

25+ Best Things to Do in Budapest: Ultimate Guide For Adults, Couples & Families

"I've visited Budapest 5 times over the last decade — during spring, winter, and summer — and each trip revealed new experiences. From steamy baths in February to Danube cruises in August, Budapest never stops inspiring."

Welcome to **Budapest, the "Pearl of the Danube"**! This stunning city is known for its [rich history](#), beautiful architecture, and vibrant culture. Whether you're visiting for a weekend or a week, there's no shortage of amazing experiences waiting for you.

I've visited **Budapest** multiple times and explored every corner of this magnificent city. From soaking in thermal baths to exploring historic castles, I'm excited to share **my personal insights** and **recommendations** to help you plan your perfect trip.

This guide covers everything you need to know - [must-see attractions](#), **Best Things to do in Budapest**, **hidden gems**, practical tips, and answers to common questions. Let's discover the best things to do in Budapest together!

Why Visit Budapest?

Budapest offers something for every type of traveler. The city is actually two cities in one - **Buda** on the **west bank** and **Pest** on the **east bank**, connected by beautiful bridges across the Danube River. You'll find:

- **Stunning architecture from Gothic to Art Nouveau**
- **The world's largest thermal water system**
- **Affordable prices compared to other European capitals**
- **Rich history and cultural experiences**

Top 15 Must-Do Experiences in Budapest

1. Visit the Hungarian Parliament Building

The Parliament Building is Budapest's most iconic landmark. This magnificent Gothic Revival building is the **third-largest parliament building** in the world. The

interior is even more impressive than the exterior, with stunning staircases, frescoes, and the Hungarian Crown Jewels.

Price: ~6,000 HUF (€15)

Duration: 45 minutes

- Reserve online weeks in advance
- See the **Holy Crown of Hungary**

Insider Tip: Book tickets online in advance as tours often sell out. The English tours fill up fastest, so book at least a week ahead during peak season.

2. Soak in the Széchenyi Thermal Bath

Budapest is famous for its thermal baths, and Széchenyi is the largest and most popular. The **yellow Neo-Baroque palace** houses 18 pools, including **three outdoor pools** that stay open year-round. There's nothing quite like soaking in warm thermal water while snow falls around you in winter.

Price: ~9,900 HUF (€25), towel rental extra

Open: 7 AM–8 PM

- 18 pools, saunas, steam rooms
- Outdoor pools steamy even in winter
- Bring flip-flops, towel & swim cap

Personal Experience: I recommend spending at least 3-4 hours here. Arrive early (before 10 AM) to avoid crowds, especially on weekends.

3. Explore Buda Castle and Castle Hill

Buda Castle District is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** that offers breathtaking views of Pest across the river. The area includes:

- **Buda Castle Palace**
- **Matthias Church**
- **Fisherman's Bastion**
- **Medieval streets and houses**

Entry Fee: Grounds free, museums ~4,800 HUF (€12)

Hours: 10 AM–6 PM

- **Offers panoramic views of Pest**

- **Includes National Gallery & History Museum**
- **Ride the Castle Funicular (1,200 HUF one-way)**

Good to Know: You can take the Buda Castle Funicular up the hill or walk up - the path takes about 15-20 minutes and offers great photo opportunities.

4. Walk Across the Chain Bridge

The **Széchenyi Chain Bridge** was the first permanent bridge connecting Buda and Pest. It's beautifully illuminated at night and offers fantastic views of both sides of the city. Walking across at sunset is particularly magical.

Price: Free

Open: 24/7

- Connects Buda & Pest across the Danube
- Closed to vehicles (pedestrian only in 2025)

5. Visit St. Stephen's Basilica

This **Neoclassical basilica** is named after Hungary's first king and houses his preserved right hand. You can climb to the dome panorama for one of the best views of Budapest. The interior is magnificent with intricate mosaics and marble work.

Price: Donation 2,000 HUF (€5); Dome entry extra

Hours: 9 AM–7 PM

- Climb 364 stairs (or take the lift) to the dome
- Viewpoint rivals Gellért Hill's

6. Experience the Great Market Hall

The Great Market Hall is Budapest's largest and oldest indoor market. The three-story building offers:

- Fresh produce on the ground floor
- souvenirs and crafts on the second floor
- A food court and restaurants in the basement

Entry: Free

Hours: Mon-Fri 6 AM–6 PM, Sat till 3 PM

- Try langos (~800 HUF), goulash (~2,000 HUF)
- First floor = food stalls
- Second floor = souvenirs, textiles

Food Recommendation: Try lángos (fried dough with toppings) at the basement food court - it's a Hungarian classic!

7. Cruise the Danube River

A **river cruise** offers unique perspectives of Budapest's most famous landmarks. Evening cruises are particularly spectacular when the **city lights up**. Many cruises include **dinner** or **drinks**.

Price: Day cruise ~4,000 HUF (€10); Dinner cruise from €40

Duration: 1–2 hours

- Available day and night
- Many companies near Vigadó Square or Dock 11

8. Discover the Dohány Street Synagogue

This is the largest synagogue in Europe and the second largest in the world. The complex includes the Jewish Museum, Holocaust Memorial, and the beautiful Raoul Wallenberg Memorial Park.

Location: Dohány Street, District VII

Entry Fee: ~5,000 HUF (€12) for museum + guided tour

Hours: Sun–Thu 10 AM–4 PM (seasonal changes)

- **Jewish Museum** with Holocaust memorials
- **Raoul Wallenberg Memorial Park**
- **Tree of Life** sculpture in honor of victims

9. Relax at Gellért Thermal Bath

While Széchenyi is more famous, Gellért offers a more elegant experience with Art Nouveau architecture and healing waters. The indoor pools are particularly stunning.

Price: ~9,400 HUF (€24)

Hours: 9 AM–7 PM

- Elegant Art Nouveau design
- Indoor + outdoor pools
- Less crowded than Széchenyi

10. Explore Heroes' Square

This impressive square features the Millennium Monument with statues of the seven chieftains of the Magyars and other important Hungarian national leaders. It's adjacent to City Park and the Zoo.

Entry: Free

- Monument honoring Hungary's founders
- Flanked by **two art museums**
- Near **Budapest Zoo** and **Vajdahunyad Castle**

11. Visit the House of Terror

This museum is housed in the former headquarters of the Arrow Cross Party and AVH (secret police). It documents the fascist and communist regimes in Hungary and serves as a memorial to their victims.

Price: ~4,000 HUF (€10)

Hours: 10 AM–6 PM (Closed Monday)

- In-depth look at Hungary's Nazi & Communist past
- Audio guides are highly recommended

12. Enjoy Budapest's Ruin Bars


Ruin bars are unique to Budapest - they're bars set up in abandoned buildings and courtyards. Szimpla Kert is the original and most famous, but there are many others worth visiting.

Nightlife Tip: Ruin bars don't get busy until after 10 PM. Go earlier if you want to avoid crowds and actually see the decor.

Entry: Free (drinks not included)

- Most drinks: 1,200–2,500 HUF (€3–6)

- Live music, art, retro furniture
- Open till late (1–4 AM)

 *Try:* Hungarian fruit brandy called **pálinka**

13. Climb Gellért Hill

For the **best panoramic views** of Budapest, climb Gellért Hill. You'll be rewarded with breathtaking views and see the Liberty Statue and the Citadella along the way.

Entry: Free

Time: 30–45 min hike

- One of the **best city views**
- Visit the **Liberty Statue** on top
- Safe even at sunset

 Wear proper shoes; parts are steep.

14. Margaret Island

Entry: Free

- Accessible by foot or tram #4/6
- **Bike rental:** ~2,500 HUF/hour
- Includes a small zoo, a musical fountain, and medieval ruins


 A quiet break from city bustle — bring a picnic!

15. Fisherman's Bastion

Price: Lower deck free, upper deck ~1,200 HUF (€3)

Open: 24/7


- Fairytale towers & views over the Danube
- Café with a terrace inside

 Early mornings = no crowds, peaceful photos.

Things to Do in Budapest with Kids

Budapest is **surprisingly family-friendly!** Safe, fun, and educational.


Activity	Why It's Great
Budapest Zoo	One of Europe's oldest (~3,000 HUF entry)
MiniPolisz Kids' Town	Interactive city roleplay (~4,000 HUF)
Children's Railway	Operated by kids with adult supervision
Margaret Island Park	Open space, small zoo, pedal carts
Aquaworld Waterpark	All-weather fun (~7,000 HUF full day)

 Baby changing facilities and stroller access are widely available at top attractions.

Things to Do in Budapest at Night For Young Adults

Budapest lights up after sunset — literally and figuratively. Here's what you can do:


Night Activity	Description
Danube Night Cruise	See the city glitter from the river
Thermal Baths After Dark	Széchenyi Spa parties (called "Sparties")
Ruin Pub Crawl	Explore 3–5 bars with a guide (~€15–25)
Night View from Citadel	City skyline is breathtaking at night

 Many bars stay open till 4–5 AM. Public transport runs late on weekends (or use Bolt taxis).

Things to Do in Budapest for Couples

Budapest is **one of the most romantic cities in Europe**. Ideal for proposals, honeymoons, or spontaneous getaways.


- **Sunset at Fisherman's Bastion**
- **Dinner Cruise on the Danube** (from €40 with 3-course meal)
- **Couple's massage at Gellért or Rudas Baths**
- **Ferris Wheel of Budapest**
- **Walk along the illuminated Chain Bridge at night**

 Bonus: Book a private spa cabin or candlelight dinner on Margaret Island.

Things to Do in Budapest for Adults

Looking for something more **laid-back, cultural, and classy**?

- **Opera or ballet at the Hungarian State Opera House**
- **Fine dining** at Costes, Babel, or Borkonyha
- **Historic cafés**: New York Café, Gerbeaud, Café Astoria
- **Art & history museums** around Heroes' Square


 Dress codes apply at fine restaurants and opera events — pack something formal.

Crazy Things to Do in Budapest

For those who love the **weird, wild, and unforgettable**, try:

- **Sparty at Széchenyi Baths** (Saturday night pool rave)

- **Escape Rooms** — Budapest has the world's most! (~€12–15 pp)
- **Caving under Buda Hills** — Real adventure in the Pálvölgyi Cave
- **Bobsled track on Buda Hills** (open year-round!)

 Book wild activities in advance — many sell out fast on weekends.

Things to Do in Budapest in December


December transforms Budapest into a **winter fairytale**:

- 🎄 **Christmas Markets** at Vörösmarty Square & Basilica
- 🛼 Ice skating at **City Park Ice Rink** (entry ~2,000 HUF + rental)
- 🚿 Steam in outdoor thermal pools with snow falling
- 🎭 Attend a Christmas concert or ballet

 Markets typically open mid-November and run until January 1st.

Where to Eat in Budapest

Dish	Where to Try
Goulash	Paprika Vendéglő, Frici Papa
Langos	Karaván Street Food Market
Chimney Cake (Kürtőskalács)	Molnár's or Váci Street
Dobos Torte	Gerbeaud Café
Chicken Paprikash	Paprika Vendéglő

 **Bonus:** Try a **Hungarian food tour** to sample multiple dishes with a local guide.

Where to Stay in Budapest

Traveler Type	Best District	Why
Budget	District VII (Jewish Quarter)	Close to ruin bars and food
Mid-range	District V (Inner City)	Walkable to major sights
Luxury	Castle Hill (District I)	Quiet, scenic, historic
Families	Near City Park or Margaret Island	Green space, calmer areas

Practical Information for Your Trip

Best Time to Visit

- **Spring (April-June) and Fall (September-October):** Ideal weather, fewer crowds
- **Summer (July-August):** Warm weather, but crowded
- **Winter (November-March):** Christmas markets are magical, but it can be cold

Getting Around

Budapest has an excellent public transportation system, including:

- **Metro (4 lines)**
- **Trams** (including the famous Tram 2 along the Danube)
- **Buses**
- **Taxis** (use reputable companies like Főtaxi)

Money-Saving Tip: Purchase a Budapest travel card for unlimited travel on public transportation.

Currency

Hungary uses the **Hungarian Forint (HFT)**. While some places accept euros, you'll get better prices if you pay in forint.

Language

Hungarian is the official language, but **English** is widely spoken in tourist areas.

Budapest 3 Itinerary Suggestions

Day 1:

- Buda Castle
- Chain Bridge
- Parliament Tour
- Danube Cruise

Day 2:

- Heroes' Square
- City Park
- Széchenyi Baths
- Ruin Bars at night

Day 3:

- Gellért Hill hike
- Gellért Baths
- Great Market Hall
- St. Stephen's Basilica



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Frequently Asked Questions

Is Budapest expensive to visit?

Budapest is one of the most affordable European capitals. You can enjoy nice meals for \$10-15, and attraction prices are reasonable compared to Western Europe.

How many days do I need in Budapest?

We recommend 3-4 full days to see the main attractions without rushing. If you want to take day trips or explore more deeply, 5-7 days is ideal.

Is Budapest safe for tourists?

Yes, Budapest is generally very safe. Use normal precautions against pickpocketing in crowded areas and on public transportation.

What should I avoid in Budapest?

- **Unlicensed taxis** (always use reputable companies)
- **Currency exchange offices** with bad rates (avoid ones near tourist areas)
- **Restaurants** with no prices on menus
- **Overpriced ruin bars' drinks** (check prices first)

Do I need to tip in Budapest?

Tipping is appreciated but not mandatory. For restaurants, 10-15% is customary if service wasn't included.

What are the best things to do in Budapest at night?

Try a river cruise, visit ruin pubs, walk across Chain Bridge, or relax in a thermal spa.

How many days do I need in Budapest?

3 days is ideal to see the highlights. With 5, you can go deeper and explore hidden gems.

Are thermal baths in Budapest worth it?

Yes! They're relaxing, affordable, and unique to the city's culture.

Conclusion: Your Budapest Adventure Awaits

Budapest truly offers something for everyone - history buffs, foodies, architecture lovers, and those simply looking to relax in thermal waters. The city's unique blend of Eastern and Western influences creates an experience you won't find anywhere else.

From my multiple visits, I can confidently say that Budapest only gets better the more you explore. Don't just stick to the main attractions - wander the side streets, try local restaurants, and talk to locals to discover the city's true charm.

Use this guide as your starting point, but don't be afraid to create your own adventures. Whether you're watching the sunset from Fisherman's Bastion or enjoying a glass of Hungarian wine at a ruin bar, you're sure to create unforgettable memories.

Ready to start planning your trip? Check out our recommended hotels and tours to make the most of your Budapest experience.