



Veszprém-Balaton 2023  
European Capital of Culture

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# Moods, Flavours, Experiences

Roaming Veszprém and the Bakony-Balaton Region

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# History and religion

Veszprém



## Sacral Time Travel in the Company of Medieval Saints and Castellans

From a distance, it seems as if Veszprém has its very own compass. A pointed steeple rises from among the buildings of the historic city centre. Of course, once you check your travel guide, you'll soon realize that it is a spiked watchtower, which the locals simply call the Fire Tower. Appropriately so since, in the Middle Ages, it was from this lookout that watchmen kept an eye out for fires breaking out around the city. The story's authenticity can be verified by climbing the spiral staircase to the observation platform, 48 metres above street level.

The Fire Tower is also a defining symbol of Veszprém in another respect. Like a giant offline GPS, it shows the way to the entrance of the castle district. Enter through the gate and you begin a journey both historical and sacral. Along the way, the rulers tell us about times a thousand years ago. We learn that the lives of the saints were not only spent in prayer and why modern art is but one step away from medieval frescoes.

We learn how a late Roman Empire timber fortification was transformed into the proud Castle we know today. Why was Veszprém the favourite city of the Blessed Gisela, the wife of Hungary's founder king, Saint Stephen? Where was their son, Prince Emeric raised and who exactly is the mysterious parachutist whose bronze plaque adorns the side of the Heroes' Gate, the entrance to the Castle?

He was, we are proud to inform you, Faustus Verancsics, a Croatian-born castellan whom we may honour as the da Vinci of Veszprém for inventions that far preceded their time.

One legend about Faustus Verancsics tells of him standing on the ramparts in Veszprém, contemplating how to descend to his sweetheart. That was when the idea of a pioneering invention formed in his mind: by parachute, of course!

Also, according to local legend, a number of tunnels run from the Castle in different directions around Veszprém. They were excavated during the Middle Ages by the local people, mainly to serve as escape routes.

No historian questions the fundamental role played by Veszprém in consolidating Christianity and Christian culture in Hungary a thousand years ago. To verify that, you do not need to dive into the sea of documents of the rich archival collection of the archdiocese, although that is possible if you so wish. It can just be enough to look at how many churches and chapels there are in the castle district. But don't just count them; it is far more exciting to discover them from both the outside and the inside. Should you feel confused about your knowledge of art history along the way, let us assure you that you are not at fault. Veszprém Castle survived

numerous battles and fires over the centuries and our hardworking ancestors rebuilt the walls each time. That is the reason why, for example, Saint Michael's Cathedral carries gothic, baroque and neo-Romanesque features.

A forearm bone of Queen Gisela, beatified in 1911, is preserved in a shrine next to the basilica's altar. It is of particular interest that the dexter of her husband the king, Saint Stephen, has also survived through the ages and is kept in Saint Stephen's Basilica in Budapest.

Veszprém Castle is elegant in itself even though, over time, many fires raged inside its walls and it has had to endure numerous sieges.

During Ottoman times, barrages of cannon fire were launched by the enemy from a strategically important point, a peninsular outcrop north of the Castle. The rock, known by the locals as Benedek Hill, is another guardian of numerous local legends. Medieval tombs were found here and a chapel used to stand atop it; it is said to have been named after the chapel erected by Benedictine monks. The caves carved into its bowels functioned as a military hospital during World War II.

It is worth walking out to the farthest, still safe edge of Benedek Hill, from where you can take a panoramic photo of the city or a selfie with the twin statue of Saint Stephen and Queen Gisela on the castle wall at the same time.

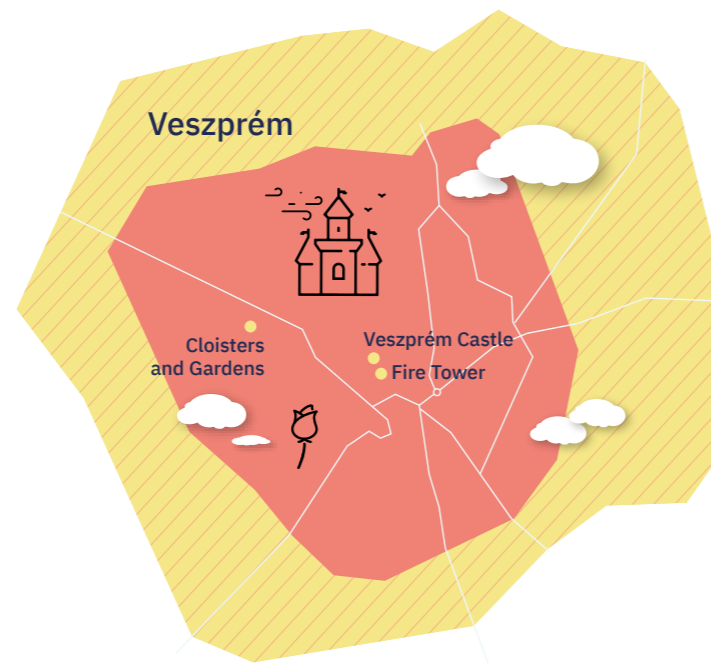


You may continue your historic walk down the steep steps from Benedek Hill in two directions, along a route called Monasteries and Gardens. You will encounter plenty of both along the way.

On the path, voted the most beautiful in the country, you will discover the former nunnery of Saint Margaret alongside the rose garden. Soon after that, you will find ruins that survived from the time of the foundation of the state, as well as a Jesuit church from the 17th century. Both offer plenty of legends to learn about Veszprém.

Several legends about the Greek Orthodox nunnery were spun over time and have been spread by word of mouth by Veszprém locals. One is that a chasuble, later converted into a Hungarian coronation mantle, was embroidered at this place. According to the story, Queen Gisela embroidered the work of art with her own hands. Whether that is true or false will remain a mystery forever.

From the castle's base, the entire walk is accompanied by the quiet babble of the Séd stream. It may be soothing and tranquil music to the ears of visitors today, though not so long ago, it used to be the background noise to hard daily work for many locals. Even as late as the beginning of the 20th century, numerous water mills were in operation in the city. This lovely little stream, originating in nearby forest springs and flowing into the Sárvíz river near Székesfehérvár, provided livelihood for entire generations of millers. The former significance of the milling industry is demonstrated today by the Fenyves Mill, reconstructed under the Veszprém-Balaton 2023 European Capital of Culture programme.



# Lake Balaton

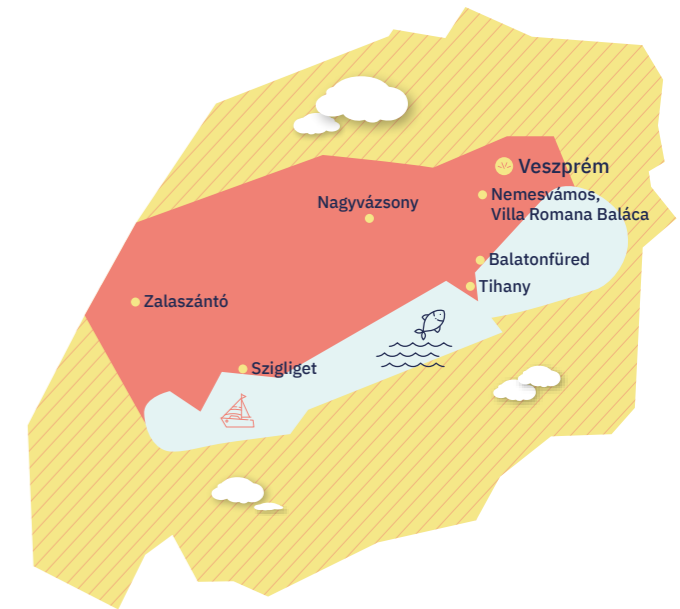


## Riding Waves of Elegance in Space and Time

It takes less time to get from Veszprém to the shore of Lake Balaton than to ride any of the Budapest Metro lines from one terminus to the other. And if, instead of going directly, you are also willing to take a detour or two, for example, through the Balaton Uplands, you can easily journey back to the Roman period. Especially if you approach by way of Nemesvámos, because on the outskirts of the settlement stands the Villa Romana Baláca, a complete Roman villa. It is not just the 2,000-year-old farm and the remains of a few walls that have survived, but the mosaic floor in the home of its owner, a Roman general, is also there to be admired. The renovation of the ancient villa farm is supported by the Veszprém-Balaton 2023 European Capital of Culture programme. Digital attractions and other benefits for tourists will be added in 2022.

There have been other, more recent heroes who have lived here since the Roman era. A bit farther away, in Nagyvázsony, in the halls and tower of the Kinizsi Fortress, you can acquaint yourself with the chivalrous legend of Pál Kinizsi. According to popular folklore, one day, when there was no tray available, he offered a cooling jar of water to a young lady on a millstone he held up with one hand. No one since has repeated this feat, although should you wish, you are welcome to try.

In addition to ancient and medieval legends, Lake Balaton preserves many more moments and monuments that are not only cherished gossip but are tangible and accessible to this day. One central location for such cultural gems is Balatonfüred.



István Széchenyi, Károly Kisfaludy, Mór Jókai, Lujza Blaha are but a few names from Hungarian history and culture that shaped Balatonfüred. And what proves that their memory lives on beyond the stories told? The proof is in the waterfront streets with exhibition spaces and hotels adjacent to each other, and museums, restaurants, and cafes – all built or established by those groundbreaking figures. You can still sense the elegance of the 19th century aristocracy in Balatonfüred today. Plan a slow, comfortable walk on Tagore Promenade at the lakeside, just as it was done in the 19th century. If you are lucky, you may see the excursion ships ‘Jókai’ or ‘Kisfaludy’, replicas of the ones that their namesakes used several generations ago.

The first steamer on the lake went into operation at Balatonfüred in 1846, on István Széchenyi’s 55th birthday and the pleasure-boat ‘Kisfaludy’ that ploughs the waters today is an exact replica of that ship.

Nothing compares to the experience of sipping a fragrant cappuccino or tasting a cooling bowl of ice cream on the Balatonfüred waterfront, especially with the contours of white sails dotting the waterscape. Do not seek distant landmarks on the other side of the lake, as the Tihany peninsula completely blocks the view of the western basin of the lake. The twin towers of the Abbey on the hilltop are proof that the history of Lake Balaton was not only written in Füred.

Medieval locals erected the Benedictine monastery in Tihany, which soon acquired yet another, if not the best-known, legendary feature of the region: the Tihany echo. A shout in good weather from the right location on the peninsula resonates perfectly, even a number of times, as the sound waves bounce back from the high walls of the Abbey. Test it yourself: let go a shout from Echo Hill towards the monastery. After that you can also visit the cosy restaurant built alongside and enjoy its unrivalled panorama.



As opposed to the noisy hikers of today, silent monks bored into the rock wall and carved out their cells on the steep eastern side of the peninsula. As part of a pleasant walk in the woods, you can see the remains of the living quarters of those friars. They raise the question of whether the unique panorama would be worth making your bed on cold rock every night.

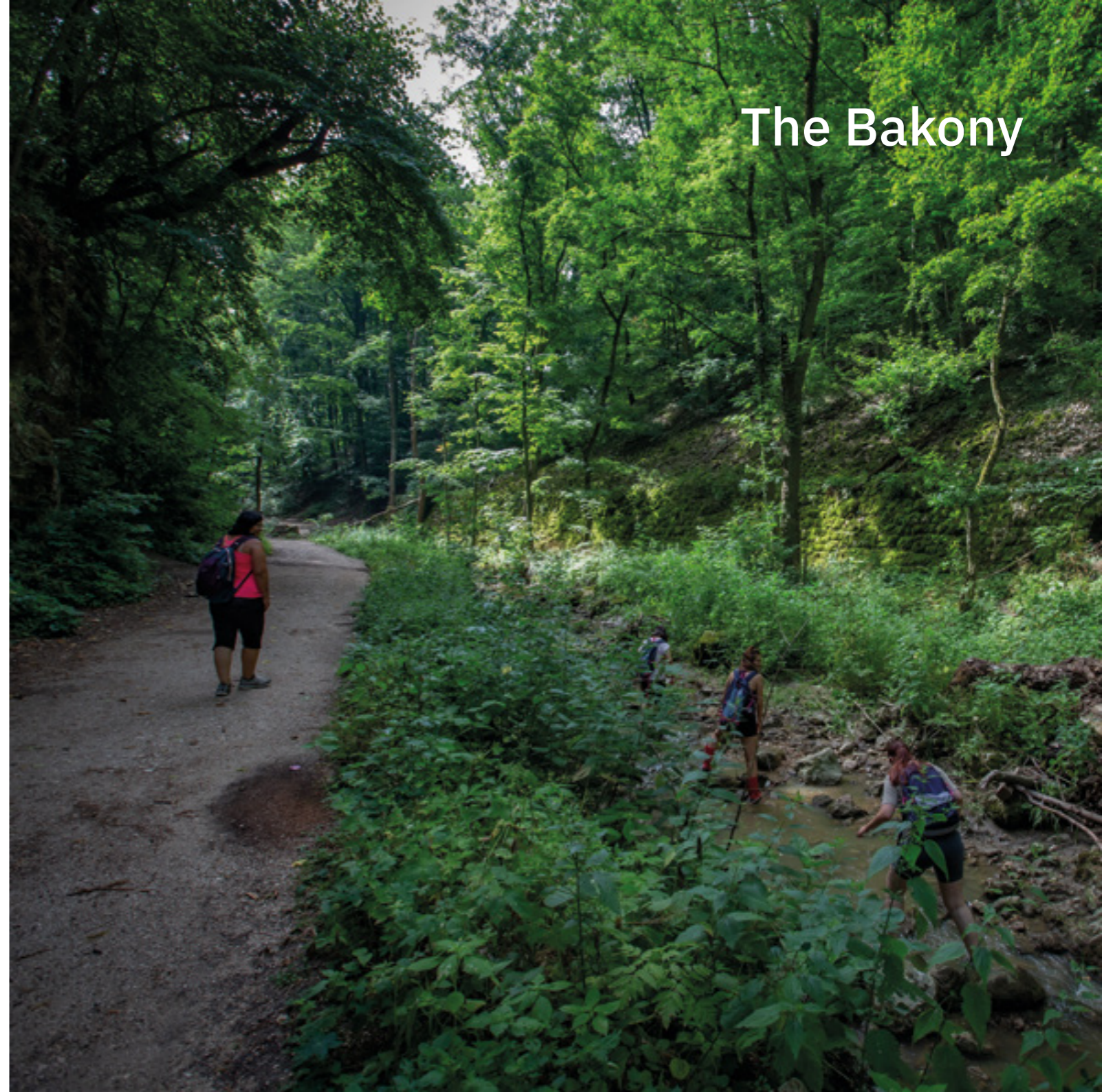
Legend has it that there was once an island in Lake Balaton, somewhere west of Tihany. The island's name was Losta, and it was inhabited by fishermen. In the Middle Ages, the lake flooded the island several times as water levels rose and fell. Eventually, following the Turkish occupation, the houses on the lakeshore were built using the dismantled structures of the island village.

After the rolling hills of Tihany, there is a much steeper hill to climb to reach the castle of Szigliget.

The effort is worth it as, in addition to the panorama, you can also learn the story of the onetime defenders of the fortress. In those times, the water level of Lake Balaton was so high that Szigliget was surrounded by wetlands, forming a swampy, marshy defensive zone around the settlement.

Although the Balaton Uplands is home to many Christian chapels and cultural memorials, other cultures have also left their marks for you to discover. It is enough to travel to Zalaszentő, where a Buddhist stupa rises from the Kovács Hill. It is no accident that this eastern religious pilgrimage site is called the Peace Stupa as peace and serenity, characteristic of Buddhism, surround the area, constantly watched over by two Buddhist monks.

## The Bakony



## Discover the Vibrant Culture of the Forest

As you head north from Veszprém, instead of towards Lake Balaton, it is like entering a completely different world. The cultural buzz is replaced by a serene yet vibrant feeling. The Bakony range of hills and its dense forests radiate tranquillity. Perhaps it is due precisely to that particular trait of the region that numerous religious centres were established there, each offering exciting discovery and perfect solace at the same time.

One that stands out is Bakonybél and its community of Benedictine monks, who are living proof that it is wrong to think that being monastic is strictly about retreating from the world.



The Benedictines of Bakonybél are quite the opposite, since they garden, run a farm, and make herbal teas and syrups, though what is even more peculiar is that they release an album with a section of their favourite secular music every Christmas. They are also highly active on social media, building a bridge between a unique form of religious life and secular existence.

The monks of Zirc are also serious players in the cultural and sacral life of the area. They live and work in the picturesque Abbey of Zirc, the capital of the Bakony. Should you decide to visit them, be prepared to take home a little bit of the tranquillity of monastic life as well as some of the goods they produce, especially the famous Zirc Abbey beer.

According to the records of the time, the Zirc monks first brewed beer in 1735 and did it to the great satisfaction of all. The tradition was revived in 2015, combining centuries-old science and manual labour with modern equipment.

# Culture

# Veszprém

## A Jewellery Box Filled with Cultural Treasures

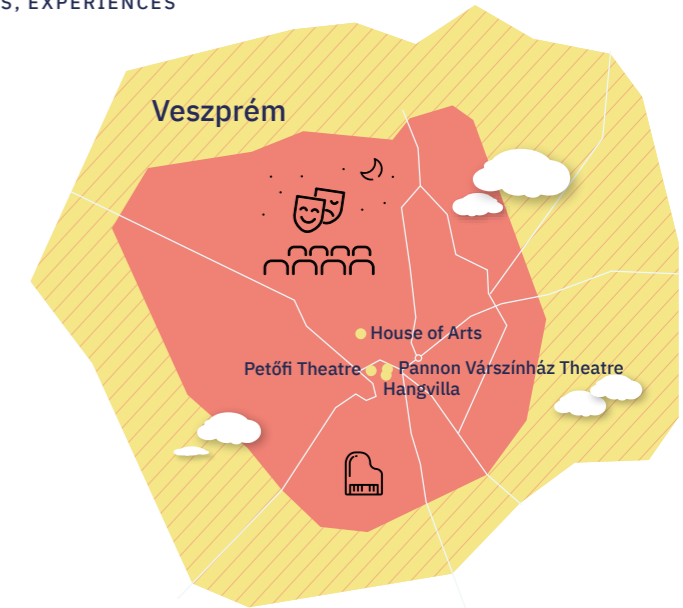
It would be challenging to say which type of art best characterizes Veszprém's cultural life. Music would undoubtedly be one of the first, though classical and modern fine art and theatre follow closely. During her first visit here, a world-famous singer called the city a jewellery box of music.

It is hardly a coincidence that the cultural centre in the heart of Veszprém is called Hangvilla (a pun on Tuning fork and Villa of Sounds). It is, in some ways, the alpha and omega of the city's cultural offering with its regular classical and popular music concerts, theatre performances and exhibitions.

Hangvilla also boasts the Award of Excellence in Architecture, and from a bird's eye view, its shape is reminiscent of a grand piano.

However, all that Veszprém offers in culture cannot be introduced only through the programme of a single institution. So, having finished your morning coffee in Hangvilla's café, it is worth acquainting yourself and exploring the city's daytime cultural offer up-close, irrespective of sector and style, before the evening programmes begin.

The art scene in Veszprém has always represented freedom and intellectual heights.



An excellent example of that is the House of Arts located in the historic castle, where contemporary artists and painters take turns in presenting a new exhibition each week. In addition to the numerous Hungarians, world-famous artists have also presented their works here, including Bernar Venet, whose steel statue is on exhibit in the House of Arts' courtyard. Other creations of that French conceptual artist have been on show in New York and Paris.

Along with the House of Arts, the László Vass collection is also worth visiting in the castle district. The renowned art collector, who selected and organized works of art over many decades, chose this city as the site for his permanent exhibition.

László Vass began his career as a shoemaker, and his name is associated with the world-famous bespoke shoe brand Vass Shoes.

What makes Veszprém Castle special as a cultural venue is the combination of present-day and medieval arts. In addition to contemporary exhibitions, ecclesiastical exhibition spaces, such as the Archbishop's Palace, offer exhibitions presenting the millennia-old treasures of Hungarian Christianity, shedding light on yet another segment of the city's rich history.

Of course, to truly get to know the cultural life of Veszprém, it may be enough to visit a cosy downtown bistro. We may easily find ourselves again among works of contemporary artists or happen upon an impromptu concert. For example, in the cultural bistro Papírkutya (Paper Dog), surprise concerts spring up countless times.

Veszprém is proud to be a 'City of Music', a title awarded by UNESCO. This international recognition is awarded to cities with exceptional emphasis on cultivating music and presenting various musical styles. Veszprém is now in great company alongside Liverpool, England, the hometown of The Beatles; Kingston, Jamaica, the capital of reggae; and Seville, Spain, where Flamenco originates.



## Enchanted by Festivals

Just as impromptu performances eventually grow into full cultural productions, elements of improvisation are manifest in the festivals that Veszprém offers. The flagship event, without doubt, is the Street Music Festival which, every summer for more than 20 years, has been filling inner-city squares and parks with Hungarian and foreign musicians giving unforgettable and open performances to the crowds.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, a premium concert experience is offered by another audience-favourite summer festival, VeszprémFest, with artists such as Tom Jones, Lisa Stansfield, Jamie Cullum, Emeli Sandé, Roger Hodgson, and too many others to list.

But it does not stop there. In August, the Hungarian and international classical music elite led by the local Mendelssohn Chamber Orchestra presents itself at the Auer Festival, evoking Antonio Stradivari in the City of Queens.

In addition to music, from time to time other art forms are introduced at the festivals. Veszprém, together with Balatonfüred and Balatonalmádi, is now the new venue of the Hungarian Motion Picture Festival. The multi-day event features film premieres and showcases the very best of the Hungarian film industry. During the festival, don't be surprised to be sitting down to lunch in the cosy Old Town Square with a famous actor or director at an adjacent table. On festival nights,



city centre squares are transformed into cinemas, turning the passion for movies into a genuine community experience.

Over the decades Veszprém has served as the shooting location for a number of films. Amongst others, Miklós Jancsó filmed his 1969 classic 'Fényes szelek' (The Confrontation) in the city, and several scenes of recent success, #sohavégetnemérős (#neverending) took place in the city.

Were we to try and list all the cultural programmes and attractions, it would take all evening, and we would miss the performance in one of the two theatres, the Petőfi Theatre and the Pannon Várszínház Theatre, both offering quality stage productions. Both companies are careful to stage a variety of plays, from humorous pieces to classics, when planning their season.

# Lake Balaton

## Waves of Culture, Flooding the Shore

Driving to the Balaton lakeshore from Veszprém takes only as long as it takes a band to play their first three numbers at a concert. Of course, if you have more time and want to cycle to the lakeside settlements, the ride may take as much time as Act One at the theatre.

It doesn't take too long to find programmes around here either since, on summer evenings, you are likely to stumble upon an acoustic concert on almost all the beaches or moles.

If, in addition to such impromptu events, you are looking for an authentic festival atmosphere, pedal up to the picturesque village of Paloznak – it is only a few uphill kilometres from the lakeside cycle path. Paloznak is the home of the regular 'Jazz Picnic'. Take a blanket along, spread it out in the grass, and enjoy a VIP experience at the festival as well-known pop-jazz performers start their concert.

It is beyond any doubt that Balatonfüred is one of the major centres of cultural life by the lakeside. Upon arrival in the reform-era town, it's a good idea to go to one of the historic confectioneries, the 'Bergmann' or the 'Kedves' ('Dear'). By the time you finish your cake or torte, you'll be ready to immerse yourself in the unique local atmosphere.

At the entrance to the Balatonfüred mole, a life-size bronze statue captures the figure of the actor István Bujtor, (the 'Hungarian Bud Spencer' AKA Csöpi Ötvös, in his best-known movie), practising his passion - sailing on Lake Balaton.

Immersing himself is probably what very popular 19th century writer Mór Jókai did when he first arrived in Balatonfüred and promptly fell in love with the town. So much so that he bought a villa just a few hundred metres from the lakeshore and then wrote several of his novels there. You are free to visit the writer's house today and, although they no longer serve the bean soup named after him at lunchtime, the villa still offers an exciting insight into the world of one of the greatest figures of Hungarian literature.



It is no accident that a bean soup was named after Jókai. It was his favourite, a delicacy enriched with pork knuckle and petittoes, which he could consume at any time of the day or night.



These buildings will quickly captivate you. Should that happen, you must not stop but continue on to Keszthely, where the Festetics Palace not only provides an insight into the world of the bourgeoisie, but that of the former Hungarian aristocracy. In addition to learning about the customs of the ladies and gentlemen of the time as you walk from room to room, you can also relax in the cosy café and confectionery, where no one will mind if you raise your little finger as you sip your coffee.

The area around Lake Balaton also holds extraordinary inspiration for artists. Their works are often on show in the streets of one or other charming Balaton Uplands village, though it is worth taking the whole day to get to know them more closely in the many galleries. Some excellent locations for that are, for example, the 'Vaszary Gallery' in Balatonfüred, the 'Salföld Barn Gallery' or 'The First Hungarian Spectacle Gallery' in Diszel.

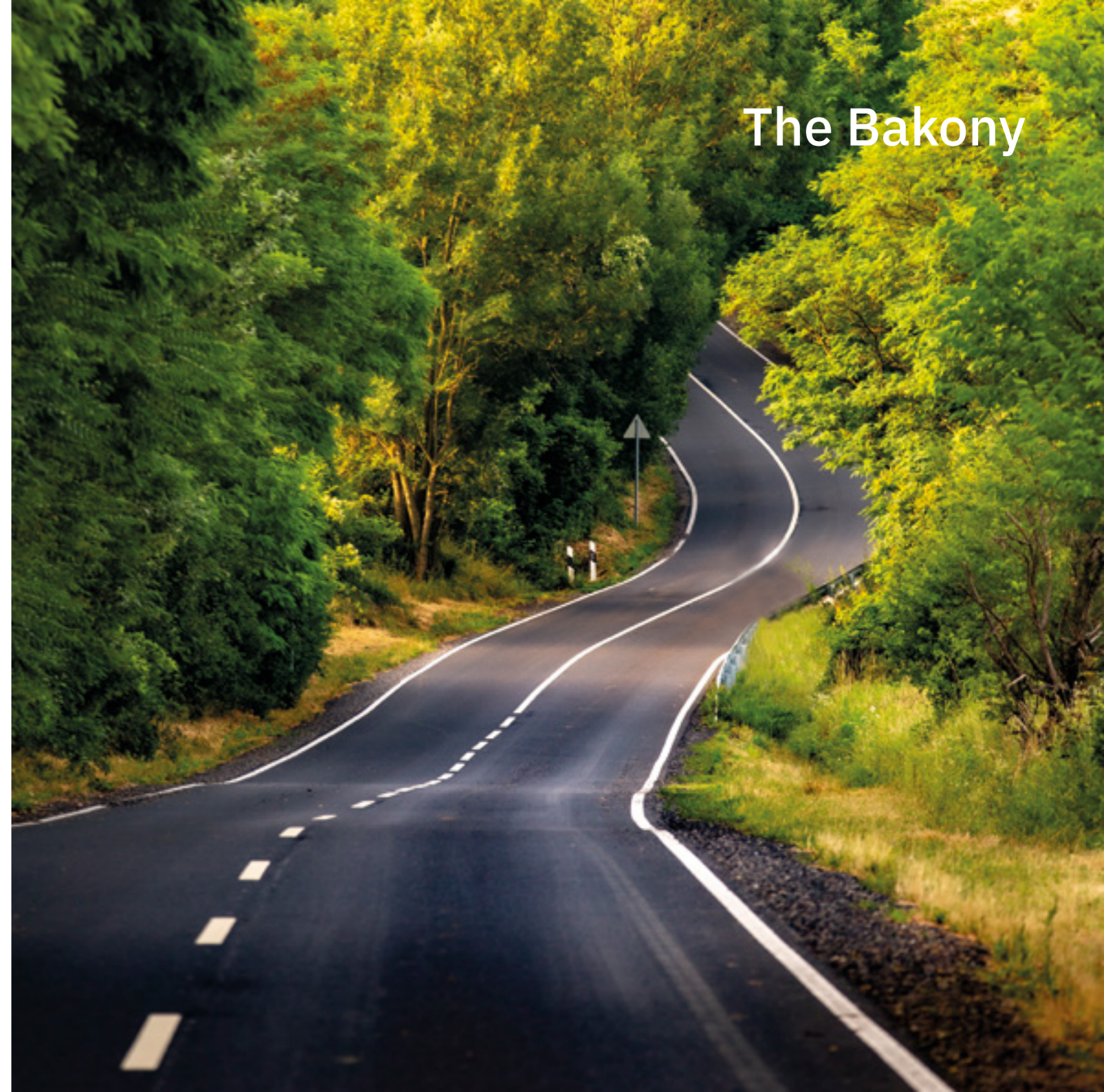


## Listen to Muses Whisper in the Wind

The question of from where an artist draws inspiration will elicit many answers. Some will capture a moment in the bustle of a major metropolis and turn it into a masterpiece of fine arts, music, or literature. Then, there are those who prefer to invite their muse for a date in a quiet, secluded corner of the world. For them, the small villages of the Bakony provide the perfect place and opportunity to create. It is no coincidence that many writers and musicians have a house in one of these small villages, and it is easy to run into them even if you are only on a short visit.

But you do not have to be an artist of national or worldrenown to have an ear for the muse's call in the Bakony. Take Magyarpolány, for instance, where the villagers one day decided to stage the 'Passion of Christ'. That was back in the early 1990s, but they have staged their performance several times a year since. The actors may be amateurs, but the show presented is a profound work of art.

## The Bakony



Active

Veszprém

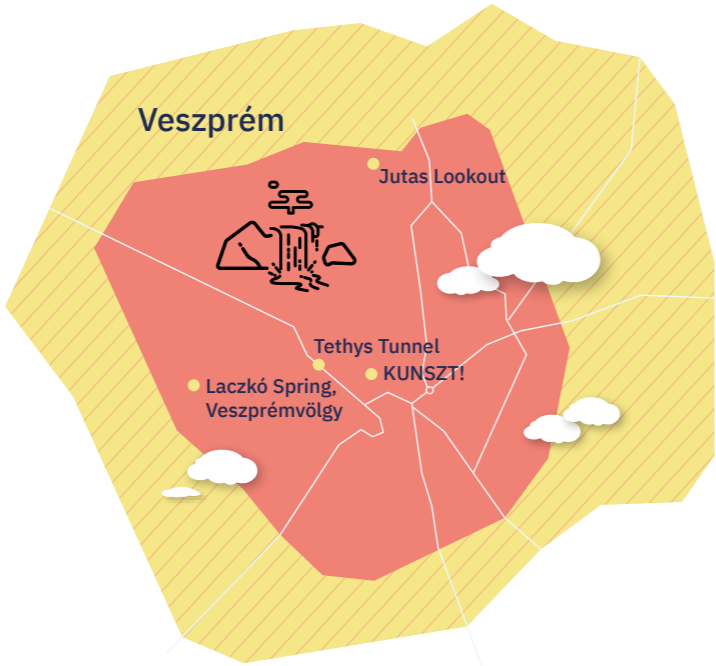


# Cloisters and Enchanted Forest Paths, all within the City Limits

Find a good breakfast place in Veszprém, such as the ‘KUNSZT’, order the most filling breakfast on the menu, and then list the sites you wish to visit on your city tour that day. A hearty breakfast will be helpful, as will a comfortable but tightly laced boots. No matter how long the list is, you will undoubtedly come upon hidden surprises and encounter unexpected experiences you would not want to miss.

Start the tour immediately in one of the most extraordinary museums of Veszprém, which not so long ago served to detain dangerous bandits.

On the western side of the castle, the steep building of the former castle jail rises from the mountain, where the dreaded 19th century outlaw, Jóska Sobri of the Bakony, is said to have been held. Today you can safely enter the building, converted into a museum, without fear of hearing the padlock click shut behind you. It is worth recalling that there were prisoners who attempted to escape from this high-security prison. How successful their attempts were will be revealed during your visit.



Prisoners were held in the Castle Prison as late as 2003 when the last prisoners were transferred to a modern facility. The building became a museum and will soon be accessible through Ruttner House under the Castle. Visitors will be taken up to the cells by lift from the former trading house.

Next, it is worth hopping on an electric bike or scooter – both are available for rent. The city is full of hills and valleys, so alternative modes of transport may be helpful. They say that in Veszprém, two things are hopeless to find: flat areas and straight streets.

When you come to the wooded area on the northern edge of the city, it makes no difference how straight the path you took was. The site, dotted with pavilions and fire pits, is perfect for evoking the intimate atmosphere of summer evening bacon fat grilling. For that Hungarian speciality, you need to stock up on the finest fat bacon and sausages beforehand, best purchased from local producers at the bi-weekly Sunday market in Old Town Square. There you will even get helpful tips for preparing the delicacies.

The lookout tower, named after the brave warrior Jutas, the son of Árpád the Conqueror, is not another simple wooden structure. The designers built it respecting the Pythagorean theorem in mathematics, following the rules of the golden ratio. It is hardly visible from the ground but climbing the steep and snarling stairs will make you feel that you are not dealing with just another ordinary lookout tower.

Another option is to start from the city centre in a westerly direction until you arrive at Gulya Hill. The term ‘hill’ is deceptive since we are talking about a wooded plateau, which evokes an enchanted forest from a fairy tale. Those who know these stories need not be reminded of the thrills of passing through such a wild landscape. Along the winding paths, there is a playground, a sports field, a running circuit, a picnic area, and since the Zoo is right behind the trees, sometimes you’ll hear the cry of an exotic animal. The most significant adornment of Gulya Hill is in the middle of the area: the unique metal structure of the Queen Gisela Lookout, reminiscent of the crown of our former queen. 22 metres from the ground above the foliage, tourists who



find the structure in the thickets of the trails can admire the city and the far off Bakony ranges from the top.

Whether you head to the Zoo or descend to Veszprém Valley and the world of monasteries, either decision is sound. If you take the latter route, you will pass by Laczkó Spring, where you may fill your empty water bottle so that you can once again grab your bicycle and head for Lake Balaton on one of the bicycle paths.

## Places not to be missed in Veszprém:

- The Fire Tower;
- Queen Gisela Lookout;
- Jutas Lookout, for far-looking tourists;
- Laczkó Spring, for those who want to cool off;
- Gulya Hill, for those willing to take a 20-minute walk to get away from the bustle of the city;
- The Cloisters and Gardens walk path for a romantic atmosphere and to explore historical legends;
- The Tethys Tunnel for explorers of prehistoric times

# Lake Balaton

## On Land, on Water and in the Air around Lake Balaton

Arriving in Veszprém from the direction of the capital, you witness an interesting phenomenon: only the steeples and top floors of Veszprém's taller buildings are visible at first. That is no optical illusion: it merely shows that Veszprém, its hills notwithstanding, is located in a valley. You will experience that if, for example, you start for Lake Balaton from the city centre on any cycle path. After the initial ascents, you'll crest the slopes of the Balaton Uplands, and from there, it's a pleasant descent in the direction of the lake.

If you choose the route to Balatonalmádi, it is advisable to keep your hands on the brakes. Not because the slope is too steep, but rather because suddenly a bistro called 'Zöld' ('Green') appears and beckons from among the trees.

After you have refreshed yourself, you will quickly reach the shore of the lake, where a plethora of possibilities will open up to you.

In Balatonalmádi, for example, you can work on your sense of balance on the increasingly popular SUPs. Should you not trust the unpredictable waves but are still attracted to the blue waters of Balaton, you may rent a sailboat in many of its ports. The captains are familiar with the winds, and you will soon experience the joy of the moment when the unfolding white

sail catches the breeze. Though you will have a similar experience if you buy a ticket for an excursion boat and admire the undulating hills of the Balaton Uplands from a unique perspective.

If you would rather look for other experiences on land, it is worth including Tihany in your itinerary. The village only occupies a small part of the peninsula and the rest of its area offers a real close-to-nature tour, including the unmissable Inner Lake. If you are lucky, you will even encounter a native ground squirrel or two.



From Tihany, you can continue your journey along the southern shore after a short ferry ride operating all year-round. Many cyclists are familiar with the concept of the Balaton Small Circuit. As part of this bike performance tour, they do not go around the entire lake but cross the lake at Tihany by ferry and turn back east on the south side, to crown the sporting achievements of their day with a cooling dip and a well-deserved Riesling spritzer.

The more determined can continue and complete the Great Balaton Circuit. That involves cycling about 200 kilometres, which is wisely split over several days. Not only because there is the opportunity to rest and recharge from time to time but also to stop by the miracles the Balaton Uplands offer. The 'Sea of Stones' at Szentbékállá is just one of them - the natural formation is a relic of the era when volcanoes still shaped the Balaton Uplands.

One of the curiosities of the 'Sea of Stones' is the swinging rock. It is a gigantic block of stone among thousands of others. With a combined effort, visitors can rock this monster, as the boulder rests on just three points on top of another rock. It is a ten-tonne stone bench and another phenomenon to be discovered and experienced.

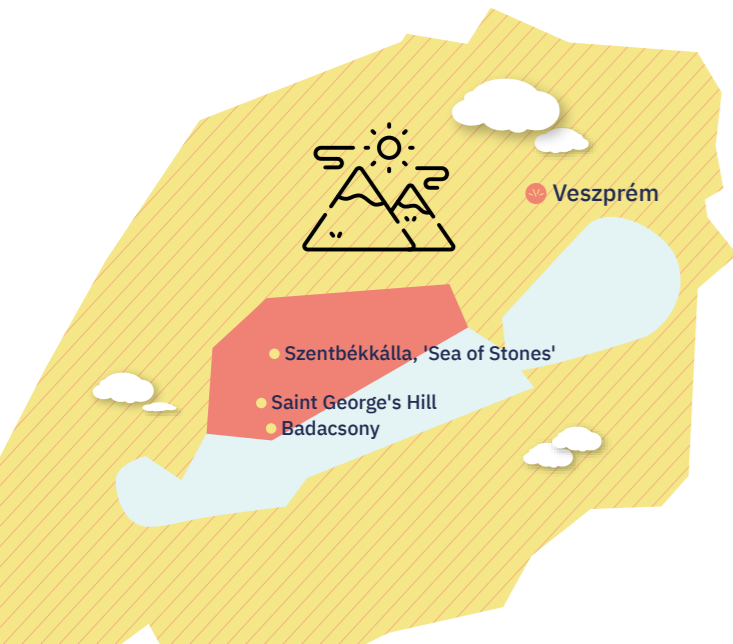
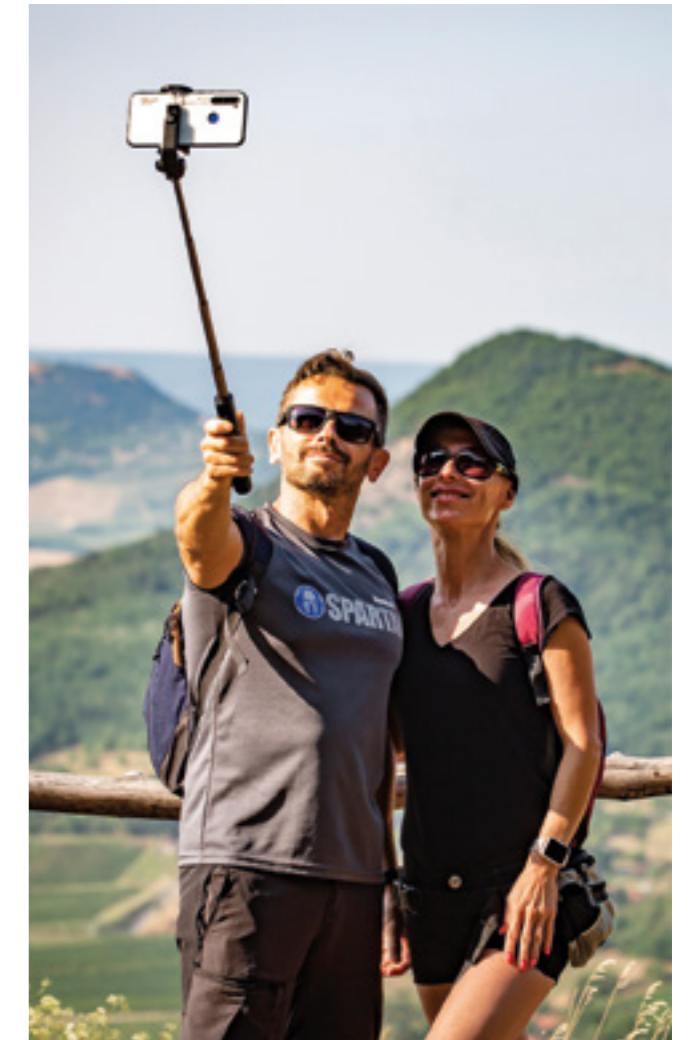
When wandering through the Balaton Uplands, it is easy to lose your sense of time and space. You are jerked back to reality when the monadnocks of the Káli Basin suddenly appear. A total of seven hills rise from the basin, awaiting your conquest. Badacsony is the highest at 438 metres but, whichever you choose, the excitement of the hike will be unrivalled.



When visiting these mounds, it is definitely worth taking the road to Saint George's Hill because of its unique basalt organ pipes. These millions of years old rock formations are the exciting remains of a bygone era and survivors of early volcanic activity.

If you feel that your adrenaline level is low, paragliding, taking off from the side of a hill, will surely give you tingles. In this region, lovers of this extreme sport can regularly be seen gliding across the skies.

If not paragliding, you could also choose a more relaxing way of admiring the unique view of the Balaton Uplands from above. From spring to autumn, hot air balloons regularly float silently above Lake Balaton and leave visitors lost for words at the vista.



# The Bakony

## In the Footsteps of Outlaws in the Bakony

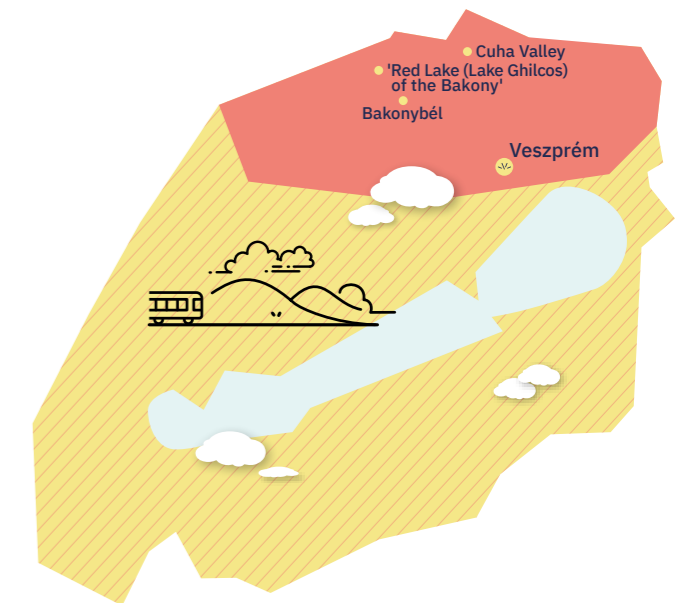
To explore the Bakony, you need comfortable hiking equipment, the determination to overcome all obstacles that nature may throw at you, and a train ticket to get to the innermost depths of the hills.

It is no coincidence that we recommend the train if you are going into the forests of the Bakony since this line is without a doubt the most beautiful in the country. It would be difficult to compete with the steep passes, tunnels, bridges, and dense forests lining the train's path, making travel a memorable experience.

During the journey, a pretty little stream appears on several occasions. The Cuha cuts through the dense forest, but more importantly, its banks offer a first-rate hiking route. True, in certain places, in the absence of a bridge, it is necessary to cross the stream by balancing on wet stepping stones, but the excitement is worth it in exchange for discovering caves and cliffs along the way. This is a perfect time to recall the visit to the castle dungeons in Veszprém and the story of Jóska Sobri and other Bakony outlaws. In the day, 200 years ago, it was in this very land that they took refuge from the law and, according to legend, did so quite successfully.

The tunnels and viaducts of the railway line crossing the Cuha Valley are protected as historic monuments. Through them you may reach Vinye, from where you may wander a 13-km route around the ravines of the Cuha Valley.

The Bakony is rife with natural wonders – one of the most special being the lake located only a few kilometres from Bakonybél, called the 'Red Lake (Lake Ghilcos) of the Bakony' by many. It is not by chance that the name resembles its Transylvanian counterpart. The stumps of the earlier living trees protrude similarly from the depths of the lake, presenting hikers with a ghostly but wonderful scenery.





Family Friendly

Veszprém



## When the City of Queens Turns into a Fairy-Tale World

At the beginning of each summer, Queen Juniper and King Habakuk visit Veszprém. Of course, they are not the real and legendary rulers associated with the city but fairy-tale performers of the Kabóca ('Cicada') Puppet Theatre, famous far and wide. The festivity, at which the fairy-tale king and queen regularly appear, is the Kabóciádé Festival. This event in the Veszprém festival line-up, at which the fantasy figures come to life, creating an unforgettable experience for the little ones, is specifically aimed at young children and families.

But this festival is not the only way the fantasy and fairy-tale world take shape in Veszprém. Sometimes even a simple playground offers an opportunity to become part of a Hungarian fable. In Veszprémvölgy, at the Folk Tales playground, children can play make-believe: that the righteous King Matthias, perhaps a brave knight, or even the youngest of the three sons of traditional Hungarian folktales pops out from behind the swings, jungle gyms, and slides to cunningly defeat the dragon and win the hand of the beautiful princess in marriage.

After the folktale adventure, it is time to discover the world around us. At the world-class Veszprém Zoo, you can tour the seven continents and see the exotic animals that live there, all in one day. In addition to roaming the world, the Zoo will throw in a detour with the help of a 'time portal'.

Once you through this gate, you will travel back to the age of dinosaurs and encounter life-size reptile-like creatures that ruled the Earth millions of years ago. All herbivorous, carnivorous, and winged dinosaurs are on parade, including, at the very end, the famous T. Rex. The little ones can also participate in an actual excavation, with zoo educators helping them to find fossils that make it possible for people today to understand the creatures that once inhabited the Earth.

Every now and then, there are true animal celebrities at the Veszprém Zoo. Böbe, the chimpanzee, used to dazzle people with her drawing skills. Incidentally, she also learned to make coffee and eat from a plate. We should also mention Suzy, the Indian elephant whose life story is fit for an action movie, was evacuated from the war-torn Balkans at the beginning of the '90s, to end up living peacefully in Veszprém. A few years ago, an actual chase also took place: a sloth crossed the fence and ran away but was eventually caught - about 5 metres out.

After the adventures, it is time to revisit one of the downtown restaurants to relax and recall the day's experiences over a light dinner, and plan the next day's programmes. By the way, most

restaurants in Veszprém are dog friendly, so it's no problem if you do not want to leave your pet alone during your adventures.



# The Bakony

## A Forest that Opens the World

While Veszprém, with its versatility, offers unforgettable experiences to children and adults, the Bakony's natural treasures do the same with their simplicity and the welcome of their dense forests, without unscalable cliffs or steep ravines. The slopes of the Bakony therefore assure a pleasant hiking experience for the whole family, whether opting for a longer or shorter trek.

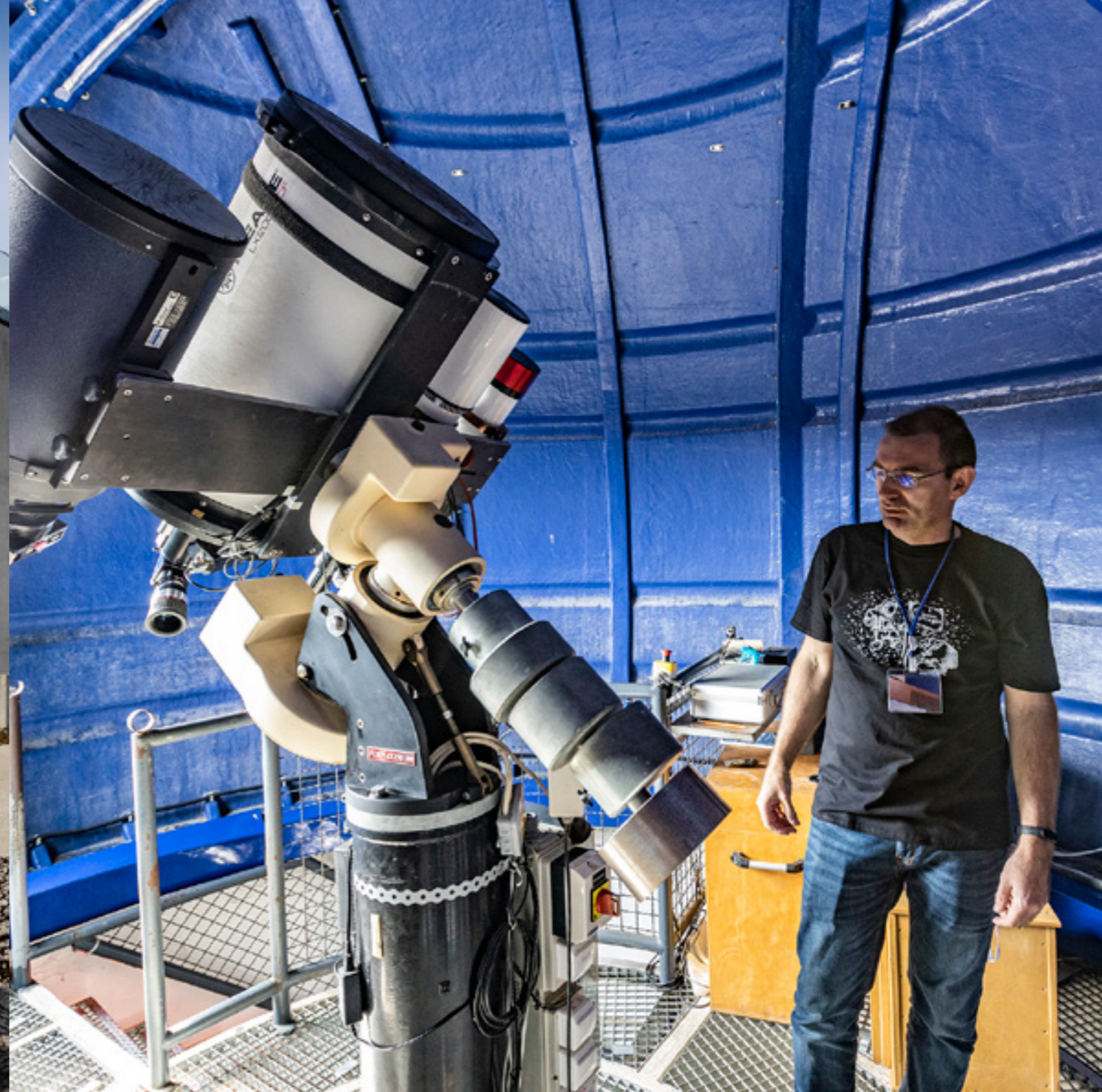
However, not only do close-to-nature experiences await those who decide not to go from Veszprém to Lake Balaton but target the small Bakony villages in the north. In this case, visiting Bakonybél is a must, not only because of the captivating atmosphere of the town but also because of the experience provided by the Pannon Csillagda Observatory. This place offers nothing less than to take us from the heart of the Carpathian Basin, specifically the Bakony, to the furthest planets of the solar system or to far away galaxies. An interactive showroom was built around the observatory here, where visitors can examine a replica of the Mars rover. When the skies are clear, the observatory's dome opens up and visitors are awed by the beautiful images of shining stars and of other worlds in the dark universe.

The secrets of yet another world and era are seen in Tés, not in the stars but the air. The winds were important since their elemental force powered

the mills on the outskirts of the village. Today they no longer grind wheat into flour, but they are perfect relics of our grandparents' age, attractive even to small children.

The Bakony possesses many curiosities beyond the natural treasures offered by the region. Yet this magical environment would do well if only







with its rich flora and fauna. The former can be well admired at the Cistercian Arboretum in Zirc. The 18-hectare botanical garden next to the abbey is rich in ornamental plants, trees and shrubs, as well as a fishpond, which exude tranquillity and provide a sense of exciting discovery, truly refreshing for all the members of the family.



## Lake Balaton





## Unforgettable Experiences in Old-New Robes

Every adult has pleasant childhood memories of Lake Balaton. It would be hard to forget the moment when, after a long wait, they first saw the distant gleam of sunlight sparkling on the water's surface. One could almost smell the beaches in the air and hear the joyful noise growing louder.

Although Lake Balaton has changed a lot in recent decades, to this day it still evokes the same nostalgic feelings. Children of the 21st century can experience the same excitement their parents once had.

While the feeling may have remained the same, the area of Lake Balaton has changed in so many ways as is especially evident at the public beaches.

There is no place on the shore today where the summer season opens without offering the most diverse toys and other playthings for use in the water and on land, much to the delight of the children. Of course, the classic water slide is a mandatory element at the beaches, but there are also play castles and sand-covered sports grounds.

Should you be undecided about which beach to target, point your index finger at anywhere on the Balaton map and choose the lakeside town nearest to your finger. Getting there will not be



difficult, as cycle paths go to each. Take your bike, or rent for the whole family, which is also possible at many locations around Lake Balaton.

For those who do not wish to enjoy the Balaton experience this way, another obvious solution is to take the train. In that case, you may be able to enjoy more than the usual rail journey. Nostalgia trains, like those on which today's adults used to travel when they were children, regularly operate on the north shore. The sight of the refurbished trains is quite an experience, but the real excitement comes when a genuine, fully operational steam engine pulls into the station.

The end of the line for these trains is Tapolca, and should you have missed your station earlier, don't worry. This small town in the Balaton Uplands also boasts hidden treasures, including an underground lake in a cavern, where you can row a boat along the narrow passages of the cave, beneath the earth.

# Gastronomy

Veszprém



# Diversity, the Secret Ingredient

High quality and courageous creativity. Those are perhaps the two most characteristic traits present in the gastronomic offer in Veszprém and the region.

Let’s begin with our favourite morning wake up, coffee. Although it takes some searching in Veszprém to find the small café ‘Tizen1’, it is well worth looking out for, following the pedestrian street towards the steeple to find this small, secluded establishment on Kossuth Street where, week after week, the baristas prepare the hot, refreshing drink to guests’ requirements, using carefully roasted coffee beans from various plantations around the world.

Here, you can consume your brew on the spot or take it away with you in a cosmopolitan way, like in films set in New York.

We prefer the first option, sitting and watching the city’s vibrancy around us while sipping our coffee at a table in the shade. Most city centre restaurants are suitable for such impromptu escapes and almost every restaurant and bistro has that little corner where you can take a break from the hustle and bustle passing only two steps away. Maybe that is why they call another popular café downtown the ‘Incognito’.



Of course, some places are the exact opposite. With their vast shop window glass walls, they seem to melt into the hubbub of the street. The routine manoeuvring of baristas and waiters seen through the window gives the impression that they are part of the streetscape. Such a concept of hospitality is no coincidence either, especially in the case of ‘KUNSZT’ in Old Town Square, which is both an excellent breakfast venue and a design shop, offering the trendiest handicraft products for purchase.

It is a place where fine art and gastronomy create an extraordinary fusion. Though design is not the only branch of art that the Veszprém restaurateurs like to mix with gastronomy.



Wine and records may be the subject of separate obsessions but what if the two are presented together? There is a cosy wine bar in Veszprém city centre, where vinyl records line the walls in a strict pattern, partly with the aim of finding their new owner. The ‘Wine & Vinyl’ wine bar and record store offers the visitor a chance to explore the surroundings and the specialties of Hungary’s and Europe’s best wine regions. In addition to the gastronomic experience, the music playing on scratchy records enhances the atmosphere.

The mentality of the ‘Oliva Restaurant’ speaks of courage when it comes to compiling the menu. But of course, that is what guests have come to expect from one of Veszprém’s most popular restaurants, with a kitchen known for regularly inventing and introducing novelties on its menu.

Entering the ‘Oliva’, you feel as if having suddenly flown to Tuscany. Only a ceramic dragon indicates that the ‘Oliva’ is more than just a stylish fusion restaurant in the city centre. The place has an extraordinary history, which the owner is happy to share with his guests.

The highly respected Gault & Millau restaurant guide lists three Veszprém restaurants among the top 50 Hungarian eateries. In addition to the ‘Oliva’, the ‘Villa Medici’, and the ‘Chianti’, recently renamed ‘GUSTO 13’, are honoured.

Veszprém’s location is unique, as several wine regions are within sight of the City of Queens. Both the Balaton wine region and the cellars of Somló are less than half an hour’s drive away and their winemakers are regularly featured guests in

the gastronomic programmes of the city. Veszprém is on a first-name basis with these knowledgeable professionals, who are proud to present their excellence both in the wine coolers of local restaurants and at festivals. For example, in the summer, at the ‘Rosé, Riesling, and Jazz Days’, you can choose from some 120 different wines. Natural and sparkling wines have recently been added to the list.

For those who have not fallen in love with good wines, the breweries and pálinka (fruit brandy) distilleries in the area offer alternatives. Those include the beers of the Stari brewery in Tapolca and the lagers of the Zirc Abbey Manufactory. For lovers of the more potent pleasures, the products of the Csalló Pálinka Manufactory in Balatonalmádi are on offer.



The ‘Fricska’ apartment restaurant at the base of the Castle, on the banks of the Séd stream, offers yet another extraordinary experience. The bistro-style restaurant on a former mill site may be the perfect dinner destination on a summer evening. Having explored the cultural sights of Veszprém and the surrounding area, taken a hike in the Bakony or enjoyed the cooling waters of Lake Balaton, it is well worth targeting the ‘Fricska’ for a relaxing evening. Finding it in the dark is no problem, as the aromas of outdoor grilled dishes grilled will guide you in the right direction from afar. Notably, the delicacies prepared here are primarily made from local ingredients, which may have come from the land and farms you cycled alongside during the day.

In many Veszprém restaurants you come across the products of the Tekeresvölgyi Cheese Manufactory in Nemesvámos. The shady valley, located only a few kilometres from Veszprém, has an excellent microclimate for maturing cheeses, giving them a unique local flavour and a tour of the pleasant Tekeres Valley may also be a good idea.

## The Bakony



## Delicacies of the Forest à la Bakony

Do we need more evidence of the specific gastronomy of the Bakony region than the fact that a unique method of preparing dishes has been named after this region? After all, when we ask for 'Bakony-style', we'll get one of many roasts cooked in a delicious sauce with cream, mushrooms and red pepper. It is no coincidence that popularity of such dishes started out from the Bakony, finding their way to restaurants' a la carte menus. The depths of the dense local forests are an excellent source for various fungi, which are great by themselves when baked, steamed, or fried and blend perfectly with Bakony-style meats as an accessory.

Of course, it would be a mistake to assume that it is only mushroom pickers who walk the forests of the Bakony all day long. Thanks to the rich wildlife, hunting is also widespread and that practice later meets gastronomy in the kitchen. When you order a game dish in the restaurants of any small town in the Bakony, you can be sure that excellent and fresh food will arrive on your plate from the dawn hunt.

But the people of the Bakony don't only prepare mouth-watering gastronomic dishes gathered or hunted in the forests. One of the most popular places for those with a sweet tooth is the confectionery 'Pepe' in Zirc. We'll gladly bet you a slice of French pastry that you'll find something to your liking there.

## Lake Balaton



## Surfing on Waves of Flavour

The gastronomy of Lake Balaton has long been characterized by ‘lángos’ (a fried flatbread, a local favourite), hamburgers and pancakes. Still, like so many things around the lake, those typical beach foods have undergone profound change. Today you need not search long and far to find a gastro speciality that is not part of the usual buffet fare. The best beach foods of 2021 include the ‘carrot-dog’, goat cheese-beetroot bagels and, in order to not do without the traditional lángos, it may come with a bit of a twist. One of the bistros prepares it with sweet potatoes and tops it with a ragout of venison.

It is worth targeting Lake Balaton to discover these gastro-tricks, but if you are looking for more classic local flavours, plenty of restaurants and bistros await you.

Local restaurants take care to obtain excellent, fresh ingredients from nearby farms for their chefs to prepare and then present to their guests. Near the lake, you are likely to come across creative dishes that all contain something unique, something that may quickly become your favourite.

In addition to the rethought beach buffet menus, bistros are springing up all over, each with a lighter meal to pamper guests while they explore the area. Small plate restaurants with up to 5-6 specialities invite you on an exciting gastronomic

journey. Classic inns should not be forgotten either. Their waiters still serve up various roasts piled high on wooden platters. And, to mention delicacies clearly connected to the waterfront, the focus of numerous restaurants and bistros is on fish.

Fish is also plays and important role in the area’s gastro festivals. Trout plays the leading role every year in Tapolca. In Tihany, the Sabrefish Festival looks back over a century-old tradition. The day’s catch is skewered and grilled over charcoal, giving it a unique flavour.

A menu always goes down well with some local wine speciality. The Balaton area contains six wine regions and their characteristics result in the unique flavours of their noble beverages. The Rieslings of the Balatonfüred-Csopak region for example may be the perfect complement to gazing at the falling stars on a warm summer night, while in Badacsony, the fuller ‘Grey Friar’ (a Pinot Gris) can contribute to an unpretentious atmosphere of deep and friendly conversation.

Badacsony winemakers believe their excellent wines are the result of their grapes being exposed to the sun from three separate sources: directly from the sun itself, reflected off the water of the lake and also reflected off the basalt of the hillside, which absorbs the energy and then radiates it back onto the grapes.

It may seem idyllic to sit on a wine terrace in the Balaton Uplands, watching the contents of your glass disappear sip by sip as afternoon slowly turns into evening. That image, however, cannot remain the theme of just a single picture postcard, as there are many wineries, each with their own special features, dotting the shore from Balatonalmádi to Badacsony.



Of course, the world of Balaton wines is not limited to the north shore. The south side also has many culinary adventures to be explored and the climate of the southern landscape gives the wines produced there a completely different taste. It might be the same lake that washes the shore in that area, but the sandy soil of Somogy, the humid air brought from the lake the northerly winds and, of course, the warmth of the summer sun, provide the perfect conditions for the vineyards of the southern shore. Here, you certainly need to taste the more full-bodied red wines, although, more recently, sparkling wines have started to become more and more popular.

### A few suggestions for gastro-adventurers:

- **Mór24 (Balatonfüred)**  
– small plates
- **Zománc Bisztrócska (Vászoly)**  
– bistro atmosphere and food
- **Jóbarátok Halsütöde (Balatonalmádi)**  
– fish dishes
- **Hatlépcsős (Balatonfüred)**  
– classic tavern
- **Baricska Csárda (Balatonfüred)**  
– tavern
- **Villa Kabala (Szigliget)**  
– tasting menu
- **Random Bagel Bar (Örvényes)**  
– bagels
- **Tiki Beach Bisztró (Zamárdi)**  
– bistro and beach dishes





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