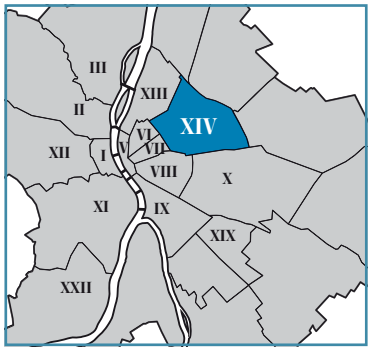
District XIV: Zugló

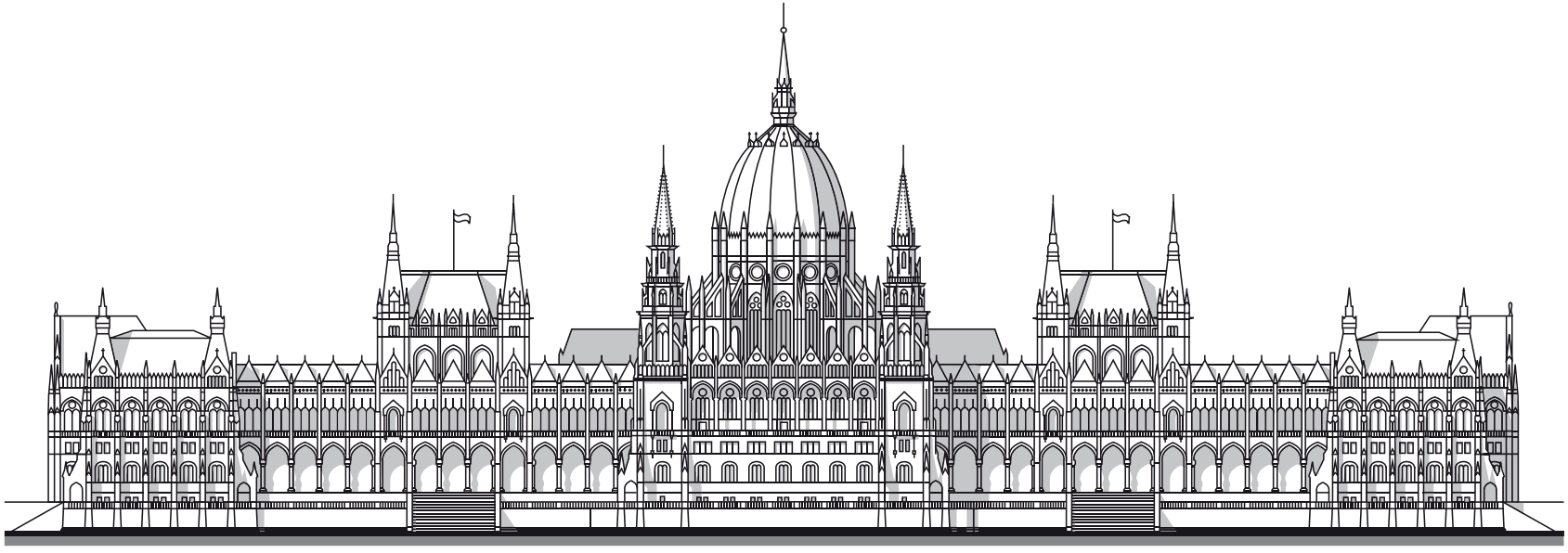
Heroes' Square is the Hungarian Pantheon, a monumental public space adorned with statues of the nation's most fêted heroes and animated at all times of year by groups of tourists. The grandiose Museum of Fine Arts building lies to one side. Behind it lies City Park, the green lung of Pest, home to the famous Széchenyi Baths and the architectural pastiche known as the Vajdahunyad Castle. The streets nearby preserve some fine examples of early 20th-century architecture.



HEROES' SQUARE

The huge open space known as Heroes' Square (Hősök tere; *map p. 429, F1*), attractively paved with a grey and white geometric pattern, was laid out in 1896 by the architect Albert Schickedanz as a parade ground for the celebrations to mark Hungary's Millennium, the year when the country celebrated a thousand years since Árpád and the Magyar tribes had first occupied the Carpathian Basin. In the centre of the square is a tall Corinthian column surmounted by a statue of the Archangel Gabriel (by György Zala) holding aloft St Stephen's Crown and the Apostolic Cross. Gabriel is said to have appeared to Pope Sylvester II in a dream, telling him to send a crown to the king of Hungary, to legitimise his position as one of the defenders of Christendom. Today that crown is displayed in the Hungarian Parliament (*see p. 141*). Grouped around the column, in mounted file, are the seven Magyar chieftains. At the front rides Árpád (György Zala, 1912), then moving clockwise they are Kond, Ond, Tétény (also known as Töhötöm), Tas, Huba and Előd (all by Zala, 1928). A frieze of oak leaves runs below them. The ensemble was restored in 1996 for the 'millecentenary', 1,100 years since the Magyars arrived in their new homeland. Behind the column is a two-part hemicycle adorned with statues, as follows:

HEROES' SQUARE
The statues between the columns are Charles I and Louis the Great. Above is the Chariot of War.



HUNGARIAN PARLIAMENT: RIVER FAÇADE

By the early 19th century, the favourite site had become Pozsony (Bratislava). As Hungarian national sentiment and the desire for independence grew, so calls began to be made for a permanent location to be chosen. Pozsony was rejected as being too close to Vienna. Pest became the allotted city. The first plan for a building was submitted by Mihály Pollack (architect of the National Museum) in 1840. It was as massive as Steindl's eventual incarnation was to be, but heavily neo-Florentine, inspired by the massy grandeur of Palazzo Pitti. Nothing came of his plans, nor of the over 40 others that were received, from architects all over Europe, because the turmoil of the 1848 revolution turned attention elsewhere. It was not until 1865 that another committee was set up to deliver a parliament building. They commissioned one from the foremost architect of the day, Miklós Ybl, and construction proceeded with haste. In just eleven months the building was completed, on Bródy Sándor utca overlooking the National Museum (it is now the Italian Cultural Institute; *see p. 137*). The lower house met there while the lords met in the Museum (the Hungarian Parliament was bicameral until 1945). Hasty construction had delivered an imperfect building, however, with notoriously bad acoustics. In 1880 the project was put out to tender again. The new building was to hold both houses, upper and lower, and it was to be a symbolic edifice representing the entirety of the Hungarian people, 'to soar above all other buildings, to express the power of the Hungarian nation on the banks of the Danube.' When Imre Steindl's Gothic Revival plan emerged the winner, critical voices grumbled that there was nothing Hungarian about it. Nevertheless, it was built, and now stands proud, 265 metres long, 96 metres high at the top of the dome and containing some 700 rooms. Work was completed in 1902. The first parliamentary session was held here in October of that year. Sadly Imre Steindl had died a few weeks earlier and so did not live to see his great building finally fulfil its purpose.

A SYMBOLIC BUILDING FOR THE NATION

Despite the early critics' complaints that Steindl's building was not notably Hungarian in style, it does much to allude to Hungary throughout its fabric. The height of the dome, 96m, is unfailingly mentioned by the tour guides as being an allusion to the year 896, when the Magyar tribes occupied the Carpathian Basin. In the decoration of the building, motifs of Hungarian flora are constantly used. The seating in the two debating chambers is of Slavonian oak and everywhere else too, mainly Hungarian materials were used and Hungarian craftsmen and artists were employed to execute it all: Zsolnay, Róth, Lotz. Despite its vastness and thus its capacity to accommodate representatives of all the Hungarian people—and its avowed aim to do so—the fact remains that in its early years it did not. Before WWI, only a small percentage of the population had the vote and non-Magyars within the realm (Slovaks, Croats, Serbs and Romanians) were greatly under-represented. The franchise was extended after the First World War and universal adult suffrage had arrived by 1945, only to be swiftly extinguished by the single-party state. A multi-party democratic parliamentary system came into being in 1990.

into a mosque, the first church to undergo such a change. It was here that Suleiman gave thanks to Allah for his victory. When other churches on the hill also became mosques, the Matthias Church adopted the name *Eski Djami* (Old Mosque). After the reconquest of 1686, the church passed to the Jesuits, who repaired it in the Baroque style. Between 1873 and 1894, a full-scale programme of repair and reconstitution took place, directed by Frigyes Schulek. He dismantled all the Baroque additions and set about resurrecting the church in its Gothic glory, re-carving damaged elements, supplementing missing ones on existing models and, where these were lacking, giving free rein to his own imagination (for example in the crocketed spire which surmounts the 15th-century bell-tower). The result is a sumptuous Magyarisation of the Gothic idiom, opulently polychrome in the interior, where the walls and vaults are covered with decoration in richly-coloured geometric and floral designs, partly inspired by Hungarian folk motifs and partly by heraldic emblems. Noted artists were brought in to execute the work, including Károly Lotz and Bertalan Székely. Two coronations took place here: Franz Joseph's in 1867 and Charles IV's in 1916. The church was badly damaged in WWII. Restoration was finally completed in 2015.

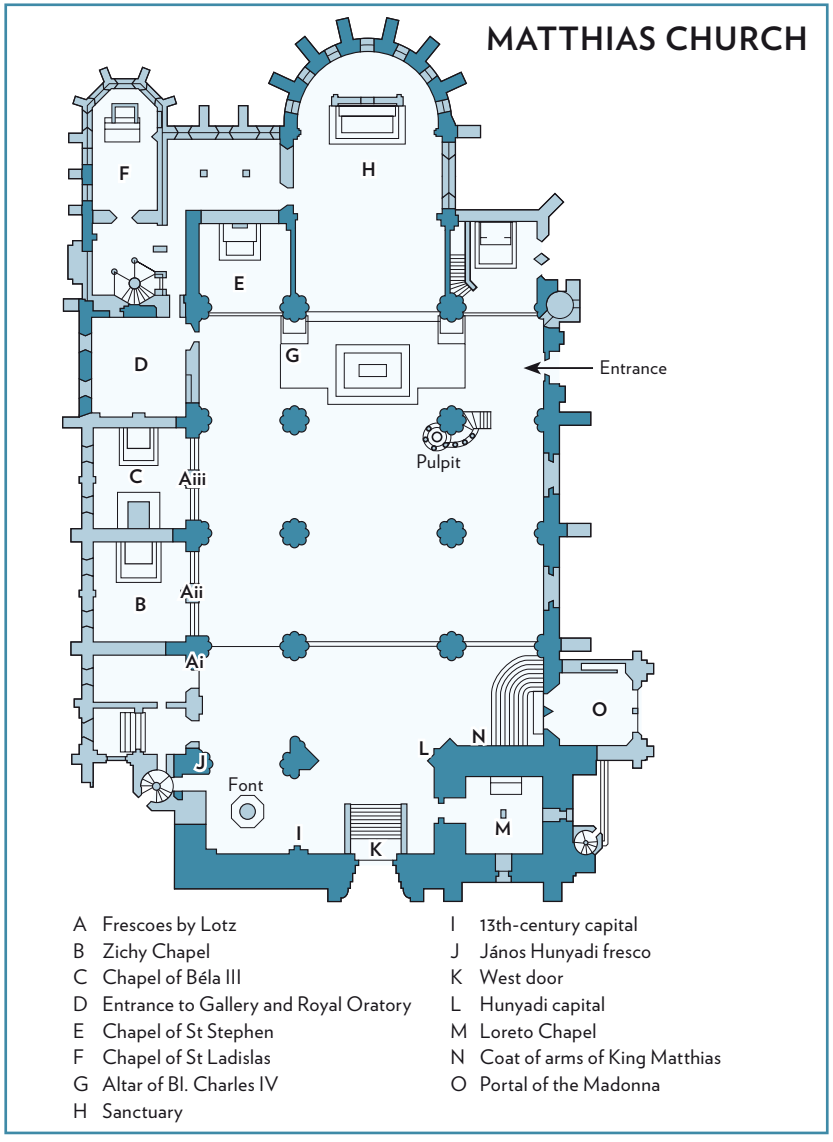
The church is officially dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin but is always familiarly known as the Mátyás-templom (Matthias Church). The description below corresponds to the plan opposite.

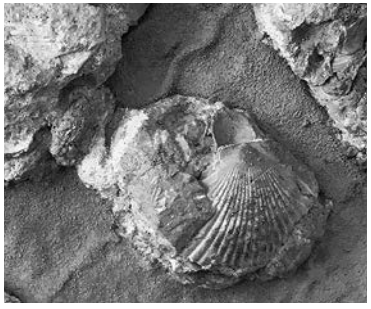
(A) The Lotz frescoes: Above the chapel arcades on the north side is a series of 19th-century painted scenes by Károly Lotz celebrating the divine intervention of the Virgin, patron saint of Hungary, in the fortunes of the nation. From left to right, they are: **(Ai)** St Stephen appeals to the Virgin and the troops of Emperor Conrad retreat; **(Aii)** The Virgin in a dream promises victory to Louis the Great if he fixes her image to his standard; **(Aiii)** On the recapture of Buda in 1686, a statue of the Virgin, walled up by the Ottomans, miraculously shows itself once more.

(B) Zichy Chapel: The chapel is dedicated to St Imre, son of St Stephen. The panels on the altarpiece doors are painted by Mihály Zichy and show scenes from the sainted prince's life. The three statues are of Imre (centre) flanked by his father and his tutor, St Gellért. On the opposite wall are frescoes of St Francis by Bertalan Székely and allegories of the monastic vows of the Franciscans: Poverty, shown in rags; Chastity, holding her gown tight across her bosom; Obedience, with head bowed.

(C) Chapel of Béla III: King Béla III (d. 1196) and his first wife, Anne de Châtillon, were reburied here, in a fine tomb by Ferenc Mikula, in 1898. Opposite is an altarpiece of the Holy Trinity. King Béla's second wife Margaret of France (*see p. 339*) outlived her husband and died in the Holy Land.

(D) Entrance to the Gallery and Royal Oratory: As you mount the stairs, you have a good view of Károly Lotz's large fresco of the *Coronation of Franz Joseph*, showing the king and his wife Elisabeth kneeling before the Virgin. It decorates the chapel of the Hungarian Knights of Malta. The balcony of the Royal Oratory overlooks the chancel and has good views of the stained-glass windows of saints and apostles. An exhibition here includes a copy of St Stephen's Crown and the coronation regalia (orb and sceptre): you can study these copies much more closely than the originals in the Parliament.





NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM
Miocene-epoch limestone with fossil scallop shells, from the Tétény plateau.

The displays

Above the ticket hall hangs the **skeleton of a fin whale** (*Balneoptera physalis*). The permanent exhibition consists of a model of a coral reef and, on the upper floors, three displays devoted to rocks and minerals, fossils and biodiversity.

The **rocks, minerals and gemstones** collection includes pieces of meteorite, a case of beautiful luminous minerals and well-displayed and labelled examples of the many types of rock that are to be found in the earth's crust, including bright lemon yellow Sicilian sulphur, various corundums (from which rubies and sapphires are made) and delicate wavelite, which forms crystals like little parasols. A wall caption notes that there are more colours to be found in the mineral world than in the light spectrum.

Lost Worlds exhibits **fossil remains** of shells, ferns, trees (including cycads), belemnites, crinoids and other prehistoric creatures. Part of the display is devoted to Hungarian dinosaur remains, from isolated species such as the huge *Magyarosaurus dacus* (in appearance similar to an apatosaurus) and the armoured *Hungarosaurus tormai*. The **biodiversity display** attempts to cover the vast array of life forms on earth, from mosses and molluscs to mammals, with particular focus on the Carpathian Basin.

EATING AND DRINKING IN JÓZSEFVÁROS

RESTAURANTS

***f–fff* Oinos**. Bar and bistro occupying a wing of the Rákóczi tér market hall, on the corner of Déri Miksa utca. Despite the Greek name, it is an Italian restaurant, offering a wide range from pizza and pasta to *filetto di manzo*. Good wines. *Rákóczi tér 7. T: 06 70 770 9803, oinos.hu. Map p. 429, E3.*

***ff* Rosenstein**. Popular family restaurant close to Keleti Station. Traditional Hungarian and Jewish cooking leavened with a little Mediterranean influence. The meat is sourced from their own farm. *Káposztás cvekedli*, a pasta and cabbage dish, features on the dessert menu, in true old-fashioned Hungarian style. Closed Sun. *Mosonyi u. 3. T: +36 1 333 3492, rosenstein.hu. Map p. 429, F3.*

***f–ff* Építész Pince**. Seating in a cosy vaulted cellar in winter and in the courtyard of the old Almássy town house in summer. Weekday lunch menu. Good-value Hungarian cooking with a faint international flavour. The building is also home to the Hungarian Architects' Association, hence the restaurant's name ('Architects' Cellar'). Closed Sun. *Ötpacsirta u. 2. T: +36 1 266 4799, epiteszpince.hu. Map p. 429, D4.*

***f* Csiga**. Facing Rákóczi tér, a relaxed, very low-key place offering coffee, drinks, simple full meals and a weekday lunch menu. *Vásár u. 2. T: 06 30 613 2046. Map p. 429, E3.*

CAFÉS AND BARS

Fekete Udvar, at Múzeum körút 5 (*map p. 429, D3*), is a nice place to take a break at one of the little tables clustered around the marble well head. As you sip your coffee, spare a thought for the toiling housemaids who would once have filled their heavy pails here. Above you rise two storeys of flats joined by an interior suspended walkway with pretty wrought-iron railings.

Lumen, a café at Mikszáth Kálmán tér 2–3 (*map p. 429, E4*) is open daily for coffee, drinks and sandwiches. They also hold photography exhibitions.

At Bródy Sándor u. 2, close to the National Museum (*map p. 429, D3–E3*), is **Caffè Torino** (seating outside in warm weather), which serves coffee, cakes, sandwiches and simple pasta. It's good for a mid-morning drink or a light lunch. Further up at no. 9 is the **Tasting Table**, where you can buy and taste wine, accompanied by selections of Hungarian cheese and charcuterie. For tastings, booking is advised (see the website for details; open daily noon–8pm; *T: +36 30 720 8197, tastehungary.com*). At Bródy Sándor u. 23 is the **Budapest Cukrászda**. It has no seating but is a good place to buy a sweet snack to eat as you go. They bake excellent biscuits (the lavender ones are particularly good). With **Coffee Stand Gutenberg** (Békési utca; *map p. 429, E3*), coffee-to-go (in disposable cups) has arrived in Budapest. It opened in 2018.

Further out, beyond the Nagykörút, is **Cintányéros**, a small, atmospheric place for drinks and light snacks (a contemporary take on the traditional *borozó*, where wine was served loose, measured out by the ladle) in a 19th-century block that still bravely survives amid the bulldozers of the Corvin district. Coffee, wine, spritzers, *pálinka* or fruit cordial accompanied by grilled *debreceni* sausage, cold meats, cheese or sandwiches. Cash only. Opens at 5pm. *Bókay János u. 52 (corner of Tömő utca). T: +36 1 797 7396. Map p. 427, C5.*

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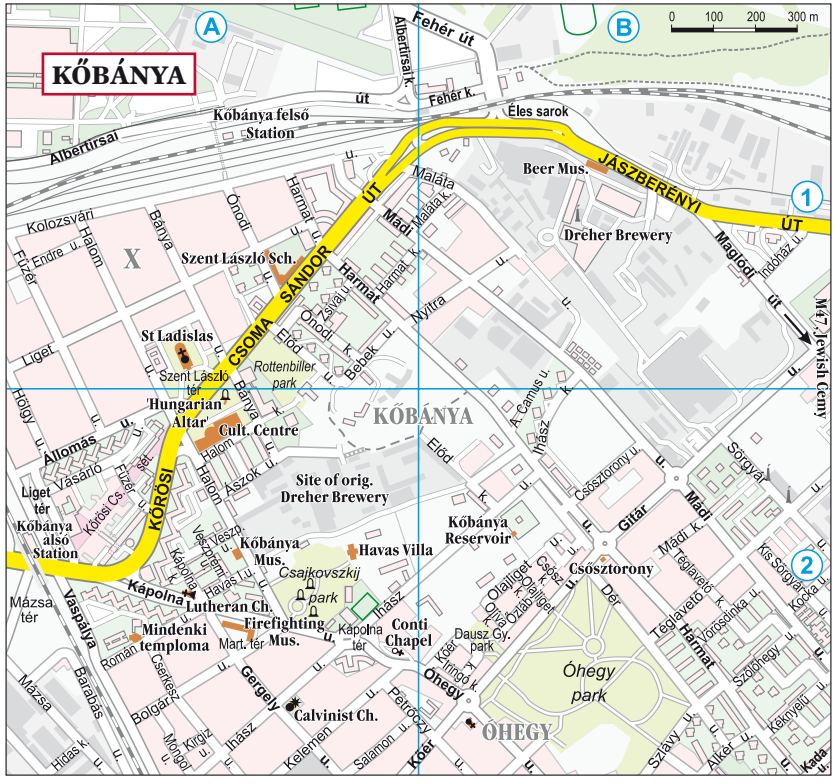
- Commuter boat service
- Metro
- Suburban train (HÉV)
- Statue or monument
- Synagogue
- Catholic church
- Lutheran church
- Calvinist church
- Orthodox church
- Uniate church
- Presbyterian church
- Cave