

Magyarország!



So what is it like to live in Hungary? Hungary is located in Central Europe and it is one of the few landlocked countries. Hungary is a fairly small country; it covers an area of 35,934 square miles, and is surrounded by the Carpathian Mountains, the Alps, and the Dinaric Alps. The Danube River divides Hungary and bisects the capital, Budapest into Buda, and Pest. The culture of Hungary is very rich and varied; it has great folk traditions producing embroideries, pottery, decorated buildings, and carvings.

The religion in Hungary is Christianity, and the majority (70%) are Roman Catholic. Special traditions include believing that Santa (St. Nicolas) gives gifts on the 6th December and Jesus gives the Christmas gifts on the 24th - So I open my Christmas gifts a day early! Hungarian people also celebrate name days, each day of the calendar is dedicated to 2 or 3 names, and small gifts are given.



I play the piano and am a cellist in the school orchestra; music is a very strong part in my life, and runs in the veins of the country. Hungarian music ranges from the rhapsodies of Franz Liszt to Roma and folk music. Although today's Hungary is rife with newly developed pop-bands, and modern groups, Kodály Zoltán and Bartók Béla are among the most famous Hungarian musicians who displayed the best of the Country's folk culture in their music. The characteristics of Hungarian music, as well as other aspects of the culture are influenced by the Hungarian language which derived from Finno-Ugric. For example the language, which is invariably stressed on the first syllable, lends a strongly accented dactylic rhythm to the music. Hungary's music is characteristic of accelerating rhythms and unique folk instruments: the Cimbalom (the picture: a bit like a harpsichord) and the Duda (a kind of flute). Gypsy music is very famous in the Hungarian entertainment industry, distinctive for huge orchestras of violins e.g. the Száz Tagú Zenekar - but they aren't all gypsies.

Hungary is well known for its water sports, e.g. swimming, canoeing, and water polo. Gymnastics also won Hungary many medals in many world competitions including the Olympics: one of the most famous Hungarian gymnasts is Magyar Zoltán who was the first person to execute a (stunning) routine on the pommel horse.

Education and knowledge are very important parts of the culture here. Many important mathematicians such as János Bolyai and Paul Erdős were Hungarian. Hungarians are proud of their inventions such as the match, ballpoint pen, electronic railway engine, the discovery of Vitamin C: Noble prize winner Albert Szent-Györgyi and the theoretical background of the hydrogen bomb (independently of its questionable result).

Hungary has a great literature, with many poets and writers, although not many are well known abroad due to the limited prevalence of the language - it's a very strange tongue, and you have a hard time getting around if you don't speak it. The most famous authors were Jókai Mór and Mikszáth Kálmán, while the most famous poets were Petőfi Sándor (writer of Talpra Magyar-a strong symbol of freedom) and József Attila.



Hungarian cuisine includes many pork and beef dishes, particularly goulash: a beef soup (gulya means a herd of cows) or a stew known in Hungarian as pörkölt. Dishes are often flavoured with paprika-very hot peppers, and hot onions. Hungary also produces wine, including the distinctive Tokaji from Tokaj which is often referred to as the Wine Of The Kings: And The King Of The Wines. Also when in Hungary, one should most definitely not forget to visit the elaborate cake and sweet shops, which serve some of the Country's finest cakes such as Gundel Palacinta (a flaming pancake!).

