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# Jim Sherman's Travel Journal

## 5 DAYS IN **BUDAPEST**

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**JIM SHERMAN**, founder and CEO of Sherman's Travel Media and avid globe-trotter, writes about his recent travels and offers some expert advice.

**B**udapest is sometimes referred to as the Paris of central Europe, and it's easy to see why. The city was created in 1873, following the unification of Buda and Obuda on one side of the Danube River

and Pest on the other. It is lined with pretty boulevards, and vacations here are typically spent strolling through picturesque neighborhoods, stopping at excellent cafés, and exploring city highlights such as the Castle District and the Danube embankments.

On a recent visit, I stayed at the **Kempinski Hotel Corvinus**, a classic luxury property with modern amenities. It is located on the Pest side of the Danube (better for basing a visit, in my opinion, than the Buda side). Winter rates are \$450 per night, but the hotel has frequent specials. (At press time, rooms could be had for under \$200 per night.) Other five-star properties in Budapest exceed \$500 per night, so this is a smart splurge. After settling in, I recommend a morning bus tour to get an overview of the city and then lunch at **Gerbeaud**, a famous—and often crowded—café established in 1858. Over the next few days, visit the **Fine Arts Museum**, which houses many masterpieces from around the world, and the **Museum of Torture**, which intelligently chronicles Hungary's turbulent 20th-century history, with exhibits on Nazi occupation, the Soviet years, and the 1956 popular uprising.

After a day or two of touring, there is nothing better than a visit to one of Hungary's famous baths, which locals use for everyday relaxation and physical therapy. **Gellert** is the city's most famous—a good example, though it could use a face-lift. Two other options are **Szecessenyi** and **Kiraly** baths.

As for dining, an excellent traditional dinner can be had at **Gundels**. For more modern fare, try **Tom George**, a chic place with a young crowd. A low-key, lovely bistro is **Café Kor**; it has one of the most flavorful steak tartares I can recall. Wherever you go, be sure to try Hungarian wine, which is both inexpensive and quite good.

Finally, no visit to Budapest is complete without experiencing a concert or recital. The city has a rich musical history, and the **State Opera House** is arguably the most beautiful in Europe. I was able to snag last-minute box seats at a very reasonable price (less than \$30 per person). Budapest offers many such opportunities. It may not have the intense high energy and color of western capitals, but it is certainly one of the most beautiful, noble cities in Europe.

### ON THE GO A quick list of more of my recent favorites:

- **NEW YORK** The off-Broadway musical **A Star Is Born** is hilarious. It beats many of the more expensive Broadway shows. While you're in town, try **Spice Market** for a great Pan-Asian dinner. It's located in the trendy meatpacking district, so go on a weeknight to avoid crowds.
- **ISTANBUL** **Cligan Palace** is a great smart splurge (check for winter deals). Ask for a room with a view of the pool and Bosphorus.
- **PROVINCETOWN** Now is the time to make summer plans. Try **Carpe Diem** guesthouse, and request one of their newly renovated rooms.

