

# Welcome to Hungary



**JOHN VON NEUMANN UNIVERSITY**

Kecskemét

2021

## An introduction to Hungary<sup>1</sup>

Dear Visiting Students,

When you arrive at our university, I think it could be interesting and useful for you to be acquainted with some facts about the country you are to spend some time in. Therefore, I recommend you a few pieces of information accompanied with pictures to introduce Hungary to you. We wish you a pleasant stay and success at our university and in Hungary.



Dr. Tamás Fülöp, rector



If you are not from Europe, you might not know the origin of the name of this land, the second smallest of the continents, as far as its territory is concerned. *Europé*, as it is told in the Greek mythology, was the daughter of the first Phoenician king (*Agenor*, son of *Poseidon*, the god of the seas, and *Libya* the personification of North Africa). One day the king of the gods, *Zeus* decided to seduce *Europé*, so he approached her in the form of a white bull with golden horns. When the princess dared to sit on the back of the bull, he jumped into the Mediterranean Sea and swam with her to the large island of Crete. There she gave birth to *Minos*, the first Cretan king, founder of the Minian Greek Civilization in Crete that is said to be the cradle of European civilization as well, under the name of Atlantis. True, the first cultures of the Iron Age spread from Phoenicia to Crete then to the Greek mainland and all over the rest of Europe. Otherwise the name Europe has a double meaning; it can be interpreted in ancient Greek language either as '*Eur-Ópé*' meaning 'wide face' that represents the full moon the symbol of the ancient feminine goddesses of the Mediterranean region, or '*Eu-Rópé*' meaning 'good for the willow tree.' It is the wet land, abundant in waters, which is good for the willow and indeed, if you have a look at the map of Europe, you will find it is very rich in rivers, lakes, bays and inland seas.



### *The geographical boundaries of Central Europe*

Hungary is situated in Central Europe, together with countries like Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Austria, most parts of Germany, and some parts of Romania, Croatia, Italy, Switzerland, Ukraine, Serbia and the Baltic countries. It is a region most of which used to be the scene of constant wars over the past centuries. This and the exclusion from trading and colonizing the rest of the world left most of the Central European region in a state of slow economic development compared to Western European countries and nations. The territory of Hungary covers 93,000 square kilometres and its population is just under ten million.

<sup>1</sup> Not for sale



## The Hungarian Conquest (895 AD)

and  
Attila the Hun



Seven nomadic tribes conquered the territory of the Carpathian Basin more than 1100 years ago. Hungarian language does not belong to the Indo-European language family therefore it is said to be rather difficult to learn for other Europeans. It has a lot of inflexions, special suffixes and prefixes. It is related to Finnish and Turkish belonging to the Ural-Altai language family. Hungarians never call themselves Huns, but '*Magyar*' (pronounce 'mud-jar'). The formidable Hun nation endangering Europe and the Roman Empire used to dwell and quickly disappear in the Carpathian Basin some 400 years before the Magyars came, though recent paleo androgenetic research show 30 % Asian-Hun genes in Hungarians, too. The recorded identification of the two nations is due to the deliberate mistake of the mediaeval chronicle writers who wanted to justify the conquest of the land by interpreting it as a kind of homecoming.



The first Hungarian king was *István* (Stephen) the Saint, who ascended the throne in 1000 AD. He managed to settle the nomadic nation, converted them to the Christian religion by force and founded the state. Hungary's most respected national holiday has always been King Stephen's Day on 20<sup>th</sup> August. Without him, the Magyar nation would have been lost in history like several others (the Romanized Celts like Pannons and Dacians, Sarmatians, Gepids, Huns, Avars) in the Carpathian Basin, with the exception of the Slovaks and the Croatians, inhabiting in the northern and southern hilly parts. The Slovaks came a century earlier and succeeded in surviving the storms of history.

Hungary soon became a powerful European kingdom, attached to the Roman Christianity, not to the Byzantine one. The consequence of this lucky choice of the first king prevails even today since in all aspects Hungary (together with Slovakia, Croatia and the Transylvanian part of Romania) is closer to Western European civilization than Russia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, and the Moldavian part of Romania which were once affected by the Byzantine culture. The symbol of the Hungarian state is the royal crown consisting of two parts: the upper half represents the lost one that was sent by the Pope from Rome, while the lower part by the Byzantine Emperor from today's Istanbul. Thus, it symbolizes Hungary as a connecting point between West and East in Europe.



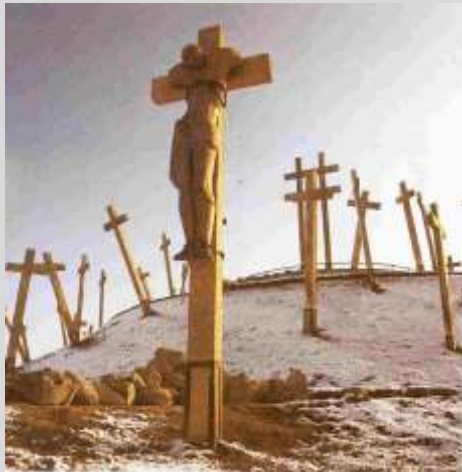
**The Royal Crown**



Dating from the Middle Ages, there are a lot of small, rebuilt Romanesque churches still functioning in the countryside. They have thick walls, small windows, vaults and look like small forts to defend themselves, which they really had to do.



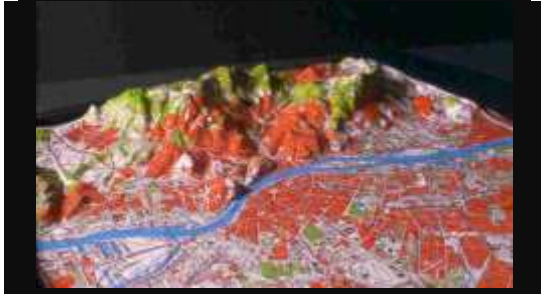
Up to the end of World War I, the Hungarian Kingdom had been situated in the whole of the Carpathian Basin. It is a perfectly situated piece of land of favourable geographic conditions with arable lands watered by big rivers in the Great Plain, high mountain ranges with timber and precious ore deposits in the Slovakian Uplands and in Transylvania. Having been defeated in World War I, the neighbouring nations divided two thirds of her territory with the assistance of France and the victorious powers who did not wish to see the restoration of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy as a supporter of the Germans any more. Therefore, the strongest link of the Monarchy had to be transformed into a politically instable region for centuries with the means of ethnic policy. The Hungarian Kingdom and Hungarian nation happened to be situated right in the middle of the region the winners planned to render instable.



Because of the unjust peace treaty ending World War I, some 5 million Magyars found themselves abroad. The borders did not change after World War II, either. The Czechoslovakians deported hundreds of thousand Hungarians from their homeland into Hungary, and the Serbs and Romanians massacred thousands of them after the wars, just because they were Hungarians. In spite of the permanent persecution and the forceful social assimilation that is going on even today, some 2 million Hungarians still live in Transylvania (the middle region of Romania), 600 thousand in Slovakia, 400 thousand in Serbia and 200 thousand in Ukraine. The rights of these national minorities are hardly recognized. The collapse of the communist regimes in these countries has led to open political tension.



In today's Hungary, however, there is no considerable ethnic minority except the Gipsy population. Owing to the long lasting nomadic nature of these peoples, it has been difficult to find their place in society over the few hundred years. They dwell mostly in the Eastern and Northern parts of the country and in great number in Budapest, too. The rate of growth of the Gipsy population, unlike the decreasing number of Hungarians is very high. Their number is estimated to approach one million and their social integration is the gravest domestic issue.



Budapest is the capital of Hungary. It is situated on both sides of the River Danube, which is the second largest river in Europe. Budapest is disproportionately large, compared to the present territory of the country. It has some 1.7 million inhabitants. Most of the Hungarian administration, business and economic activity are concentrated there. Under the riverbed, a major geological fracture is responsible for the 300-500 metres high region on the West side of the Danube (Buda) and the complete flatland on the East side (Pest). Pest (meaning 'cave' in ancient Hungarian language) got its name from the large cave chapel carved into the rock of the Gellért Hill; while Buda was the name of a king living at this place. He was brother to Attila, the Hun.



This is a computer-plotted map of the city of Budapest, entirely based on a LANDSAT satellite image procession. The red colour shows the most densely built up areas, other colours represent the industrial, transportation and loosely built up residential areas like housing estates, garden suburbs and weekend houses. Green shows forests or parks.

The hilly and spacious residential areas of the Buda side surround the Castle District, full of old, historical buildings, monuments and the Royal Palace. The Palace houses the National Gallery. Buda has the highest prestige for dwelling in Hungary, so the most expensive housing areas can be found on the steep slopes of the Buda Hills offering beautiful views of the town below. Like elsewhere in the world, 'the rich live on the top' in Budapest, too.



Pest is a densely built up flatland, the floodplain of the Danube. The same dolomite rocks that form the Buda Hills can be found several thousand metres deep beneath the alluvial deposits of the Pest Plain. Several bridges cross the river, and the oldest of them is the Chain Bridge built more than 150 years ago. The Elizabeth Bridge here, like all the other bridges, was blown up during World War II. It was rebuilt in a new style in the 1970s and it became the symbol of socialist labour and development.

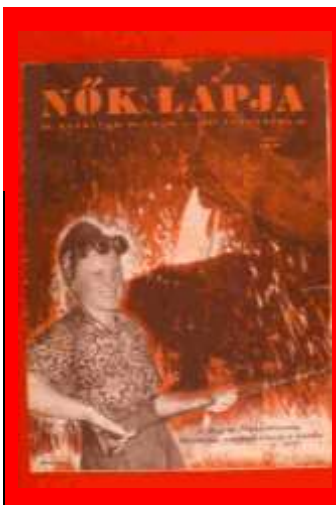


Budapest was heavily bombed by the Allied Forces, and then shelled by the besieging Russians and the defending Germans alike in the last few months of World War II. Rebuilding demanded heroic work. Even the Chain Bridge was destroyed. The post-war Hungary was drawn into the Soviet sphere of influence, thus her social and economic development was diverted into an idealized, unrealistic path, a dead end.

In the 1950s and 1960s Hungary was intended to be a country of 'iron and steel.' Heavy industry was artificially developed although the country's natural reserves did not justify it. Hungary is poor in minerals. After the total collapse of the cheap Soviet coal and iron imports at the end of the 1980s, most of the present unemployment comes from the bankruptcy of the ill-proportioned heavy industry and engineering. Today unemployment of the working age population, exceeding 10 % in 1990, dropped below 3 %. The out-of-date steel works and foundries have been out of use for three decades by now.

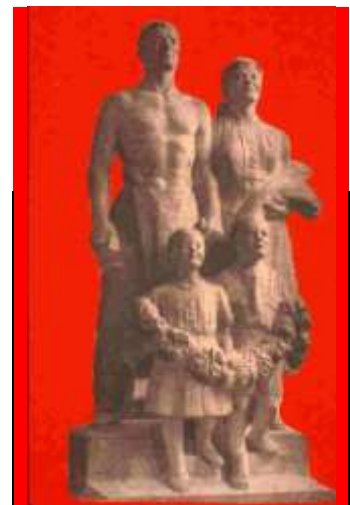


Miskolc, Ózd, Salgótarján are the once prosperous heavy industrial centres of Hungary. In this photo, you can see Miskolc that used to be the second largest town of the country with a population over 200 thousand. It is situated in a long valley in the Eastern side of the Bükk Mountains. Most of the unemployed can be found here today.



In the heroic age of socialism, absurdity ruled the world in Hungary, too. Have a look at the cover of the Women's Magazine from 1951. A class-conscious young woman is working as an iron-founder!

The dominating and official tendency in fine arts was Socialist Realism. The sculpture in this picture is entitled 'Gratitude' and it was sculpted in honour of Stalin's birthday. It expresses unquestioning, absolute and implicit confidence, devotion in the great idea of communism.



The buildings of the early socialist period (the 1950s) bear the mark of Classicism, not only the main buildings of institutions, but the simple residential blocks in the housing estates. Classical elements emerge into architecture when the ruling class claim to have total power, control and knowledge over society and nature (it can also be seen with the ancient Greeks, Romans, the Renaissance kingdoms, Napoleon's France and Hitler's Germany). This architectural trend is called 'Stalin's Baroque' in Hungary.

In the 1970s, many new housing estates were erected, using prefabricated concrete panels. One, two and three roomed flats comprise these huge blocks. They are entirely functional with no ornamentation. Their only purpose is to accommodate as many people as possible in the smallest area. In Budapest, we can find large residential panel estates, accommodating several thousands of people in the outskirts of the city. In other provincial towns, unfortunately these concrete blocks were often built on the site of the demolished old city centres.



By the end of the 1980s, the state had no more cheap residential housing estates built. The new, individual residential blocks have been designed in the postmodern style, a rather cosmopolitan European tendency. These houses, however, offer more pleasant accommodation than the former, uniformized panel blocks of the 1970s. These new residential houses are relatively few and built by banks or private enterprises, since the state can no longer afford housing services.



In the city of Budapest, especially in Pest, we can find old residential buildings, most of them are more than 100 years old. The ones facing the main streets are restored, but the majority are in a much-neglected condition looking like slums. These residential tenant houses were nationalized at the end of the 1940s. Their flats were given free or let to rent very cheaply as 'council' flats. The lack of any real owner resulted in their upkeep being neglected. After 1990, they were up for sale and offered to the ones living in them very cheap. The grey vacant lot surrounded by the high bulkhead walls of these buildings create a depressing atmosphere.

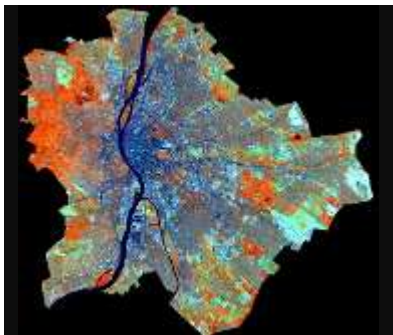
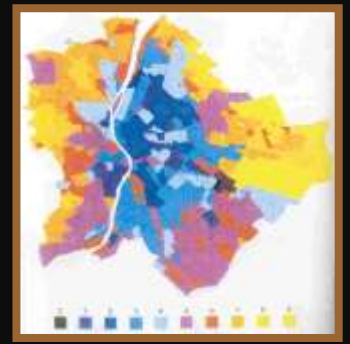


However, urban revitalization is going to change the function and the look of these areas in the years to come. From the old residential central areas, modern, institutional and business centres are being formed step-by-step. See these new office buildings on former vacant lots in the old residential area.

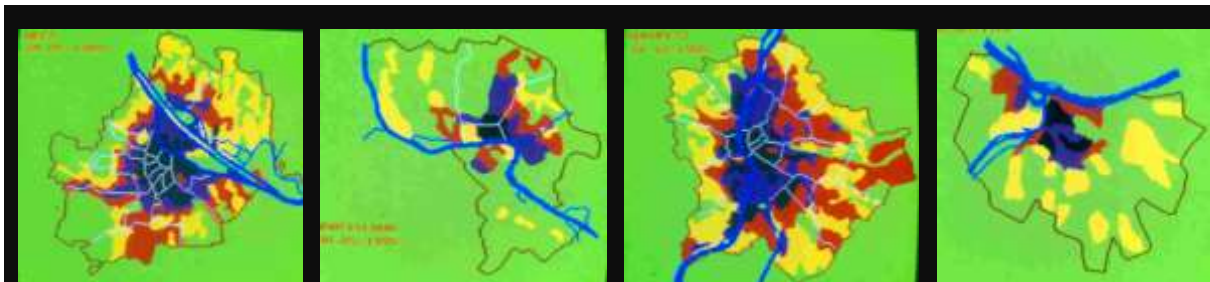


Though nowadays every car in Budapest city is a Western make, not too long ago, especially in the countryside you could see old, two-stroke motorcars manufactured in the former socialist East Germany with very dangerous exhaust gases. They were the Wartburgs and Trabant. The high age of the car stock, the deficient and narrow roads, the lack of enough motorways are all responsible for the serious traffic problems you can experience in Hungary.

This map is the result of a human ecological land assessment in Budapest. Some measured and recorded polluting factors (NO<sub>2</sub>, smoke, SO<sub>2</sub>, and dust in the winter and summer half years alike, the traffic intensity, the proportion of green areas) and some indicators (the prices of the flats, the land use and the lichen population) were weighted together and synthesized. The light colours in the outskirts of the city show the areas with the relatively best urban environments as far as human health is concerned, and the dark colours represent the worst. There are 10 qualitative categories (colours) between the best and the worst.



In this false colour LANDSAT satellite image, Budapest can be seen. The Danube looks black, the built up territories of the town can be seen in the shades of blue. Among others, it is also possible to outline the territories of different degrees of air pollution within the city based on such images.



During an experiment, 5 images were processed in order to estimate the distribution of air pollution over 4 capital cities on the Danube. In this picture you can see the distribution of air pollution over 1 Vienna (Austria), 2 Bratislava (Slovakia), 3 Budapest (Hungary) and 4 Beograd (Serbia). This result was based on 5 different LANDSAT image evaluations.



### Environment

In the streets of the major towns, unfortunately you can meet beggars and homeless people. The environmental sense of people is not too well developed either. Unfortunately, when touring the countryside you can often meet such illegal waste deposits. It can be an everyday sight.

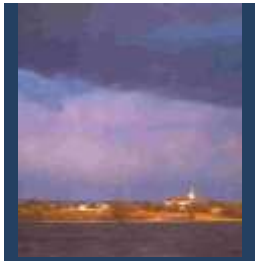






Hungary = Magyarország

Much of Hungary's territory is occupied by the Great Plain, composed on the sandy and clayey deposits of the Pannon Sea which covered it millions of years ago. In the Northwest, there is the Minor Plain. Both flatlands are still sinking owing to the plate-tectonic movements, but the country is not a seismically active region. In the Southwest – Northeast direction, there are 500-700 metres high faulted, folded and eroded hilly regions, made up of limestone, dolomite and volcanic rocks. There are two main rivers crossing the country, the Danube and the Tisza. In Transdanubia, there is large lake, the Balaton. Most of Hungary is covered by soils favourable for agricultural activity.



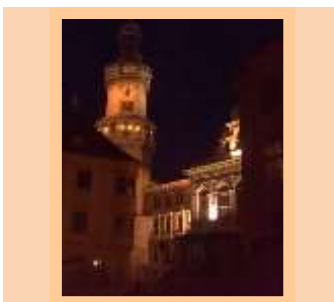
The **climate** of Hungary is dominantly continental, which means cold winters and hot summers, with little rain, which is mostly in early summer and in autumn. The precipitation is just above 600 mm a year. In Western Hungary, at the foothills of the Alps it is more, while in the Great Plain draughts often occur. Westerly winds often drift cyclones over Hungary and this Oceanic, Atlantic effect produces much of the rain. The annual mean temperature is about 10 degrees Centigrade (in winter about – 2 and in summer + 18).

**Snow** cover can last 60 days in the hilly regions of the Northern part of the country, but it does not offer very good possibilities for winter sports due to the lack of proper sporting infrastructure: motels, ski runs, cable chairs. The woods consist of beech in the higher and oak in the lower regions of the hills. The highest peak is situated in the Mátra Mountains. It is the Kékes ('Blueish') 1014 metres high.

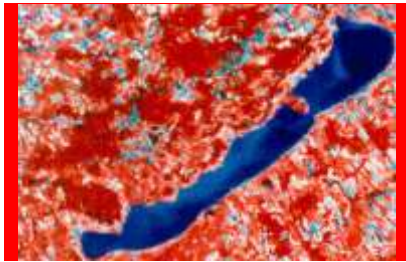


The territory west of the Danube is called **Transdanubia** as seen in this false colour satellite image. The North-western part of it is a plain (the Minor Plain), but  $\frac{3}{4}$  of it is a low, hilly region, with the Lake Balaton situated in the middle. This is a satellite image of the region. Both in economic and social aspects this part of the country is more developed than the rest. The historical reason for it can be traced back to the Roman times.

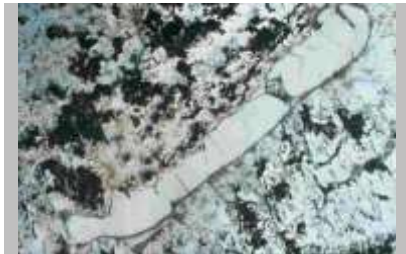
The Danube used to be the Eastern border of the Roman Empire and Transdanubia was named **Pannonia** then. This name is often applied even today to the whole of Hungary. Each major town in Transdanubia has remnants and ruins of Roman fortresses, towns, buildings or roads. The Romans planted the first grapes here.



In Transdanubia, many historical towns can be found like Székesfehérvár (the former capital), Veszprém, Szombathely, Kőszeg, Sopron. In this picture you can see the old city of the Westernmost town, Sopron. It was mainly inhabited by German settlers at the foothills of the Alps. It is famous for its wine the Kékfrankos ('Blue Francs'). The towns in Western Hungary have always had a far better infrastructure than those in the Eastern part of the country.



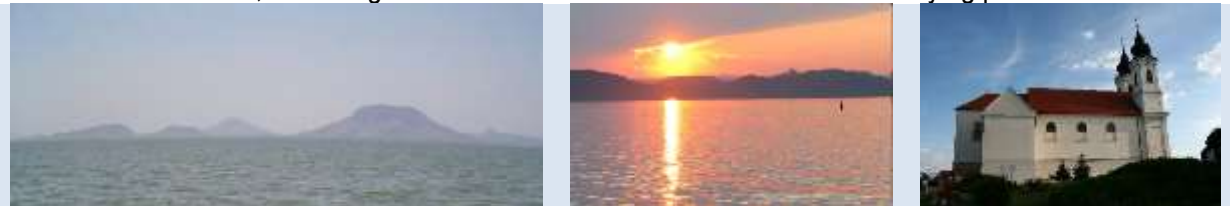
**Lake Balaton** is the largest lake in Central Europe. It is very shallow; the average depth is 3 metres only. It offers favourable conditions for sailing, surfing, bathing and fishing. It is 78 kilometres long 5-12 kilometres wide and has a water surface of 595 sq kilometres.



In winter the lake usually freezes, offering skating and skate-sailing possibilities. When in spring the ice begins to melt, giant cracks are formed in seconds accompanied by thundering sound effects. Such a situation can be seen in this LANDSAT space image.



Lake Balaton, the 'Hungarian Sea' offers beautiful sceneries and holidaying possibilities



There are extinct basaltic volcanoes along the North coast of the lake. The soil formed on the slopes of these hills is very favourable for viticulture. The most famous Balaton wine is the Szürkebarát ('Grey Monk') produced at Badacsony Hill. The Tihany Peninsula used to be an island. It is a volcanic hill with two crater lakes in it at present. There is a mediaeval abbey there (see it in this picture) and its climate is mild, Sub-Mediterranean, there are even old lavender plantations there.



There are **holiday centres**, spas and great tourist infrastructure along the lakeside at Siófok, Keszthely and Balatonfüred. The lake used to be the most frequented resort for the East Germans until the crash of the Berlin Wall and the German reunion in 1990. On the South shore you can wade in the water for hundreds of metres, it is so shallow. The lake's ecology is endangered by overuse and overloading even today, when tourism is decreasing. For holiday purposes, the reeds were cut down at many places, and a stone embankment was built, so there is not too much reed left to filter pollution.

In the socialist decades, private enterprise was officially exiled from Hungary, so people could not invest their savings in functioning capital. They built **weekend houses**, cottages, bungalows, the well-to-do at Lake Balaton, others by gravel pit lakes, by rivers, on the slopes of the hills everywhere near the larger settlements. Most Hungarian families have weekend houses. They range from the very expensive luxury houses to the poor, makeshift cottages. This kind of weekend estate in this picture is called the 'Paradise of the working class.'





In the **village**, you can find residences like this, surviving from the older times. This kind of village house was typical at the end of the 1800s and at the beginning of the 1900s. Stables, stockyards, sheds and kitchen gardens are attached to it. Nowadays, with the weekend houses it is again in fashion to thatch their roof in this archaic style, though of course, equipped with bathrooms and modern facilities inside.

In the 1930s – 1940s, this kind of **rural** family house spread in Hungary. The farmyard (kitchen garden, animal keeping) is still in close relation with the house.

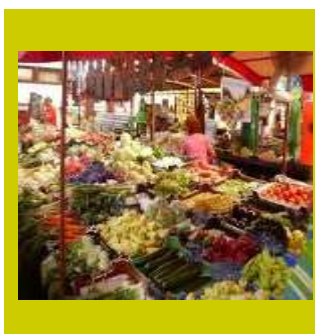


In the 1950s – 1960s, the dominant type of family **houses** lost their farm function. This was partly due to the collectivization of the agricultural lands and to the many new jobs in the emerging industry.



The last fashionable architectural tendency brought about this kind of modern detached and semi detached houses in the 1970s – 1990s these mainly have only residential function. Their inhabitants usually work in industry or in business and services and they have no time for part time farming at home. However, nowadays this practice is going to change with these new houses in the rural regions. Since the 1990s more and more once, nationalized land was given back to the former owners or to their descendants. Farm buildings, sheds were rebuilt around these family houses.

By the end of the 1960s, all **agricultural** croplands were nationalized or collectivized and state farms and co-operatives were formed. They were equipped with modern machinery, they used fertilizers, and they built irrigation canals. The state paid for much of these activities. Huge croplands were cultivated, and because of the favourable physical conditions crops were abundant and of very good quality. The main products were wheat, corn, sunflower, sugar beet, fodder, fruits and vegetables. Hungary exported much of these crops. The very best croplands can be found in the loess-covered region of the South-eastern corner of the country, in Békés County.



In spite of the socialist way of economy excluding market, Hungarians were never short of food. The local market places, the food shops were never empty here, unlike most socialist countries. The small, fruit and vegetable growing private enterprises successfully survived the socialist period. They went bankrupt after 1990, when the global market economy entered Hungary and its weak economy was exposed to the global economic processes. The big state farms that used to produce a lot of food owing to the favourable natural conditions, the machines and the fertilizers were privatized after 1990 and fell to pieces.

Traditional and special **Hungarian meals** are very tasty, spicy, though not healthy. They contain much bacon and fat, pork, beef, poultry and fish. The most characteristic meals not to be missed are fish soup ('halászlé'), goulash ('gulyás') stuffed cabbage ('töltött káposzta'), potatoes with red pepper ('paprikás krumpli'), and pork and brochette (in this picture) with one slice of bacon, one slice of meat alternately on a skewer. Bacon frying parties are very common, when friends and relatives fry bacon on spits on an open fire. Hungarian kitchen uses old mediaeval European spices like tarragon, crocus, rosemary and marjoram.



The Hungarian countryside is famous for its large variety of spectacular old, **national costumes**, which people today wear only on stage during performances and festivals.

The old styles of clothing appear during festivities as attractions for tourists or for media broadcastings especially in the countryside.



An interesting and joyful folk tradition is **sprinkling** the girls and women on Easter Monday. Nowadays it is limited to within families and relatives and of course, men and boys use perfume for 'watering' girls. Some time ago, however, they used buckets full of cold water as can be seen here. This tradition dates back to ancient pagan times to ensure the fertility of females by filtering out the weak with this rough testing.

Traditional handmade **embroideries** are very attractive and can be purchased as souvenirs in most places all over the country.



The former way of country life and poverty is reflected in artistic paintings, for example in this picture titled 'Sister and Brother' (by Adolf Fényes). We can almost hear the young boy telling the maiden in a low voice 'please, I wanna eat.'

Another painting, representing the former way of life of the peasants, though in a Romantic style, is titled 'Harvesters returning home' by Lajos Deák-Ébner.



In the country, you can find splendid **palaces** that used to belong to the aristocracy, and in each village smaller mansions of the lower nobility. After the communists gained power, these were nationalized and public institutions (museums, libraries, councils, schools, sanatoriums) were housed in them. Unfortunately, their upkeep was neglected and they eventually became dilapidated. One of the few lucky exceptions is the Esterházy Palace at Keszthely by the Balaton.

The former habitations of the nobility were surrounded by huge gardens and parks. These again were at the mercy of the new councils and they were damaged, ruined, much of their valuable trees were lost and cut. Later most of them became nature conservation areas, protected parks, although lacking the financial means, so the authorities could not restore their original beauty. They are still attractive places to visit.



These are typical **Transdanubian landscapes**. Low hills, covered by loess and sandy deposits, with eroded valleys in between. On the slopes of the hills, you can see grape plantations, on top of them, small woods. The villages and the agricultural lands are situated in the spacious valleys.



The river Danube forms the border between Transdanubia and Slovakia to the North. After the Danube leaves the Alps in Austria, its flow slows down and the river builds many small islands on the Minor Plain, as it lays down its sediments brought from the mountains. This territory used to be an extensive marshland. Much of it was reclaimed in the early days of socialism in order to obtain new croplands. The peat soil was not only unsuitable for cultivation, but the river lost a good deal of its self-clearing capacity with the pollution-filtering reed of the marshland. However, a little marshland survived along the branches of the Danube, enough to neutralize the pollution from Vienna and Bratislava.





The **Danube Bend** is Hungary's most beautiful landscape. It is the site where the river breaks its way through the volcanic hills. The Danube Bend is a frequented and expensive resort area of Budapest, rich in historic monuments and ruins.

In the end of the 1980s the socialist government was ready to spoil this landscape by placing a dam and a hydropower plant right in the middle of it, without asking the population, not to mention the ecological dangers of the system. **Visegrád** Castle in the Danube Bend is a spectacular destination.

Following the political intentions of the great Hungarian King Matthias in the end of the 1400s, four Central European countries established an economic-political co-operation named the **Visegrád Countries (the V4)**.



Poland



Czech R.

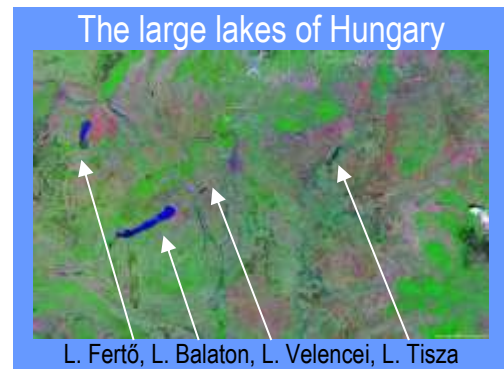


Slovakia



Hungary

In Hungary, there are already several examples of the unconsidered investments of great scale. There was a huge water reservoir constructed on the river Tisza in the early 1970s. You can see the four big lakes of Hungary in this LANDSAT space image. The Tisza Lake is the fourth. Its eutrophized water formed marshlands within the reservoir area. The change of the groundwater level ruined many croplands in its vicinity. There was no money to remove the woods from the reservoir prior to the construction, so they were flooded.



It was to have been a second Lake Balaton, offering possibilities for drinking and irrigation water supply, holidaying and fishing. Instead, much of the reservoir is a marshland, difficult to navigate, but offering Europe's most splendid sanctuary for water and wading birds, and a self-filtering possibility for the river as well.



At a time, Hungary's second largest river, the Tisza was the 'most Hungarian' river, rising and falling in Hungary. Today its spring is in the Ukraine and it meets the Danube in Serbian territory. Meandering about, it crosses the Great Plain, much of which it used to flood. However, in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the river was regulated and dykes were built along its banks. Because of the floated sand particles, its colour is yellowish and the river is named the 'fair' Tisza.

Hungary's national river is the subject of many folk songs, poems, and pieces of art. 'Those who drank from Tisza River, are sure to be drawn back forever' sing thousands of Hungarian emigrants from Cleveland to Sydney.

The largest town on the Tisza is **Szeged** at the Southern border of Hungary. After being destroyed by a flood in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was planned and rebuilt so it has a favourable structured street network with rings and avenues. Today it is a large university town. It is famous for its fish soup, its salami and red pepper, its ornamented wooden slippers and its witches, the black haired and blue-eyed local girls. One of Hungary's first kings declared during the times of the great mediaeval European witch-hunt that 'witches did not exist.' This horrible 'fashion' avoided Hungary, however, much later in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the very few Hungarian witchcraft trials took place at Szeged, hence, the attribute of the local girls.



*The Hungarian girls are said to be the most beautiful in Europe*



In this aerial photo, you can also see a redbrick cathedral in Szeged that houses the famous summertime outdoor dramatic performances.



This is a typical well used all over the country in older times to fetch groundwater. The sight of these sweep-pole wells used to belong to Hungarian landscape in rural regions, together with the optical phenomenon of the mirage (*Fata morgana*)



**Stork** is the national bird of Hungary. They build their nests on top of chimneys and poles in the countryside. Hungarians never do harm to these large migratory birds. They occur in folk tales and songs, since they bring the babies.



Traditionally clothed Hungarian **horse-herds** (cowboys or 'csikós' in Hungarian) driving the stud at Hortobágy National Park not far from Debrecen. It is merely a tourist attraction, however.



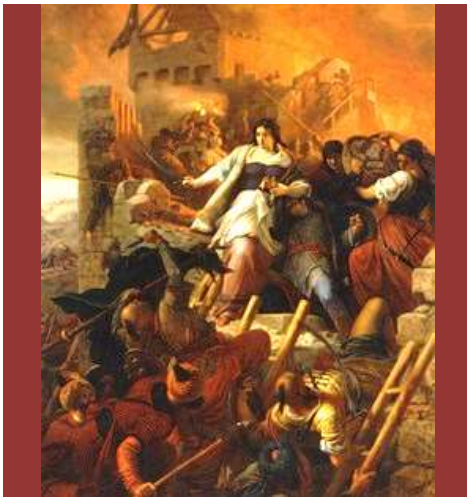
One of Hungary's main tourist attractions is the '**Pusta**' (Prairie), the complete flatland where ancient species of grey cattle and sheep with rough grey fleece graze, mirages shimmer in the air, and shepherds cook the goulash on open fire. That is only for tourists, not at all characteristic of the Great Plain any more. You can see endless croplands and National Parks at Bugac and Hortobágy. These parks can be noted for their rare alkali soil vegetation and fauna.





There is a unique settlement type in the Great Plain, the **isolated farmhouse system**. Small rural houses are scattered about on the plain hundreds of metres or kilometres from one another. In many of them, there is no electricity, but they are conditioned to self-supporting farming. This is the only example of this settlement network in Europe.

The formation of this isolated farmhouse system is connected with the Turkish invasion of the country. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Turkish Empire occupied and ruled the territory of the Hungarian Great Plain for some 150 years. When the Turks were driven out of the country in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the constant wars desolated all the small villages on the plain and only the largest towns survived, surrounded by vast areas of no man's land. The citizens of the towns divided this land for farming purpose. They eventually radiated out of the cities and stayed with their families in these farmhouses on their own pieces of land.



In the late Middle Ages Hungary used to be the 'shield' of the Christian Europe against the westward invading Muslim Turkish Empire. For 300 years the weakened Hungarian Kingdom, which then joined the Austrian Habsburg Empire, fought against the Turks. The Muslims occupied even Buda Castle, but the castles in the Northern hilly region and in Transdanubia succeeded in stopping their invasion. This Romantic painting immortalizes a most heroic and victorious castle-defence against a 100-fold Turkish superiority at Eger Castle. Even the women were fighting on the bastions. It is titled 'The Women of Eger' and was painted by Bertalan Székely.



The walls of the legendary **Eger** Castle today Eger is a nice historical town on the slopes of the Bükk and Mátra Mountains. It is also famous for its Baroque city centre and its wine called Bikavér ('Bull's Blood').

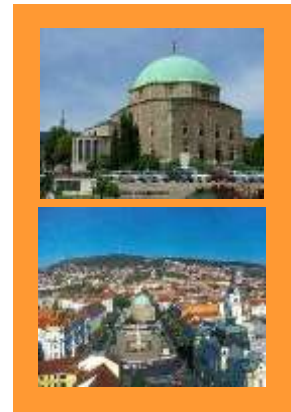


The **noon bells** toll all over the Christian world in memory of the victory (at today's Beograd in 1456) of Hunyadi, the greatest Hungarian hero fighting against the Turks.





Quite a few Turkish monuments have survived the almost 300 years since the conquerors left. There are three minarets (the northernmost representatives of the original Muslim churches in Europe) and two mosques, one of which can be seen in this picture. It is situated in **Pécs**, the largest Transdanubian town in the South. It is a nice historical and university town with the mildest climate in Hungary, situated in the Southern slopes of the Mecsek Hills.



There are four original **Turkish baths** in Budapest, which are still functioning. Even the Romans built baths on the hot mineral springs of Buda. The Romans named Buda as Aquincum (Water Town). Today Budapest is often referred to as the City of Baths, there are so many of them there.



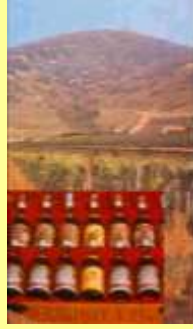
Not only Budapest, but also almost the whole Carpathian Basin is very rich in **hot mineral and medicinal waters**. The Earth's crust is rather thin under the Great Plain and the geothermic gradient is very high. Therefore, the abyssal waters get hot and dissolve minerals. In the plain land, they drill wells to obtain the hot mineral water for medicinal baths, and in the hilly regions, the water ascends through the faults in the rocks. The most famous spa is at Hévíz. It is a lake filled with hot mineral water, not far from Keszthely and Lake Balaton. 'Hévíz' means hot mineral water in Hungarian. It is the world's largest hot mineral spring.



The Hungarian medicinal waters are used for curing a number of illnesses and they attract a lot of foreigners as well as Hungarians. Hot mineral water is the most important natural reserve of Hungary. If we consider its territory and population, is the world's richest country in hot mineral waters, exceeding Kamchatka, New Zealand and Iceland. Hajdúszoboszló with its brownish iodiferous water is the second most famous spa of Hungary, situated in the Great Plain.



Near Miskolc, you can find another spa, named Miskolctapolca. There is a **cave bath** there, the only one in Europe, where both the cave and the medicinal water springs are natural and original. It is a hydrothermally formed active cave bath that has been developed into a bath with world standard facilities and services.



In Northern Hungary, on the Southern slopes of the volcanic mountains superb wines have been produced for hundreds of years. The most famous of them in the world is the white and sweet wine of **Tokaj**. It has often been referred to by foreign experts as 'The King of Wines and the Wine of Kings' or simply as medicine. Wine is the national drink of Hungarians and there are numerous wine growing districts in the country.

North of Miskolc there is the **Aggtelek Karsts Region**. Hundreds of caves are there in the limestone and the largest one is 27 kilometres long, magnificent dripstone cave of Aggtelek. It is ranked among the world's ten most impressive dripstone caves. The main corridor is 10 metres wide and 8 metres high on the average. One of the world's largest stalagmites can be found there, named the 'Observatory.' It is 25 m tall. The Giants' Hall is 200 m long, 70 m wide and 50 m high.

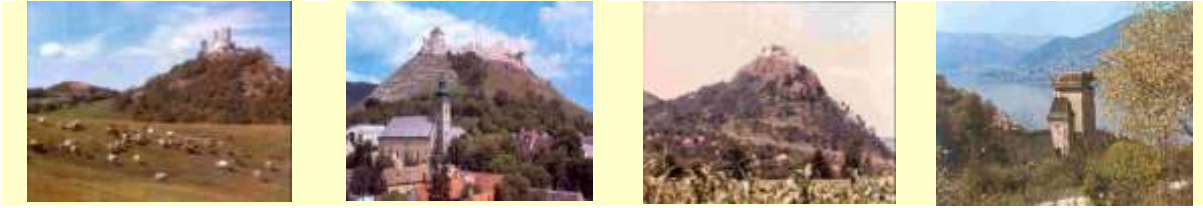
In North Hungary and in South Transdanubia there are many small depopulating **villages** with insufficient infrastructure (no proper services in shopping, schooling, health care, public transport). It is a major problem of the countryside. Agriculture's capacity to retain the population is not strong enough anymore and the disappearance of the steel industry and mining caused a long lasting unemployment among the working age population who used to commute to the towns to find jobs from these small villages. In some places, however, some small villages began to provide bases of rural tourism and recreation.



This picture represents the **wild life** and the characteristic animals of Hungary in stamps. Deers with world prize winning antlers can often be shot in Hungarian woods; the most famous of them is the Gemenc Forest by the Danube. Pheasants, hares and foxes are the most common small game. The small black Hungarian shepherd dog is the most characteristic ancient species of sheep dog (puli).

This is the 'Sleeping Beauty' of the Hungarian hotel industry. This palace hotel was built in the 1930s as a resort for the aristocracy to compensate them for the loss of the resorts in the High Tatra after World War I. Then it became the property of the trade union. Nowadays it is a real hotel situated in most beautiful surroundings at **Lillafüred** in the Bükk Mountains.





There are many romantic **castle ruins** on the tops of steep hills and cliffs in the hilly regions everywhere in Hungary. Most of them served as defences against the Turks. Later, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century they were destroyed by the Austrians, when there were several fights for independence against the Habsburg Empire. Today some of them are restored and turned into hotels or museums, but the majority is no more than hikers' destination.



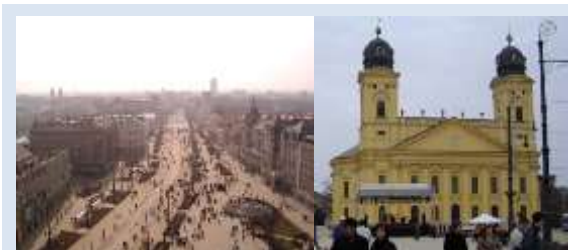
A typical building of the Hungarian Renaissance from the 16<sup>th</sup> century (the **Sárospatak College**). Sárospatak is an old school town, the 'Hungarian Athens,' at the foothills of the Northeast Mountains of the country. This is the 'lion-cave' of Hungarian Freedom Fights since many started here.



The most attractive example of the very few Hungarian Gothic Monuments is the **Matthias Church** in Buda Castle.



King Matthias used to be a great Renaissance ruler, and during his reign, the Hungarian Kingdom used to be the most powerful one all over Europe in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.



The Great Reform Temple in **Debrecen** is the centre of the Hungarian Reformed Church. Debrecen is the second largest city of Hungary after Budapest. It lies in the middle of the plain between the River Tisza and Transylvania. It is rich in hot mineral baths and is a university town as well.

The two major **Christian Churches** in Hungary are the Roman Catholic and the Reformed (Protestant). The Protestants are in majority in the Eastern half of the country and Transylvania, while the Roman Catholics in Transdanubia. The historical reason for this is that Transylvania became an independent principality after the Turkish invasion of Hungary. Although Transylvania used to pay tax to the Turkish Empire, it became a stronghold of Protestantism against the forceful counter-reformation of the Austrian Habsburg Empire in Transdanubia and the Uplands (today's Slovakia). The land east of the River Tisza used to be under Transylvanian influence.

On the other hand, the Hungarian archbishop has his seat in the Basilica of **Esztergom**. He is the head of the Hungarian Roman Catholics. Esztergom is a nice old town in the Danube Bend. It used to be the very first capital of the Hungarian Kingdom in the Middle Ages, followed by Székesfehérvár and Budapest.





Hungarian Baroque, closely associated with Catholicism and counter-reformation, flourished in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. The festive and over-ornamented Baroque style spread after driving the Turks out (with the help of the Roman Catholic Austrian Habsburg Empire). This is the Town Hall and the interior of a temple in **Győr**, the fastest developing Hungarian town in the Minor Plain.

This is a painting by an unknown painter about the encounter between Hungarian freedom fighters and Austrian soldiers in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. There were several wars of independence against the Austrian-German Empire during and after the Turkish wars, and often in alliance with the Turks! The greatest such war was led by the last Transylvanian prince, **Rákóczi**. He is one of the most honoured heroes of Hungarian history. His fight lasted for ten years.



This is a painting by Mór Than. In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was the last war of independence against the Austrians. It was following a bourgeois revolution. It would have been victorious, had the Russian Czar not invaded Hungary in favour of the Austrian Emperor. Nevertheless, in spite of this failure, some 20 years after this war Austria and Hungary became equal kingdoms in the dualistic state of the so-called Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. This state gave free way to the fast rise of the middle class and industrial development in Hungary.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Budapest was developing very dynamically and rapidly. It became a competitor to Vienna in every aspect. It was a larger and far more developing metropolis than Madrid or Rome at that time. The buildings of the city were erected in Eclectic style. It is a cosmopolitan trend combining a wide variety of styles. A considerable number of Jewish populations took the lead in developing enterprise; this is the reason why the cosmopolitan Eclecticism dominated the early capitalist period of Hungarian economic development in the 1910s.



The majority of the buildings in Budapest City are Eclectic. The residential blocks with the nationalized 'council' flats are generally neglected and dilapidated, but those, housing public institutions and offices, were restored and look beautiful like the interior of the one in this picture.

The best-known provincial building of the Secession Art is the 'Showy' ('Cifra') Palace in **Kecskemét** town in this picture. Kecskemét is the largest plain land town between the Danube and the Tisza. It is famous for its 'whistling' apricot brandy, which is so strong that it makes people 'whistle.' The soil is very sandy around Kecskemét, the average hours of sunshine is very high, so the environment is favourable for growing peaches, apricots, tomatoes and green peppers.



Faces of Kecskemét: 70 kms from Budapest on the motorway

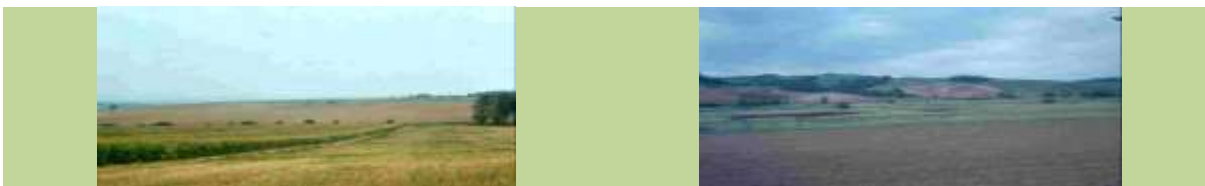
*Theatre, Cathedral, Town Hall, Cinema, view, folk and music festivals, markets, apricot and peach, baths, wellness, riding, 'pusta' landscape, John von Neumann University: 21<sup>st</sup> century campus*



This is the **House of the Parliament**, the symbol of the country. It is said to be the most beautiful house of the parliament all over Europe and the world. Imre Steindl partly in Neogothic and partly in Neoromantic style built it in 1884.



In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Hungarian arts gave up Romanticism, which so far served as an encouragement, representing the heroic past against the Austrian rule. The new wave, the previously mentioned Secession Art reflected the new attitude and new human relations of the age of capitalism. This very famous painting titled 'Picnic' by Pál Szinyei-Merse is said to be the sign of the change.



In these pictures you can see today's most typical Hungarian landscapes that you are most likely to see anywhere while driving in the country. Croplands on end with low hills in the background, except in the Great Plain.



In the 1950s Hungary's national football team used to be the best in the world; the name of 'Puskás' sounded as well as that of 'Pelé.' In **sports**, today, it is only water polo, in which Hungary has always had one of the most successful teams all over the world.



The communist dictatorship reached its peak in 1956 when at last there was a **revolution** against it. The Soviet Russian military force defeated the Hungarian Revolution and hundreds of thousand people fled to the Western countries. This is the main reason why there are so many (2.4 million) Hungarian immigrants all over the world, especially in the USA and Canada (1.7 million).

In Budapest and in the major provincial towns (Debrecen, Miskolc, Pécs, Győr, Székesfehérvár and Szeged) you can see people walking busily in the streets and a great deal of motor traffic. After the socialist one party system was overthrown in 1990, the new democratic Hungary gave foreign direct investments free way. It resulted in a sudden destruction of the so far well developed agriculture and industry. The collapse of heavy industry was of course due to the disappearing cheap Soviet export of coal and iron ore. Multinational companies took over economic power in Hungarian economy during the 30 years of democracy from 1990 to now.



A magnificent modern European bridge has recently been built over the Danube in North Budapest.

There are many industrial investments and infrastructural developments in the past decades in Hungary.




The Mercedes Factory in Kecskemét



The relatively well performing branches of economy are pharmacies, manufacturing medicines and chemical industry producing goods of synthetic materials and car manufacturing industry. Together with banks, and business management companies they provide many of the jobs. Multinational global corporations own almost all the large companies in Hungary.

MDF 1990-1994	MSZP 1994-1998	FIDESZ-KGP 1998-2002	MSZP-SZDSZ 2002-2006	MSZP-SZDSZ 2006-2010	FIDESZ-KDNP from 2010 on
right-central	left-central	right central	left-liberal	left-liberal	right-central


From 1945 until 1990, the totalitarian, Communist system (the dictatorship of the 'working class') ruled Hungary. However, after the revolution of 1956, this dictatorship led by János Kádár, was a 'light' one. There were many **political** jokes in this period like 'Which are the two systems that cannot stand each other? The Communist system and the nervous system.' From 1990, following the economic collapse of the Soviet Union, a new democracy began with the above governments. In 2004, Hungary joined the European Union.



### Public Administration

There are 3200 local governments, but only 1515 local government offices in Hungary, out of which 220 are incorporated as towns. However, only 40 settlements have a population more than 30 thousand.

There are 7 large statistic regions (A) without administrative bodies. It means that Hungary is a unitary state. There are 19 counties (B) with regional administration managing health care, education and some 160 micro regions or ridings (C) with administration. They are going to manage building and document issues from 2013 on, while social care management will remain on the local level.





Saint  
Kunigunda



Saint  
Margaret



Saint  
Elisabeth



King Louis  
the Great




**Polish – Hungarian brotherhood**



The Margaret Island is a nice park in the heart of Budapest

There is a traditional friendship between Hungarian and Polish peoples. '*Polák, venger, dva bratanki*' (as the Polish saying goes). It dates back to mediaeval times, when in the 1240s one of our great kings' daughter (Kunigunda or Kinga, daughter to Bela IV) gained special appreciation in Poland. Later, in the 1380s, the Hungarian king, Louis the Great, governed Poland, too and the borders of his kingdom reached four seas (Adriatic, Baltic, Black and, since he conquered South Italy, the Tyrrhenian). Another daughter of King Bela IV was Margaret, who lived as a nun in today's Margaret Island. She is the protective saint of Budapest. The aunt of Bela was Elisabeth (daughter to the Hungarian king, Andrew II) who became a European symbol of charity in Thuringia and all over Germany.



During 900-1000 AD, Hungarians were formidable riders, raiding Europe. There is a prayer '**a sagittis Hungarorum, libera nos Domine**' (**Lord save us from the arrows of the Hungarians**), but horse riding lost its traditions. We have to mention two wonder racehorses from recent times.



For youngsters the most fascinating event is the so-called **Sziget Festival** that attracts some four hundred thousand young people from all over Europe each August on a deserted, former industrial shipyard island of the Danube, within Budapest. The most trendy rock and pop groups are invited and programs go on day and night for a week.



The red pepper of Kalocsa

When you want to buy very special and 'only Hungarian' products, you have to look for some of the so-called **'Hungarikums'** (= Hungarian uniqueness).



The onions of Makó



The sausages of Gyula



The Pick salami of Szeged



The sweet white 'Aszu' wine of Tokaj



The apricot brandy of Kecskemét



The 'Bull Blood' red wine of Eger



The 'Blue Francs' red wine of Sopron



The 'Grey Monk' red wine of Badacsony



The Zwack Unicum liquor



The porcelain of Herend



The 'Zsolnay' art pottery of Pécs



'Béres Drops' the wonder-medicine against cancer



Szentendre



The Hungarian Conquest; a small part of a giant 15 x 120 metres circle painting at Ópusztaszer, not far from Kecskemét



Museum village

'Skanzens'  
They are museum villages; the two most famous of them is the one situated at Szentendre, not far from Budapest, a small town full of old buildings and art galleries and there is the largest skanzen, with several types of villages and towns built up in it. The other skanzen is at Ópusztaszer, where you also can find a giant painting by Árpád Feszti.



If you want to visit the UNESCO Cultural **World Heritage Sites** in Hungary, you should go to see 1 the Buda Castle District and the embankment of the Danube opposite to the Buda Castle, 2 also in Budapest the Andrásy Avenue and the first European Continental Subway tram beneath it with the Heroes' Square at the bottom of the road, 3 the Abbey of Pannonhalma, 4 the city centre of Pécs with the ancient Christian chambers beneath it, 5 the old, inhabited museum village of Hollókő.



Heroes' Square



The Old City of Pécs

As for the Natural World Heritage Sites you can visit 1 the 'Hegyalja' which is a cultural landscape including several small settlements like Tokaj, Sárospatak, Tállya, Tarcal, Tolcsva, Mád, Szerencs, Gönc and they form the world famous white wine growing landscape. 2 The 'Hortobágy', which is an alkali grassland national park. 3 The large caves in the karsts (lime-stone) region of the Aggtelek National Park and the South Slovakian Karsts Region together.



The Abbey of Pannonhalma



The museum village of Hollókő



Tokaj-Hegyalja Cultural Landscape



Hortobágy National Park



Aggtelek Karsts National Park

### National Parks

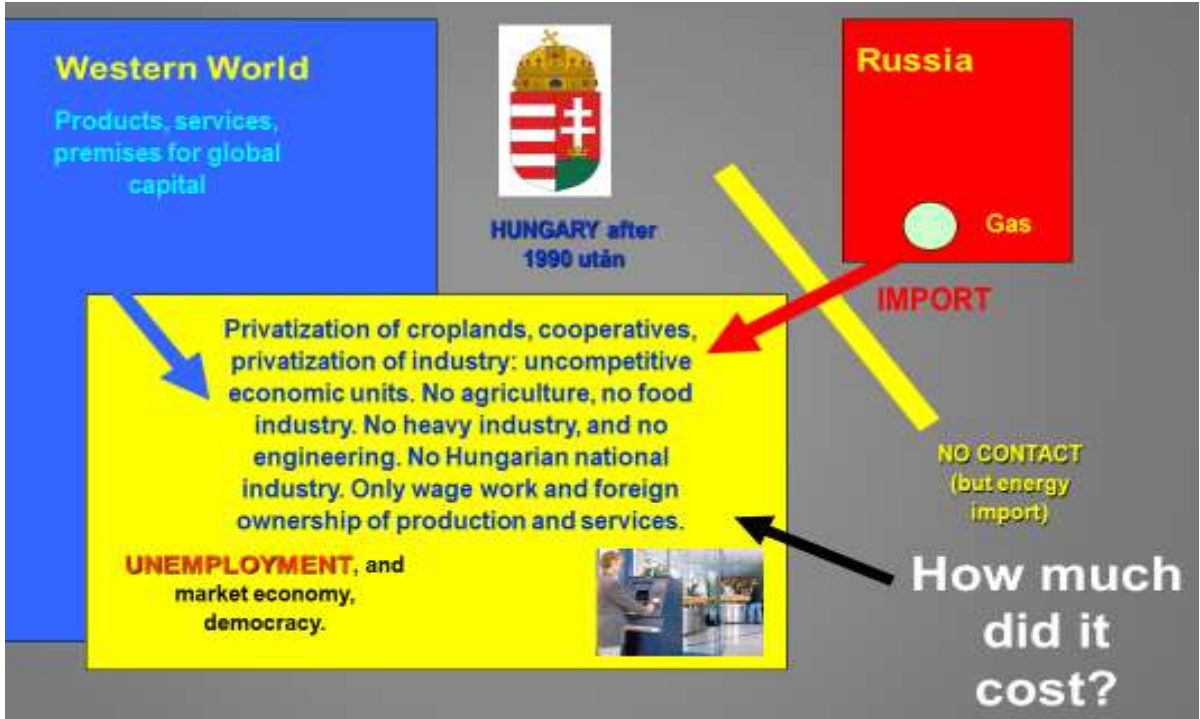


If you are interested in natural beauties and wildlife, you can visit some of the centres of the ten national parks of Hungary at Jószaftó (in the Aggtelek Karsts region), Lillafüred, Szilvásvárad, Mátrafüred and Kékes (in the Northern Hungarian mountains), Bugac and Hortobágy (in the Great Plain national parks). Sarud (in the Northwest, the lake Fertő alkali marshland region)



If you want to enjoy the famous **medicinal waters**, you can visit any of the baths of Budapest. While staying in Hungary you cannot miss the very unique Lake of Hévíz, and the Cave Bath of Miskolc you cannot find anything like them in the world. Other spas offering superb amusement include Hajdúszoboszló, Egerszalók, Zalakaros, and Harkány, to mention some of the most famous ones.

**Hungary's economic transition:**



Viktor Orban is **the prime minister** of Hungary. His political party won the general elections in 2010, in 2014 and in 2018 with a 2/3 majority! His political objectives include strengthening the power and economic influence of the government since after 1990 more than 80 % of the Hungarian economic production and services were owned by multinational corporations. Thus, the Hungarian government's intentions in legislation led to political debates with the leadership of the European Union and the International Monetary Fund. Instead of reducing the budget of social and health care and accepting migrants from Asia and Africa, the Orban Administration tried to reduce the amount of profit taken out of the country, support the families and keep up the nation state.



Prime minister of Hungary:  
Victor Orbán



This is the final picture with the **Royal Castle of Buda** in it. There is an old Hungarian saying that 'Nothing is lost while Buda Castle stands'. In the front, you can see the national colours of the country: red, white and green.



Prof. Dr. István Tózsza  
Economic geography and Urban Marketing Center  
John Von Neumann University  
Kecskemét  
2021

[Tozsa.Istvan@uni-neumann.hu](mailto:Tozsa.Istvan@uni-neumann.hu)

Photos from own collection and Internet

To be distributed free among the visiting students of the Universities