

FAQ for international students in Győr

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This is a quick and short introduction to Frequently Asked Questions about:

Hungary
Hungarian culture
Győr (the city)
Széchenyi István University.

FAQ about Hungary

How old is Hungary?

It was founded in 896 when the first Hungarians settled in this part of the continent in the Carpathian Basin. Later in 1000 it became a Christian kingdom and an influential power in the region. Hungarians are proud of their long history, even though they lost some major wars. As a consequence, the territory of the country is now much smaller than it used to be; this still saddens many Hungarians.

Is Hungary in Eastern Europe?

Not really, it is geographically located in Central Europe. Some people in the west say it is part of Eastern Europe, but if you look at the map it is almost at the heart of the continent. Hungarians do not consider themselves part of the east, as they feel more close to the western tradition and culture. Hungary has seven neighbours: Slovakia (north), Austria (northwest), Slovenia (west), Croatia (southwest), Serbia (south), Romania (southeast) and Ukraine (northeast).

Is Hungary a rich or poor country?

It depends from the perspective of the European Union, Hungary is not a particularly wealthy country. The EU countries in the west have a higher standard of living and salaries are better too. However, Hungary is definitely not a poor state, even if Hungarians like to complain about the problems they face in everyday life.

Does Hungary have a king/queen?

No, but for a very long time it was a kingdom. King Saint Stephen (Szent István király) was the first king of Hungary who established the Hungarian Kingdom in 1000. You can see him on the 10000 forint bank note. Hungary ceased having a king after WWI. A lot of Hungarian kings are still very popular and they are highly regarded. Today Hungary is a parliamentary democracy with a President and Prime Minister. The Prime Minister has most of the power; he/she is responsible for governing the country. Elections are held every four years.

How do Hungarians order their names and how should I say my name?

In Hungary the family name always comes first, followed by one or two given names (forenames). E.g., in *Kovács János*, Kovács is the family name and János is the male given name. Women can choose between many forms of names after getting married. E.g., *Kovács Jánosné* is a more traditional form where the “né” part means “Mrs” and her maiden name is not known. When saying your name always be clear which one is your family name or given name, especially when giving your name at offices or for official documents.

When are the public holidays?

The following are public holidays in Hungary:

January 1 – New Year’s Day

March 15 – Commemorating the revolution of 1848

March/April – Easter (both Good Friday and Easter Monday are holidays)

May 1 – Labour Day

May/June – Whit Sunday and Monday/Pentecost

August 20 – St. Stephen’s Day

October 23 – Commemorating the revolution of 1956

November 1 – All Saints’ Day

December 25-26 – Christmas

On all public holidays there is no school or work and companies, including shops, will be closed. Some restaurants, bars and petrol stations will remain open. If the holiday falls on a Tuesday or a Thursday, then the Monday or Friday respectively can be given off for schools and businesses, however shops will remain open on the Monday and Friday. Schools and business that take this extra day off will have to work a previous or following Saturday to compensate for the missed day.

What are the rules concerning smoking?

Smoking inside public places is prohibited. This includes offices, restaurants, pubs, shopping malls, on public transportation, bus stops, offices of businesses and student dormitories. Usually there are designated areas that you can smoke at and they are 5 meters from the entrance of the building.

What is the weather like?

Hungary has all four seasons. It is hot in the summer, especially in July and August when the temperature can reach 35°C. In winter months it can be as mild as 10°C or the temperature can go below 0 to -15°C. Be prepared for rainy periods (May, June) and snow in the winter. The Győr region usually has quite a lot of windy days.

How cheap is life in Hungary? How much is sales tax/VAT?

Of course this is all relative. In relation to western European countries Hungary has a lower cost of living. The capital, Budapest, tends to be more expensive than cities and towns in the countryside. Győr is a bit cheaper than Budapest but a bit more expensive than an average city of its size due to its thriving economy. Sales tax or VAT is the highest in Europe at 27% (excluding basic foods where it is 5%) but it is included in the price you see in the store or restaurant. If the sales tax is not included they will write “the price + ÁFA” (‘ÁFA’ is Hungarian for ‘VAT’).

Here is a website that is updated regularly with the average cost of things in Hungary:

https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/country_result.jsp?country=Hungary

What is the healthcare system like in Hungary?

Hungary has a universal health care system. The doctors and nurses are highly qualified but like with many public healthcare systems the waiting times can be quite long. The hospital in Győr is good quality, modern, and clean. More and more doctors speak English but it is not certain you will get one that speaks English. Nurses tend to have less knowledge in English. It is important to remember that you must take your health insurance documents or health insurance card (TAJ kártya) with you when you go to the doctor and hospital.

Is it easy to travel to other European (EU) countries?

Yes it is. Hungary is a member of the EU and a Schengen country, which means that borders are open. No visas are required for EU member countries if you live in the EU with a residence permit. However you are required to take your passport with you when you travel and sometimes trains and buses (and cars) are stopped at borders for random checks. If travelling outside of the EU please check if you need a visa at the embassy of the country you want to travel to.

Why is Vienna called Bécs and Bratislava called Pozsony?

Because of Hungary’s common history with Austria and Slovakia. From 1867 Hungary was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which was a multinational state consisting of two monarchies. Bécs and Budapest were both its capitals. Slovakia was once part of the Kingdom of Hungary and Pozsony was essentially its capital. Vienna is 120 km from Győr and Bratislava is 80 km.

FAQ about Hungarian Culture

Are Hungarians friendly?

Generally speaking Hungarians are friendly. Sometimes Hungarians will approach you if you need help and if you ask for it they will help you (if they can speak even a little English). In most shops, restaurants and businesses they will greet you upon arrival.

Can you make friends easily in Hungary?

In Hungary there are many levels of friendship. Hungarians on the surface are very friendly and helpful, they can also be quite personal when talking to you. However, Hungarians do keep their distance when it comes to inviting others to do things or inviting others to their home. It takes more time to build up trust with a Hungarian to the point that you would consider them a friend. In Hungary many people have few friends and many acquaintances. To make a friendship you may have to initiate meeting and spending time together. Having said this, it is a bit of a generalization and some Hungarians will be more open to building a friendship.

Why don't Hungarians speak English well?

Many factors contribute to this problem. For a long period under Communism (until 1990) there were no opportunities to learn English. At this time Russian was compulsory to learn in schools. However, English has not become compulsory. The teaching methodology in the school system is also not very effective. Almost all films on TV and in the cinema are dubbed into Hungarian. Hungary is not a multicultural society, everyone speaks Hungarian all the time so Hungarians are not forced to use other languages at home. In this region German is relatively well spoken.

Is it difficult to learn Hungarian?

Like learning any language it takes time and hard work to learn Hungarian. It is said that Hungarian is the second hardest language to learn next to Chinese; however this is not to say it is impossible. Many foreigners have learnt the language or at least have a strong command of it. The grammar structures can be a bit difficult to understand but if you take the time to study and practice you will be able to communicate in everyday life. Hungarians are very appreciative if you try to speak even a little Hungarian.

How will not knowing Hungarian affect my life?

In Győr the number of people that speak English has been increasing in recent years; however German is still the most common second language spoken. Some basic Hungarian is needed if you want to order food in a supermarket (at the deli and meat counter). Public (state) offices tend to have less people that speak English (except for the Interior Ministry). Banks tend to have at least one staff member available to help out in English. At the hospital more and more doctors speak English but sometimes you will have deal with other staff that don't speak English.

Is it difficult to find a job in Hungary?

No. There are many job vacancies, especially in the service industry. Engineers also have a relatively easy time finding good jobs. The unemployment rate in Hungary is around 4%. Some Hungarians have more than one job in order to earn enough income for their family.

Do I need to speak Hungarian to get a job?

Yes. There are probably only a few places where you can work without knowing some Hungarian. Hungary is not very multicultural, everyone speaks Hungarian as the native language, even the ethnic minorities. Companies generally expect their employees to speak Hungarian. At the same time most Hungarians don't expect you to be fluent and they appreciate even the smallest effort.

How good is customer service in Hungary?

Customer service has been improving in recent years. It still would be considered a bit less in quality than 'western countries' but, for the most part, privatization and the free market have encouraged companies to promote better customer service. Like in many places around the world you will find some people extremely helpful and others not. And in some cases people will seem unhelpful but this is because they do not speak English and are uncertain of how to deal with the situation, as they are not used to dealing with people who don't speak Hungarian.

What is Hungarian food like?

Hungarian cuisine is very delicious. Hungarians use a variety of ingredients in their cooking. For people coming from the west it sometimes is too spicy and those from the east not spicy enough. Paprika (both hot and sweet versions) is often used in many dishes. Hungarians tend to have a pork-based diet but you can find chicken, turkey, game and beef dishes as well. Their fish dishes consist mostly of fresh water fish (carp and catfish are the most popular). Vegetables are widely available but they are often served pickled with traditional meals. Fruits are very popular and when they are in season they are cheap and tasty.

Are Hungarians religious?

Yes, but not strictly speaking. The majority of the population is Christian, mainly Catholic. A lot of Hungarians do not practice their religion on a daily basis and very few people go to church regularly. However, most people are christened and religion plays an important role in weddings and at funerals. Most Hungarian traditions and holidays are connected to Catholicism.

Why do church bells ring at noon?

To commemorate the victory at the Siege of Nándorfehérvár (Belgrade). The Ottoman Empire pushed into the Kingdom of Hungary in 1456 to advance into Europe but the Hungarians stopped their forces here. The pope ordered the Catholic kingdoms to ring the bells to call people to pray for Belgrade to win the battle. This custom is still practiced everyday at noon.

What is the typical behaviour of Hungarians in public?

Hungarians usually do not behave loudly when in public. Many people sit quietly when using public transport, or speak in a low voice in shops and restaurants. Men and women who are in relationships often hold hands or kiss in public. Women often go through a door or enter a lift before men, except when entering a restaurant or pub. It is considered polite if you share your food (mainly sweets or fruit) with others who are around you.

What are Hungarian attitudes towards foreigners?

Hungarians tend to be a bit cautious towards foreigners especially in places outside of the capital city (like Győr). This is more because Hungary has been a quite closed society for the past 70 years. Immigration to the country is limited and tourists tend to visit only the main tourist destinations. So if you feel that Hungarians are a bit unfriendly to you it is probably because they are not sure how to act toward you.

What are some typical weekend activities for Hungarians?

Hungarians like to go walking around town when the weather is nice and drink a coffee or have ice cream. Families plan excursions in the countryside, which can involve hiking, cycling or activities connected to water. Sometimes they plan longer shopping trips. Spending the weekend in wellness hotels is also quite popular. Younger people like to participate in outdoor sports.

What are name days?

In Hungary every Hungarian name has a corresponding day. When you look in a Hungarian calendar you can see a person's name on each day. In the past these were usually celebrated in workplaces instead of birthdays, often with some cake and drinks. Nowadays it is not so common and it is more often celebrated at home with families and friends. Usually a small gift is given by family or close friends and they have some cake and drinks.

FAQ about Győr

Is Győr a big town?

Considering other Hungarian cities, yes it is. Győr is the sixth largest town in the country with a population of 130,000. Budapest is the largest city (1,800,000) but the other cities are not much bigger than Győr. Debrecen (200,000) is the second largest city after Budapest. Most towns in Hungary are quite small and there are also many small villages with a population of less than 1000.

What facilities does Győr have and how good is the infrastructure?

Győr is considered to be a well-developed town and has every necessary facility for a comfortable life. It is the most important urban centre of the Northwest region with many institutions. The university and many big companies make it an attractive place to work and live. You can find stores for almost any shopping need, and there is even a zoo. Infrastructure for travelling is good but road surface quality is not the best. Reaching Budapest and Vienna by train is fast and easy. There are many facilities for doing sports including kayaking, swimming, and various team sports facilities, gyms and sports clubs that are available to all.

What is the best way to explore the town?

On foot or using a bicycle. The area of Győr is not very large, most institutions and services are available within walking distance of the university. The town and the surrounding region are flat so using a bicycle is the best way to explore the outskirts. Many people use bikes to go to work or school.

Is the tap water safe to drink?

Yes. Hungary has a lot of freshwater resources, mainly in the form of groundwater. The drinking water (tap water) comes from deep wells throughout the country, not the rivers or lakes. Hungarians also enjoy drinking carbonated water, or soda. In the shops bottled carbonated water has a blue cap and still water has a pink cap.

Where can I buy food of my home country?

In the larger supermarkets and hypermarkets (e.g., Spar, Tesco) you can find an international section, which has some products from around the world. However in order to find a greater selection you will have to go to Budapest. A quick search online will provide you with many options to help find some of the food you miss from home.

(Please note that the hypermarket Tesco is on the outskirts of the town but it has a bus that travels there from the city centre.)

Can I get vegetarian/vegan meals in Győr?

Győr has two vegetarian/vegan restaurants at the time of writing this (the websites are listed below). However, most restaurants have two or three vegetarian options available on the menu.

Vital Café

<https://www.facebook.com/VitalCafeandBistro/>

Élelem Étterem

<https://www.facebook.com/nyersvegan.gyor/>

Are there any theatres/movies in English?

Yes there is a multiplex cinema in Győr that offers some films in English with Hungarian subtitles (Cinema City Győr). For art or alternative films Rómer Ház shows films (but not on a regular basis) and they also have concerts as well (Facebook pages are listed below but you should ask in advance if the movie is subtitled (feliratos) or dubbed (szinkronizált).

There is a theatre in Győr but the plays are all in Hungarian. However they also have ballet performances and there are concerts of all types of music throughout the city.

Győr Plaza Multiplex cinema: <https://www.cinemacity.hu>

Rómer Ház: <https://www.facebook.com/romerhaz/>

What other programs or festivals does Győr have?

Győr has many programs and festivals throughout the year, some of which include the seasonal festivals (spring, summer, etc.), wine festivals, the sweets festival, and advent/Christmas festival and market. All of the festivals include a variety of programs. In Hungary there are some music festivals as well, the largest is *Sziget*, which is held in the summer in Budapest every year. Almost all cities have their own festivals to find out more information go to the homepage of the city for more information.

Is Győr a safe place? Are there places in Győr that I should avoid?

Győr is a relatively safe place. The most common crime is theft so it is important to be aware of your property at all times. If you own a bicycle please purchase a good lock as bike theft is also very common. In the evening, especially on weekends, you may find intoxicated (drunk) people wandering in the streets. Generally these people keep to themselves but sometimes they can be aggressive and verbally harass people walking by. Like in many places women should avoid walking alone when it is dark. At night try to avoid smaller streets especially ones that are not well lit.

FAQ about Széchenyi István University

Who is Széchenyi István?

He is considered to be one of the most influential historical and political figures of the 19th century and referred to as “the Greatest Hungarian”. His name is carried by many public places, and you can see him on the 5000 forint bank note. Numerous projects are connected to his name, including the establishment of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the construction of the Chain Bridge (the first permanent bridge in Budapest). He also established the first steamboat routes in the country. He was a promoter of modernization and economic reforms in Hungary.

How large is the university?

In Hungary it is a medium-sized university with approximately 14,000 students. The university has nine faculties working in various research fields. Eight faculties are located in Győr, and one in Mosonmagyaróvár (a town about 40km away). Most students study in one of the three engineering faculties. The university is the Northwest region's largest educational institution.

What is the difference between the lecture period and the exam period?

In every semester there are 14 weeks of lessons/lectures. During this period you will also get assignments, and sometimes tests to complete. After the 14 weeks, teaching stops and the exam period begins. There is a 6-week exam period where you will have time to prepare for and take your exams. A lot of Hungarians go home from the dormitory during the exam period. It is recommended that you study during the lecture period too since you might not have enough time to study everything you need in the exam period.

How much free time will I have during the semester?

Quite a lot. If you visit the lectures and do your assignments, you will still have enough free time remaining to do other activities. The weekends are free and lectures usually end early on Fridays. There are also public holidays (sometimes "long weekends") and other university programs, which will give you more days off. It is important to manage your time well between studying and leisure.

What happens if I fail in an exam?

Don't panic! Due to the credit system you will have multiple chances to complete your exams. It is important however, that you try to complete the more important subjects in the given semester because they might be a prerequisite for taking other subjects in the following semester. If you fail to do so, you will delay your studies by a semester.

Do classes have compulsory attendance?

Officially there is no compulsory attendance at Széchenyi István University. However some professors may require you to attend by giving marks for participating in the lessons (through discussions, quizzes, in-class assignments, etc.). It is advisable to ask the professor at the beginning of the lecture their policy on missing lectures.

Can I be late to the lectures?

You should try to be on time for your lectures. Most lectures start on time or 1 or 2 minutes late. If you are late it really depends on the professor's attitude towards students arriving late. Some tend to be more lenient and don't care while others will not tolerate it and may not let the students join the lecture if they arrive late. If you do arrive late in a larger classroom find a seat quickly and quietly as possible. If you are in a smaller class give a short apology ("I'm sorry for being late") and take a seat quickly and quietly.

How should I address my professors?

When addressing them in English it is recommended that use 'Professor + their family name', e.g., 'Professor Kovács'. In Hungarian if it is a male teacher or professor then you say 'Tanár Úr' and for a female teacher or professor 'Tanárnő'.

Are professors helpful?

Like at any university you will have a range of professors from very helpful to not very helpful. However, most of your professors will be helpful but it is a good idea to follow some guidelines. First listen to instructions in the classroom carefully and read emails from the professors carefully, as most will be very detailed with the information you need. Secondly, try to have short and direct questions when asking something through email.

What should I expect from assignments and studying outside the classroom?

Hungarian education still relies heavily on providing large amounts of information to the students. So it is advisable to be prepared to do a good amount of homework in the form of assignments and projects, as well as studying for mid-term tests and exams. You will find it is necessary to learn quite a bit of information for exams so it is advisable to study throughout the lecture/lesson period for the final exam. Exams can be either oral or written (or sometimes both).

Basic words you might need during your first weeks

Hungary = Magyarország (ma-djar-orsaag)
Hungarian = Magyar (ma-djar)
English = angol (ongawl)
foreigner = külföldi (khul-ful-dee)
Do you speak English? Beszel angolul? (Be-sel angoloul)

university = egyetem (edj-e-tem)
student = hallgató (hall-ga-toe) / diák (dee-ak)
student card = diákigazolvány (dee-ak eegahzolvaan)
class room = tanterem (tawn-tair-em)
lecture = előadás (el-uu-adaash)
exam = vizsga (viizhga) (the 'zs' sound is the same as the 's' in "pleasure")
teacher/professor = tanár (tawn-ar) / oktató (awk-ta-toe)
dormitory = kollégium (kawl-lay-gee-um)
room = szoba (so-ba)
key = kulcs (koolch)
library = könyvtár (kunv-tar)
building = épület (eh-poo-let)
canteen/cafeteria = menza (men-zah)

yes = igen (ee-gen)
no = nem (nem)
Good afternoon = Jó napot (yoh nu-pawt)
Goodbye = viszlát (vis-la-at)
thank you = köszönöm (khoe-se-noem)
I am sorry = bocsanat (bo-cha-nat)

address = lakcím (lack-tseem)
street = utca (oot-tsah)
square = tér (tair)
bridge = híd (heed)
passport = útleveél (ootlevel)
signature = aláírás (aw-la-ee-rash)
bus = busz (bous)
train = vonat (vo-nut)
ticket = jegy (yedje)
restroom/toilet = mosdó, (mosh-doh) / WC (vay tsay)
for men = férfi (fair-fee)
for women = női (newee)
open = nyitva (kneetva)
closed = zárva (zaarva)

water = víz (veez)
still water = szénsavmentes víz (seyn-sha-vash men-tesh veez)
lunch = ebéd (E-bed)
meat = hús (hoosh)
pork = disznóhús (Dis-no-hoosh)
coffee = kávé (Ka-vey)