



## Budapest

Art & architecture in the Hungarian capital

**2–6 July 2026 (MM 105)**

5 days

Lecturer: Gavin Plumley

Explore the cultural riches of Budapest – painting, architecture and decorative arts.

Special focus on the 19th and 20th centuries: from Austro-Hungarian grandeur to Magyar modernism.

Led by cultural historian, Gavin Plumley, specialist in Central Europe during the final years of the Habsburg Empire.

Option to combine this tour with the cruise, *History & Art on the Danube*, 6–13 July.

Straddling the Danube, the Hungarian capital is the union of three once-separated cities: the ancient settlement of Óbuda, the royal seat of Buda – ensconced on an outcrop on the right bank – and Pest, a small town that became a place of Parisian elegance, stretching across the flatter terrain to the east. Formally united in 1873, Budapest is now the principal metropolis of East-Central Europe, its vitality and splendour emerging again after the post-war period of Soviet domination.

Its architectural legacy is remarkable: while there are some medieval and Renaissance survivals, much was lost during the Ottoman occupation and the struggle for liberation. In their place rose magnificent Baroque and 19th-century buildings – many born of the burst of prosperity which accompanied growing Magyar demands for national self-determination.

Budapest is among the half-dozen cities richest in Art Nouveau art and design, which is notable for its originality and variety of forms. The Hungarian variant developed both in opposition to artistic orthodoxy and as a manifestation of Magyar resentment of the cultural and political dominance of Austria.

Both countries were within the Habsburg Empire and even though Hungary enjoyed a large measure of independence from 1867, the crescendo of national revivalism led increasingly to a desire to identify difference and express nationalist aspirations through the arts. Artists and architects rummaged among ancient myth and modern anthropology to define a distinctly Magyar artistic language.

This layered identity with emulation of western models on the one hand, and cultivation of distinctiveness and originality on



*Budapest, late-20th-century etching by F. Conrad.*

the other, are in large part responsible for the allure of Budapest. Our programme of guided walks and visits aims to familiarise participants with the city and its treasures, major and minor and there will be some time left free to explore the city independently.

### Itinerary

**Day 1.** Morning flight from London Heathrow to Budapest. There is an afternoon introductory guided walk before dinner.

**Day 2.** A morning architectural walk in and around Vörösmarty Square, the heart of inner city Pest. Highlights include the Vigadó concert hall, the impressive Moorish revival Dohány Street Synagogue and the beautifully restored Rumbach Street Synagogue. In the afternoon, cross the Danube to the hill-top Castle District of Buda. Within the 18th- & 19th-century Royal Palace are the remains of its medieval and Renaissance predecessors; the National Gallery housed here has a marvellous collection of Hungarian art from the Middle Ages to the present day.

**Day 3.** Travel by coach to visit the celebrated Liszt Academy and the former home of Hungarian composer Zoltán Kodály, now a museum. Continue east to Heroes' Square

and the Millennium Monument which commemorates the founding of the Hungarian state AD 896. After lunch, explore the Museum of Fine Arts, whose excellent collection includes antiquities and European painting, particularly rich in Spanish and Italian works.

**Day 4.** Follow the Danube north to Szentendre, a delightful riverside town favoured as an artists' retreat for over a century, now home to several small studios and galleries, including a museum dedicated to Károly Ferenczy, pioneer of Hungarian modernism. In the afternoon, continue to Skanzen, an open-air ethnographic museum showcasing Hungarian folk architecture from the 18th to 20th centuries.

**Day 5.** Morning visit to the vast 19th-century Basilica of St Stephen followed by a guided walk through Szabadság (Liberty) Square, passing József Vágo's monumental Gresham Palace (1907) and the Postal Savings Bank by the leading architect of the time, Ödön Lechner. Fly from Budapest, arriving at London Heathrow in the afternoon.

If combining this tour with *History & Art on the Danube* in July 2026, transfer by coach to the ship in the afternoon.

Budapest  
continued

## Lecturer

**Gavin Plumley.** Writer, broadcaster, lecturer and the author of two books. He studied music at Keble College, Oxford and specialises in the culture of Central Europe during the final years of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. As well as writing for newspapers, magazines and opera and concert programmes worldwide, Gavin has lectured at the British Museum, the National Gallery, the National Theatre, the Royal Opera House and Wigmore Hall. Instagram: @gavinplumley | Website: gavinplumley.com.

## Practicalities

**Included:** Coach travel for transfers and excursions; accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 1 lunch, 3 dinners with wine; admission charges; all tips for restaurant staff, drivers and guides; all airport and state taxes; the services of the lecturer, tour manager and Hungarian local guide.

**Accommodation. Intercontinental Hotel** (budapest.intercontinental.com): a modern, international 5-star hotel excellently situated beside the Danube in Pest and close to the Chain Bridge. *Single occupancy rooms are doubles for sole use.*

**How strenuous?** There is quite a lot of walking on the excursions, some on uneven or cobbled ground. Average distance by coach per day: 10 miles.

**Combine this tour with:**

*History & Art on the Danube, 6–13 July 2026.*

**Group size:** between 10 and 22 participants.