



Hungary

A landlocked land of wide plains, thermal baths and paprika, with the Danube running through its grand capital, Budapest.

Hungary lies in the middle of the Carpathian Basin in Central Europe and has no coast. Much of the country is flat lowland, above all the Great Hungarian Plain in the east. Two great rivers cross it from north to south: the Danube, which runs through Budapest, and the Tisza. In the west lies Lake Balaton, the largest lake in Central Europe.

AT A GLANCE

Facts to know

CAPITAL

Budapest

POPULATION

About 9.5 million

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Hungarian

CURRENCY

Hungarian forint (Ft, HUF)

AREA

About 93,000 km²

GOVERNMENT

Parliamentary republic

HIGHEST MOUNTAIN

Kékes, 1,014 m, in the Mátra mountains

LONGEST RIVER IN HUNGARY

The Tisza, about 596 km within Hungary. The Danube runs about 417 km through the country

NEIGHBOURS

Austria, Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia. Hungary is landlocked

DRIVES ON THE

Right

CALLING CODE

+36

A 45-minute trip to Hungary

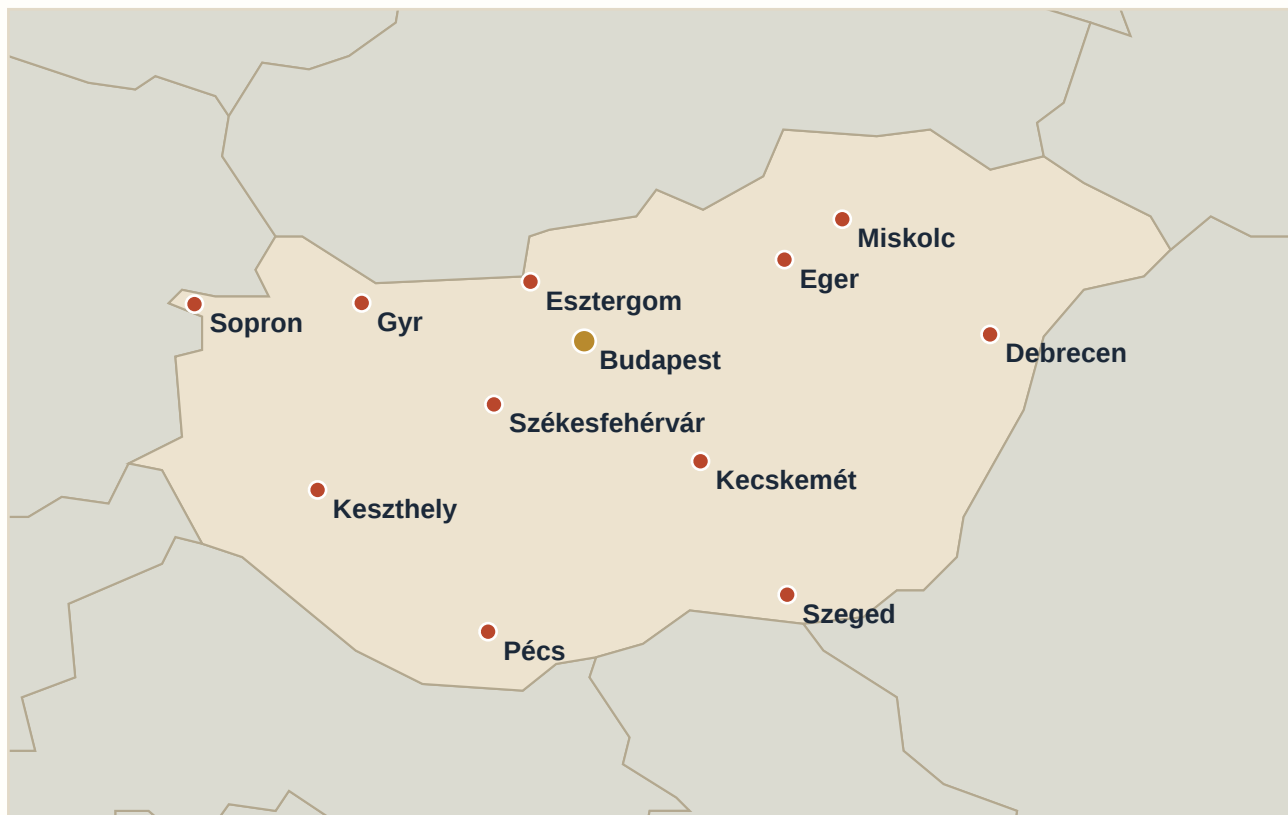
Everything you need is in this pack. No preparation beyond printing. Adapt the timing to your group.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 0 to 5 min | Welcome. Show the map page and find Hungary together. Ask: who has been there, or knows someone from there? |
| 5 to 15 min | Read the facts at a glance, then three moments from the story: AD 895: The Magyars settle the Carpathian Basin; 1686: Buda is recaptured; 2004: Hungary joins the EU. |
| 15 to 25 min | At the table: talk about Goulash and Fisherman's soup. Idea: bring a small taste (bread, cheese, fruit, tea) if your kitchen can help. |
| 25 to 30 min | Say it like a local: practise "Jó reggelt!" (Good morning), "Jó napot!" (Good day, hello), "Jó estét!" (Good evening). Everyone says them together. |
| 30 to 40 min | Quiz: read the questions aloud, or play the big-screen version at https://worldstroll.com/countries/hungary/group . No scores needed. |
| 40 to 45 min | Talk about it (questions page), then stamp or sign everyone's passport page. |

You will need

- This printed pack (one per table, or one each)
- Pens for the quiz
- Optional: a world map or globe, a small tasting, music from the country

Hungary and its cities



- Budapest (Central Hungary): The Parliament on the Danube, Buda Castle and its hill, Thermal baths, The Chain Bridge
- Debrecen (Hajdú-Bihar County): The Reformed Great Church, Its August flower festival, The Hortobágy National Park nearby
- Szeged (Csongrád-Csanád County): Paprika, Winter salami, Its university
- Miskolc (Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County): Diósgyőr Castle, The cave bath at Miskolctapolca, The Bükk hills
- Pécs (Baranya County): The Early Christian Necropolis, The mosque of Pasha Qasim, Hungary's oldest university
- Gyr (Gyr-Moson-Sopron County): Its baroque old town, The meeting of three rivers, Pannonhalma Archabbey nearby
- Eger (Heves County): Eger Castle, Bull's Blood red wine (Egri Bikavér), Its minaret and thermal baths
- Sopron (Gyr-Moson-Sopron County): Its medieval old town, The Pan-European Picnic of 1989, Lake Fert nearby
- Kecskemét (Bács-Kiskun County): Apricot pálinka, Art Nouveau buildings, Orchards and vineyards
- Székesfehérvár (Fejér County): Its royal history, Baroque buildings and museums, The road

to Lake Balaton

- Esztergom (Komárom-Esztergom County): Esztergom Basilica, the largest church in Hungary, The Danube Bend, The seat of Hungary's Catholic Church
- Keszthely (Zala County): Lake Balaton, Lake Hévíz nearby, Summer holidays

A short history of Hungary

Hungary's story runs from horse-riding tribes who settled the Carpathian Basin, through a medieval Christian kingdom, Ottoman wars and the Habsburg empire, to the revolutions of 1848 and 1956 and a peaceful return to democracy in 1989.

AD 895 **The Magyars settle the Carpathian Basin**

A union of seven Hungarian tribes, led by Grand Prince Álmos and his son Árpád, moved from the steppes north of the Black Sea into the Carpathian Basin, completing the move around 895. Árpád's family ruled Hungary for the next 400 years.

1000 **Stephen, the first king**

Stephen, son of Grand Prince Géza, was crowned on Christmas Day 1000 or New Year's Day 1001 with a crown sent by Pope Sylvester II. He turned Hungary into a Christian kingdom and is honoured today as Saint Stephen.

1222 **The Golden Bull**

King Andrew II was forced by his nobles to issue the Golden Bull, one of the first documents in Europe to place limits on a king's power. It even gave nobles the right to resist a king who broke the law.

1241 **The Mongol invasion**

Mongol armies crushed the Hungarian army at the Battle of Mohi in April 1241 and ravaged the country. Up to half of the population may have died. Afterwards King Béla IV encouraged the building of stone castles, and nearly 100 new ones went up during his reign.

1458 **Matthias Corvinus becomes king**

Matthias, son of the general John Hunyadi, was elected king. A Renaissance ruler and patron of learning, he built up a great library, the Bibliotheca Corviniana, and a powerful standing army that even took Vienna.

1526 **The Battle of Mohács**

On 29 August 1526 the Ottoman army of Suleiman the Magnificent destroyed the Hungarian army near Mohács. King Louis II died while fleeing, and the kingdom fell into chaos.

1541

The Ottomans take Buda

The Ottomans captured Buda, and Hungary was split into three parts: a Habsburg-ruled strip in the north and west, a Hungarian-ruled east that became the Principality of Transylvania, and an Ottoman province in the centre.

1552

The siege of Eger

About 2,100 defenders led by István Dobó held the castle of Eger against a much larger Ottoman army. The siege became Hungary's great symbol of courage and patriotism.

1686

Buda is recaptured

After a siege from June to September 1686, an army of the Holy League led by the Habsburgs retook Buda, ending nearly 150 years of Ottoman rule over the old capital.

1848

The revolution of 1848

On 15 March 1848 crowds in Pest pushed through a list of twelve demands for reform. A war of independence against the Habsburgs followed, led by Lajos Kossuth, and was defeated in August 1849 with the help of Russian armies.

1867

The Compromise with Austria

The Austro-Hungarian Compromise created the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary: two states with their own parliaments and capitals, sharing one monarch, Franz Joseph, and a common army and foreign policy.

1873

Budapest is born

The separate towns of Buda, Óbuda and Pest were officially united into one city with the new name Budapest. It grew quickly into one of the great cities of Europe.

1920

The Treaty of Trianon

On 4 June 1920, after the First World War, the Treaty of Trianon set Hungary's new borders. The country lost 71% of its territory and about two thirds of its population, and millions of Hungarians found themselves in neighbouring states.

1956

The 1956 Revolution

On 23 October 1956 protests in Budapest grew into an uprising against the communist government and Soviet control. Soviet tanks crushed it in November. Thousands were killed and about a quarter of a million people fled the country.

1989

The Pan-European Picnic

On 19 August 1989 a border gate between Hungary and Austria near Sopron was opened during a peace picnic, and hundreds of East Germans crossed to the West. Hungary moved peacefully to democracy, with free elections in 1990.

2004

Hungary joins the EU

On 1 May 2004 Hungary became a member of the European Union, five years after joining NATO. It joined the Schengen area in 2007.

What people eat in Hungary

Hungarian food is hearty and warming, built on meat, onions, sour cream and above all paprika, the ground red pepper that gives many dishes their colour. Lunch is traditionally the main meal of the day: it starts with a soup, followed by a main dish with a salad or pickles, and often ends with something sweet. Hungarians also love cakes and pastries, served in the cake shops called cukrászda.

Goulash (gulyás)

The Great Hungarian Plain, all of Hungary

A rich, red soup of beef, onions, potatoes and vegetables, seasoned with plenty of paprika and caraway. In Hungary gulyás is usually a soup, while a thicker meat stew is called pörkölt.

Fisherman's soup (halászlé)

The banks of the Danube and the Tisza, especially Szeged and Baja

A bright red, hot and spicy soup of carp or mixed river fish, made with a strong fish broth and generous amounts of hot paprika.

Chicken paprikash (paprikás csirke)

All of Hungary

Chicken slowly simmered in a creamy paprika sauce finished with sour cream, traditionally served with nokedli, small soft egg dumplings.

Pörkölt (pörkölt)

All of Hungary

A thick stew of boneless meat, usually beef or pork, slowly cooked with plenty of onion and sweet paprika, with less liquid than goulash.

Stuffed cabbage (töltött káposzta)

All of Hungary

Cabbage or sauerkraut leaves rolled around minced pork, rice, onion and spices, slowly cooked in a pot with more sauerkraut and paprika, and served with sour cream on top.

Lecsó (lecsó)

All of Hungary, best in late summer

A thick stew of yellow peppers, tomatoes and onions cooked in lard or oil with paprika. It is eaten on its own with bread, with sausage, or as a side dish.

Curd cheese noodles with bacon (túrós csusza)

All of Hungary

Small homemade noodles mixed with crumbled fresh curd cheese (túró), topped with thick sour cream and crispy fried bacon, then warmed in the oven.

Hortobágy pancakes (hortobágyi palacsinta)

Created for the 1958 Brussels World's Fair

Thin pancakes filled with a paprika stew of veal or other meat, rolled up and covered with the creamy sauce and a spoon of sour cream.

Vegetable stew (fzelék)

All of Hungary

A thick vegetable dish, somewhere between a soup and a stew, made with peas, beans, lentils, potatoes, squash or cabbage and thickened with a roux or sour cream. It is often eaten as the main course at lunch or as a side dish with meat.

Lángos (lángos)

All of Hungary, a favourite at markets and beaches

A deep-fried flatbread, crisp outside and soft inside, rubbed with garlic and usually topped with sour cream and grated cheese.

Winter salami (téliszalámi)

Szeged and Budapest

A pork salami spiced with white pepper and allspice, cured in cold air and slowly smoked. A fine white mould forms on the casing as it dries.

Dobos torte (dobostorta)

Budapest, 1885

Thin layers of sponge cake filled with chocolate buttercream and crowned with a hard, shiny layer of caramel.

Chimney cake (kürtskalács)

The Székely Land in Transylvania, now loved all over Hungary

A strip of sweet yeast dough wound around a wooden cone, rolled in sugar and roasted over charcoal until the sugar turns to a crisp caramel crust. It is often dusted with cinnamon or ground walnuts.

Cold sour cherry soup (hideg meggyleves)

All of Hungary

A chilled, sweet and slightly sour fruit soup made with sour cherries, served cold as a starter.

Tokaji aszú (tokaji aszú)

The Tokaj wine region in the north-east

A rich, golden sweet wine made with grapes shrivelled by 'noble rot', a helpful mould that concentrates their sugar. Furmint is the main grape.

Pálinka (pálinka)

All of Hungary

A strong fruit brandy, most often made from plums, apricots, pears, apples or cherries, and often offered to guests when they arrive.

GOOD MANNERS

At the table

- Before eating, people wish each other 'Jó étvágyat' (enjoy your meal).
- When glasses are raised, people say 'Egészségedre' (to your health).
- Many Hungarians still do not clink beer glasses. The story says Austrian officers clinked beer to celebrate the execution of 13 Hungarian generals in 1849.
- Lunch is the main meal of the day and usually begins with soup.
- Bread is served with almost every meal.
- In the countryside a glass of pálinka is often offered to guests on arrival.

Goulash

A rich, red soup of beef, onions, potatoes and vegetables, seasoned with plenty of paprika and caraway. In Hungary gulyás is usually a soup, while a thicker meat stew is called pörkölt.

Ingredients

- 800 g beef shin or chuck, cut in 2 cm cubes
- 2 large onions, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons lard or sunflower oil
- 2 tablespoons sweet Hungarian paprika
- 1 teaspoon caraway seeds and 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 2 carrots and 1 parsnip, cut in chunks
- 1 green pepper and 1 tomato, chopped
- 500 g potatoes, cut in cubes
- About 2 litres water or beef stock, salt and pepper

Method

1. Melt the lard in a large heavy pot and cook the onions gently for 10 minutes until soft and golden.
2. Take the pot off the heat and stir in the paprika, so that it does not burn and turn bitter.
3. Add the beef, caraway and garlic, return to the heat and stir for a few minutes until the meat is coated and lightly browned.
4. Pour in a little water, cover and simmer gently for about 1 hour, adding a splash of water now and then.
5. Add the carrots, parsnip, pepper, tomato and the rest of the water or stock. Simmer for 30 minutes.
6. Add the potatoes and cook for another 20 to 25 minutes, until soft. Season with salt and pepper and serve hot with fresh bread.

Chicken paprikash

Chicken slowly simmered in a creamy paprika sauce finished with sour cream, traditionally served with nokedli, small soft egg dumplings.

Ingredients

- 1 kg chicken thighs and drumsticks, skin removed if you like
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons sunflower oil or lard
- 2 tablespoons sweet Hungarian paprika
- 1 green pepper and 1 tomato, chopped
- 250 ml water or chicken stock
- 200 ml sour cream mixed with 1 tablespoon flour
- For the nokedli: 300 g plain flour, 2 eggs, about 150 ml water and a pinch of salt

Method

1. Cook the onions gently in the oil for 10 minutes until soft. Take the pan off the heat and stir in the paprika.
2. Add the chicken, pepper, tomato, salt and water. Cover and simmer for about 40 minutes, until the chicken is cooked through.
3. Meanwhile, mix the flour, eggs, water and salt into a soft, sticky dough. Press it in small pieces into a pan of boiling salted water, using a spätzle maker or a spoon. When the dumplings float, cook for 2 more minutes, then drain.
4. Stir a spoonful of the hot sauce into the sour cream mixture, then stir it all into the pan. Simmer gently for 5 minutes, without boiling hard, until the sauce thickens.
5. Serve the chicken and sauce with the nokedli and a cucumber salad.

Lecsó

A thick stew of yellow peppers, tomatoes and onions cooked in lard or oil with paprika. It is eaten on its own with bread, with sausage, or as a side dish.

Ingredients

- 6 pale yellow peppers (Hungarian wax peppers or sweet pointed peppers), cut in strips
- 4 ripe tomatoes, chopped
- 2 onions, sliced
- 2 tablespoons lard or sunflower oil
- 1 teaspoon sweet Hungarian paprika
- Salt and a pinch of sugar
- Optional: 1 smoked sausage, sliced

Method

1. Warm the lard or oil in a wide pan and cook the onions for about 5 minutes, until soft.
2. If you use sausage, add it now and fry for 2 minutes.
3. Add the pepper strips and cook for about 10 minutes, stirring now and then, until they start to soften.
4. Take the pan off the heat, stir in the paprika, then add the tomatoes, salt and a pinch of sugar.
5. Simmer for 10 to 15 minutes until thick and soft. Serve hot with fresh white bread.

Lángos

A deep-fried flatbread, crisp outside and soft inside, rubbed with garlic and usually topped with sour cream and grated cheese.

Ingredients

- 400 g plain flour
- 7 g dried yeast and 1 teaspoon sugar
- About 250 ml lukewarm milk or water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Sunflower oil for frying
- To serve: 2 garlic cloves crushed in a little water, 200 ml sour cream and 100 g grated cheese

Method

1. Mix the flour, yeast, sugar and salt, then add the milk and knead for about 5 minutes into a soft, smooth dough.
2. Cover and leave in a warm place for about 1 hour, until doubled in size.
3. Divide the dough into 4 pieces. With oiled hands, stretch each one into a round about 1 cm thick.
4. Heat about 3 cm of oil in a deep pan to about 175°C. Never leave hot oil alone, and keep children away from the pan. Fry the lángos one at a time for 2 to 3 minutes on each side, until golden.
5. Drain on kitchen paper, brush with garlic water, spread with sour cream and sprinkle with cheese. Eat warm.

Useful phrases

Jó reggelt!

yoh REG-gelt · Good morning

Jó napot!

yoh NO-pot · Good day, hello

Jó estét!

yoh ESH-tayt · Good evening

Jó éjszakát!

yoh AY-so-kaat · Good night

Viszontlátásra

VEE-sont-laa-taash-ro · Goodbye

Szervusz

SER-voos · Hello (friendly)

Köszönöm, jól

KUH-suh-num, yohl · Fine, thank you

Örvendek

UR-ven-dek · Nice to meet you

Szívesen

SEE-veh-shen · You're welcome

Elnézést

EL-nay-zaysht · Excuse me

Beszél angolul?

BEH-sayl ON-go-lool · Do you speak English?

Nem értem

nem AYR-tem · I don't understand

Mennyibe kerül?

MEN-nyee-beh KEH-rool · How much is it?

Hol van a mosdó?

hol von o MOSH-doh · Where is the toilet?

Jó étvágyat!

yoh AYT-vaa-djot · Enjoy your meal

Egészségedre!

EH-gays-shay-ged-reh · Cheers! (to your health)

Nagyon finom volt

NO-djon FEE-nom volt · It was delicious

A számlát kérem

o SAAM-laak KAY-rem · The bill, please

Things you might not know

- 1.** The Rubik's Cube was invented in 1974 by Ern Rubik, a Hungarian sculptor and professor of architecture. It was first called the Magic Cube, and as of January 2024 around 500 million had been sold worldwide.
- 2.** Budapest's Metro Line 1, opened in 1896 for the thousandth anniversary of the Hungarian conquest, was the first electrified underground railway on the European mainland. It still runs under Andrásy Avenue today.
- 3.** Hungarians put the family name first. A man called Kovács István has the family name Kovács (Smith) and the given name István (Stephen), though most switch the order when speaking a foreign language.
- 4.** Hungarian is not related to the languages of its neighbours. It belongs to the Uralic family and is distantly related to Finnish and Estonian.
- 5.** Lake Balaton, the largest lake in Central Europe, is 78 km long and covers about 600 km², but it is very shallow: on average only about 3.3 metres deep.
- 6.** The biochemist Albert Szent-Györgyi, born in Budapest, won the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1937. He is credited with first isolating vitamin C.
- 7.** László Bíró, a journalist born in Budapest, patented the first commercially successful modern ballpoint pen. In Britain and several other countries a ballpoint is still called a 'biro'.
- 8.** The great escape artist Harry Houdini was born Erik Weisz in Budapest in 1874, before his family emigrated to the United States.
- 9.** Hungary's men's water polo team is considered the greatest power in the history of the sport. As of 2026 it had won 16 Olympic medals.
- 10.** The first Hungarian Grand Prix in 1986 was the first Formula One race held behind the Iron Curtain. It has been part of the championship every year since.
- 11.** The Széchenyi Chain Bridge, opened in 1849, was the first permanent bridge across the Danube in Hungary. It was designed by the English engineer William Tierney Clark and built by the Scot Adam Clark.
- 12.** Hungary's highest mountain, Kékes, is only 1,014 metres high. Before 1920

the highest peak of the Kingdom of Hungary was Gerlachovský štít, which is now in Slovakia.

- 13.** When the forint replaced the peng on 1 August 1946, it removed 29 zeros. The peng had suffered the worst hyperinflation ever recorded.

TALK ABOUT IT

Questions for the group

- Have you ever been to Hungary, or has someone in your family? What do you remember?
- Have you ever tasted Goulash or Fisherman's soup? What is a dish you remember from a trip?
- The 1956 Revolution (1956). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- The Pan-European Picnic (1989). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- Have you seen The Hungarian Parliament Building, in person or in pictures? Which famous place would you most like to see?
- If you could spend one day in any city of Hungary, which would it be and why?

QUIZ

How well do you know Hungary?

Circle the right answer. The answers are on the last page.

1. In which city were 43 Hungarian kings crowned in the Middle Ages?

- A) Szeged
- B) Miskolc
- C) Székesfehérvár
- D) Debrecen

2. In which style was the Hungarian Parliament Building on the Danube built?

- A) Moorish Revival
- B) Neo-Gothic
- C) Modernist
- D) Art Nouveau

3. The Hungarian word gulyás, which gave goulash its name, originally meant what?

- A) A baker
- B) A soldier
- C) A fisherman
- D) A cattle herder

4. Sopron lies on Hungary's border with Austria.

- A) True
- B) False

5. What does the Hungarian word 'kenyér' mean?

- A) Cheese
- B) Bread
- C) Wine
- D) Water

6. What is the capital of Hungary?

- A) Pécs
- B) Debrecen
- C) Budapest
- D) Szeged

7. As of September 2026, which currency is used in Hungary?

- A) Hungarian forint
- B) Euro
- C) Czech koruna
- D) Polish zoty

8. Budapest's first metro line opened in 1996.

- A) True
- B) False

9. What is the main ingredient of halászlé, the fisherman's soup?

- A) River fish such as carp
- B) Chicken
- C) Cabbage
- D) Beef

10. Buda, Óbuda and Pest were officially united into one city called Budapest in 1873.

- A) True
- B) False

11. Albert Szent-Györgyi, who won the Nobel Prize in 1937, is credited with first isolating which vitamin?

- A) Vitamin A
- B) Vitamin B12
- C) Vitamin C
- D) Vitamin D

12. In Hungary you may drink one small beer before driving.

- A) True
- B) False

Quiz answers

1. C) Székesfehérvár

Székesfehérvár was the royal seat of medieval Hungary: 43 kings were crowned there and 15 were buried there.

2. B) Neo-Gothic

Imre Steindl designed the Parliament in neo-Gothic style. It opened in 1902 and is the largest building in Hungary.

3. D) A cattle herder

Gulya means a herd of cattle and gulyás means a cattle herder: the dish began as the meal of herdsmen on the plains.

4. True

True. Sopron sits right on the Austrian border, and after a vote in 1921 it chose to stay in Hungary.

5. B) Bread

Kenyér (KEN-yair) means bread, which Hungarians eat with almost every meal.

6. C) Budapest

Budapest is the capital and by far the largest city, home to about 1.7 million people on both banks of the Danube.

7. A) Hungarian forint

Hungary pays in the Hungarian forint (Ft). It joined the EU in 2004 but has not adopted the euro.

8. False

False. Metro Line 1 opened in 1896, a hundred years earlier. It was the first electrified underground railway on the European mainland.

9. A) River fish such as carp

Halászlé is a hot paprika soup made with river fish such as carp, from the banks of the Danube and the Tisza.

10. True

True. The three towns on the two banks of the Danube were united in 1873 and given the new name Budapest.

11. C) Vitamin C

Szent-Györgyi is credited with first isolating vitamin C and won the Nobel Prize in

Physiology or Medicine in 1937.

12. False

False. Hungary has zero tolerance: it is illegal to drink any alcohol and then drive.

Hungary visa page

Name: _____ Date: _____



Next stops

Country: _____	Country: _____	Country: _____
Country: _____	Country: _____	Country: _____

Play the interactive version, collect a stamp in your passport:

<https://worldstroll.com/countries/hungary>