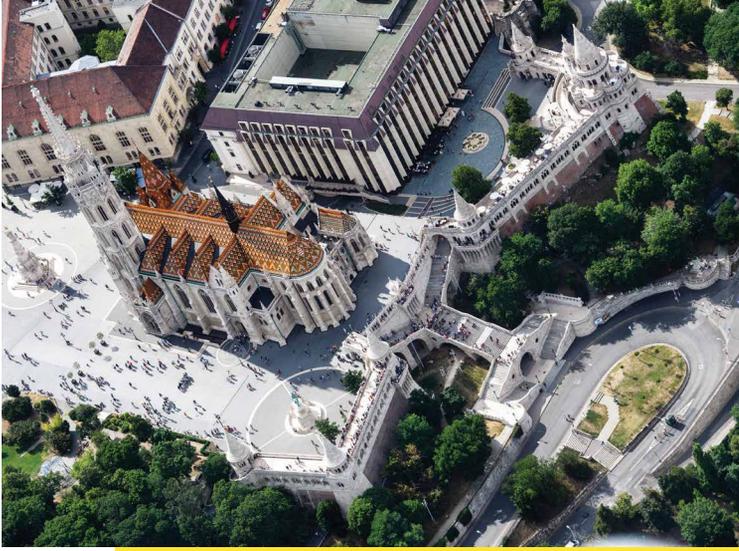


the Long's weekend

Budapest

Sliced in two by the Danube, Hungary's capital has history, culture and fun in spades





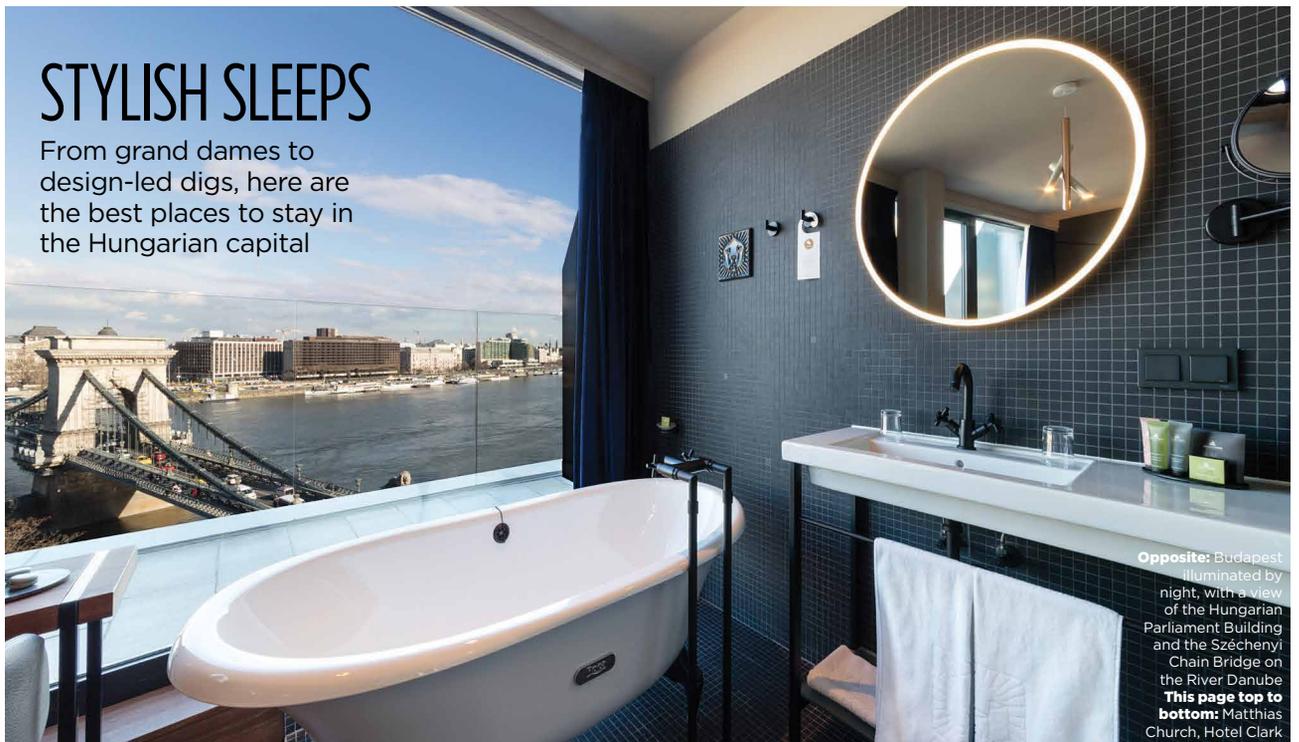
With its riverside setting and grand architecture, Budapest can lay claim to being one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Blessed with a vibrant café culture, an abundance of thermal springs and luxury hotels that won't break the bank, spend a long weekend here and you'll soon be plotting your return.

Home to more than two million people, Budapest is a city of two halves – Buda and Pest – which sit on opposite sides of the Danube River and are connected by a series of bridges. Settled by the Romans during the 1st century, sacked by the Mongols in 1241 and captured by the Ottomans in 1541, the city experienced its golden age during the 19th century as part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Since the fall of Communism in 1989, Budapest has evolved into one of Europe's most popular city break destinations.

In Buda, you'll find some of the city's best thermal spas and the must-visit Castle Hill, home to the Royal Palace and Fisherman's Bastion viewing terrace. Meanwhile, over in Pest, you can ogle Art Nouveau buildings and Hungary's neo-Gothic Parliament, and explore hip cafés and restaurants. Read on for our curated collection of the hottest hotels, coolest restaurants and only-in-Budapest experiences to enjoy...

STYLISH SLEEPS

From grand dames to design-led digs, here are the best places to stay in the Hungarian capital



Opposite: Budapest illuminated by night, with a view of the Hungarian Parliament Building and the Széchenyi Chain Bridge on the River Danube
This page top to bottom: Matthias Church, Hotel Clark

In a neo-classical building in Pest, the music-themed **Aria Hotel** (ariahotelbudapest.com) has floors dedicated to genres like jazz and opera, while each of the 48 rooms pay homage to a different artist. There's a cracking rooftop terrace, modern Hungarian restaurant and subterranean spa.

Dating back to 1896, **Corinthia Budapest** (corinthia.com) is similarly grand, with a sweeping staircase, six-storey glass atrium and 412 impeccably styled rooms. Dine at one of four restaurants and book a treatment in the beautifully restored Art Deco spa.

Next to the State Opera House, **Callas House** (callashouse.com) mixes Art Deco and Art Nouveau styles to stunning effect. There are just 25 rooms with dark wood panelling, muted tones and subway-tiled bathrooms, along with an atmospheric café-restaurant on the ground floor.

Across the river, the adults-only **Hotel Clark** (hotelclarkbudapest.hu) is just steps from the Chain Bridge and Castle Hill funicular. The views are fabulous, especially from the rooftop terrace and riverfront rooms, while the buzzy Beefbar restaurant was imported from Monaco.

retail therapy

Looking to take home an authentic slice of the city? Make tracks to these top shops.

Áeron. Born into a family of tailors, designer Eszter Áron has won many fans with her clean, yet feminine silhouettes. Drop by the showroom in District V to stock up on asymmetrical dresses, high-waisted jumpsuits and stylish handbags.

aeron.hu



Tisza Cipő. For retro trainers that will never go out of style, check out this cult '70s footwear brand. Choose from a range of colours with the trademark 'T' logo, or go full old-school with a pair of high-tops. tizzacipo.com

Paloma. Housed in the courtyard of a 19th-century building, this design collective is a great place to discover up-and-coming talent. Shop for jewellery, clothing, artworks and more from around 40 young designers and artists.

palomabudapest.hu



This page from top to bottom: Széchenyi Thermal Bath; Áeron; Hungarian Parliament Building
Opposite, from top: Kollázs; Gerbeaud Café

BATH TIME

Take a relaxing dip in the thermal pools

Known as the City of Spas, more than 100 thermal springs lie beneath Budapest. 'Taking the waters' has been a popular activity since Roman times, with the mineral waters said to soothe all manner of ailments.

GELLÉRT BATHS. With its temple-like thermal pools, this Art Nouveau gem offers one of the

most beautiful bathing experiences in town.

Wallow in the thermal baths, which range in temperature from 35°C to 40°C, and relax in the colonnaded indoor swimming pool and outdoor wave pool.

SZECHENYI BATHS. In a buttercup yellow neo-Baroque building in City Park, this sprawling complex is home to a dozen indoor thermal baths, three outdoor pools and multiple saunas and steam

rooms. In winter, you'll see locals playing chess in the water as clouds of steam rise into the cold air.

VELI BEJ BATHS. The city's oldest Ottoman-era spa bathing complex dates back to 1575 and is less touristy than others. It features five thermal pools of varying temperatures – including an octagonal pool beneath a beautiful dome – and a cluster of saunas and steam rooms.



instagrammable architecture

A melting pot of architectural styles, Budapest is one of the most photogenic cities in Europe. Make **Parliament** your first port of call; its Gothic exterior was inspired by London's Palace of Westminster. Stroll over to Szabadság tér (Liberty Square) and snap the sumptuous Art Nouveau façade of the **Royal Postal Savings Bank**, before continuing on to Andrassy Street to gawp at the neo-Renaissance **Hungarian State Opera House**, decorated with statues of opera greats such as Puccini, Mozart and Liszt. Finish up at **Liszt Music Academy**, an Art Nouveau wonder with colourful frescoes and a spectacular organ.



HOT TABLES

Hungarian cuisine offers more than goulash – get set to explore the exciting dining scene

KOLLÁZS With interiors inspired by the 1920s, this contemporary brasserie in the Four Seasons Hotel serves acclaimed Hungarian and French cuisine. Try the signature octopus and scallops with potato paprikash. kollazs.hu

BORKONYHA Don't let the casual bistro vibe fool you: this Michelin-starred spot serves artfully plated Hungarian dishes. Savour mains such as lamb with stuffed cabbage, or opt for the five-course tasting menu. borkonyha.hu

BARACK & SZILVA Book ahead for this friendly neighbourhood bistro, which serves Central European classics such as chicken paprika and goulash soup. Traditional cimbalom folk music only adds to the charm. barackesszilva.hu

a perfect day



Artist Zsófi Barabás (zsofibarabas.net) takes us on a tour of her hometown

“In the middle of the Danube, **Margaret Island** is a relaxing place with two

swimming pools and a small zoo, so a lap around the 5km running track makes a nice start to the day. Then hop on **Tram 2**, which starts on the Pest side of **Margaret Bridge**, for the best views of the city as you trundle alongside the Danube. Get off at the **Palace of Arts** (mupa.hu), home to the **Ludwig Museum** (ludwigmuseum.hu) where you can browse the collection of contemporary art. Head back to **Liberty Bridge**, cross the river and walk up **Gellért Hill**, topped by **Liberty Statue**, for panoramic views. Then stroll down to **Béla Bartók** street, stopping at **Hadik** (hadik.eu) or **Kelet Café** (facebook.com/keletkavezo) for lunch, before checking out the latest art exhibition at **Faur Zsófi Gallery** (galeriafaur.hu), which showcases local contemporary artists (including myself). For dinner, head to **Két Szerecsen** (ketszerecsen.hu), my go-to restaurant whenever I return from abroad. There are weekly specials, but I recommend the duck breast with creamy savoy cabbage.”

Words: Lara Brunt Photo of Zsófi Barabás by Dániel Németh

CAFE CULTURE

Just like Vienna, Budapest is famous for its cafés. They thrived during the 19th century, with more than 400 coffee houses across the city, and you can still sample a slice of history – and a caramel-topped Dobos torte – at one of its old-school establishments.

Afternoon tea at the **New York Café** (newyorkcafe.hu) evokes turn-of-the-century opulence, with its marble columns, gilded stucco and dapper waiters.

Just as glamorous is the chandelier-lit **Gerbeaud Café** (gerbeaud.hu), where you can savour delectable sweets like Esterházy slice (walnut cake filled with vanilla cream) in damask-draped salons. The warm, wood-panelled **Central** (centralkavehaz.hu), meanwhile, was once a magnet for writers and poets; slide into a tan-leather booth



and treat yourself to the Baroque Breakfast for two.

It's not all grand and gilded coffee houses, though. Budapest has also seen a new generation of hipster-friendly cafés where you can sip single-origin espressos and silky-smooth flat whites. Local favourites include

The Goat Herder (thegoatherder.hu), with beans from a local roastery, **My Little Melbourne** (mylittlemelbourne.hu), a brew bar specialising in filtered coffee, and **Espresso Embassy** (espressoembassy.hu), with cakes and pastries as delicious as their drinks.