

## HISTORY OF BUDAPEST

Budapest, the capital of the Hungarian People's Republic, lies in the Carpathian Basin, at latitude 47°28' north and longitude 19°08' east. The Danube is one of the most important waterways of Europe. A 28-km stretch of the River Danube divides Buda on the right bank from Pest on the left. Buda is built on a number of hills, with its highest point 529 m. above sea level. Pest lies on level ground that forms part of the Great Hungarian Plain. The Danube at Budapest is a busy waterway, varying in width from 300 to 600 m. and enclosing five islands, of which Csepel in the south of the city is the largest. The city has several medicinal springs, some thermal.

Budapest is today the second most populous city in central Europe. Its 2,089,533 inhabitants in 1978 made up 19,6% of Hungary's population and included 27,8% of the country's industrial workforce. The city's area is 525.20 sq.km., two-thirds of which are on the Pest side of the river. The development plan approved by the Hungarian Council of Ministers in 1971 regards 44 communities outside the city boundaries as parts of the Budapest conurbation.

Archaeological discoveries confirm that there have been important settlements on the site of present-day Budapest for thousands of years. Celtic tribes settled on both banks of the Danube in the 3rd century BC. After the conquest of Pannonia, the Romans in the last decades BC built the town of Aquincum on the site of the Celtic settlement of Ak-ink, on the right bank of the river. In AD 124 Aquincum became the provincial capital of Lower Pannonia. Contra-Aquincum, built in AD 294 on the left bank, was the most important of a string of fortresses along the Danube designed to guard the borders and the river crossing points.

Roman rule came to an end in AD 409 with the arrival of the Huns. After the disintegration of the Hunnish Empire in AD 453, Iranic and Germanic peoples took possession of the territory of present-day Hungary, followed at the end of the 6th century by the Avars. The Avars were in turn conquered by the Franks, but small groups of Avars and Slavs were still living here when the Hungarian conquest began at the end of the 9th century. Prince Árpád, the military leader of the Hungarian settlers, made his headquarters on Csepel Island, while the chief priest, Kursan, took up residence in the former town of Aquincum, which became the first major Hungarian settlement. (The Roman amphitheatre of which remains still survive in Nagyszombat utca in Budapest's 3rd district was referred to as Kursan's Castle in charters as late as the 14th century.) In the 11th century the king founded a priory in the town. It also became the centre of the royal estates and the royal seat, where King Béla III (1172-1196) received Frederick Barbarossa as he passed through Hungary on his way to the Holy Land. This town was called Buda until the 13th century. Early 13th century documents state that it was inhabited by Latin merchants (probably Walloons), but in the later 13th century there are references to German citizens.

A community called Gézavásár grew up south of Buda by a river crossing point, not far from the site of today's Margaret Bridge, probably around the end of the 10th century. It was annexed to Óbuda in the 13th century and became known as Felhévíz after its abundance of thermal springs, still found today. A community of Bulgarian Moslem merchants from the Volga region established itself at Contra-Aquincum, which became known by the Bulgarian-Slavic name of Pest, signifying the lime kilns that existed there. Pest gained its importance from its position at the Danube crossing point of a major trading route to western Europe, known as the Kiev Road. In the 11th century, the south wall of the forerunner of the present Belvárosi templom (Inner City Church) was built upon the outer wall of a former Roman camp. By the first half of the 13th century there had been a major population change in Pest: contemporary sources were by then referring to it as a large and wealthy German town.

Soon after the Hungarian conquest a settlement grew up opposite Pest, on the right bank of the Danube, between Geldrt Hill and Castle Hill. Initially it was called Kisebb-Pest (Lesser Pest), but was later known as Alhévíz after its thermal springs. Pest on the left bank and Kisebb-Pest on the right counted legally as a single town. Around 1230 a charter granted the citizens staple rights, exemption from excise duties within the country's borders and the right to choose their own magistrates and clergy.

In 1241-2 the Tatar forces of Batu Khan devastated the towns, but after their withdrawal King Béla IV (1235-1270) founded a new town on the site known today as Castle Hill. It was initially called Pestújhegy (Pest New Hill) because many citizens of Pest came to live there. Later its name was changed to Buda, and the town on the site of Aquincum became Óbuda, meaning Old Buda. (The German name for Buda remained Ofen, which is a literal translation of the word Pest.) The king incorporated Kisebb-Pest and the southern part of Felhéziv into the new town he had founded on Castle Hill, and Pest was also subordinated to it until the beginning of the 15th century. By the second half of the 13th century Buda had become a busy commercial city and was regarded as the centre of the country. Its inhabitants included a large number of foreigners; dominant were the German merchants, who dealt mainly in cloth. Until the 15th century the city's poorer Hungarian farmers and craftsmen were excluded from any share in the city's administration. In the 14th century, Italians, mainly Florentines, settled in the city in increasing numbers; they controlled the city's financial transactions and dominated trade in luxury articles.

In the late 14th and early 15th centuries crafts developed rapidly in the city and the first guilds were formed. The code of Buda, from the beginning of the 15th century, lists 58 crafts, of which fine metalwork was the most prominent. Pest's livestock markets and wine trade also made it prosperous at the end of the 14th century. It was already the second largest city after Buda. A royal charter of 1470 raised it to equal rank with Buda.

However, Óbuda's development lagged behind. Till 1541 the estates and royal palace built there in the 13th century belonged to the queen. In spite of some building (a castle, a church and the Clarissa Convent) and the foundation of a university in 1395 by King Sigismund, Óbuda remained a rural community. Its inhabitants were Hungarians who lived mainly by vine-growing, farming and crafts.

Buda's first great period of building came in the second half of the 13th century. The long narrow plateau of Castle Hill was surrounded by a wall, and at the southern end a royal palace and several churches and monasteries were erected, among them the Church of Our Lady (today Matthias Church) and the Church of St Mary Magdalene.

The large-scale building work between the 14th and 16th centuries determined the street pattern and layout of the centre of Buda (now the Castle District), which has remained unchanged to this day. The buildings and city walls put up by King Béla IV were demolished and replaced by the Angevin kings Charles Robert (1308- 1342) and Louis the Great (1342-1382). Later Sigismund of Luxembourg, King of Bohemia, Holy Roman Emperor and King of Hungary (1387-1437); built the court of honour and the Friss Palota (New Palace) north of the castle. The royal residence at Buda reached the height of glamour under the great Renaissance King Matthias Corvinus (1458-1490), who invited Italian architects to reconstruct the Gothic façades and interiors of the palace in Renaissance style and turned Buda into a centre of classical learning. The walls around the castle were fortified with round bastions, and four main gates faced the surrounding satellite communities of Felhéziv, Szentpéter (later known as Víziváros), Logod and Alhéziv (Tabán). By the early 16th century about two-thirds of Buda's 12,000 to 15,000 inhabitants lived outside the city walls.

Pest was at first confined within today's Petőfi Sándor utca, Károlyi Mihály utca and Kecskeméti utca. North of this area lay Új-Bécs (New Vienna) and south of it Szentfalva, both of which later became parts of Pest. By about 1500 the central district of Pest had become overcrowded, and so a new city wall was built along the line of the present-day Kiskörút (Small Boulevard, formed by Múzeum körút and Várház körút), fortified with nine turrets and six round towers, and with gates opening onto the main roads out of the city. The population by then was about 10,000.

The development of Buda and Pest was halted by the defeat of the Hungarians by the Turks at Mohács in 1526. The royal court and the wealthier citizens fled from Buda. After a series of battles Buda and Pest, like the whole of central Hungary, came under Turkish rule on August 29, 1541, and remained so for 145 years. The Habsburg kings transferred their administration capital to Pozsony (now Bratislava, Slovakia) in the western part of Hungary, which remained under their control. Although Buda maintained its importance as a junction of east-west trade and the centre of the Turkish-ruled area of Hungary, repeated attempts to

recapture Buda and Pest caused lasting damage. The Pashas of Buda did not live in the splendid old royal palace; it was used first as stables and later as an arsenal. Churches were converted or new 'djamis' were built for the Moslem Turkish population and domed bath houses adorned with the Turkish crescent appeared over many thermal springs, but apart from that the Turks confined their building to a complete reconstruction of Buda's fortifications during the course of the 17th century. The Hungarian population of both Buda and Pest fell, but Turks and a variety of other peoples arrived from other parts of the Turkish Empire to settle there, bringing with them a number of new crafts, including carpet weaving.

During the eventual recapture of Pest and Buda from the Turks in 1686, still more extensive damage was done, but reconstruction and resettlement began immediately. Materials from the old walls and other ruins were used to rebuild houses, while the old street pattern and plot boundaries remained largely unchanged. In Buda, the Castle District was populated mainly by Germans, Viziváros by a mixture of Germans, Croatians and Hungarians, Serbians moved into Tabán, and Hungarians, Germans and Serbs settled in Pest. Óbuda became the property of the Zichy family, and later of the Treasury, but it did not develop beyond the rank of a market town with modest rights of self-government. Most inhabitants of Óbuda earned their living from vineyards, which with the wine trade were important sources of income to many citizens of Buda and even Pest as well.

Buda and Pest only regained their freedoms in 1703. Buda's charter refers to it as a Capital, but the diet continued to meet in Pozsony, and the government offices remained there, too. The royal residence was Vienna.

Public building after the recapture of Buda was mainly military and ecclesiastical. The old churches and the Turkish djamis were handed over to the monastic orders, which also erected new churches and monasteries in the Baroque style. About 1710 the construction of town halls was begun in both Buda and Pest, the one in front of the Church of Our Lady in Buda, the other near the Inner City Church in Pest. The ruins of the old royal palace were demolished and a new, more modest one built in its place. The huge Invalidus kaszánya (Veterans' Barracks) was also begun (now the Budapest City Hall). Once the two cities had regained their privileges, the development of Buda and Pest gathered momentum. At the end of the 17th century their joint population did not exceed 10,000. By 1777 it reached 35,000, with a proportionate increase in the built-up area. The old town walls of Pest were gradually removed after 1730 and the communities of Terézváros, Józsefváros, Lipótváros and Ferencváros grew up on former farmland and gardens outside them. The population and number of houses on the outskirts of Buda also increased considerably, and the new suburb of Krisztinaváros was built in the 1770s. Joseph II (1780-1790) transformed Buda from a nominal capital into a true centre of government. By his orders the offices of the Governing Council of the Governor-General, responsible for the administration of the country, of the Hungarian Treasury and of the Military High Command took over buildings vacated by religious orders suppressed in 1783-1784. As the royal palace of Buda did not regain its former importance, although from 1790 to 1848 the nádor (palatine, or viceroy), who also presided over the Council of the Governor-General, resided there with his court.

Building work was regulated from the time of Maria Theresa (1740-1780). Private individuals had to apply for building permits and submit drawings to the City Council. The city's own building plans and costings were considered by the Council of the Governor-General. The first fire regulations were issued in Buda and Pest in the last decades of the 18th century. The increasing administrative burden of building, paving, drainage and surveying led each city to establish a City Engineer's Office. From the end of the 18th century Buda, as the seat of government, and Pest, the still faster developing centre of trade, began jointly to perform the role of the country's capital. A factor was the university brought to Buda in 1777 and later transferred to Pest. Pest's development in the 19th century continued to be based on trade. Its supremacy was consolidated by the changes in transport means— steam shipping on the Danube in 1830, and in 1846 the first of a countrywide network of railway lines converging on Pest. The employment offered by the growing number of factories in Pest drew many people to the city. In 1846, Pest with 100,000 inhabitants was the largest city in Hungary, while Buda, with 40,000 was the third largest. The fast population growth

brought urgent tasks of urban development. On the initiative of Palatine Joseph, the first comprehensive development plan was completed by János Hild in 1805, and in 1808 the Pest Improvement Committee under the chairmanship of the Palatine was set up to implement it. The Committee regulated building activities north of the city centre on the newly demarcated plots in Lipótváros and elsewhere, and the decisions of its juries on the projects submitted helped to give the city a unified Neoclassical appearance. Mihály Pollack and Joseph Hild were among the architects in this period to create buildings of lasting value (for example Pollack's National Museum). Again on the initiative of Palatine Joseph, a Building Committee was formed in Buda in 1810. It failed, however, to agree upon a homogeneous development plan like that drawn up for Pest.

After the disastrous floods of 1838, building-work in Pest increased so sharply that comprehensive building regulations were issued in 1839. They stipulated the quality of building materials, the thickness of walls, the height of buildings, sanitary standards and façade, thus laying the foundations for Pest's architectural development as a great city.

István Széchenyi, a statesman of broad intellectual interests, did much to make Pest an industrial, cultural and political centre during the Age of Reform. He championed the idea of merging Buda and Pest into a single city that could develop into a modern capital. On his initiative, the first permanent bridge across the Danube, the Chain Bridge, was built in 1839-49 to the designs of the British engineer W. T. Clark. Some of Széchenyi's proposals for protecting the two cities from flooding were also put into effect.

During the 1848-9 War of Independence, the city became the true capital of the country. Pest was the seat of the first independent Hungarian government and the first representative parliament. The row of mansions along the Danube embankment and several other buildings in the city centre, Lipótváros and Terézváros were destroyed by the ruthless bombardment of the Austrian imperial troops as they re-entered Buda at the beginning of January 1849.

By the early 1860s. Pest's grain trade had become a dominating factor in the Hungarian economy. Pest had the largest steam-powered flour mills in Europe to process grain from the whole country. That and a number of other industries brought prosperity as early as the 1850s. The population of Pest in 1850 was 128,000, while that of Buda and Óbuda was 58,000. Most of the inhabitants were Hungarians. Town planning activity was declining. Building in Terézváros, Józsefváros, Ferencváros and along part of the Danube embankment was becoming very dense as a result of land speculation. Romanticism (Frigyes Feszli's Vigadó concert hall, 1859-63) and the early composite Eclectic style (Friedrich August Stüler's Academy of Sciences, 1860-6) appeared alongside late Neoclassicism. After the Ausgleich, or Compromise between Austria and Hungary in 1867, the Hungarian government established the Board of Public Works (Act X/1870) on the lines of London's Metropolitan Board of Works. To quote Prime Minister Andrassy, it was established "to develop the capital, Budapest. . . into a true city. . . with a place among the capitals of the civilized western world worthy of the prestige of the Hungarian state and its 15 million inhabitants." Act XXXVI/1872 unified Pest, Buda and Óbuda, and the joint administration took over on November 17, 1873. The Board of Public Works prepared a new survey of the capital. In 1871 there had been an international competition for a city development plan, and from the three prize-winning entries—two from Hungary and one from Britain—the Board drew up and executed its own plan. That plan created the present layout of Budapest, with its avenues converging on the city centre and its three rings of boulevards leading to bridges over the Danube. The achievements of the Board of Public Works were many: the final regulation of the Danube; the building of Sugárút, a 2.32-km avenue (today called Andrassy út) between the city centre and the Városliget (City Park); the completion of the Kiskörút (Small Boulevard) and Nagykörút (Great Boulevard) and of a further boulevard (Margit körút, Krisztina körút and Attila körút) in Buda; the construction of three new bridges over the Danube—the Francis Joseph Bridge (today Szabadság, i.e. Liberty Bridge), the Elizabeth Bridge and the Margaret Bridge—and the development of the districts around their approaches; and finally, the formation of Szabadság Square in place of the demolished Újépület barracks. In 1894, the Board of Public Works issued new building regulations dividing the capital into zones and providing for a suitable city centre, lower-density suburbs

in the Buda Hills, and the concentration of factories into special zones. Until the turn of the century housing construction kept pace with the rapid growth of the capital's population, in fact, over 70% of the housing that existed in 1900 had been built since 1869, mostly in the form of multi-storeyed tenements. This period also saw the construction of many public buildings that the city's role as a capital necessitated, for example Miklós Ybl's Main Customs House (1871-4) and the Opera House (1875-84), Imre Steindl's Parliament (1884-1904) Alajos Hauszmann's Supreme Court (1893-6), the Museum of Applied Arts (1893-6, by Ödön Lechner and Gyula Pártos) and Lechner's Post Office Savings Bank (1900). The Castle District also gained several impressive new additions: the Neo-Baroque complex of the Royal Palace (1890-1905, by Miklós Ybl and Alajos Hauszmann), the Neo-Gothic restoration of the Church of Our Lady (today's Matthias Church, 1873-96, Frigyes Schulek), the neighbouring Fishermen's Bastion in Romanesque style (1895-1902, Frigyes Schulek) and new government buildings. The 1896 millennium of the Hungarian conquest stimulated several important projects, including the large triple complex consisting of the Millennium Memorial, the Art Gallery and the Museum of Fine Arts in Hősök tere (Heroes' Square) by Albert Schickedanz and Fülöp Herzog at the Városliget end of Sugárút, various exhibition halls, and the first underground tramway in continental Europe, built beneath Sugárút.

The heterogeneous Romantic style that characterized the last four decades of the 19th century gave way to art nouveau towards the end of the century and the conscious attempt at creating a national style (Museum of the Applied Arts, Post Office Savings Bank).

From 1873 till the end of the First World War, technical progress was rapid. Public utilities, roads and railway stations were built (Southern Railway Station, 1861; Western Railway Station, with a cast-iron framework supplied by the Paris Eiffel company, 1877; the Eastern Railway Station, 1884). With the building of local railways at the turn of the century, a belt of heavily industrialized satellite towns around the capital became the country's largest industrial complex. Between 1869 and 1913 the population of Budapest more than trebled — from 270,000 to 930,000—while that of the seven most important satellite towns rose between 1900 and 1910 from 105,000 to 183,000. The unification of Budapest with its outer industrial zone was being suggested as early as 1908.

In 1918-9 Budapest was the centre of the bourgeois democratic and socialist revolutions, and the most radical changes brought by the Hungarian Republic of Councils applied mainly in Budapest. The Budapest Revolutionary Workers' and Soldiers' Council, formed on April 7, 1919, after democratic elections, introduced a number of new measures to simplify the administration of the city, including a development plan that involved annexing the city's suburbs.

The treaties terminating the First World War reduced Hungary to one third of its former extent. The capital, with its almost one million inhabitants, thus became disproportionately large, and was unrivalled by any other city in the country, of which the population was now 7,606,971. Budapest continued to act as an economic magnet within a country that was otherwise overwhelmingly agricultural. Between 1921 and 1930 the number of factories and workshops in Budapest doubled. Half of the country's industrial production was concentrated in and around the capital.

The modernization of Budapest continued, but at a slower rate. The public utilities and public transport authorities came under city control. A large covered market was established to ensure the city's regular food supplies. Between 1920 and 1941 the number of buildings increased by about 50%, but the majority of the additions were public buildings (hospitals, baths, churches, etc.), and there was still a shortage of dwellings. Until the Second World War building was spontaneous and development plans were drawn up only for a few smaller districts. Under one such plan Tabán, an old district of Buda that had an evocative atmosphere despite its poverty, was demolished in the 1930s and replaced by a park. Building increased steadily, especially on the outskirts. Modern styles asserted themselves primarily in private building. The new villas and freehold apartments in the Buda suburbs displayed evidence of Bauhaus influence. From the 1930s increasing numbers of commercial, industrial and public buildings were constructed in modern styles. When Hungary entered the Second World War on the side of Hitler's Third Reich, all building work

was suspended. Occupation by the Nazis made Hungary a theatre of war for eight months, during two months of which Budapest itself was a battlefield. Bombing and street fighting destroyed whole rows of houses and sections of the capital. Out of 40,000 buildings only 10,000 remained unscathed. All the bridges were in ruins. Liberated with the help of the Soviet Army, the population, together with the democratic forces and the new leading body of the city started to rebuild the ruined capital.

Removal of the rubble and restoration work began at a rapid pace. At the same time an up-to-date master development plan that included the annexation of the outer suburbs was drawn up. By Act XXVI/1949, seven towns and 16 villages were annexed, giving Budapest its present-day boundaries. The long overdue amalgamation increased the capital's area by 250% and its population by 50% (from 1,057,912 to 1,590,316); the number of districts (boroughs) into which it was divided grew from 14 to 22, while four existing districts were increased in size.

The first comprehensive city development plan was completed in 1960 and approved also by the government. New housing estates were already being built in accordance with it. However, the war had caused such a shortage of housing that modernization of the old inner districts of the capital foreseen in the plan had to wait till the end of the 1960s. The first section of the underground railway (Metro) system was opened to the public in 1970. The insufficient area available for housing and industry led in 1970 to the elaboration of a fresh city development plan.

The general progress after 1945 caused certain changes in the function of the historic centre of the city. Government offices were transferred from the ruined Castle District to Pest. After decades of reconstruction work, the Castle District, including the Royal Palace, which from the 18th century till 1945 was the centre of public administration, has been made over to cultural institutes and tourist purposes. On the Pest side the inner city has continued to be a cultural and shopping centre. The district between Deák Ferenc utca and Szent István körút, the old Lipótváros, had been occupied before 1945 mainly by banks, insurance companies and Stock Exchange. Today it has become an administrative, economic and, to an extent, a scientific centre.

The development plan of 1960 took into consideration houses and building complexes of historic or scenic value. However, the preservation of historic buildings and monuments in Hungary has a much longer past. In the 1850s, Lipót Varásdi, City Engineer of Buda, was commissioned by the Imperial and Royal Central Commission for the Identification and Maintenance of Historic Buildings in Vienna to prepare a schedule of historic buildings and monuments in Buda and Óbuda, and to select those worthy of preservation. In the 1860s the Hungarian Academy of Sciences placed commemorative tablets on several buildings in the Castle District, showing the date they were built and their history. A National Commission for the Preservation of Historic Monuments set up in 1872 was declared permanent in 1881, and the listing and restoration of the country's historic buildings and monuments began. The first detailed schedule of historic monuments in Budapest was compiled by Jenő Kismarty Lechner in 1924. In 1959 a new schedule was drawn up in accordance with revised legislation, and restoration of buildings of various ages in accordance with up-to-date preservation principles began. Since 1957 restoration, related research work and collection of material has been controlled by a National Monument Inspectorate, while the preservation of historic buildings and monuments in the capital has been entrusted to the Budapest Monument Inspectorate responsible to the City Development and Architectural Department of the Budapest Council. Act III/1964 again amended the law on the preservation of historic buildings and monuments and included the concept of areas of historic importance.

Of the projects completed, the reconstruction of the Royal Palace and of the entire Castle District is the most important. It included excavation of the medieval palace and other buildings that had been covered by several metres of earth. Long forgotten Gothic doors and windows, and other medieval details, were discovered in most of the damaged buildings of the Castle District. Today both the Palace and the Castle District as a whole reflect the medieval Hungarian capital with greater authenticity than before. Excavations in the centre of Pest have brought to light the remains of Contra-Aquincum's fortifications and the

foundations of the Hatvan and Kecskemét Gates and their round bastions. During reconstruction and the erection of new housing estates in Óbuda several hitherto unknown remains of Aquincum have been unearthed.