




MAJOR SIGHTS

PART II

GUIDE TO THE CITY

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These sights are marked on the map on the following page.

- ➊ **THE CHAIN BRIDGE:** The most beautiful of all the bridges across the Danube - p. 32.
- ➋ **CASTLE HILL:** The royal palace, former residence of the Habsburg emperors, is surrounded by traces of glorious and inglorious history. The Mátyás church is Buda's oldest and most exotic-looking - p. 35.
- ➌ **PARLIAMENT:** Symbol of sublime self-confidence, now home to St Stephen's Crown - p. 44.
- ➍ **THE OPERA HOUSE:** Possibly the most beautiful opera house in the world - p. 55.
- ➎ **HEROES' SQUARE:** A parade-ground on a monumental scale, to celebrate a thousand years of nationhood - p. 57.
- ➏ **ST STEPHEN'S BASILICA:** Sheer magnificence, dedicated to Hungary's founding monarch-saint - p. 60.
- ➐ **THE DOHÁNY UTCA SYNAGOGUE:** Budapest's grandest temple - p. 65.
- ➑ **VÁCI UTCA:** Includes a celebrated market and coffee house - p. 69.

The Chain Bridge, Budapest's most enduring symbol.



MAJOR MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

THE HUNGARIAN NATIONAL GALLERY
(*Magyar Nemzeti Galéria*) Buda I, *Budavári Palota*
Entrance from Wing C, the Danube-facing façade.
Open Tues–Sun 10am–6pm. Map p. 262, D2.



Taking up the main wing of the former Royal Palace, the collection here covers Hungarian art from the middle ages to the 20th century. It is arranged on four floors, each floor consisting of an inner suite of rooms encircling the stairway (which should be toured clockwise, as works are arranged chronologically). Then there are two long wings opening off the central space beneath the dome.

THE PERMANENT COLLECTION

Ground floor: Mediaeval lapidarium: a collection of stone fragments recovered from mediaeval and Renaissance Buda and elsewhere in Hungary.

FIRST FLOOR

19th-century painting: As soon as you reach the top of the stairs, you enter the epic world of Hungarian history painting. **Gyula Benczúr's** *Recapture of Buda* (1896) dominates the atrium space with all the assertive confidence of its age. The Ottoman Pasha Abdurrahman lies dead, a victorious trumpet is

sounded from stage right, and Turkish captives are led off to the left. And in the centre the commanders of the Christian armies, Eugene of Savoy and Charles of Lorraine, look haughtily down from their white chargers as a fanatical Franciscan friar brandishes a crucifix. More paintings in a similar

dramatic vein are exhibited in the halls to right and left of this.

The inner suite of rooms has the whimsical, boudoir creations of **Károly Lotz** (1830–1904). Lotz, the public artist par excellence, contributed more to the 19th-century face of the city than any other painter. His romantic Historicist style (also adopted by his contemporaries Bertalan Székely and Gyula Benczúr, who share wall space with him here) can be found in frescoes in the Opera House and Parliament, as well as in countless villas and town houses.

To the right of the dome hall is more history painting, leading to the



'Bathers' by Károly Lotz, typical of his sensual salon style. Left: 'The Visitation' (1506) by the unknown 'Master MS'.

Mediaeval Collection. The best piece is the beautiful *Visitation* (1506), by an artist known only as Master MS. Once part of an altar triptych, its exquisite combination of human figures, landscape elements and wild flowers will stun anyone who thought that late mediaeval art stopped at the Alps. In the former throne room of the palace, next to *The Visitation*, is a collection of carved, painted and gilded winged altarpieces, salvaged from the woodworm and the damp that would otherwise have destroyed them in parish churches

THE JEWISH QUARTER

This route takes you into the heart of the Jewish quarter, with three splendid synagogues and a warren of old-fashioned sidestreets.

This walk starts in front of the **Dohány utca Synagogue**, the largest in Europe, built in 1862 (see p. 65). It stands on the outermost fringe of an area of Budapest that has

been home to the city's Jewish community since the 18th century. In a house that once stood on the site, Theodore Herzl, founder of the Zionist movement and campaigner for a Jewish homeland in Palestine, was born in 1860. After the 1867 Compromise between Austria and Hungary (see p. 19), Jews received full civic status, and during the latter

Detail of the Pékary ház (1847), one of the first neo-Gothic buildings in Budapest.

