towns make up the Badacsony region: Badacsonylábdaihegy, Badacsonyörs, Badacsonytördemic and Badacsonytomaj. But when Hungarians say Badacsony, they usually mean the little resort at the Badacsony train station, near the ferry pier southwest of Badacsonytomaj.

Badacsony is thrice-blessed. Not only does it have the lake for swimming and the mountains for wonderful walks and hikes, but it has produced wine – lots of it – since the Middle Ages. Badacsony was one of the last places on Balaton's northern shore to be developed and has more of a country feel to it than most other resorts here. Only

Tihany vies for supremacy in the beauty stakes (both places are 'landscape protection reserves'), and you might stop here for a day or two to relax.

Orientation

Rte 71, the main road along the lake's northern shore, runs through Badacsony as Balatoni út; this is where the bus lets you off. The ferry pier is on the eastern side of this road; almost everything else is to the west. Above the village, several *pensions* and houses with private accommodation ring the base of the hill on Római út, which debouches into Balatoni út at Badacsonytomaj, a few kilometres to the northeast. Szegedi Róza utca branches off to the north from Római út and runs through

the vineyards to the Kisfaludy House restaurant (p201) and the base of the hill.

Information

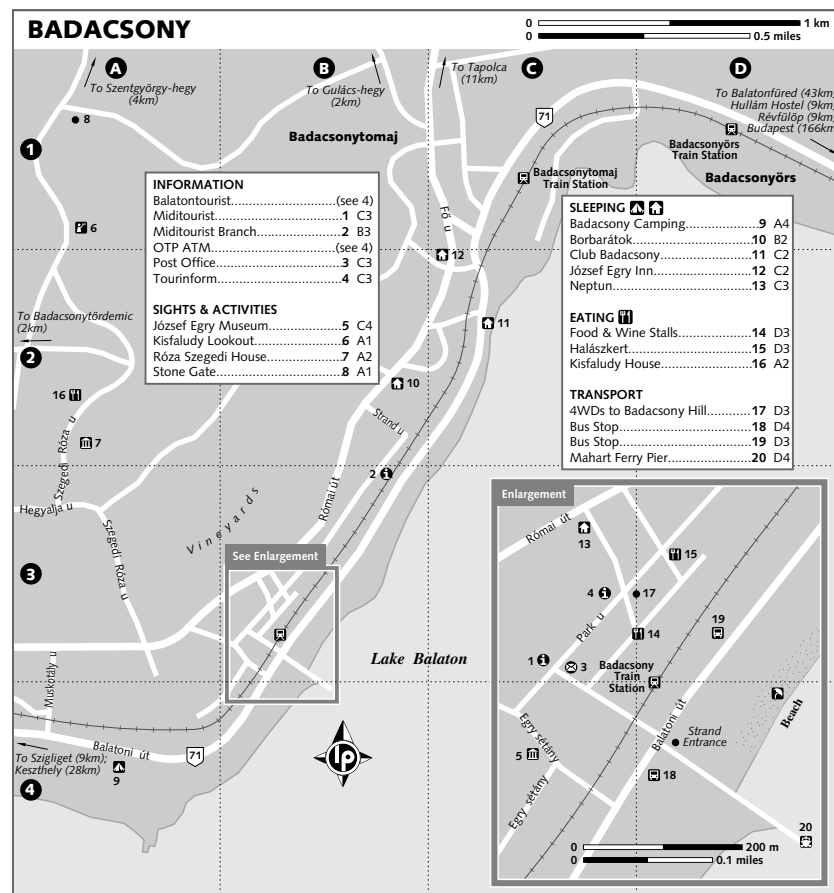
Balatontourist (☎ 531 021; Park utca 4) Organises private rooms, fishing licences and will exchange money.

Miditourist (☎ 431 028; Egy sétány 3; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-noon Sat May-Oct); branch office (☎ 431 028; Park utca 53; ☎ 9am-7pm May-Oct) The main office is in the centre of the village, the branch is to the northeast.

OTP ATM (Park utca 4) Beside Balatontourist.

Post office (Park utca 3)

Tourinform (☎ 431 046; badacsonytomaj@tourinform.hu; Park utca 6; ☎ 9am-6pm mid-Jun–mid-Sep, 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun mid-Sep–mid-Jun) Informed staff have details on the region.



Sights & Activities

The **József Egry Museum** (☎ 431 044; Egry sétány 12; adult/child 300/150Ft; 🕒 10am–8pm Jul–Aug, 10am–6pm Tue–Sun May–Jun & Sep–Oct) is devoted to the Balaton region's leading painter (1883–1951) and Hungary's equivalent to Kokoschka. Many of his works powerfully capture the essence of village and fishing life on the lake through the use of strong, dark colours.

The dramatic slopes and vineyards above the town centre are sprinkled with little wine-press houses and 'folk baroque' cottages. One of these is the **Róza Szegedi House** (☎ 430 906; Szegedi Róza utca; adult/child 400/200Ft; 🕒 10am–6pm Tue–Sun May–Sep), which belonged to the actress wife of the poet Sándor Kisfaludy from Sümeg. Established in 1790, it contains a literature museum.

The flat-topped forested massif overlooking the lake is just the place to escape the tipsy herds. If you'd like to get a running start on your hike, catch one of the open 4WDs marked 'Badacsony-hegyi járat' (3600/5000Ft one way/return up to six persons). The driver will drop you off at the Kisfaludy House restaurant (opposite) where a large map of the marked trails is posted by the car park. Or you might arm yourself in advance with a copy of Cartographia's *A Balaton* 1:40,000 topographical map (No 41; 800Ft).

Several paths lead to lookouts – at 437m, **Kisfaludy Lookout** (Kisfaludy kilátó) is the highest – and to neighbouring hills like **Gulács-hegy** (393m) and **Szentgyörgy-hegy** (415m) to the north. The landscape includes abandoned quarries and basalt towers that resemble organ pipes; of these, **Stone Gate** (Kőkapu) is the most dramatic. Several of the trails take you past **Rose Rock** (Rózsakő). A plaque explains an unusual tradition: 'If a lad and a lass sit here together with their backs to the lake, they will be married in a year'. Good luck – or regrets (as the case may be).

The postage-stamp-sized **beach** (admission free) is reedy; you would do better to head a few kilometres northeast to Badacsonytomaj or Badacsonyörs for a swim. See Activities (p188) for information on lake cruises.

Sleeping

Midtourist has a particularly good list of private rooms for the entire Badacsony area, as does Balatontourist; expect to pay anything between €18 and €25 per double.

Note that it generally costs more for stays of less than three nights. If you want to strike out on your own there are plenty of places along Római út and Park utca.

BUDGET

Neptun (☎ 431 293; Római út 156; dm 2000Ft, s/d 6000/7000Ft; 📍) This, the sister *pension* of Borbarátok, is a short walk to the train station and has a choice of rooms, including basic dorm-style rooms.

József Egry Inn (471 057; Római út 1; 1-5-bed r per person 1500-2500Ft; 🕒 mid-Apr–mid-Oct) This simple inn is about as cheap as you can find in Badacsony, and is within walking distance of the Badacsonytomaj train station. Its rates depend on the season.

Badacsony Camping (☎ 531 041; cbadacsony@balatontourist.hu; camp sites per tent 705-1035Ft, adult 705-975Ft, child 565-805Ft; 🕒 May–early Sep; 📍) With its own beach and plenty of tree-cover, this camping ground, about 1km west of the ferry pier, is a fine place for families and those wanting to kick back. Price depends on the season.

MIDRANGE

Club Badacsony (☎ 471 040; www.badacsonyhotel.hu; Balatoni út 14; r €50-112; 🕒 Apr–Nov; 📍) This 70-room place includes a sauna and lies on the shore in Badacsonytomaj with its own (rather pathetic and reedy) beach. It's easily the largest place in town, and has an exclusive feel to it.

Borbarátok (☎ 471 597; www.borbaratok.hu; Római út 78; s/d 6000/7000Ft; 📍) Rooms at this *pension*

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Hullám Hostel (☎ 463 089; www.balatonhostel.hu; Füredi út 6; dm €12, s €15-18, d €30/36) About 9km east of Badacsony in the township of Révfülöp is Hullám, the only hostel with any character in all of provincial Hungary. With a decidedly laid-back air more suited to the Caribbean, young staff who are happy to share a drink and a tale, and bright colours splashed across its basic rooms, this hostel will certainly appeal to those looking for a fun yet relaxed time away from the predominantly ageing tourists along the north shore. Bicycles are also available for hire (one hour 250Ft, one/two/three days 1800/3200/4500Ft).

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Kisfaludy House (☎ 431 016; Szegedi Róza utca 87; mains 1500-2500Ft; 🕒 to midnight Apr–Nov) Perched high on the hill overlooking the vineyards and the lake is Kisfaludy House, a charming stone cottage built in 1798 that was once a press house of the Kisfaludy family. The view from its alfresco terrace easily ranks among the top five on the entire lake, and is the best place in Badacsony for a meal or a drink. To the west is lovely Szigliget Bay, and directly across to the south lie what Hungarians call the two 'breasts' of Fonyód: the Sípós and Sándor Hills.

are above its restaurant and a little on the small side but comfy enough. It's a short walk to the lake and has the advantage of an extensive wine cellar.

It's also worth striking out on your own on the road north of the train line as there are several small *pensions* among the vineyards.

Eating

Halászkert (☎ 431 054; Park utca 5; mains 1500Ft) If you can't make it up the hill to Kisfaludy and are looking for a range of fish dishes to choose from, head here. It may be crowded and touristy at times, but the food is top-rate.

Borbarátok (☎ 471 597; Római út 78; mains 1000-2000Ft) A lively bar and restaurant where the food is served on wooden plates (adds to the flavour perhaps?). It's a good place to try a glass of Badacsony's premier white wines, Kéknyelű (Blue Stalk) or Szürkebarát (Pinot Gris).

Neptun (☎ 431 293; Római út 156) Borbarátok's sister *pension*, with its simple restaurant and large terrace, is also a fine choice.

Food stalls with picnic tables dispensing sausage, fish soup, *lángos* and *gyros* (meat skewers), line the pedestrian walkway between the train station and Park utca, and are intermingled with **wine stalls** (80Ft per glass, 450Ft to 600Ft per litre) serving cheap plonk.

Getting There & Away

There are three daily buses that go to Balatonfüred (544Ft, 50 minutes, 44km) and Székesfehérvár; other buses run to Budapest (2060Ft, three hours, 170km, one daily), Hévíz (423Ft, 45 minutes, 35km, one daily),

Keszthely (363Ft, 35 minutes, 27km, one daily), Tapolca (241Ft, 30 minutes, 16km, two daily) and Veszprém (786Ft, 1½ hours, 62km, one daily).

Badacsony is on the train line linking all the towns on Lake Balaton's northern shore with Déli and Kelenföld train stations in Budapest (1828Ft, 3½ hours, 170km) and with Tapolca (182Ft, 20 minutes, 14km). To get to Keszthely (346Ft, one hour, 39km) you must change at Tapolca.

Passenger ferries between Badacsony and Fonyód run at least four times daily from late April to late October; there are eight ferries daily in June and September and nine daily in July and August. In Fonyód you can get a connection to Southern Transdanubia by taking a train direct to Kaposvár.

See Keszthely (p196) for information on the MÁV Nostalgia steam-train service between the two towns.

TAPOLCA

☎ 87 / pop 18,200

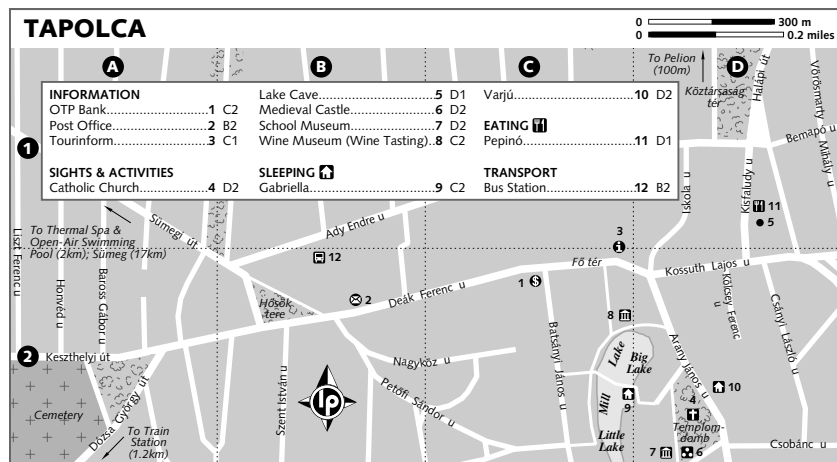
This pleasant town has a particularly fine setting wedged between the Balaton Highlands and the Southern Bakony Hills some 14km northeast of Badacsony. It's quite a gentle place and by no means touristy, so if you're looking for somewhere to take a day out from the tourist-swamped lake shore, consider heading here.

History

Tapolca has always been an important crossroads; under the Romans both the road between Rome and Aquincum and the road that linked Savaria (Szombathely) and Arrabona (Győr) passed through here. The Romans were followed by the Avars and, in turn, by the Slavs, who called the area Topulcha, from the Slavic root word for 'hot springs'. Tapolca's original source of wealth was wine – a legacy of the Romans – but it only really appeared on the map when the Bakony bauxite mining company set up its headquarters here.

Orientation

Tapolca's main thoroughfare is Deák Ferenc utca, which runs west from Hősök tere, where the bus station is located, and east to Fő tér, just north of Mill Lake. The train station is on Dózsa György út, about 1.2km southwest of the centre.



Information

OTP bank (Fő tér 2) Has an ATM and money-exchange machine.

Post office (Deák Ferenc utca 19)

Tourinform (☎ 510 777; tapolca@tourinform.hu; Fő tér 17; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat May-Aug; 9am-4pm Mon-Fri Sep-May) Just north of Mill Lake.

Sights

MILL LAKE

Mill Lake (Malom-tó), just south of Fő tér is reached through the gateway at No 8 or by walking south along Arany János utca. A small footbridge divides it in two: to the north is the **Big Lake** (Nagy-tó), which is about the size of a large pond, and to the south the **Little Lake** (Kis-tó). Created in the 18th century to power a water mill, the lake has been artificially fed since the nearby bauxite mine lowered the level of the karst water. But it remains a picturesque area, with pastel-coloured houses reflected in the water of the Big Lake and a church and a museum near the Little Lake. In the centre are the slowly turning blades of the mill house, which is now the Gabriella hotel (opposite).

The **Catholic church** (☎ services only) on Templom-domb has a Gothic sanctuary but the rest of it is 18th-century baroque. The ruins of Tapolca's **medieval castle**, destroyed during the Turkish occupation, can be seen to the southwest. Nearby is the small **School Museum** (Iskola Múzeum; ☎ 413 415; Templom-domb 15; adult/child 200/100Ft; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri mid-Apr-mid-Oct), which doubles as the City Museum.

LAKE CAVE

Tapolca's second big attraction, the **Lake Cave** (Tavasbarlang; ☎ 412 579; Kislaludy utca 3; adult/child 400/200Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Jun-Aug, 10am-5pm Tue-Sun mid-Apr-May & Sep-mid-Nov) is a short distance to the northeast. You can visit about 100m of the cave and even row a boat (400Ft) on a small underground pond, which has returned since mining ended here in 1990.

Activities

There's a **thermal spa** and **open-air swimming pool** (Sümegei út; adult/child 600/400Ft; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-8pm Sat & Sun May-Sep) northwest of the centre, but for something a little less energetic make a beeline for the **Wine Museum** (Bormúzeum; ☎ 414 186; Arany János utca 1; adult/child 400/200Ft; ☎ 9am-6pm) to sample various Bakony wines in its long, cool cellar.

Sleeping & Eating

There's no real need to overnight in Tapolca with the lake and its attractions so close, but if you find yourself stuck, check in with Tourinform for private rooms.

Pelion (☎ 513 100; reserve@hotelpelion.hunguest hotels.hu; Köztársaság tér 10; s/d from €72/102; P) This all-in-one wellness/thermal hotel has every possible treatment to turn back the clock (or stop it in its tracks), including its very own humidity cave. Rooms here are modern and comfy, and designed for a good night's sleep.

Varjú (☎ 510 522; kalomista.imre@kaloplastik.hu; Arany János utca 14; s/d 4000/8000Ft, mains 1000Ft; P)

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Gabriella (☎ 511 070; www.hotelgabriella.hu; Batsányi tér 7; s 7400-9800Ft, d 9800-14,800Ft, mains 1500Ft; P) Gabriella couldn't ask for a better location – occupying the town's original mill house, it proudly stands on the edge of both lakes. Its rooms, which are large, modern affairs featuring plenty of natural wood, therefore look directly onto one of the town's peaceful waterways. Its restaurant is also a delight, with tables on the footbridge in warm weather and attentive service.

Directly opposite the Catholic church is this sparkling new *pension* with well-kept rooms with a minimum of character, and a restaurant with a secluded inner courtyard and good wine list.

Pepinó (☎ 414 133; Kislaludy utca 9; pizzas from 600Ft) Near the Lake Cave, this is a simple pizzeria with generous portions and street-side seating.

Getting There & Away

BUS

Tapolca is a major transport hub with buses departing almost hourly for Keszthely (363Ft, 35 minutes, 28km), Nagyvázsöny (363Ft, 35 minutes, 28km), Sümeg (302Ft, 40 minutes, 22km) and Veszprém (605Ft, one to 1½ hours, 49km). Other important destinations serviced by bus include Balatonfüred (725Ft, 1½ hours, 55km, two buses daily), Badacsonytomaj (241Ft, 30 minutes, 16km, up to six daily), Budapest (1570Ft, 3½ hours, 162km, three daily), Pápa (846Ft, two hours, 67km, three daily) and Székesfehérvár (two hours, 94km, four daily).

TRAIN

Tapolca is the main terminus for the train line linking most of the towns along Lake Balaton's northern shore with Székesfehérvár (1212Ft, 2¾ hours, 117km) and Budapest (2030Ft, three-4½ hours, 184km). The train line also heads northwest to Sümeg (182Ft, 20 minutes, 20km) and Celldömölk (544Ft, one hour, 56km), from where frequent trains continue on to Szombathely (1212Ft, 2¼ hours, 100km) in western Hungary.

SÜMEG

☎ 87 / pop 6800

This small town, some 19km northwest of Tapolca between the Bakony and Keszthely Hills, has a few pleasant surprises for the traveller. The first is obvious as Sümeg swings into view – a hilltop castle with commanding views of the surrounding lands. The second, arguably the best baroque frescoes in the country, is well hidden in the town's back streets.

History

Sümeg was on the map as early as the 13th century, when an important border fortress was built by King Béla IV in the aftermath of the Mongol invasion. The castle was strengthened several times during the next three centuries, repelling the Turks but falling to the Habsburg forces, which torched it in 1713.

Sümeg's golden age came later in the 18th century when the all-powerful bishops of Veszprém took up residence here and commissioned some of the town's fine baroque buildings.

Orientation

Kossuth Lajos utca is the main street running north-south through Sümeg. The bus station is on Béke tér, a continuation of Kossuth Lajos utca south of the town centre. The train station is a 10-minute walk north-west, at the end of Darnay Kálmán utca.

Information

Balatontourist (☎ 550 259; Kossuth Lajos utca; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri)

OTP bank (Kossuth Lajos utca 17) Has a currency-exchange machine and ATM.

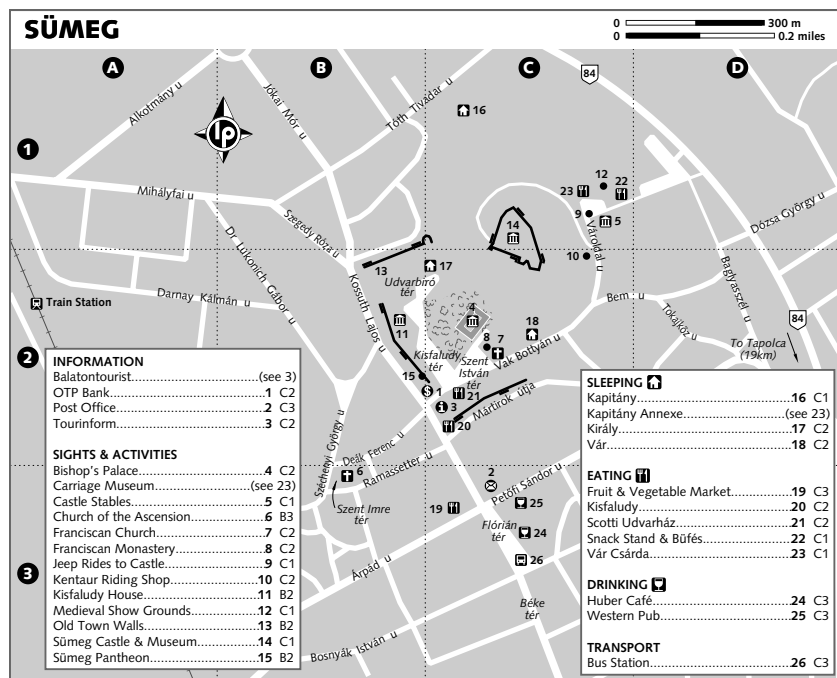
Post office (Kossuth Lajos utca 1)

Tourinform (☎ 550 276; sumeg@tourinform.hu; Kossuth Lajos utca 15; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat Jun-Aug; 8am-4pm Mon-Fri Aug-May) Shares a building with Balatontourist.

Sights

SÜMEG CASTLE

Sitting on a 270m-high cone of limestone above the town – a rare substance in this region of basalt – is this imposing **castle** (adult/child 800/400Ft; ☎ 9am-6pm May-Sep, 9am-5pm Oct-Apr). You can reach it by climbing Vak Bottyán utca, which is lined with lovely baroque *kúriák* (mansions), from Szent István



tér and then following Vároldal utca past the **Castle Stables** (Váristálló; Vároldal utca 5), which now house a riding school (opposite). The castle is also accessible from the northeast via Rte 84 and by hitching a ride in a jeep (350Ft per person) from the parking lot at the end of Vároldal utca.

Sümeg Castle fell into ruin after the Austrians abandoned it early in the 18th century, but was restored in the 1960s. Today it is the largest and best preserved castle in all of Transdanubia and well worth the climb for the views east to the Bakony Hills and south to the Keszthely Hills. There's a small **Castle Museum** (Vármúzeum) of weapons, armour and castle furnishings in the 13th-century **Old Tower** (Öregtorony); pony rides and archery in the castle courtyard; a snack bar; and a restaurant. Medieval tournaments and feasts within the castle walls are organised throughout the year. You can still see bits of the **old town walls** below the castle at the northern end of Kossuth Lajos utca (Nos 13 to 33). A 16th-century tower is now the living room of the house at No 31.

CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION

The castle may dominate the town, but for many people it is not Sümeg's most important sight. For them that distinction is reserved for the **Church of the Ascension** (church office ☎ 352 003; Szent Imre tér; admission free; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-6pm Mon-Fri Apr-Sep, 9am-noon & 1-4pm Mon-Fri Oct & Nov, 9am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri Mar; services only Sat & Sun year-round). You would never know it from the outside: architecturally, the building (1756) is unexceptional. But step inside and marvel at what has been called the 'Sistine Chapel of the rococo'.

That's perhaps an overstatement, but it's true that Franz Anton Maulbertsch's frescoes (1757-58) are the most beautiful baroque examples in Hungary and by far the prolific painter's best work. The frescoes, whose subjects are taken from the Old and New Testaments, are brilliant expressions of light and shadow. Pay special attention to the Crucifixion scene in Golgotha on the northern wall in the nave; the Adoration of the Three Kings, with its caricature of a Moor opposite Golgotha; the Gate of Hell, across the aisle under the organ loft

on the western side under the porch; and the altarpiece of Christ ascending airily to the clouds. Maulbertsch managed to include himself in a couple of his works, most clearly among the shepherds in the first fresco on the southern wall (he's the one holding the round cheeses and hamming it up for the audience). The commissioner of the frescoes, Márton Padányi Bíró, bishop of Veszprém, is shown on the western wall near the organ. Drop a coin in the machine to illuminate the frescoes and to view them at their best.

OTHER SIGHTS

The Church of the Ascension steals the limelight from the 17th-century **Franciscan church** (Ferences templom; Szent István tér 7; admission free), which has modern frescoes, a beautifully carved baroque altar and a pieta that has attracted pilgrims for 300 years. Don't miss the ornate pulpit with the eerie dismembered hand grasping a crucifix. The baroque **Franciscan monastery** (Ferences kolostor; Szent István tér 9; admission free; ☎ 11.30am-3pm), built in 1657, is next door, but there's not a lot to see.

The former **Bishop's Palace** (Püspöki palota; Szent István tér 8-10) was a grand residence when completed in 1755, but now it needs some TLC. You can still admire the two Atlases holding up the balcony at the entrance and the copper rain-spouts in the shape of sea monsters.

Kisfaludy House (Kisfaludy szülőháza; ☎ 30-491 9719; Kisfaludy tér 4; adult/child 400/200Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) is the birthplace of Sándor Kisfaludy (1772-1844), the Romantic 'poet of the Balaton'. Together with a history of his life and work, the museum contains further exhibits on Sümeg Castle and the area's geology. Outside along a wall is the **Sümeg Pantheon** of local sons and daughters who made good.

The small **Carriage Museum** (Vároldal utca; admission free), next to the Kapitány hotel's annexe, has well-restored horse carriages and a small array of medieval weapons and armour. Ask for the key at the Vár Csárda restaurant.

Activities

There is excellent **hiking** east of Sümeg into the Bakony Hills (known as 'Hungary's Sherwood Forest'), but get yourself a copy of Cartographia's *Bakonyi-hegység - déli rész* (Bakony Hills - Southern Part) 1:40,000 map (No 3; 800Ft).

If you want to go horse riding, visit the **Castle Stables** (☎ 550 087; varistallo@axelero.hu; Vároldal utca 5) or **Kentaur riding shop** (☎ 351 836; Vároldal utca 10; ☎ 9am-6pm); both places charge around 2500Ft per hour.

Medieval shows (☎ 352 598; admission 700Ft; ☎ 11am Jul & Aug), consisting of swashbuckling antics and horsemanship prowess, are all the rage in Sümeg and take place in the show grounds of Kapitány hotel annexe.

Sleeping

Tourinform can help with private rooms (about 2500Ft per person).

Király (☎ 352 605; Udvarbíró tér 5; s/d 4000/6000Ft; P) This six-room, family-run *pension* in an old farmhouse is a cosy, flower-bedecked place with a *csárda* (Hungarian-style restaurant) and a welcome you'd usually only receive from friends and family.

Kapitány (☎ 352 598; www.hotelkapitany.hu; Tóth Tivadar utca 19; r from 10,900Ft; P) A modern, well-designed hotel north of the castle, this place has plenty of added extras, including sauna, tennis court, horses for rent, a wine cellar and a newly completed wellness centre. It also has an annexe near the Carriage Museum.

Vár (☎ 352 352; www.hotelvar.hu in Hungarian; Vak Bottyán utca 2; s/d 7000/9000Ft) Vár has modern yet sterile rooms, but if all you're looking for is a quiet spot for a good sleep then it may just fit the bill.

Eating & Drinking

Kisfaludy (☎ 352 128; Kossuth Lajos utca 13; mains 1000Ft) This restaurant at the former Kisfaludy hotel is one of the few places in the centre of town where you can have a sit-down meal, and is pleasantly bereft of kitsch Hungarian décor. The *cukrászda* here is popular for ice cream and cakes.

Vár Csárda (☎ 350 924; Vároldal utca; mains 1500-2000Ft) Closer to the castle, this caters to tourist crowds with Gypsy music and medieval banquets but it's very pleasant in warmer weather to sit under the walnut trees in full view of the hilltop fortress.

Scotti Udvarház (☎ 350 997; Szent István tér 1; pizzas from 800Ft) Scotti also accommodates busloads of tourists but with its big portions and huge, covered garden it's still an attractive bet.

For quick eats, head for the compact **fruit and vegetable market** (Árpád utca) near the bus

station or pick a *büfé* (snack stand) along the access road to the castle from Rte 84.

Popular watering holes are concentrated around the bus station and include the fairly sedate **Huber Café** (Flórián tér 8) and much rowdier **Western Pub** (Petőfi Sándor utca 1), with its split-log tables and jukebox rave music.

Getting There & Away

Daily buses leave Sümeg hourly for Hévíz (302Ft, 35 minutes, 23km), Keszthely (423Ft, 50 minutes, 31km) and Tapolca (302Ft, 40 minutes, 22km); departures to Pápa (605Ft, 1½ hours, 50km) and Veszprém (846Ft, two hours, 68km) are also frequent. Other buses go to Budapest (2300Ft, four hours, 184km, four daily), Győr (1210Ft, 2¼ hours, 99km, four daily) and Sopron (1330Ft, 2½-3½ hours, 107km, three daily).

Sümeg is on the train line linking Tapolca (182Ft, 25 minutes, 20km) and Celldömölk (346Ft, 45 minutes, 36km), from where frequent trains continue on to Szombathely (890Ft, two hours, 81km). For Budapest (2200Ft, four to five hours, 205km) and other points to the east and west along the northern shore of Lake Balaton, change at Tapolca.

NAGYVÁZSONY

☎ 88 / pop 1810

When you grow tired of the Balaton hubbub, head north to Nagyvázsöny, a sleepy little market town in the southern Bakony Hills. The drive from Badacsony via Tapolca or from Tihany, 15km to the southeast, takes you through some of the prettiest countryside in the Lake Balaton region, and it's here you'll find the important 15th-century Vázsonykö Castle.

Orientation & Information

In the centre of town you'll find Nagyvázsöny's three bus stops and the **post office** (Kinizsi utca 59); there's not a lot else around.

Sights

VÁZSONYKŐ CASTLE

This **castle** (☎ 264 786; Vár utca; adult/child 600/400Ft; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct), on a gentle slope north of the tiny town centre, was begun early in the 15th century by the Vezsenyi family, but in 1462 it was presented to General Pál Kinizsi by King Matthias Corvinus in gratitude for the brave

general's military successes against the Turks. It became an important border fortress during the occupation and was used as a prison in the 1700s.

The castle is essentially a rectangle with a horseshoe-shaped barbican. The 30m-high, six-storey keep is reached via a bridge over the dry moat. A large crack runs from the top of the tower to the bottom, but it must be secure enough: the upper rooms contain the **Kinizsi Castle Museum** (Kinizsi Vármúzeum), while the lower room displays dummies torturing one another. Part of General Kinizsi's red-marble sarcophagus sits in the centre of the restored chapel and there's a collection of archaeological finds in the crypt.

OTHER SIGHTS

The **Post Office Museum** (Postmúzeum; ☎ 264 300; Temető utca 3; adult/child 150/75Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Mar-Oct) is opposite the castle. Nagyvázsöny was an important stop along the postal route between Budapest and Graz in the 19th century (horses were changed here). The museum is a lot more interesting than it sounds, particularly the section on the history of the telephone in Hungary beginning with the installation of the first switchboard in Budapest in 1890. Next to the museum is an 18th-century **Evangelist church** with a free-standing belfry.

Nearby is a small **Open-Air Folk Museum** (Szabadtéri Néprajzi Múzeum; ☎ 264 724; Bercsényi utca 21; adult/child 200/100Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun May-Oct) at a farmhouse dating from 1825. It was once the home of a coppersmith and his workshop remains.

The **Church of St Stephen** (Szent István templom; Rákóczi utca) was built by General Kinizsi in 1481 on the site of an earlier chapel. Most of the interior, including the richly carved main altar, is baroque.

Sleeping & Eating

Malomkő (☎ 264 165; www.malomko.hu; Kinizsi utca 47-49; s/d 3000/6000Ft; ☎ P) Malomkő is the liveliest and flashiest accommodation in town, with spacious rooms (some with kitchen) filled with natural-wood furniture and plenty of light. The ground floor is given over to a simple but satisfying restaurant which often hosts bands on weekends.

Vázsonykö (☎ 264 344; Sörház utca 2; s/d 3500/5000Ft; ☎ P) This friendly and welcoming *pension* a

HUNGARY'S SPRING SNOW

Hungary is not a country known for its blankets of snow, particularly in spring, but from May to June, that all changes. During this time, poplar trees (*nyárfa* in Hungarian) give up their pollen to the four winds, which carry it to every nook and cranny imaginable. The Balaton area is particularly badly hit, with the fluffy white substance lining gutters, covering footpaths and pooling in courtyards. As every hay-fever sufferer knows, poplar pollen is about as bad as it gets, so if you suffer from this annoying condition be sure to bring something to counteract its strong effect (or be prepared to buy something quick), because a severe case of runny nose, itchy eyes and sinus congestion can wreak havoc to a well-earned holiday. For more information on health issues for the country, consult the Health chapter (p391).

short walk from the castle has good-sized rooms and a peaceful setting. Its restaurant serves up good home cooking inside or on its small patio.

Vár Csárda (Temető utca 5; mains 1000Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Jun-Sep) This thatched place has a relaxing garden overlooking the castle and attracts most visitors to the stronghold.

Getting There & Away

Some 12 buses a day link Nagyvázsöny and Veszprém (302Ft, 30 minutes, 22km); and up to eight run to Tapolca daily (363Ft, 35 minutes, 28km) to the southwest.

TIHANY

☎ 87 / pop 1450

The place with the greatest historical significance on Lake Balaton is Tihany, 14km southwest of Balatonfüred. It is on a peninsula of the same name that juts 5km into the Balaton, almost linking the lake's two shores. The entire peninsula is a nature reserve of hills and marshy meadows; it has an isolated, almost wild, feel to it that is unknown around the rest of the lake. The village, on a hilltop on the eastern side of the peninsula, is one of the most charming in the Balaton region.

History

There was a Roman settlement in the area, but Tihany first appeared on the map in

1055, when King Andrew I (r 1046–60), a son of King Stephen's great nemesis, Vászoly, founded a Benedictine monastery here. The Deed of Foundation of the Abbey Church of Tihany, now in the archives of the Benedictine abbey at Pannonhalma (p161), is one of the earliest known documents bearing any Hungarian words – some 50 place names within a mostly Latin text. It's a linguistic treasure in a country where, until the 19th century, the vernacular in its written form was spurned – particularly in schools – in favour of the more 'cultured' Latin and German.

In 1267 a fortress was built around the church and was able to keep the Turks at bay when they arrived 300 years later. But the castle was demolished by Habsburg forces in 1702 and all you'll see today are ruins.

Tihany Peninsula is a popular recreational area with beaches on its eastern and western coasts and a big resort complex on its southern tip. The waters of the so-called Tihany Well, off the southern end of the peninsula, are the deepest – and coldest – in the lake, reaching an unprecedented 12m in some parts.

Orientation

Tihany village, perched on an 80m-high plateau along the peninsula's eastern coast, is accessible by two roads when you turn south off Rte 71. The Inner Harbour (Belső kikötő), where ferries to/from Balatonfüred and Siófok dock, is below the village. Tihany Port (Tihanyi-rév), to the southwest at the tip of the peninsula, is Tihany's recreational area. From here, car ferries run to Szántód-rév and passenger ferries to Balatonföldvár.

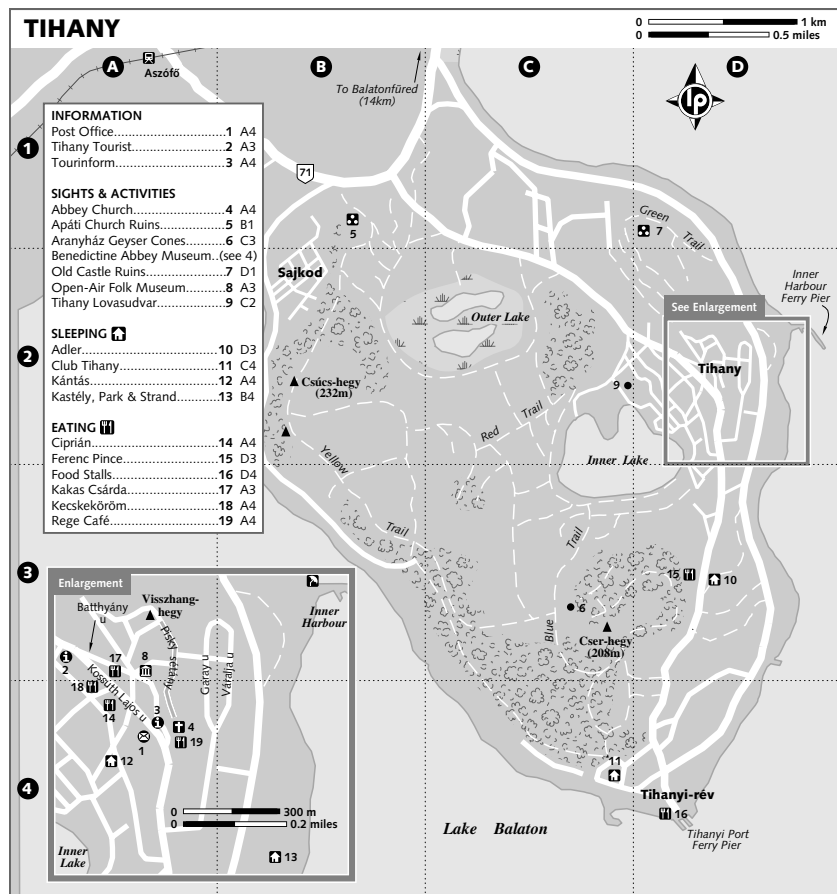
Two inland basins on the peninsula are fed by rain and ground water. The Inner Lake (Belső-tó) is almost in the centre of the peninsula and visible from the village, while the Outer Lake (Külső-tó), to the northwest, has almost completely dried up and is now a tangle of reeds. Both basins attract bird life.

Information

Post office (Kossuth Lajos utca 37) Has an ATM and an exchange bureau.

Tihany (www.tihany.hu) More information on the town and its surrounds.

Tihany Tourist (☎ 448 481; www.tihanytourist.hu; Kossuth Lajos utca 11; ☎ 9am-5pm Apr-Oct)



Tourinform (☎ 448 804; tihany@tourinform.hu; Kossuth Lajos utca 20; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun-mid-Sep; 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat mid-Apr-mid-Jun & early Sep, 10am-4pm Mon-Fri early Sep-mid-Apr)

Sights

ABBEY CHURCH

This twin-spired and ochre-coloured church (☎ 538 200; adult/child 500/250Ft; tours 8000Ft; ☎ 9am-6pm May-Sep, 10am-5pm Apr & Oct, 10am-3pm Nov-Mar) was built in 1754 on the site of King Andrew's church and contains fantastic altars, pulpits and screens carved between 1753 and 1779 by an Austrian lay brother named Sebastian Stuhlhof. They are baroque-rococo masterpieces and all are richly symbolic.

With your back to the sumptuous main altar (the saint with the broken chalice and snake is Benedict, the founder of Western monasticism) and the Abbot's throne, look right to the side altar dedicated to Mary. The large angel kneeling on the right supposedly represents Stuhlhof's fiancée, a fisherman's daughter who died in her youth. On the Altar of the Sacred Heart across the aisle, a pelican (Christ) nurtures its young (the faithful) with its own blood. The besotted figures atop the pulpit beside it are four doctors of the Roman Catholic church: Sts Ambrose, Gregory, Jerome and Augustine. The next two altars on the right- and left-hand sides are dedicated to Benedict and his twin sister, Scholastica; the last pair,

a baptismal font and the Lourdes Altar, date from the 20th century.

Stuhlhof also carved the magnificent choir rail above the porch and the organ with all the cherubs. The frescoes on the ceilings by Bertalan Székely, Lajos Deák-Ébner and Károly Lotz were painted in 1889, when the church was restored.

The remains of King Andrew I lie in a limestone sarcophagus in the Romanesque crypt. The spiral sword-like cross on the cover is similar to ones used by 11th-century Hungarian kings.

The **Benedictine Abbey Museum** (Bencés Ápátsági Múzeum), next door to the Abbey Church in the former Benedictine monastery, is entered from the crypt. It contains exhibits about Lake Balaton, liturgical vestments, religious artefacts, a handful of manuscripts, and a history of King Andrew.

OTHER SIGHTS

Pisky sétány, a promenade running along the ridge north from the church to Visszhang-hegy, passes a cluster of folk houses that have now been turned into a small **Open-Air Folk Museum** (Szabadtéri Néprajzi Múzeum; ☎ 538 022; adult/child 300/150Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Easter-mid-Oct).

You'll find **Visszhang-hegy** (Echo Hill) at the end of Pisky sétány. At one time, up to 15 syllables of anything shouted in the direction of the Abbey Church would bounce back but, alas, because of building in the area (and perhaps climatic changes) you'll be lucky to get three nowadays. From Visszhang-hegy you can descend Garay utca and Váralja utca to the Inner Harbour and a small beach, or continue on to the hiking trails that pass this way.

Activities

Hiking is one of Tihany's main attractions; there's a good map outlining the trails near the front of the Abbey Church. Following the Green Trail northeast of the church for an hour will bring you to the **Russian Well** (Oroszkút) and the ruins of the **Old Castle** (Óvár) at 219m, where Russian Orthodox monks, brought to Tihany by Andrew I, followed out cells in the soft basalt walls.

The 232m-high **Csúcs-hegy** (Csúcs Hill), with panoramic views of Lake Balaton, is about two hours west of the church via the Red Trail. From here you can join up with the Yellow Trail originating in Tihanyi-rév,

which will lead you north to the ruins of the 13th-century **Apáti Church** (Ápáti templom) and to Rte 71. From the church, it's possible to follow the Yellow Trail south till it crosses the Blue Trail near **Aranyház**, a series of geyser cones formed by warm-water springs and resembling (somewhat) a 'Golden Horse'. From here, you can take the Blue Trail north to the **Inner Lake** and on to the town centre.

Horses are available for hire at the **Tihany Lovasudvar** (☎ 30-275 3293; Kiserdótelepi utca 10; 1 hr riding 3000Ft) just north of the Inner Lake.

As the lake bottom drops away quicker here than in other parts of the lake, Tihany's **beaches** are an inviting option. The stretches on the eastern side are the most accessible, which also mean they're the most popular, but if you're looking to escape the crowds head to **Sajkód** at the peninsula's northwestern point. A small track leads south from this small settlement to a secluded beach; with Tihany's hills as a backdrop, it's one of the most peaceful spots to while away an afternoon, or a week.

Sleeping

Accommodation in Tihany is limited and expensive; you could consider making it a day trip from Balatonfüred by bus. Also, most of the hotels listed in this section are closed between mid-October or November and March or April.

For private rooms (from 6000Ft per double), consult Tihany Tourist. Many houses along Kossuth Lajos utca and on the little streets north of the Abbey Church have 'Zimmer frei' signs.

Kastély, Park & Strand (☎ 448 611; Fördőtelepi út 1; s 5100-22,000Ft, d 6900-23,800Ft; ☎) On the Inner Harbour, this hotel has suitably fine rooms in a former Habsburg summer mansion (the Kastély), dated rooms in an ugly modern wing (the Park) and simple but appealing rooms in a small one-level building (the Strand). There's also a 5-hectare garden and a private beach to run amok in.

Club Tihany (☎ 538 564; www.clubtihany.hu; Rév utca 3; s €48-93, d €80-138, bungalows from €44; ☎) Just up from the car-ferry pier, this is a 13-hectare resort with 160 bungalows and a 330-room hotel – and every sporting, munching and quaffing possibility imaginable. It has two-person bungalows and some rooms in the high-rise hotel have lake views and balconies.

Also worth considering:

Kántás (☎ 448 072; www.hotels.hu/kantas; Csokonai út 49; r €33-41) Below tourist-central on a quiet street, with small but cosy rooms and balcony.

Adler (☎ 538 000; www.adler-tihany.hu; Felsőkopaszhegyi utca 1/a; r €35-43; P ♿ ♻️) Secluded romantic getaway with natural wood and white-washed rooms; Jacuzzi, sauna and restaurant on site.

Eating

Like the hotels, most restaurants are closed between mid-October or November and March or April.

Rege Cafe (☎ 448 280; Kossuth Lajos utca 22; mains 1000-2000Ft) Rege has possibly the best panoramic view of the lake on the Balaton from its high vantage point near the Benedictine abbey; its cakes and light meals aren't bad either.

Kecskeköröm (Fossil Shell; Kossuth Lajos utca 13; mains 1500Ft) Kecskeköröm has its fair share of Hungarian kitsch but it's fortunately not done in a garish way; in fact, it complements the solid Hungarian menu offered here.

Kakas Csárda (☎ 448 541; Batthyány utca 1; mains 1500Ft) In a rambling basalt house almost opposite Kecskeköröm is this homely restaurant with its fair share of kitsch and Hungarian specialities.

Ciprián (☎ 448 515; Kossuth Lajos utca; mains from 1500Ft) Offering an alternative to views of the lake, Ciprián looks inwards towards Tihany's interior and has a simple Hungarian menu to attract tourists and a talking cockatoo to attract kids.

Cheap food stalls greet passengers to-ing and fro-ing across the lake at Tihanyi-rév.

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Ferenc Pince (☎ 448 575; Cser-hegy 9; mains from 1200Ft) Ferenc is both a wine- and food-lover's dream; not only does its chef cook up a Hungarian storm in the kitchen with a mixture of local and national meat and fish dishes, but some of the best wine available is served by the very people who produce the stuff. During the day, its open terrace offers expansive views of the lake, while at night the hypnotic twinkling lights of the southern shore are in full view from its cosy thatched-roof house. Ferenc Pince is just under 2km south of the abbey church.

Getting There & Away

Bus routes cover the 14km from Balatonfüred's train station to and from Tihany about 20 times daily (182Ft, 30 minutes). The bus stops at both ferry landings before climbing to Tihany village.

The Balaton passenger ferries from Siófok, Balatonfüred and elsewhere stop at Tihany from late April to late October. Catch them at the pier below the abbey or at Tihanyi-rév. From March to mid-October the car ferry takes 10 minutes to cross the narrow stretch of water between Tihanyi-rév and Szántódi-rév, and departs every 40 minutes to an hour.

BALATONFÜRED

☎ 87 / pop 13,000

Balatonfüred is the oldest and most popular resort on the northern shore of Lake Balaton. It has none of the frenzy or brashness of Siófok, partly because of its aristocratic origins and partly because the thermal waters of its world-famous heart hospital attract a much older crowd.

History

The thermal water here, rich in carbonic acid, have been used as a cure for stomach ailments for centuries, but its other curative properties were only discovered by scientific analysis in the late 18th century. Balatonfüred was immediately declared a spa with its own chief physician in residence.

Balatonfüred's golden age was in the 19th century, especially the first half, when political and cultural leaders of the Reform Era (roughly 1825-48) gathered here in the summer. The town became a writers' colony of sorts. Balatonfüred was also the site chosen by István Széchenyi to launch the lake's first steamship Kisfaludy in 1846.

By 1900 Balatonfüred was a popular place for increasingly wealthy middle-class families to escape Budapest's heat. Wives would base themselves here all summer along with their children while husbands would board the 'bull trains' in Budapest at the weekend. The splendid promenade and a large wooden bath were built on the lake to accommodate the increasing crowds.

Orientation

Balatonfüred has two distinct districts: the lakeside resort area and the commercial

centre in the older part of town around Szent István tér to the northwest. Almost everything to see and do is down by the water.

The train and bus stations are on Dobó István utca, about a kilometre northwest of Vitorlás tér, where the ferry pier is located. The quickest way to get to the lake from either station is to walk east on Horváth Mihály utca and then south on Jókai Mór utca.

Information

OTP bank (Petőfi Sándor utca 8) With 24-hour ATM.

Post office (Zsigmond utca 14)

Tourinform (☎ 580 480; balatonfured@tourinform.hu;

Petőfi Sándor utca 68; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri May-Oct, 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat, 9am-1pm Sun mid-Jun-mid-Sep, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat mid-Sep-Oct,

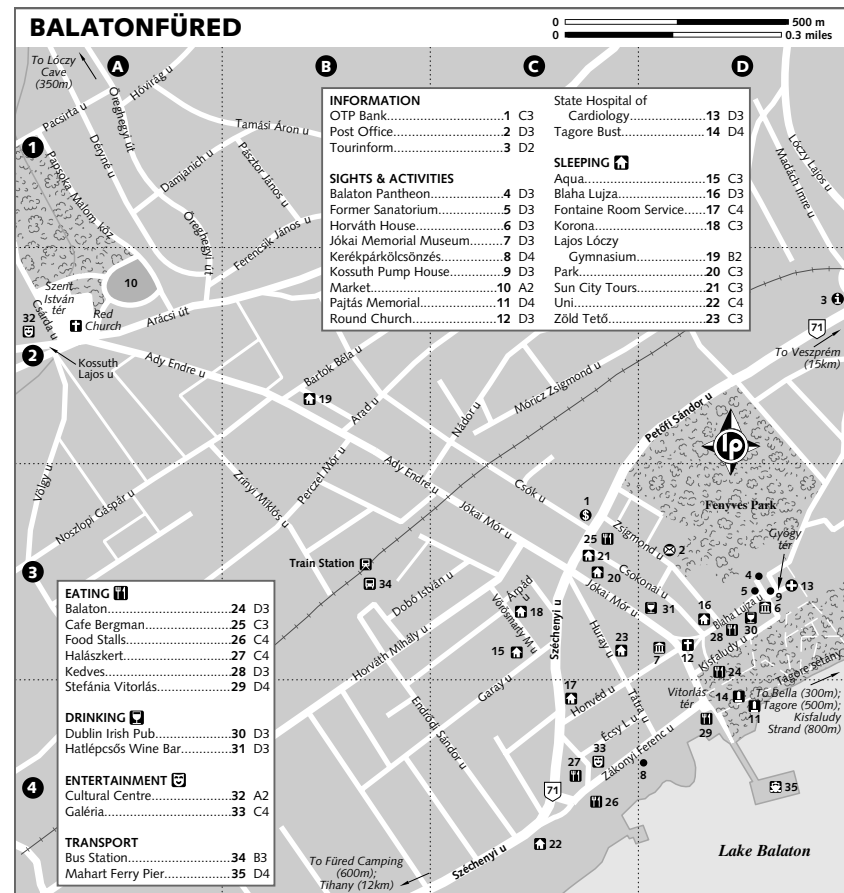
9am-4pm Mon-Fri Nov-mid-Jun) Inconveniently located 1km northeast of the centre.

www.balatonfured.hu Online information in a number of languages.

Sights

The **Jókai Memorial Museum** (Jókai Emlékmúzeum; ☎ 343 426; Jókai Mór utca; adult/child 300/150Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun May-Oct) is housed in the summer villa of the prolific writer Mór Jókai, just north of Vitorlás tér. In his study here, Jókai churned out many of his 200 novels under the stern gaze of his wife, the actress Róza Laborfalvi.

Across the street is the tiny neoclassical **Round Church** (Kerek templom; ☎ 343 029; Blaha Lujza utca 1; admission free; ☎ services only) completed in



1846. The *Crucifixion* (1891) by János Vaszary sits above the altar on the western wall and is the only notable thing inside.

If you walk down Blaha Lujza utca you'll pass the villa (now a hotel) at No 4 where the 19th-century actress-singer Lujza Blaha spent her summers from 1893 to 1916. A short distance further along is Gyógy tér, the heart of the spa. In the centre of this leafy square, **Kossuth Pump House** (1853) dispenses slightly sulphuric, but drinkable, thermal water. This is as close as you'll get to the hot spring. Although Balatonfüred is a major spa, the mineral baths are reserved for patients of the State Hospital of Cardiology.

The late baroque **Horváth House** (Gyógy tér 3), for many years a hotel, was the site of the first Anna Ball in 1825 (see right), but the former **Sanatorium** (1802) currently hosts the event.

Nearby is the **Balaton Pantheon**, with memorial plaques from those who took the cure at the hospital. The Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore was one of them. A **bust** of this Nobel Prize-winning man of letters stands on Tagore sétány before a lime tree that he planted in 1926 to mark his recovery from illness after treatment here. Diagonally opposite and closer to the lake is a bizarre **memorial** of a hand stretching out of the water in memory of those who drowned in the lake when the Pajtás boat sank in 1954.

On the eastern side of the tér is the sprawling, **State Hospital of Cardiology** (Országos Szívkörház; Gyógy tér 2), which put Balatonfüred on the map.

Activities

Balatonfüred has three **public beaches** (adult/child per day 330/190Ft, per week 1980/1140Ft; ☎ 8.30am or 9am-6pm or 7pm mid-May-mid-Sep), of which **Kisfaludy Strand** along Aranyhíd sétány to the east of Tagore sétány is the best. (See Activities p188 for information on lake cruises.)

You can rent bicycles for 350Ft per hour from several places in Balatonfüred, including **Kerékpárkölszónés** (bicycle rentals; ☎ 480 671; Tagore Hotel, Zákonyi Ferenc utca; ☎ 9am-7pm).

Consider walking or cycling to **Lóczy Cave** (Lóczy-barlang; Öreghegyi utca; adult/child 300/200Ft; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun May-Sep), north of the old town centre. It is the largest cave in the Lake Balaton region and accessible from Szent István tér. Just walk east a couple of minutes on Arácsi utca past the excellent market (which sells everything from food to shoes)

and then north on Öreghegyi utca. There's also good **hiking** in the three hills with the names Tamás (Thomas), Sándor (Alexander) and Péter (Peter) to the northeast.

In July the **Anna Ball** is held in the Sanatorium, near Gyógy tér; it's a prime event on the Hungarian calendar. Tickets cost from 25,000Ft. Concerts and other events accompany the ball; keep your eyes peeled if you're here during July.

Sleeping

Prices fluctuate throughout the year and usually peak between early July and late August.

As elsewhere around Lake Balaton, private room prices are rather inflated. **Sun City Tours** (☎ 481 798; Csokonai utca 1) can help with finding you a place, as can **Fontaine Room Service** (☎ 343 673; Honvéd utca 11), which also has rooms to rent above its office. There are lots of houses with rooms for rent on the streets north of Kisfaludy Beach.

BUDGET

Lajos Lóczy Gymnasium (☎ 343 428; Bartók Béla utca 4; dm 2000Ft; ☎) This school turns into dorm accommodation over the summer months, and is more than handy to the train and bus stations.

Füred Camping (☎ 580 241; cfured@balatontourist.hu; Széchenyi utca 24; camp sites per tent 18,600-5300Ft, adult 650-1500Ft, child 550-1100Ft, bungalows 6400-19,970Ft; motel r 5460-19,970Ft; ☎ Apr-mid-Oct; ☎) This, the only camping ground at Balatonfüred, is a massive complex able to accommodate 3500 people. It's about 1.5km southeast of the train station on the lake-shore and has direct access to the lake.

MIDRANGE

Zöld Tető (Green Roof; ☎ 341 701; zoldteto@netquick.hu; Huray utca 4; s/d €37/52; ☎) This is arguably the best midrange option in town, with large, airy rooms, friendly staff and a shady outdoor patio for breakfast.

Blaha Lujza (☎ 581 210; www.hotelblaha.hu; Blaha Lujza utca 4; s/d from €32/41; ☎) This small hotel is one of the loveliest to stay in. Its rooms are a little compact but very comfy, and it was the summer home of the much loved 19th-century actress-singer from 1893 to 1916.

Tagore (☎ 342 603; www.hoteltagore.com; Deák Ferenc utca 56; r €24-28; ☎) Tagore is value for money and more than handy to the lake;

its rooms aren't modern but they're certainly comfy enough.

Park (☎ 343 203; www.parkhotel.hu; Jókai Mór utca 24; s 6000-12,500Ft, d 12,000-15,000Ft; ☎) This is a rather posh old-world hotel, with huge rooms (some with balcony) and a private garden. The rate includes half-board.

Uni (☎ 581 360; www.hotels.hu/uni; Széchenyi utca 10; s/d 9700/13,000Ft; ☎) Big and impersonal, this large square block of a hotel is a hang-over from the busy communist days. It does however have its own beach, rooms come with balcony, and there is something appealing about reliving the bad old days...

A huddle of attractive *pensions* can be found close to the bus and train stations:

Korona (☎ 343 278; www.koronapanzio.hu; Vörösmarty utca 4; s €26.50-37, d €31.50-46; ☎) Homely décor bordering on kitsch; big, bright rooms.

Aqua (☎ 342 813; www.balaton.hu/aquahaz; Garay utca 2; r €28-41; ☎) Spotless rooms in a thoroughly modern, albeit slightly clinical, *pension*.

Eating & Drinking

Halászkert (☎ 343 039; Zákonyi Ferenc utca 3; mains 1000-1500Ft) This place serves some of the best *korhely halászlé* (drunkard's fish soup) in Hungary on its large, shaded terrace. If that's not your style, there's plenty of other fish dishes to choose from.

Balaton (☎ 481 319; Kisfaludy utca 5; mains 1000-2000Ft) This cool, leafy oasis amid all the hubbub is set back from the lake in a shaded park area. It serves huge portions and, like so many restaurants in town, has an extensive fish selection.

Bella (☎ 481 815; Tagore sétány; pizzas 800Ft) Bella has good pizzas, Hungarian staples and the wonderful panorama terrace facing the lake. It's also quite touristy, but it's hard to find a place in these parts that isn't.

Stefánia Vitorlás (Tagore sétány 1; mains 1500Ft) It's hard to find a more central location right on the lake's edge than Vitorlás. This does mean it's often crowded with diners, so a quiet, intimate dinner is not always an option here.

Cafe Bergman (☎ 341 087; Zsigmond utca 3; ☎ 10am-7.30pm) Escape the crowds down by the lake and head to popular Bergman, an elegant café with the town's best selection of cake and ice cream.

Kedves (Blaha Lujza utca 7) Like Bergman, Kedves will appeal to those looking for a break from madding crowds; this chilled café was also where Lujza Blaha herself took tea.

Dublin Irish Pub (Blaha Lujza utca 9) This pseudo-Irish pub with Guinness on tap is a popular stop for thirsty folk who've been enjoying the lake's attractions all day.

Hatlépcsős (Six Steps; Jókai Mór utca 30) A cheap wine bar that attracts students and dipsomaniacs. Its huge patio isn't a bad place to try one of Balatonfüred's famous Rieslings.

For cheap eats, head west along the lake and Zákonyi Ferenc utca where you'll come across a plethora of food stalls.

Entertainment

Cultural centre (☎ 481 187; Kossuth Lajos utca 3) The staff at this centre near Szent István tér can tell you what's on, such as musical performances and theatre productions.

Galéria (Zákonyi Ferenc utca; ☎ Fri & Sat) There are clubs all over town in summer, including this disco.

Getting There & Away

BOAT

From April to late October, up to seven daily Mahart ferries link Balatonfüred with Siófok and Tihany. Up to eight daily ferries serve these ports from late May to mid-September.

BUS

Buses for Tihany (182Ft, 30 minutes, 14km) and Veszprém (302Ft, 40 minutes, 20km) leave throughout the day. Other departures are to Budapest (1690Ft, 2½ hours, 136km, four daily), Győr (1210Ft, 2½ hours, 100km, seven daily), Hévíz (907Ft, 1½ hours, 75km, six daily), Kecskemét (2660Ft, five hours, 214km, one daily), Nagykanizsa (1570Ft, 2¾ hours, 26km, one daily) and Székesfehérvár (846Ft, 1½ hours, 69km, seven daily).

TRAIN

Frequent express and local trains travel northeast to Székesfehérvár (658Ft, 1½ hours, 65km) and to Déli and Kelenföld stations in Budapest (1420Ft, 2½ hours, 132km; and southwest to Tapolca (544Ft, 1¾ hours, 52km) and lakeside towns as far as Badacsony (346Ft, one hour, 38km).

Getting Around

You can reach Vitorlás tér and the lake from the train and bus stations on buses 1, 1/a and 2; bus 1 continues on to Füred Camping.

You can also book a local **taxi** (☎ 444 444).

VESZPRÉM

☎ 88 / pop 62,900

Spreading over five hills between the northern and southern ranges of the Bakony Hills, Veszprém has one of the most dramatic locations in the Lake Balaton region. The walled castle district, atop a plateau, is a living museum of baroque art and architecture. It's a delight to stroll through the windy Castle Hill district's single street, admiring the embarrassment of fine churches. As the townspeople say, 'Either the wind is blowing or the bells are ringing in Veszprém'.

History

The Romans did not settle in what is now Veszprém but 8km to the southeast at

Balácapuszta, where important archaeological finds have been made. Prince Géza, King Stephen's father, founded a bishopric in Veszprém late in the 10th century, and the city grew as a religious, administrative and educational centre (the university was established in the 13th century). It also became a favourite residence of Hungary's queens.

The castle at Veszprém was blown up by the Habsburgs in 1702, and lost most of its medieval buildings during the Rákóczi War of Independence (1703–11) shortly thereafter. But this cleared the way for Veszprém's golden age, when the city's bishops and rich landlords built most of what you see today. The church's iron grip on Veszprém prevented it from developing commercially,

however, and it was bypassed by the main railway line in the 19th century.

Orientation

The bus station (Piac tér) is a few minutes' walk northeast from Kossuth Lajos utca, a pedestrian street of shops and travel agencies. If you turn north at the end of Kossuth Lajos utca at Szabadság tér, and walk along Rákóczi utca you'll soon reach the entrance to Castle Hill (Vár-hegy) at Óváros tér.

The train station is 3km north of the bus station at the end of Jutasi út.

Information

Kokó (Kossuth Lajos utca; per hr 500Ft; ☎ 9am–10pm Mon–Thu, 9am–midnight Fri & Sat, 2–10pm Sun) A cake shop on the 1st floor of the Cserhát shopping complex with Internet access.

OTP bank (Óváros tér 25) With ATM.

Post office (Kossuth Lajos utca 19)

Tourinform (☎ 404 548; veszprem@tourinform.hu; Vár utca 4; ☎ 9am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–4pm Sat, 10am–4pm Sun Jun–Aug, 9am–5pm Mon–Fri Sep–May) Has lots of information on the city and the surrounding villages and also free Internet access.

Veszprem (www.veszprem.hu) Find out more about Veszprém by logging on here.

Sights

CASTLE HILL

You should begin any tour of Veszprém in Óváros tér, the medieval market place at the foot of Castle Hill. Of the many fine 18th-century buildings in the square, the most interesting is the late baroque **Pósa House** (Óváros tér 3), built in 1793 and now a bank. There are also the former **customs house** (Óváros tér 7), also a bank, and the **town hall** (Óváros tér 9).

As you begin to ascend Castle Hill and its sole street, Vár utca, you'll pass through **Heroes' Gate** (Hősök kapuja), an entrance built in 1936 from the stones of a 15th-century castle gate.

To your left is the **firewatch tower** (tűztorony; ☎ 425 204; Vár utca 9; adult/child 300/200Ft; ☎ 10am–6pm May–Oct, 10am–5pm mid–Mar–Apr), which, like the one in Sopron, is an architectural hybrid of Gothic, baroque and neoclassical styles. You can climb to the top for excellent views of the rocky hill and the Bakony Hills.

The extremely rich **Piarist church** (Piarista templom; ☎ 426 088; Vár utca 12; admission free; ☎ 10am–6pm May–Aug, 10am–5pm Tue–Sun Sep–mid–Oct) was built in 1836 in the neoclassical

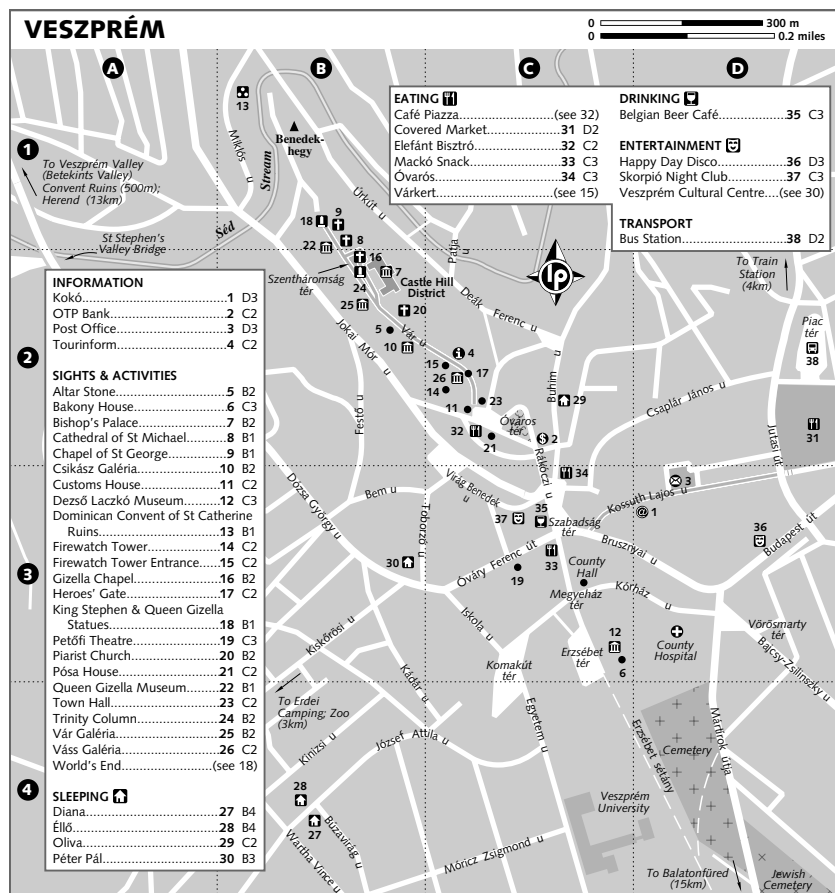
style. The red marble **altar stone** (1467) diagonally opposite outside the parish office at No 27 is the oldest piece of Renaissance stonework in Hungary.

The U-shaped **Bishop's Palace** (Püspöki palota; ☎ 426 088; Vár utca 16; adult/child 500/250Ft; ☎ 10am–6pm May–Aug, 10am–5pm Tue–Sun Sep–mid–Oct), designed by Jakab Fellner of Tata in the mid-18th century, is where the queen's residence stood in the Middle Ages. It faces Szentháromság tér, named for the **Trinity Column** (1751) in the centre.

Next to the Bishop's Palace is the early Gothic **Gizella Chapel** (Gizella-kápolna; ☎ 426 088; Vár utca 18; adult/child 100/70Ft; ☎ 10am–6pm May–Aug, 10am–5pm Tue–Sun Sep–mid–Oct), named after Gizella, the wife of King Stephen, who was crowned near here early in the 11th century. The chapel was discovered when the Bishop's Palace was being built in the mid-18th century. Inside the chapel are Byzantine-influenced 13th-century frescoes of the Apostles. The **Queen Gizella Museum** (☎ 426 088; Vár utca 35; adult/child 300/150Ft; ☎ 10am–6pm May–Aug, 10am–5pm Sep–mid–Oct) of religious art is opposite the chapel.

Parts of the dark and austere **Cathedral of St Michael** (székesegyház; ☎ 328 038; Vár utca 18–20; admission free; ☎ 10am–6pm May–Aug, 10am–5pm Sep–mid–Oct), which is the site of the first bishop's palace, dates from the beginning of the 11th century, but the cathedral has been rebuilt many times since then – the early Gothic crypt is original, though. Beside the cathedral, the octagonal foundation of the 13th-century **Chapel of St George** (Szent György kápolna; ☎ 426 088; adult/child 100/70Ft; ☎ 10am–6pm May–Aug, 10am–5pm Tue–Sun Sep–mid–Oct) sits under a glass dome.

From the rampart known as **World's End**, at the end of Vár utca, you can gaze north to craggy Benedek-hegy (Benedict Hill) and the Séd Stream, and west to the concrete viaduct (now St Stephen's Valley Bridge) over the Betekints Valley. In Margit tér, below the bridge, are the ruins of the medieval **Dominican Convent of St Catherine** and to the west is what little remains of the 11th-century **Veszprém Valley Convent**, whose erstwhile cloistered residents are said to have stitched Gizella's crimson silk coronation robe in 1031. The **statues of King Stephen and Queen Gizella** at World's End were erected in 1938 to mark the 900th anniversary of King Stephen's death (see boxed text, p216).



REACH OUT & TOUCH

It could have been a chapter from a Mills & Boon novel for the macabre. It was 1996. Millennium celebrations honouring the arrival of the Magyars in the Carpathian Basin in 896 were under way in Hungary. People were in the mood to mark dates and one of those people was the archbishop of Veszprém.

He knew that it had been in Veszprém that the future king, Stephen, and a Bavarian princess, Gizella, were married in 996. Just suppose, he thought, that the bishop of the Bavarian city of Passau, where Gizella's remains had been resting these nine centuries, agreed to send her hand to Hungary. The Holy Dexter, St Stephen's revered right hand, could be brought down from the Basilica in Budapest and they could... Well, the mind boggled.

All parties agreed (the bishop of Passau even threw in Gizella's arm bone) and the date was set. In the square in front of the Cathedral of St Michael in Veszprém, the hands were laid together and – 1000 years to the day of the wedding – coyly touched in marital bliss once again.

The world did not change as we know it that fine spring morning – tram 2 raced along the Danube in Budapest; Mr Kovács dished out steaming *lángos* from his stall somewhere along Lake Balaton; schoolchildren in Sárospatak recited their *ábécé*. But all true Magyars knew, deep in their hearts, that all was right with the world.

Vár utca is home to a number of **art galleries**, including the **Vás Galéria** (☎ 561 310; Vár utca 7; adult/child 400/200Ft; 🕒 10am–6pm May–Oct, 10am–5pm Tue–Sun Nov–Apr), the **Csikász Galéria** (☎ 425 204; Vár utca 17; adult/child 250/150Ft; 🕒 10am–6pm May–Oct, 10am–5pm Nov–Apr) and the **Vár Galéria** (☎ 425 204; Vár utca 29; adult/child 250/150Ft; 🕒 10am–6pm May–Oct, 10am–5pm Nov–Apr), which exhibit everything from religious paintings to post-modernist sculpture.

DEZSŐ LACZKÓ MUSEUM

The **Dezső Laczkó Museum** (Bakony Museum; ☎ 564 310; Erzsébet sétány 1; adult/child 300/150Ft, includes entrance to Bakony House; 🕒 10am–6pm Tue–Sun mid-Mar–mid-Oct; noon–4pm Tue–Sun mid-Oct–mid-Mar) is south of Megyeház tér. It has archaeological exhibits (the emphasis is on the Roman settlement at Balácapuszta), a large collection of Hungarian, German and Slovak folk costumes and superb wooden carvings, including objects made by the famed outlaws of the Bakony Hills in the 18th and 19th centuries. Next to the main museum is **Bakony House** (Bakonyi ház; ☎ 564 330; adult/child 200/100Ft; 🕒 10am–6pm Tue–Sun May–Sep), a copy of an 18th-century thatched peasant dwelling in the village of Ócs, southwest of Veszprém. It has the usual three rooms found in Hungarian peasant homes, and the complete *kamra* (workshop) of a flask-maker has been set up.

PETŐFI THEATRE

Take a peek inside this **theatre** (☎ 564 220; Óváry Ferenc utca 2; 🕒 9am–5pm) even if you're

not attending a performance. It's a pink, grey and burgundy gem of Hungarian Art-Nouveau architecture and its decoration was designed by István Medgyaszay in 1908. It's also important structurally, as the theatre was the first building in Hungary to be made entirely of reinforced concrete. The large round stained-glass window entitled *The Magic of Folk Art* by Sándor Nagy is exceptional. For information on performances, see the Entertainment section.

Tours

From June to August **Tourinform** (☎ 404 548; Vár utca 4) offers free tours of the city, leaving at 10am Wednesday and Saturday from a temporary booth on Kossuth Lajos utca.

Festivals & Events

The **Veszprém Festival**, held at the beginning of August, attracts some big international names in the field of jazz and classical music.

Sleeping

Oliva (☎ 403 875; www.oliva.hu; Buhim utca 14-16; s/d 14,100/16,000Ft; 📍) This exquisite little *pension* has stylish and modern rooms with enough space to be comfortable and is only a short stroll to the Castle Hill.

Péter Pál (☎ 567 790; info@peterpal.hu; Dózsa György utca 3; s/d 6600/8900Ft; 📍) Only a short walk to the centre, Péter Pál is another fine choice with simple yet stylish rooms, a lovely garden and above-average restaurant, and very friendly and helpful staff.

Diana (☎ 421 061; József Attila utca 22; s/d 6800/9200Ft; 📍) Quiet, clean and value-for-money, this is an excellent bet for those looking for a bed for the night and a minimum of fuss. There's also a decent restaurant here.

Élló (☎ 420 097; József Attila utca 25; s/d 10,500/12,000Ft; 📍) Élló occupies an alpine-style house more commonly found in Austria. Rooms are outdated but on the large size, and come with bathroom.

Erdői Camping (☎ 326 751; Kittenberger utca 14; camp sites per adult/child/tent 850/425/800Ft, bungalows 9300Ft; motel s/d 3500/6800Ft; 🕒 mid-Apr–mid-Oct; 📍) This small camping ground is a fair way west of town, which is great if you're looking for some peace and quiet, but you'll need your own transport. It's surrounded by fields and woods, and is next to the zoo. Motel rooms have shared facilities.

Eating & Drinking

Oliva (☎ 403 875; Buhim utca 14-16; mains 1800–2500Ft) Oliva compliments its *pension* with an upmarket eatery, featuring in-season Hungarian specialities, a substantial wine selection and a huge outdoor patio.

Várkert (☎ 442 992; Vár utca 17) Várkert was receiving a serious overhaul at the time of writing, but expect to find a restaurant with a bustling atmosphere, a huge patio and plenty of choices in the heart of the Castle Hill district.

Óváros (☎ 326 790; Szabadság tér 14; mains 6500–15000Ft) This restaurant attracts diners throughout the day with its baroque setting, an extensive menu including fish dishes, and reliable cuisine.

Belgian Beer Café (☎ 444 900; Szabadság tér 5) Why Belgian beer is such a hit in Hungary when the amber liquid north of the border is a far better option is anyone's guess, but no matter, this place attracts punters by the dozen with its convivial, relaxed atmosphere.

The large **covered market** (Piac tér), where you can buy food among other things, is south of the bus station.

Mackó Snack (Szabadság tér; burgers & pizza slices from 260Ft) Join students and workers on the run at lunchtime for Mackó's quick snacks of burgers and pizzas.

The following two places at the foot of Castle Hill are both pleasant spots:

Elefánt Bisztró (☎ 329 695; Óváros tér 6; mains from 1000Ft) From steaks to salads, Elefánt has a go at most Hungarian dishes and has outdoor seating.

Café Piazza (☎ 444 445; Óváros tér 4; pizzas 800Ft; 🕒 8.30am–10pm) Simple pizzeria with big pizzas and seating on the square.

Entertainment

Veszprém Cultural Centre (☎ 429 111; Dózsa György utca 2) This is where the city's symphony orchestra is based.

Petőfi Theatre (☎ 564 220; Óváry Ferenc utca 2; 🕒 9am–5pm) This theatre is magnificent and stages both plays and concerts; tickets are available from the box office (open 9am to 1pm and 2pm to 5pm weekdays) in the theatre. See also opposite.

Happy Day Disco (Budapest út 7; 🕒 to 4am Fri–Sun) A popular club with an unfortunate name, Happy Day pumps till the wee-small hours on weekends.

Skorpió Night Club (Virág Benedek utca 1; 🕒 to 2am Mon–Thu, to 4am Fri & Sat, to 1am Sun) If you're looking for a fun, rowdy and boozy evening, look no further than the Skorpió.

Getting There & Away

BUS

Connections with Veszprém are excellent, with between half-hourly and hourly departures to Budapest (1450Ft, 2¼ hours, 112km), Herend (302Ft, 20 minutes, 21km), Nagyvácszony (302Ft, 30 minutes, 22km), Keszthely (1090Ft, two hours, 88km), Pápa (665Ft, 1¼ hours, 52km) and Tapolca (725Ft, 1¼ hours, 59km).

Other destinations from Veszprém:

Destination	Price	Duration	Km	Frequency
Győr	968Ft	2hr	79	9 daily
Kecskemét	2300Ft	4hr	184	3 daily
Pécs	2300Ft	4hr	181	2 daily
Siófok	605Ft	1¼hr	48	8 daily
Sümeg	846Ft	2hr	68	5 daily

TRAIN

Three railway lines meet at Veszprém. The first connects Veszprém with Szombathely (1420Ft, two hours, 124km) and Budapest's stations (1212Ft, two hours, 112km) via Székesfehérvár (up to seven/14 daily to Budapest/Szombathely). The second line carries up to six trains daily north to Pannohalma (544Ft, 1¼ hours, 58km) and Győr (774Ft, 2¼ hours, 80km), where you can transfer for Vienna (see p382). The third, southeast to Lepsény, links Veszprém

with the railway lines on the northern and southern shores of Lake Balaton up to six times daily.

Getting Around

Buses 1 and 2 run from the train and bus stations to Szabadság tér. You can also book a local **taxi** (☎ 444 444).

AROUND VESZPRÉM

Herend

☎ 88 / pop 3330

The porcelain factory at **Herend** (www.herend.hu), 13km west of Veszprém, has been producing Hungary's finest handpainted chinaware for over 150 years. There's not a lot to see in this dusty one-horse village, and prices at the outlet don't seem any cheaper than elsewhere in Hungary, but the **Porcelánium** (☎ 523 262; www.porcelanium.com; Kossuth Lajos utca 140; adult/child factory & museum 1500/500Ft; ☎ 9am-6pm Apr-Oct, 9am-4.30pm Tue-Sat Nov-Mar) is worth the trip. It consists of a museum which displays the most prized pieces of the rich Herend collection, and a mini-factory, where you can witness first-hand how ugly clumps of clay become delicate porcelain. It's a five-minute walk northeast from the bus station. Labels are in four languages, including English, which makes it easy to follow the developments and changes in patterns and tastes (see boxed text, below), and there's a short film tracing the history of Herend porcelain.

The complex has a **shop** (☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-5pm Sat, 9.30am-4.30pm Sun) selling antique pieces; otherwise scout around the

few shops close to the Porcelánium for new pieces.

Should you feel hungry, Porcelánium has an upmarket restaurant called **Apicius** (menu 400Ft). **Lila Akác** (Kossuth Lajos utca 122; mains from 800Ft) is a more down-to-earth place west of the museum and across Vasút utca, with a hearty selection of Hungarian dishes.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

You can reach the town of Herend by bus from Veszprém at least every 30 minutes (302Ft, 20 minutes, 21km); other destinations include Sümeg (665Ft, 1½ hours, 52km, three daily) and Balatonfüred (484Ft, one hour, 37km, two daily). Six trains run through Herend daily on their way to Ajka (264Ft, 20 minutes, 22km). Change there for Szombathely.

PÁPA

☎ 89 / pop 33,500

This attractive and peaceful town some 50km northwest of Veszprém has been called the 'Athens of Transdanubia' largely because of its Calvinist school. It was attended by such literary greats as the poet Sándor Petőfi and the novelist Mór Jókai in the 19th century. Religious tolerance has been a hallmark of Pápa for centuries.

History

Protestantism gained ground swiftly in the area in the 16th century and the first Hungarian translation of the Heidelberg Catechism was published here in 1577. During the late Middle Ages, Pápa was the third

most important Protestant stronghold in Transdanubia after Sopron and Sárovar.

Pápa flourished after liberation from the Turks, with Bishop Károly Esterházy overseeing the construction of many of its fine baroque buildings; his family effectively owned the town from 1648 to after WWII (1939-45). His brother Ferenc encouraged trade by allowing Jews to settle in Pápa. Pottery, broad cloth and paper-making industries were mainly run by Jews and by the end of the 19th century Pápa had one of the largest Jewish populations in Hungary.

Orientation

Pápa's main drags are Fő tér and Fő utca, which run southeast from Kastély-park to Március 15 tér. Pedestrian Kossuth Lajos utca runs southward from the large parish church on Fő tér. The bus station (Szabadság utca) is a short distance east of the church. The train station (Béke tér) is north of the centre at the end of Esterházy Károly utca.

Information

K&H bank (Kossuth Lajos utca 27) With ATM.

Main post office (Kossuth Lajos utca 29)

OTP bank (Fő utca 5) Also with ATM.

Tourinform (☎ 311 535; papa@tourinform.hu; Fő utca 5;

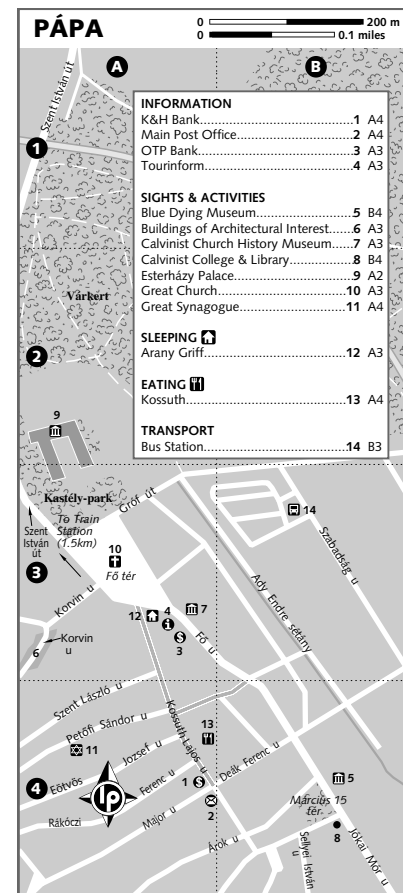
☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Small office near the main square.

Sights

The enormous U-shaped yellow building at the entrance to Kastély-park is the former **Esterházy Palace** (Esterházy kastély; ☎ 313 584; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun) built in 1784 on the foundations of an older castle. Russian soldiers were billeted here as late as 1990. The palace contains a small regional museum, a music school and a library, but don't be surprised to find the doors locked due to sporadic renovation.

South of the palace is the **Great Church** (Nagytemplom; Fő tér; admission free; ☎ 9am-4pm) built by Jacob Fellner in 1786 and dedicated to St Stephen. It contains wonderful frescoes (1781-82) of St Stephen's life and martyrdom by Franz Anton Maulbertsch (the same artist who did the frescoes in Sümeg) and Hubert Mauer, but its bland, grey walls are rather depressing.

The **Calvinist Church History Museum** (Református Egyháztörténeti Múzeum; ☎ 342 240; Fő utca 6; adult/child 150Ft/free; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun May-Oct) may not sound like a crowd-pleaser but it



HEREND PORCELAIN

A terracotta factory, set up at Herend in 1826, began producing porcelain 13 years later under Mór Farkasházi Fischer of Tata in Western Transdanubia.

Initially it specialised in copying and replacing the nobles' broken chinaware settings imported from Asia. You'll see some pretty kooky 19th-century interpretations of Japanese art and Chinese faces on display in the Porcelánium museum here. But the factory soon began producing its own patterns; many, like the *Rothschild bird* and *petites roses*, were inspired by Meissen and Sèvres designs from Germany and France. The Victoria pattern of butterflies and wild flowers of the Bakony was designed for Queen Victoria after she admired a display of Herend pieces at the Great Exhibition in London in 1851.

To avoid bankruptcy in the 1870s, the Herend factory began mass production; tastes ran from kitschy pastoral and hunting scenes to the ever-popular animal sculptures with the distinctive scale-like triangle patterns. In 1993, three quarters of the factory was purchased by its 1500 workers and became one of the first companies in Hungary privatised through an employee stock-ownership plan. The state owns the other quarter.

sometimes held and there's an interesting display of samples and old photographs.

The streets running west off Kossuth Lajos utca are particularly rich architecturally, especially along **Korvin utca**; check out the Gothic, baroque and rococo gems at Nos 4, 9, 7 and 13 on Korvin utca, most of which are now offices. To the south the **Great Synagogue** (Nagyzsinagóga; Petőfi Sándor utca 24-26), a romantic structure built in 1846 with some 100,000 bricks donated by the Esterházy family, sadly barely stands.

Sleeping & Eating

Tourinform can fill you in on private rooms in and around town.

Arany Griff (☎ 312 000; www.hotelaranygriff.hu; Fő tér 15; s 5984-7480Ft, d 8704-11,790Ft; (P)) This is the only decent option aside from private rooms, with comfy, dated rooms and excellent views of the Great Church across Fő tér.

Kossuth (Kossuth Lajos utca 22; mains 600-1000Ft) Kossuth, in a quiet courtyard in the Kossuth Udvar shopping mall, mixes pizzas into its Hungarian menu and serves it all under a pagoda-like structure outdoors.

Places to eat are rather scarce though the restaurant at the back of **Arany Griff** (mains 1000-2000Ft) and its *cukrászda*, with outdoor seating out front in the warmer months, is a safe bet for reliable food.

Getting There & Away

BUS

Bus service to/from Pápa is good with hourly departures to Győr (605Ft, one hour, 48km) and Veszprém (665Ft, 1¼ hours, 50km). Other destinations include Balatonfüred (786Ft, 1¼ hours, 63km, two daily), Budapest (2060Ft, four hours, 170km, three daily), Keszthely (968Ft, 2¼ hours, 80km, eight daily), Sümeg (665Ft, 1¼ hours, 51km, five daily) and Tapolca (725Ft, 1½ to two hours, 59km, four daily).

There is a bus to Vienna at 6.55am on Monday, Thursday and Friday.

TRAIN

Pápa is on the rail line linking Győr (430Ft, one hour, 47km) with Celldömölk, from where you can carry on to Szombathely (658Ft, one to two hours, 70km) up to 19 times daily. The only other place you can reach by rail from Pápa is Csorna, which is on the main line between Győr and Sopron.

SZÉKESFEHÉRVÁR

☎ 22 / pop 106,300

Székesfehérvár (*sake-kesh-fehair-vahr*) may look like just another big city off the M7 between Budapest and Lake Balaton. But this city is traditionally known as the place where the Magyar chieftain Árpád first set up camp, making it the oldest town in Hungary. But that doesn't make it the hottest tourist destination in the country; quite to the contrary, Székesfehérvár is often overlooked by tourists. This is a pity because its pretty centre and handful of attractions are worth a detour and even warrant an overnight stay.

History

As early as the 1st century, the Romans had a settlement at Gorsium near Tác. When Árpád arrived late in the 9th century, the surrounding marshes and the Sárviz River offered protection – the same reason Prince Géza built his castle here less than 100 years later. But it was King Stephen I who raised the status of Székesfehérvár by building a fortified basilica in what he called Alba Regia. Hungary's kings (and some of its queens) would be crowned and buried here for the next 500 years. In fact, the city's name means 'Seat of the White Castle', as it was the royal capital and white was the king's colour.

With Visegrád, Esztergom and Buda, Székesfehérvár served as an alternative royal capital for centuries, and it was here in 1222 that King Andrew II was forced by his mercenaries to sign the Golden Bull, an early bill of rights. The Turks captured Székesfehérvár in 1543 and used the basilica to store gunpowder. It exploded during a siege in 1601; when the Turks left in 1688, the town, the basilica and the royal tombs were in ruins.

Stephen, and much less Árpád, would hardly recognise today's Székesfehérvár. The stones from his basilica were used to construct the Bishop's Palace in 1801; several decades later, the marshland was drained and the Sárviz was diverted. The city had been at a crossroads since the 11th century, when crusaders (on a budget) from Western Europe passed through on their way to the Adriatic Sea. The arrival of the railway in the 1860s turned the city into a transport hub.

In March 1945 the Germans launched the last big counteroffensive of WWII near Székesfehérvár. Though the fighting razed the city's outskirts (the historic centre was

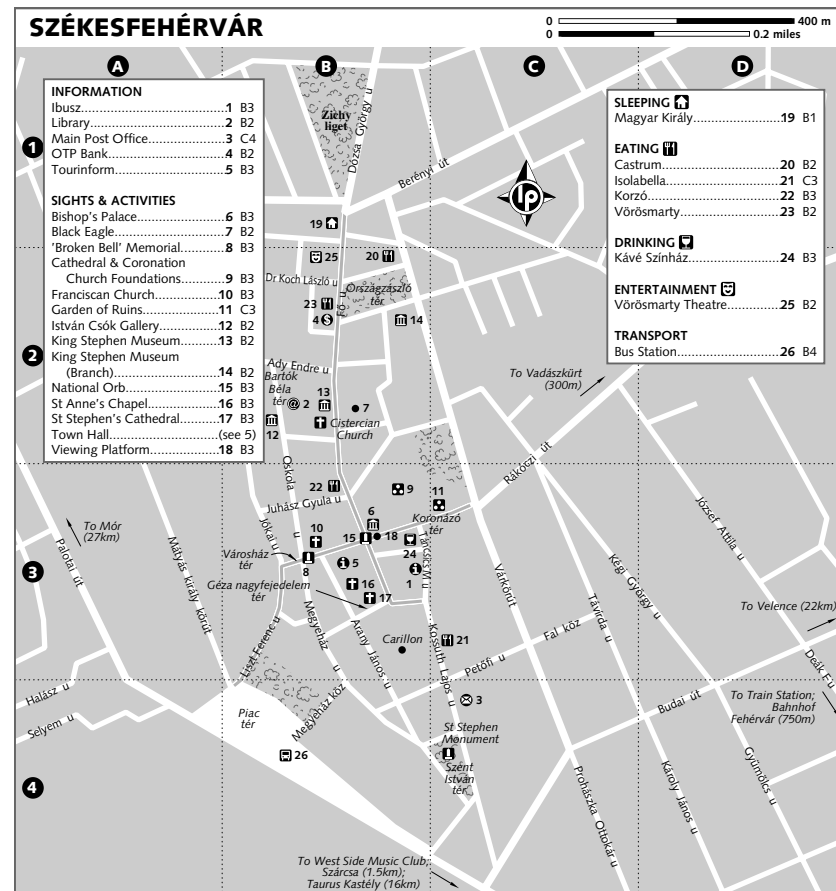
left more or less intact), it opened the way for postwar industrial development.

Orientation

Városház tér and Koronázó tér form the core of the old town. Pedestrian Fő utca – what the Romans called Vicus Magnus – runs north from here. The train station is a 15-minute walk southeast and can be reached via József Attila utca and its continuation, Deák Ferenc utca. The bus station is near the market, just outside the old town's western wall.

Information

Ibusz (☎ 348 316; Táncsics Mihály utca 5; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri) Will exchange money.



Paul, but what you see today is essentially an 18th-century baroque church. The ceiling frescoes inside were done by Johannes Cymbal in 1768. On the paving stones in front of the cathedral are foundation outlines of an earlier (perhaps 10th century) church. The wooden crucifix on the northern wall is dedicated to the victims of the 1956 Uprising.

Just north of the cathedral is **St Anne's Chapel** (Szent Anna kápolna; Arany János utca; admission free; ☎ services only) built around the same time, with additions (the tower, for example) made some centuries later. The Turks used the chapel as a place of worship; you can still see the remains of a painting from that era.

AROUND VÁROSHÁZ TÉR & KORONÁZÓ TÉR

Arany János utca debouches into Városház tér and Koronázó tér. The single-storey block of the **town hall** (Városház tér) dates from 1690; the larger northern wing was formerly the Zichy Palace built in the 18th century. Opposite is the austere 1745 **Franciscan church** (Ferences templom; admission free). The stone ball with the crown in the centre of the square is the **National Orb** (Országalma – which means 'national apple' in Hungarian) dedicated to King Stephen. The monument that looks like a **broken bell** (1995) lying on its side is dedicated to the victims of WWII.

The most imposing building on Koronázó tér is the Zopf-style **Bishop's Palace** (Püspöki palota), built with the rubble from the medieval basilica and royal burial chapels. The basilica and chapels stood to the east, in what is now the **Garden of Ruins** (Rómkert; ☎ 315 583; adult/child 290/130Ft; ☎ 9am–5pm Tue–Sun Apr–Oct). The site is sacred to Hungarians – about 30 of their kings and queens were crowned and 15 buried here. The white marble sarcophagus in the chamber to the right as you enter the main gate is thought to contain the remains of Géza, Stephen or his young son, Imre. Decorative stonework from the basilica and royal tombs lines the walls of the loggia, and in the garden are the foundations of the **cathedral** and the **Coronation Church**. A small amount of excavation of the site continues. The Garden of Ruins is open to visitors but you can see most of it from the street or the **viewing platform** (Koronázó tér).

AROUND FŐ UTCA

North of the town centre, the **Black Eagle** (Fekete Sas; ☎ 315 583; Fő utca 5; adult/child 290/130Ft; ☎ 10am–

6pm Tue–Sun) is a pharmacy set up by the Jesuits in 1758, with beautiful rococo furnishings. Just to the west, on Oskola utca, the **István Csók Gallery** (☎ 314 106; Bartók Béla tér 1; adult/child 290/130Ft; ☎ 10am–7pm Mon–Fri, 10am–6pm Sat+Sun) has a good collection of 19th- and 20th-century Hungarian art. Note that the gallery is closed on the first Monday of each month.

The **King Stephen Museum** (István Király Múzeum; ☎ 315 583; Fő utca 16; adult/child 290/130Ft; ☎ 10am–4pm Tue–Sun May–Sep, 10am–2pm Tue–Sun Oct–Apr) has a large collection of Roman pottery (some of it from Gorsium), an interesting folk-carving display and an exhibit covering 1000 years of Székesfehérvár history. The **museum branch** (☎ 2–6pm Tue–Sun May–Sep, 2–4pm Tue–Sun Oct–Apr) on Országzászló tér has temporary exhibits.

Activities

To the east of the city is **Velence**, the third-largest lake in Hungary at 10.5km long and 26sq km in size. It's a far more subdued lake than Balaton, and with an average depth of under 2m, it's ideal for families. Almost a third of its surface is covered in reeds, so it's a good place to observe birdlife; other activities include swimming, boating, windsurfing, water skiing and fishing.

Most of the action is concentrated in the towns of **Gárdony** and **Agárd** on the south side of the lake, and **Velence** to the east, including 10 camp sites and a plethora of hotels and *pensions*. Székesfehérvár's Tourinform can arm you with a handy booklet outlining much of what's on offer on the lake.

Sleeping

For cheap options, check with Tourinform for college accommodation in July and August for between 2000Ft and 4000Ft per person. Ibusz can arrange private rooms (from 4500Ft per person).

Taurus Kastély (☎ 447 030; castlehotel@inbound.hu; Kastély utca 1; s/d €75/81, ste €138; ☎) Some 16km southeast of town at Seregélyes is this stately home, surrounded by 22 hectares of manicured parkland. Originally the Zichy family's country manor (1821), it now houses a hotel, complete with frescoed dining hall, tennis court and sauna; rooms are surprisingly basic, but you're paying for ambience, not over-the-top luxury. You can rent the entire joint (sleeps up to 104 people) for €4400.

Magyar Király (☎ 311 262; Fő utca 10; s/d 9300/11,000Ft; ☎) So old fashioned (it's a 150-year-

old hotel) it doesn't even have an email address. And while it's fading, it still exudes a semblance of grandeur, with a regal banquet hall, elaborate staircase and dated rooms.

Szárca (☎ 325 700; www.szarca.com; Szárca utca 1; s/d 12,000/17,500Ft; ☎) This is a fair distance south from the town centre but it's worth the trip. Each of its nine rooms are individually decorated with antique furniture and the entire effect is one of a giant doll's house. There's a quality restaurant here, too.

Vadászkürt (☎ 507 515; www.jagerhorn.hu; Berényi út 1; s/d 5900/9000Ft; ☎) This *pension* caters to business travellers and has lifeless rooms, but they're modern, clean and cheap and the centre is only 15 minutes' walk away.

Eating & Drinking

The restaurants at Taurus Kastély, Magyar Király and Szárca are all worth dining at. The wine to try in these parts is Ezerjós from Mór, 27km to the northwest in the Vértes Hills. It's an acidic, greenish-white tiple that is light and fairly pleasant. Tourinform has a list of wine cellars to visit in Mór.

Korzó (☎ 312 674; Fő utca 2; mains 900–1500Ft) With a pole position allowing views the length of Fő utca, Korzó is the pick of the restaurants in the very heart of Székesfehérvár. Its menu is filled with hefty Hungarian cuisine and its terrace is perfect for enjoying a sunny day.

Castrum (☎ 505 720; Várkörút 3; midday menu 700Ft, mains 1300–3000Ft) Show your chivalry and head to this medieval-themed cellar restaurant for above-average Hungarian fare; in the summer months, tree-shaded outdoor seating on Országzászló tér is thankfully an option.

Vörösmarty (Fő utca 6; ice cream 90Ft; ☎ 9am–9pm) This is an ice cream and cake shop that keeps the crowds satisfied with sweet delights throughout the year.

Isolabella (☎ 328 318; Kossuth Lajos utca 12; pizzas 1000Ft) Head to Isolabella if you're in the mood for pizza and people-watching; this restaurant attracts a regular following and shares a courtyard with a couple of bars.

Kávé Színház (Coffee Theatre; ☎ 310 923; Táncsics Mihály utca 1) This little spot is great for a quiet drink, day or night. Its huge terrace overlooks Koronázó tér and the Garden of Ruins.

Entertainment

For more information on what's on, check the free bi-weekly *Fehérvári Est* magazine.

Vörösmarty Theatre (☎ 515 350; Fő utca 8) This theatre, near the Magyar Király hotel, has recently experienced a complete overhaul, so expect cultural performances here to enjoy a grand backdrop.

Bahnhof Fehérvár (Takarodó utca 1) This club, east of the train station, revs (and raves) up at the weekend. It's easy to spot – a locomotive is parked into the side of the building.

West Side Music Club (☎ 507 633; Vörösmarty tér 1) Southeast of the bus station, this is another club that attracts large crowds, and has bowling and billiards if you're not up for drinking and dancing.

Getting There & Away

BUS

Buses depart for Budapest (846Ft, 1¼ hours, 68km), Veszprém (544Ft, 50 minutes, 45km) and the vineyards near Mór (302Ft, 35 minutes, 22km) about once every half hour, and you can reach Lake Velence towns like Velence and Gárdony (via Agárd) throughout the day (241Ft, around 30 minutes, 20km).

Other destinations from Székesfehérvár:

Destination	Price	Duration	Km	Frequency
Balatonfüred	786Ft	1¼hr	61	6 daily
Keszthely	1690Ft	3hr	132	5 daily
Pápa	1210Ft	2¼hr	97	2 daily
Siófók	544Ft	50min	44	6 daily
Sümege	1450Ft	3hr	116	3 daily
Szekszárd	1330Ft	2hr	104	5 daily
Tapolca	1150Ft	2¼hr	94	3 daily

TRAIN

The town is a main train junction and you can reach most destinations in Transdanubia from here. One line splits at Szabadbattyán (10km to the south), leading to Lake Balaton's northern shore and Tapolca on one side of the lake, and to the southern shore and Nagykanizsa on the other.

Trains every half-hour link Székesfehérvár with Kelenföld and Déli train stations in Budapest (658Ft, 1¼ hours, 65km); frequent trains run daily to Szombathely (1828Ft, 2½ to four hours, 170km) via Veszprém (430Ft, one hour, 45km). A local train runs north to Mór (264Ft, 35 minutes, 30km, six daily).

Getting Around

Bus 12/a runs close to Szárca Hotel. You can also book local **taxis** (☎ 222 222).

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