

## Walking Tours ■

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# Walking Tours

Budapest is a city made for walking and there are sights around every corner – from a brightly tiled gem of an Art Nouveau building to peasant women from the countryside hawking their homemade *barack lekvár* (apricot jam) or colourful embroidery at the markets or outside metro stations.

The following eight tours include sights and attractions described elsewhere in this guide, as well as additional significant features; the walks are really designed for those with more time or an interest in seeing the city in greater depth. Don't worry about doing every tour or even finishing each one; linger as long as you like in a museum or market that takes your fancy, do a little shopping or even visit one of the city's fine thermal spas along the way.

## CASTLE CAPER

You can start your tour of Várhegy (Castle Hill; p53) by walking up Várfok utca from Moszkva tér to **Vienna Gate 1** (Bécsi kapu), the medieval entrance to the Old Town, which was rebuilt in 1936 to mark the 250th anniversary of the retaking of the castle from the Turks. The gate is not all that huge, but when Budapest children are loquacious or noisy, their parents tell them: 'Your mouth is as big as the Vienna Gate!'

The large building to the west with the superb majolica-tiled roof contains the **National Archives (2)**; Országos Levéltár; Bécsi kapu tér 2-4), built in 1920. Across the square, which was a weekend market in the Middle Ages, a **Lutheran church 3** with the words 'A Mighty Fortress is Our God' written in Hungarian marks the start of Táncsics Mihály utca. On the west side of the square, there's an attractive group of **burgher houses 4**; No 7 has four medallions of classical poets and philosophers, and No 8, a curious round corner window.

Táncsics Mihály utca is a narrow street of little houses painted in lively hues and adorned with statues. Many have plaques with the word *műemlék* (memorial) attesting to their historical associations. In the entrances to many of the courtyards, you'll notice lots of *sedilia* – stone niches dating as far back as the 13th century. Some historians think they were used as merchant stalls, while others believe servants cooled their heels here while their masters (or mistresses) paid a visit to the occupant.

The **medieval Jewish prayer house 5** (p55), dating partly from the 14th century, contains a small museum. Across the road to the southeast at Táncsics Mihály utca 9 is where **Lajos Kossuth was imprisoned 6** from 1837 to 1840. The controversial **Hilton Budapest 7** (p154), which incorporates parts of a medieval Dominican church and a baroque Jesuit college, is further south. Have a look at the **little red hedgehog relief 8** above the doorway at the house on Hess András tér 3, which was an inn in the 14th century.

If you walk north from Hess András tér along Fortuna utca, you'll soon reach the interesting **Hungarian Museum of Commerce and Catering 9** (p55). This street leads back into Bécsi kapu tér, but if you continue west along Petermann bíró utca you'll reach Kapisztrán

### A STREET BY ANY OTHER NAME

After WWII, most streets, squares and parks were renamed after people, dates and political groups that have since become anathema to an independent and democratic Hungary. From April 1989, names were changed at a pace and with a determination that some people felt was almost obsessive; Cartographia's *Budapest Atlas* lists almost 400 street name changes in the capital alone. Sometimes it was just a case of returning a street or square to its original (perhaps medieval) name – from Lenin útja, say, to Szent korona útja (Street of the Holy Crown). Other times the name is new.

The new (or original) names are now in place after more than a decade and a half, the old street signs with a red 'X' drawn across them have all but disappeared and virtually no one refers to Ferenciek tere (Square of the Franciscans), for example, as Felszabadulás tér (Liberation Sq), which honoured the Soviet army's role in liberating Budapest in WWII.

tér, named after John Capistranus (1386–1456), a charismatic Franciscan monk who raised an entire army for János Hunyadi (p40) in his campaign against the Turks. He was canonised in 1724 and is known as St John of Capistrano.

The large white building to the north of the square houses the **Military History Museum 10** (p56). Around the corner, along the so-called Anjou Bastion (Anjou bástya), with displays detailing the development of the cannon, lies the turban-topped **tomb 11** of Pasha Abdi Arnaut Abdurrahman (1615–86), the last Turkish Grand Vizier of Budapest, who was killed here on the day Buda was liberated. 'He was a heroic foe,' reads the tablet in Hungarian, 'may he rest in peace.'

The big steeple on the south side of Kapisztrán tér, visible for kilometres to the west of Castle Hill, is the **Mary Magdalene Tower (12**; Magdolna-torony; I Kapisztrán tér), the reconstructed spire of an 18th-century church. The church, once reserved for Hungarian speakers in this district (German speakers were worshipped at Matthias Church), was used as a mosque during the Turkish occupation and was destroyed in an air raid in 1944.

### WALK FACTS

Start II Moszkva tér

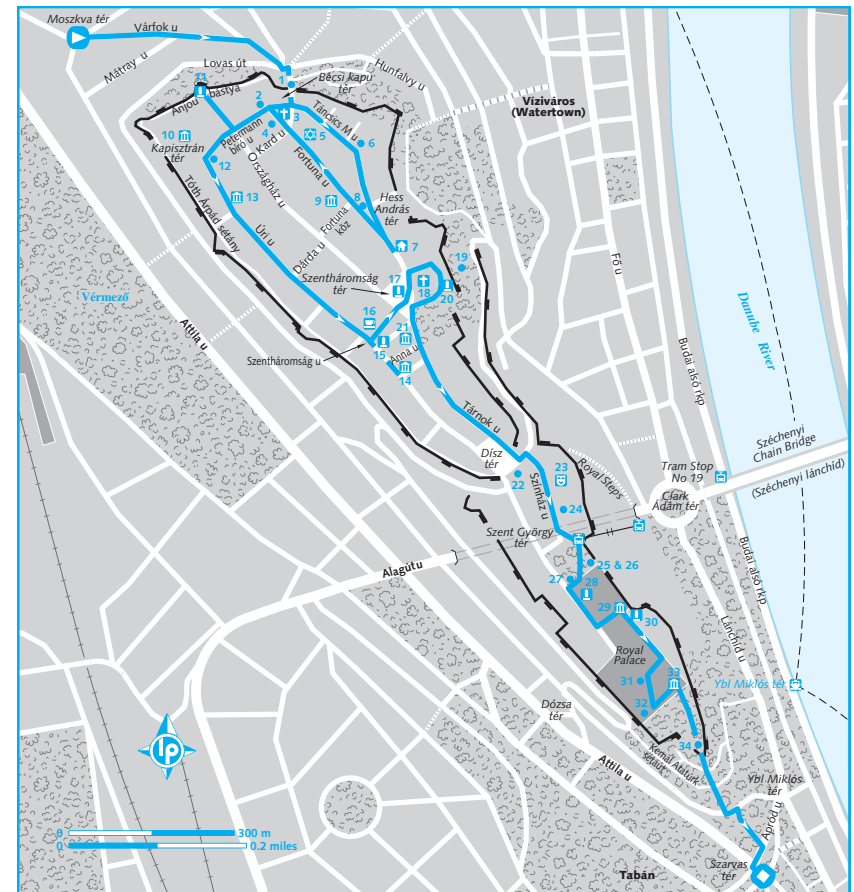
End I Szarvas tér

Distance 3.5km

Duration Two hours (or more)

Transport M M2 (start); 18, 86 (end)

Fuel Stop Ruszwurm café (p125)



From Kapisztrán tér, walk southeast on Országház utca, keeping an eye open for the sedile in the glassed-in entrance to No 9 and the medieval houses painted white, terra cotta and lime at Nos 18, 20 and 22.

Úri utca, the next parallel street to the west, has some interesting courtyards, especially No 19 with a sundial and what looks like a tomb. There are more Gothic sedilia at Nos 32 and 40; if the gates are locked there's a peephole to look through. The **Telephony Museum 13** (p56) is housed in an old Clarist monastery. At No 9 of the same street is the entrance to the touristy **Buda Castle Labyrinth 14** (p53). Returning to I Szentháromság utca, on the corner you'll pass a mounted **statue of András Hadik 15**, a Hussar field marshal in the wars against the Turks. If you're wondering why the steed's brass testicles are so shiny, well, it's a student tradition in Budapest to give them a stroke before taking an exam. For a coffee-and-cake break, try **Ruszwurm 16**.

In the centre of I Szentháromság tér to the northeast there's a **statue of the Holy Trinity (17; Szentháromság szobor)**, another one of the 'plague pillars' put up by grateful (and healthy) Buda citizens in the early 18th century. The square is dominated by Castle Hill's two most famous sights: **Matthias Church 18** (Mátyás templom; p55) and **Fishermen's Bastion 19** (Halászbástya; p54) just beyond it. In front of the bastion is an ornate equestrian **statue of St Stephen 20** by Alajos Stróbl.

The **Golden Eagle Pharmacy 21** (p54), a short distance to the southwest and just before Dísz tér, probably looks exactly the way it did in Buda Castle in the 16th century, though it was moved to its present site 100 years later. Continue to Dísz tér, then from here walk south along Színház utca to Szent György tér. Along the way you'll pass the bombed-out **former Ministry of Defence 22** on the right, a casualty of WWII and, during the Cold War, NATO's supposed nuclear target for Budapest. Further south and on the left is the **National Dance Theatre 23** (Nemzeti Táncszínház; p135), built in 1736 as a Carmelite church and monastery, and the restored **Sándor Palace 24** (Sándor palota), which now houses the offices of the president of the republic.

From Szent György tér there are two entrances to the **Royal Palace** (Budavári palota), the large complex to the south that has been burned, bombed, razed, rebuilt and redesigned at least a half-dozen times over the past seven centuries. The first is via the **Habsburg Steps 25** through an ornamental gateway dating from 1903. Flanking the steps is a large **statue of the turul 26**, an eagle-like totem of the ancient Magyars (p37), erected in 1905. The other way, which we'll take, is via **Corvinus Gate 27**, with its big black raven symbolising King Matthias Corvinus, southwest of the square.

The first part of the palace (Wing A) is currently empty since the Ludwig Museum of Contemporary Art (p70) has relocated to Pest. In the middle of the square and facing the entrance, a **statue of a Hortobágy csikós 28** (cowboy) in full regalia breaks a mighty *bábolna* steed, a sculpture that won international recognition for its creator, György Vastagh, at the Paris World Exhibitions of 1900 and 1901.

To reach one of two entrances to the **Hungarian National Gallery 29** (p54), walk under the little archway south of Wing B to the square facing the Danube for Wing C, or walk under the massive archway protected by four snarling lions to Wing D. Those choosing the former will enter what was once the palace terrace and gardens. Just in front of Wing C stands a **statue of Eugene of Savoy 30** (1663–1736), who wiped out the last Turkish army in Hungary at the Battle of Zenta in 1697. Designed by József Róna 200 years later, it is considered to be the finest equestrian statue in the capital.

Whichever route you take, you'll pass the large, Romantic-style **Matthias Fountain 31** (Mátyás kút), to the west and facing the palace's large northwestern courtyard, which portrays the young king Matthias Corvinus in hunting garb. To his right below is Szép Ilona (Beautiful Helen), a protagonist of a Romantic ballad by the poet Mihály Vörösmarty. Apparently the poor girl fell in love with the dashing 'hunter' and, upon learning his true identity and feeling unworthy, she died of a broken heart. The rather smug-looking fellow with the shiny foot below to the left is Galeotto Marzio, an Italian chronicler at Matthias' court. The middle of the king's three dogs was blown up during the war; canine-loving Hungarians – and most are – quickly had an exact copy made.

If you want to bail out of the tour and leave Castle Hill altogether now, there's a lift (elevator; 100ft) to the right of the Lion Court archway that will take you down to Dózsa tér and the stop for bus 16 for Pest.

In Wing F of the palace on the west side of Lion Court is the **National Széchenyi Library 32** (p190), which contains codices and manuscripts, a large collection of foreign newspapers and a copy of everything published in Hungary or the Hungarian language. It was founded by Count Ferenc Széchenyi (1754–1820), father of István Széchenyi (p42), who endowed it with 15,000 books and 2000 manuscripts. The **Budapest History Museum 33** (p54) is in Wing E.

You can walk through the history museum and exit through the rear doors without buying a ticket. Have a look around the castle walls and enter the palace gardens. **Ferdinand Gate 34** under the conical Mace Tower will bring you to a set of steps. These descend to Szarvas tér in the Tabán district, from where you can take tram 18 south to XIII Gellért tér or bus 86 north to Margit körút.

## ÓBUDA'S MADE FOR WALKIN'

Begin this walking tour of Óbuda (p59) in **Flórián tér 1**, which is split in two by the Árpád Bridge flyover and encircled by mammoth housing blocks. It is not the best introduction to Óbuda, but it remains the district's historic centre.

In the subway below this massive square are Roman objects that have been discovered in the area (many of them, sadly, are now vandalised and tagged in graffiti), including the **Baths Museum (2; Fűrdő Múzeum; @ 250 1650; admission free; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun May–Sep, 10am–5pm Tue–Sun 15–30 Apr & Oct)**. Still more Roman ruins, including a reconstructed temple, can be found in the park that is above the subway.

Dominating the easternmost side of III Flórián tér is the yellow baroque **Óbuda Parish Church (3; Óbudai plébániatemplom; III 168 Lajos utca)**, which was built in 1749 and dedicated to Sts Peter and Paul. There's a massive rococo pulpit inside. To the southeast, the large neoclassical building beside the Corinthia Aquincum Hotel is the **former Óbuda Synagogue (4; Óbudai zsinagóga; III Lajos utca 163)**, dating from 1821. It now houses sound studios for Hungarian Television (MTV).

### WALK FACTS

**Start** III Flórián tér  
**End** Aquincum  
**Distance** 4.5km  
**Duration** Three hours  
**Transport** HÉV Árpád hid, ☎ 86 from Buda, 🚇 from Pest (start); HÉV Aquincum (end)  
**Fuel Stop** Új Sípos Halászkert (p97)

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Two contiguous squares lying east of Flórián tér – **Szentlélek tér 5** (Holy Spirit Sq), a transport hub, and **Fő tér 6** (Main Sq), a quiet restored square of baroque houses, public buildings and restaurants – contain Óbuda's most important museums. To reach them, walk north on Budai alsó rakpart and under the flyover.

In the former Zichy Mansion is the **Vasarely Museum 7** (p60), devoted to the works of the 'father of op art', the late Victor Vasarely. In the back of the same building facing the courtyard (enter at Fő tér 1) is the **Kassák Museum 8** (p60) of early-20th-century avant-garde art. Take advantage of outdoor seating for a snack at **Új Sípós Halászkert 9**.

Walking northeast from the square, you'll see a group of odd metal sculptures of **women 10** under umbrellas in the middle of the road. It is an installation by the prolific Imre Varga, whose work is shown at the **Imre Varga Exhibition House 11** (p60) in a charming townhouse nearby.

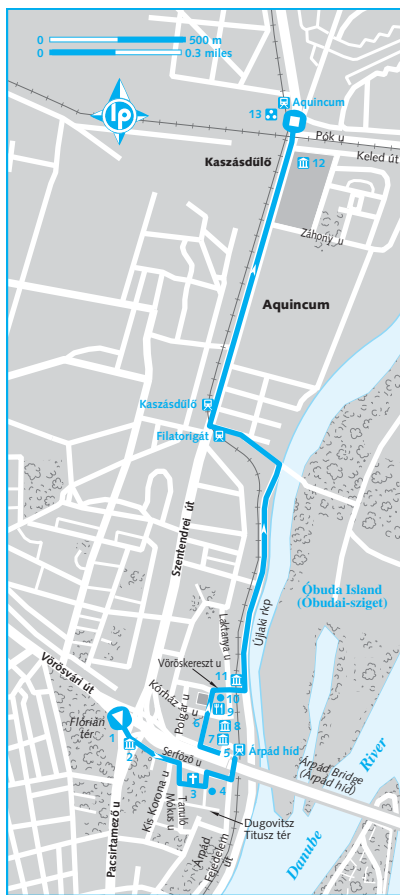
If you want to continue on to Aquincum (p59), the most complete Roman civilian town in Hungary and now an indoor and outdoor museum, don't walk but hop on bus 34 or 43 heading north from III Szentlélek tér or catch the HÉV suburban train from Árpád hid for three stops, and alight at the Aquincum station. A Roman aqueduct used to pass this way from a nearby spring, and remains have been preserved in the central reservation (median strip) of III Szentendrei út. The prosperous town's heyday was in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, lasting until the Huns and assorted other hordes came and ruined everything. The **Aquincum Museum 12** (p59) is well worth the trip.

Across Szentendrei út to the northwest is the **Roman Civilian Amphitheatre 13** (Római polgári amfiteátrum), about half the size of the one reserved for the garrison (p60). Much is left to the imagination, but you can still see the small cubicles where lions were kept and the 'Gate of Death' to the west through which slain gladiators were carried.

## MARGARET ISLAND HOPPER

Begin your tour of Margit-sziget (Margaret Island; p62) by heading north from the tram stop (4 or 6) on Margaret Bridge. In the flower-bedded roundabout 350m to the north is the **Centennial Monument 1** (Centenáriumi emlékmű), unveiled in 1973 to mark the union of Buda, Pest and Óbuda 100 years before. Three decades ago was an entirely different era in Budapest, and the sculptor filled the strange split cone with all sorts of socialist and nationalist symbols. They remain – as if contained in a time capsule that's been cracked open.

Walking along the central road, you'll pass two popular swimming pools on the west side. The first is the very serious **Alfréd Hajós National Sports Pool 2** (Hajós Alfréd Nemzeti Sportuszoda; p137). To the north is the recently renovated **Palatinus 4** (p137) complex. This place is an absolute madhouse on a hot summer afternoon but it's always a good place to watch Hungarians at play.



Just before you reach the Palatinus (and almost in the exact geographical centre of the island) you'll pass the ruins of a **Franciscan church and monastery 3** (Ferencs templom és kolostor), including a large tower and wall dating from the late 13th century. The Habsburg archduke Joseph built a summer residence here when he inherited the island in 1867. It was later converted into a hotel that ran until 1949.

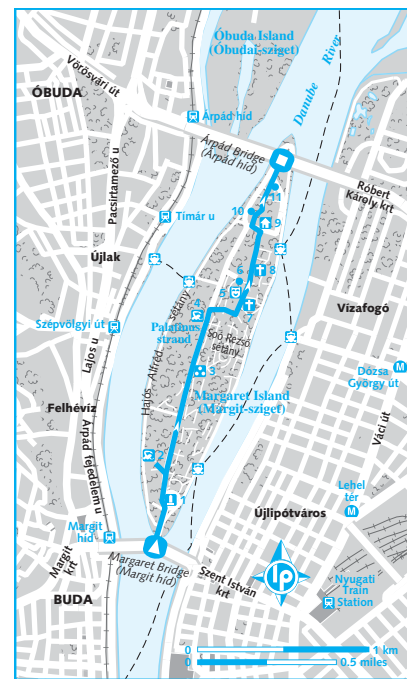
In the north-central north part of the island, an **open-air theatre 5** (*szabadtéri színpad*; ☎ 340 4883) is used for opera, plays and concerts in summer. An octagonal **water tower 6** (*víztorony*), erected in 1911, rises 66m above the theatre. The tower now houses the **Lookout Gallery** (Kiállító Galéria; ☎ 340 4520; adult/child 200/100Ft; ☎ 11am-7pm May-Oct), which exhibits some interesting folk craft and contemporary art on the ground floor. The main reason for entering is to climb the 153 steps for a stunning 360-degree view of the island, Buda and Pest from the cupola terrace.

Due east is the former **Dominican convent 7** (Domonkos kolostor) constructed by Béla IV whose scribes played an important role in the continuation of Hungarian scholarship. Its most famous resident was Béla's daughter, St Margaret (1242–71). According to the story, the king promised to commit his daughter to a life of devotion in a nunnery if the Mongols were driven from the land. They were and she was – at nine years of age. Still, she seemed to enjoy it – if we're to believe the *Lives of the Saints* – especially the mortification-of-the-flesh parts. St Margaret, only canonised in 1943, commands something of a cult following in Hungary. A red-marble sepulchre cover surrounded by a wrought-iron grille marks her original resting place, and there's a much visited shrine with ex-votes nearby.

Some 200m north is the reconstructed-Romanesque **Premonstratensian Church 8** (Premontre templom), dedicated to St Michael and originally dating back to the 12th century. Its 15th-century bell is real enough, though; it mysteriously appeared one night in 1914 under the roots of a walnut tree that had been knocked over in a storm. It was probably buried there by monks at the time of the Turkish invasion.

The Romans used the thermal springs bubbling below the northeastern part of the island both as drinking water and therapy and so do modern Magyars. Margitszigeti Krisztályvíz (Margaret Island Crystal Water), one of the more popular brands of mineral water in Hungary, is sourced and bottled here, and the thermal spa at the **Danubius Grand Hotel Margitsziget 9** (p136) to the northeast is one of the cleanest and most modern in Budapest.

The attractive **Japanese Garden 10** (Japánkert), at the northwestern end of the island, has koi, carp and lily pads in its ponds, a small wooden bridge and a waterfall. The raised gazebo to the north is called the **Musical Fountain 11** (Zenélőkút), a replica of one in Transylvania. A tape plays chimes and tinny snatches of a folk song on the hour. From here walk to Árpád Bridge and the bus stop.



### WALK FACTS

Start Margaret Bridge  
End Árpád Bridge  
Distance 3km  
Duration Two hours  
Transport ☎ 4 or 6 (start); ☎ 26, ☎ 1 (end)

## IN THE STEPS OF ST STEVE

This walking tour of Szent István körút (p67), not particularly long or demanding, begins in XIII Jászai Mari tér, which is split in two by the foot of Margaret Bridge on the Pest side. Two buildings of very different styles and functions face the square. The modern building south of the square is nicknamed the **White House** (1; V Széchenyi rakpart 19), the former headquarters of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. It now contains the offices of the members of the nearby Parliament. To the north is an elegant block of flats called **Palatinus House** (2; XIII Pozsonyi út 2), built in 1912.

The area to the north of Szent István körút is known as Újlipótváros (New Leopold Town). It is a wonderful neighbourhood with tree-lined streets, antique shops, boutiques and a few cafés and is vaguely reminiscent of uptown Manhattan. It was upper middle class and Jewish before the war (and remains essentially so today, with the odd ex-communist boss thrown in for good measure), and many of the 'safe houses' organised by the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg (p68) during WWII were here. A street named after this heroic man, two blocks to the north, bears a commemorative plaque. Along the bank of the river is a rarity for Budapest: a row of **Bauhaus apartments** 3. They may not look like much today after decades of bad copies, but they were the bee's knees when they were built in the late 1920s. East of the apartments is **Szent István Park** 4, where a **statue of Raoul Wallenberg** 5 doing battle with a snake (evil) was erected in 1999. It is titled *Kígyóölő* (Serpent Slayer) and replaces one created by sculptor Pál Pátzay that was mysteriously removed the night before its unveiling in 1948.

Return along Pozsonyi út to Szent István körút, which is an interesting street to stroll along; as elsewhere on the Big Ring Road, most of the Eclectic-style buildings were erected in the last part of the 19th century. Don't hesitate to explore the inner courtyards here and further on – if Dublin is celebrated for its doors and London for its squares, Budapest is known for its lovely *udvarok*.

This stretch of the boulevard is also good for shopping. The **Szőnyi Antikvárium** 6 (p148), a second-hand and antiquarian bookshop, is excellent for browsing – it has old prints and maps in the chest of drawers at the back. **Falk Miksa utca** 7, the next street on the right and running south, is loaded with pricey antique shops. You can get an idea of what Hungarians are off-loading these days from the secondhand **BÁV shop** 8 (p147).

### WALK FACTS

**Start** XIII Jászai Mari tér  
**End** V Erzsébet tér  
**Distance** 3km  
**Duration** 2½ hours  
**Transport** (R) 4 or 6 (start); (M) M1/2/3 Deák Ferenc tér (end)  
**Fuel Stop** Okay Italia (p115)



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The attractive little theatre roughly in the middle of this section of the Big Ring Road is the **Comedy Theatre** 9 (p134). Right on Nyugati tér, **Okay Italia** 10 is a good place to replenish for the rest of the tour.

You might recognise the large iron and glass structure on Nyugati tér (known as Marx tér until 1989) if you arrived by train. It's the **Nyugati train station** 11 (Nyugati pályaudvar), dating from the end of the 19th century. The old restaurant room to the right now houses one of the world's most elegant McDonald's.

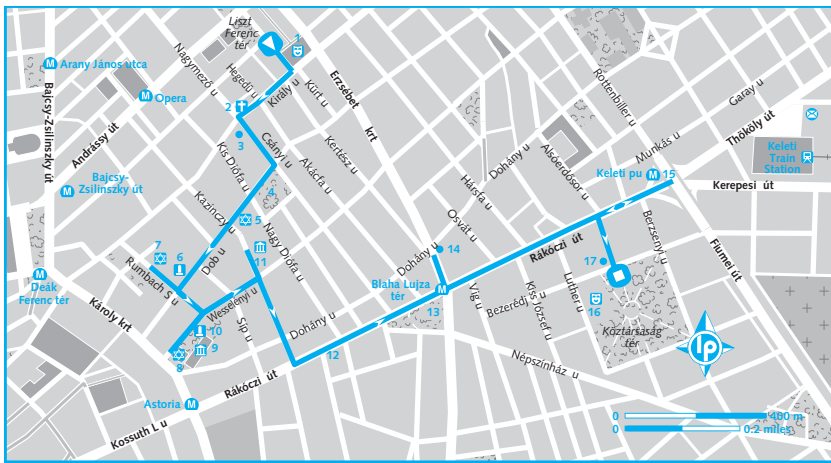
If you look north up Váci út from Nyugati tér, beyond the new **West End City Centre** 12 shopping mall, you may catch sight of the twin spires of the **Lehel church** 13 (XIII Lehel tér) a 1933 copy of the 13th-century Romanesque church (now in ruins) at Zsambék, 33km west of Budapest. The monstrosity that is **Lehel Csarnok** 14 (p93) is nearby.

If you're feeling energetic, walk south through Nyugati tér and along Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út for about 800m to the **Basilica of St Stephen** 15 (p64). The street ends at busy Deák Ferenc tér. In the subway below, near the entrance to the metro, you'll find the **Underground Railway Museum** 16 (p64).

In the early part of the 20th century, big foreign insurance companies built their offices here, with some huge ones still standing. **Madách Imre út** 17, running east from Károly körút, the start of the Little Ring Road, was originally designed to be as large and grand a boulevard as nearby Andrásy út. But WWII nipped that plan in the bud, and it now ends abruptly and rather self-consciously after just two blocks. Much of **Erzsébet tér** 18 is now given over to a park since the international bus station was moved to Népliget and the National Theatre opened its doors along the Danube in Ferencváros and not here, as originally planned.

## ELIZABETH TOWN TAILORED TOUR

This walking tour of Erzsébetváros (p68), or Elizabeth Town, which takes you through the old Jewish Quarter and up along Rákóczi út to the Keleti train station, begins in Liszt Ferenc tér, where you'll find the **Ferenc Liszt Academy of Music** 1 (Liszt Zeneakadémia; p131) at the south-eastern end. There are always tickets (some very cheap) available to something – perhaps a recital or an early Saturday morning rehearsal.



If you walk southwestwards along Király utca you'll pass the **Church of St Teresa 2**, built in 1811 and containing a massive neoclassical altar and chandelier and, diagonally opposite, a lovely **neo-Gothic house 3** at No 47 built in 1847. **Klauzál tér 4**, the heart of the old Jewish Quarter, is a couple of streets to the southeast over Dob utca.

The square and its surrounding streets retain a feeling of prewar Budapest. Signs of a continued Jewish presence are still evident – in a kosher bakery at Kazinczy utca 28, the Kóvári butcher's at Dob utca 35, the Fröhlich cake shop and café (p125) which has old Jewish favourites, at Dob utca 22 and wigmakers at Kazinczy utca 32.

There are about half a dozen synagogues and prayer houses in the Erzsébetváros district, and these were reserved for different sects and ethnic groups: conservatives, the Orthodox, Poles, Sephardics and so on. The **Orthodox Synagogue (5)**; Ortodox zsinagóga; VII Kazinczy utca 29-31), which is also accessed from Dob utca 35, was built in 1913 for Budapest's Orthodox community, and the Moorish **Rumbach Sebestyén utca Synagogue (7)**; Rumbach Sebestyén utcai zsinagóga; VII Rumbach Sebestyén utca 11) in 1872 by Austrian Secessionist architect Otto Wagner for the conservatives. Between the two synagogues there's an unusual antifascist **monument to Carl Lutz (6)**; VII Dob utca 12), a Swiss consul who, like Raoul Wallenberg, provided Jews with false papers in 1944. It portrays an angel on high sending down a long bolt of cloth to a victim.

## WALK FACTS

**Start** VI Liszt Ferenc tér

**End** Keleti metro station

**Distance** 4km

**Duration** 3½ hours

**Transport** M1 Oktogon (start); M2 Keleti pályaudvar (end)

**Fuel Stop** Kádár (p120)

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No synagogue compares with the **Great Synagogue 8** (p68), which also contains the **Jewish Museum 9** (p68). Outside the front of the synagogue a plaque notes that Theodore Herzl, the father of modern Zionism, was born at this site in 1860. The **Holocaust Memorial Center 10** (p69) is on the northern side of the synagogue, and faces Rumbach Sebestyén utca. The **Hungarian Electrotechnology Museum 11** (p68), a personal favourite, is a short distance to the north.

**Rákóczi út 12**, a busy shopping street to the south, leads to **Blaha Lujza tér 13**, named after a leading 19th-century stage actress. The subway (underpass) below is one of the liveliest in the city, with hustlers, beggars, peasants selling their wares, musicians and, of course, pick-pockets. Just north of the square is the Art Nouveau **New York Palace (14)**; New York Palota; VII Erzsébet körút 9-11), erstwhile home of the celebrated New York Café (New York Kávéház; see boxed text, p126), scene of many a literary gathering over the years. It has now been almost completely restored and will soon reopen as a hotel.

Rákóczi út ends at Baross tér and the **Keleti train station 15** (Keleti pályaudvar). It was built in 1884 and renovated a century later. To the southwest in huge VIII Köztársaság tér is the city's 'other' opera house, the ugly **Erkel Theatre 16** (p133). From the outside, you'd never guess it was built in 1911. On the same square you'll find the **former Communist Party headquarters (17)**; VIII Köztársaság tér 26-27), from which members of the secret police were dragged and shot by demonstrators on 30 October 1956. It now houses the main offices of the 'reformed' MSZP.

## WORKING THROUGH THE VIII & IX DISTRICTS

Begin the walking tour of the traditionally working-class districts of Józsefváros and Ferencváros (p69) in **Rákóczi tér 1**, the only real square right on the Big Ring Road and as good a place as any get a feel for these areas. The square is the site of a busy **market hall 2** (*vásárcsarnok*; p93), erected in 1897 and renovated in the early 1990s after a bad fire.

Across József körút, Bródy Sándor utca runs west from Gutenberg tér – with a lovely **Art Nouveau building (3)**; VIII Gutenberg tér 4) to the **former Hungarian Radio headquarters (4)**; Magyar Rádió; VIII Bródy Sándor utca 5-7), where shots were first fired on 23 October 1956. Beyond it is the **Italian Institute of Culture (5)**; VIII Bródy Sándor utca 8), which once housed the erstwhile House of Commons and appears on the reverse of the 20,000Ft

## WALK FACTS

**Start** VIII Rákóczi tér

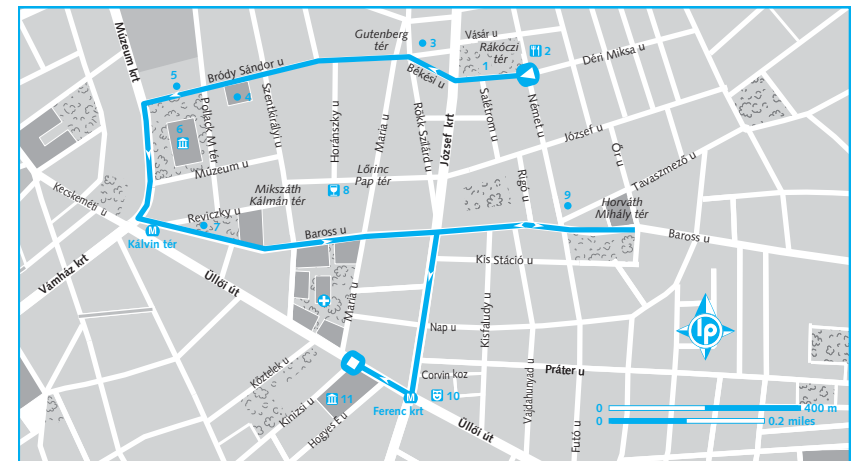
**End** Applied Arts Museum

**Distance** 3.5km

**Duration** Three hours

**Transport** 4 or 6 (start); M3 Ferenc körút (end)

**Fuel Stop** Darshan Udvar (p124)



note, and the **Hungarian National Museum 6** (p69). You may enjoy walking around the museum gardens, laid out in 1856. The column to the left of the museum entrance once stood at the Forum in Rome. Have a look at some of the villas and public buildings on Pollack Mihály tér behind the museum and the white wrought-iron gate in the centre.

Walk south to Kálvin tér and follow Baross utca and Reviczky utca eastwards to the **Ervin Szabó Central Library 7** (p190), built between 1887 and 1894 and exquisitely renovated in recent years. With its gypsum ornaments, gold tracery and enormous chandeliers, you'll never see another public reading room like it. Take time out for a refreshment in the terrace café of **Darshan Udvar 8**, just beyond Mikszáth Kálmán tér.

Further east along Baross utca, across the Big Ring Road, the old **Telephone Exchange building 9**; VIII Horváth Mihály tér 18), built in 1910, has reliefs of classical figures using the then newfangled invention, the telephone. The Art Deco **Corvin Film Palace 10** (Corvin Filmpalota; p133), at the southern end of Kisfaludy utca in the middle of a square flanked by Regency-like houses, has been restored to its former glory.

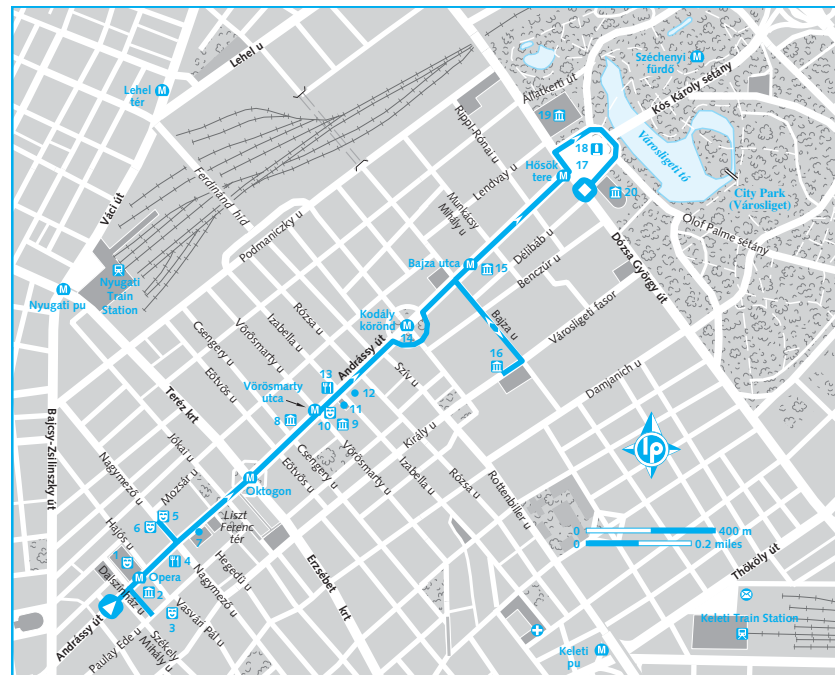
West of here is Hungary's answer to London's Victoria and Albert Museum: the **Applied Arts Museum 11** (p69). In fact, the London museum was the inspiration when this museum was founded in 1864.

## ANDRÁSSY AMBLE

Andrássy út (p70) splits away from Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út about 200m to the north of V Deák Ferenc tér. This section of Andrássy út is lined with plane trees – cool and pleasant on a warm day. The first major point is the **Hungarian State Opera House 1** (p71). The interior, which can be visited on a tour, is particularly lovely and sparkles following a total overhaul undertaken in the 1980s.

Opposite the Opera House, the so-called **Drechsler House 2**; VI Andrássy út 25) was designed by Art Nouveau master builder Ödön Lechner in 1882. Until recently it housed the Hungarian State Dance Institute but it now stands empty, another victim of 'development' that never happened. For something even more magical, walk down Dalszínház utca to the **New Theatre 3**; Új Színház; ☎ 351 1406; VI Paulay Ede utca 35), a Secessionist gem embellished with monkey faces, globes and geometric designs that opened as the Parisiana music hall in 1909.

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The old-world café **Művész 4** (p126) is in the next block. The following cross street is Nagymező utca, 'the Broadway of Budapest', counting a number of theatres, including the **Budapest Operetta 5** (p133) at No 17 and, just opposite, the **Thália 6**; ☎ 331 0500; VI Nagymező utca 22-24), lovingly restored in 1997.

On the right-hand side of the next block, the **Fashion House 7**; Divatcsarnok; VI Andrássy út 39), the fanciest emporium in town when it opened as the Grande Parisienne (or Párisi Nagyruház in Hungarian) in 1912, contains the ornate Ceremonial Hall (Díszterem) on the mezzanine floor, a room positively dripping with gilt, marquetry and frescoes by Károly Lotz. It is currently being redeveloped so it may be closed when you pass by.

Andrássy út meets the Nagykörút – the Big Ring Road – at Oktogon, a busy intersection full of fast-food places, shops, honking cars and pedestrians. Just beyond it, the former secret police building, which now houses the **House of Terror 8** (p71), has a ghastly history, for it was here that many activists of every political persuasion was out of fashion before and after WWII were taken for interrogation and torture. The walls were apparently double thickness to mute the screams. A plaque on the outside of this house of shame reads in part: 'We cannot forget the horror of terror, and the victims will always be remembered'. The **Franz Liszt Memorial Museum 9** (p71) is diagonally opposite.

Along the next two blocks you'll pass some very grand buildings housing such institutions as the **Budapest Puppet Theatre 10** (p73) at No 69, the **Academy of Fine Arts 11**; Magyar Képzőművészeti Egyetem; VI Andrássy út 71) next door and the headquarters of **MÁV 12**;

### WALK FACTS

Start Opera metro station

End VI Hősök tere

Distance 2.6km

Duration Two hours (or more)

Transport M2 Opera (start); M1 Hősök tere (end)

Fuel Stop **Művész** (p126) or **Lukács** (p126) cafés

V Andrassy út 73), the national railway, after that. The **Lukács café 13** (p126) and cake shop is just opposite.

The next square (more accurately a circus) is **Kodály körönd 14**, one of the most beautiful in the city, with the façades of the four neo-Renaissance townhouses still in desperate need of a massive face-lift.

The last stretch of Andrassy út and the surrounding neighbourhoods are packed with stunning old mansions that are among the most desirable addresses in the city. It's no surprise to see that embassies, ministries, multinationals and even political parties (eg FIDESZ-MPP at VI Lendvay utca 28) have moved in.

The **Ferenc Hopp Museum of East Asian Art 15** (p70) is in the former villa of its eponymous collector and benefactor at No 103. More of the collection is on display at the nearby **György Ráth Museum 16** (p71), a few minutes' walk southwest.

Andrassy út ends at **Hősök tere 17** (Heroes' Sq), which leads to City Park (p72). The city's most flamboyant monument and two of its best exhibition spaces are in the square. The **Millenary Monument 18** (Ezeréves emlékmű; p71) defines Hősök tere. Beneath the tall column and under a stone slab is an empty coffin representing the unknown insurgents of the 1956 Uprising. To the north of the monument is the **Museum of Fine Arts 19** (p71) and its rich collection, while to the south is the ornate **Múcsarnok 20** (Palace of Art; p72), which was built around the time of the millenary exhibition in 1896 and renovated a century later.

## INNER TOWN IN STRIDE

The best place to start a wide-reaching tour of the Belváros (Inner Town; p63) is **Egyetem tér 1** (University Sq), a five-minute walk south along Károlyi Mihály utca from Ferenciek tere. The square's name refers to the branch of the prestigious **Loránd Eötvös Science University 2**; ELTE; V Egyetem tér 1-3). Next to the university building to the west is the **University Church 3**, a lovely baroque structure built in 1748. Over the altar inside is a copy of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa so revered in Poland. The church is often full of young people – presumably those who haven't tickled András Hadik's horse (see p78) on Castle Hill.

Just north of Egyetem tér, the **Petőfi Literary Museum 4**; Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum; ☎ 317 3611; V Károlyi Mihály utca 16; adult/child 280/140Ft; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) is housed in the sublimely renovated neoclassical **Károlyi Palace 5** (Károlyi Palota; 1840), which also houses a centre for contemporary literature, library, concert/lecture hall and terrace restaurant in the courtyard.

Southwest of Egyetem tér, at the corner of Szerb utca and Veres Pálné utca, stands the **Serbian Orthodox church 6**; Szerb ortodox templom; V Szerb utca 2-4; admission 260Ft; 🕒 9.30am-1pm & 2-5pm), built by Serbs fleeing the Turks in the 17th century. The iconostasis is worth a look.

There are a couple of interesting things to see along **Veres Pálné utca 7**, which runs north to south just west of Egyetem tér. For example, the building at No 19 has bronze reliefs above the 2nd floor illustrating various periods of construction in the capital in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries. At the corner of Papnövelde utca and Cukor utca, the stairwells of the enormous **Apáczai Gimnázium 8**; V Papnövelde utca 4-10) elementary school (1913) is topped with little Doric temples on either side of the roof symbolising culture and learning. A few steps north is **Szivárvány köz 9** (Rainbow Alley), the narrowest and shortest street in Budapest. The building with the multicoloured tiled dome and north of the alley is the **Loránd Eötvös University Library 10**; Egyetemi könyvtár; V Ferenciek tere 6).

The best way to see the posher side of the Inner Town is to walk up pedestrian Váci utca, the capital's premier – and most expensive – shopping street, with designer clothes, expensive jewellery shops, pubs and some bookshops for browsing. This was the total length of Pest in the Middle Ages. To gain access from Ferenciek tere, walk through **Párisi Udvar 11**; Parisian Court; V Ferenciek tere 5), a gem of a Parisian-style arcade built in 1909, out onto tiny Kigyó utca. Váci utca is immediately to the west.

Make a little detour off Váci utca by turning east on Haris köz – once a privately owned street – and continue across Petőfi Sándor utca to **Kammermayer Károly tér 12** a lovely little square with shops, an arty café and, in the centre, a statue of Károly Kammermayer (1829-97), united Budapest's first mayor.



On the southeastern corner of the square is the **Pest county hall 13**; Pest Megyei Önkormányzat Hivatal; V Városház utca 7) – the city of Budapest is located in the county of Pest – a large neoclassical building with inner three courtyards. North of the square is the 18th-century **municipal council office 14**; Fővárosi Önkormányzat Hivatal; V Városház utca 9-11), or city hall, a rambling red and yellow structure that is the largest baroque building in the city.

**Szervita tér 15** is at the northwestern end of Városház utca. Naturally there's the requisite baroque church (Szervita templom; 1732) presiding over the square, but much more interesting are the buildings that stand to the west. You would probably never guess, but the **Rózsavölgyi House 16**; V Szervita tér 5) apartment block was built in 1912, and is a wonderful example of early Modernism. Two doors away is the former **Török Bank House 17** (p20); have a look up to the gable to see its marvellous mosaic. You can return to Váci utca via Régiposta utca.

### WALK FACTS

**Start** V Egyetem tér  
**End** V Március 15 tér  
**Distance** 2.3km  
**Duration** Two hours  
**Transport** 🚇 M3 Ferenciek tere (start and end)  
**Fuel Stop** Gerbeaud café (p125)



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Many of the buildings on Váci utca are worth a closer look, but as it's a narrow street you'll have to crane your neck or walk into one of the side lanes for a better view. **Thonet House** (18; V Váci utca 11/a) is another masterpiece built by Ödön Lechner (1890), and a flower shop called **Philanthia** (19; V Váci utca 9) has an original Art Nouveau interior.

At the top of Váci utca, across from Kristóf tér with the little **Fishergirl Well** 20, is a brick outline of the foundations of the Vác Gate (Váci kapu), part of the old city wall. The street leads into **Vörösmarty tér** 21, a large square of smart shops, galleries, cafés and an outdoor market of stalls selling tourist schlock, and artists who will draw your portrait or caricature. Suitable for framing (maybe).

In the centre is a statue of the 19th-century poet after whom Vörösmarty tér was named. It is made of Italian marble and is protected in winter by a bizarre plastic 'iceberg' that kids love sliding on. The first – or last – stop of the little yellow metro line (M1) is also in the square, and at the northern end is **Gerbeaud** 22 (p125), Budapest's most famous café and cake shop.

South of Vörösmarty tér is the sumptuous **Bank Palace** (23; Bank Palota; V Deák utca 5), built in 1915 and now housing the Budapest Stock Exchange. The **Pesti Vigadó** 24 (p131) concert hall dating from the mid-19th century faces the river to the west of Vörösmarty tér. Before proceeding, have a look (if open) in the foyer at V Vigadó utca 6, which has one of those strange conveyances called Pater Noster lifts (p65).

A pleasant way to return to Ferenciek tere is via the **Duna korzó** 25, the riverside 'Danube Embankment' between Chain and Elizabeth Bridges and above Belgrád rakpart. It's full of cafés, musicians and handicraft stalls and leads into **Petőfi tér** 26, named after the poet of the 1848–49 War of Independence and the scene of political rallies (both legal and illegal) over subsequent years. **Március 15 tér** 27, which marks the date of the outbreak of the revolution, abuts it to the south. Here you'll find the **Inner Town parish church** 28 (p64) and, in the small park to the north, what's left of the **Contra Aquincum** 29 Roman fort.

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