

## Turn of the Century

Stepping back into the urban action on the Pest side, you can stroll along Andrásy Boulevard, very much like the Champs-Élysées, and admire the mix of neoclassic, Romantic, Art Nouveau and uniquely Hungarian Eclectic style of architecture in the buildings - mostly from the turn of the century.

Outstanding examples include the Opera House, Hungarian Academy Sciences, Post Office Savings Bank, Museum of Applied Arts, St. Stephen's Basilica and, of course, Parliament, which you have seen at sunset from the Buda side across the river. At the end of Andrásy you will find the magnificent Heroes' Square with statues of Hungary's greatest leaders from the founding of the state to the 19th century.

At the National Museum, you will learn about the saga of Hungarian history and see the legendary crown jewels of King Stephen. Although they post-date the sainted Stephen by several centuries, the crown jewels nevertheless have a spectacular history, having been lost, stolen or misappropriated at various times since the Middle Ages. After World War II, fleeing Hungarians brought them to the United States for safekeeping. Jimmy Carter returned them to Hungary in 1978.

Worth seeing for both the building itself as well as the exhibits inside is the Museum of Applied Arts, a fantastic combination of traditional folk elements with Art Nouveau, Islamic, Hindu and Persian motifs. The roof is covered with ceramics from the famous Zsolnay factory in Pécs. The spacious white Victorian interior with glass dome overhead seems a complete contrast to the multicolored Oriental exterior. Exhibits include furniture, textiles, metalwork, ceramics, porcelain and glass.

The superb Museum of Ethnography originally served a different purpose. Its designer was the first runner-up in the turn-of-the-century competition for the Parliament building, and it housed the Supreme Court and Chief Prosecutor's Office. Go inside just to admire the frescos on the ceiling and the splendid staircase.

To make it easy for visitors to see museums and all the city's sights, the 3-day Budapest Card allows the purchaser to travel free on all public transportation, visit most of the city's top museums and provides discounts on guided tours, at selected restaurants and shops. You can buy the Budapest Card in the US or upon your arrival in Hungary at the airport, at hotels, museums, travel agencies and metro stations.

Budapest had the first subway on the European Continent. That first line is still in operation, along with the modern lines built after World War II.

One area that must be explored on foot is Erzsébet Town, the charming old Jewish quarter. The Byzantine-looking Dohány Street Synagogue was recently restored to its original grandeur. With 3,000 seats, it is Europe's largest synagogue and the world's second largest after New York's Temple Emanu-El.

In the courtyard is the moving Holocaust Memorial in the form of a weeping willow, its metal leaves engraved with the names of victims. Theodor Herzl, founder of modern Zionism, was born nearby. Wander through the courtyards connecting residential buildings, forming a protective cocoon for the quarter. Then stop for pastry or lunch at one of several kosher restaurants and cafés.