



HUNGARY

WELCOME TO HUNGARY!

We are glad to hear that you have chosen our country for your exchange year. We hope that you are as curious about us as we are about you. We would like to help you imagine your life here by providing some basic information about Hungary.

In introducing the country and its characteristics we called for help a book written by István Bart, titled Hungary & the Hungarians: Dictionary of facts and beliefs, customs, usage, & myths. We selected some related quotations which you can find under the topics.



First we would like to tell you about YFU Hungary and then get into details about the country.

YFU IN HUNGARY

YFU programs have been running in Hungary since 1990 when we had the first exchanges with Germany and Finland. Since then we have established relationships with other countries as well.

We established our organization in 1992 and started with our own office in March 1993. The staff consists of three members while the rest are volunteers from all over the country. These volunteers will help you at any time in any region of the country.

We are looking forward to having you here and we will try to do everything we can in order to make your stay unforgettable.

SHORT FACTS AND INFORMATION ON HUNGARY



Territory and Population

We are a relatively small country in the middle of Europe: the total territory of Hungary is 93,000 km². (The country is about the size of the state Indiana in the USA, or three times as big as Belgium in Europe.)

The population of the country is approximately 10 million people, a bit more than 2,5 million of which live in the capital, Budapest. Other major cities are Miskolc, Debrecen, Szeged, Győr and Pécs.

Due to the size of the country distances are fairly short. You can cross the country within seven hours by car!





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Duna (pron. *doonah*), *Danube*; though it is on the plains of Hungary that the Danube becomes a really big river which cuts the country in two (until the construction of the Chain Bridge or *Lánchíd* quite literally, producing two very distinct areas which have kept some of their individual character to this day), the Danube does not play an appreciable role in the Hungarian imagination, perhaps because its role in the economy (except for the ample fish in its waters which made for a fabulous catch until the last century), was negligible until Széchenyi made it navigable, and the wheat could be shipped from the south-eastern part of the country, where it was grown, to the mills in Vienna and Pest, but even this did not make Hungarians into a real sea (or river) faring nation, and to this day the traffic is slight on the river, which in the local imagination conjures up mighty floods and, of course, Budapest, whose breathtaking, spectacular panorama has been bestowed on it by the Danube.

Ki a Magyar? *'who is Hungarian?'* (lit.); orphaned in the world by a language no one else speaks, Hungarians have been occupied with the question of their identity ever since the continued existence of a (multi-national) "historical Hungary" was first endangered, which after the dissolution of the state (Austria-Hungary), ended in scapegoating (pointing the finger at "aliens"), whereas for centuries the Carpathian Basin was melting pot comparable only to America, as a result of which the question "Who is Hungarian?" cannot be answered on the basis of citizenship alone, nor with recourse to a common ancestry, not even through anthropological (genetic) considerations; being Hungarian means sharing a common cultural heritage and language, as well as a question of voluntary self-identification.



Hungarian grey cattle



Danube bend

Climate and weather

Hungary is situated in the middle of the continent therefore the climate is continental with Mediterranean and Atlantic influences.

We have four typical seasons. Winter is rather cold and snowy (the coldest month being January when the temperature might sink below - 10 C^o/14 F. Summer is very hot, you should not be surprised about a heat of 35 C^o/95 F in July. Besides these two seasons we have a very nice, clear, mild spring and autumn. Rainy weeks are not usual in our country.



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Language

You are probably very curious about our language. It might sound (and especially seem!) strange and difficult to you, but we will help you. You will get a beginner language course in the arrival camp.

Of course you will have to be very patient and willing to learn Hungarian. Although you will probably manage very well with your English or German, we advise you to use any word or sentence you have learned and you will soon realize how much you have improved. Your environment will appreciate the efforts you put in very much.

Well, to set you off, here are the first and the most important expressions in Hungarian:

Hello	Szia	(seeya)
Bye-bye	Viszontlátásra	(veesont latashra)
Good morning	Jó reggelt	(yo reghelt)
Good evening	Jó estét	(yo eshtate)
Thank you	Köszönöm	(kosonom)
You are welcome.	Kérem./Szívesen.	(kayrem)
How are you?	Hogy vagy?	(hodge vadge)
Fine, thanks.	Köszönöm jól!	(kosonom yol)
Sorry	Bocsánat	(botshanat)
Yes	Igen	(eegen)
No	Nem	(nem)
Hungary	Magyarország	(madyarorsag)
Hungarian	magyar	(madyar)
Friend	barát	(barat)
Family	család	(chalad)

History



The Finnugors were the ancestors of the Hungarians who had been living at the mountain Ural until the 5th century A.D. At that time the Magyars (Hungarians) withdrew from the other tribes, and began their emigration occupying a large part of the Carpathian basin at the end of the 9th century.

During these hundred years they settled down at several places. Before Hungarians appeared on this territory some other people had lived here already. The most important tribes were the Celts, Romans, Avars. The ancient Hungarians actually occupied the land from Slavic people.

The leader of the settling Hungarian tribes was Árpád: his descendants formed the only Hungarian royal dynasty, which died out in 1301.

The Hungarians were Nomadic people, their society, religion and way of life were very different from the life and customs of other nations in Europe.

The founder of the Hungarian state was King Stephen who was crowned in 1001. Being surrounded by Christian countries he forced the Hungarians to take up the new religion.



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During the following centuries several events happened that had a great influence on Hungarian history. In the beginning of 1100 Hungary was the first country where the burning of witches was forbidden. In the 13th century the Tatars destroyed the country almost completely. The capital Buda was established in the middle of the century. Between the 15-17th centuries the Turks occupied the country for 150 years. Because of the Turkish occupation the country was divided into three parts, one ruled by the Turks, the other by the Habsburgs (an Austrian royal dynasty) and the third by the Prince of Transylvania. Until 1918 the Habsburgs ruled Hungary.

World War I and II also had an impact on the development of the country. In 1956 there was a major revolution against the government. Until the 23rd of October 1989 Hungary was People's Republic and a socialist regime ruled the country. In 1989 the regime was changed and since then the country has been officially called Hungarian Republic.

Economy

Hungary is a country with an intermediately developed agricultural-industrial economy. Since 1989 the socialist economy has gradually developed into a market-oriented structure and more and more private enterprises became successful besides the state-owned firms, factories, etc. Foreign investments (American, German, Scandinavian, French etc.) now have an important role in Hungary's economy.

The natural environment is particularly convenient for agriculture; this is the reason why the cultivation of grain, grapes, peaches, apples, raspberries, apricots, paprika and other vegetables are widely spread in the country.

Hungary is famous for its excellent wines, the most well-known ones are from Tokaj, Eger, Villány and Sopron.

EDUCATION

The school system in Hungary consists of three levels.

Elementary school starts at the age of 6 and lasts for 4, 6 or 8 years. After finishing the elementary students may choose from different types of Secondary schools to continue their studies.

- In a Technical School (szakmunkásképző) students learn a profession for three years and after qualifying they are capable of starting to work. The type of Technical school can be chosen after 8 years of elementary school.
- Vocational Schools (szakközépiskola) are a mixture of general education and job-focused training. Students go to higher education after graduation or they can start working in the job they had studied. This school lasts for 4 years. The type of Vocational school can be chosen after 8 years of elementary school. (Students on Music and Catering Program are enrolled in these type of schools.)
- In a High School (gimnázium) students learn academic subjects and since this is the type of school you will attend we describe it in more details. Students can start attending 'gimnázium' at the age of 10, 12 or 14. (Students on academic program are enrolled in these schools.)

"Gimnázium" provide an overall, general knowledge, which enables graduates to continue their studies on a higher level. These schools do not give a job qualification so this is not the best choice for those wishing to start work after school.

The main subjects taught in these schools are: History, Hungarian Grammar, Literature, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geography, Language Practice (English, German, French etc.), Music, P.E., Art.

A typical school day starts at 8 o'clock and the average number of classes is 6 per day. Classes last for 45 minutes and there is always a break of at least 10 minutes between them. Most schools have a longer break for lunch, which can be obtained at the school canteen.



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School attendance is obligatory and there are special regulations for being absent which will apply to you just as it does to Hungarian students. Schools are usually strict about leaving school during the day (except if you have no more classes). The schedule does not depend on you. It is set up at the beginning of the terms by the teachers and the class has to follow it throughout the term.

A class consists of an average of 35 students but during classes like Language Practice, Maths and some others, students are divided into groups of 15-20.

The relationship between students and teachers is usually formal and rather strict. Teachers expect to be respected and if they are, they can be really nice and helpful. It happens very often that the relationship between a student and his favorite teacher remains for years and turns into a friendship.

School year starts on 1st September and last until mid-June. The 1st semester ends on 31st January and the second semester starts on 1st February. Usually, schools have couple of days break between the semesters.

FAMILY LIFE



The average Hungarian family consists of 3-4 members but - mainly in the countryside- families with 3 or more children can be found as well.

Generally families live in houses or in apartments of 2-3 rooms. Of course there are bigger houses with a garden and several floors, too. Because of problems of housing usually children live with their parents during their school years and, more or less, after getting married, too. Therefore it is not rare to find families where three or even four generations live together.

Parents are usually very busy with their work and many people have second or even third jobs in order to make a living. In spite of this Hungary is a family-oriented country where families spend as much time together as they can.

One of the favourite get-togethers are meal times.

Culture

You will find much to admire in Hungary, starting with two different creative arts - architecture and cooking. Whatever city you live in, make sure to take plenty of walks during your stay so that you can examine closely the fine examples of architecture from many periods. In addition to architecture, Hungarians are justifiably proud of their cuisine, best known outside the country for its strong paprika flavouring. Paprika is included in many dishes that you should try while living in Hungary, among them the chicken paprika and fish soup.

Leisure time

The most popular way of spending free time among youngsters is doing sports, meeting friends, sitting in small cafés and chatting for hours, going to the cinema or the disco, clubs, concerts, exhibitions etc.