



Magdalena's Best of Budapest

Tipps, recommendations and all you need to know
about your stay in Budapest!





Photo of the Parliament by my husband, taken during the recent flood

FALL IN LOVE WITH BUDAPEST!

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Did you know that Buda and Pest used to be two separate cities? Still today the two sides have their own character - a different geography, a unique heritage and a special atmosphere. Frankly I am a true "Pest girl", born and raised on this side of the river Danube, but I fell in love and married a Buda guy. . . And now we live on the Buda side! Although there is a healthy rivalry between us about which side is better, the truth is that Buda and Pest complement each other just perfectly, making it such a great place!

MY FAVORITE RESTAURANTS, CAFÉS AND BARS

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Restaurants on the Buda side

[Buja Disznó:](#) A casual and cozy place of a famous chef, located at the Fény street market. The name means Lusty Pig, and they mostly have pork dishes – best schnitzel in town! The portions are huge, we often share. It is a lunch spot, as it closes at 19 hours. They also offer a nice selection of champagnes :) No need for reservation. (They can be found in a few other locations too, for example in the **City Park close to Hero's square**, but I think this is the coolest one).



That's one portion of Schnitzel at the Buja Disznó... enjoy!



Terrace of the Déryné Restaurant

[Déryné Restaurant](#): Chic, sexy, cosmopolitan, yet utterly local – Déryné opened in the heart of a quiet Buda neighborhood in the summer of 1914. Artists, authors, movie stars, designers, the rich and famous shared the space with local crowds over coffee, drinks, food and the decadent magic lingering around its walls ever since. The word gets around, because Woody Allen, Tom Hanks, Harrison Ford and Danny De Vito are among those who have dined there when they've been in town. *Inside:*



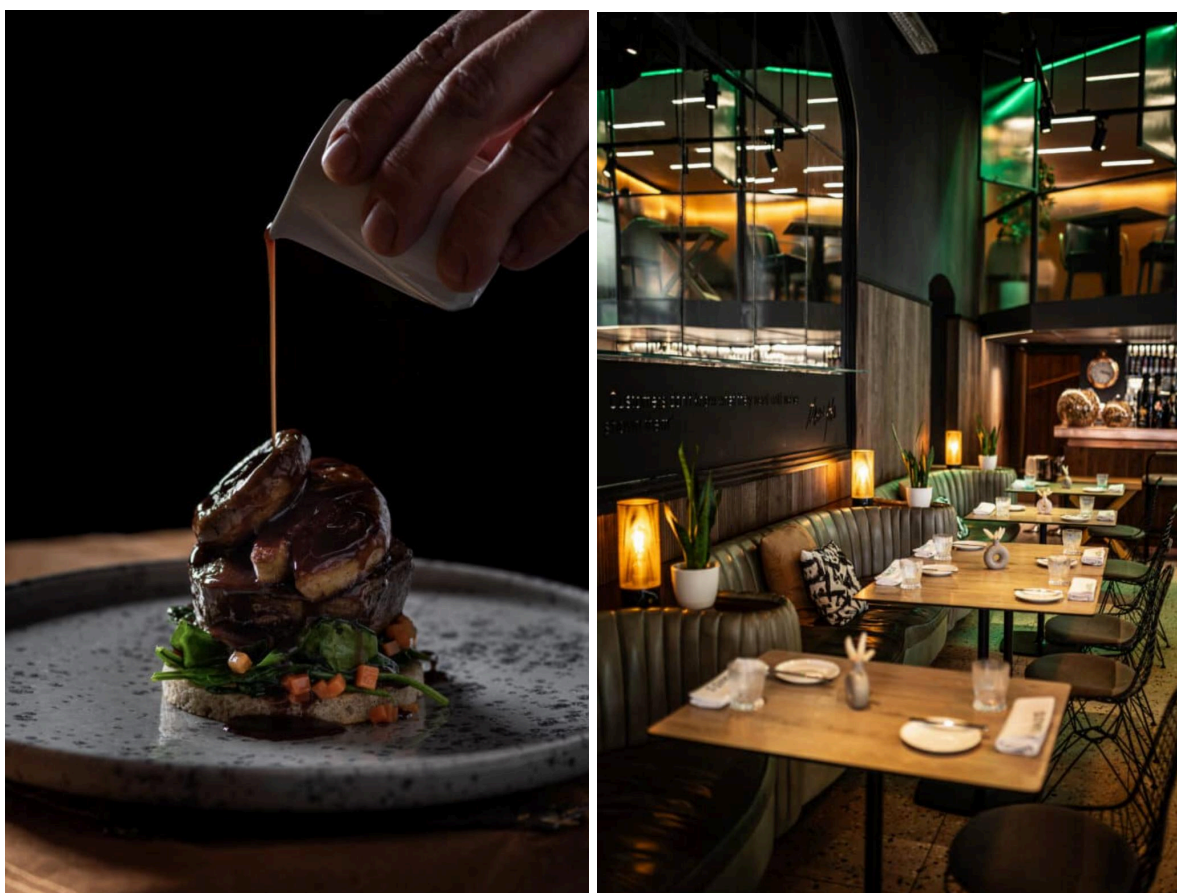


Building of the Royal Guard Café - you couldn't tell it's new!

[Royal Guard Café](#) (Főőrség Kávéház): It is quite a special spot as it is part of the Buda Palace complex, yet it is a building that has been destroyed and recently rebuilt just as the original Royal Guard's headquarters. Honestly I was a bit intimidated by it at first, I thought it must be way posh and expensive, but once I tried it I was very pleasantly surprised and now I am regular! *Inside cool vibes:*



[Stand25 Restaurant:](#) Stand25 is the joy of cuisine taken as seriously as possible by Szulló Szabina & Széll Tamás, famous local star chefs. We are talking about chefs with Michelin stars, so expect the highest quality food at Stand25, but not the fine dining stuff (it is featured in the Michelin Guide and has a Bib Gourmand recommendation).



At Stand25 you can try the typical Hungarian favorites, and they also offer a 3-course menu for around 50 Euros. It is closed on Sundays and advance reservation is needed as the place is usually full.

My favorite dish here is the “Slowly baked duck leg, potatoes with cabbage, apple salad” and my top pick for a dessert would be the “Cottage cheese dumplings, sour cherry, sour cream foam”.

Restaurants on the Pest side

The lively Pest side has more restaurants and bars than Buda, so the selection there is amazing. There are several Michelin star restaurants too, as the fine dining scene is coming up in Hungary!

I tried to collect restaurants for every taste, typical Hungarian, International, from casual to more high end. So here are a few places that I visited several times and always enjoyed :)



Good food and good vibes at the Mazel Tov Restaurant

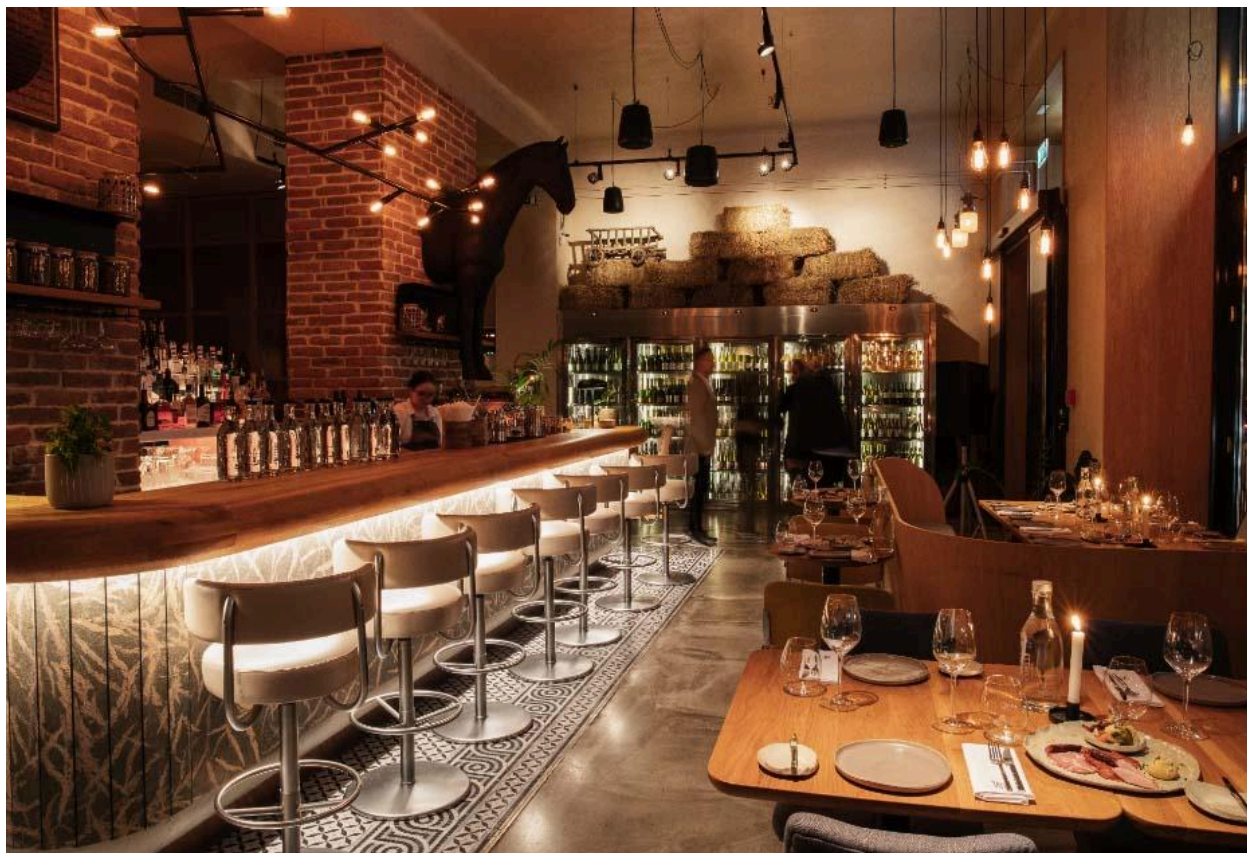
[Mazel Tov](#) : It is a super cool place in the Jewish district, with an amazing atmosphere! It's open until midnight, so it is great for dinner, but make a reservation well in advance on their website as it is usually full (3-4 weeks in advance). They serve Middle Eastern and Jewish food, so don't expect Hungarian food here. In the evening you may run into some live music too, such as a saxophone or piano gig!



At the Vakvarjú Pest Restaurant

[Vakvarjú Pest:](#) This is the restaurant where we most often go for a family dinner and a birthday lunch! It is located close to the Deák square in the heart of Pest downtown. The interior is cozy and cool and the food is very good - mostly Hungarian but some international dishes too. Probably my number 1 choice for a nice dinner date :) Highly recommended for families with little children too as they have a section with toys and often a babysitter is there as well! *Inside:*





Cozy Interior of the TATI Farm to Table Restaurant

[TATI Farm to Table](#): TATI is a fabulous restaurant where the typical Hungarian dishes such as Goulash or chicken paprikash are reimagined with a modern touch. As the name says they are focused on local ingredients, in fact the owners have their own farm 30 minutes from Budapest and they try to produce as many of the ingredients as they can. On the menu they display for each dish the farm the food comes from :) Sustainable approach, seasonal menus - although it opened not long ago it was already featured in the Michelin guide! Handsome brunch from 8-3:30 pm, then dinner options from 5 pm. The atmosphere is great and the prices are ok too, you can't go wrong with this one!

The 3 “Rumba” Restaurants: [DobRumba](#), [PingRumba](#) and [MaRumba](#)

These restaurants are owned by 6 friends who were pioneers with their first place, the Dobrumba. Now each place offers a different cuisine:



Chill, casual vibes at the Dobrumba Restaurant

Dobrumba: The motto of this place is “from the Atlas to Ararat mountains”, meaning that they focus on Mediterranean African and Middle Eastern dishes. It has a cool sharing concept, so a lot of smaller cold and hot starters are on the menu, that you can share with your group. Dobrumba is in the Jewish district, at the corner of Dob street and Rumbach street – hence the name :)

Pingrumba: Their second opening went further East, with the slogan “from Cairo to Calcutta”. The sharing of “Mezzes” or smaller bites is also present. The signature dishes here include Shakshuka and Indian classics such as Prawn Curry and Chicken Masala. Watch out this one is on the Buda side!



*Mezzes to share at the **Pingrumba** Restaurant*

Marumba: Their latest opening is focused on reimagining the traditional Hungarian cuisine, and they have done a great job with that! I was quite surprised at first that these guys opened a Hungarian place but it makes sense – they are settled down now with families and instead of travelling the world they are more at home in Hungary, getting inspiration locally.



Marumba Restaurant – bringing the best of Hungary!

[Retek Bisztró](#): A very friendly and cool place close to the Basilica. I think this is the restaurant I most often hear my travelers talking about! It has a cute decoration, making us remember our Grandmas, however the dishes they present would surprise our Grannys I think. It is based on the typical Hungarian cuisine but taking it a step further – in a good way too :)



Inside the Retek Bisztró

It is one of the best places to try the all-time favorite Somlói sponge cake for example! It's a popular spot, very close to many nice hotels too, so make sure to get a reservation in advance.



The famous Somlói Sponge Cake at the Retek Bisztró

Gettó Gulyás: This is a great Hungarian restaurant, focusing on the gulyás and all versions of stews – veal stew, venison stew, mushroom stew, catfish stew... If you have had enough of the “reimagined Hungarian cuisine”, and simply want the real deal as local people would normally eat it – this is your place! It is located in the Jewish district, close to the Great Dohány Street Synagogue.



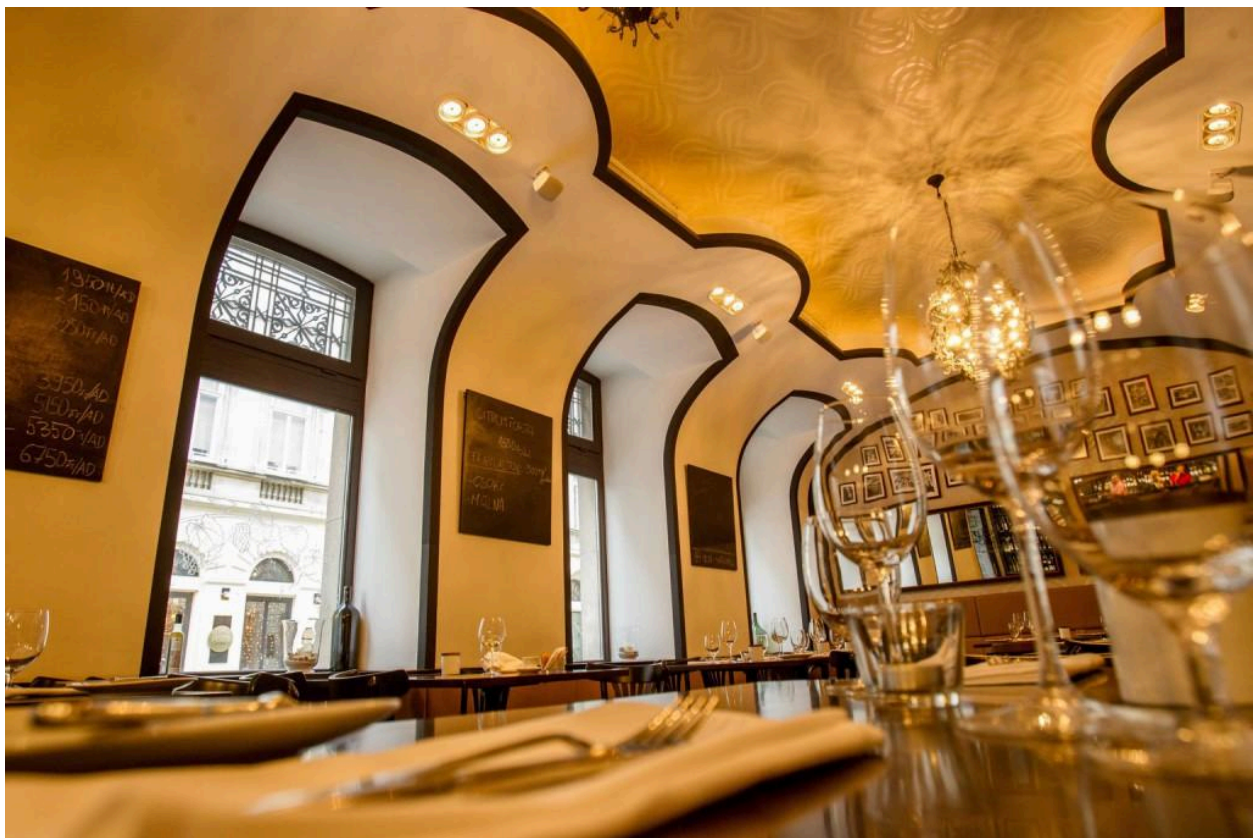
Yummy Chicken Paprikash at the Gettó Gulyás, just like at home

Menza: This restaurant is at the Liszt square, which is a lovely green square with several cafés and restaurants, right next to the famous Andrassy Avenue. If the weather is nice the outside terraces are full of life. Menza has an international menu. It is open till 23 hours so it is great for dinner as well.



Lush greenery of the Liszt square and inside the Menza Restaurant

[Borkonyha \(Wine Kitchen\)](#): Last but not least I wanted to recommend to you a Michelin star restaurant of the city. I have some great memories related to Wine Kitchen in particular: once I had the chance to star in an in-flight entertainment movie for American Airlines. I was the tour guide showing around downtown Pest, we did a lot of cool stuff, looking at street art, vintage shopping, going to ruin bars and rooftop bars... and we went to Borkonyha as well! I did an interview with the chef Ákos Sárközy who is a local celebrity and I could peek inside the kitchen and try different dishes. Based on my experience the food was great and the atmosphere is more casual than in most Michelin star restaurants.



Elegant but not too posh, the Borkonyha Restaurant

Cafés and pastry shops on the Buda side

[Coyote coffee and deli](#): This is one of my favorite places since we moved to the Buda side. Hidden in a cute corner next to the Batthyány square, it has laid back and chilled vibes. The cappuccino is the best and the cakes and tarts are amazing. However, don't expect to find Hungarian classics here, it is more like cheese cakes, brownies and bagels. It's definitely a more local spot! Staff is super nice too :)



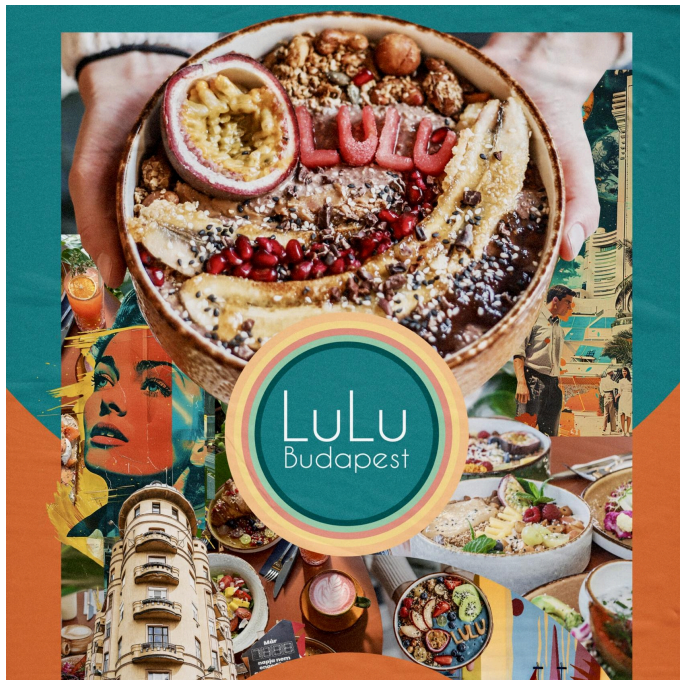
Let's enter Coyote Coffee and deli :)

[Ruszwurm Pastry Shop:](#) This patisserie was founded in 1827 and has been up and running ever since – that makes it one of the oldest pastry shops in the world! It is certainly the oldest in Budapest, and still has parts of the original furniture inside. Ruszwurm is located in the Buda Castle district, just a stone throw away from Matthias Church, so yes of course we are talking about a touristy place. Yet I say it's worth a visit, the cakes are delicious, the prices are OK (last time I paid 7 EUR for a latte and cake, tip included). A big favorite is the Ruszwurm cream cake, but they have also done a great job in reviving the Hungarian classic Dobo cake.



Entrance to Ruszwurm Pastry Shop – it has a nice seasonal terrace too

[LuLu Budapest](#): A relatively new opening in the heart of Buda, close to the metro and busy Széll Kálmán square. It is not a patisserie but more like a brunch place, offering healthy food. So if you have enough calories and want to put some fresh, feel-good food into your system, the LuLu Budapest is absolutely a great choice. The coffee selection is remarkable, and on the menu you can expect smoothie bowls, overnight oatmeals, eggs benedict croissants and vegan avocado toasts. The interior design is fresh and cosy, bringing sunny-seaside vibes.



The Menu of LuLu Budapest and funky lamps inside

Cafés and pastry shops on the Pest side



Handsome cake selection at the Central Grand Café

[Central Grand Café](#): A classic café that dates back to 1887. It has a very pretty palace like interior and was frequented by the writers, poets, intellectuals back in the day. If you want to visit a beautiful café, this is a smarter choice than standing in line in front of New York Café or spending way too much at Gerbeaud. The cakes are great, the location is perfect, prices are reasonable – as it is open late, it's even nice for dinner, with some live gypsy or piano music.



Central Cafe - pretty outside & inside, menu options are fab too!

[Geraldine by Augustt](#): This classy place is located in the garden of the National Museum, right behind the building. It belongs to the Augustt confectionery which has a long history since 1870 too. Bit fancy but less touristy than Gerbeaud, it's a place I would go with my girl friends :) Also great for families as they have a little playing area for kids and next to it in the garden there's a super playground!



Building of the Geraldine Pastry shop



Geraldine has a yummy cake selection!



Anton offers more croissants and puff pastries, fewer tarts

[Anton Coffee and Bakery](#) : if you want to get out of the more touristy parts and go more local with your morning coffee then Anton is a good start! A cute little place at the corner of my husband's studio (Pest Palace quarter), I love Anton for the young vibe, great coffee & bakery products. Casual spot where I regularly stop by for breakfast!



Entrance to the Anton Coffee



Lumen: a great spot any time of the day!!

Lumen: I am not even sure if I should put Lumen in the category of restaurants, cafés or bars! It is a bit everything, a favorite spot of the younger crowd too as there are many universities close by. A casual artsy spot, sometimes with live music, so don't expect a fancy restaurant :) The must try dish is the Sztrapacska for sure! We hang out here a lot as my husband Tamas' design studio (noppa design) is located in the courtyard of Lumen :)



Look for the coffee sign :) Lumen's courtyard is awesome!

Bars on the Buda side



Fantastic wine selection at the Palack Wine Bar

[Palack Wine Bar](#): If you like wine you will love this place! Hungary is famous for the great wine selection and variety and this nice wine bar has it all. It has an amazing location close to the Danube at the foot of the Gellért hill. They also offer a wine tasting of 5 different wines for 16-20 euros! My latest favorite is the red wine Streit Zagonyi: The Union (Cabernet, Merlot).





Terrace with view - Leo Bistro Sky Bar

[Leo Bistro Sky Bar](#) : This amazing rooftop bar is on top of the Hotel Clark by the foot of the Chain Bridge on the Buda side. It is open to everyone, not just hotel guests! It is ok even in bad weather as it has a covered area too, with huge windows looking at the panoramic view. It is a more expensive place but not too bad, and you can just go up for a drink too. They have some good bar food options as well, so it is great for a small dinner!



A38 Ship

Iconic place in town, an old Russian ship (Artemovszk38) that is permanently docked on the Buda side of the Danube embankment. It is close to the Petőfi Bridge, so the tram 4-6 runs, making it easily accessible. A38 is primarily a concert venue, of course it has a bar and even a restaurant. In warmer seasons the outdoor bar area also opens, with a unique vibe and cool music. As far as the bands that perform here: you could find any genre, from electronic beats to heavy metal and indie. At some ska concerts, when everyone is jumping around like crazy, I could feel the boat moving :) Check their events out when you're in town!

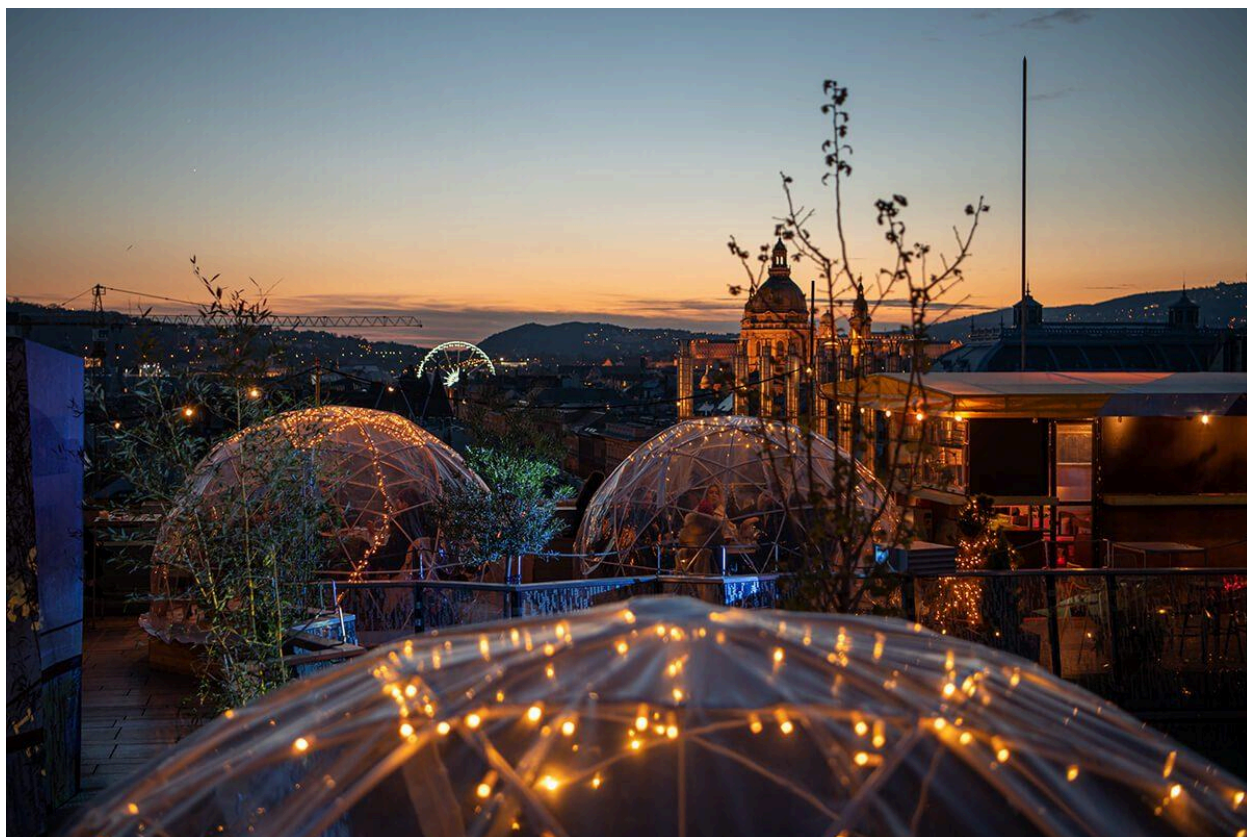


Iconic star of Budapest's nightlife - the A38 ship

Bars on the Pest side

The night life of the city is more focused on the lively, urban Pest side, especially on the Jewish district. Bars and clubs are open till late, so the party never stops :) The city is also popular for bachelor parties, so you may see some wild groups by night!

[360 rooftop bar](#): A chilled and casual rooftop bar on the famous Andrassy avenue. During the colder season they put up some igloos so you won't be cold here! I wouldn't advise eating here but the drinks are good. I usually go up for the views and have one drink as it is a bit expensive.



Igloos at the 360 bar with a view of the St. Stephen's Basilica

[Szimpla Kert](#) This is the first original RUIN BAR of the city! It had an enormous effect on the entire Jewish district, basically it became the party district thanks to Szimpla. It has a unique atmosphere and it's a must see place - do expect a lot of tourists too and if you arrive late there is a queue to enter and it's crowded as hell! There are live concerts, DJs and they even organize a farmers market on Sundays - so it is kind of a community center too. If you don't want a crowd you can go earlier in the afternoon.



Szimpla ruin bar, hard to explain:)

[Gozsdu courtyard](#) Seven courtyards with plenty of places for you to choose your favorite! It is also a must see of the Jewish district. They have cool seasonal decorations too, such as for Halloween and Christmas. The selection includes Jamie Oliver's Restaurant, Café Vian, Splíler for a nice burger.. If you fancy some nice tapas you can go to "Vicky, Barcelona" and feel like you're in Spain. There is also a karaoke bar and a Divino Wine Bar to try Hungarian wines. During the day in the weekends there is an artsy-flea market here.



Hard to choose in the Gozsdu Courtyard

Élesztő: If you want to get away from the usual tourist spots and go to a more local place, Élesztő is for you! It gives cool ruin bar vibes, and it has an amazing variety of artisan beers from different Hungarian breweries - including micro-breweries of course. It defines itself as a “Gastropub”, meaning they have great bar food on offer too. As it is a not-so-touristy place it is not in the Jewish district, but in district 9, however it can be reached easily (by tram 4-6 for example).



Yummy bar food, chilled beers, fun times w/ friends at the Élesztő Ház

SHOPPING IN BUDAPEST

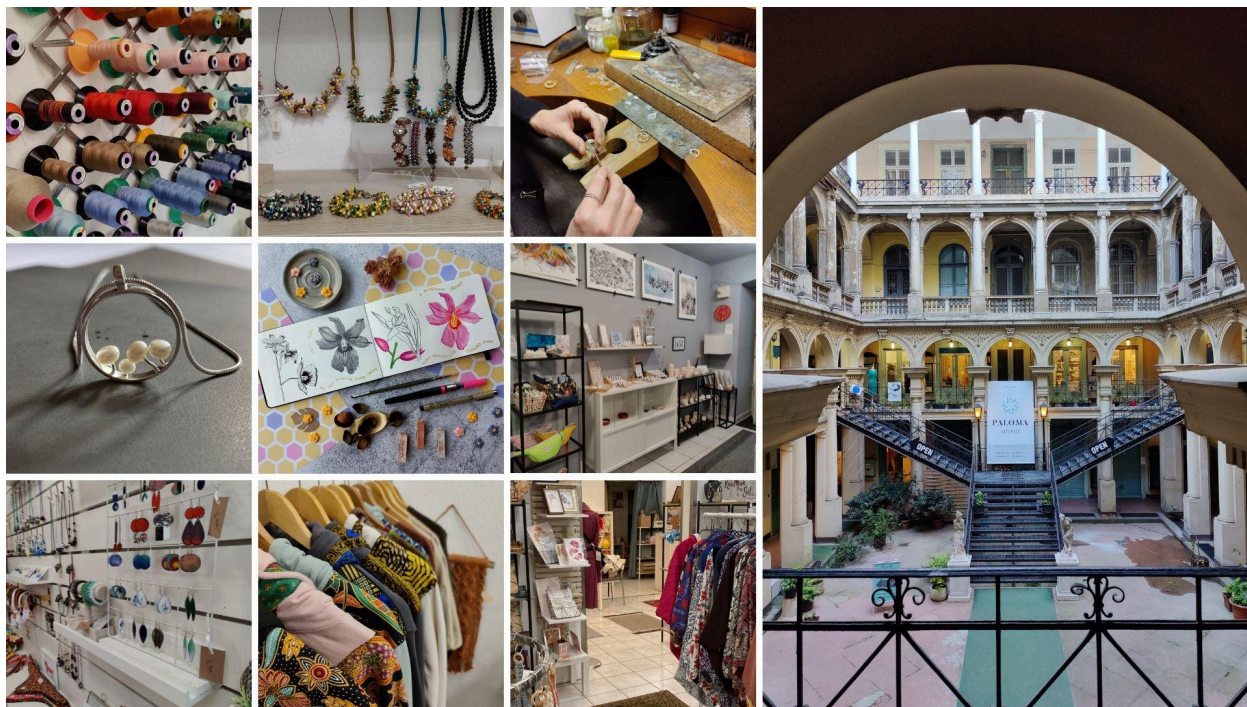
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You will definitely find more shopping opportunities on the Pest side, from big brands to local designers. Let's see my top list by category!

Best souvenir: [Magma](#) is a great shop with works from different artists and a wide selection of different souvenir options. There's stuff that would be a nice present for kids too! Besides their downtown Pest shop they also have a smaller shop in the Buda Castle district. My recent favorite is the fun book "Periodic table of Hungarians". If you're looking for a classic gift such as paprika spice or fridge magnets I recommend the Central Market Hall!



Inside the Magma store of Pest



Paloma artspace

Best local designer: Check out the super creative [Paloma Artspace!](#) This old historic building in the heart of Pest downtown is home to many local designers. Another good spot is the [Printa](#) in the Jewish district. It is a smaller, environmentally conscious shop with an artsy vibe.



Printa design store

Best vintage and hipster: If you're looking for vintage and underground stuff you should head to the Jewish district! Here the king of vintage shops is the [Retrock](#). As the biggest retro shop it sells clothing collected across the world, but also designer pieces from the 1960s-1990s. So you may even find treasures like a classic Chanel or Dior piece. Definitely a must visit!

My personal favorite is [Szputnyik](#) though! This shop sells the old and the new together, so you can try on contemporary design items with cool vintage items, making your outfit truly unique.



Shopping at Szputnyik

Best fast fashion and big brands: If you just want to update your wardrobe with some fast fashion items the **Váci street** has it all. Next to it in the Deák Ferenc street (called **Fashion street Budapest**) you will find well known brands such as Tommy Hilfiger, Cos, Calvin Klein.



Christmas Lights at Fashion Street

Best high-end shopping: If you want to get something like a Gucci bag or a Burberry coat your place is undoubtedly on **Andrássy Avenue**!



Shopping on the world famous Andrássy Avenue



Down at the basement of Pintér Antique

Best antique and art shopping: For a treasure hunt go to the Falk Miksa street, that is close to the Parliament! This charming street is full of classic antique shops that sell everything. My spot is the [Pintér Antik](#), check out their old basement! If you want to admire art just look around at the art galleries of the street :)



FUN THINGS TO DO IN BUDAPEST

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Mini statue by Mihály Kolodko on the Liberty bridge

Miniature statues Kolodko: In the bustling streets of Budapest, amidst the architectural marvels and historical landmarks, one can stumble upon a unique and random sight: the Kolodko Mini Statues. These miniature sculptures, created by the Hungarian artist Mihály Kolodko, have become a beloved feature of the cityscape, adding a touch of charm and element of surprise to its urban surroundings. It can be fun to hunt as many statues as you can, and it's an activity that really gets the attention of the kids and teenagers as well!

Escape Rooms



Did you know that the idea of escape rooms or escape games originates from Budapest? These are the games when your group is closed into a room, there is some story and fun decoration and you basically do some investigation and detective work to get out of the room. There many of them in English, some of the most popular ones are:

[Locked Room Budapest](#)

[Mystique rooms](#)



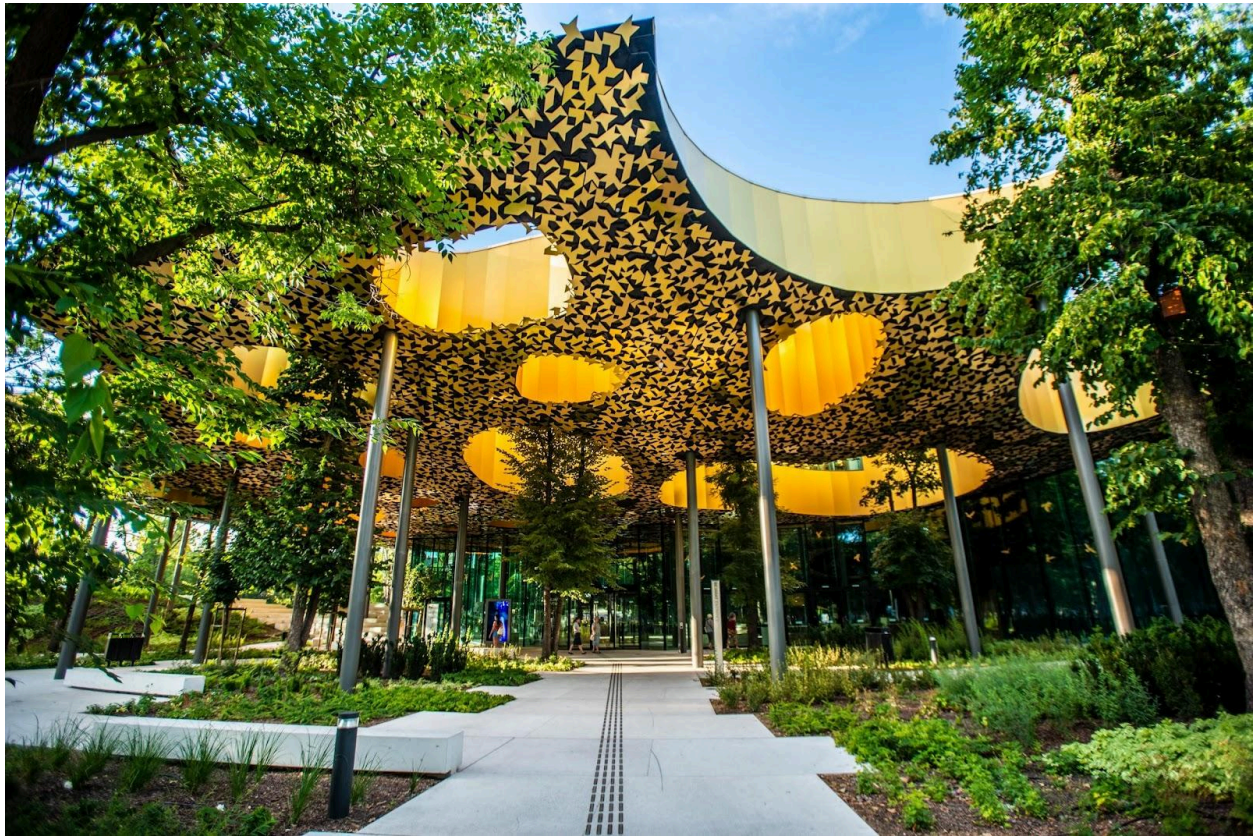
[Pinball Museum](#)



The Pinball Museum is not only a museum as you can play on the pinballs, so if you or your kids enjoy these things they would love this place! 130 Pinball machines from the last 100 years! It is located in a trendy hip district, Újlipótváros. Best atmosphere, cool restaurants in the area are on Pozsonyi street.

[Retro Museum](#): If you are interested in how life was during Communism this place is for you. An old school bar, fun vibes and many objects from the Communist time period are here.





House of Music

This is one the best modern buildings in town. Great architecture and some of the best exhibitions! You can learn about music, instruments etc in a fun, interactive way. There are concerts too and the “Sound Dome” which has a space of 360 themed projections with music. Advance booking is required. House of Music is in the city park, close by you can find the Museum of Ethnography, which is an exciting building as well and it is possible to walk up on its rooftop!

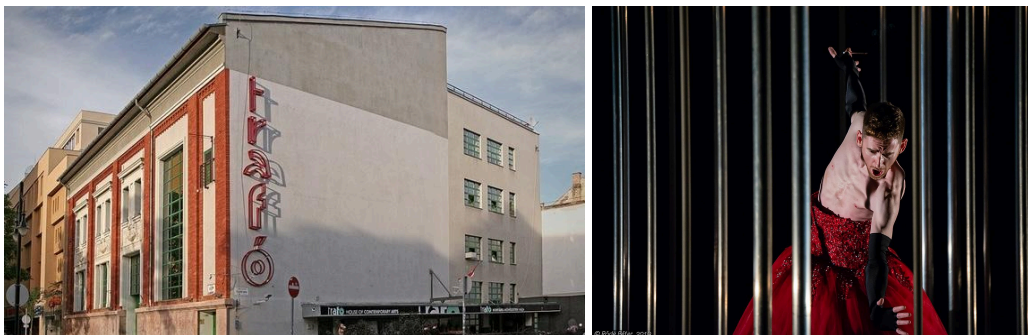


MüPA - Palace of Arts

This is a pretty modern music and art venue, both with classical music and more easy going gigs. I have been here on soo many cool shows over the years, from jazz to ballet, from new circus to kids programmes. One of my personal favorites is the group “Recirquel”, they regularly have different performances here at MüPa, it is a stunning new circus group that blends art, dance and acrobatic stunts together.



Trafo contemporary art space: Cool performances, music shows, and concerts are here at this underground art center and club.



Things underground

[Hospital in the Rocks](#): It is an old military hospital located in the underground cave system under Buda Castle. It can be visited with one hour guided tours that are quite interesting. There are also wax figures and objects from the second world war and cold war era.

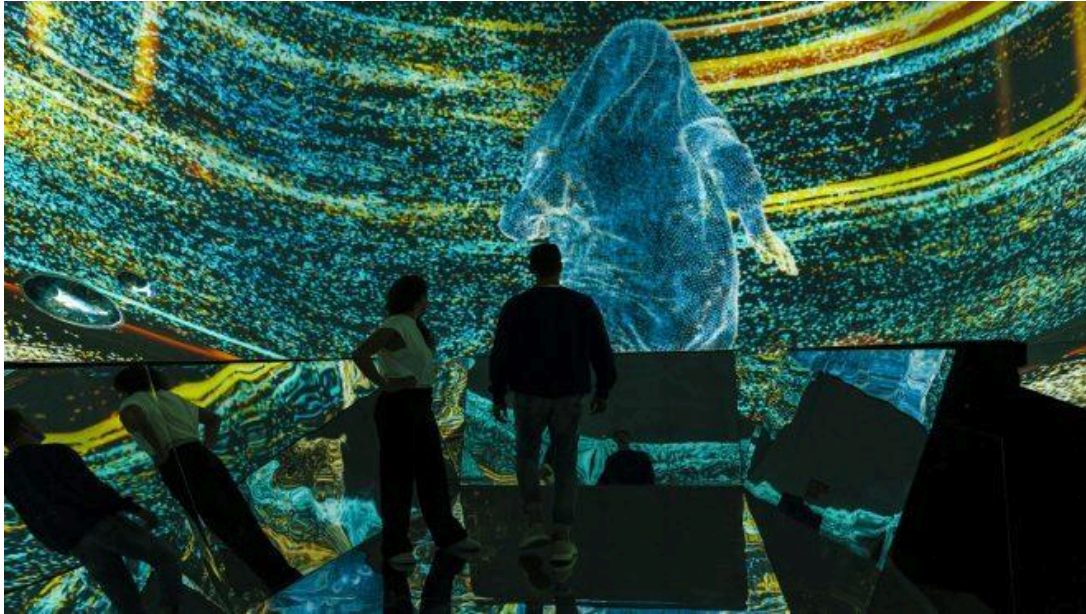


[Buda Castle Labyrinth](#): There are natural caves under the Castle and many of them were used for storage, protection, refuge and as prison in history. Some parts of it can be visited, there are tacky wax figures but all in all it is quite special, a time travel!



Things with Lights

[LAM Light Art Museum](#): A cool light museum in an old market hall building close to Parliament! Enticing visual experience :)



[Cinema Mystica](#): This is rather a hallucinogenic experience with projected lights all over the place, in the beautiful Paris Courtyard!



OTHER USEFUL INFORMATIONS

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Money : DO NOT exchange money at the airport, it is a very bad rate! Avoid the Interchange, the ones with an orange facade! The other exchange places are usually ok. Also you can pay with credit card almost everywhere so you don't need to exchange a lot of money. In some restaurants Euros are accepted, but it is always a very bad rate, so don't pay with Euros!

Tips: Normally we leave a 10% tip if we are satisfied in a restaurant. However many places add a "service fee" to the bill - that represents the tip, so if it is added you are not expected to tip more! If it is not clear to you whether the service fee is added, you can simply ask!



MOL BuBi Bike rental spot at Batthyány square

Biking - MOL BuBi: If the weather allows, biking is nice, especially on Margaret Island, Andrassy avenue and City park, and by the River banks. There is a public bike rental system in Budapest called MOL BuBi, you need to register on their app. With one registration you can take out 2 bikes!

A DAY TRIP OUTSIDE THE CITY - SZENTENDRE

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Charming, artsy vibes in lovely Szentendre

If you are looking for an easy day trip from Budapest, then the quaint colorful town of Szentendre should be at the top of your list. Szentendre sits directly on the banks of the Danube River and offers interesting historic architecture, cute side streets to explore, and a skyline dominated by church towers. The town is also a haven for artists, so you'll find many small galleries and museums scattered around. And all of this is only 40 minutes by train from central Budapest. Here is a great blog entry about a day trip to [Szentendre](#)!
