

THE MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR

OF THE INTEGRAL COMMUNITY

IEC  INTEGRAL
EUROPEAN
CONFERENCE
2016



“Come, whoever you are. Ours is not a caravan of despair. Even if you have broken your vows a thousand times. Come.” /Rumi/

Joining the caravan

Taking an outward journey with the right guidance, is also taking an inward journey at the same time. Two guides pair up to lead you gently on an

unforgettable tour through the land, the culture, and the spirit of deep Central Europe. This is a voyage of ease and depth, balancing on the threshold of the secular and the sacred.

Traveling to a distant land and having people share their culture with you is a true gift. That's when you really get global. You need to see it, smell it, taste it, touch it. Then it becomes part of you. That's how you embody global consciousness. You will feel like Alice in Wonderland on this historic, cultural, and memetic journey designed to be fun but with integral consciousness: it totally beats everyday tourism!

Escape the routine

Wonder and Awe

Stepping inside another reality is where it gets magical. You will enter into a culture with historic depth and richness in its every fiber, from purple to teal.

You will embark on a communal holiday journey infused with integral consciousness. What does it mean to be integral in a country with more than a thousand years of memetic depth - from purple through red, amber, orange, green, to teal - and an unbroken history line? Our external route will also be a journey up the internal ladder. We will show you the land, the culture, and the spirit of Hungary.

THREE REASONS TO COME

1. Travel with your tribe

you will be with your chosen, shared-value community, fantastic integral people with an evolutionary drive in their heart, a common language, and an openness to connect. The bus has a genuinely home-tribe feel. You are on the right caravan.

2. Experience “integral journeying”

with the double guide format developed by Bence. This format allows you to learn the salient facts that every tourist wants to know (exterior, “regular” tour guide Győző) with an additional focus on communal and individual interiors (Bence).

3. Let local integralists show you their land

it makes all the difference. You are not an outsider anymore. You are invited to be an insider, and so you transcend formal tourism.

MEET THE TEAM



Bence Ganti - *Community Guide*

Bence, director of the IEC and Integral Academy, has two decades of experience guiding individuals and groups psycho-spiritually. Bence has himself traveled throughout Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Jeff Salzman of The Daily Evolver, a participant in the first community bus tour after IEC 2014 (also in Hungary) wrote:

“Bence leads from both the heart and the head. He is as comfortable talking theory as he is directing a large group process, or leading a drumming circle in the woods. It is never about gaining attention for himself, rather it is about creating a richer experience for the participant.”



Győző Simay - *Tour Guide*

Győző is a very experienced tour guide, who has so far traveled in 60+ countries across 5 continents, and has led tours in 25 countries besides Hungary. He has lived in Hungary, the UK, and the USA, and is as experienced at navigating people through Western cultures as those of the exotic Far East and India.



Krisztina Bodó - *Tour Manager*

Krisztina Bodo, student of Integral Academy and owner of Winair Travel Agency in Budapest, organizes tours in Hungary, other European countries, the USA, the Middle East, and Asia.



Örs Horváth - *General Coordinator*

Örs Horváth, economist and integral counselor, is an Integral Academy board member and serves as general coordinator of the tour.

Örs is a talented, integral businessman trained in Budapest, Vienna, and Berkeley, CA.

This tour is organized by the Integral Academy of Hungary.

BRIEF OVERVIEW

MONDAY



9:30 am

The Community Bus Experience

Spontaneous socializing hours on the bus with some rotation.
Enjoy the scenery of local farms, traditional villages, lovely countryside.
Was Dracula really a person? Learn facts and legends.
Learn how to read those unpronounceable Hungarian words and never get lost.
Engage in inspiring conversations and spontaneous group activities.

12:00 pm

Time Travel in the Ópusztaszer National Heritage Park

Learn what “szer” the local root word means.
Enjoy local cuisine: the Lecsó (Le-cho) Lunch.
Understand the historic roots of Hungarian culture.
Experience the 360-degree 3D art wonder in the Feszty Painting Dome.
Experience a historic village from the inside.
Watch an original horse and archery culture show and never get lost.
Engage in inspiring conversations and spontaneous group activities.



15:30 pm The Community Bus Experience Continues

Explore the Eastern Great Plains, home of shadoofs and mirages.

17:30 pm Dinner in Lilaakác

19:00 pm Evening calm, sunset and spa options at Hotel Balneum

BRIEF OVERVIEW

TUESDAY

9:30 am, The Community Bus Experience Continues
Heading North to the Carpathian Mountains



10:00 am

Hiking in the Carpathian Forests on the Bükk Mountains

Open your senses in a spring forest and meadows: a good walk and short contemplation in the deep forests of Bükk-mountain. Visit an ancient, shamanic ceremonial site, where a Cistercian Monastery was built 800 years ago. Experience a local ceremony with Fehérholló and Karak Somogyi István. Lunch at the lakeside.

15:00 pm, Egerszalók, the Cascading Lime Hill Healing Spa

18:30 pm

A Visit to the Bolyki Winery:

Wine Tasting in Caves and Dinner with
Local Virtuoso Gypsy Music



BRIEF OVERVIEW

WEDNESDAY

9:00 am, **The Budapest Sightseeing Day, yea!**

*At 9:00 am we will leave the hotel and
from 11:00 am to 16:00 pm tour the sights of Budapest.*

City Park and Heroes' Square

Heroes' Square - UNESCO World Heritage Site

Andrássy Avenue - UNESCO World Heritage Site

Did you know that the idea of Israel was born in Budapest?

The Jewish Tour: the Great Synagogue, the Ghetto, and the Holocaust.

A walk in the Jewish Ghetto and the Holocaust.

Lunch in Budapest's most famous "ruin pub" in the former Ghetto.

Touring the city: artistic bridges, the Danube, the universities.

Buda Castle - the Vár

The Parliament, one of Europe's oldest legislative buildings.

The "Communism Tour" and a visit to the 1956 Hungarian Revolution site.

Last stop: enjoy the 360-degree panorama of Budapest on top of Gellért
Hill at the Citadel.

Finding an integral spot in town: the Garden of the Wise.



4:00 pm, **Taxi to Airport or Hotel**

ITINERARY - MONDAY

9:00 am - Embarking on our Journey

On Monday morning at 9 a.m., after breakfast, we will **meet at the parking lot of the Azur Hotel** in front of the reception area to embark on our communal journey. **Our integral, magical mystery tour bus will take us through ancient purple experiences, red tribal roots, and shamanic power sites**; the blue era of kingdoms and castles, the terrors of WWII and the Holocaust; reminiscences of former communist times; then feeling into the modern, orange, capitalist Hungary and discovering the local postmodern green and yellow. **There is nothing to compare with touring through 1,200 years of rich Hungarian culture, across the ages, with integral consciousness guiding the way!**

9:30 am - The Community Bus Experience

Your seat partner may emerge from creative flow, or alternatively you may have chosen the person you would like to sit next to ahead of time. Now we are heading towards Southern Hungary - a 2.5 hour ride with stops.

Enjoy the scenery of local farms, traditional villages, lovely countryside.

Large panoramic windows are perfect for viewing the countryside as it rolls by: fresh green fields, forests, local villages, and villagers living their daily life. After your days spent in the conference building, the outdoors opens up and welcomes you. You are free to simply gaze out quietly at the passing scenery or engage in conversation with those next to you and around you.



Was Dracula really a person? Learn facts and legends.

A professional tour guide will accompany us and, from time to time, take the mic and regale us with some really fascinating facts and history—the basic info every tourist wants to know in order to make sense of Hungary's landscape and history. Our guide will cover the exterior quadrants, and we will cover the interior quadrants. In this way it becomes a real integral journey! There will be plenty of time on the bus when nobody is speaking up front, when everyone can just relax and look out the window or chat with nearby passengers.

Learn how to read those unpronounceable Hungarian words!

There are 3 basic tricks you need to learn. Bence will teach them to you on the bus, so you can read Hungarian and never get lost! As a bonus, you will get a pocket cheat sheet. :-)

Engage in inspiring conversations and spontaneous group activities.

On our previous magical bus tour experience (IEC 2014), we found that it was fun to ring a bell and give people a chance to change seat partners if they wish - thus getting the opportunity to meet and enjoy more people. So, you can stay with your seatmate or rotate.

ITINERARY - MONDAY

12:00 pm - Time Travel in the Ópusztaszer

National Heritage Park

Around noon, the bus begins its journey through the **Great Plains of Hungary**—the most ancient part of the land. **The eastern part of the plains is where Attila the Hun (the famous red Hungarian conqueror) is buried.** “Hun-garians” are the descendants of the Huns. Attila the Hun was a well known conqueror, a proto-Hungarian Chieftain, 1,200 years ago. His descendants established the country 400 years later in 895, with the Hungarian conquest of the Carpathian Basin. Seven Hungarian tribes, led by Chieftain Árpád, entered the Carpathian Basin (today’s Hungary, plus parts of neighboring countries) and declared this their homeland. They have been here ever since. **Ópusztaszer (oo-pusta-sear) is the the place where the modern nation of Hungary was born** and where the first assemblies were held by Árpád and his descendants.

Ópusztaszer (meaning ancient(O)-plains(pusztá)-ceremonial site(szer)) is a National Heritage Park.

SZER (pronounced as "cer-" in "ceremony") **is one of the most ancient words in Hungarian.** It is used daily, even today, in modern Hungarian language. The following words contain SZER: ceremony, love, falling in love, medicine, to fix, organ, organize, organization. So all the words of this sentence contain szer: “Organizers organize ceremonial events (where people get) healed and like each other and fall in love.” In Hungarian: “A szervezők, akik szertartásokat szerveznek (ahol az emberek) szeretik egymást, szerelembe esnek és 'megszerelődnek'.” **We use the power of the spirit of “szer when we organize the Integral European Conference in Hungary,** and on the post-conference community tour we visit the ancient ceremonial place called Ópuszta-SZER to absorb the felt sense of an ancient land. **We connect the deeper (pre-personal) and higher (transpersonal) levels, combined with mental-egoic (middle stages) realities -all for a fuller, integral experience**



Enjoy local cuisine: the Lecsó (Le-cho) Lunch.

At the park, a Lecsó lunch will be served with both veggie and non-veggie options. **Lecsó is a thick, Hungarian, vegetable ragout** or stew, which features green and/or red peppers, tomatoes, onions, lard, salt, and ground sweet and/or hot paprika as a base recipe. **It is similar to ratatouille and best made in a cauldron cooked over a bonfire.**

Understand the historic roots of Hungarian culture.

At Ópusztaszer, you can feel the vibes of ancient times when the nation was a nomadic, horse-riding Hun nation, living in yurts and coming from Central Asia. This was a pre-Christian (pre-blue), purple-red society with shamanic spirituality - somewhat similar to some of the Native American tribes: **close to nature, praying to the ancestors, following the suggestions of the shaman.** No wonder that in Hungarian, postmodern spirituality there is a deep attraction to shamanism and Central Asia. The magyars were at home grabbing shamanic drums and chanting around bonfires. For some, this might be a purple/green community bonding celebration, and for others with psychic and subtle capacities it can be a genuine path of spiritual journeying and intuitive visions from the metaphysical world. When a Hungarian postmodern person studies Tibetan Buddhism, he gets not only the Buddhist part - he also can feel that his ancestors came from the Tibet-Mongolia-Kazakhstan region.

ITINERARY - MONDAY

Experience the 360-degree art wonder in the Feszty Painting Dome.

You will have a rare experience: standing in the middle of a dome where a 5-meter high and 120-meter long (590 in × 4,700 in), 360-degree circular painting (cyclorama) is canvassed around you, giving you a full, 3D-effect historical experience. You observe the panorama from a raised viewing platform in the center of the cyclorama, with a diorama (maquette) - with actual sand, bushes, swords, and walk path - situated in front of the canvas, as if the scene could materialize at any moment. The canvas and the diorama is synchronized in such a way as to create the illusion of a real landscape. **You feel as if you were right there 1,200 years ago!**

The title of the magnificent artwork and the scene that you are part of is **"The Arrival of the Hungarians."** It depicts the scene when the seven tribes of Hungarians, under the leadership of Árpád, arrived in the Carpathian Basin and took the land. The Chief and the Shaman orchestrate the crowd. This huge painting was created by Hungarian painter Árpád Feszty in 1891, during the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. It was the most visited attraction at the Budapest World Fair in 1896 and was also introduced at the Greater Britain Exhibition in 1899. It alone attracted some 3 million visitors in the last few decades.



Experience a historic village from the inside.

Walk the streets of ancient villages and the actual (living) characters will show you their houses and their way of life. You will meet people from the Middle Ages and from the World War II period.

Watch an original horse and archery culture show.

Inside actual Hun yurts, meet horsemen in costume who will show you some of their weapons and the warfare arts of the ancient Hungarians. You can also try them yourself.



Experiencing the living contemporary local spirituality with ancient roots

We are visiting Fehér Holló Öskű (White Crow Ancient Wow) a shamanic practitioner friend who represents the Hungarian original spirituality in today's word. He is a ceremony leader, healer, drum maker, lodge leader. We get to know him and see the real countryside life. **This is not a tourist site. This is where Hungarians go for ceremonies.** We land in the home of a spiritual man with the aim to anchor and arrive to the land. This is a cultural-spiritual experience that you never get as a tourist. If you are curious of the living contemporary local spirituality with ancient roots you must come.

ITINERARY - MONDAY

15:30 pm - Community Bus Experience Continues

Explore the Eastern Great Plains, home of shadoofs and mirages.

Relax in the bus and enjoy the view in silence to digest what you have just experienced, or continue the sweet, social flow with your journeymates. **Now we are headed to the Eastern Great Plains, to the Nagykunság region**, named after the Kun people (Cumans), a nomadic Türk tribe that settled here 800 years ago and is today assimilated by the Hungarians.



The "**gémeskút**" (literally "**heron wells**") are the main symbol of the region that you will see along the way. Gémeskút is a form of well with a counterbalanced sweep that has been used since ancient times. This region is also known for the mirage that occurs over the dry, sun-heated plains, and people get lost here easily. Other famous elements of the region are **the #1 red paprika** of Hungary (Kalocsai), **cowboys (gulyás)** - and this is the region where the original **Gulyás soup** comes from (which means cowboy soup).

Also, the **river Tisza**, **the second biggest river in Hungary**, runs through here, and legend has it that Attila the Hun is buried in this region between the Danube and the Tisza.

17:30 pm, Dinner in Lilaakác (Lila Acacia)

Enjoy the truly sweet, typical, home-style local cuisine in a relaxed garden restaurant, with outdoor tables under a lush arbor that covers the whole garden.

19:00 pm, Evening calm, sunset and spa options at Hotel Balneum

We will spend the evening at a 4-star, modern, spa hotel, the Hotel Balneum, which is situated on a beautiful peninsula on the shore of Lake Tisza amid landscaped gardens. After settling into our rooms, we can wind down in the sauna and jacuzzi, and soak in the bubbling warm waters. **Hungary has 1,000 natural, thermal springs, so wherever we go, we can routinely find a thermal hotel.**

For dinner, the hotel restaurant follows the latest in international cuisine trends and also offers seasonal and daily Hungarian specialties, such as fresh fish caught directly from the lake, **traditional Hungarian schnaps (pálinka)**, and some of the Tokaj region's finest wines.



ITINERARY - TUESDAY

9:30 am - Community Bus Experience Continues

Heading North to the Carpathian Mountains

After plenty of sleep and a delicious breakfast, enjoying our coffee while we admire the lovely view over Lake Tisza, we head to Northern Hungary, the mountainous region of Hungary. We leave the Great Plains behind, and narrow, winding roads take us up into a fresh mountain landscape, surrounded by the lush green of spring forests and the chirping of birds. **Memeticly, this begins our transition from the shamanic-purple and heroic-red tribal era to the peaceful, blue architectural zone of the early Christians.**

10:00 am - Hiking in the Carpathian Forests



on the Bükk Mountains

Open your senses in a spring forest and meadows: a good walk and short contemplation in the deep forests of Bükk-mountain.

We arrive in the hidden valleys of the Bükk Mountains, where time seems to have stopped and silence is all around us. Part of the Carpathian Mountains, the Bükk (meaning Beech) region is famous for its spacious beech forests that allow a lot of light in and have an elegant atmosphere, due to the light grey color and straight, tall trunks of the beech trees. The Bükk Mountains are also home to 1,115 caves!

When we reach the village of Bélapátfalva (The Village of Monk Bé), where one of our Integral Academy graduates lives, young and beautiful Sandra (who will also lead a workshop at IEC) will guide us on a hike from a lake into the mountains to the ruins of a XIIIth century monastery - a sacred site to the locals.

Visit an ancient, shamanic ceremonial site, where a Cistercian Monastery was built 800 years ago.

The Bélháromkút (Bél-Three-Wells) Cistercian Monastery was built in 1232 by early medieval Christians with contemplative practices, and the church is still in use for big religious ceremonies and for concerts. It was built on an ancient power center and was the site for shamanic ceremonies. The site represents where the shamanic meets the Christian, and how the latter silently includes elements of the former. The whole site lies protected at the foot of a powerful, big rock wall that towers over the valley. The Cistercians chose this place consciously, because the monastery's epicenter is crossed by Saint George lay lines. It was originally built between three springs, but nowadays only two of them are flowing.

ITINERARY - TUESDAY

Experience a local ceremony with Fehérholló and Karak Somogyi István.

In early times, shamanic people held their nature ceremonies in this space. It is believed to be conducive for meditation, prayer, contemplation, and falling into trance. Certainly the serene beauty of the place, surrounded by thick forest, deep silence, and the wells, will make you drift easily into contemplation.

Exactly in this ancient power spot, we will meet three friends who will lead a short ceremony. Two are Hungarian shamanic practitioners, Fehérholló Öskű and Karak Somogyi István, who will share songs and drumming with us and invite us into the music and breathing so we are together in it. This lets us tune in and feel into the living interior of the culture. There is no greater gift than the gift of the interior quadrants when you are a traveler. In other words, when you go to a distant land and the people there share their culture and interiors with you, that's when you feel "arrived," connected, and a real guest of the country, host and guest mutually honored, rather than a tourist observing from the outside.

Lunch at the lakeside.

After the ceremony, the bus will take us to a beautiful meadow, right on the shore of the lake, where we will eat a sandwich lunch and drink fresh spring water.

15:00 pm - Egerszalók

Cascading Lime Hill Healing Spa

Our hotel, the Saliris Spa Resort, is situated in a beautiful park at Egerszalók, next to the only salt hill in Europe. Here you will find a cascading, white, travertine, bringing beauty to your eyes, as well as one of the most well-known spas in Hungary. Surrounded by pine trees, apple trees, and a grove of beeches, the springs yield 68°C mineral water that surge up from deep inside mother Earth. The springs fill a natural pool on the hill and 17 other pools in and around the hotel. You will have plenty of time to relax and enjoy the waters after we descend from the mountains.



18:30 pm - A Visit to the Bolyki Winery

At 18:30 pm, we venture to the nearby **Bolyki Winery - the most famous in the country**. It's not only the renowned Eger wine region that makes it so tasty and of such a superior quality, but **the speciality of the winery is that the aging barrels are hidden in a large cave system!** Volcanic caves surprise visitors and keep the wines at a constant 10-13°C with high humidity year round. It is the perfect wine cellar climate, with noble mold on the walls. János Bolyki, the owner, has won many awards in Hungary, including Winemaker of the Year and Businessman of the Year. He also won the Bordeaux wine award in France. You will have the opportunity to **taste Egri Bikavér (Bull's Blood from Eger), a wine found only here in all the world**, and also to enjoy a tasty dinner.

Your senses will be further delighted by a fine gypsy band, bringing you the most romantic, original Central European violin music you have ever experienced. What you will hear is a true local specialty, not heard anywhere else in the world.

ITINERARY - WEDNESDAY

9:00 am -The Budapest Sightseeing Day, yea!

At 9:00 am we will leave the hotel and from 11:00 am to 16:00 pm tour the sights of Budapest.

Budapest is sometimes called the “Paris of the East, and for many newcomers to Budapest, it is love at first sight. Beyond its architectural similarity with Paris, Budapest is totally unique and has more to offer than one can possibly imagine. Budapest is set in a spacious valley with the rolling green hills of Buda on the right, the ancient, flat, downtown of Pest on the left, and the **Danube River** flowing right through the middle of the city, with many historic bridges connecting Buda and Pest, each one with its own personality. Life here has a peaceful and grounded vibe while taking place amidst mind-blowing architecture. The downtown is a super social area, where a whole new Europe-wide tourist industry has been developed, a postmodern epicenter in the former Jewish ghetto (details below). You would need days to explore here, but we'll give you the best of the top experiences in just a few hours. **Our Budapest journey alone will be a total trip in itself.**



City Park and Heroes' Square

Following our modern and postmodern experiences of spa hotels and the Bolyki winery, we now climb up the developmental ladder of history to orange modernity as we enter City Park. Currently the biggest recreational park, it was once the millennial exhibition park in the Golden Age of Hungary. During this era, between 1867 and 1919, Pest and Buda were connected by the Chain Bridge (now the absolute city center), and Budapest was born, elevated from being small, sleepy, separate local towns into a modern metropolis.

Heroes' Square - UNESCO World Heritage Site

Heroes' Square is a No.1, “must see” tourist site: a large square with a monument summarizing and commemorating the last 1000 years. After a brief visit, we'll keep driving to the heart of the city.

ITINERARY - WEDNESDAY

Andrássy Avenue - UNESCO World Heritage Site

Running from Heroes' square to the heart of downtown is Andrássy Avenue, the "Hungarian Champs-Élysées", that had the first electric subway system on the European continent, still running conveniently today. Along Andrássy you will find **Embassy Row**, the **Integral Academy's workshop center** (which we are working on getting into the history books), the **House of Terror** (Integral Academy is better), the **Franz Liszt Music Academy**, and the **Opera House**.

Did you know that the idea of Israel was born in Budapest? The Jewish Tour: the Great Synagogue, the Ghetto, and the Holocaust.

There is a lot happening in the epicenter of downtown Pest. The first section we will visit is the **Jewish Quarter**. Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), the founder of Zionism, was born and raised right here in downtown Pest, next to the synagogue. We'll visit the famous synagogue and also find his home. Herzl formed the World Zionist Organization and promoted Jewish migration to Palestine in an effort to form a Jewish state: Israel. Not only is **Dohány utca** (Tobacco Street) famous for his home, but right next to it is the **Budapest Great Synagogue - the biggest synagogue in Europe!** It is also one of the three biggest synagogues in the world, the other two being in New York City and in Israel. **The Holocaust Memorial in the synagogue's garden** has the names of Hungarian Jews killed during the Holocaust inscribed on each leaf. The memorial was sponsored by famous Hollywood actor Tony Curtis in honor of his father who emigrated to New York from here.



A walk in the Jewish Ghetto and the Holocaust.

In 1944-45, the Nazis occupied Budapest and conducted one of the biggest Holocaust terrors in Europe: deporting 600,000 Jews in only two months to Auschwitz and Birkenau death camps. Though many Hungarians risked their lives to help the Jews, there was one extremist right-wing party in power during that one short year - the infamous Arrow Cross party - that did the dirty job for the Nazis with great effectiveness. Most of the Jews residing in the country outside of Budapest were killed. On the better side of the story is that although Budapest Jews were displaced and locked up in the ghetto, this is the only city in German-occupied Europe where the Jews were not deported from the ghetto. Though unfortunately, many were simply shot right out of their shoes into the Danube (as commemorated by a memorial sculpture of bronze shoes along the riverbank), at least 80,000 Jews survived in the Budapest Ghetto instead of being evacuated and deported. This was due to the Hungarian resistance and the weakening of Germany in 1945, during the Budapest siege when the Russian Red Army and the Nazis clashed right in Budapest. The Russians won (the good news) and stayed for 45 years (the bad news).

ITINERARY - WEDNESDAY

Lunch in Budapest's most famous "ruin pub" in the former Ghetto

Ruin bars are all the rage in Budapest and have been around for 10 years, since the founding of Szimpla Kert, the mecca of all ruin bars. These bars are built in Budapest's old Jewish Quarter in the ruins of abandoned buildings, stores, or lots.



Szimpla Kert (Simple Garden) is the pioneer of the ruin pubs. It is really a cult place - undoubtedly the best known ruin pub among locals and tourists as well. A pub and restaurant during the day and a party scene at night (like most ruin pubs), Szimpla is an iconic party place that has resulted in the pop-up of a whole culture of "ruin pubs" in the last 12 years. Imagine Budapest in the early 2000s. Something is going on in the Jewish quarter: **bars and cultural centers are opening in partially ruined buildings and courtyards**. After a few years, they have an official name: ruin pubs. The essence of ruin pubs is that instead of creating all-new, fancy places, they take reality as with an innovative approach: they recycle stuff from previous decades and recreate it in an artistic way. Not only each pub, but within - each table, each wall, each bar counter— is different, a testimony of young creative energy. The atmosphere here will totally charm you. For example, you may find yourself sitting at a table made from an old Trabant car! (A Trabant is the iconic East German communist car - the "worst car ever.") **Now, after 10 years, ruin bars have become one of the ultimate highlights of Budapest.**

The former Jewish ghetto of Budapest has become an incredibly interesting district, with a flourishing night-life and alternative arts scene, ubiquitous street art, and the best local designer shops. As a result, Budapest has become one of Europe's top tourist destinations - particularly among young people. The former Jewish ghetto has turned into a postmodern, avant garde night life center. At night the district is so full you can hardly walk the streets; it rivals London, New York City, and Kao San Road in Bangkok.

Touring the city: artistic bridges, the Danube, the universities.

Eight bridges span the Danube River in Budapest, linking Buda and Pest, each with a fascinating tale to tell. The wide and majestic Danube River flows through the middle of the city, dividing it into two parts: green and hilly Buda and flat, downtown Pest. Every tourist visiting Budapest will want to cross at least a few bridges in order to get a feel for the heart and soul of Budapest and today's Hungary. We will cross the **Elizabeth Bridge** at **Gellért-hill**, then our tour bus will guide us past the **Budapest University of Technology**, the square where the 1956 revolution broke out, the **Economic University**, the **Whale Building**, the postmodern art wonder the **National Theater**, and the **A38 Ship**, a world-famous concert pub and cultural center (on a boat floating on the river). Lonely Planet listed A38 as the "World's Best Pub" in 2014. Then we'll cross the most famous of all of Budapest's bridges, the **Chain Bridge**, and visit the **Buda Castle**.



ITINERARY - WEDNESDAY



Buda Castle - the Vár

Buda Castle (or vár in Hungarian), a part of the Budapest World Heritage Site, is the historical castle and palace complex of the Hungarian kings in Budapest. It was first completed in 1265. In the past, it has been called both Royal Palace and Royal Castle. This is where Hungarian kings were seated, where the Turks (Ottoman) were seated, and where Maria Theresa and later Franz Joseph (Ferenc József) were also seated. Castle Hill unmistakably rules the cityscape of Budapest like a refined artistic jewel in the middle of town. During our short trip, we won't visit the interior of the castle, but we will see it from plenty of angles as we pass by.

The Parliament, one of Europe's oldest legislative buildings.

The seat of the National Assembly of Hungary, one of Europe's oldest legislative buildings, a notable landmark of Hungary, sits magnificently on the bank of the Danube River, dominating the Budapest landscape. A popular tourist destination, the square in front of the Assembly Building is where the uprising of 1956 culminated. Since then, strikes and demonstrations have taken place here also.



The “Communism Tour” and a visit to the 1956 Hungarian Revolution site

Our tour guide has a short “Communism Tour” to help you understand what happened. Throughout our 1,200-year history, Hungary was under communist control for less than 45 years (less than 4% communist and 96% not-communist). Still, often this is the only thing that visitors know about Hungary, which is truly a shame. It points, nevertheless, to how much visitors are interested in this topic when they visit Budapest. As short as that period was, historically it has little to do with Hungarian culture. But it is important to understand and learn from local people how they experienced that era, and how they experienced the capitalist years since 1991.

In a nutshell, WWII ended in 1945, with the Russian Red Army running down Hungary and wiping out the Germans. The big clash was right here in Budapest - the Siege of Budapest - a 50-day-long encirclement of Budapest by Soviet forces and a strategic victory for the Allies in their push towards Berlin.

The Soviet occupation of Hungary lasted for 45 years, the length of the Cold War. In March of 1990, the Red Army finally began to depart from Hungary, with the last troops withdrawing on June 19, 1991. Russian troops were actually not part of Hungarian daily reality—but Russian soldiers were stationed in small, hidden, military camps in the forests. So the average Hungarian usually never met any Russians; Hungary remained Hungary and wasn't part of Russia. It was part of the Eastern Bloc (due to which Americans mistakenly thought Hungary was part of Eastern Europe), but really Hungary is part of Central Europe. Between 1945 and 1956, it was a dark Stalinist era with spies and torture.

ITINERARY - WEDNESDAY

Hungarians had enough of the Russian-backed communist era 11 years after the end of WWII, and in 1956 tried to free themselves from the shackle. The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 was a spontaneous, nationwide uprising against the Communist government of Hungary and its Soviet-imposed policies. After announcing their willingness to negotiate the withdrawal of Soviet forces, the Soviet regime changed their minds and moved to crush the revolution. On November 4, 1956, a large military force, led by Moscow, entered Budapest to crush the armed resistance. Soviet tanks penetrated Budapest and Soviet artillery and tank fire were heard in all districts of Budapest, combined with air strikes. Over 2,500 Hungarians and 722 Soviet troops were killed and thousands more wounded.

Then the Russian “liberators of Hungary” (as we were taught to call them) stayed for another 35 years. The crushing of the Hungarian Revolution strengthened Soviet control over the Eastern Bloc. The Soviets put János Kádár into place as Prime Minister, and Kádár remained there until 1991. The Hungarian boomers and Generation Y grew up in the peaceful, socialist era under Kádár. There was no more unrest, and the **1991 “rendszer-váltás (“system-change) also happened peacefully and smoothly.** But there was a final, “informal price tag” attached. The Soviets reportedly asked for 50 billion forints (some 800 million US dollars at the time) as compensation for “Soviet investment” in Hungary, and said that troop withdrawals could be held up if Hungarians refused to pay. Grateful for the gracious 45-year investment, Hungarians paid this tiny baksheesh to finally get rid of the foreign-imposed system.



Last stop: enjoy the 360-degree panorama of Budapest on top of Gellért Hill at the Citadel.

This is the place many Hungarian men secretly bring their lovers for their first kiss - because this place is just so beautiful and romantic. Here couples kiss, swimming in the flowery scents of the warm spring air, with the whole city at their feet; UNESCO also named Gellért Hill part of the Budapest World Heritage Site

Finding an integral spot in town: the Garden of the Wise.

By now we have covered the ancient, the purple, the red, the amber, the orange, the green postmodern, and now it's time to find an integral spot. Just below the Citadel on Gellért Hill is a small hidden treasure in the park: the Garden of the Wise. Unexpectedly, you find eight people standing timeless in a circle: Abraham, Moses, Echnaton, Lao-tzu, Buddha, Jesus, St. Francis of Assisi, and Gandhi. It is still and contemplative - symbolizing different cultures and religions from around the world, spreading the message of spiritual enlightenment. The composition reflects the development of humankind and aims for a mutual understanding. This is where we will make our closing circle and conclude our integral Magical Mystery Tour.

We finish at 4:00 pm at the Garden of the Wise on Gellért-hill. Upon request, we can arrange taxis from here to the airport (a 30-40 minute ride) or to the hotel where you are staying. Some of you may be staying together in the same hotel, which will make transportation easier. Just let us know at the beginning of the bus tour on Monday, and we will help to arrange your taxi and hotel. Reservations are easy to find any day in May; no need to worry. We want to make this trip as easy and smooth for you as possible, and have it be a time for you to relax, be enchanted, recharge, and connect with fellow integral folks, the spirit of the land, and local culture. It is likely to be the trip of a lifetime—an experience that you will carry in your heart for the rest of your life