**First-time Ungheria - 6 days**

**Day 1: Hévíz**

The seaside town of **Hévíz,** 195km from Budapest and 6km from the Lake Balaton, is a huge thermal complex thanks to the healing waters of the Lake Hévíz. It’s considered the major thermal natural lake in the world, originating from past volcanic activities, and it is still biologically active. With a surface of 4,4 hectares, it receives the water from 2 mineral-rich springs: their flow is so strong (410litres/second) that the water of the lake is completely replaced every 72 hours.

**Curiosity**: According to an old legend Virgin Mary, after having listened to the prayers of the nanny of a paralyzed child, made the water gush from a spring in order to heal him. Thanks to the warm water and to the mud, the child recovered. The legend dates back to the Romans and the child is Flavius Theodosius, the future emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire who recognized Christianity as official religion within the Empire.

**Day 2: Hévíz - Keszthely - Kaposvár - Pécs(Km. 160)**

Visit of the close city of **Keszthely**, the “beach” of Hungary, with its Baroque Festetics Palace and the Balaton Museum. We proceed to **Kaposvár** that, according to the legend, was founded on 7 hills just as Rome. Arrival in **Pécs,** visit of the Zsolnay quarter, built on the land belonging to the famous ceramic factory of Vilmos Zsolnay, the most important potter of the country. For this reason the city features many multicoloured facades and roofs made in ceramics.

**Curiosity**: in 1852 a pot maker of Pécs founded a factory for the production of hydraulic pipes, stone plates, ceramics for the building constructions, using a underdeveloped technology. In 1865 his son Vilmos Zsolnay became the manager of the factory and he won many prestigious prizes at world fairs and international exhibitions, including the World Fair in Vienna (1873) and the World Fair in Paris (1878).

**Day 3: Pécs – Szeged (km. 190)**

Visit of **Pécs**: Szécheny square is dominated by the main Muslim sanctuary of central Europe: the Mosque of Pasha Qasim. The Romanesque Cathedral is the landmark of the city because of the perseverance of the Hungarian citizens over the centuries. Today it is devoted to St. Peter and Paul and it was nicknamed the “small Basilica” by Pope John Paul II during his visit to Hungary. In the afternoon departure for **Szeged,** the third largest city of Hungary, located really close to the border with Serbia and Rumania. Its nickname is the “City of sunshine”, due to the high hours of sunlight reported during the year. The main attractions are the modern Synagogue, the Cathedral and the Dömötör Tower.

**Typical dish not to be missed**: the Szeged-style fish soup called Halászlé. The soup is made of carp, catfish and fogas cooked with onions, sweet tomatoes and peppers, and is characterized by a strong taste and a vivid red colour.

**Day 4: Szeged - Kecskemét – Debrecen(Km. 275)**

The city of **Kecskemét** is placed halfway between Szeged and Budapest and its name comes from the word “kecske”, goat, while the syllable “mét” means walk. It’s known as the “**city of bells**” since on a Town Hall balcony you can find many bells of different dimensions. Striking the hour, the bells play Hungarian folk songs. At 12:00 am the sound lasts 10 minutes. Continuing our walk we will find 4 churches belonging to different religious communities: Catholic, Protestant and Jewish.

**Alcoholic curiosity**: Kecskemét is a significant fruit production centre, that’s why is popular the distillation of fruit mash or pulp known as the “pálinka”, the Hungarian grappa. The most famous and scented local pálinka derives from apricots.

We proceed our journey to **Debrecen**, the second largest city of Hungary that was declared twice official capital. The city was nicknamed the “Calvinist Rome” since in 1538 it became the centre of Calvinism. Before reaching the centre, we will visit the **Nagyerdei Park**, also known as the Great Forest Park, with its wonderful Botanical Garden. At the park’s border there is a thermal spring discovered in 1820: its healing waters are camel-coloured due to iodine.

**Curiosity**: in the centre of **Debrecen** there is the Calvinist College, called “**the school of the city**” since it gave both primary and higher education to everybody, apart from their social status (sons of farmers, manufacturers, nobles). Thus it happened that when the students went back to their rural communes, they became essential for the society and in their turn they founded schools so as to spread the acquired knowledge, fostering the country development.

**Day 5: Debrecen - Hortobágy–EgerSzentendre – Budapest (Km. 315)**

Stop in **Hortobágy,** in the Pannonian Steppe and in the homonymous **National park**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since more than 20 years. Here you will attend the horse riding show of the Csikòs, the Hungarian cowboys. Afterwards visit of the Eger Castle, built as a fort against the Mongol raids and genuine symbol of the Hungarian resistance before the arrival of the Turks. In 1552, less than 2,000 defenders (men, women and children) for 5 weeks long withstood a 80,000 –soldiers army that was forced to retreat. As evidence of the multiculturalism of the city, the 2 main attractions are the **Ottoman Minaret** with its 40m height and the **Cathedral**. Proceed to **Szentendre,** one of the most artistic cities in the country.. It gained celebrity during the 1920s, when a group of talented artist moved here, fascinated by the tranquillity of this place and then ice landscapes. Szentendredevelops around the Main Square Fő Tér, dotted with retro cafés and restaurants. From here begins the network of small alleys full of museums, textile handcrafts and culinary specialties. Arrival in the evening in **Budapest** and panoramic tour by night from the hill of the Castle, in Hungarian **Várhegy. Curiosity:** the city of **Buda** was born here in 1200.

**Day 6: Budapest**

Visit of the Hungarian capital, “Jewel of the Danube”, deriving from 3 cities: **Buda**, **Pest** and **Óbuda,** linked together by the **Chain Bridge** (the most photographed monument in the city) and other 7 bridges. The Buda quarter is the most romantic, it’s a World Heritage Site, is full of churches and museums and it houses the **Royal Palace**, another city landmark, the **Fishermen’s Bastion** and **St. Matthias Church.** The Old Town, located in the northern part of the city, has a medieval look and is full of evocative alleys: a sort of small city within the city. The Pest quarter is more juvenile and lively, a modern and innovative centre. Trendy shops, outdoor cafés, stands, nice and always crowded squares and historic places, such as the **Greshame Palace** and the **Hungarian Parliament**. The old town of Budapest hosts historic and artistic attractions of high value: along the **Andrassy Avenue** you can enjoy the **Opera House**, proceeding afterwards to **Heroes Square** and the **City Park,** seat of the Museum of Fine Arts, until arrive to the **Vajdahunyad**e **Castle** close to the **Thermal Site of** **Széchenyi.**

**Typical dish:** Gulasch. The original name derives from the word gulyás, which in turn originates from the tradition of one of the 7 herdsmen’s tribes that were used to cook the soup in a pot. There are many types of soup, every family and every chef prepares it in a different way, but the soup is mainly made of beef meat with potatoes, peppers and lard, spiced with paprika.