

Budapest

A 5-Day Itinerary — I-Journey

A 5-day introduction to Budapest: Castle Hill's turrets and river views on arrival, a guided tour of the Hungarian Parliament and an evening cruise past its floodlit dome, a soak in the Szechenyi Thermal Bath's outdoor pools, and a walk through the Jewish Quarter's synagogues and ruin bars — with real hotels, ticketed sights, and 2026 prices for every stop.

DURATION

5 Days

BEST TIME TO GO

April–June & September–October

FROM

\$740 USD / person

DAY 1

Arrival & Castle Hill

Land in Budapest and spend the afternoon on Castle Hill, the fortified ridge above the Danube with the city's best river views.

Castle Hill Walk — Buda Castle & Matthias Church

~2 hours, self-guided · Free to walk the grounds; museum entry separate

A funicular or a short uphill walk from Chain Bridge reaches the walled hilltop where Hungary's kings once lived — the neo-Gothic spires of Matthias Church and the cobbled lanes of the Castle District make for an easy first orientation to the city.

Fisherman's Bastion Upper Towers

~45 minutes, self-guided · HUF 1,700 (about \$5 USD) per adult

A neo-Romanesque terrace of seven white turrets built in 1902, framing the single best postcard view in Budapest — the Parliament building and the Pest skyline across the river. The lower terrace is free; the upper towers charge a small entry fee.

Overnight — Aria Hotel Budapest

From \$220–320 USD/night, for 2 people

A music-themed boutique hotel two blocks from St. Stephen's Basilica, each floor dedicated to a different genre — walkable to both Castle Hill's funicular and the Danube embankment.

Aria Hotel Budapest · +36 1 445 4055 · ariahotelbudapest.com

DAY 2

Parliament & the Danube by Night

A guided tour through Hungary's seat of government in the morning, then an evening river cruise timed for the building's floodlit reflection on the water.

Hungarian Parliament Guided Tour

~50 minutes · \$65 USD/adult (non-EU visitor rate), audio guide included

Europe's largest parliament building when it was completed in 1904, its neo-Gothic hall housing the Hungarian Holy Crown — non-EU visitors need a guided tour rather than self-guided entry, and tours sell out days ahead in summer, so book online first.

Coffee & Pastries — Cafe Gerbeaud

~1 hour · \$15–20 USD/person

A grand 1858 confectionery on Vorosmarty Square, all gilded mirrors and marble-top tables — the Gerbeaud slice (walnut, apricot jam, and chocolate glaze) is the signature order, best paired with a Viennese-style coffee.

Cafe Gerbeaud · +36 1 429 9000 · gerbeaud.hu

Danube Legend Evening Cruise

~1 hour · \$27 USD/adult (25 EUR)

An hour-long sightseeing cruise timed for sunset, gliding past the floodlit Parliament building, Chain Bridge, and Buda Castle with an audio guide in multiple languages — boats depart from the Pest embankment near Vigado Square.

Legenda Cruises · +36 30 944 5216 · legenda.hu

Overnight — Aria Hotel Budapest

From \$220–320 USD/night, for 2 people

A second night at the same central boutique hotel.

Aria Hotel Budapest · +36 1 445 4055 · ariahotelbudapest.com

DAY 3

Thermal Baths & City Park

A morning soak in Budapest's grandest thermal bath, then an afternoon in the green expanse of City Park before a traditional Hungarian dinner.

Szechenyi Thermal Bath

~3 hours · HUF 13,200–15,800 (about \$37–44 USD) per adult, locker included

The largest thermal bath complex in Europe, its mustard-yellow neo-Baroque courtyard pools fed by a natural hot spring at 74°C — an outdoor chess match in the main pool is the classic Budapest photo, and the complex stays open through winter.

Szechenyi Thermal Bath · +36 20 435 0051 · szechenyibath.hu

City Park & Heroes' Square

~1.5 hours, self-guided · Free

Heroes' Square's Millennium Monument, ringed by statues of Hungary's founding chieftains, opens onto City Park's boating lake and the turreted, part-Gothic-part-Baroque Vajdahunyad Castle — a short walk from the Szechenyi Bath's entrance.

Dinner — Retro Goulash House

~1.5 hours · \$20–30 USD/person

A Jewish Quarter spot built around Hungary's national dish, served in a mid-century “retro” dining room — the beef goulash and chicken paprikash both come with the traditional nakedli dumplings.

Retro Goulash House · +36 30 973 4843 · retrogoulashhouse.hu

Overnight — Aria Hotel Budapest

From \$220–320 USD/night, for 2 people

A third night at the same central boutique hotel.

Aria Hotel Budapest · +36 1 445 4055 · ariahotelbudapest.com

DAY 4

Jewish Quarter & Ruin Bars

A morning in the historic Jewish Quarter's synagogues and market halls gives way to an evening in the graffiti-covered courtyards that made Budapest's ruin-bar scene famous.

Great Synagogue & Jewish Quarter Walk

~2 hours, self-guided with optional entry · Synagogue entry from \$16 USD/adult

Europe's largest synagogue, an 1859 Moorish Revival landmark with a memorial garden and the Tree of Life sculpture behind it — the surrounding District VII streets hold most of Budapest's Jewish heritage sites and its densest concentration of ruin bars.

Central Market Hall

~1 hour, self-guided · Free entry

A cavernous 1897 iron-and-glass market hall on the Pest end of Liberty Bridge, ground floor stalls selling paprika, salami, and Tokaji wine, upstairs food stalls for a quick langos (fried dough) snack.

Ruin Bar Evening — Szimpla Kert

~2 hours, self-guided · Drinks from \$3–5 USD

The original ruin bar, built into a derelict apartment building's courtyard and stitched together from mismatched furniture, old bathtubs, and a Trabant car turned into a table — the template every other ruin bar in the district has copied since.

Overnight — Aria Hotel Budapest

From \$220–320 USD/night, for 2 people

A fourth and final night at the same central boutique hotel.

Aria Hotel Budapest · +36 1 445 4055 · ariahotelbudapest.com

DAY 5

Vorosmarty Square & Departure

A last, unhurried morning in the square where the trip's first coffee stop was, before the transfer to the airport.

Final Morning — Vorosmarty Square

~1 hour, self-guided · Free

Budapest's central square, framed by Cafe Gerbeaud on one side and the pedestrian shopping street Vaci utca on the other — an easy, low-key finish before checkout.

Departure — Budapest Ferenc Liszt International Airport

Self-guided · ~30 minutes from central Budapest by taxi or the 100E airport bus

Closes out five days that ran from a floodlit Parliament dome to a thermal bath's outdoor chess tables — allow the standard two-to-three-hour buffer before an international departure.