

A rare offering from Brighton Travelworld



CYCLING HUNGARY

Castles and Spas of
Western Hungary by bike.
13-25 September 2012

13 days fully supported with local guides and an Australian tour escort. Cycle Hungary's back roads and discover a little known part of Europe. A fully inclusive cycling tour starting and finishing in Budapest.

OLD EUROPE BY BIKE

Cycling in Hungary comes as a wonderful surprise to Australian cyclists. Here is a remnant of old Europe that is easy to explore by bike. The bike paths that cross rural Hungary are a delightful link between the old thatched villages and sublime lakes that dot the Danube valley. Then there are the centuries old castle hotels where we stay (some for two nights) and the town thermal spas.



FULLY SUPPORTED CYCLING

This is a 13 day cycle tour with a total ride distance of about 320 km. Daily ride distances are 16-65 km. We have the advantage of two local guides and an Australian tour escort. Our support minibus carries our baggage. Our guides have teed up the locals along the way to let us into interesting, hard to find palaces, museums, tiny rural churches and of course amazing local restaurants where we dine each night. Full technical support is provided.



HIGHLIGHTS

Explore willow forests and World Heritage wetlands along the Danube. Visit Baroque palaces and mansions of Hungarian nobility. Forest rides to Hungary's prettiest sub-alpine villages. We soak in some of the country's best thermal spas. Bed down in centuries old castles and mansions. Dine in village restaurants and enjoy hearty Hungarian hospitality.



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HOW WE RIDE

Aboard our support minibus we transit directly into the most interesting spots then start riding. Our bikes are current model Merida hybrids with front suspension, 24 gears, V-brakes, mudguards, rear rack and panniers. Helmets are supplied. A moderate fitness level is required. We cycle through flat and some undulating country but avoid steep climbs. Our minibus is always available as a sag wagon. Our group is strictly limited to 15 riders.

FOOD AND ACCOMMODATION

Each day begins with a Hungarian buffet breakfast. Our guides set up picnic lunches in forests and parks along the way. Each night we enjoy three course dinners with local wines and beers to give insights into Hungary's regional food specialties. Somehow we always manage to find a village coffee/cake shop for a morning cycling halt - cost not included.

Most accommodation is 3 stars with an emphasis on historic old castle and mansion hotels in quiet locations. All rooms have en suite facilities. And most have an historic and romantic atmosphere about them.

TRAVEL ESSENTIALS

You must take out personal travel insurance. You should hold a valid passport with six months validity. No visa is required for Australian citizens in Hungary.



\$2,590*

Single supplement: \$400.00 (excluding air fares)

*Prices subject to currency fluctuations.

Includes: 12 nights accommodation with ensuite facilities, based on twin share. Buffet breakfasts, lunches and three course dinners - drinks include wine or beer. Wine tastings at two vineyards. Full support: air conditioned minibus and bike transport, technical support. Bicycle hire including panniers and helmet. Entry fees: 11 museums, castles, churches, and 4 thermal bath tickets. English speaking guides plus Australian tour escort. Souvenir water bottle and T shirt. Transfers to and from airport/railway station Budapest.



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ITINERARY - CYCLING HUNGARY 13-25 Sept 2012

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DAY 1: Thur 13 Sept.

Arrive Budapest. Transfer to Normafa Hotel in the woods amid the Buda Hills overlooking the city.

DAY 2: Fri 14 Sept Pre Tour day in BUDAPEST.

Budapest orientation day. We take the cog-wheel railway down to the city to explore the "Pearl of the Danube", Hungary's capital. A short walk takes us to the St Stephen Cathedral or the extraordinary neo-renaissance Budapest Opera House. We will probably wander over to the Great Market Hall in time for lunch (cost not included) at one of the food stalls amid the paprika and salami stands. Then walk out onto one of the Danube bridges. Back at the hotel there's time for a swim, sauna or massage. Tonight we meet our Hungarian tour guide and have a welcome drink and tour information session. Dinner in the cosy hotel restaurant.



DAY 3: Sat 15 Sept BUDAPEST TO GYOR.

Aboard our bus we take a guided tour around the best sights and viewpoints of Budapest. Then, heading up the Danube valley, we reach Győr and check into the 18th century Carmelite cloister, our quaint hotel in the old city centre. We walk across the road to the thermal spa pool. Then, for dinner, we thread our way through to laneways past the cathedral and baroque houses to our restaurant.

DAY 4: Sun 16 Sept CYCLING THE DANUBE

On our bikes we are off along the forest tracks through the willows, waterways and lakes along the Danube. We track along river levee banks through wetlands to a picnic lunch by the river. In the afternoon we ride the back roads through villages that modern Europe has bypassed to reach lovely thermal bath in Lipót. After a refreshing bathe, we reach Hédervár. Tonight we enjoy real luxury in the 400 year old Renaissance castle, recently restored. Dinner in the castle library. **(approx. 48km cycling)**



DAY 5: Mon 17 Sept CYCLE THROUGH THE HANSÁG MARSHLAND.

This morning our 21st century bus takes us a few km into the 13th century village of Lébény and its Romanesque church and ancient buildings. We cycle into the UNESCO World Heritage Fertő-Hanság National Park with its bog meadows and alder woods. The Hanság wilderness is a wetland for migratory birds. We stop in Fertőd at the splendid 18th century Baroque palace with its Versailles style surrounds. Tonight we check into the Castle Hotel in Balf for two nights. We have a small thermal bath within the hotel. Dinner tonight at an excellent village restaurant run by a local vintner. A trip into his cellars is a possibility. **(approx. 55km cycling)**

DAY 6: Tue 18 Sept SOPRON AND A DOWNHILL FOREST ZIP TO LAKE FERTŐ.

Short transfer by bus to Sopron, famous for its monuments and wine. Excavated Roman ruins stand amid the town's other historic buildings. Then we take one of the highlight cycling experiences - a long downhill bike path swoop through beech and alder forests to Lake Fertő - a steppe lake that shares its shore with Austria. During a cruise on the lake we see the curious thatch-roof chalets built out on the water. Lake-side cafe lunch. Return to Balf then a sunset call at a hilltop quarry begun by the Romans and now an underground opera venue of towering stone galleries. And a beautiful view of Lake Fertő. Dinner tonight at a village restaurant featuring the regional cuisine and wines of western Hungary. **(approx. 23km cycling)**

DAY 7: Wed 19 Sept CASTLES, VILLAGES AND FORESTS TO BOZSOK.

Count István Széchenyi was one of Hungary's greatest 19th century statesmen and this morning we cycle out the back roads to his castle at Nagycenk, now a museum to Hungary's industrial revolution. Lunch beside a 300 year old watermill. This afternoon we pedal through woods and quiet villages towards the foothills of the Alps and arrive at the romantic 17th century "Sibrik" castle in the forest at Bozsok. We stay here for two nights. Dinner at the village restaurants where Hungarian schnitzels are so good Austrians cross the border here for dinner. **(approx. 44km Cycling)**

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DAY 8: Thu 20 Sept KOSZEG - FOREST RIDING AND A GLIMPSE BEHIND THE "IRON CURTAIN".



Short bus ride to Kőszeg - it's hard to find a prettier town in Hungary. Richly decorated buildings line narrow streets that date back to the Middle Ages. From the Kőszeg castle Hungarians threw back the Turks in 1532. We cycle in the mystical forests among the hills of the Írottkő Naturpark with sensational views. At the tiny wine growing village of Cák we see curious thatch roof wine cellars along the bike path. Before dinner we take our bus to the Austrian border and the Iron Curtain Museum run by a wine maker who spent his military service as a border guard in the former Communist regime. He will test your ability to cross a minefield. Dinner in the village restaurant. **(approx. 24km cycling)**

DAY 9: Fri 21 Sept CYCLE FROM CASTLE TO CASTLE.

Today we are deep in rural Hungary with its rolling pastures and wooded hills. We pass remnants of Roman occupation then arrive at Ják with its Benedictine abbey. Later we ride into Csempeszkopács, where we stop at a tiny Romanesque church with its old frescos and organ loft. We ride sealed backroads with occasional traffic, passing a few small lakes, then arrive at a quiet village with a charming castle hotel. We are here for two nights. **(approx. 56km cycling)**

DAY 10: Sat 22 Sept KESZTHELY AND HÉVÍZ

A day of leisure. We take our bus to Keszthely, an old town close to Lake Balaton. Here we visit one of the most beautiful Baroque palaces in Hungary with its English garden, rich furniture, and its extraordinary treasure, the Helikon Library, preserved in its original style. This is a centrepiece of Hungarian culture. Later we take a short bus 6 km to Hévíz and its 4ha thermal lake (33-34°C) the second biggest thermal lake of the world. This is Hungary's most famous health resort. From the wooden buildings out on the lake we plunge into the healing waters and the profusion of water-lilies. Return to our castle hotel for dinner.

DAY 11: Sun 23 Sept CYCLING THROUGH HUNGARY'S SUMMER PLAYGROUND - LAKE BALATON.

Like Australians Hungarians like to holiday by the water and today we cycle through small lakeside villages with their renovated old thatched village houses. The volcanic hills here make up the Badacsony-historic wine region. We ride through picture-book villages like Szigliget. This is a favoured region for ex-pats wanting an old Hungarian holiday house. Riding through the vineyards we reach the Tihany Peninsula on the edge of the classically beautiful Lake Balaton. Tonight we dine in a traditional old thatched-roof Hungarian restaurant. **(approx. 63km cycling)**

DAY 12: Mon 24 Sept LAKESIDE RIDE THEN BACK TO BUDAPEST.

Before we leave Tihany there's time to drive a few km up to the Benedictine monastery built on the hill overlooking the lake. This church goes back to 1055 and the views here are sensational. The village here offers excellent Hungarian crafts and souvenirs. The pottery shop is worth a visit. On our bikes again for the final cycling stage we glide along the lake shore through old health resort towns like Balatonfüred. Then we pack up our bikes for our return to Budapest, to our hotel in the hills and a farewell dinner. **(approx. 15km cycling)**

DAY 13: Tue 25 Sept.

After breakfast in the friendly atmosphere of our hotel we say our goodbyes.



Normafa Hotel Budapest



Rural back roads



Budapest Opera House



Danube picnic

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What's included.

12 nights accommodation mainly in 3-4 star castles, mansions or historic houses in quiet areas mostly in beautiful parks. All rooms have private facilities.

11 breakfast, and 3 course gourmet dinners, always with some drinks and excellent wines, Picnics in beautiful spots. Drinks during cycling.

2x wine tastings in wine cellars.

Full English speaking guiding during the whole tour, one cycling with you and one driving the back-up bus. Australian tour escort cycling.

Full technical support, and special trailer for all bikes and luggage.

Air conditioned support bus, available for the group during the whole tour and providing a flexible alternative for those who want to rest at any time.

All bus transfers, private guided sightseeing tours, and visits mentioned in the itinerary.

Boat trip on Lake Fertő.

All 11 museums, castles, churches and 4 bath tickets listed in the programme.

Quality hybrid bikes with 24 gears, front suspension, handbrakes, and panniers.

Souvenir water-bottle and T-shirt.

Transfers in Budapest between your hotel and the airport or stations.



Gyor thermal pool.



Castle hotel Boszok.



Romanesque church Lébény.



Tour route through western Hungary

Brighton Travelworld can arrange pre and post tours. For more information contact Julie Avery at Brighton Travelworld

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