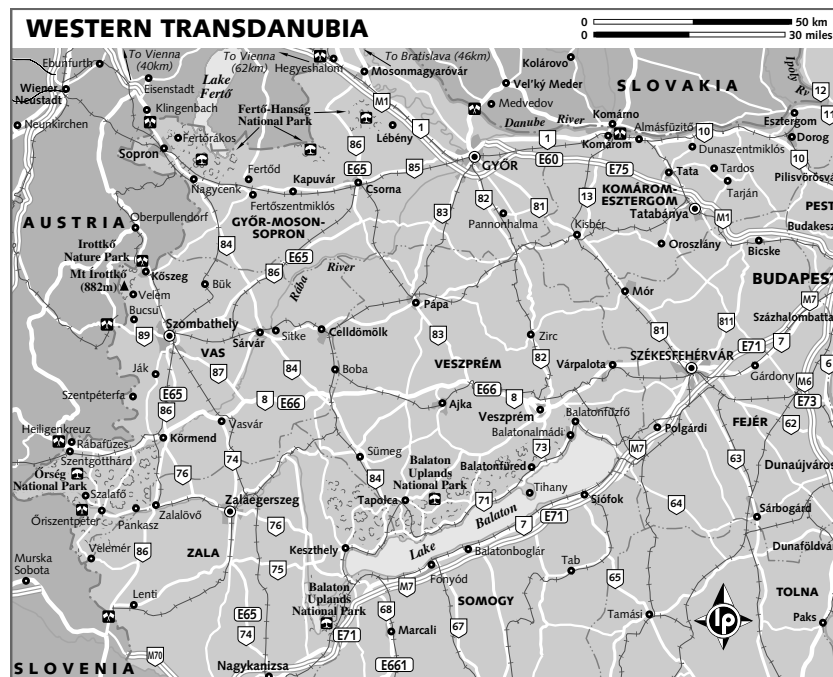


# Western Transdanubia



The aptly named region of Western Transdanubia (Nyugat-Dunántúl) lies 'across the Danube' from Budapest, extending west and southwest as far as the borders with Austria and Slovenia. It is an area of plains and rolling hills, with the vineyards of Etyek, Mór and especially Sopron producing some excellent wines. As the nation's 'window on the West', Western Transdanubia has always been the richest and most developed region of Hungary, and it contains some of the most historically important towns, castles, churches and monuments in the country.

WESTERN TRANSDANUBIA



WESTERN TRANSDANUBIA

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Watching one of the best sights in **Tata** (p153) – birds in flight – at Őreg-tó (Old Lake) in winter
- Reliving (as it were) the life and blood-sucking times of Erzsébet Báthory at Sárvár's **Nádasdy Castle** (p179)
- Exploring colourful **Jurisics tér** (p182), dubbed 'the nation's jewellery box', in Kőszeg
- Hiking in the **Őrség National Park** (p185), one of the most unspoiled and traditional areas of Hungary
- Checking out Sopron's **Storno Collection** (p165) of Romanesque and Gothic furnishings and deciding where the Storno family got it right or wrong



## History

The Danube River was the limit of Roman expansion in what is now Hungary, and most of today's Western Transdanubia formed the province of Pannonia Superior, or 'Upper Pannonia'. The Romans built some of their most important military and civilian towns here, including Arrabona (Győr), Scarbantia (Sopron), Savaria (Szombathely), Adflexum (Mosonmagyaróvár) and Brigetio (Komárom). Because of their positions on the trade route from northern Europe to the Adriatic Sea and Byzantium, and the influx of such ethnic groups as Germans and Slovaks, these towns prospered in the Middle Ages. Episcopates were established, castles were built and many of the towns were granted special royal privileges.

A large part of Western Transdanubia remained in the hands of the Habsburgs during the Turkish occupation, and it was thus spared the ruination suffered in the south and on the Great Plain. As a result, some of the best examples of Romanesque and Gothic architecture in the country can be found here. Because of Vienna's authority

and influence throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, Western Transdanubia received Hungary's first baroque churches and civic buildings.

## TATA

☎ 34 / pop 23,900

Tata (German: Totis), situated west of the Gerecse Hills, is a pleasant town of springs, canals and lakes, a castle and much history; for a town of its size, there's lots for travellers to see and do. Tata's two lakes offer ample opportunities for sport – including bird-watching – and there's a spa complex north of town. Tata is also a convenient springboard from Budapest and the Danube Bend for other Western Transdanubian towns.

## History

Tata's Őregvár (Old Castle), perched on a rock at the northern end of a large lake, has been the focus of the town since the 14th century. It was a favourite residence of King Sigismund, who added a palace to it in the early 15th century, and his daughter,

Elizabeth of Luxembourg, married here in 1440 with the purloined crown of St Stephen, en route to Székesfehérvár where her newly born son would be crowned king. King Matthias Corvinus turned Tata into a royal hunting reserve attached to Visegrád, and his successor, Vladislav (Ulászló) II, convened the diet here to escape from plague-ravaged Buda at the turn of the 16th century. The castle was badly damaged by the Turks in 1683, and the town did not begin its recovery until it was acquired by a branch of the aristocratic Esterházy family in the 18th century. They retained the services of Moravian-born architect Jakob Fellner, who designed most of Tata's fine baroque buildings.

## Orientation

Tata's bustling main street (Ady Endre utca), a section of busy Rte 1, separates larger Öreg-tó (Old Lake) from Cseke-tó (Tiny Lake). The bus station is 200m northwest of the castle on Május 1 út. The main train station is 1.5km north of the city centre.

## Information

**Main post office** (Kossuth tér 19) Southwest of the castle.  
**OTP bank** (Ady Endre utca 1-3) Opposite the clock tower.

**Tourinform** (☎ 586 046; tata@tourinform.hu; Ady Endre utca 9; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat, 9am-1pm Sun Jun-Sep, 8am-4pm Mon-Fri Oct-May) Central, with very helpful staff.

**www.tata.hu** Good introduction to Tata but of little practical use.

## Sights

### ÖREGVÁR

The remains of the medieval Old Castle – one of four original towers and a palace wing – were rebuilt in neo-Gothic style at the end of the 19th century to mark a visit by Emperor Franz Joseph. Today they house the **Domokos Kuny Museum** (☎ 381 251; adult/senior or student 500/250Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun mid-Apr–mid-Oct, 10am-2pm Wed-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun mid-Oct–mid-Apr). On the ground floor are archaeological finds from nearby Roman settlements, bits of the 12th-century Benedictine monastery near Oroszlány and contemporary drawings of the castle in its heyday. The 'Life in the Old Castle' exhibit on the 1st floor is interesting; don't miss the cathedral-like green-tiled Gothic stove that takes pride of place in the **Knights' Hall**. Material on the 2nd floor examines the work of a dozen 18th-century artisans, including Kuny, a master ceramist. Tata porcelain was well known for centuries (the crayfish, once abundant in the lake, was a common motif) and the craft indirectly led to the foundation of the porcelain factory at Herend near Veszprém.

### MILLS

Öregvár is surrounded by a moat, and a system of locks and sluices regulates the flow of water into nearby canals; Tata was once known as the 'town of mills'. The 16th-century **Cifra Mill** (Cifra-malom; Váralja utca 3), east of the castle, is interesting only for its red marble window frames and five, rapidly deteriorating, water wheels visible from the north side.

The magnificently restored **Nepomucenus Mill** (Alkotmány utca 2), built in 1758, now houses the **German Minority Museum** (Német Nemzetiségi Múzeum; ☎ 487 888; adult/child or student 200/100Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun mid-Apr–mid-Oct, 10am-2pm Wed-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun mid-Oct–mid-Apr). Like Pécs and Székesfehérvár, Tata was predominantly German-speaking for centuries, and the exhibition ('Living Together for 1100 Years') explores all aspects of the German experience in Hungary. Other mills around the lake include the **Öregkálló Mill** (Tópart sétány) and the **Miklós Mill** (Ady Endre utca 26).

### OTHER SIGHTS

Walking southwest from the castle for a few minutes through leafy Kastély tér to Hősök tere, you'll pass the Zopf-style former

**Esterházy Mansion** (Eszterházy Kastély; Kastel tér; ☎ 708 106; adult/student or child 300/150Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Sun May-Sep). Designed by Jakob Fellner in 1764 and used as a hospital for many years, it has now been restored and hosts temporary exhibitions. In the renovated Romantic-style former synagogue is the **Museum of Graeco-Roman Statue Replicas** (Görög-Római Szobormásolatok Múzeuma; ☎ 381 251; Hősök tere 7; adult/student or child 200/150Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct). Here you'll find displays of plaster copies of stone sculptures that lined the walkways of Cseke-tó in the 19th century. At Bercsényi utca 1, just before you enter Kossuth tér, is the **birthplace of Mór Farkasházi Fischer**, founder of the Herend porcelain factory (see boxed text, p218) and Tata's most famous son. Dominating the square is another of Fellner's works, the 18th-century **Holy Cross Church** (Szent Kereszt-templom), also called the Great Church.

**Cseke-tó**, surrounded by the protected 200-hectare Angolpark, built in 1780 and Hungary's first 'English park', is a relaxing place for a walk or a day of fishing.

The octagonal wooden **clock tower** (óratony; Országgyűlés tér) is a lot older than it looks. Designed by Fellner in 1763, it once housed the town's tiny prison.

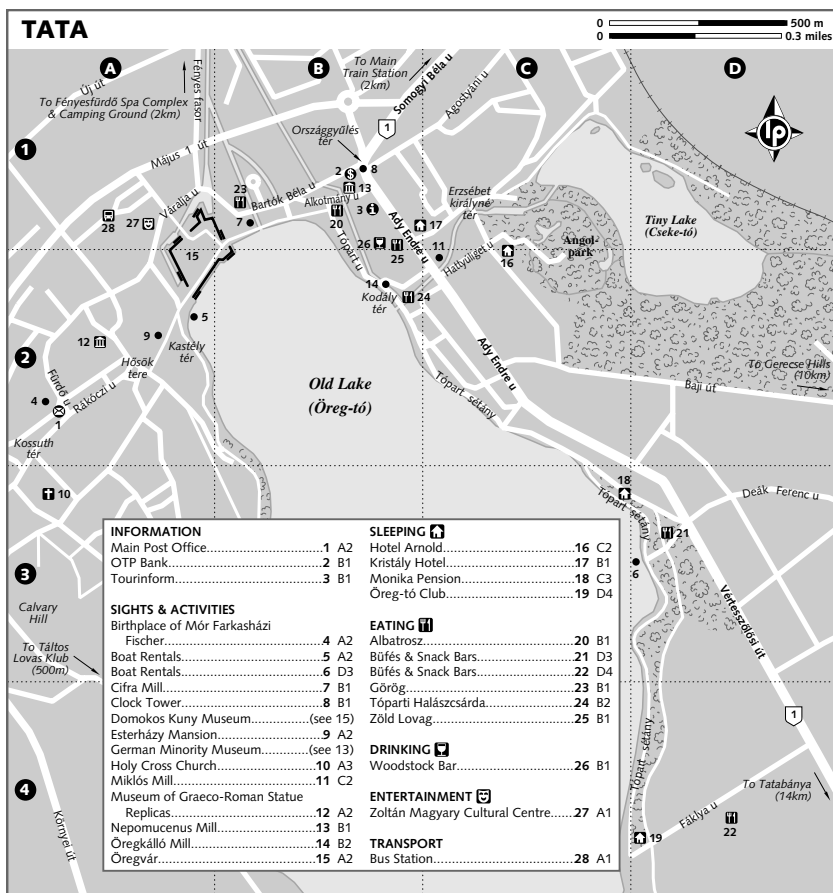
## Activities

Öreg-tó, a 'Wetland of International Importance' and protected by the Ramsar Convention, attracts a considerable number and variety of waterfowl (see boxed text, p51).

The lake has several **swimming beaches**, and **pleasure boats** (☎ 383 136; adult/child 400/300Ft) depart from the pier just southwest of the castle and on the eastern shore of the lake. **Táltos Lovas Klub** (☎ 06 30 242 2233; Fekete utca 2/a) is a horse-riding school south of Calvary Hill, with horses for hire and coach rides.

The **Fényesfürdő** (☎ 588 144; www.fenyessfurdo.hu; Fényes fásor; adult/child or student 800/500Ft, after 3pm 500/300Ft; ☎ 9am-7pm May-Sep) spa complex and camping ground north of the city centre has thermal spas and several huge pools.

Ask Tourinform for a copy of the free *Activities for Tourists in the Komárom-Esztergom Region*. If you do plan on **hiking** in the Gerecse Hills east of Tata, get a head start by taking a bus to Tardos, Tarján or Dunaszentmiklós. Cartographia publishes a 1:40,000-scale map of the area called *Gerecse Turistatérkép* (No 10; 900Ft).



## Sleeping BUDGET

**Öreg-tó Club** (☎/fax 487 960; Fáklya utca 4; bungalows per person 1200Ft, hotel d 9300Ft; (P) (☎)) Near the big lake, it has 19 basic bungalows with shared facilities and a 24-room hotel.

**Fényesfürdő Camping** (☎/fax 481 208; www.fenyeshurdo.hu; Fényes fasor; camp sites per large tent/small tent/adult/child May–mid-Jun & late Aug–mid-Sep 1100/800/1100/900Ft, mid-Jun–late Aug 1400/1000/1300/1000Ft, bungalows for 4/6 people 8500/10,500Ft & 11,000/13,000Ft; ☎ May–mid-Sep; (P) (☎)) This place is about 2km north of the city centre and connected to the spa complex. It also has motel rooms for two/four people costing 6500/9000Ft.

## MIDRANGE

**Hotel Arnold** (☎ 588 028; www.hotels.hu/arnold; Erzsébet királyné tér 8; s/d/tr €40/54/65; (P) (☎)) In an older building on the edge of Angolpark just metres from the small lake, this lovely 25-room hotel leaves the Kristály Hotel in the dust in terms of comfortable, stylish and tranquil accommodation.

**Kristály Hotel** (☎ 383 577; www.hotels.hu/kristaly\_tata; Ady Endre utca 22; old building s/d/tr €40/50/68, new building s/d €44/54; (P)) This atmospheric (though well-worn) place has 20 rooms in a 200-year-old former Esterházy holding and 17 rooms in a sympathetically designed new wing. It has a lovely back garden, but the front rooms can be rather noisy.

**Monika Pension** (☎/fax 383 208; www.hotels.hu/monikapanzio; Tópart sétány 9; d €45; (P) (☎)) Eight-room Monika is not the most modern pension, but it's right on the big lake (ask for a room with balcony) and the price is right.

## Eating & Drinking

*Büfés* and snack bars line Fáklya utca near Öreg-tó Camping and along Deák Ferenc utca near the pier where you can rent boats.

**Tóparti Halászsárda** (☎ 380 136; Tópart sétány 10; starters 500–1400Ft, mains 860–1800Ft; ☎ noon–10pm Sun–Thu, noon–midnight Fri & Sat) South of Kodály tér, the 'Lakeside Fisherman's Inn' is a quaint little eatery serving scaly things. Try its famous *halászlé* (fish soup; 860Ft). The *csárda* (Hungarian-style inn or restaurant) may be closed on Monday and Tuesday in winter.

**Görög** (☎ 480 980; Váralja utca 20; starters 750–1100Ft, mains 1100–1500Ft; ☎ noon–10pm) In a restored Esterházy mansion, the 'Greek' serves, well,

Greek-ish food in pseudo-Hellenic surroundings. It does make for a change from goulash.

**Zöld Lovag** (Green Knight; ☎ 481 681; Ady Endre utca 17; mains 1200–2700Ft; ☎ noon–11pm Sun–Thu, noon–midnight Fri & Sat) This courtyard eatery is another one of those 'medieval-style' restaurants, with colourful banners, large rough-hewn tables and chairs, a menu in Old Hungarian script and men in tights. But the food ain't half bad at this particular one.

**Albatrosz** (Tópart utca 3; soups 450–700Ft, starters 500–1050Ft, mains 1050–1400Ft) This restaurant and (sometimes lively) bar is in an attractive old house overlooking the lake near the castle. It attracts a young crowd.

**Woodstock Bar** (Ady Endre utca 13; ☎ 10am–midnight Sun–Thu, 10am–6am Fri & Sat) At the end of a courtyard just off Ady Endre utca, this is a modern joint with outdoor seating. The crowd is often young and exuberant.

## Entertainment

**Zoltán Magyar Cultural Centre** (☎ 380 811; Váralja utca 4), between the castle and the bus station, can provide you with brochures and up-to-date information on what's going on. Also consult the listings in the biweekly freebie *Komárom-Esztergomi Est*, which includes Tata.

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

Buses leave very frequently for Tatabánya (133Ft, 20 minutes, 10km, every 20 minutes), Dunaszentmiklós (182Ft, 23 minutes, 11km, at least hourly) and Komárom (423Ft, 30 to 50 minutes, 31km, at least hourly), and there are regular departures to Tarján (302Ft, one hour, 31km, six daily) in the Gerecse Hills and Oroszlány (423Ft, one hour, 32km, every 45 minutes to one hour), which is the gateway to the Vértes Hills. You can also reach Győr (907Ft, 1½ hours, 72km, two daily Monday to Saturday), Budapest (907Ft, 1½ hours, 75km, two daily via Visegrád or Tatabánya) and Esztergom (665Ft, one hour and 40 minutes, 54km, hourly) from here.

### TRAIN

Tata is on the main train line linking Budapest with Győr (512Ft, 55 to 90 minutes, 57km, half-hourly) and Vienna (5294Ft, 2½ to three hours, 189km, up to four

with just one change). There are direct trains to Sopron (1350Ft, two hours and 10 minutes, 142km, three or four daily) and Szombathely (1730Ft, three hours, 174km, two or three daily) via Tata, but you usually have to change at Győr. If you're travelling by train to Esztergom (512Ft, two hours, 51km, up to six daily with change), you must change at Almásfüzitő. To get to Slovakia, take the train to Komárom (170Ft, 15 to 20 minutes, 20km, half-hourly) and walk across the border.

## Getting Around

Bus 1 links the main train station with the bus station and Kossuth tér. Bus 3 will take you to Fényesfürdő; bus 5 gets you close to Fáklya utca. For a local taxi call ☎ 489 808 or 489 080.

## GYŐR

☎ 96 / pop 129,000

Győr is usually pegged as 'that big industrial city with the funny name' and neither can be denied. Pronounced something like 'jyeur', Győr (German: Raab) is an important producer of trucks, rolling stock and textiles, and is the nation's third-largest industrial centre.

But Győr is also a historical city; in fact, after Budapest and Sopron, no place in the country can boast as many important buildings and monuments, and no traveller to Transdanubia should miss it. Stroll 100m up pedestrian Baross Gábor utca from the bus or train station and you'll enter a world that has, in some regards, changed little since the 17th and 18th centuries.

## History

Situated in the heart of the so-called Little Plain, or Kisalföld, at the meeting point of the Mosoni-Danube and Rába Rivers, Győr was settled first by the Celts and then by the Romans who called it Arrabona. The Avars came here, too, and built a circular fort (called a *gyűrű* from which the town took its name) before the arrival of the Magyars.

King Stephen established a bishopric at Győr in the 11th century, and 200 years later the town was granted a royal charter, allowing it to levy taxes on goods passing through.

A castle was built here in the 16th century and, being surrounded by water, was an

easily defended outpost between Turkish-held Hungary and Vienna, the seat of the Habsburg Empire, until late in the century. When the Ottomans captured Győr, they were able to hold on to it for only four years and were evicted in 1598. For that reason Győr is known as the 'dear guard', watching over the nation through the centuries.

## Orientation

Győr's train station lies south of Honvéd liget (Soldier Park) on Révai Miklós utca. To reach the bus station in Hunyadi utca on the other side of the train line, go through the subway (underpass) east of the main entrance. Baross Gábor utca leads to the Belváros, the historic Inner Town, and the rivers run to the north and northwest.

## Information

**Different Internet Café** (☎ 516 810; Zichy Palace, Liszt Ferenc utca 20; per 30min 250Ft; ☎ 8am–9pm Mon–Fri, 2–9pm Sat) Internet access on six machines in the basement of a stunning 18th-century mansion.

**lbusz** (☎ 311 700; Kazinczy utca 3; ☎ 8am–5pm Mon–Fri, 8am–1pm Sat) More useful for accommodation than general information.

**Main post office** (Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út 46; ☎ 8am–6pm Mon–Fri) Opposite the Győr National Theatre; train station branch (Révai Miklós utca 8) South of the colossal city hall.

**OTP bank** (Baross Gábor utca 16; ☎ 7.45am–4pm Mon, 7.45am–3pm Tue–Thu, 7.45am–1.30pm Fri)

**Tourinform** (☎/fax 311 771; gyor@tourinform.hu; Árpád út 32; ☎ 8am–8pm Mon–Fri, 9am–6pm Sat & Sun Jun–mid-Sep, 8am–6pm Mon–Fri, 9am–2pm Sat Apr & May, 9am–4pm Mon–Fri, 9am–2pm Sat mid-Sep–Mar) In a kiosk, just north of the county hall.

**www.gyor.hu** Has both background and practical information but doesn't seem to be updated very often.

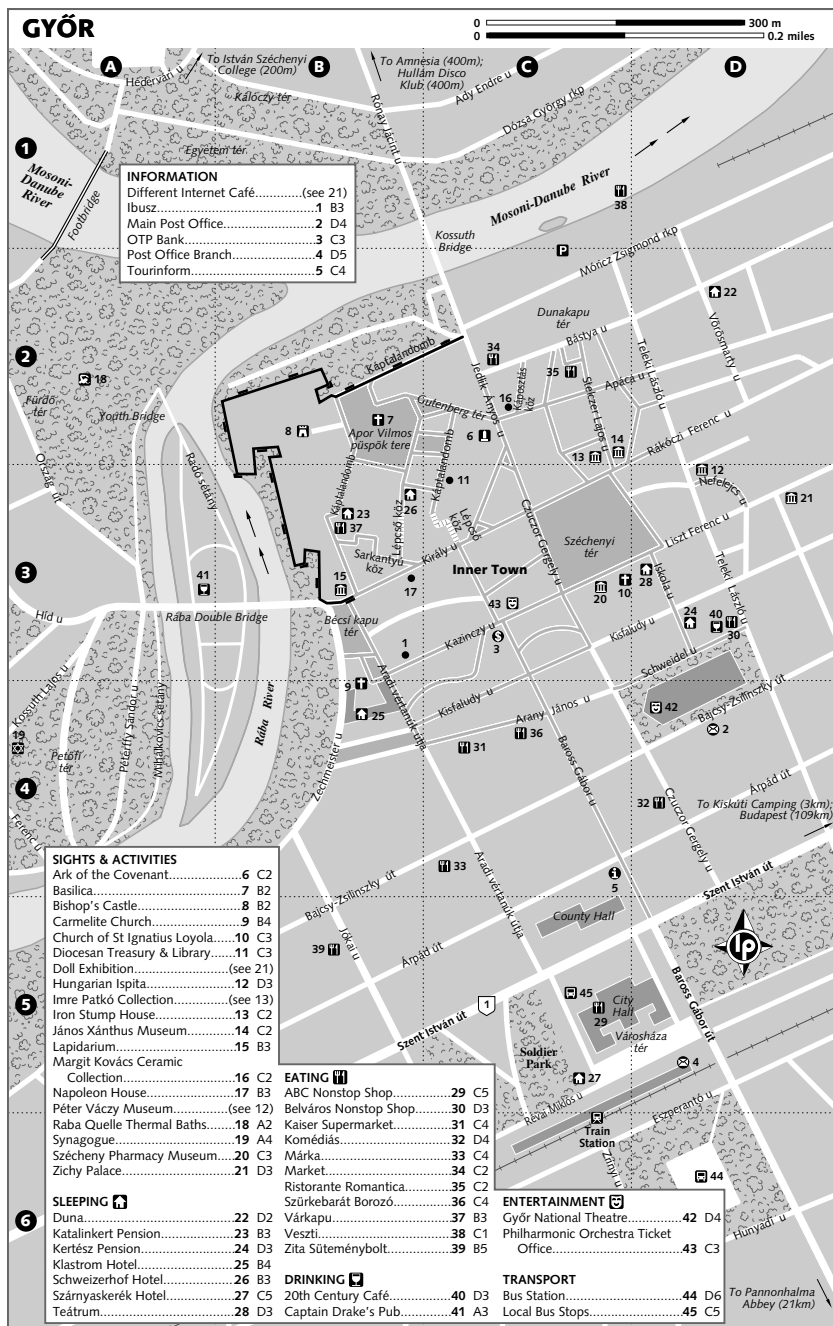
## Sights

### BÉCSI KAPU TÉR

Baroque 'Viennese Gate Sq' is dominated to the south by the **Carmelite church** built in 1725. On the north and northwest side of the square and cutting it off from the river are the fortifications built in the 16th century to stop the Turkish onslaught, and a bastion that has served as a prison, a chapel, a shop and, until recently, even a restaurant.

In the casemates is the **lapidarium** (☎ 310 588; Bécsi kapu tér 5; adult/senior or student 400/200Ft; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun Apr–Oct), a rich collection of Roman and medieval bits and pieces (the majority of which is stone remains); it is





## NAPOLEONIC PAUSE

Known only to pedants and Lonely Planet guidebook writers is the 'footnote fact' that Napoleon actually spent a night in Hungary – at Király utca 4, due east of Bécsi kapu tér, on 31 August 1809. The building is now called Napoleon-ház (Napoleon House), appropriately enough, and contains a branch of the City Museum. And why did NB choose Győr to make his grand entrée into Hungary? Apparently the city was near a battle site and an inscription on the Arc de Triomphe in Paris recalls 'la bataille de Raab'.

a branch of the János Xánthus Museum. To the north but still within the fortified walls is the **Bishop's Castle** (Püspökvár), a fortress-like structure with parts dating from the 13th century; the foundations of an 11th-century Romanesque chapel are on the south side.

## KÁPTALAN-DOMB

From Bécsi kapu tér, Káptalan-domb (Chapter Hill) leads to Apor Vilmos püspök tére, the oldest part of the city. The **basilica** (Bazilika; admission free; ☎ 8am-noon & 2-6pm), whose foundations date back to the 11th century, is an odd amalgam of styles, with Romanesque apses (have a look from the outside), a neo-classical façade and a Gothic chapel riding piggyback on the south side. But most of what you see inside, including the stunning frescoes by Franz Anton Maulbertsch, the main altar, the bishop's throne and the pews hewn from Dalmatian oak, is baroque and dates from the 17th and 18th centuries.

The Gothic **Héderváry Chapel** contains one of the most beautiful (and priceless) examples of medieval gold work in Hungary, the **Herm of László**. It's a bust reliquary of one of Hungary's earliest king-saints (r 1077-95) and dates from the early 15th century. If you're looking for miracles, though, move to the north aisle and the **Weeping Icon of Mary**, an altarpiece brought from Galway by the Irish Bishop of Clonfert in 1649, who had been sent packing by Oliver Cromwell. Some 40 years later – on St Patrick's Day no less – it began to cry tears of blood and is still a pilgrimage site.

To the east of the Basilica is the **Diocesan Treasury and Library** (Egyházmegyei kincstár

és könyvtár; ☎ 525 090; adult/senior or student/family 300/150/500Ft; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun mid-Mar–Oct), one of the richest in Hungary and labelled in English.

As you descend narrow Gutenberg tér to the east of the Basilica, you'll pass the outstanding **Ark of the Covenant** (Frigyszekrény szobor; Jedlik Ányos utca), a large statue dating from 1731. Local tradition has it that King Charles (Károly) III erected the ark, the city's finest baroque monument, to appease the angry people of Győr after one of his soldiers accidentally knocked a monstrance containing the Blessed Sacrament out of the bishop's hands during a religious procession. Just opposite the ark but entered from Káposztás köz 8 is the **Margit Kovács Ceramic Collection** (Kovács Margit kerámiagyűjtemény; ☎ 326 739; Apáca utca 1; adult/senior or student/family 400/200/1000Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), a branch of the City Art Museum devoted to the celebrated ceramicist Margit Kovács (1902-77) who was born in Győr.

## SZÉCHENYI TÉR

A couple of blocks southeast of Káptalan-domb is enormous Széchenyi tér, which was the town's marketplace in the Middle Ages. On the south side, the Jesuit and later Benedictine **Church of St Ignatius Loyola**, the city's finest, dates from 1641. The 17th-century white-stucco side chapels and the ceiling frescoes painted by the Viennese baroque artist Paul Troger in 1744 are worth a look. Next door, the **Szécheny Pharmacy Museum** (Szécheny Patikamúzeum; ☎ 320 954; Széchenyi tér 9; admission free; ☎ 7.30am-4pm Mon-Fri) was established by the Jesuits in 1654 and is a fully operational baroque institution. You can inspect the rococo vaulted ceiling and its fabulous frescoes with religious and herbal themes.

If time is limited, skip the main branch of the **János Xánthus Museum** (☎ 310 588; Széchenyi tér 5; adult/senior or student 500/250Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-2pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar), with exhibits on local history, stamps, coins, antique furniture and natural history, and head next door to the **Imre Patkó Collection** (☎ 310 588; Széchenyi tér 5; adult/senior or student 400/200Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, with advance booking 10am-2pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar) in the 17th-century **Iron Stump House** (Vastuskós Ház), a former caravanserai entered from Stelczer Lajos utca that still sports the log into which

itinerant artisans would drive a nail to mark their visit. The museum has an excellent collection of 20th-century fine art on the first two floors; the 3rd floor is given over to objects collected by the journalist and art historian Imre Patkó during his travels in India, Tibet, Vietnam and west Africa.

### OTHER SIGHTS

The late Renaissance **Hungarian Ispita** (Magyar Ispita; 3 Nefejejs köz), once a charity hospital, now houses the **Péter Váczy Museum** (☎ 318 141; adult/senior or student/family 400/200/1000Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun). Váczy, a history professor and avid antiques collector, managed to assemble quite an eclectic assortment of pieces, from Greek and Roman relics to Chinese terracotta figures, all of which are on display.

In the stunning **Zichy Palace** (Zichy palota; Liszt Ferenc utca 20) is the **Doll Exhibition** (Baba Kiállítás; ☎ 320 289; adult/child 200/100Ft; ☎ 8am-3.30pm Mon-Thu, 8am-1pm Fri), consisting of some 72 19th-century dolls and furniture. It's worth a visit just to see the 18th-century baroque palace, which is also used sometimes for concerts and plays.

Across the river the richly decorated octagonal cupola, galleries and tabernacle of the city's erstwhile **synagogue** (Kossuth Lajos utca 5), built in 1870, are worth a look if you can get into the partially restored building; try at the entrance to the music academy (formerly a Jewish school) next door.

### Activities

On the left bank of the Rába River is **Raba Quelle** (☎ 514 900; www.gyorthermal.hu; Fürdő tér 1; adult/child or student per day 1600/1000Ft, per 3hr 1300/800Ft; ☎ thermal baths 9am-10pm year-round, covered pool 6am-8pm Mon-Sat year-round, open-air pool 8am-8pm May-Aug), Győr's renovated complex of thermal baths, pools, and fitness and wellness centres, offering every treatment imaginable.

### Festivals & Events

The prestigious **Hungarian Dance Festival** (www.nemzetitanacszinhas.hu/english/festivals.php) is held biannually in Győr in late June.

### Sleeping

#### BUDGET

A limited number of private rooms (4200Ft per two people) are available from Ibusz.

**István Széchenyi College** (☎ 503 447; Hédervári út 3; dm 2300Ft) Dormitory accommodation is available year-round at this huge school north of the city centre.

**Szárnyaskerék Hotel** (☎ 314 629; fax 317 844; Révai Miklós utca 5; d/without/with bathroom 5500/7800Ft) Within stumbling distance of the train and bus stations is the 'Winged Wheel', a four-storey, 30-room hotel that could do with some TLC before it totally disintegrates. The two dozen or so rooms without private bathrooms have washbasins.

**Kiskúti Camping** (☎ 318 986, 06 30 600 7905; camp sites incl tent & adult 1600Ft, bungalows for 2/4 people 2400/4000Ft, motel d/tr/q 4000/6000/8000Ft; ☎ bungalows mid-Apr–mid-Oct; ☎) Some 3km northeast of town in Kiskútliget (Little Well Park) and near the stadium is this camping ground for 300 people. It also has bungalows and a 32-room heated motel.

### MIDRANGE

Unusually for a Hungarian city, Győr is full of small private *pensions*. Very central and in some of the city's most colourful old buildings, they're very good value but seldom have lifts.

**Teátrum** (☎ /fax 310 640; www.teatrum.hu in Hungarian; Schweidel utca 7; s/d/tr 7500/9500/11,500Ft) An excellent choice, this very central *pension* on an attractive pedestrian street has 10 rooms.

**Duna** (☎ /fax 329 084; paarhotels@mail.arrabonet.hu; Vörösmarty utca 5; s/d/tr 6500/8500/10,400Ft) Teátrum's sister-*pension* and equally recommended, the powder-blue 14-room Duna has antique furniture in some of the common rooms.

**Katalinkert Pension** (☎ /fax 542 088; katalinkert@axelero.hu; Sarkantyú köz 3; s/d 7100/9100Ft; ☎) This lovely place has six modern rooms tucked away above a pleasant courtyard restaurant. The staff here are exceptionally friendly and helpful.

**Kertész Pension** (☎ /fax 317 461; sometimes love@freemail.hu; Iskola utca 11; s/d/tr/q 6900/9900/13,000/15,000Ft) The friendly 'Gardener' has nine cheery rooms, a tiny sauna and some fitness machines.

### TOP END

**Schweizerhof Hotel** (☎ 329 171; www.schweizerhof.hu; Sarkantyú köz 11-13; s €68, d €73-82; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This is Győr's finest top-end hotel and about as plush as you'll find here. There's

a wellness centre, wine cellar, and quality restaurant and bar within the hotel.

**Klastrom Hotel** (☎ 516 910; www.klastrom.hu; Zechmeister utca 1; s/d/tr €55/70/80; ☎ ☎) This delightful three-star hotel is in a 300-year-old Carmelite convent south of Bécsi kapu tér. It boasts a sauna, solarium, pub with a vaulted ceiling, and a restaurant with seating in a leafy and peaceful inner garden. The best rooms face the courtyard.

### Eating

#### RESTAURANTS & CAFÉS

**Várkapu** (☎ 328 625; Bécsi kapu tér 7; dishes 700-2400Ft; ☎ 10am-11pm Tue-Sun) Overlooking the Carmelite church, this is a charming little eatery, particularly when dining is available on the terrace. It has a limited but excellent menu of Hungarian favourites.

**Komédiás** (☎ 527 217; Czuczor Gergely utca 30; soups 350-750Ft, starters 500-1900Ft, mains 960-2720Ft; ☎ 11am-midnight Mon-Sat) A very upscale cellar eatery decorated in postmodern greys and blacks, the 'Comedian' is opposite the Béla Bartók Cultural Centre. It has courtyard seating, which is a delight in the warmer months, and there are good-value set menus (570Ft and 670Ft).

**Ristorante Romantica** (☎ 314 127; Dunakapu tér 5; starters 1125-3750Ft, pasta 1250-1875Ft, mains 1850-3850Ft) The name might be hyperbole but the RR is a lovely restaurant just down from the river, with superb Italian food and an eye for detail.

**Szürkebarát Borozó** (☎ 311 548; Arany János utca 20; soups & starters 250-600Ft, mains 750-2600Ft; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat) A decent wine cellar-restaurant in a small courtyard, where you'll also find a small kiosk selling very popular

#### AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Veszi** (☎ 337 700; Móricz Zsigmond rakpart 3; soups 440-640Ft, starters 460-1690Ft, mains 990-1990Ft; ☎ 10.30am-10pm Mon-Thu, 10.30am-midnight Fri, 10.30am-2am Sat, 10.30am-3pm Sun) It hardly serves what you'd call *haute gourmande* food, but this jack-of-all-trades eatery, on an atmospheric old riverboat on the Mosoni-Danube River, has everything from Hungarian mains to pizza (490Ft to 1490Ft) and Tex-Mex (1290Ft to 1690Ft). It attracts a fun crowd and the service is right on the ball.

ice cream for 100Ft per scoop. The restaurant also does breakfast (350 Ft to 600Ft) and there's a set menu at lunch (530Ft).

**Zita Süteménybolt** (☎ 323 180; Jókai utca 6/a; cakes 100-120Ft; ☎ variable) For something sweet don't go by this window dispensing cakes and pastries. It's so popular that people sometime have to queue up along the footpath.

### QUICK EATS & SELF-CATERING

**Márka** (☎ 320 800; Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út 30; dishes 250-540Ft; ☎ 11am-5pm Mon-Sat) A modernised cafeteria and a good choice for a cheap self-service meal in the centre of town.

A very small but colourful open-air **market** (Dunakapu tér) is held most mornings. Shops selling foodstuffs and sundries:

**ABC nonstop shop** (Révai Miklós utca; ☎ 24hr) Next to the train station.

**Belváros nonstop shop** (Schweidel utca 27; ☎ 10am-6am)

**Kaiser supermarket** (Arany János utca 16; ☎ 7.30am-7pm Mon, 6.30am-7pm Tue-Fri, 6.30am-3pm Sat)

### Drinking

**Captain Drake's Pub** (☎ 312 686; Radó sétány 1; ☎ noon-midnight Sun-Thu, noon-2am Fri & Sat) A relaxing spot for a drink on the little island in the Rába River.

**20th Century Café** (☎ 312 819; Schweidel utca 25; ☎ 7am-midnight Sun-Thu, 7am-5am Fri & Sat) This very central café promotes itself as a cocktail bar and caters to a more mature crowd.

### Entertainment

A good source of information for what's on in Győr is the free fortnightly magazine *Győri Est*.

**Győr National Theatre** (Győri Nemzeti Színház; ☎ 520 600, 314 800, ticket office 520 611; www.gyoriszinhas.hu in Hungarian; Czuczor Gergely utca 7; ☎ 10am-1pm Mon, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Tue-Fri) This is a modern, technically advanced though rather unattractive structure covered in Op Art tiles by the promoter of the style Victor Vasarely. The celebrated **Győr Ballet** (www.gyoriballet.hu), the city's opera company and the **philharmonic orchestra** (☎ ticket office 326 323; Kisfaludy utca 25; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-4.30pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 8am-noon & 1-5pm Thu) all perform here.

**Annésia** (☎ 06 30 402 2411; Szövetség utca 12; ☎ 10am-midnight Mon-Wed, 10am-2am Thu & Fri, 2pm-2am Sat, 4pm-midnight Sun) A popular bar-cum-club with theme nights – 'Italo Disco Night' anyone? – that attracts a student crowd.

**Hullám Disco Klub** (☎ 315 276; Hédervári utca 22; ☎ 10pm-5am Fri & Sat) This weekend-only dance club just a few metres away from Amnésia has DJs and a Moroccan-themed restaurant, with food available till 4am.

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

Buses depart from Győr for the following places:

Destination	Price	Duration	Km	Frequency
Balatonfüred	1210Ft	2½hr	100	7 daily
Budapest	1570Ft	1hr 5min	128	12-16 daily
Dunaiújváros	1690Ft	2½-3hr	137	5 daily
Esztergom	1210Ft	2½hr	99	1-2 daily
Hévíz	1570Ft	3hr	124	2 daily
Kapuvár	605Ft	1hr 10min	50	half-hourly
Keszthely	1570Ft	3¾hr	129	4 daily
Lébény	302Ft	30min	23	8-12 daily
Mosonmagyaróvár	484Ft	50min	39	up to 12 daily
Pannonhalma	302Ft	30min	21	half-hourly
Pápa	605Ft	1hr	48	10 daily
Pécs	3020Ft	4-5hr	243	2 daily
Sümege	1210Ft	2¼hr	99	4 daily
Székesfehérvár	1090Ft	1½hr	86	7 daily
Szombathely	1330Ft	2½hr	110	5-7 daily
Tapolca	1330Ft	2½hr	106	2-3 daily
Tata	786Ft	1½hr	64	3 daily
Veszprém	968Ft	1½hr	79	9 daily
Vienna	1918Ft	2hr	129	2-3 daily
Zalaegerszeg	2060Ft	4hr	165	5 daily

### TRAIN

Győr is the main train junction after Budapest. It has convenient connections with Budapest (1338Ft, 1½ to two hours, 131km, half-hourly) and Vienna (4750Ft, 1½ hours, 119km, six to eight daily) via Hegyeshalom. Trains to Ebenfurth in Austria via Sopron are run by GySEV, which isn't part of the MÁV system; they are less frequent.

You can also reach Szombathely (1142Ft, 1½ to two hours, 117km, eight daily) by train via Celldölmök or Csorna and the gateway to the Balaton region, Veszprém (739Ft, two hours, 79km, four or five daily) via Pannonhalma and Zirc. If heading for Slovakia, change trains at Komárom (326Ft, 30 minutes, 37km, hourly).

## Getting Around

You can easily reach Kiskúti Camping on bus 8 from beside the city hall on Városház

tér, where a number of other local buses also stop.

Parking is difficult (and costly) in Győr and the one-way system very confusing for the uninitiated. Avoid driving in the city if at all possible. Local taxis are available on ☎ 444 444.

## PANNONHALMA

☎ 96 / pop 4090

Since the late 10th century, this small village 21km southeast of Győr has been the site of a Benedictine abbey, which even managed to continue functioning during the darkest days of Stalinism. Its secondary school, founded in 1802 and attended by more than 300 students, is among the best in the country. In 1996 the abbey received the distinction of being added to Unesco's World Heritage List and is now one of the most impressive historical complexes in Hungary.

## History

The monastery was founded by monks from Venice and Prague with the assistance of Prince Géza. The Benedictines were considered a militant order, and Géza's son, King Stephen, used them to help convert the Magyars to Christianity.

The abbey and associated buildings have been razed, rebuilt and restored many times over the centuries; it escaped damage during the Turkish occupation when it was used as a mosque. As a result, the complex is a patchwork of architectural styles.

## Orientation

Pannonhalma is dominated by Várhegy (Castle Hill) and the abbey. Most buses from Győr stop in the village centre; from here follow Váralja up to the abbey. About four or five buses continue up the eastern side of the hill and stop at the abbey's main entrance.

The train station is a few kilometres west of the village off Petőfi utca in the direction of Rte 82.

## Information

**Main post office** (Dózsa György utca 7; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) Also does foreign exchange.

**OTP bank** (Dózsa György utca 1)

**Tourinform** (☎ /fax 471 733; pannonhalma@tourinform.hu; Petőfi utca 25; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) Inconveniently located about 600m south of Szabadság tér at the Ferenc Kazinczy Cultural Centre.

## Sights

**Pannonhalma Abbey** (Pannonhalmi főapátság; ☎ 570 191; www.bences.hu; Vár utca 1; ☎ 9am-4pm Tue-Sun late Mar-May & Oct-mid-Nov, 9am-5pm Jun-Sep, 10am-3pm Tue-Sun mid-Nov-late Mar) was spruced up for its 1000th birthday in 1996. After buying your ticket at the reception building opposite the car park and watching a 15-minute film about life in the monastic community, follow the overhead walkway to the central courtyard, where the tour begins. In the centre you'll see a statue of the first abbot, Asztrik, who brought the crown of King Stephen to Hungary from Rome, and a relief of King Stephen himself presenting his son Imre to the tutor Bishop Gellért. To the north are dramatic views of the Kisalföld, while looming behind you are the abbey's modern wings and a neoclassical clock tower built in the early 19th century.

The entrance to **St Martin's Basilica** (Szent Márton-bazilika), built early in the 12th century, is through the **Porta Speciosa**. This arched doorway in red limestone was re-carved in the mid-19th century by the Stornos, a controversial family of restorers who imposed 19th-century Romantic notions of Romanesque and Gothic architecture on ancient buildings (see p165); it is beautiful despite the butchery. The fresco above the doorway by Ferenc Storno depicts the church's patron, St Martin of Tours, giving half his cloak to a crouching beggar. Look down to the right below the columns and you'll see what is probably the oldest graffiti in Hungary: 'Benedict Padary was here in 1578', in Latin.

As you walk along the cloister arcade, you'll notice the little faces carved in stone on the wall. They represent human emotions and vices, such as wrath, greed and conceit, and are meant to remind monks of the base-ness and transitory nature of human existence. In the cloister garden a Gothic sundial offers a sobering thought: 'Una Vestrum, Ultima Mea' (One of you will be my last).

The most beautiful part of the abbey is the neoclassical **abbey library** (főapátság könyvtára) built in 1836 by János Packh, who was involved in designing the Esztergom Basilica. It contains some 300,000 volumes – many of them priceless historical records – making it the largest private library in Hungary. But the rarest and most important document is in the abbey archives.

It is the *Deed of Foundation* of Tihany Abbey and dates from 1055. It is written in Latin, but also contains about 50 Hungarian place names, making it the earliest surviving example of written Hungarian. The library's interior may look like marble, but it is actually wood made to look like the more expensive stone. An ingenious system of mirrors within the skylights reflects and redirects natural light throughout the room.

The **art gallery** (*képtár*) off the library contains works by Dutch, Italian and Austrian masters from the 16th to 18th centuries. The oldest work, however, goes back to 1350.

Because it still functions as a monastery, the abbey must be visited with a guide. Tours in Hungarian (with foreign-language text) go on the hour between 9am and 5pm daily from June to September, and in English and four other languages (Italian, German, French and Russian) at 11.20am, 1.20 and 3.20pm. From late March to May and October to mid-November they leave on the hour between 9am and 4pm Tuesday to Sunday, with tours in other languages only available at 11.20am and 1.20pm. In winter tours in Hungarian occur five times daily Tuesday to Sunday (10am to 3pm); those in other languages are by request only.

## Activities

Oázis Bikerent at the *Familia pension* has **bicycles** (per day 1500Ft) for hire. Ask Tourinform for a copy of *Cycling in West Transdanubia: Pannonhalma-Sokoró*, which includes three cycle tours of the area between 45km and 56km long.

## Festivals & Events

Six **organ and choral concerts** are scheduled between April and December in the basilica – always at the same time, 3.30pm, and on the same dates: Easter Monday, Whit Monday, St Stephen's Day (20 August), Virgin Mary's Birthday (Saturday before/after 8 September), National Day (23 October) and 26 December. See www.bences.hu for details.

## Sleeping

**Pannon** (☎ /fax 470 041; www.hotels.hu/pannon; Hunyadi út 7/c; s/d/tr/q 6200/8300/9800/11,000Ft; ☎) A relatively large guesthouse – with 16 rooms, it's almost a small hotel – on the way up the hill to the abbey. The surrounding garden is a plus.



**Familia** (☎ /fax 570 592; <http://w3.enternet.hu/familiaip>; Béke utca 61; s/d/tr/q 3750/5500/6750/9000Ft; (P)) This seven-room, very homey *pension* has a small kitchen and lounge available for guests' use, and there are bicycles for rent. You'll find it on Rte 82 as you enter the town from the north.

**Fazekas Vendégház** (☎ /fax 470 157; Kisfaludy utca 1; d/tr 4300/5800Ft; (P)) This very simple B&B, with four rooms just opposite the Tourinform office, is about the closest Pannonhalma has to budget accommodation. It's comfortable but basic.

### Eating & Drinking

**Pannon** (☎ /fax 470 041; Hunyadi út 7/c; mains 900-1950Ft; ☎ 12.30-9.30pm Tue-Sun) The restaurant at this *pension* is a convenient place for a meal going to or coming from the abbey.

**Kolostor** (☎ 470 012; Szabadság tér 1; soups 380-550Ft, starters 680-1500Ft, mains 950-2680Ft; ☎ 10am-9pm Mon-Thu, 10am-10pm Fri & Sat, 10am-5pm Sun) In a historic building in the centre of town, this is the best place in Pannonhalma for a meal.

**Szent Márton** (☎ 470 793; Vár utca 1; soups 400-700Ft, starters 900-1500Ft, mains 800-2400Ft; ☎ 10am-4pm) Below the abbey and at the back of the car park, this place has a snack bar, pub and gift shop, as well as a decent – if not groundbreaking – restaurant.

While in town try some of the wine from the nearby Pannonhalma-Sokoróalja region, which produces some excellent white whites, notably Rieslings; the abbey's vineyard produces some 300,000 bottles annually from vines planted only in 2001.

**Borbírodalom** (Wine Empire; ☎ 471 240; Szabadság tér 27; ☎ 11am-7pm) A good place to start is this wine cellar and restaurant, diagonally across from the Kolostor restaurant in the town centre. It has an extensive selection available for tasting (140Ft to 200Ft per 10cL, 350Ft to 500Ft per 25cL).

### Getting There & Away

There are frequent buses to/from Győr (302Ft, 30 minutes, 21km, half-hourly). The first bus from Győr leaves for Pannonhalma at 7.20am (8.50am Saturday and Sunday) and the last bus from Pannonhalma to Győr departs at 5.35pm daily.

Trains stop at Pannonhalma on their way to Veszprém (512Ft, 1¼ hours, 58km, six daily), usually from Győr (248Ft, 30 minutes, 21km, six to eight daily).

## SOPRON

☎ 99 / pop 55,600

At the foot of the Lővér Hills and only a couple of kilometres from Lake Fertő, Fertő-Hanság National Park and Austria, Sopron (German: Ödenburg) is one of the most charming medieval cities in Hungary. With its preponderance of Gothic and early baroque architecture, Sopron is the closest city Hungary has to Prague (though admittedly on a much smaller scale), and exploring the backstreets and courtyards of the Inner Town is like stepping back in time.

### History

Sopron has had more wars, difficult decisions and political rulings thrust upon it than most other Hungarian cities. Indeed as recently as 1921 its citizens had to vote whether to stay in Austria's *Bürgenland* as a result of the Trianon Treaty (see p29) or be reannexed by Hungary. They resoundingly chose the latter, which explains the little knot of Hungarian territory that juts into Austria.

First to arrive in the area were the Celts, then came the Romans, who lived in a settlement called *Scarbantia* (now Sopron's Inner Town) between the 1st and 4th centuries. The Germans, Avars, Slavs and the Magyars followed in succession. In medieval times Sopron was ideally situated for trade along the so-called Amber Route from the Baltic Sea to the Adriatic and Byzantium. By the 1300s, after a century of struggle between the Hungarians and the Austrians for hegemony over the city, Sopron had been made a royal free town – its mixed population able to pursue their trades without pressure from feudal landlords. Thus a strong middle class of artisans and merchants emerged here, and their wealth contributed to making Sopron a centre of science and education.

Neither the Mongols nor Turks were able to penetrate the heart of Sopron, which is why so many old buildings still stand. But damage during WWII was extensive – the area saw much restoration work done in the 1960s.

### Orientation

The medieval *Belváros*, or Inner Town, shaped vaguely like a shoeprint, contains

almost everything of interest, though there are a few worthy sights across the narrow Ikva Stream to the northeast, just beyond the city walls. The Lővér Hills start about 4km southwest of the city. *Várkerület* and *Ógabona tér* form a ring around the Inner Town, roughly following the city's Roman and medieval walls.

Sopron's main train station (Map p167) is on *Állomás utca*, about 800m south of the Inner Town. Sopron-Déli train station (Map p167), through which trains to/from Szombathely also pass, is to the northwest of the Sopron train station. The bus station is just northwest of the Inner Town on Lackner Kristóf utca.

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## Information

**Ciklámen Tourist** (☎ 312 694; fax 311 480; Ógábona tér 8; ☞ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat) On the road leading to the bus station.

**Main post office** (Széchenyi tér 7-8) South of the Inner Town; Inner Town branch (Várkerület 37; ☞ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri)

**OTP bank** (Várkerület 96/a)

**Tourinform** (main branch ☎ 517 560;

sopron@tourinform.hu; Ferenc Liszt Conference & Cultural Centre, Liszt Ferenc utca 1; ☞ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri year-round, 9am-3pm Sat & Sun Jun-mid-Sep; Inner Town branch ☎ /fax 338 892; Előkapu utca 11; ☞ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri Jun-mid-Sep) Just north of the Inner Town.

**www.sopron.hu** Attractive and easy-to-use, with practical and background information.

## Sights

### INNER TOWN

The best place to begin a tour of Sopron is to climb the 200 steps of the narrow circular staircase to the top of the 60m-high **fire-watch tower** (tűztorony; ☎ 311 327; Fő tér; adult/senior or student 500/250Ft; ☞ 10am-8pm Tue-Sun May-Aug, 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr, Sep & Oct) at the northern end of Fő tér. The tower affords excellent views over the city, the Lővér Hills to the southwest and the Austrian Alps to the west, as well as Fő tér below and the four narrow streets that make up the Inner Town.

The tower, from which trumpeters would warn of fire, mark the hour (now done by chimes and tinny music) and greet visitors to the city in the Middle Ages, is a true architectural hybrid. The 2m-thick square base, built on a Roman gate, dates from the 12th century, and the cylindrical middle and arched balcony from the 16th century. The baroque spire was added in 1681. **Fidelity Gate** at the bottom of the tower shows 'Hungaria' receiving the *civitas fidelissima* (Latin for 'the most loyal citizenry') of Sopron. It was erected in 1922 after that crucial referendum.

Another way to get a feel for the city is to follow the **castle wall walk** (várfal sétány; admission free; ☞ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat & Sun), but

since so much of it goes behind or between buildings you won't see as much.

The focal points of graceful Fő tér are the **Trinity Column** (1701), the best example of a 'plague pillar' in Hungary, and, on the south side of the square, the old **Goat Church** (Kecsketemplom; Templom utca 1; admission free; ☞ 8am-6pm), whose name comes from the heraldic animal of its chief benefactor. The church was originally built in the late 13th century, but many additions and improvements have been made over the centuries. The interior is now mostly baroque, though the red marble pulpit in the centre of the south aisle dates from the 15th century. Beneath the church is the **Chapter Hall** (Káptalan-terem; ☎ 338 843; Templom utca 1; admission free; ☞ visits at 10am, 11am, 2pm, 3pm & 4pm Mon-Sat, 11am Sun Jun-Aug) – part of a 14th-century Benedictine monastery, with frescoes and stone carvings of grotesques, demons, and human moods and emotions.

The **Pharmacy Museum** (Patikamúzeum; ☎ 311 327; Fő tér 2; adult/senior or student 300/150Ft; ☞ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-2pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar) is in a Gothic building beside the Goat Church and contains the usual scary things in cobwebby bottles and vile vials.

Across the square are **Fabricius House** (Fő tér 6) and **Storno House** (Fő tér 8); both contain exhibits of the Sopron Museum. The first contains **urban flats** (polgári lakások; ☎ 311 327; adult/senior or student 500/250Ft; ☞ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-2pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar) on the upper floors, with rooms devoted to domestic life in Sopron in the 17th and 18th centuries. There are a few kitchen mock-ups and exhibits explaining how people made their beds and washed their dishes in those days, but the highlights are the rooms facing the square that are crammed with priceless antique furniture. The lower floors have an **archaeological exhibition** (adult/senior or student 500/250Ft; ☞ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-2pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar) covering Celtic, Roman and Hungarian periods of history. Scarbantia-era statues reconstructed from fragments found in the area (including enormous statues of Juno, Jupiter and Minerva), guard the **lapidarium** (*kőtar*) in the cellar of house No 7 (which is between Fabricius House and Storno House), once a Gothic chapel with vaulted ceilings 15m high. Entrance is included in the admission price.

On the 1st floor of Storno House, built in 1417, there's a less-than-enthralling exhibit

on Sopron's more recent history, but on the floor above is the wonderful **Storno Collection** (Storno Gyűjtemény; ☎ 311 327; adult/senior or student 800/400Ft; ☞ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-2pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar), which belonged to a 19th-century Swiss-Italian family of restorers whose re-carving of Romanesque and Gothic monuments throughout Transdanubia is frowned upon today. To their credit, the much maligned Stornos did rescue many altarpieces and church furnishings from oblivion, and their house is a Gothic treasure-trove. Highlights include the beautiful enclosed balcony with leaded windows and frescoes, leather chairs with designs depicting Mephisto with his dragons, and door frames made from pews taken from 15th-century St George's Church on Szent György utca. Franz Liszt played a number of concerts in this house in the mid-19th century.

The **Scarbantia Forum** (☎ 321 804; Új utca 1; adult/senior or student 240/120Ft; ☞ 8am-5pm Mon-Thu, 8am-1.30pm Fri) is an original Roman-era marketplace recently discovered under – and accessible through – an office block. If you carry on walking down Új utca – known as Zsidó utca (Jewish St) until the Jews were evicted from Sopron in 1526 – you'll reach the **Old Synagogue** (Ó Zsinagóga; ☎ 311 327; Új utca 22; adult/senior or student 400/200Ft; ☞ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun May-Sep, 10am-2pm Tue-Sun Oct) and the **New Synagogue** (Új Zsinagóga; Új utca 11). Both were built in the 14th century, and are among the greatest Jewish Gothic monuments in Europe; they are unique in Hungary. The Old Synagogue, now a museum, contains two rooms, one for each sex (note the women's windows along the west wall). The main room contains a medieval 'holy of holies' with geometric designs and trees carved in stone, and some ugly new stained-glass windows. The inscriptions on the walls date from 1490. There's a reconstructed *mikvah* (ritual bath) in the courtyard. The New Synagogue, which once formed part of a private house and offices, was recently renovated with EU funds and may soon be open to the public.

### OTHER SIGHTS

Sopron's sights are not entirely confined to the Inner Town. Walk back to Fő tér, past the old Roman walls, under Előkapu and over a small bridge leading to Ikva, once a district of merchants and artisans. Your first stop should be the excellent **Zettl-Langer**

**Private Collection** (Zettl-Langer Magángyűjtemény; ☎ 311 136; Balfi út 11; admission 300Ft; ☞ 10am-noon Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-noon Fri-Sun Nov-Mar), containing ceramics, paintings and furniture. It's the largest and most significant private collection on display in Hungary.

Heading northwards, on Dorfmeister utca, is the 15th-century **Church of the Holy Spirit** (Szentlélek-templom), worth a peak for its wall and ceiling frescoes. Further north at Szent Mihály utca 9 is the **House of the Two Moors** (Két mór ház). It was fashioned from two 17th-century peasant houses and is guarded by two large statues, which are now painted PC-white.

At the top of the hill, along Szent Mihály utca, is **St Michael's Church** (Szent Mihály-templom), built between the 13th and 15th centuries, and behind it to the south is the little Romanesque-Gothic **Chapel of St James** (Szent Jakab-kápolna), the oldest structure in Sopron and originally an ossuary. Not much escaped the Stornos' handiwork when they 'renovated' St Michael's – they even added the spire. Check out the lovely polychrome Stations of the Cross (1892) in the churchyard and the large number of tombstones with German family names.

If you return to the House of the Two Moors and walk west along Fövényverem utca, you'll soon reach Bécsi út and the **Bakery Museum** (Pékmúzeum; ☎ 311 327; Bécsi út 5; adult/senior or student 300/150Ft; ☞ 10am-2pm Tue-Sun May-Aug), a fantastic reminder of a bygone era. It's actually the completely restored home, bakery and shop of a successful 19th-century bread and pastry maker named Weissbeck, and contains some interesting gadgets and work-saving devices.

There's a crumbling **synagogue** (Papré 14) east of the Inner Town. A new plaque tells passers-by that '1640 martyrs' were taken from here to Auschwitz on 5 July 1944.

## Activities

**Tóth & Fia** (Map p167; ☎ 334 001, 06 20 935 7625; Bécsi utca 13; ☞ 9am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri Nov-Mar, 8am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri Apr-Oct, 9am-noon Sat), a cycle shop just down the hill from Bástya pension, rents bicycles for 1500Ft per day (3300/5500Ft three/five days).

## Festivals & Events

Sopron is a musical town, and the highlights of the season are the **Spring Days** in late

### DISCOUNT CARDS

The **Sopron Ticket**, a seasonal pass that allows entry to 10 of Sopron's museums, is available from Tourinform offices and costs 2000/1000Ft for adults/seniors.



March, the **Sopron Festival Weeks** from mid-June to mid-July and the **International Choir Festival** in early July. Tickets to the various events are available from the ticket office in the Ferenc Liszt Conference and Cultural Centre. For details check the Events Calendar under Tourism at **Sopron** ([www.sopron.hu](http://www.sopron.hu)).

## Sleeping

### BUDGET

Enquire at Ciklámen Tourist about private rooms (2500Ft per person), though there are very few available in the city centre.

**Vakáció Vendégház Sopron** (Map p167; ☎ 338 502; Ady Endre út 31; dm 2200Ft; ☎) This brightly coloured place is one of the new brand of hostels in Hungary, with decent accommodation in 16 clean and well-furnished rooms of two to 10 beds. Bus 10 will drop you off right outside.

**Ózon Camping** (☎/fax 331 144; ozoncamping@sopron.hu; Erdei Malom köz 3; camp sites per large tent/small tent adult/child 1600/800/1200/850Ft; ☎ mid-Apr–mid-Oct; ☎) This delightful camping ground with 60 sites has everything you could want from fridges and washing machines to a pool and other sports facilities. Ózon Camping is set in a leafy valley about 4.5km west of the Inner Town.

## MIDRANGE

**Jégverem Pension** (☎/fax 510 113; [www.jegverem.hu](http://www.jegverem.hu); Jégverem utca 1; s 4990-5790Ft, d 7990-9590Ft, tr 9990-11,590Ft) This is an excellent and central bet, with five suite-like rooms in an 18th-century ice cellar in the Ikva district. The staff are exceptionally accommodating, and the restaurant comes highly recommended whether you're staying here or not.

**Wieden Pension** (☎ 523 222; [www.wieden.hu](http://www.wieden.hu); Sas tér 13; s €26-29, d €39-43, tr €55-61, apt for 4 people €61-70, apt for 8 people €106-115; ☎) This guesthouse is in a lovingly renovated old townhouse, and is the most plush of Sopron's pensions (though the dormer windows in most of the rooms are a minus). There are seven rooms and six apartments, four of them in the building opposite.

**Bástya Pension** (Map p167; ☎ 325 325; info@bastya-panzio.hu; Patak utca 40; s/d/tr/q 6000/9000/11,000/14,000Ft; ☎) A modern pension with 16 rooms, it's approximately a 10-minute walk north of the Inner Town up Szélmalom

utca. If you're coming by car, parking is easy here.

## TOP END

**Pannónia Med Hotel** (☎ 312 180; [www.pannonia-hotel.com](http://www.pannonia-hotel.com); Várkerület 75; s €75, d €85-115, ste €115-130; ☎) Sopron's grand century-old hotel and now part of the Best Western stable. The Pannónia has 62 renovated rooms and, on the 1st floor, a very green (as in the colour) wellness centre with pool, sauna and gym. If you really want to splash out, ask for one of the 14 suites with antique furnishings. The prices of the doubles depend on the room.

**Hotel Sopron** (☎ 512 261; [www.hotelsopron.hu](http://www.hotelsopron.hu); Főenyverem utca 7; s €56-75, d €65-83, ste €145-250; ☎) This sprawling place is up on Koronázó-domb (Coronation Hill), with views of the city and the Lővér Hills. It has 100 rooms as well as bars, a restaurant and the Vinosseum wine cellar. There are clay tennis courts and a small outdoor swimming pool to boot.

## Eating

### RESTAURANTS

**Cézár Pince** (☎ 311 337; Hátsókapu 12; dishes 340-850Ft; ☎ 11am-midnight Mon-Sat, 1-11pm Sun) Located in a medieval cellar in a historic building off Orsolya tér, 'Caesar's Cellar' is the best restaurant in Sopron for an inexpensive lunch or light meal. The platter of sausages and salad (850Ft) attracts the locals; chase it with a glass of Soproni Kékfrankos (a red) or a young white Zöldveltélini. There is courtyard seating over the summer months.

**Generális-Corvinus** (☎ 505 035; Fő tér 7-8; mains 990-2100Ft; ☎ 9am-11pm) With its café tables on

## AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Jégverem** (☎/fax 510 113; [www.jegverem.hu](http://www.jegverem.hu); Jégverem utca 1; soups 170-550Ft, starters 620-1550Ft, mains 860-1790Ft) This rustic pension restaurant, whose slogan is 'The Restaurant for Guzzle-guts' (we think they mean 'greedy-guts'), serves a huge selection of reasonably priced Hungarian dishes, some of them quite inventive, in portions that are enormous even by Hungarian standards. If you want to skip breakfast and lunch tomorrow, eat here tonight. And order the half-portions (where available).

the Inner Town's main square, the GC is a great place for a pizza (650Ft to 1700Ft) in the warmer months.

**Corso** (☎ 340 990; 1st fl, Várkerület 73; soups 290-320Ft, starters 440-740Ft, mains 990-1990Ft; ☎ 11am-10pm Mon-Thu, 11am-midnight Fri & Sat, 11am-5pm Sun) In the Korona shopping arcade next to the Pannónia Med Hotel, this place serves above-average Hungarian fare. Its two-course set menus (780Ft to 1290Ft) are excellent value.

**Forum** (☎ 340 231; Szent György utca 3; starters 350-1050Ft, mains 1090-2290Ft; ☎ 11am-10pm) This popular spot is great in the warmer months when tables spread out into a courtyard between two Inner Town streets. It serves the whole range, but we'd stick to pizza (650Ft to 1350Ft), pasta dishes (550Ft to 1100Ft) and/or the self-serve salad bar (small/large 350/420Ft).

**Papa Joe's Saloon & Steak House** (☎ 340 933; Várkerület 108; soups 270-520Ft, starters 650-1150Ft, mains 950-3200Ft; ☎ 11am-midnight Sun-Wed, 11am-2am Thu-Sat) If you're feeling ravenous (but don't fancy Hungarian at the Jégverem), head to Joe's for a steak (1500Ft to 3200Ft)

or some passable Tex-Mex (1210Ft to 1600Ft).

## CAFÉS

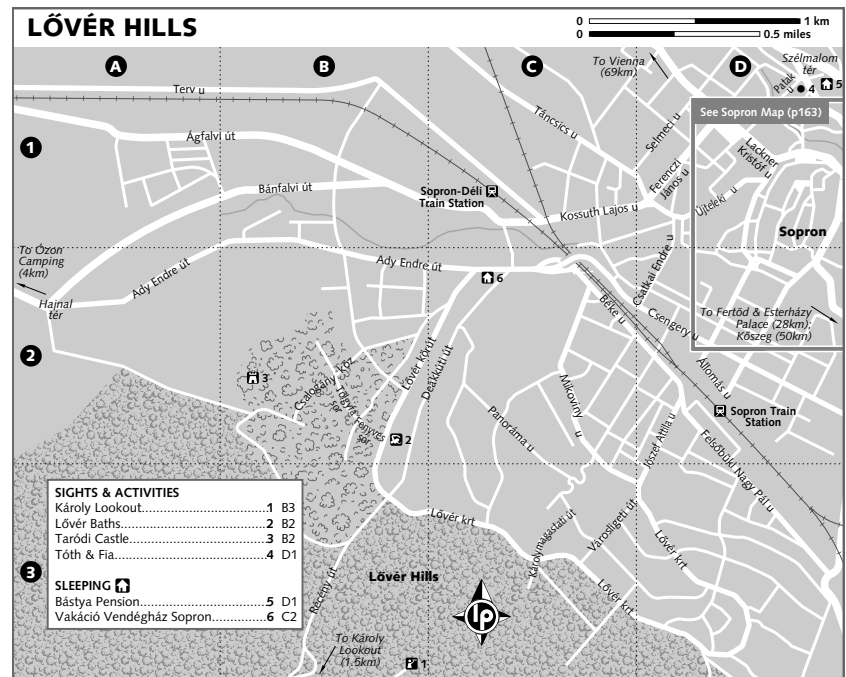
**Várkapu Café** (☎ 311 523; Várkerület 108/a & Hátsókapu 3; cakes 140-260Ft; ☎ 7.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 7.30am-10pm Sat) This old world-style coffee-house is an excellent place for both cakes and coffee, and a relaxing oasis from the summer crowds.

**Dömöröri** (☎ 506 623; Széchenyi tér 13; ice cream per scoop 100Ft, cakes from 250Ft; ☎ 7am-10pm Mon-Thu, 7am-11pm Fri & Sat, 8am-10pm Sun) The queues lining up to get ice cream or a table here testify to the quality of its products. Don't miss out!

**Liszt Szalon** (☎ 323 407; Szent György utca 12; hot drinks 190-490Ft; ☎ 10am-10pm) Very stylish indeed is this new/old (just opened/ancient building) café serving a wide range of hot chocolates (with chilli, anyone?) as well as teas and coffees.

## QUICK EATS & SELF-CATERING

**Zorba's Ételtár** (☎ 06 70 249 5454; Várkerület 40; gyros 490-690Ft, burgers 350-390Ft; ☎ 10am or 10.30am-1am)



This fast-food eatery serves passable gyros as well as burgers till the wee – for Sopron – hours, and there's a sitting area just opposite by the road.

**Match** (Várkerület 100-102; ☎ 6.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 6.30am-4pm Sat) This is a central branch of the supermarket chain.

Sopron handily has two shops open round the clock within staring distance of one another:

**Ógabona Dohány Üzlet** (Ógabona tér 12; ☎ 24hr)

Essentially a tobacconist and drinks shop.

**Lackner Éjjel-Nappal** (Lackner Keresztútca 2; ☎ 24hr)

The usual necessities available here.

## Drinking

The Sopron region is noted for its red wines, especially Kékfrankos and Merlot. Many – but not all by any means – are cheap and high in acid and tannin, so watch your intake if you don't want a massive *macskajaj* ('cat's wail' – Hungarian for 'hangover') the next day. Tourinform distributes a pamphlet called *A Soproni Bor Útja* (The Sopron Wine Road), which lists vintners throughout the region where you can sample local wines.

**Soproni Borház** (Sopron Wine House; ☎ 510 022; Várkerület 15; ☎ 11am-11pm Tue-Sat) Sopron's largest cellar and wine shop, and the best place in town to try the local vintages and/or buy a bottle.

**Swing Pub & Bar** (☎ 06 20 214 8029; Várkerület 15; ☎ 5pm-midnight Sun-Fri, 5pm-2am Sat) This popular place in the same courtyard as the Soproni Borház is a good spot to catch live music, particularly jazz, nightly.

## Entertainment

For more up-to-date entertainment listings on Sopron, get hold of freebie biweekly *Soproni Est* or the monthly *Soproni Program Ajánló*.

**Ferenc Liszt Conference and Cultural Centre** (☎ 517 500, ticket office 517 517; www.prokultura.hu; Liszt Ferenc utca 1; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) This newly renovated venue facing Széchenyi tér contains a theatre, concert hall, casino and restaurant, and hosts some of the most important music and other cultural events in Sopron. Contact Tourinform for details.

**Petőfi Theatre** (☎ 511 738; Petőfi tér 1) This beautiful theatre with National Romantic-style mosaics on the front façade is just

around the corner from the Ferenc Liszt Conference and Cultural Centre.

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

The bus service to/from Sopron:

Destination	Price	Duration	Km	Frequency
Balatonfüred	1930Ft	4hr	158	2 daily
Budapest	2660Ft	3¼hr	218	4 daily
Esztergom	2300Ft	4hr	190	1 daily
Fertőd	363Ft	45min	28	half-hourly
Fertőrákos	182Ft	20min	11	half-hourly
Győr	1150Ft	1½hr	94	half-hourly
Hévíz	1690Ft	2½-3hr	132	1-2 daily
Kaposvár	2780Ft	4½hr	220	1 daily
Kapuvár	544Ft	1hr	45	half-hourly
Keszthely	1690Ft	2½-3hr	138	1-2 daily
Komárom	1690Ft	2¼hr	137	1 daily
Kőszeg	725Ft	1hr 20min	59	6 daily
Nagyecenk	241Ft	20min	15	half-hourly
Nagykanizsa	2170Ft	4¼hr	179	2 daily
Pécs	3510Ft	5½hr	285	1 daily
Sárvár	786Ft	1½hr	82	3 daily
Sümege	1330Ft	2½-3½hr	107	3 daily
Székesfehérvár	2170Ft	4½hr	182	2 daily
Szombathely	968Ft	1¾hr	76	up to 6 daily
Tapolca	2060Ft	4hr	170	1 daily
Tatabánya	1930Ft	2¾hr	160	1 daily
Veszprém	1690Ft	3½hr	138	3 daily
Zalaegerszeg	1570Ft	3hr	129	2 daily

There are also buses to Vienna (2000Ft, 1¼ hours, 66km), with an 8am bus on Monday to Friday (Saturday late June to September only) and extra departures at 9.25am Monday, Thursday and Friday. Also, buses go to Munich (9300Ft, seven hours, 496km) and Stuttgart (13,700Ft, 10½ hours, 728km) on Thursday ( 8.05pm) and Sunday (9.05pm).

### TRAIN

There are express trains to Budapest (2656Ft, 2¾ hours, 216km, five daily) via Győr and Komárom. Local trains run to Szombathely (620Ft, 1¼ hours, 62km, up to 12 daily) and Wiener Neustadt in Austria (1900Ft, 40 minutes, 34km, five daily), where you change for Vienna (3850Ft, 1¼ hours, 84km, up to nine daily).

## Getting Around

Bus 12, from the bus and train stations, circles the Inner Town. For the Vakáció hostel,

take bus 10 from the bus station. Bus 3 goes to Ózon Camping. You can call a local taxi on ☎ 555 555, 313 313 or 06 80 626 626.

## AROUND SOPRON Lővér Hills

This range of 300m- to 400m-high foothills of the Austrian Alps, some 5km south and southwest of the city centre, is Sopron's playground. It's a great place for hiking and walking, but is not without bitter memories, for it was here that partisans and Jews were executed by Nazis and the fascist Hungarian Arrow Cross during WWII. You can climb to the top of **Károly Lookout** (Károly kilátótorony; ☎ 313 080; adult/child or student 250/150Ft; ☎ 9am-8pm May-Aug, 9am-7pm Sep, 9am-6pm Apr & Oct, 9am-5pm Mar, 9am-4pm Nov-Feb Tue-Sun) on the hill (394m) west of the Lővér hotel; walk to **Taródi Castle** (Csalogány köz 8; adult/student 500/300Ft; ☎ variable), a 'self-built private castle' owned by the obsessed Taródi family and a pack-rat's delight; or, visit the **Lővér Baths** (☎ 510 964; Lővér körút 82; adult/child day 650/375Ft, half-day 430/280Ft; ☎ covered pools 5.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-8pm Sat & Sun year-round, sauna & solarium 2-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun year-round, outside pools 9am-8pm late May-mid-Sep).

## FERTŐD

☎ 99 / pop 3400

Some 27km east of Sopron, Fertőd has been associated with the aristocratic Esterházy family since the mid-18th century when Miklós, proclaiming that 'Anything the (Habsburg) emperor can afford, I can afford too', began construction of the largest and most opulent summer palace in central Europe. When completed in 1766, it boasted 126 rooms, a separate opera house, a hermitage (complete with a real-live cranky old man in a sack cloth who wanted to be left alone), temples to Diana and Venus, a Chinese dance house, a puppet theatre and a 250-hectare garden laid out in the French manner. Fertőd – or Esterháza as it was known until the middle of the 20th century – was on the map.

## History

Much has been written about the Esterházy Palace and many hyperbolic monikers bestowed on it (the 'Hungarian Versailles' is the most common). But the fact remains that this baroque and rococo structure – its architects unknown except for the Austrian Melchior Hefe – is the most beautiful

palace in Hungary and much of it is now under renovation. While the rooms are for the most part bare, history is very much alive here. Many of the works of composer Franz Joseph Haydn (a 30-year resident of the palace) were first performed in the Concert Hall, including the *Farewell Symphony*. In the Chinoiserie Rooms Empress Maria Theresa attended a masked ball in 1773, and in the French Garden Miklós 'the Splendour Lover' threw some of the greatest parties of all time for friends like Goethe, complete with fireworks and tens of thousands of Chinese lanterns.

After a century and a half of neglect (it was used as stables in the 19th century and a hospital during WWII), the palace has been partially restored to its former glory and renovations are continuing.

## Orientation

The palace and its gardens on Joseph Haydn utca (formerly Béla Bartók utca) dominate the town; buses stop almost in front of the main gate. The town centre is 700m to the west. Fertőszéplak train station is 1.5km to the west, but is of little use to most travellers. The station at Fertőszentmiklós (on the Sopron-Győr line) is 4km to the south.

## Information

**OTP bank** (Fő utca 7; ☎ 7.45am-noon & 12.30-3pm Mon-Thu, 7.45am-noon Fri)

**Post office** (Fő utca 6; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri)

**Tourinform** (☎ /fax 370 544; fertod@tourinform.hu; Joseph Haydn utca 3; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun-mid-Sep, 9am-4pm Mon-Fri mid-Sep-mid-Jun) In the east wing of the Grenadier House.

## Sights & Activities

About two-dozen renovated rooms at the horseshoe-shaped **Esterházy Palace** (☎ 537 640; Joseph Haydn utca 2; adult/senior or student/family 1000/600/2500Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun mid-Mar-Oct, 10am-4pm Fri-Sun Nov-mid-Mar) are open to the public; the rest of the huge complex houses a hotel and a secondary school.

As you approach the main entrance to the so-called **Courtyard of Honour**, notice the ornamental wrought-iron gate, a masterpiece of the rococo. You can only tour the palace with a guide, but armed with a fact sheet in English (available from the ticket office), try to lag behind and explore the rooms away from the crowds.

On the ground floor of the palace you'll pass through several rooms decorated in the pseudo-Chinese style that was all the rage in the late 18th century; the pillared **Sala Terrena**, which served as the summer dining room, with its floor of cool Carrara marble and Miklós Esterházy's monogram in floral frescoes on the ceiling; and the **Prince's Bed Chamber**, with paintings of Amor. On the 1st floor are more sumptuous baroque and rococo salons as well as the lavish **Concert Hall** and **Ceremonial Hall**, which lead on to one another. There's also an exhibit dedicated to the life and times of Haydn.

The apartment where Haydn lived, off and on, from 1761 to 1790 in the west wing of the baroque **Music House** (Muzsikaház; Madach sétány 1), southwest of the palace, now contains the **Joseph Haydn Memorial Hall** (Joseph Haydn Emlékszoba; ☎ 537 043; adult/senior or student 200/100Ft; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri May-Aug) on the 1st floor, a veritable temple to the great Austrian composer.

The area around Fertőd is great for cycling, and you can rent **bicycles** (per day 1500Ft) at Dori Hotel and Camping. Ask Tourinform for the map/brochure *Kerékpárral Nyugat-Pannóniában* (By Bicycle in Western Pannonia).

## Festivals & Events

Two major musical events at the palace are the **Haydn Festival of the Budapest Strings** in July and the more established **Haydn Festival** in late August/early September. For information on both check [www.artsfestivals.hu](http://www.artsfestivals.hu). Both are usually booked out months in advance, but you might try your luck at Tourinform.

## Sleeping

**Kastély** (☎ 537 640; [esterhazy@eneter.net](mailto:esterhazy@eneter.net); Esterházy Palace, Joseph Haydn utca 2; d/tr/q 4900/6400/7200Ft; 📍) This 17-room hotel on the 2nd floor of the palace's east wing is one of the main reasons people come to Fertőd and the palace. You won't be sleeping in anything like the Prince's Bed Chamber, but for a palace the price is right. Book well in advance.

**Bagatelle** (☎ 06 30 378 5423; Lés erdő) The truly romantic should ask about the Bagatelle, a separate pavilion in the park and arboretum behind the palace with four apartments.

**Újvári** (☎ /fax 537 097; [ujvaripanzio@freestart.hu](mailto:ujvaripanzio@freestart.hu); Kossuth Lajos utca 57/a; s 5700-5900Ft, d 7800-8200Ft,

tr 11,100-11,400Ft; 📍) This very welcoming *pension* has six rooms as well as a massage and reflexology studio downstairs. It's in Fertőd-Sarród, about 120m north of the post office.

**Dori Hotel & Camping** (☎ /fax 370 838; [www.hotels.hu/dori](http://www.hotels.hu/dori); Pomogyi út 1; camp sites per tent/adult/child/car 590/690/550/590Ft, s/d/tr bungalows 6600/9800/13,200Ft, s/d/tr hotel rooms 6400/9800/13,200Ft; 📍) This large complex on the edge of a wood just 100m north of the palace has a good range of accommodation and is a great base to enjoy such activities in the area as cycling and walking.

## Eating

Two very convenient restaurants for a bite to eat are both located in Grenadier House, the former living quarters of the grenadier guards opposite the palace.

**Gránátos** (☎ 370 944; Joseph Haydn utca 1; starters 490-850Ft, mains 990-1790Ft; 🕒 9am-10pm) Rather dark interior and very popular with Austrian groups.

**Kastélykert** (☎ 349 418; Joseph Haydn utca 1; mains 1190-1790Ft; 🕒 10am-10pm) The more relaxed option, with a good-value set menu (1030Ft) available throughout the day.

**Coop** (Fő utca 5; 🕒 6am-5pm Mon, 6am-6pm Tue-Fri, 6am-1pm Sat) A branch of the ubiquitous supermarket chain, next to the OTP bank.

## Getting There & Away

Frequent bus services serve Sopron (363Ft, 45 minutes, 28km, half-hourly), as well as Győr (846Ft, 1½ hours, 67km, two to four daily) and Kapuvár (302Ft, 30 minutes, 21km, half-hourly).

Trains link Fertőszentmiklós to the south of Fertőd with Sopron (248Ft, 20 minutes, 24km, up to 12 daily) and Győr (620Ft, one hour, 61km, up to 10 daily).

## NAGYCENK

☎ 99 / pop 1700

Only 14km west of Fertőd and the Esterházy Palace, but light years away in spirit, lies Nagycenk, site of the ancestral mansion of the Széchenyi clan. No two houses – or families – could have been more different than these. While the privileged, often frivolous Esterházy held court in their imperial palace, the Széchenyis – democrats and reformers all – went about their work in a sombre neoclassical manor house that

aptly reflected their temperament and sense of purpose. The mansion has been completely renovated and part of it has been turned into a superb museum dedicated to the family. It's a must for those who want to understand Hungarian history and put things in perspective.

## History

The Széchenyi family's public-spiritedness started with patriarch Ferenc, who donated his entire collection of books and *objets d'art* to the state in 1802, laying the foundations for the National Library now named in his honour. But it was his son, István (1791–1860), who made the greatest impact of any Hungarian on the economic and cultural development of the nation. For more information, see boxed text below.

## Orientation

The train station is near the centre of town, southwest of the Széchenyi mansion, not far from the neo-Romanesque St Stephen's Church, designed by Miklós Ybl in 1864, and the Széchenyi family's mausoleum. The bus from Sopron stops close to the mansion's main gate.

### THE GREATEST HUNGARIAN

The contributions of Count István Széchenyi were enormous and extremely varied. In his seminal 1830 work *Hitel* (meaning 'credit' and based on *hit* or 'trust'), he advocated sweeping economic reforms and the abolition of serfdom (he himself had distributed the bulk of his property to landless peasants two years earlier).

The Chain Bridge, the design of which Széchenyi helped push through Parliament, was the first link between Buda and Pest, and for the first time everyone, nobles included, had to pay a toll to use it.

Széchenyi was instrumental in straightening the serpentine Tisza River, which rescued half of Hungary's arable land from flooding and erosion, and his work made the Danube navigable as far as the Iron Gates in Romania.

He arranged the financing for Hungary's first train lines (from Budapest to Vác in the north and Szolnok in the east, and west to what is now Wiener Neustadt in Austria), and launched the first steam transport on the Danube and Lake Balaton.

A lover of all things English, Széchenyi got the upper classes interested in horse racing with the express purpose of improving breeding stock for farming.

A large financial contribution made by Széchenyi led to the establishment of the nation's prestigious Academy of Science.

Széchenyi became part of Lajos Batthyány's revolutionary government in 1848, but political squabbling and open conflict with Vienna caused him to lose control and he suffered a nervous breakdown. Despite a decade of convalescence in an asylum, Széchenyi never fully recovered and tragically took his own life in 1860.

For all his accomplishments, Széchenyi's contemporary and fellow reformer, Lajos Kossuth, called him 'the greatest Hungarian'. This dynamic but troubled visionary retains that accolade to this day.

## Sights

The entrance to the **Széchenyi Memorial Museum** (Széchenyi Emlékmúzeum; ☎ 360 023; [www.nagycenk.hu](http://www.nagycenk.hu); Kiscenki utca 3; adult/senior or student 500/250Ft; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar) is in the mansion through the Sala Terrena – it's almost austere compared with the similarly named hall at the Esterházy Palace in Fertőd. There's a taped commentary in several languages (including English) in each room; just press the button.

The rooms on the museum's ground floor, furnished with period pieces, trace the Széchenyi family and their political development, from typical baroque aristocrats in the 18th century to key players in the 1848 War of Independence and István's involvement in the ill-fated government of Lajos Batthyány. A sweeping baroque staircase leads to the exhibits on the 1st floor – a veritable temple to István's many accomplishments – from Budapest's Chain Bridge and the Danube and Tisza Rivers' engineering works, to steamboat and rail transport. There's also an interesting exhibition on Hungarian coinage.



It is fitting that the mansion of a railway developer like István Széchenyi is near an open-air **Locomotive Outdoor Museum** (Mozdony Skanzen; admission free; ☎ 24hr), with steam engines that were still in use on main lines as late as 1950. You can actually ride a **narrow-gauge train** for 5.5km to Fertőboz and back (steam/diesel-powered one way adult 310/240Ft, child 155/120Ft). Departures between April and early October from the Kastély train station at Nagyencnk are at 9.50am and 11.15am and 2pm, 3.35pm and 5.35pm on Saturday and Sunday only. All except the last turn around at Fertőboz in less than half an hour for the return trip to Kastély. There are also shorter trips to Barátság (3.3km, departures at 1.15pm and 5.05pm), which cost the same.

A 2.6km **row of linden trees** opposite the mansion's main gate, planted by István's grandmother in 1754, leads to a **hermitage**. Like the Esterházy, the Széchenyi family had a resident loner who, in this case, was expected to earn his keep by ringing the chapel bell and tending the garden.

The **Széchenyi Mausoleum** (☎ 360 059; Széchenyi tér; adult/senior or student 200/100Ft; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun May-Oct), the final resting place of István and other family members and a great place of pilgrimage for Hungarians, is in the village cemetery across the road from St Stephen's Church.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Kastély** (☎ /fax 360 061; www.kastelyszallo.try.hu; Kiscenkai utca 3; s €35-75, d €56-87, tr €68-100, ste for 2 €84-125; ☎ ☎) In the west wing of the mansion, this beautifully appointed 19-room inn has recently got a facelift and rates vary wildly depending on the season and the room type. If you can afford it opt for room No 106 or 107, which are large suites with period furniture and restful views of the 6-hectare garden. Rates include entrance to the museum. The splendid dining room (starters 750Ft to 900Ft, mains 1650Ft to 3500Ft; open 7am to 10pm) at the Kastély is the place for lunch in these parts, and there are outdoor tables in the hotel's splendid courtyard in summer.

## Getting There & Away

Nagyencnk is accessible from Sopron (241Ft, 20 minutes, 15km, half-hourly) by frequent bus. The village is on the train line linking

Sopron (170Ft, 15 minutes, 12km, up to a dozen daily) and Szombathely (404Ft, one hour, 50 minutes, up to a dozen daily).

If you time it right, you can reach Nagyencnk by the narrow gauge train. Take the bus from Sopron to Fertőboz and board the train for Kastély at 10.35am or at 12.15pm, 3pm or 4.15pm.

## SZOMBATHELY

☎ 94 / pop 80,200

Szombathely (German: Steinamanger) is a major crossroads in western Hungary, and most travellers in Western Transdanubia will eventually find themselves passing through it. That's not such a bad thing, as there is plenty to see and do here.

The city's name (*som-bot-hay*) translates as 'Saturday Place' and refers to the important weekend market held here in the Middle Ages. For Austrians who continue to cross the border at the end of the week in search of cheap edibles and services, it remains just that.

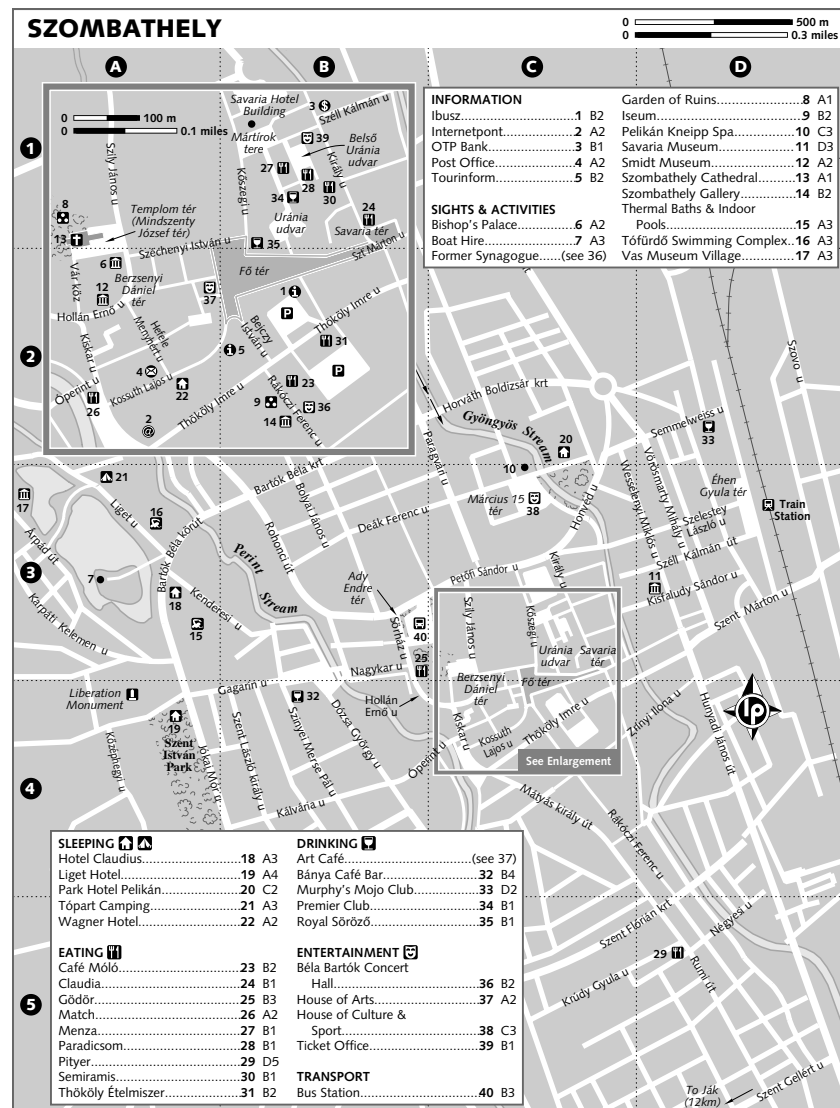
## History

Szombathely got an earlier start than most. In AD 43 the Romans established a trade settlement called Savaria here on the lucrative Amber Route. By the start of the 2nd century it was important enough to be named the capital of Upper Pannonia. Over the next few centuries Savaria prospered and Christianity arrived; Martin of Tours, the patron saint of France, was born here in AD 316. But attacks by Huns, Longobards and Avars weakened its defences, and in 455 an earthquake reduced the town to rubble.

Szombathely began to develop again in the early Middle Ages, but the Mongols, then the Turks and the Habsburgs put a stop to that. It was not until 1777, when János Szily was appointed Szombathely's first bishop, that the city really began to flourish economically and culturally. The building of the train line to Graz brought further trade. In 1945 Allied bombers levelled much of the town, which has since been largely rebuilt.

## Orientation

Szombathely is made up of narrow streets and squares, with the centre at enormous, leafy Fő tér. To the west are Berzsényi



Dániel tér and Templom tér (also called Mindszenty József tér), the administrative and ecclesiastical centres of the city respectively. The train station is on Éhen Gyula tér, about 1km northeast of Mártírok tere at the end of Széll Kálmán út. The bus station is on Petőfi Sándor utca, northwest of Fő tér.

## Information

**Ibusz** (☎ 314 141; Fő tér 44; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat Jun-Aug) Good for private rooms but not general information.

**Internetpoint** (☎ 310 161, 06 70 204 9368; Kossuth Lajos utca 19; per hr adult/student 420/360Ft; ☎ noon-midnight Mon-Sat, 6pm-midnight Sun) Some 15 machines available southwest of Fő tér.

**Main post office** (Kossuth Lajos utca 18)

**OTP bank** (Király utca 10; ☎ 7.45am-5pm Mon, 7.45am-3pm Tue-Fri)

**Tourinform** (☎ 514 451; szombathely@tourinform.hu; Kossuth Lajos utca 1-3; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri mid-Sep-mid-Jun, 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun-mid-Sep) South of Fő tér in the City Hall building.  
**www.szombathely.hu** The city's website, with lots of practical and background information.

## Sights

### SZOMBATHELY CATHEDRAL

Allied bombing in the final days of WWII did not spare the Zopf-style **Szombathely Cathedral** (Szombathelyi Székesegyház; Templom tér; free admission) built in 1797. Designed by Melchior Hefele for Bishop Szily in 1791, the cathedral was once covered in stucco work and frescoes by Franz Anton Maulbertsch and supported by grand marble columns. They're now gone, of course, though a couple of Maulbertsch originals and a glorious red-and-white marble pulpit remain, breaking the monotony of this sterile place, and there is a plaster sunburst of angels and *putti* (winged babies or cherubs) above the main altar.

### BISHOP'S PALACE

Maulbertsch frescoes in the upstairs Reception Hall at the **Bishop's Palace** (Püspöki palota; ☎ 312 056; Berzsenyi Dániel tér 3; adult/senior or student 200/100Ft; ☎ 9.30am-noon & 12.30-3pm Mon-Fri, 9.30-11.30am Sat), built in 1783 and south of the cathedral, miraculously survived the air raids, but are not usually open to the public. You can, however, admire the murals of Roman ruins and gods painted in 1784 by István Dorffmeister in the **Sala Terrena** on the ground floor. Other rooms contain photographs of the cathedral before and just after the bombing of WWII and the **Diocesan Collection and Treasury** (Egyházmegyei Gyűjtemény és Kincstár), including missals and Bibles from the 14th to 18th centuries, Gothic vestments, a beautiful 15th-century monstrance from Kőszeg and even a jewelled replica of St Stephen's Crown made in the USA.

### SMIDT MUSEUM

In a baroque mansion just south of the Bishop's Palace, the **Smidt Museum** (☎ 311038; Hollán Ernő utca 2; adult/senior or student/family 460/250/900Ft; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Mar-Dec, 10am-5pm Tue-Fri Jan &

Feb) contains the private collection of one Lajos Smidt, a pack-rat hospital superintendent who spent most of his adult life squirreling away antique weapons, furniture, fans, pipes, clocks, Roman coins and so on. None of it looks like it's worth very much, but the volume and zaniness of it all makes the museum worth a visit. (Keep an eye open for Franz Liszt's pocket watch.)

### GARDEN OF RUINS

Szombathely has some of the most important Roman ruins in Hungary, and many of them are on display in the so-called **Garden of Ruins** (Romkert; ☎ 313 369; Templom tér 1; adult/senior or student/family 360/180Ft/700Ft; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun mid-Mar-Nov), containing a wealth of Savaria relics excavated here since 1938. Don't miss the beautiful mosaics of plants and geometrical designs on the floor of what was **St Quirinus Basilica** in the 4th century. There are also remains of Roman road markers, a customs house, shops and the medieval castle walls.

### ISEUM

The **Iseum** (Rákóczi Ferenc utca 12), south of Fő tér, is part of a grand 2nd-century complex of two temples dedicated to the Egyptian goddess Isis by Roman legionnaires. When the smaller temple was excavated in the 1950s, the city decided to reconstruct it – with cement blocks. The result is grotesque, though it is said to be undergoing a facelift. The frieze on the sacrificial altar depicts Isis riding the dog Sirius.

### SZOMBATHELY GALLERY & SYNAGOGUE

The **Szombathely Gallery** (Szombathelyi Képtár; ☎ 508 800; Rákóczi Ferenc utca 12; adult/student 360/180Ft; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue & Thu-Sun, 10am-7pm Wed) is one of Hungary's best modern art galleries. The lovely twin-towered Moorish building opposite at No 3 is the former **synagogue** (zsinagóga; Rákóczi Ferenc utca 3) designed in 1881 by the Viennese architect Ludwig Schöne. Today it's a music school and the attached **Béla Bartók Concert Hall**. A plaque marks the spot from where '4228 of our Jewish brothers and sisters were deported to Auschwitz on 4 July 1944'.

### SAVARIA MUSEUM

The **Savaria Museum** (☎ 500 720; Kisaludy Sándor utca 9; adult/senior or student/family 460/230/900Ft; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat mid-Apr-mid-Oct, 10am-5pm

Tue-Fri mid-Oct-mid-Apr), fronting a little park east of Mártírok tere, is worth a short look around. The ground floor is devoted to highly decorative but practical items carved by 19th-century shepherds to while away the hours; the cellar is full of Roman altars, stone torsos and blue-glass vials found at Savaria excavation sites. There's a local history exhibit on the 1st floor and a collection devoted to the Romanesque church at Ják.

### VAS MUSEUM VILLAGE

The **Vas Museum Village** (Vasi Múzeumfalva; ☎ 311 004; Árpád út 30; adult/senior or student/family 500/250/1000Ft; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Apr-early Nov), on the western bank of the fishing lake northwest of the city centre, is an open-air museum with some 40 18th- and 19th-century *porták* (farmhouses) moved from more than two dozen villages in the Órség region. They're arranged around a semi-circular street, as was usual on the western border. The most interesting of these are the Croatian, German and 'fenced' houses. Nettles from a strange plant called *kővirőzsa* (stone rose) growing on the thatch were used to pierce little girls' ears.

## Activities

The rowing and fishing lakes northwest of the city centre along Kenderesi utca cover 12 hectares and make up Szombathely's playground; **boats** (☎ 9am-5.30pm Mar-mid-Sep) can be hired from the western side of the little island in the middle. The huge **Tófürdő swimming complex** (☎ 505 690; Liget utca; adult/child 790/670Ft; ☎ 9am-8pm mid-May-mid-Oct) close by has huge pools and a bunch of slides for both big and small kids. The city's **thermal baths and indoor pools** (☎ 314 336; Bartók Béla körút 41; adult/child 750/500Ft; ☎ thermal baths 4-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5.30pm Sat & Sun, swimming pool 2-9.30pm Mon, 6am-9.30pm Tue-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat & Sun year-round) are just to the south. Admission is cheaper the later you enter.

## Sleeping

Tourinform has a list of student hostels (dorm from approximately 2000Ft), with beds available over summer. Try Ibusz for private rooms (double from 5000Ft).

**Wagner Hotel** (☎/fax 322 208; www.hotelwagner.hu; Kossuth Lajos utca 15; s 10,500-14,500Ft, d 16,500Ft, ste from 20,500Ft; P ☎ ☎) A lovely hotel, with a sunny inner courtyard and a dozen rooms,

just southwest of Fő tér. Rooms are small but comfortable, and have all the mod cons.

**Park Hotel Pelikán** (☎ 513 800; www.hotelpelikan.hu; Deák Ferenc utca 5; s 15,500-18,500Ft, d 21,500-24,900Ft Oct-Apr, s 20,000-21,000Ft, d 24,000-27,000Ft May-Sep; P ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This stunner of a four-star hotel north of the city centre occupies a former orphanage and children's hospital, and retains many of the building's original features. Its 43 spacious rooms have everything you need, and the affiliated **Pelikán Kneipp Spa** (Markusovszky 2) a few metres to the west has an indoor pool, spa, sauna and fitness room and an encyclopaedia of various treatments available.

**Hotel Claudius** (☎ 313 760; www.claudiushotel.hu; Bartók Béla körút 39; s 11,900-12,900Ft, d 14,900-15,900Ft, ste from 17,900Ft; P ☎) This large, modern-looking hotel near the lakes has lost a few rooms (there are now 87) and gained a star (now four) after a major refurbishment. It still isn't much to look at from the outside but the rooms and public areas are fresher and brighter.

**Liget Hotel** (☎ 509 323; www.hotels.hu/liget\_szombathely; Szent István park 15; s/d with shower 5000/6000Ft, with bath 6999/7999Ft; P) West of the city centre, Liget has 38 rooms that are functional at best, but it's in a quiet neighbourhood, and is convenient to the lakes and the museum village. The monstrous Liberation monument – the two concrete 'wings' on the hill to the northwest – was topped with a big red star until the mid-1990s.

**Tópart Camping** (☎ 509 038; fax 509 039; Liget utca 14; camp sites per tent/adult/child 500/700/350Ft, d/q bungalows 6500/10,500Ft; ☎ May-Sep; P ☎) Northwest of the city centre, near the lakes and swimming complex, this is a pleasant place to stay. From the bus stop (bus 27) on Bartók Béla körút, walk along Liget utca to the camping ground.

## Eating

### RESTAURANTS

**Pityer** (☎ 508 010; Rumi út 18; soups 350-990Ft, starters 900-1600Ft, mains 1590-2990Ft; ☎ 11am-11pm Sun-Thu, 11am-midnight Fri & Sat) One and a half kilometres southwest of Fő tér, this traditional *halászsárdá* (restaurant serving fish dishes) is worth the trip if you're in search of fish. Portions are large and the surrounds are quite atmospheric.

**Gödör** (☎ 510078; Hollán Ernő utca 12; soups 170-550Ft, starters 620-1550Ft, mains 860-1790Ft; ☎ 11am-11pm

Mon-Thu, 11am-midnight Fri & Sat, 11am-3pm Sun) This restaurant-cum-wine cellar is affiliated with the Jégverem in Sopron (p166) and as such caters to 'greedy-guts' types. Portions are massive, dishes relatively authentic and prices reasonable. You really can't go wrong eating here.

**Café Móló** (☎ 509 200; Rákóczi Ferenc utca 1-3; pizza 790-1290Ft; ☎ 10am-midnight Mon-Thu, 11am-1pm Fri & Sat, 11am-midnight Sun) This modern, upbeat place opposite the less-than-appetising Iseum should be your first choice if you just want a pizza.

**Paradicsom** (☎ 342 012; Belső Uránia Udvar; starters 480-990Ft, pizza 650-2000Ft) The 'Tomato' is an above-average Italian restaurant with a good vegetarian selection. The pizza and pastaria (740Ft to 990Ft) are quite good. Belső Uránia Udvar can be accessed from Mártírok tere or Fő tér 20.

## CAFÉS

**Claudia** (☎ 313 375; Savaria tér 1; ice cream from 90Ft; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Sat, 2-10pm Sun) Excellent cakes and ice cream are served here, and it's a great place to relax, especially in summer when tables spill out onto the pavement.

**Semiramis** (Király utca 7; coffees 230-490Ft; ☎ 7am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat) Semiramis easily fits the bill of a downtown Manhattan café. It probably serves the best coffee in Szombathely, too.

## QUICK EATS & SELF-CATERING

**Menza** (☎ 511 348; Mártírok tere 5/b; meals 190-660Ft; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat) This modern take on a workers' (or student) canteen serves basic but filling meals at remarkably low prices.

**Match** (cnr Óperint utca & Kiskar utca; ☎ 6am-7pm Mon-Fri, 6am-2pm Sat) A huge central branch of the popular supermarket chain.

**Thököly Ételmiszer** (Thököly Imre utca 35; ☎ 5am-midnight Mon-Sat, 6am-midnight Sun) Grocery store with extended hours.

## Drinking

**Art Café** (☎ 310 661; Fő tér 10; ☎ 8am-11pm Mon-Sat, 9am-11pm Sun) This sedate café-pub on the main square attracts watchers and talkers, not party people. Come here for a quiet drink.

**Royal Söröző** (☎ 339 727; Fő tér 16; ☎ 8.30am-midnight Sun-Thu, 8.30-1am Fri & Sat) A popular pub with sidewalk tables on the northeastern

side of Fő tér, opposite the House of Arts. What's more, it has Internet access (130Ft per half-hour).

**Premier Club** (☎ 330 792; Uránia Udvar; ☎ 9am-11pm Mon-Thu, 9am-6am Fri & Sat, 4-11pm Sun) A big, raucous pub with eight pool tables in the Uránia Udvar shopping arcade.

**Bánya Café Bar** (☎ 321 123; Szinyei Merse Pál utca; ☎ 10am-11pm Mon-Wed, 10am-midnight Thu & Fri, 2pm-2am Sat, 2-10pm Sun) This impressive basement (*bánya* means 'mine'), a former workers' pub, has been dragged into the 21st century and wouldn't look out of place in London. There are parties and live music on Saturday and Sunday.

**Murphy's Mojo Club** (☎ 315 891; Semmelweis Ignác utca 28; ☎ 4.30pm-midnight Mon-Thu, 4.30pm-1am Fri & Sat, 4.30-11pm Sun) This bar is not exactly in the centre of Szombathely, but worth the trip for the music (canned). It also serves reliable food.

## Entertainment

An excellent source of information is the free biweekly entertainment guide *Szombathelyi Est*. For tickets to most events head to the **ticket office** (☎ 312 579; Király utca 11; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) just south of the old Savaria Hotel. Enter from Mártírok tere.

Szombathely has devoted a lot of attention to music ever since Bishop Szily engaged the services of full-time musicians to perform at church functions – not services. Important venues include the **Béla Bartók Concert Hall** (☎ 313 747; Rákóczi Ferenc utca 3), attached to the former synagogue, where the Savaria Symphony Orchestra performs throughout the year; the **House of Arts** (Művészetek Háza; ☎ 509 641; Fő tér 10); and the ugly **House of Culture & Sport** (Művelődési és Sportház; ☎ 312 666; Március 15 tér 5) dating from the 1960s.

## Getting There & Away BUS

In general the bus service isn't so good to/from Szombathely, though there are frequent departures to Ják (241Ft, 20 minutes, 21km, 15 daily), Kőszeg (302Ft, 35 minutes, 21km, hourly) and Körmend (363Ft, 30 minutes, 29km, hourly). Also three weekly buses depart for Vienna (2454Ft, 2½ hours, 165km) at 6.40am Wednesday, 7am Friday and 3.55am Saturday.

Other destinations to/from Szombathely include the following:

Destination	Price	Duration	Km	Frequency
Budapest	3150Ft	3½-4½hr	230	3 daily
Győr	1570Ft	2½hr	125	5 daily
Kaposvár	2300Ft	3½hr	188	3 daily
Keszthely via Hévíz	1090Ft	2¼hr	90	2 daily
Nagykanizsa	1330Ft	2½hr	107	6 daily
Pécs	3260Ft	5hr	261	2-3 daily
Sárvár	423Ft	1hr	35	hourly
Sopron	968Ft	1¾hr	76	up to 6 daily
Sümeg	907Ft	1½hr	73	2-3 daily
Szeged	4230Ft	7½hr	348	1 daily at 7.38am
Velem	302Ft	40min	21	up to 8 daily
Veszprém	1450Ft	2½hr	117	2-3 daily
Zalaegerszeg	725Ft	1½hr	56	2-3 daily

## TRAIN

Express trains to Budapest (from 2226Ft, 3½ hours, 236km, 15 daily) go via Veszprém and Székesfehérvár. Győr (1142Ft, 1½ to two hours, 117km, eight daily) is also served by express train (via Celldömölk), as is Pécs (from 2376Ft, four hours, 250km, four daily). There are local trains to Kőszeg (170Ft, 30 minutes, 18km, up to 12 daily), Sopron (620Ft, 1¼ hours, 62km, up to 12 daily) and Körmend (248Ft, 30 minutes, 26km, up to 12 daily). There are also direct trains to/from Graz (4750Ft, three hours, 136km, three daily).

## Getting Around

Szombathely is simple to negotiate on foot, but bus 27 will take you from the train station to the Vas Museum Village, lakes, camping ground and the Liget Hotel. Bus 1 or 1/c is good for the Kámon Arboretum. You can also call a taxi on ☎ 322 322 or 333 666.

## AROUND SZOMBATHELY

### Ják

☎ 94 / pop 2300

This sleepy village boasts the **Benedictine Abbey Church** (Bencés apátság templom; ☎ 356 217; adult/senior or student 260/130Ft; ☎ 8am-5pm May-Aug, 9am-5pm Sep-Apr), one of the finest examples of Romanesque architecture in Hungary. Its main feature, a magnificent portal carved in geometric patterns 12 layers deep and featuring carved stone statues of Christ and his

Apostles, on the west side, was renovated for Hungary's millennium celebrations in 1996. The decorative sculptures on the outside wall of the sanctuary and the church's interior are also worth a look.

The two-towered structure was begun as a family church in 1214 by Márton Nagy and dedicated to St George four decades later in 1256. Somehow the partially completed church escaped destruction during the Mongol invasion, but it was badly damaged during the Turkish occupation. The church has had many restorations, the most important three being in the mid-17th century, between 1896 and 1904 (when most of the statues in the portal were recut or replaced, rose stained-glass windows added and earlier baroque additions removed) and from 1992 to 1996 for Hungary's millennium celebrations.

Enter through the south door, once used only by the monks. The interior, with its single nave and three aisles, has a much more graceful and personal feel than most Hungarian Gothic churches. To the west and below the towers is a gallery reserved for the benefactor and his family. The rose-and-blue frescoes on the wall between the vaulting and the arches below could very well be of Márton Nagy and his progeny.

To the west of the Romanesque church is the tiny clover-leaf **Chapel of St James** (Szent Jakab-kápolna) topped with an onion dome. It was built around 1260 as a parish church, since the main church was monastic. Note the paschal lamb (symbolising Christ) over the main entrance, and the baroque altar and frescoes inside.

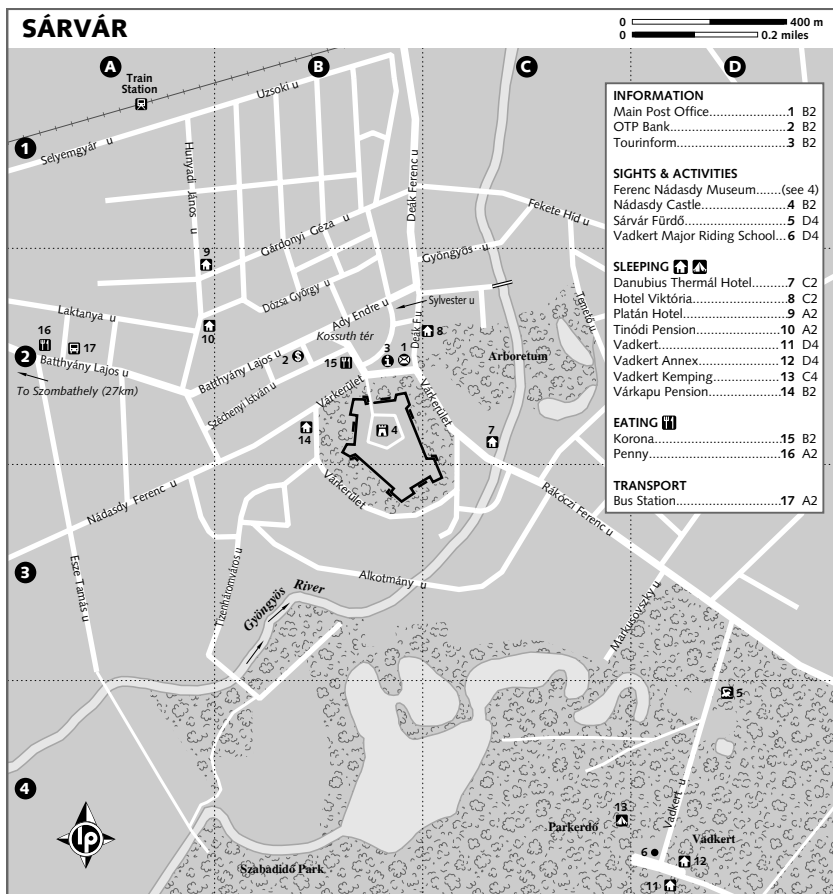
Buses from Szombathely (241Ft, 20 minutes, 21km, 15 daily) are frequent and will drop you off in Szabadság tér. From Ják you can return to Szombathely or continue on to Körmend (302Ft, 30 minutes, 20km, two or three daily) and make connections there.

### SÁRVÁR

☎ 95 / pop 15,350

Sárvár is well known for its 44°C thermal waters, discovered in the '60s during exploratory drilling for oil. Recently the spa complex to the southeast of the town centre has seen a lot of investment, and the town of 'Mud Castle' has gone from being a haven for retired Austrians seeking a cure for whatever ails them to a modern spa centre with some of





the most up-to-date facilities in Hungary. It's very clean, well managed, and overflowing with facilities and fun for the whole family.

Of course, not everyone visits Sárvár for the hot water. Some want a glimpse of the castle where a certain 18th-century countess developed a taste for blood – literally (see boxed text, opposite).

## History

Some 27km east of Szombathely on the Rába River, Sárvár has experienced some good and some very bad times over the past 500 years or so. During the Reformation Sárvár's fortified castle was a centre of Calvinist culture and scholarship, and its owners, the Nádasdy family, were a respected

dynasty in statecraft and military leadership. In 1537 Tamás Nádasdy set up a press that published the first two printed books in Hungarian – a Magyar grammar in Latin and a translation of the New Testament. Ferenc Nádasdy II, dubbed the 'Black Captain', fought heroically against the Turks, and his grandson Ferenc III, a lord chief justice, created one of the greatest libraries and private art collections in central Europe.

But everything began to go pear-shaped at the start of the 17th century. It seems that while the Black Captain was away at war, his wife Erzsébet Báthory, as mad as a hatter and bloodthirsty to boot, was up to no good. Then Ferenc III's involvement

in a plot led by Ferenc Wesselényi to overthrow the Habsburgs was exposed. He was beheaded in Vienna in 1671.

## Orientation

Sárvár's train station is on Selyemgyár utca. To reach the town centre, walk south along Hunyadi János utca and turn east on Batthyány Lajos utca, which leads to Kossuth tér and the castle. Rákóczi Ferenc utca leads southeast to Vadkert utca and the spa complex. The bus station is at the western end of Batthyány Lajos utca.

## Information

**Main post office** (Várkerület 32)

**OTP bank** (Batthyány Lajos utca 2)

**Tourinform** (☎ 520 178; sarvar@tourinform.hu; Várkerület 33; ☎ 9am–4pm Mon–Fri) This tourist office is almost opposite the castle entrance.

## Sights

### NÁDASDY CASTLE

The entrance to the **Ferenc Nádasdy Museum** (☎ 320 158; Várkerület 1; adult/senior or student/family 460/230/900Ft; ☎ 9am–5pm Tue–Sun) in pentagonal Nádasdy Castle is across a brick footbridge from Kossuth tér and through the gate of a 14th-century tower. Parts of the castle date from the 13th century, but most of it is 16th-century Renaissance and in good condition despite Erzsébet Báthory's shenanigans and all the plundering by the Habsburgs. As punishment for the Nádasdy family's involvement in the rebellion of 1670, their estate was confiscated by the Austrian crown and the castle's contents – including much of the library – were taken to Vienna. As a result, many of the furnishings, tapestries and *objets d'art* you see in the museum's three wings today were collected from other sources.

## THE BLOOD COUNTESS

It was the scandal of the 17th century. On the night of 29 December 1610 the Lord Palatine of Hungary, Count György Thurzó, raided the castle at Csejta (now Čachtice in western Slovakia) and caught Countess Erzsébet Báthory literally red-handed – or so he and history would later claim. Covered in blood and screaming like a demon, the widow of the celebrated Black Captain was in the process of eating (as in chomp, chomp) one of her servant girls.

Yet another one, or so it would seem... By the time Thurzó had finished collecting evidence from household staff and the townspeople at Čachtice and Sárvár, some 300 depositions had been given, accusing the countess of torturing, mutilating, murdering and – worst of all – disposing of the bodies of more than 600 girls and young women without so much as a Christian burial.

The case of the so-called Blood Countess has continued to grab the imagination of everyone from writers (Erzsébet is believed to have been the model for Bram Stoker's *Dracula*) and musicians (remember the Goth group Bathory?) to filmmakers and fetishists over the centuries, and some pretty crazy theories as to why she did it have emerged. Some say she considered the blood of young maidens to be an *elixir vitae* and bathed in it to stay young. Others claim she suffered from acute iron deficiency and just had to have those red corpuscles. Still others point to the high incidence of lunacy in the two, much intermarried branches of the Báthory dynasty. Most likely, however, Erzsébet Báthory herself was the victim of a conspiracy.

When the Black Captain died in 1604, his widow inherited all of his estates – properties coveted by both Thurzó and Erzsébet's son-in-law Miklós Zrínyi, the poet and great-grandson of the hero of Szigetvár (see p305), who themselves were linked by marriage. Worse, the election of the countess' nephew Gábor Báthory as prince of Transylvania, a vassal state under Ottoman rule, threatened to unite the two Báthory families and strengthen the principality's position. It was in the interest of the Palatine – and the Habsburgs – to get this matriarch of the Báthory family out of the way.

Gábor was murdered in 1613 and the 'Báthory faction' in Hungary ceased to be a threat. The case against the Blood Countess never came to trial, and she remained interned 'between stones' (ie in a sealed chamber) at the castle until she died in 1614 at the age of 54.

Was Erzsébet as bloodthirsty as history has made her out to be? Did she really bite great chunks out of the girls' necks and breasts and mutilate their genitals? Much of the villagers' testimony does appear to be consistent, but to form your own conclusions read Tony Thorne's well-researched *Countess Dracula: The Life and Times of Elisabeth Bathory*.

One thing the Habsburgs could not take with them was the magnificent ceiling fresco in the **Knights' Hall**, picturing Hungarians – the Black Captain included – doing battle with the Turks at Tata, Székesfehérvár, Győr, Pápa, Kanizsa and Buda. They were painted by Hans Rudolf Miller in the mid-17th century. The biblical scenes on the walls, depicting Samson and Delilah, David and Goliath, Mordechai and Esther, and so on were painted in 1769 by István Dorffmeister. There's a particularly beautiful 16th-century cabinet of gilded wood and marble to the right of the hall as you enter.

The museum also has one of the nation's best collections of weapons and armour, and almost an entire wing is given over to the Hussars, a regiment of which was named after the Nádasdy family. The uniforms, all buttons, ribbons and fancy epaulets, would do a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta proud.

Among the exhibits about the castle and Sárvár is the printing press established here, and some of the then inflammatory Calvinist tracts it published. One work in Hungarian, entitled *The Pope Is Not the Pope – That's That* and dated 1603, was later vandalised by a Counter-Reformationist who defiantly wrote 'Lutheran scandal' across it in Latin.

A superb (and priceless) collection of some 60 antique Hungarian maps donated by a UK-based expatriate Hungarian in 1986 and called 'Carta Hungarica' is on exhibit in a room at the end of the west wing.

The 9-hectare **arboretum** (Várkerület 30/a; admission free; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-mid-Oct, 9am-5pm mid-Oct-Mar), east of the castle and bisected by the Gyöngyös River, a tributary of the Rába River, was planted by the Nádasdy's successors, the royal Wittelsbach family of Bavaria (the castle's last royal occupant was Ludwig III, who died in exile in 1921).

## Activities

A huge and very modern spa and wellness complex southeast of the castle, **Sárvár Fürdő** (☎ 523 600; www.sarvarfurdo.hu; Vadkert utca 1; adult/child 6-16yr 1600/700Ft, adult after 5/8pm 1100/700Ft; ☎ thermal baths 8am-10pm year-round, outdoor pools 9am-8pm May-Sep) has indoor and outdoor thermal and swimming pools, several types of sauna, a wellness and fitness centre, and comprehensive medical facilities with all kinds of treatments. The summer entrance to the open-air pools is just south of the main entrance.

There are **tennis courts** (per hr 400Ft) and the **Vadkert Major riding school** (☎ 320 045) at the end of Vadkert utca. Ask the staff at the Vadkert inn about **horse riding** (per 30min 1500Ft) and **coach rides** (up to 3 people 4500Ft).

## Sleeping

### BUDGET

**Vadkert** (☎/fax 320 045; Vadkert utca; main building s/d/tr 7500/8800/10,700Ft, annexe 6200/7500/9800Ft; ☎) This inn south of the spa is among the most atmospheric places to stay in Sárvár. It's a 19th-century royal hunting lodge, with 24 rooms in an old building and a newer annexe with 16 rooms. The older rooms are furnished in rustic pine, and the common sitting room with the large hearth looks to be from an Agatha Christie whodunnit novel.

**Vadkert Kemping** (☎ 523 600; Vadkert utca; camp sites per tent/adult/child 900/650/500Ft; ☎) This camping ground is just north of the Vadkert inn and within easy walking distance of the spa complex.

### MIDRANGE

**Várkapu Pension** (☎/fax 326 475; www.varkapu.hu; Várkerület 5; s/6700-7000Ft, d/9300-9900Ft, tr/12,300-13,200Ft; ☎) As close to the castle as can get without actually staying there, the 'Castle Gate' has nine clean and accommodating rooms. It also has a sauna and a great restaurant.

**Tinódi Pension** (☎/fax 323 606; www.tinodifogado.hu; Hunyadi János utca 11; s/d/tr 7800/9900/13,500Ft) A colourful little boarding house (its term), with 15 renovated rooms and a quiet courtyard. The rustic restaurant is very popular.

**Hotel Viktória** (☎/fax 320 525; www.hotel-viktoria.hu; Deák Ferenc utca 6; s/d/ste 7500/11,000/12,000Ft; ☎ ☎ ☎) There's not much left to let you in on the secret that this was once the site of Sárvár's Romantic-style synagogue built in 1850. It's now a comfortable enough 20-room hotel, close to the arboretum and the castle.

### TOP END

**Platán Hotel** (☎ 320 623; www.platanhotel.hu; Hunyadi János utca 23; d/tr 13,500/17,500Ft; ☎ ☎) This is a lovely smallish (20 rooms) hotel with swimming pool. Though it's close to the train station, it's a bit removed from Sárvár's action.

**Danubius Thermál Hotel** (☎ 888 400; www.danu biusgroup.com/sarvar; Rákóczi Ferenc utca 1; s €91-98, d €122-130; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Sárvár's poshest established hostelry (there are a couple of new kids on the block down by the spa

complex). With 136 rooms just on the edge of the arboretum, it boasts all the mod cons, indoor and outdoor thermal pools, and complete curative facilities.

## Eating

**Várkapu** (☎/fax 320 045; Vadkert utca; soups 390-560Ft, starters 750-1390Ft, mains 1490-2390Ft; ☎) 8.30am-10pm Sun-Thu, 8.30am-11pm Fri & Sat) The pick of the crop in Sárvár, and we especially like the Hungarian and international menu that changes with the seasons and the good selection of Hungarian wines. There are restful views of the castle and surrounding park.

**Tinódi** (☎/fax 323 606; www.tinodifogado.hu; Hunyadi János utca 11; soups & starters 260-650Ft, mains 990-2300Ft; ☎) 8am-10pm) The cellar restaurant at this *pen-sion* is warm and inviting in winter, but in summer try to get a table in the large and leafy internal courtyard. It's a good place for breakfast (330Ft to 490Ft) alfresco, too.

**Platán** (☎ 320 623; Hunyadi János utca 23; soups 250-780Ft, starters 860-1600Ft, mains 750-2300Ft) The main draw of the *csárda* at the Platán, which also has a well-stocked and popular bar, is the terrace in summer.

**Korona** (☎ 320 542; Kossuth tér 3; ice cream from 100Ft, cakes 80-160Ft; ☎) 9am-9pm) This café and pastry shop is a great choice for cakes and ice cream.

**Penny** (Batthyány Lajos utca; ☎) 7am-8pm Mon-Sat, 7am-2pm Sun) This large branch of the supermarket chain is just west of the bus station.

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

Buses that run to/from Sárvár:

Destination	Price	Duration	Km	Frequency
Budapest	2780Ft	3hr	221	1-2 daily
Bük	363Ft	40min	28	8-10 daily
Celldömölk	363Ft	50min	28	8 daily
Győr	1090Ft	2hr	96	2 daily
Kaposvár	1930Ft	3¼hr	159	1 daily
Keszthely	907Ft	1½-2hr	75	2 daily
Lenti	1450Ft	2¼hr	117	1 daily Mon-Fri
Pápa	605Ft	1½hr	50	2-3 daily
Pécs	2780Ft	4½hr	224	1 daily
Sitke	133Ft	15min	10	8-10 daily
Sopron	786Ft	1¼hr	62	2-3 daily
Sümege	484Ft	1hr	40	2-3 daily
Szombathely	423Ft	1hr	35	hourly
Veszprém	907Ft	1½hr	77	2-3 daily
Zalaegerszeg	1030Ft	1¾hr	85	2-3 daily

## TRAIN

Sárvár is on the train line linking Szombathely (363Ft, 40 minutes, 29km, hourly) with Veszprém (946Ft, two hours, 100km, up to six daily), Székesfehérvár (1534Ft, 2½ hours, 145km, up to six daily) and Budapest (from 2076Ft, 3½ hours, 224km, up to six daily). From Szombathely up to five daily trains continue on to Graz (5500Ft, four hours, 136km) in Austria via Szentgotthárd.

## KŐSZEK

☎ 94 / pop 11,500

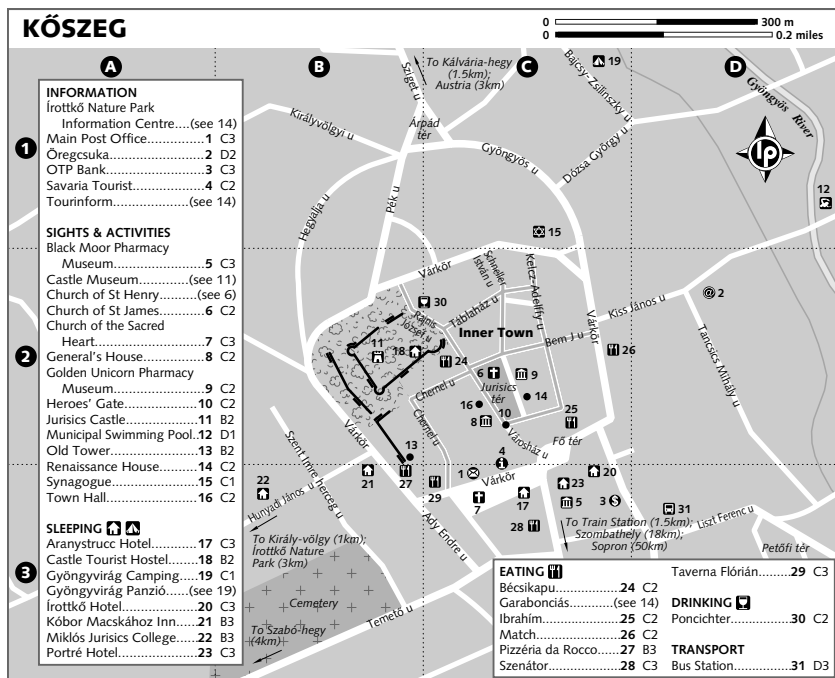
The tranquil town of Kőszeg (German: Güns) is sometimes called 'the nation's jewellery box', and as you pass under the pseudo-Gothic Heroes' Gate into Jurisics tér, you'll see why. What opens up before you is a treasure-trove of colourful Gothic, Renaissance and baroque buildings that together make up one of the most delightful squares in Hungary. At the same time the nearby Kőszeg Hills, which includes Mt Írottó (882m), the highest point in Transdanubia, and the Írottó Nature Park, offer endless possibilities for outdoor activities.

## Orientation

Kőszeg's historic district, the Inner Town, is ringed by the Várkör, which follows the

## FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS

Kőszeg has played pivotal roles in the nation's defence over the centuries. The best-known story is the storming of the town's castle by Suleiman the Magnificent's troops in August 1532, which sounds all too familiar but has a surprise ending. Miklós Jurisics' 'army' of fewer than 50 soldiers and the town militia held the fortress for 25 days against 100,000 Turks. An accord was reached when Jurisics allowed the Turks to run up their flag over the castle in a symbolic declaration of victory provided they left town immediately thereafter. The Turks kept their part of the bargain (packing their bags at 11am on 30 August), and Vienna was spared the treatment that would befall Buda nine years later. To this day church bells in Kőszeg peal an hour before noon to mark the withdrawal.



old castle walls. The city's bus 'station' is a half-dozen stands on Liszt Ferenc utca, a few minutes' walk to the southeast. The train station is on Alsó körút, about 1.5km in the same direction.

## Information

**Irottó Nature Park information centre** (☎ 563 121; www.naturpark.hu; Jurisics tér 7; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) Shares space with Tourinform.

**Main post office** (Várkör 65) Just west of Savaria Tourist.

**Öregcsuka** (☎ 561 546; Kiss János utca 18; per 30min 500Ft; ☎ 11am-midnight) The 'Old Pike' fish restaurant near the Gyöngyös River has Internet access on three machines.

**OTP bank** (Kossuth Lajos utca 8; ☎ 7.45am-5pm Mon, 7.45am-3pm Tue-Thu, 7.45am-12.30 Fri) Also has a foreign currency-exchange machine.

**Savaria Tourist** (☎ 563 048; fax 563 049; Várkör 69; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat) Just off Fő tér.

**Tourinform** (☎ 563 120; koszeg@tourinform.hu; 1st fl, Jurisics tér 7; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun-mid-Sep, 8am-4pm Mon-Fri mid-Sep-mid-Jun) On the main square, it's in the same building as Garabonciá's café.

## Sights

**Heroes' Gate** (Hősök kapuja), leading into Jurisics tér, was erected in 1932 (when these nostalgic portals were all the rage in Hungary) to mark the 400th anniversary of Suleiman's withdrawal. The tower above is open to visitors and accessible from the **General's House** (Tábormokház; ☎ 360 240; Jurisics tér 6; adult/senior or student 360/180Ft; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat mid-Mar-Sep), which contains exhibits on folk art, trades and guilds, and the natural history of the area.

Almost all the buildings in Jurisics tér are interesting. The red-and-yellow **Town Hall** (Városháza; Jurisics tér 8), a mixture of Gothic, Renaissance, baroque and neoclassical styles, has oval paintings on its façade of worldly and heavenly worthies. The **Renaissance house** (Jurisics tér 7), built in 1668 and

## DISCOUNT CARDS

The **Kőszeg Ticket** is a daily ticket allowing entry into all of the town's museums. It costs 600/300/1200Ft per adult/child/family.

now housing a pub, is adorned with graffiti etched into the stucco. A few doors down is the **Golden Unicorn Pharmacy Museum** (Arany Egyszárú Patikamúzeum; ☎ 360 337; Jurisics tér 11; adult/senior or student 360/180Ft; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Apr-Nov), one of two pharmacy museums in little Kőszeg. For those of you who can't get enough of controlled substances under glass, the other one is the **Black Moor Pharmacy Museum** (Fekete Szerecseny Patikamúzeum; ☎ 360 980; Rákóczi Ferenc utca 3; adult/senior or student 360/180Ft; ☎ 1-5pm Tue-Fri Mar-Nov).

In the centre of Jurisics tér a statue of the Virgin Mary (1739) and the town fountain (1766) adjoin two fine churches. The Gothic **Church of St James** (Szent Jakab-templom), built in 1407, is to the north and contains very faded 15th-century frescoes on the east wall (ie to the right of the main altar) of a giant St Christopher carrying the Christ Child, Mary Misericordia sheltering supplicants under a massive cloak, and the Three Magi bearing their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. The altars and oaken pews are masterpieces of baroque woodcarving, and Miklós Jurisics and two of his children are buried in the crypt. The baroque **Church of St Henry** (Szent Imre-templom) with the tall steeple has two art treasures: a painting of the church's patron by István Dorffmeister above the altar, and one of Mary visiting her cousin Elizabeth by Franz Anton Maulbertsch, on the north wall (ie to the left of the main altar).

Just off Rajnis József utca to the northwest is a path leading to **Jurisics Castle** (☎ 360 113; Rajnis József utca 9; adult/child 120/80Ft; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun). Originally built in the mid-13th century, but reconstructed several times (most recently in 1962), the four-towered fortress is now a hotchpotch of Renaissance arcades, Gothic windows and baroque interiors. The **Castle Museum** (Vármúzeum; ☎ 360 240; adult/senior or child/family 460/230/900Ft; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) on the 1st floor has exhibits on the history of Kőszeg from the 14th century (with the events of 1532 taking up most of the space; see boxed text, page 181) and on local wine production. Among the latter is the curious *Szülő jövésnek könyve* (Arrival of the Grape Book), a kind of gardener's logbook of grape shoot and bud sketches begun in 1740 and updated annually on St George's Day (23 April). You can climb two of the towers, from where a brass ensemble entertained the townspeople in the Middle Ages.

Walking south along narrow Chernel utca, with its elegant baroque façades and saw-toothed rooftops (which allowed the defenders a better shot at the enemy), you'll pass the remains of the ancient **castle walls** and the so-called **Old Tower** (Öreg Zvinger; ☎ 360 240; Chernel utca 16; adult/senior or child 200/100Ft; ☎ 10am-1.30pm Tue-Fri & odd-numbered Sat), an 11th-century corner bastion, the oldest structure in town.

The neo-Gothic **Church of the Sacred Heart** (Jézus Szíve-templom; Fő tér), built in 1894, is unexceptional save for its refreshingly different geometric frescoes and those 'middy' bells at 11am. The circular **synagogue** (zsinagóga; Várkör 38), built in 1859, with its strange neo-Gothic towers, once served one of the oldest Jewish communities in Hungary, but now sits abandoned and in decay to the northeast of Jurisics tér.

## Activities

Walking up to the baroque chapel on 394m-high **Kálvária-hegy** (Calvary Hill) northwest of the town centre, or to the vineyards of **Király-völgy** (Royal Valley) west of Jurisics Castle, is a very pleasant way to spend a few hours. You can also follow Temető utca southwest and then south up to 458m-high **Szabó-hegy** (Tailor's Hill). Tourinform has a brochure with easy walks in the area called *Kőszeg-Hegyaljai Séták* (Kőszeg Upland Paths), but a copy of Cartographia's 1:40,000-scale *Kőszegi-hegység* (Kőszeg Hills; No 13; 650Ft) map will prove more useful if you plan to do adventurous hiking or visit the **Irottó Nature Park** to the west.

The **municipal swimming pool** (városi uszoda; adult/child 650/400Ft, Kiss János utca; ☎ 10am-6pm mid-Jun-Aug) is east of the town centre.

## Sleeping

### BUDGET

Savaria Tourist can arrange private rooms (2500Ft per person).

**Kóbor Macskához Inn** (☎ /fax 362 273; Várkör 100; d with washbasin/shower 4000/5500Ft; (P)) Just west of the Inner Town, 'At the Sign of the Stray Cat' is a charming nine-room inn with relatively large rooms and a downstairs bar that can sometimes be noisy.

**Gyöngyvirág Panzió** (☎ 360 454; fax 364 574; Bajcsy-Zsilinszky utca 6; s/d/tr/q with washbasin 4000/5000/6200/8200Ft, s/d with shower 5500/6500Ft; (P)) This spotless guesthouse next to the town's



**AUTHOR'S CHOICE**

**Aranysrucc Hotel** (☎ 360 323; www.aranysrucc.hu; Várkör 124; s 5400Ft, d 8200-9200Ft; (P)) The 'Golden Atmospheric' is a worn though wonderfully atmospheric hotel in the heart of Kőszeg. It has 15 rooms in an 18th-century building, near the entrance to the Inner Town. Room No 7, on the corner with balcony views over the main square (Fő tér), is the biggest and the best. The most expensive rooms have antique furnishings.

only camping ground is surrounded by greenery and very quiet.

**Miklós Jurisics College** (☎ /fax 361 404; Hunyadi János utca 10; dm 1900Ft; (P)) This enormous college west of the Inner Town has over 100 beds in dormitory accommodation available in July and August.

**Castle Tourist Hostel** (☎ 360 113, 360 227; Rajnis József utca 9; dm approx 1500Ft) A cheap and central option, this hostel is in a small building near the entrance to Jurisics Castle. It's very well worn, but the location makes it attractive.

**Gyöngyvirág Camping** (☎ 360 454; fax 364 574; Bajcsy-Zsilinszky utca 6; camp sites per tent/car/adult/child 400/400/700/300Ft; (P)) By the little Gyöngyös River, the 'Lily of the Valley' is a basic camping ground with space for approximately 20 to 25 tents.

**MIDRANGE**

**Portré Hotel** (☎ 363 170; www.portre.com; Fő tér 7; d/tr 9000/11,000Ft; (M)) This positive stunner of a boutique hotel offers a half-dozen wonderfully decorated rooms on the town's main square. Try and get a room on the 1st floor, as those on the 2nd have dormer windows.

**Írottókó Hotel** (☎ 360 373; www.hotelirtokko.hu; Fő tér 4; s/d/tr 9800/13,100/15,400Ft; (M)) Kőszeg's main hotel. It's large (48 rooms) and central and, while the building is rather uninspiring, the renovated guestrooms and public areas have improved tremendously in recent years.

**Eating & Drinking**

**Taverna Flórián** (☎ 563 072; Várkör 59; starters 850-1890Ft, mains 1490-2990Ft; (M) 11.30am-2.30pm & 7-10pm Wed-Sun) For fine dining, head here for quality Mediterranean food in beautiful

cellar-like surroundings. Pasta dishes (650Ft to 1590Ft) are particularly recommended.

**Bécsikapu** (☎ 563 122; Rajnis József utca 5; soups & starters 210-1350Ft, mains 990-2290Ft; (M) 11am-10pm) Almost opposite the Church of St James, this is a pleasant *csárda* with a back garden looking towards the castle. It fills up at lunch with tourists, though.

**Pizzéria da Rocco** (☎ 362 379; Várkör 55; pizza 500-1500Ft; (M) noon-10pm) With its huge garden within the old castle walls, da Rocco is a coveted address and great for a pizza or indeed just a drink.

**Ibrahim** (☎ 360 854; Fő tér 17; ice cream from 80Ft; (M) 8am-10pm) For ice cream don't go past this place; what looks like half the population of Kőszeg queuing outside can't be wrong.

**Szenátor** (☎ 360 320; Rákóczi Ferenc utca 6; (M) 3pm-midnight) This upbeat *cukrászda* (cake shop) and café gets the thumbs up from readers who love its cakes.

**Garabonciás** (☎ 360 050; Jurisics tér 7; pizzas 350-2290Ft; (M) noon-10pm Mon-Sat, 5-10pm Sun) A simple but very centrally located café in a lovely historical building on the main square.

**Poncichter** (Rajnis József utca 10; (M) 9am-9pm Tue-Sun) For wine (generally common Sopron vintages), go to this old wine cellar, which has vaulted ceilings, high Gothic windows and, in the warmer months, an inviting garden.

**Match** (Várkör 20; (M) 6am-7pm Mon-Fri, 6am-4pm Sat) A very central branch of the supermarket chain.

**Getting There & Away**

Departures are frequent to Sopron (665Ft, 1½ hours, 55km, up to six daily), Szombathely (302Ft, 35 minutes, 21km, hourly) and Velem (182Ft, 20 minutes, 11km, up to six daily), but more sporadic to Lenti (1570Ft, three hours, 126km, Monday to Friday at 3.45pm), Nagykanizsa (1570Ft, three hours, 125km, two daily) and Körmend (605Ft, 70 minutes, 47km, one daily).

Three weekly buses head for Oberpullendorf (324Ft, 40 minutes, 18km) and Vienna (2139Ft, 2½ hours, 125km) in Austria at 7.05am on Wednesday, 8.10am on Friday and 4.15am Saturday.

Kőszeg is at the end of an 18km railway spur from Szombathely (302Ft, 35 minutes, 21km, hourly). The only express train – at 7.51pm – takes just 19 minutes to reach Szombathely.

**ÓRSÉG REGION**

This westernmost region, where Hungary, Austria and Slovenia converge, has for centuries been the nation's 'sentry', or *ország*, and its houses and villages, spaced unusually far apart on the crests and in the valleys of the Zala foothills, once served as the national frontier. For their service as guards, the inhabitants of the region were given special privileges by the king, which they retained until the arrival of the Batthyány family.

Much of this region forms the boundaries of the 440-sq-km **Órség National Park**, which borders both Austria and Slovenia, and is a boon for lovers of the great outdoors. The park is crisscrossed with marked hiking trails that link many of Órség's villages, including Óriszentpéter, Szalafő, Velemér and Pankasz. Cartographia's 1:60,000-scale map *Órség, Göcsej* (No 21; 900Ft) is a good reference.

**Information**

The **Órség National Park information centre** (☎ 548 034; www.orsegimpi.hu in Hungarian; Siskaszter 26/a; (M) 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri year-round, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun May-Aug) is in Óriszentpéter just before the turnoff to Szalafő. Also in Óriszentpéter on the road to Szalafő, **Órségi Teleház** (Órség Full House; ☎ 548 038; www.orsegetelehaz.hu; Városter 116; (M) 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) can help with general information and accommodation.

**Óriszentpéter**

☎ 94 / pop 1200

Óriszentpéter, the centre of the Órség region, is a pretty village of timber and thatched-roofed houses and large gardens; it's the best Órség town in which to base yourself. Its most interesting sight, a remarkably well-preserved 13th-century **Romanesque church** (Templomszer 15), is an easy 2km walk northwest of the village centre. On the southern extension of the church is a wonderful carved portal and small fragments of 15th-century frescoes. On the north side, a set of wooden steps leads to the choir. The writings on the internal south walls, dating from the 17th century, are Bible verses in Hungarian, and the 18th-century altarpiece was painted by a student of Franz Anton Maulbertsch.

**Szalafő**

☎ 94 / pop 300

Energetic travellers may want to continue another 4km or so along Templomszer, past

arcaded old peasant houses and abandoned crank wells to Szalafő, the oldest settlement in the Órség. In Szalafő-Pityerszer, 2km west of the village, is the **Open-Air Ethnographical Museum** (Szabadtéri Néprajzi Múzeum; ☎ 06 30 467 7022; adult/senior or student/family 400/200/800Ft; (M) 10am-6pm Jun-Aug, 10am-6pm Tue-Sun mid-Mar-May, Sep & Oct), the grandiose name given to a mini-*skanzen* (open-air museum displaying village architecture) of three folk compounds of 10 houses, storerooms and outbuildings unique to the Órség. Built around a central courtyard, the houses have large overhangs, which allowed neighbours to chat when it rained – a frequent occurrence in this very wet region. The **Calvinist church** in the village centre has frescoes from the 16th century.

**Sleeping & Eating**

Both the national park's information centre and Órség Full House have comprehensive lists of accommodation in the area, including several peasant houses (from 2500Ft per person) in the Csörgöszer section of Szalafő.

**Centrum** (☎ 428 002; www.hotels.hu/centrum/panzio; Városter 17; s/d/tr/q 3500/6500/8500/10,500Ft; (P)) This eight-room place in the centre of 'downtown' Óriszentpéter has a popular restaurant and two bowling alleys, which attract young bloods from miles around.

**Domino** (☎ 428 115, 06 30 463 9542; Siskaszter 5/a; r per person 3000-5000Ft; (P)) This place has five lovely little bungalows complete with kitchen and separate bathroom. It's a bit remote, though, and you should have your own transport – though it does rent bikes.

**Bognár** (☎ 428 027; Kovácszer 96; mains 720-2200Ft; (M) 7am-9pm) In Óriszentpéter, this is a reliable choice for a meal. It's about 500m up the hill, north of the bus station.

**Getting There & Away**

Óriszentpéter (and sometimes Szalafő) can be reached by bus from Körmend (484Ft, 70 minutes, 37km, six daily) and from Zalaegecszeg (485Ft, 1½ hours, 40km, two daily with a change at Zalalövő). Other destinations include Kőszeg (1090Ft, two hours, 87km, one daily), Szentgotthárd (302km, one hour, 25km, four daily) and Lenti (605Ft, one hour, 44km, two daily).

An infrequent bus service connects Óriszentpéter with Szalafő (133Ft, six to 10 minutes, 7.5km, up to five daily).

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