



# Focus on HUNGARY

## School Program

*“The first two things I learned after arriving in Hungary were how to say, ‘I am full,’ and how to give two puszi (kisses) after meeting someone. The Hungarians are very friendly and love to feed you. Their unique culture opened my heart and mind to a whole new world, and I couldn't have picked a better country.”*

*Andi Morison, participant from the United States, 2001-2002*

Western and Eastern Europe have both helped shape Hungary's culture, lifestyle and food. Budapest, the country's capital, is often called the “Paris of Eastern Europe” because of its broad avenues, graceful architecture and many parks—as well as its bounty of fine and performing arts. Yet Budapest's residents are notably down-to-earth. They typically consider their neighborhoods to be small urban villages surrounding outdoor markets. Folk crafts, especially embroidery and pottery, still thrive in smaller towns, most of which are rustic compared with Budapest. Still, Hungary is very much in touch with modern times. For example, Budapest's weeklong Sziget Festival every summer on an island in the Danube is one of Europe's premier rock galas.

### ***AFS & your experience***

AFS Hungary has been in existence since 1989. AFS volunteers across the country work hard year-round to provide you with the most satisfying intercultural experience possible. During the school year, AFS Hungary hosts approximately 70 AFSers from as many as 25 countries.

AFS will be at your side throughout your intercultural exchange. Even before leaving your home country, you will participate in organized AFS orientations and have the assistance of experienced AFS volunteers. Once in your host country, you can rely on your local volunteer contact and other chapter volunteers to support you in your experience. Together we will ensure that you have an incredible experience abroad.

### ***Landing in Hungary***

When you land in Budapest, the capital of Hungary, you and your fellow AFSers will collect your baggage, pass through customs and be met by AFS-Hungary staff and volunteers.

### **Arrival Orientation**

Your first Hungarian orientation will be right after your arrival in Budapest. For two days, you will have a chance to relax and meet fellow AFSers from other countries. You will also learn about life in Hungary, customs, attitudes and expectations, and you will receive language instruction. At the end of the camp, your host family or volunteers will pick you up and take you to your host community.

### **Post Arrival Orientation**

After about a month of living with your new Hungarian family, you will participate at a two-day orientation. You will have a chance to meet your friends again and talk about your first experiences. You will also learn more about life in Hungary, customs, tradition and expectations.

## ***Living in Hungary***

### **Lifestyle and Family Living**

Hungarians are very independent and value human rights. However, families are traditional in their ways and maintain a rather patriarchal family structure. Parents are usually protective of their children. Teenagers are expected to inform their parents when they are going out and where they are going. Most students do not smoke. Everyone shares in the housework, and families enjoy spending time together on the weekends.

Hungarian host families, like AFS host families worldwide, are not paid. They open their homes to students in order to share their community and culture as well as to enrich their own family lives.

Students are generally placed in towns. Public transportation is good in Hungary, and monthly passes are paid for by AFS Hungary.

### **Dress and Appearance**

Hungarian teenagers like to dress casually; they wear T-shirts and jeans or corduroys. For the winter months, you will need a warm waterproof coat, heavy boots, sweaters, mittens and warm socks. As temperatures in different buildings tend to vary in the winter, it is best to wear clothes you can layer to adjust to varying temperatures. For special occasions, more formal dress is expected: for girls a dress or blouse and skirt; for boys a jacket, slacks and tie.

### **Diet and Meals**

Hungarian families love to eat. Typical Hungarian dishes tend to be hearty. A traditional favorite is *goulash*, a soup with meat, potatoes, onions and paprika; another is *pörkölt*, a stew. Paprika and other spices and sauces are used in many dishes. Side dishes include noodles, potatoes and dumplings. There is a wide variety of bread and pastries. Fruits and vegetables are available on a seasonal basis.

Hungarian salami and sausages known as *kolbász* are well known. Characteristically Hungarian products and specialties are smoked ham and goose liver, stuffed cabbage, paprika chicken, roast pig, roast duck, *letcho* (mixed sweet stewed paprika and tomatoes), sour-cherry strudel, a sweet appetizer known as *vargabéles*, and a fish soup, *halászlé*. Soups are common and usually accompany both lunch and dinner.

In the past, it was difficult to place a student who was vegetarian. Now families are more open to vegetarianism and though they eat meat, they try to meet the expectations of a person with different eating habits. It is considered inappropriate for individuals to request special foods, to prepare separate food for themselves or to raid the refrigerator.

It is said that the Hungarian kitchen is the third best after the French and the Chinese. Culinary habits are changing now, so the food is lighter than in the past but without losing its great flavors. One of the great attractions in local restaurants is live Gypsy music.

### **School**

School is probably the best place for you to meet people and make friends during your time in Hungary. AFS students attend public schools with classmates their own age. Hungarian students take their studies seriously and work hard toward their fourth-year final exams, which are important for college admissions. You will be able to take the courses your school offers to you, but Hungarian and foreign language courses are required.

The school year runs from the beginning of September to early June and is divided into two semesters. Classes are held Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., with six or seven 45-minute classes a day. Your schedule will include at least five classes a day. You can receive a certificate of attendance and/or a transcript if you attend class regularly, complete the course work and pass the examinations.

Schools can provide some extra activities such as school trips, sport and games, choir, arts or theater. Uniforms are usually not worn. Lunch, usually provided for a fee at the school's cafeteria, is reimbursed by AFS Hungary.

### **Teen Life**

School or community organizations offer activities such as sports, drama, folk dance and music clubs, and you will be welcome to participate in any that you choose. Soccer, basketball and volleyball are popular sports. You can also ask your host family or local volunteer about local community service organizations. Getting involved in any of these activities is a great way to learn more about your community and to make new friends.

Like teenagers everywhere, Hungarian young people enjoy spending their weekends visiting friends, going to movies and hanging out in the local café.

### **AFS Activities**

In addition to the two orientations at your arrival, AFS Hungary will provide you with several others. AFS orientations are a chance for participants to meet (often for a weekend or for a few days) to talk about expectations for the future program and past experiences. Orientations involve participating in group activities and self-examination. Sessions usually provide new information and ways of looking at things while also allowing participants to share points of view. AFS orientations are social, interactive and educational, bringing together young people from many countries and helping them to better understand their own intercultural learning experience.

Around the Christmas holidays, a party called Santa Claus Evening lets AFSers get together for enjoyment and relaxation.

At the end of February or early March, AFS will arrange a one-week host family exchange where you will spend a week in a different town with another family. It will give you a chance to observe another community and a second family.

At the conclusion of your short-term exchange with the second family, you will get together with other AFSers for a brief mid-term orientation in Héviz, with one of the biggest thermal lakes in Europe. This will give you a chance to reflect on the first half of your experience and look ahead to making the most of the second half.

Finally, there is the so-called End-of-Stay. You will get together with other AFSers right before you return home. The weekend-long End-of-Stay is about looking back at your sojourn and sharing memories with other AFSers. It is also about thinking of the future.

### **Language**

Hungarian is a very special language, originating from the Finno-Ugric tribe of languages. It can be difficult, and therefore AFS Hungary provides language lessons for the first three months with professional teachers. Basic preparation is strongly recommended before arrival.

### **Travel**

Although it is natural for you to want to travel while in Hungary, AFS is not designed as a tourist program. AFS offers the rare opportunity to be immersed in a culture and a country. It is likely, however, that you will have many opportunities to travel with your host family, school, community organization, local chapter or AFS Hungary. We strongly discourage traveling on your own or with friends.

### **Spending Money**

Host families are asked to pay only for ordinary family events in which you are expected to participate. When you do such things as shopping for yourself or going out with friends, the expenses are your responsibility.

AFS recommends that US\$1,000 should be sufficient to cover a year's worth of spending needs. Credit and debit cards with a Visa or Maestro logo are widely accepted.

Hungarian young people are not used to carrying or spending large amounts of money. Spending more than your peers and family may create a distance between you and them. It is wise to learn to spend as they do.

### **Safety and Support**

Hungary is a safe country, and you should do well if you follow the normal precautions you would use in your home country.

During your stay, local AFS volunteers will be available to assist you as you learn to live as a Hungarian. In the event of an emergency, AFS staff can be reached 24 hours a day by you in your host country and by your natural family at home.

For the welfare of participants, AFS worldwide has two rules: no driving and no use of drugs for non-medicinal purposes. Any student who violates either of these rules will be automatically sent home. AFS Hungary may have additional rules.

### **Health Precautions**

In addition to the precautions mentioned above, AFS suggests that you discuss the health recommendations for Hungary (which you can get from your government or easily

find on the Internet) with your personal doctor, to determine what is best for you and your personal needs.

If you require any medical assistance during your stay, your host family or local volunteers will be ready to help find it. As an AFS participant, your medical expenses are covered for illness or injuries incurred while on the program, exclusive of pre-existing, dental or visual aid expenses.

### **Documents**

You must have a passport that will be valid for six months longer than your intended stay. In addition to your passport, you also need a visa to enter and reside in your host country. Visas are obtained through the consular offices of your host country, and requirements often vary from consulate to consulate.

Consulates charge fees for their services, and obtaining your visa can be a complicated and lengthy process requiring a great deal of paperwork, patience and persistence. AFS will help you obtain the visa and provide you with instructions regarding the required documents.

### **Program Prices**

Please [contact the AFS office in your home country](#) for information about program price and scholarship possibilities and what the program price covers for the various program offerings. In most cases the program price covers the following: round-trip international travel with your AFS group; travel in the host country to your host family; travel from your host family to your international departure point; AFS's medical plan; placement with your host; orientation in your home country and your host country; 24 hour emergency assistance in your home and host countries; a global medical assistance organization to support extreme emergencies; a network of trained volunteers who support you throughout your experience.

In order to keep costs low and provide good service, AFS utilizes a network of volunteers and staff in 50+ countries around the world. Volunteers need training, support and assistance from professional staff in each country. Other expenses you will normally need to pay in addition to the program price: passport and visa fees, required inoculations, expenses for eyeglasses, contacts and dental care, school uniforms (where applicable) and personal spending money. Your housing and food are provided by your host family as part of their commitment to our program.

## ***Country Information***

### **Geography and Climate**

Hungary is approximately the same size as Portugal. It is located in the geographic center of the European continent and is bordered by the Slovak Republic on the north, Austria on the west, Ukraine and Romania on the east and Slovenia, Croatia and Yugoslavia on the south. It is generally a land of flat plains with hill country around the Danube River. Hungary is surrounded by some of the great mountain ranges of Europe. For this reason Hungary has historically been the route for trade and ethnic migrations between Asia and Western Europe.

The climate is moderate. Winters may be very cold and snowy (average temperatures around -1°C/30°F). In summer, the weather is warm and can be hot. In the Hungarian *puszta* (plain), it is possible to observe native animals and learn about ethnographic traditions.

### **Population**

Hungary's population is approximately 10.1 million. Budapest, the capital, has a population of 1.8 million. The ethnic structure of the country is Hungarian 89.9%, Roma 4%, German 2.6%, Serb 2%, Slovak 0.8%, Romanian 0.7%.

For more than 100 years, Hungarians streamed out into the world to find new lives, driven by ambitions and pushed by wars, political persecution and economic disasters. Now an estimated five million people who consider themselves Hungarian live outside the country. Generations still keep their roots and memories alive connected through numerous international and national organizations.

### **Language**

The official language is Magyar, also known as Hungarian.

### **Government**

Hungary is a republic with legislative powers invested in a unicameral National Assembly. The National Assembly elects the president.

### **Religion**

Two-thirds of Hungarians are Roman Catholic. Calvinists, Lutherans and Jews make up most of the other third.

## ***Launching Your AFS Experience***

Evaluations by previous participants support our belief that those students who prepare prior to leaving have the best experience. In order to get ready, first make every effort to learn some key Hungarian words and phrases so that you arrive with at least some basic knowledge of the language. You may start with AFS Hungary's website ([www.afs.hu](http://www.afs.hu)), where you will find support for learning the language and also become familiar with the AFS Hungary community, structure and events.

To familiarize yourself further with life in Hungary, make use of your local library and/or the Internet. A lot of general information is available about Hungary and its culture.

Although each participant's experience is unique, we strongly suggest that you speak with a recent AFS participant to Hungary. This person will be an excellent resource regarding living as a Hungarian. If you do not know any alumni, please contact your local volunteer or national AFS office. In addition, AFS Hungary will provide you with a special packet of country-specific information.

Hungarians will be curious about your home community. You may be surprised to find out how much they already know about your country. Therefore, it is also helpful to be as informed as possible about current events in your community and country.

If you have not already received a full AFS application packet, please contact your local AFS volunteer or national office to request one. We wish you a wonderful experience!

### Curiously Hungarian

- *Hungarian Paprika* - Hungarians became familiar with their popular spice paprika through the Turks; by the 16th century, it was grown in Hungary as a medicine.
- Rubik's Cube, patented by Ernő Rubik, became an international hit, being named Toy of the Year in the United Kingdom in 1980. If someone wanted to try every possible combination while making a turn once a second, finding the 43,252,003,274,489,856,000 combinations would take 14 billion years.
- Kocsi (Coach) is one of the few Hungarian words that has been adopted by nearly all other European languages (coach, Kutsche, cocchio, coche, etc.). The name of the vehicle goes back to the village of Kocs in Komárom-Esztergom County.
- The ballpoint pen was invented by József László Bíró, a Hungarian journalist in 1938. In Argentina, where he died, he was so famous that Inventors' Day is celebrated on his birthday (September 29).
- Vitamin C is highly concentrated in green paprika. Albert Szentgyörgyi, the Nobel Prize-winning Hungarian scientist, did research in biological oxidation and found the concentration. This result made possible the production of vitamin C in large quantities.
- Other famous contemporary Hungarians include Andrew Vajna (producer of many Hollywood movies including *Terminator 3*), Andrew Grove (founder of Intel), George Soros (stock exchange guru) and John Neumann (computer, game theory).

### How to Apply

To become a participant in this country's School Program, contact your nearest AFS office. To locate an AFS office, go to <http://www.afs.org/contact>

Student Age (upon arrival)	15y to 18y 6m	
Country data	Size	92,340 sq km, 35,653 sq mi
	Population	10,075,034
	Official Language	Hungarian
	Government	Parliamentary democracy
Currency	Forint divided into 100 fillers	
Useful website	<a href="http://www.hungarytourism.hu">www.hungarytourism.hu</a>	
AFS Hungary website	<a href="http://www.afs.hu">www.afs.hu</a>	

AFS program destinations are not always available to residents of all countries. If a program interests you, please contact your nearest AFS office to find out if it is an option for you. You can locate your nearest AFS office at <http://www.afs.org/contact>

