

Budapest University of Technology and Economics

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Getting to Know Budapest

BUDAPEST GEOGRAPHY AND DEMOGRAPHY

Budapest is a vibrant city of 1.74 million inhabitants. The city itself is 202.7 square miles and is similar in size to Tulsa, Oklahoma and Colorado Springs, Colorado although its population is closer in size to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania's. About 17% of Hungary's population lives in Budapest proper, but 3.3 million people live in the greater Budapest Metropolitan Area, so about 33% of Hungary's population lives fairly close to the city.

Budapest is situated around the Danube River. Buda is on the western bank and Pest is on the opposite bank. Budapest University of Technology and Economics (or in Hungarian Budapesti Műszaki és Gazdaságtudományi Egyetem) (BME) is located in Buda near then 4-6 tram lines, but Pest has, in the words of past participants, "everything else."

BUDAPEST CULTURE AND NORMS

Budapest is a rich city with a long history. It is an important center for music, film, theater, dance, and visual art. There are numerous museums and opportunities for cultural experiences in the city. It is often cited as one of the most beautiful cities in Europe and boasts an extensive World Heritage Site. It is also considered a financial hub in central Europe.

Budapest is a western city, and so, is going to be fairly similar to other western or European cities that you might have visited. There are, however, some cultural differences. Past participants have noted that

- Smoking in Budapest is more common than in Madison.
- Locals are generally fairly understanding of international students' inability to speak Hungarian.
- Locals' accents are sometimes difficult to understand.
- "Gypsies"—a derogatory term used to refer to a group of people of which 90% are Romani—are often on Budapest streets soliciting money. Locals are generally fairly racist towards this group.
- Homelessness affects a fairly large portion of Hungarians who live in Budapest.
- Budapest, in general, feels safer than Madison.

THE HUNGARIAN LANGUAGE

The Hungarian language belongs to the Uralic language family. It is one of the few languages in Europe that is not a part of the Indo-European family and thus may be very different from foreign languages that you are familiar with. It is similar to Finnish, rather than to Romantic or Germanic languages.

Although Hungarian is the first language of most of the population of Hungary, many people—especially younger people—speak English. Additionally, most signs in Budapest will include an English translation. That being said, however, you should probably be familiar with the following words:

Yes = igen (ee-gen - hard G like in gate)

No = nem

Hello or goodbye (informal) = szia (see-ah) (similar to saying Ciao)

Good morning = Jó reggelt (yo reh-gelt)

Good day = Jó napot (yo na-pot)

Good evening = Jó estét (yo ay-sa-kat)

Good bye = viszontlátásra (vee-sont-laa-taash-ra)

Please = kérek (care-ek)

Thank you = Köszönöm (kur-sur-nurm)

Pre-Departure

FORMS, PERMITS, AND OTHER DOCUMENTS REQUIRED TO ENTER HUNGARY

No visa is required for U.S. citizens to go to Budapest, but you will need a passport that will expire less than six months after your planned date of departure from the Schengen area (comprised of 26 European countries). If you are a citizen of another (non-US) country, you will need to determine whether or not you are required to obtain a visa prior to your arrival in Hungary.

You must carry your letter of admission from BME in your carry-on bag in the case that the regulators at the border have questions about your purpose for entering Hungary.

FINANCIAL PLANNING

Going abroad can be expensive, but generally, students who study in Budapest incur less costs than they would if they were studying at UW-Madison. During a semester abroad BME, you should expect to pay:

- €3,300 for tuition at BME (you will not pay UW Madison tuition)
- \$300 for IESP's program fee
- \$34/month for mandatory CISI insurance
- \$250-350/month for rent
- \$100-250/month for meals
- \$1,000 for miscellaneous expenses (such as laundry, books, supplies, etc.)
- \$850 for roundtrip travel to and from Hungary
- \$60 for local transportation
- \$80 for residence permit visa

Most semesters at BME are about 5 months, so expect that your expenses for the program will be about **\$9,400 total**. Be aware, however, that this total does not include regional travel and can vary greatly based on your lifestyle—how often you choose to eat out, how much you spend on shopping, and how much you travel.

While abroad, you will need access to a bank account in order to pay for your daily expenses. Additionally, consider bringing a few hundred dollars to convert to Forints (the local currency) when you arrive in Hungary. It might be cheaper, however, to take money out upon arrival (in Forints) from your U.S. bank using an ATM and debit card, so research these options carefully.

COUNTRY FAMILIARIZATION

Before traveling to any country with which you are not familiar, make sure to become acquainted with the most important aspects of its norms, culture, political system, and geography. Some sites you may want to consult in order to obtain this information include:

- Hungary's page in the CIA World Factbook at www.cia.gov
- The U.S. Embassy's Budapest, Hungary Page at <http://hungary.usembassy.gov/>
- The *New York Times*' Budapest travel guide at <http://www.nytimes.com/travel/guides/europe/hungary/budapest/overview.html>
- www.budapest.com
- <http://studyinbudapest.blogspot.com>
- The Budapest Travel Guide on TripAdvisor at http://www.tripadvisor.com/Travel_Guide-g274887-Budapest_Central_Hungary.html
- <http://visitbudapest.travel/budapest-events>

You may also want to read or consult the following texts:

- *Hungary Travel Guide*, published by Lonely Planet
- *Budapest Noir: A Novel*
- *A Will to Survive: A History of Hungary*

PACKING

Determining what you will need for a semester or year-long program abroad can be a daunting task. While you will most certainly want to bring necessities from home, such as clothes, shoes, and laptops, many items can be purchased in Budapest. Past participants have advised that you pack

In your carry on...

- Your passport. **You cannot leave the country without your passport.**
- Boarding passes.
- Your letter of admission as border officials may want to verify your purpose for travel.
- The emergency card given to you by IESP with emergency numbers for Budapest.
- A photocopy of your passport, credit card(s) and debit card(s).
- A document that lists the address of the hostel (or other location) to which you will be going after you arrive in Budapest. Also, print out and bring confirmation numbers and other information you will need in order to make initial housing arrangements.
- Your CISI insurance card and other proof of insurance documents to show BME administrators that you are properly covered by insurance, which is a requirement of the university.
- Your laptop from home. (This can also be packed in your checked luggage as long as it is properly protected.)
- Over-the-counter medications (such as Tylenol, cold medicines, allergy medications, and contact solution) and all prescriptions (in their original packaging) since these medicines can be hard to find or ask for in Budapest.
- Two passport-sized photographs for your residence permit and two passport-sized photographs for your student ID (4 total), which you can also purchase in Hungary.
- A bank account statement with sufficient funds to cover stay in Budapest. The bank account can be in your name or in the name of your parent(s) or other financial supporter. In this case, the financial supporter must sign a declaration stating that they assume coverage of your costs. You will need this document to obtain a residency permit, which is discussed in more detail in the “Finding Permanent Housing” section of this handbook.
- A decent amount of cash in U.S. dollars (which you can exchange in Hungary or elsewhere), possibly some Forints for immediate spending in the country, and a debit or credit card that can be used abroad. See the “Financial Planning” section above and the “Money Matters” section below in this handbook for more information about accessing money in Budapest.
- A change of clothes and travel-sized basic toiletries in case your luggage is lost.
- Entertainment and snacks (no liquids!) for the plane.
- Toiletries and other liquids or gels in a quart-size, clear plastic, zip-top bag holding 3.4 ounce or smaller containers.
- If you prefer, an unlocked phone from the U.S. In most cases, you will be able use the phone with a Hungarian SIM card and make calls within the country for a nominal rate. Alternatively, you can purchase a simple feature phone in Budapest. Contact your cellphone carrier to find out what is the best option for you. You might also want to suspend your U.S. cellphone plan while you are abroad to avoid paying for a service that you are not using. See the “Technology” section of this handbook for more information about using and purchasing cellphones in Budapest.

In your checked luggage...

- Clothes that would be appropriate for a temperate climate. Budapest will be around 30° F in January, 60° F in May, and 60° F in September. The average high for the year is around 80° F (in July) and the average low for the year is around 25° F (in January).
- Outerwear appropriate for cold weather and rain including a heavy jacket and a jacket that can be worn in the rain.
- Towel(s) for use in the hostels.
- A hiking or traveling backpack, or small luggage case for travel and recreation.
- Some nicer clothes that you will need for the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) gala at the end of the semester and for the operas, which are common in Budapest.
- Food, recipes, measuring spoons/cups or key ingredients for the “American Night” at BME or for daily cooking. Remember that there are some restrictions on food that can be brought into Budapest, for example, meat and milk products are prohibited.
- Snacks from the U.S.
- Peanut butter, if it’s a favorite of yours, since it will be difficult to find in Budapest.
- Adaptors and converters that you have bought in the U.S. before traveling to Budapest since they can be difficult to find in Hungary.
- Electronics from home if possible because electronics in general are much more expensive than in the U.S. Remember, however, that voltage and electric outlets will be different in Hungary. See the “Technology” section in this handbook for more information.
- Liquids, such as shampoo and moisturizer, packed in water-proof bags. If you aren’t picky about brands, then only bring enough of these types of toiletries for your first few days in Budapest.
- A lock in order to secure your belongings in the hostels.

Consider leaving at home...

- Bedding. Linens and other essentials can be bought at Ikea in Budapest, which is the last stop on the red line of the tram.
- A second set of copies of important documents (including a photocopy of your passport, credit card, and debit card). Leave these with a trusted parent or guardian for safe keeping.
- Expensive jewelry.

HOUSING RESEARCH

On-campus housing is not available at BME, so you will need to make your own housing arrangements. One way to begin your search before you arrive in Budapest is to contact other international students who will be studying at BME through the ESN Facebook group and make arrangements to live with them. Consult www.budapestlets.com, Budapest Property Solutions (www.bpsHungary.com), Apartments of Budapest (www.apartmentsofbudapest.com), Craigslist, and other online resources to research housing options in Budapest before you leave. You can make arrangements with landlords to view the properties during your orientation week. Do not wire money or commit to anything before your arrival or prior to seeing the apartment and meeting your roommates to avoid scams or disadvantageous situations. See the “Finding Permanent Housing” section of this handbook for more information about housing accommodations in Budapest.

First Days in Budapest

ARRIVING

Arrive a few days before the orientation so that you can get settled. It is recommended that you schedule your flight so that you will arrive in Budapest during daylight hours because the city will be much easier to navigate when it is light out.

In order to get from the airport to your destination in Budapest, you can either take a shuttle or a taxi. If you're traveling alone, past participants recommend that you take a shuttle or minibus (see www.airportshuttle.hu). You must make reservations at least 12 hours before your arrival. The cost to go from the airport to the city center will be about \$12.

If you're traveling with others, however, it can be cheaper to split a taxi. The easiest way to get from the airport to your destination is to use the airport's "official" taxi company, Fő Taxi. Fő accepts Forints, credit cards, and most major currencies, but in general, it is least costly to pay in Forints because of exchange rates. You can also choose to use other taxi companies—their cars will also be immediately outside of the door of the airport as you walk to the curb. There is no need to book taxis in advance. The cost to go from the airport to the city center will be about \$30.

TEMPORARY HOUSING

When you first arrive in Budapest, you will live in a hostel until you find more permanent housing. Make reservations before you leave the U.S. so that you know that you will have a place to stay when you arrive. Recommended hostels include:

- **Casa de la Musica Hostel**
<http://www.casadelamusicahostel.com>
16 Vas Street, 8th District
+367 037 37 330
Rates from 9€ (about \$12) to 37.5€ (about \$51)
Cash (Euros or Forints) only
- **Hotel Flandria**
<http://www.hotelflandria.hu>
Budapest Xiii. kerület Szegedi út 27.
+361 350 31 81
Rates from 6,500 HUF (about \$28)/night to 15,000 HUF (about \$66/night)
Accepts credits cards.
- **Easy Hotel Oktogon**
<http://www.easyhotel.com/hotels/budapest.html>
Eotvos utca 25/a, Budapest 1067
- **Corvin Point**
<http://www.corvinpoint.com>
1082 Nap utca 4, Budapest, Hungary
+36 70 544 0224
Accepts credit cards and euros.
- **Wombats City Hostel Budapest**
<http://www.wombats-hostels.com/budapest>
Király utca 20, H-1061 Budapest, Hungary
+36 1 8835005
Rates from 12€ (about \$16) to 31€ (\$42)

When booking the hostel, be sure to mention that you are going to be a BME student. There may be a discount.

REGISTRATION AT THE UNIVERSITY

Every new student must register for each study period during the orientation period at BME at the Students' Office, Building Z, Room 201. In order to register, you will need:

- Letter of acceptance

- Proof of your CISI insurance
- Passport
- Two photos (from the U.S. or you can have them taken in Hungary)
- 1,000 HUF (around \$5)

This will entitle you to a student ID that will entitle you to discounts on transportation passes, phones, and other events and items.

ORIENTATION

Before the start of your classes, you will participate in a week-long orientation. At the orientation you will be introduced to importation information about BME and Budapest in general.

Past participants recommend that you attend **all** of the welcome activities and especially recommend the bus tour of Budapest and the surrounding area.

There will be a housing fair during orientation and you will be given information about finding housing, but you should work on finding housing even before this point in order to make sure that you secure an adequate living arrangement using additional search tools and websites, which will be discussed in more detail in the “Finding Permanent Housing” section of this handbook.

Academics and Campus Life

THE SCHOOL

- BME is the biggest technological university in Hungary
- There are eight faculties or academic departments at BME:
 - Faculty of Civil Engineering
 - Faculty of Mechanical Engineering
 - Faculty of Architecture
 - Faculty of Chemical Technology and Biotechnology
 - Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Infomatics
 - Faculty of Transportation Engineering
 - Faculty of Natural Sciences
 - Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences
- BME has about 21,000 students and about 15,000 undergraduates. About 1,000 of these students are international.
- There are no extended breaks during the semester, but there are two national holidays during the spring term.
- The campus has two sections and it takes around 15 minutes to get between them.

COURSES

Course at BME will be significantly different from the ones that you have taken at UW-Madison. Much of your grade will be determined by your performance on a final exam and you will mostly likely not have weekly homework. If you do poorly on an exam, however, you usually will have an opportunity to retake it 1-2 weeks after your first attempt.

Past participants have reported that other students blatantly cheat on their exams. Do not succumb to this temptation. If you are confronted you will fail the class and could experience other consequences.

Classes will generally be fairly small. You will have 5-40 students in your classes. Textbooks are not typically used in classes.

Past participants recommend the following courses.

- Contemporary Hungarian Films
- History of Central Europe
- Hungarian Culture

The Beginners' Hungarian Course: Hungarian Language is generally not recommended because of its difficulty.

LIFE AS AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT

Past participants recommend that you become a part of the Erasmus Student Network (ESN), which you can join even before you arrive on campus. Membership will cost about \$25 and will entitle you to a free SIM card and other discounts. ESN coordinates trips to various locales in and around Hungary. They also offer a mentoring system that links native Hungarian mentors to foreign students.

Past participants note that the BME International Office is not always as accessible as one might hope. They recommend emailing the office rather than attending office hours since the line is often long. Make sure to have all of your documents in order before you visit the International Office. The ESN office is also staffed on most days and they may also be able to assist you.

Finding Permanent Housing

GENERAL INFORMATION

As noted above, because housing is not offered through BME, finding housing can be a bit tricky.

Past participants recommend that you start looking for housing as soon as you arrive in Budapest and continue looking during orientation. As mentioned above, during orientation, you will be given information about housing and you can choose to participate in a housing fair during which you can connect with landlords and roommates. Some past participants, however, caution that this fair isn't particularly helpful, so you should not assume that this fair is all you need to do to secure housing- you should start your research well in advance of the fair and even your departure from the US. Research the available options (see "Housing Research" section above for helpful websites), locations, rent prices, etc., and make appointments to see apartments in the first few days after your arrival.

In general, according to past participants, you should expect to pay between \$250 and \$350 per month for your apartment. Utilities will run about \$50. If possible, arrange to pay your rent in Euros as it fluctuate less than the Forint. You should also pay your security deposit in USD or Euros as you will get this money back prior to your departure and it will be easier to use or convert USD or Euros than Forints.

RECOMMENDATIONS

When it comes to housing, past participants recommend that you

- Live in the 5th district in the heart of Budapest, in Oktagon, or within the second circle of the tram (i.e., within the first two zones). In general, they recommend that you live in Pest, not in Buda.
- Arrange to live near a train line.
- Do not live in the 8th district, which has been described as "sketchy."
- Find roommates from outside UW or the United States.
- Be patient—don't jump at the first apartment you see.

OBTAINING A RESIDENCE PERMIT

THIS INFORMATION IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE. MAKE SURE TO CONFIRM ALL REQUIREMENTS WITH BME/ESN BEFORE INITIATING THIS PROCESS.

Please verify most recent requirements here:

http://bmbah.hu/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=70&Itemid=824&lang=en

You will need to apply for a residence permit within the first thirty days of your arrival in Hungary from the Office of Immigration and Nationality (Bevándorlási és Állampolgársági Hivatal (BÁH) VII.sz. Ügyfélszolgálati Iroda). Wednesdays, from 8 AM-12:00 PM, are reserved for students. Some people suggest going on this day, but others suggest other days as they aren't as busy. BME staff will explain this process in more detail, will update you on the latest requirements, and will take international students to complete the first step of obtaining the permit as a group. Below is a list of required documents and materials for obtaining this permit, however, BME will give you an updated list upon your arrival, so you should use this list only as a guide.

- Passport
- Admission letter
- Proof of health insurance
- Proof of payment of the tuition fee, which you will receive at registration.
- Proof of registration in Hungarian ("iskolálatogatási igazolás"), which you can get in the Erasmus Office during office hours.
- Student ID at BME, which you will receive at registration.
- A bank account statement with sufficient funds to cover stay in Budapest. The bank account can be in your name or in the name of your parent(s) or other financial supporter. In this case, the financial supporter must sign a declaration stating that they assume coverage of your costs.
- An address-registration card ("szállásbejelentő lap") signed by the owner of your apartment. You will get an empty form at registration, which your apartment owner must sign.
- The original lease for your Hungarian apartment—do not bring a copy.
- The property page ("tulajdoni lap") for your apartment, which the owner of your apartment will give to you.
- Two passport-sized photos (again, take these with you or have them taken in Budapest).
- Fee stamps of 18,000 HUF (around \$80), which are available at post offices.
- An ATM receipt to demonstrate that you can access money in Hungary.
- An application form available at <http://www.bmbah.hu/ujpdf/angol/71.pdf>

Please note that you must go to the same window (the right or left window) every time you go to this office.

The Office of Immigration and Nationality, Customer Service Office VII is located at

1117 Budapest, (XI. Dist.)
Budafokiu.60.
Sztregova köz
Tel: (1) 463-9233

Visit www.bmbah.hu for more information about obtaining a residency permit. Please be forewarned that obtaining the Residence Permit requires patience, perseverance, and time. If you are making travel plans before you have received your Residence Permit, make sure to research the restrictions on leaving and reentering Hungary without one. Whether or not you will be allowed back into Hungary could depend on how long it has been since you originally arrived in Hungary, where you are traveling, and the method of transportation that you use. For example, you will most likely be allowed back into Hungary if you travel to Austria by train less than 30 days after you originally arrived in Hungary. If you

travel to Serbia, however, more than 30 days after you originally arrived in Hungary, by airplane, you will most likely have more trouble. In any case, use caution when traveling outside of Hungary and make sure that you are up-to-date on the current rules and regulations that will affect your travel.

Daily Life

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

At registration, you will receive a Student ID. Please see the second “First Days in Budapest” for more information about it.

A Residence Permit (as described in more detail in the “Finding Permanent Housing” section) is required by Hungarian law.

TRANSPORTATION IN BUDAPEST

Budapest is served by great public transportation options. The city boasts buses, trains, trams, trolleys, night buses and a metro system. At first it can be difficult to understand these systems, but it will become second nature to you within a few weeks.

Student passes for all transportation systems in the city are 3,850 HUF or \$17 per month. You can buy this pass in most metro stations with cash or a credit card. Be sure to have your student ID with you and ask for the Diák (student) pass. When you are traveling, always carry both your pass and student ID. You do not need to swipe your pass like you would in Madison, but you must have both your pass and student ID in case a ticket inspector asks you to show it.

Before you get your student pass, you must buy tickets or multi-day passes before you board any of Budapest’s public transportation options (although you can buy tickets on board the night bus). They are available at metro stations, tobacco shops, newspaper stands, vending machines, and at many bus and tram stops. Single tickets do not allow you to transfer from one route to another or from one form of transportation to another—they are only valid for a single journey. If you are using a single ticket, it must be validated at the beginning of each journey. You can insert into the slot in the small red or orange box near the doors of busses, trolleys, trams, and trains. In the underground station the boxes are found at the top of the escalators. Make sure that you have validated your ticket because there are many ticket inspectors working throughout Budapest’s transportation system and fines can be steep. Remember to keep your ticket until the end of your journey because inspectors can stop you even as you exit.

Passes and tickets are valid for any of the following types of public transportation:

Bus

Budapest is served by numerous bus lines. They are blue in color. They are numbered from 5-296. Express buses are marked with an “E” at the end of their number and shorter lines are marked with an “A.” In order to signal that you want to get off at the next stop, you have to press a button near the door to alert the driver of your intention. Although the stops are posted inside the buses, the bus driver won’t stop if someone doesn’t indicate that they want to get off, so you might lose track of stops. Thus, make sure to pay careful attention to where you are going and what stop you need.

Tram

Budapest’s above-ground tram system extends throughout the city. They are numbered from 1-69 and run at all times except for midnight to 5 AM. A map of the tram system can be found [here](#):

Metro

Budapest has three metro lines, the M1 (yellow), the M2 (red), and the M3 (blue). They all meet at Deák Ferenc Tér in central Pest and run from around 5 AM to midnight. During rush hour, these lines run every 2-5 minutes. A metro map is available here:

Trolley

Trolleys are like the buses, but they are powered by electrical lines. These vehicles are red in color and are numbered from 70-83.

Night Bus

Most regular transportation services stop around midnight, so night buses replace these lines. There are separate schedules for day and night that are posted at every stop.

Train or Budapest Helyiérdekű Vasút

The trains or Budapest Helyiérdekű Vasút (BHÉV or just HÉV) are green in color and are numbered 5-9. Regular public transit tickets are valid only inside city limits, so if you are planning on going beyond the borders of Budapest, you will need to buy a ticket at one of the HÉV stations to leave the city. The train station is not located in a particularly nice neighborhood, but the trains are easy to use, convenient and clean.

Consult the public transportation websites (www.bkv.hu/en & <http://visitbudapest.travel/budapest-info/getting-around/>) to learn more about your options. One site has a route planner, which you can use to navigate your travel options, the other has pictures of the various forms of transportation and links to the different route maps. You can also use google maps to determine how to get from point A to point B using public transportation.

MONEY MATTERS

Budapest vendors will accept many U.S. debit and credit cards, but cash is more frequently used. When using local ATM machines, you can select whether you want to receive Euros or Forints. If you have to exchange cash from one currency to another, you should visit the post office, not the bank.

Past participants recommend that you do not take travelers' checks since they can be difficult to exchange or use. See the above section "Financial Planning" for more information about accessing money in Budapest.

FOOD

Food in general in Hungary is not extremely different from food that one might find in the U.S. Traditional Hungarian cuisine is based primarily on meats, seasonal vegetables, fruits, fresh bread, dairy products, and cheeses. Goulash soup is a traditional Hungarian dish that is made of beef, carrots, celery, potatoes and paprika. Pörkölt and Főzelék are other types of Hungarian stews that are common in Budapest. Palacsinta, a stuffed pancake full of various cheeses, nuts, and jams, is another Hungarian specialty.

Past participants recommend that the Hungarian goulash outside of Budapest is particularly delicious.

Other ethnic cuisine and fast food options are also available in Budapest. Additionally, there are about a half a dozen vegetarian restaurants in the country, but one or two vegetarian dishes can be found on most menus.

Food prices in Hungary are fairly cheap as long as you eat outside of the touristy areas or high-end restaurants. Past participants generally spent around \$25-50 for all meals in one week, especially if you do most of your own cooking.

TECHNOLOGY

Internet and Computers

Most apartments will have access to the Internet, although Wi-Fi access might be less common in the 5th district than in the others. All districts, however, will have Internet cafés where you can go to use the Internet.

There is a computer center on campus available for student use in building R on the third and fourth floor. Printers are also available in the center. There are also computers available for emailing in building K on the upper ground floor in rooms 40 and 41.

Past participants recommend taking a laptop in order to access the Internet and to complete coursework. Some recommend also bringing a tablet to Budapest, which you can bring with you when you travel outside of the country. If you still have receipts for these items, bring a copy of them to Budapest. There is a chance that you might have to pay customs duties if you can't prove that you didn't purchase it abroad. Check to see if these items are covered by your parents' or guardian's homeowners' insurance policy and leave a copy of the serial numbers with family in the U.S. in case they are lost or stolen.

Cell Phones

You can bring an unlocked U.S. phone to Budapest. Check with your carrier for rates and availability and make your decision accordingly.

If you cannot or do not want to unlock a U.S. phone, you can purchase a simple feature phone in Budapest. Past participants recommend that you wait to purchase a cellphone and a cellphone plan until you have received your student ID because your ID will entitle you to a discount. You can also get a group discount if desired. One common cellphone provider is Vodaphone.

In general, past participants spent about \$5-7 per week on their phone plans. Using the plan outside of Budapest was inordinately expensive—around \$1 per minute. You can recharge your cellphone minutes at any ATM.

In Budapest it is generally more common to call than to text.

Making Phone Calls

To call Budapest landlines from the U.S., dial the country code for Hungary (36), then the city code for Budapest (1), and finally the seven digit local number. The phone number will be 36-1-xxxxxxx.

To call mobile phones in Budapest from the U.S., you will first need to dial Hungary's country code (36) and then, instead of the city code for Budapest, the mobile phone carrier code (20, 30, or 70), and then the seven digit local number. The phone number will be 36-x0-xxxxxxx.

To call a landline in Budapest while in Budapest, first enter 06, which replaces the country code (36), then 1 for the city code for Budapest, and then the seven digit local number. The phone number will be 06-1-xxxxxxx.

To call a mobile phone in Budapest while in Budapest, first enter 06, which replaces the country code (36), then the two-digit mobile phone carrier code (20, 30, or 70), and then the seven digit local number. The phone number will be 06-x0-xxxxxxx.

To call the U.S. from Budapest, first dial 00, then the country code (1), area code, and local number. For example, IESP's number would be 00-1-608-263-2191. Remember that international pre-paid cards will be much cheaper than making international calls without a card.

Adaptors and Converters

In Budapest and all of Europe, the current supplied by the electricity is 220 volts, which is different from the U.S., where the current is 110 volts. Sockets are also shaped differently—they are round, recessed and have two round holes in them. Thus, plugs in Europe are round and have two cylindrical prongs.

In order for any U.S. electronics to work with Hungarian sockets and voltage, the electronic device must be able to run on 110 volts and its plug must fit into the Hungarian socket. Some electronics, including some laptops have the ability to run on both 110 and 220 volts (this should be noted somewhere on the device itself). If this is the case, you will only need to purchase an adaptor to modify the plug in order to be able to insert it into a Hungarian socket.

Other electronic devices such as hair straighteners will not have the ability to run on both 110 and 220 volts. If you bring one of these devices from home, you must purchase a converter (either at home or in Budapest) that will convert the voltage from 220 to 110 volts. Converters, however, are not perfect and if they are used incorrectly, they might “fry” your device.

Past participants recommend purchasing items like hair dryers and other electronics in Hungary or Europe so that you can be sure that they will work correctly with Hungarian sockets and voltage.

In the case that your adaptor cannot fit into Hungarian sockets (because they are, in most cases, recessed) you will have to use both an adaptor AND a converter.

As mentioned above, electronics in Budapest can be more expensive than in the U.S. If possible, bring the proper adaptors and converters from home.

LEISURE

Points of Interest

Past participants recommend that you visit

- Margit Island—in the middle of the Danube. It has a park, a track, a zoo, and more!
- St. Stephen’s Basilica
- The Dohány Street Synagogue—the second largest synagogue in the world.
- Great Market Mall in downtown Budapest.
- The rural towns outside of Budapest.
- The Tara Museum, which covers the history of Budapest.
- Pecs (pronounced “peach”) - a cute Hungarian town 1-2 hours outside of Budapest.
- Buda Castle, which was first built in 1265.
- The House of Terror Museum. Students recommend that you visit this museum early in your semester as it provides an important historical context for your time in Budapest.
- Eger/Miskolc—an area known for its wine.
- Visegrad—a city in Hungary with an upper and lower castle, a deteriorated royal palace, and an alpine slide.

Fun

Past participants recommend that you experience

- Water polo—a very popular sport in Hungary
- Spring festivals in the city
- The thermal baths
- The opera
- Parks in the city

Recommended restaurants include

- Menza—a somewhat expensive gourmet restaurant.
- City Gyros—a reasonably priced restaurant that serves delicious gyros.
- Frici Pap’s—a little restaurant that serves goulash and gnocchi.
- Roulette Steakhouse—a restaurant that serves good food that can be a little expensive.

Traveling Outside of Hungary

Past participants have used Hungary's central location to their advantage and some have traveled extensively. While it is important to focus on academics and to spend time experiencing Budapest itself, you may want to consider budgeting some time to travel outside of Hungary—especially before or after your program.

From Hungary, you will be able to find many cheap flights that will take you to countries on and near the European continent. Visit Ryan Air's website, Wizzair's website (the Hungarian equivalent of Ryan Air), [skyscanner.com](https://www.skyscanner.com), and [momondo.com](https://www.momondo.com) to find these flights.

You can organize trips with a small group of friends or can take advantage of trips that ESN will plan. Past participants recommend signing up for ESN trips promptly since they will often reach capacity quickly. Because of the size of ESN-organized trips, they can be somewhat overwhelming, so think carefully about how you would like to travel and with whom.

Past participants especially recommend that you visit:

- Split, Croatia and Plitvice Lakes National Park in Croatia
- Athens and Santorini, Greece
- Bled, Slovenia
- Bosnia
- Bratislava, Slovakia
- Denmark
- Dresden, Germany
- Lisbon
- Paris, France
- Poland
- Prague, Czech Republic
- Rome and Florence, Italy
- Sevilla, Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Transylvania, Romania
- Vienna, Austria

If you plan to visit China, Russia, and Ukraine, U.S. students will need a visa.

Remember to bring your Residence Permit and student ID when traveling—they will entitle you to discounts and your Residence Permit is, in many cases, required for reentering Hungary. You should always take your passport when leaving Budapest.

Please send us any suggested updates or additions to this handbook as we are always looking to add more student feedback and experiences to it!