

# Hungary – where meetings meet traditions!

The increasing number of meetings held in Hungary bears witness to its slogan: “where meetings meet traditions”. Delegates are not just interested in adequate conference facilities, they are looking for something new – discovering the traditions and authentic features of a country they have not known much about before. On ICCA’s latest world ranking list (The International Congress & Convention Association’s 2006 rankings), Budapest achieved 6th place in the city rankings. The increasing popularity of the country as a meetings and incentives destination has led the Hungarian National Tourist Office to focus particularly on conference and incentive tourism.

It is not difficult to see why Hungary is becoming so popular. Budapest, the pearl of the Danube, is a short flight away from all European capitals and most major airlines land there. Hungary’s accession to the European Union

## Budapest: the pearl of the Danube

Budapest is one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Its broad avenues, leafy parks and harmonious blend of architectural styles have earned it the nickname: the “Paris of Eastern Europe”. This city of 2 million inhabitants lies on both sides of the mighty river Danube and is divided into two main parts; Buda rising up over the right bank of the Danube and Pest on the flatter river plain to the left. Both the Danube bank promenade and the charming, nostalgic Andrassy Avenue leading to the Heroes’ Square are UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The walled Castle District is the main destination for visitors and contains some of

interesting parts of the city is Óbuda. This area is remarkable for its Roman ruins and its small quiet neighbourhoods, which seem unchanged since the turn of the century.

A great number of hotels in Budapest provide conference possibilities and this guide provides some excellent examples. The city also offers a number of unusual venues such as the Nostalgia Railway Heritage Park, providing a capacity of 1,500 and offering the original incentive of a trip on a special nostalgia train. The Central Market Hall in Budapest can also be hired for evening parties and receptions (capacity 800) and the wide selection of fruit and vegetables, salami, fruit-brandies and



Royal Palace of Buda

©Hungary Tourism

Budapest’s most important monuments and museums. It consists of the Old Town, where commoners lived during medieval times and the Royal Palace, the original site of a castle built in the 13th century. The oldest and one of the most

Hungarian specialities provides a unique setting for a special event. If you dream about organizing an unforgettable conference, how about holding it in a particularly unconventional environment: right on the Danube! The Europe

has boosted business traffic to the country and led to more frequent transport links. Already 9 low cost airlines such as Wizzair, Germanwings or Ryanair serve Budapest on a daily basis.

A visit to Hungary also represents good value for money – it is among the less expensive destinations in Europe. Hungary is also a shopping paradise with a colourful variety of souvenirs on offer: from ceramics, embroideries, hand-painted Herend and Zsolnai porcelain, antiques, Halas lace to culinary delicacies like red paprika, salami, excellent brandies and world-famous wines e.g. the Aszu of Tokaj or the Egri Bikavér (Bull’s Blood of Eger).

International visitors will quickly feel at home here, as German and English are widely understood and above all, the people of this country will welcome you with open arms; the Hungarians are well-known for their hospitality.



The newly opened Europa Congress Center

©Hungary Tourism

Conference Boat, a unique and exclusive venue is one of the largest ships suitable for C&I events. The Budapest Congress and World Trade Center has been hosting events for over 15 years. It is still the largest (1,755 in theatre style) and one of the most popular congress venues in Hungary. Recently, another brand new convention centre opened its doors: the Europa Congress Center with the most modern audio-visual technology and a maximum capacity of 720 in its largest hall, providing perfect premises for successful events.

## New meeting venues outside Budapest

Hungary’s MICE market is growing dynamically: conference hotels, event halls and other convention venues are springing up throughout the entire country one after the other. Over the past few years a new conference centre has been opened in the historical town of **Eger** in Northern Hungary. The centre, Hotel Eger & Park, has a capacity of up to 750. The new

Convention Centre in **Debrecen**, Hungary’s second largest city, has a maximum capacity of 1,170 and an exhibition area of 1,500m<sup>2</sup>.

In **Sopron** the Liszt Ferenc Convention and Culture Center with a capacity of 600, and in **Keszthely** the Balaton Congress Center (capacity of 500), have also been welcoming conference delegates for the last few years. The North Balaton Regional Conference Center (capacity 724) in **Balatonfüred**, on the northern part of Lake Balaton is also worth mentioning as is the Conference Complex of the University of Szeged in the southern part of the country, with an auditorium for 685 and a range of further section rooms.

Expo Center **Pécs** is located in the southern part of the country, with a hall for 1,200 and 10 additional larger and smaller section rooms plus a restaurant that can seat 400 persons. Further small towns, such as **Kecskemét** – just one hour’s drive from Budapest – boast event and conference centres of different sizes.



Hévíz Spa ©Hungary Tourism



Hungarian hospitality ©Hungary Tourism



Sailing boats, Lake Balaton ©Hungary Tourism



Vajdahunyad Castle ©Hungary Tourism

## Hungary – the incentive destination absolutely worth visiting

As Hungary is a relatively small country, every part of the country is accessible in a day from the capital, Budapest. One of the most scenic tourist routes is the Danube Bend about 40 kilometres north of the capital. First stop on this journey is the ancient town of Szentendre, a favourite holiday resort and historic place on the



Gellért Bath ©Hungary Tourism

Danube. Further north is the royal town of Visegrád, a former summer palace of Hungarian kings, and about twenty minutes' drive from Visegrád is the Episcopal City of Esztergom. Mention must also be made of Hungary's rich cultural life and scenery including the historical castles, the protected Puszta regions, the Great Plain, and pretty baroque towns such as Eger mentioned on the previous page. Depending on your preference, there are numerous opportunities to take part in all kinds of activities: horse-riding, golf or even

windsurfing on Lake Balaton, the largest fresh water lake in Central Europe. Hungary is also known as the land of the thousand spas and springs with curative properties can be found throughout Hungary. The most famous thermal spring created Lake Hévíz, the largest thermal water lake in Europe to be found 6km from Lake Balaton. A number of spa hotels offer special sport and wellness programmes next to these resorts.

### Budapest's incentive and banqueting facilities

Budapest offers a variety of incentive programmes such as a feast in the Buda castle labyrinth with various programmes, a parade of the hussars in the Royal Palace illuminated by flares and followed by a gala dinner in the National Gallery or a jazz concert in the wine cellars. One of the very special things about Budapest is the prevalence of thermal springs right in the centre of the city. The variety of spas and baths makes for an enjoyable and pleasant change to every conference. In the breathtaking aula of the Gellért Bath, even gala dinners up to 250 people can be held. Before dinner, while sipping champagne on the gallery, you can watch a unique water ballet performance. Budapest also has a splendid opera house built in



Opera house ©Hungary Tourism

neo-Renaissance style. Groups can enjoy a variety of musical performances ranging from folk dance, ballet, opera to a 100-strong gypsy band while gala dinners can even be held on stage.

### Medieval banquet

An esteemed guest deserves a grand reception in regal surroundings. Guests are greeted by fanfare to the historic walls of the medieval Visegrád Fortress. After watching a knights' tournament and listening to Renaissance music, the boldest guests can participate in an archery contest. At the table, the specialities of different eras are served by waiters dressed in period attire. This gastronomic excursion



Medieval banquet, greeting the king ©Hungary Tourism

is accompanied by a musical time-journey. Finish the day on the Blue Danube! Float back to wonderful Budapest on a pleasure boat.

### Romance of the Puszta

Participants are taken 80km southeast of Budapest to the town of Kecskemét in the heart of Hungary. This pleasant town with its art nouveau architecture is also the home town of Zoltan Kodály, one of the world's most renowned composers and musicologists. Participants are greeted by the mayor of Kecskemét who hosts a welcome reception in the town. From here a 100-year-old

nostalgia train takes you to Bugacpuszta - a special Hungarian landscape. Don't be surprised if a gang of outlaws attacks your train and makes off with the prettiest ladies - it's just for fun! But the unspoiled Hungarian "puszta" or plain, which



Epona, horsemen ©Hungary Tourism

you can observe from horse-drawn carriages, is for real. After a typical Hungarian lunch, watch a horse show in which Hungarian cowboys prove their riding and training skills on horseback. Participants can also try mounting a bareback horse! And if you have time, why not prove yourself in the Puszta Olympic Games! Which team is the best at throwing horseshoes, cracking the long whip, driving the carriage, stacking hay or driving geese? In the evening, participate in a real Hungarian wedding feast - you may even learn to dance the "csárdás"!

For further information and advice, please contact the Hungarian Convention Bureau: [www.hcb.hu](http://www.hcb.hu).



HUNGARY



Fishermen's Bastion ©Hungary Tourism



View from Fishermen's Bastion ©Hungary Tourism



Tapolca basin ©Hungary Tourism



National folklore ©Hungary Tourism