

# BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

Hungary traces its history back to the Magyars, an alliance of semi-nomadic tribes from southern Russia and the Black Sea coast that arrived in the region in the ninth century.

After centuries as a powerful medieval kingdom, Hungary was part of the Ottoman and then Habsburg empires, only to become independent again after the First World War.

During the Cold War, the country found itself under communist rule. An uprising in 1956 was crushed by Red Army, but Hungary did later become the first Eastern European country to gain some economic freedom.

For centuries, Budapest was the epicenter of the country's political, economic, and social life. Its magnificent waterfront and boulevards invite comparisons with Paris, Prague and Vienna – as do many features of its popular culture, from coffee houses and a love of opera to its wine-producing tradition.

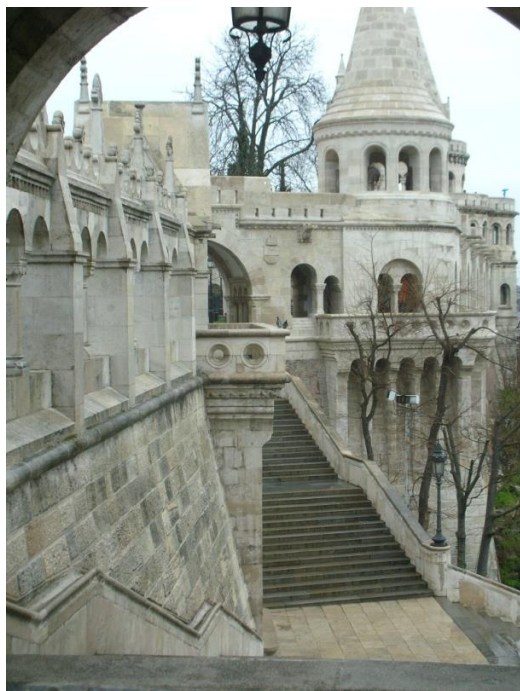
Ironically, provincial Hungarians have long regarded Budapest as a hotbed of alien values and loose morals – a charge that misses the point. Foreigners have played a major role in the city since its inception, and the Chinese and Arab communities established since the end of Communism simply bring Budapest up to date as an international capital.

## Principal Government Officials

President- János Áder

Prime Minister- Viktor Orbán (Fidesz)

Minister of Foreign Affairs- János Martonyi



## Geography

Area: 93,030 sq. km. (35,910 sq. mi.); about the size of Indiana.

Cities: *Capital*--Budapest (est. pop. 2 million). *Other cities*--Debrecen (208,000); Miskolc (170,000); Szeged (170,000); Pecs (157,000).

Terrain: Mostly flat, with low mountains in the north and northeast and north of Lake Balaton.

Climate: Temperate.



## Government

Type: Republic.

Constitution: Adopted April 18, 2011; entered into effect January 1, 2012.

Branches: *Executive*--president (head of state), prime minister (head of government), cabinet. *Legislative*--National Assembly (386 members, 4-year term). *Judicial*--Curia (supreme court) and Constitutional Court.

Administrative regions: 19 counties plus capital region of Budapest.

Principal political parties: Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Party--center-right; Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP)--center-right; Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP)--center-left; Democratic Coalition (DK)--center-left; Politics Can Be Different (LMP)--Green party; Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik)--far-right.

## Economy

Elected in 2010, the Orbán government adopted what Economy Minister György Matolcsy described as an "unorthodox economic policy" to help steer Hungary through the economic crisis. This included the introduction of "crisis taxes" targeting banking, energy, telecommunications, and retail sectors. Originally unveiled as 3-year, limited-duration, and extraordinary measures, the crisis taxes were meant to shore up the government budget until more long-term, structural changes were made. In November 2010, the government acknowledged that the "crisis taxes" would exist in some form until 2014, 2 years later than previously asserted. In addition, in 2010 the government discontinued contributions to the voluntary private pillar of the pension system, and imposed financial disincentives on those who chose not to return to the state system. The government has used the resulting budgetary windfall to help reduce the country's debt levels and meet its deficit target of less than 3% for 2011 and 2012.

Amid worsening investor sentiment and distrust toward the government's economic policy, all three credit rating agencies in December 2011-January 2012 downgraded Hungary to non-investment grade, which resulted in a sharp depreciation of the Hungarian forint to almost 350 to the euro and a corresponding increase in government bond yields from below 7% to about 10%. Rising yields and the depreciating forint made the Debt Management Agency's plan to issue 4.8 billion euros worth (approx. \$6.3 billion) of foreign-currency denominated bonds questionable and prompted the government to seek a credit line from the EU and the IMF.

## PEOPLE

Population (July 2011 est.): 9,996,000. Ethnic groups in Hungary include Magyar (nearly 90%), Romany, German, Serb, Slovak, and others. The majority of Hungary's people are Roman Catholic; other religions represented are Calvinist, Lutheran, Jewish, Baptist, Adventist, Pentecostal, and Unitarian. Magyar is the predominant language. Hungary has long been an integral part of Europe. It converted to Western Christianity before AD 1000.



## **Budapest**

- Accommodations:** **Hotel President Budapest**  
Budapest 1054, Hold utca 3-5.  
Tel. +361 3738200  
Fax. +361 3738250  
<http://www.hotelpresident.hu>
- GMF Partner:** **Hungarian Europe Society**  
István Hegedűs, chairman, Zsuzsanna Szelényi, member of the Supervisory Board  
Budapest 1052, Gerlóczy utca 11.  
[www.europesociety.hu](http://www.europesociety.hu)
- City coordinator:** **Enikő Pap**  
Active Citizenship Foundation  
E-mail: [papeniko1@gmail.com](mailto:papeniko1@gmail.com)  
Mobile: +3630 6189476  
Skype: pap.eniko1
- Emergency Contacts:  
Police Department: 107  
Fire Department: 105  
Ambulance: 104
- Budapest Travel Expenses:  
Fellows are expected to pay for local transportation. We will either use public transportation, walk or take taxis. The coordinator will provide assistance to buy public transport tickets.

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### **Friday, July 6<sup>th</sup>**

- pm** **Arrival in Budapest**  
Participants will be awaited at the airport with GMF sign. Assistance to take taxis to the hotel provided if needed. (The costs is approximately EUR 18 payable by credit cards).
- 6:00 pm** **Meet at the hotel lobby.**
- 6:15 pm** **Program overview. Introduction and orientation to Budapest/Hungary. Meeting with Zsuzsanna Szelényi, Member of the Supervisory Board of the Hungarian Europe Society and Enikő Pap, city coordinator**  
Venue: Két Szerecsen Cafe House, Budapest V., Nagymező utca 14.

*Ms. Zsuzsanna Szelényi is Executive Director at the Savoire Faire Human Development Ltd. She holds decision-making functions in several CSOs, including the Hungarian Europe Society. In 2010-2011 she was working as Executive Director of the Roma Education Fund. In 1996-2010 she was working at the Council of Europe focusing on democracy building and conflict resolution. Ms. Szelényi started her professional career as a politician in the transition period in 1988 and was elected to the first free Parliament in Hungary. Ms. Szelényi's experience encompasses political process, public policy, development policy, conflict management, and general management activities at international level. Ms. Szelényi holds an*

MA of Psychology and an MA of International Relations from Hungarian universities and has completed studies at the Global Masters of Arts Program (GMAP) within the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in Boston (USA) in International Politics and Economics.

**7:00 pm** **Welcome Dinner**  
The dinner will be covered by GMF

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**Saturday, July 7<sup>th</sup>**

**9:30 am** **Meet in the Hotel Lobby**

**9:30 am-7:00 pm** **Whole day guided tour to Esztergom, Visegrád and Szentendre cities**

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**Sunday, July 8<sup>th</sup>**

**Free day. Suggestions for city tours and cultural programs will be provided.**

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**Monday, July 9<sup>th</sup>**

**8:35 am** **Meet in the Hotel Lobby**  
Please bring your passports.

**9:00-10:30 am** **Overview of Hungarian party politics, political alternatives**  
**Meeting with Kornélia Magyar, Managing Director of Magyar Progressive Institute**  
Venue: Magyar Progressive Institute, Budapest V., Fehérhajú utca 5.  
[www.progresszivintezet.hu](http://www.progresszivintezet.hu)

*Since the first free election in 1990 4-6 parties participated in the Hungarian Parliament, and 2-3 of them formed a coalition for government providing a balanced governmental and party system. The 2010 elections brought the Hungarian right wing party Fidesz to an unprecedented success leading to two-third majority representation in the Parliament. Former governmental parties have either collapsed or diminished. An extreme right party, Jobbik received 16% representation in the Parliament. The current opposition suffers from fragmentation and powerlessness. After two years of power, Fidesz has lost a significant voter basis. The next elections will be in 2014. Can a change of government be expected? Can the current democratic opposition form a reasonable and sustainable coalition?*

*Ms. Kornélia Magyar is the Managing Director of the Magyar Progressive Institute. Previously she was Head of Department at the Prime Minister's Office, Government Communication Centre. Ms. Magyar finished her studies in Budapest, and received an MA in Political Science. She won a grant in 2004 and spent six months in Salzburg, Austria, focusing on the field of E-democracy and Participation. Eventually she specialized on this topic and wrote her final thesis about the E-democratic potential of Hungarian municipalities.*

*The Magyar Progressive Institute is a political consulting firm in Budapest, Hungary. The company was founded in 2008 and became one of the most demanded political analyst actor. The Magyar Progressive Institute run researches about the strengthening of the extreme right in Europe.*

**11:00 am-12:10 pm** **Constitutionalization and the rule of law in Hungary. Freedom of media**  
**Meeting with Éva Simon, Member of the Executive Committee and Szabolcs Hegyi, Head of Political Rights Program at Hungarian Civil Liberties Union**  
Venue: Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, Budapest XIII., Tatra utca 15/b.  
<http://tasz.hu/en>

Following the 2010 political change, the new governing party Fidesz announced the fundamental constitutional and political reconstruction of the country. The so-called "revolution at the ballots" has created an ambivalent new constitution through a one-sided process of constitutionalization, and new cardinal laws have cemented the power of the ruling party. The new restrictive media laws threaten journalists. All these "reforms" have weakened the political system of checks and balances that has been developed since 1990. The measures of the government have been strongly criticized within Hungary and worldwide. How far the liberal democratic values and the system of rule of law are challenged in Hungary today?

Ms. Éva Simon graduated from the Eötvös Loránd University of Sciences Faculty of Law, Budapest. In 2008, she became the Head of Freedom of Expression Program at the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (HCLU). From 1997 until 2004, she taught law and citizenship studies at the Kalyi Jag Roma school. From 2001 until 2005 she dealt with legal matters of the internet at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics. Ms. Simon was a researcher at Yeshiva University, the Cardozo School of Law and the CEU Center for Media and Communication Studies. From 2004, she also worked for the Association of Hungarian Content Providers. Her area of research is fundamental rights on the internet.

Mr. Szabolcs Hegyi graduated from a law school and has a philosopher's degree as well. He is an assistant professor in the Law School of the University of Miskolc, Department of Jurisprudence. Mr. Hegyi's areas of research and lessons are about the history, structure and political philosophy of constitutional democracies. The theme of his thesis was the moral limits of legal obligations. Mr. Hegyi has been working for HCLU since June 2011. Being the Head of the Political Rights Program his agenda includes issues of freedom of speech and that of the press, freedom of assembly and association and thought, religion and conscience.

The Hungarian Civil Liberties Union is the key human rights watchdog organization in Hungary established in 1994. HCLU is a law reform and legal defence public interest NGO, with the goal of building and strengthening the civil society and rule of law in Hungary and the Central and Eastern European region.

**12:45-1:45 pm**

**Meeting with Ambassador Eleni Tsakopoulos Kounalakis**

Venue: Embassy of the United States, Budapest V., Szabadság tér 12.

<http://hungary.usembassy.gov/>

Ambassador Eleni Tsakopoulos Kounalakis was sworn in to office by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on January 7, 2010. She presented her credentials to the President of Hungary, László Sólyom on January 11, 2010.

Before accepting President Obama's nomination to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Hungary, Eleni Tsakopoulos Kounalakis was president of AKT Development Corporation, one of California's largest and most respected land development firms. A prominent and successful businesswoman, Ambassador Kounalakis earned her undergraduate degree from Dartmouth and an MBA from the University of California at Berkeley. In 2011 she received an Honorary Doctorate in Law from the American College of Greece.

**1:50-2:25 pm**

**Lunch**

Venue: Roosevelt Restaurant, Budapest V., Szabadság tér 7.

**2:50-4:00 pm**

**Situation of Roma in Hungary**

**Meeting with Gábor Daróczy, Director of the Romaversitas Foundation**

Venue: Romaversitas Foundation, Budapest VI., Teréz körút 46., IV/1.

[www.romaversitas.hu](http://www.romaversitas.hu)

Roma are the largest ethnic-cultural and far the poorest minority in Europe with 12-14 million people living in various Eastern European countries. Approximately 5-7% of the Hungarian population is Roma. The integration of Roma people has become a burning political issue in the recent years in Hungary, inflamed by a series of murders of Roma people in 2008-2009. The Europe-wide strengthening of extreme right forces and growing Roma-phobia focused attention of Roma integration policies, which is a key social and political challenge in Europe. In 2011 the European Union formulated a complex strategy for Roma inclusion. What are the realistic chances for a thorough implementation of the Roma national strategy in Hungary?

Mr. Gábor Daróczy has been the Director of Romaversitas Foundation since 2008. Before this he spent several years at different NGOs and in the public service. He started his carrier at Hungarian Soros Foundation working with youths, Roma and environment programs. Later Mr. Daróczy worked for the Ministry of Health, the Prime Minister's Office, the National Development Agency, and the Open Society Institute.

Mr. Daróczy served 2 years at the Ministry of Education as the ministerial commissioner responsible for the integration of Roma and disadvantaged children and initiated programs and legal changes. He wrote several articles and chapters in different periodicals and books.

Mr. Daróczy as the youngest of a Roma family with 5 children keeps the tradition, and he himself has big family: father of an 18 months old girl, stepfather of 3 children and "honorary father" of 51 young Roma students at Romaversitas Foundation.

The Romaversitas is a special empowerment and scholarship program for Roma youth in higher education for fourteen years. In addition to stipend, Romaversitas Foundation offers selected Roma students a wide range of educational and social services in order to help them to successfully complete their studies and find adequate job. Romaversitas alumni have a key role to keep Roma professionals networked and to support one another to cope with the enormous prejudices they face in everyday life.

- 4:50-6:30 pm**                      **Individual appointments**
- 7:40 pm**                              **Meet at the hotel lobby**
- 8:00 pm**                              **Home hospitality dinner hosted by MMF alumni Kornélia Magyar and Tamás Gyurkovics**  
Venue: Budapest V., Petőfi Sándor utca 12.
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### **Tuesday, July 10th**

- 8:30 am**                              **Meet in the Hotel Lobby**  
Please bring your passports
- 9:00-11:30 am**                      **Meeting with Gábor Scheiring, Member of the Hungarian Parliament, representative of opposition party LMP (Politics Can Be Different)**  
<http://english.lehetmas.hu/>  
**Guided tour in the Hungarian Parliament**  
Venue: Hungarian Parliament, Budapest V., Kossuth tér 1-3.

*The party Politics Can Be Different (LMP) is the youngest party in Hungary that has got to Parliament in 2010 first. Being in opposition, the small parliamentary faction of 15 MPs is advocating for civil liberties and for sustainable economic growth. Under the current political circumstances opposition parties' relationship with each other is critical and difficult. Is there a need for cooperation between the democratic opposition parties at the next elections in 2014?*

*Mr. Gábor Scheiring is the founding member of the party Politics Can Be Different. He is the faction member and chair of the Economic Cabinet of the party, and also member of the Economic and Information Technology Committee of the Parliament. Mr. Scheiring is an economist, sociologist and social anthropologist by profession. He is a doctoral fellow at the University of Cambridge. He is researcher at the Institute of Political Sciences at Hungarian Academy of Sciences, board member of the Galbraith Foundation for Political Economy, and member of Védegylet – Protect the Future Association. Mr. Scheiring organized and made presentations in numerous events (as Ökofest, Globfest, Valley of Arts, and Summer University of Ecopolitics).*

- 12:00-1:00 pm**                      **Meeting with Gergely Pröhle, Deputy State Secretary for EU Bilateral Relations, Press and Cultural Diplomacy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs**  
Venue: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Budapest II., Bem tér 4.  
<http://www.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-foreign-affairs>

*The Ministry of Foreign Affairs tries to maintain Hungary's external relations in a relatively good shape when critical voices have spread over Europe and in the international community regarding the government. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán declared the decline of the West many times. How do strategic relations work with the member states of the European Union and the United States under such circumstances?*

*Mr. Gergely Pröhle gained his MA in Hungarian-German Language at the Faculty of Humanities of ELTE University in 1989. He also studied at the Budapest Institute for Graduate International and Diplomatic Studies.*

Since 1988 Mr. Pröhle has performed numerous editorial and publication tasks in different written and electronic media. He worked as lecturer at the Foreign Language Faculty at the ELTE University, Budapest. From 1992 to 1998 he was the director of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation's Budapest Office. In 1998-1999 Mr. Pröhle was state secretary of the Ministry of National Cultural Heritage. In 2000-2004 he served as ambassador in Germany and in Switzerland. Between 2005 and 2006 he was a Deputy Head of Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and from 2006 to 2010 acted as a senior consultant at Roland Berger Strategy Consultants Ltd.

Mr. Pröhle is a national inspector of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Hungary from 2006.

**1:15-2:55 pm**                      **Lunch break**

**3:00-4:50 pm**

***Economic outlook of Hungary***

**Meeting with Ferenc Karvalits, Vice Governor of the Hungarian National Bank**

Venue: Hungarian National Bank, Budapest V., Szabadság tér 8-9.

<http://english.mnb.hu/>

*Hungary, a most developed country in the region after the democratic transition, has gradually lost this leading position in the last decade, and was seriously hit by the global economic crisis. During the years the country has culminated a national debt of 80.60% of GDP and growth prospects became seriously limited. To fight the economic crisis, the current government introduced various unorthodox economic policies, which provoked criticism from the international financial institutions and could not turn the Hungarian economy to a positive track. Under the pressure of the serious devaluation of the Hungarian currency, in the fall of 2011 the government initiated negotiations with the IMF for a new standby credit, and to secure trust of the international markets. However, negotiations have not started yet. What are the risks of the rather arbitrary economic policy and the continuous delay of the IMF negotiations?*

*Mr. Ferenc Karvalits is the Deputy Governor of the Hungarian National Bank (MNB, the central bank of Hungary) since 2007. During his career Mr. Karvalits hold positions in the Hungarian National Bank (Head of Bank Department 1996-1998, Managing Director 1998-2000), and in different commercial banks (Head of the Liquidity and Risk Management Department at MH Bank, 1990-1996, CEO of the CIB Bank, 2002-2005). In 2000-2002 he worked as Deputy CEO of Wallis Rt. Before his appointment as Deputy Governor of the Central Bank, he worked as Member of the Board of Wallis Zrt. from 2002 and Graphisoft Nyrt. from 2006 and also as chairman of the Board of FHB Nyrt. He has been lecturer at the University of Economics since 1996 and was member of the Economic Advisory Board of the Prime Minister in 2004-2005. Mr. Karvalits holds an MA in Economics from the Corvinus University, Budapest and a Master of Economic Policy Management from SIPA, Columbia University, New York.*

*The Hungarian National Bank is the central bank of Hungary. The primary objective of MNB is to achieve and maintain price stability. Without prejudice to its primary objective, the MNB supports the economic policy of the Government, using the monetary policy instruments at its disposal.*

**5:30-7:00 pm**

***Hungary as a Member State of the European Union***

**Meeting with István Hegedűs, Chairman of the Hungarian Europe Society**

Venue: Dorottya Café, Budapest V., Dorottya utca 1.

*Hungary has become the "terrible child" of the European Union since 2010. The current government has had numerous conflicts with European institutions, especially with the European Parliament. Key politicians of Fidesz use a growing eurosceptic language, especially in the domestic arena. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has often been mentioned together with President Putin and other strongmen in the European quality media. Is there still a room for Hungary inside the European Union?*

*Mr. István Hegedűs has become politically active at the beginning of the Hungarian regime-change. In 1989 he participated at the national roundtable negotiations on the transition to democracy as a delegate of the opposition groups. He was a permanent member of the media committee during the talks. He became a liberal member of the first free elected Hungarian Parliament in 1990 and served as the vice-chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee.*

*Leaving politics in 1994, Mr. Hegedűs started to work as a free-lanced scholar and lecturer in different universities. Amongst others, he run courses on Hungarian and European politics for visiting students of the Education Abroad Program of the University of California located at the Eötvös Loránd University of Sciences in Budapest.*

*Mr. Hegedűs received his Ph.D. in sociology at the Corvinus University of Budapest in 2004. His main research fields are political parties, media and politics as well as EU institutional decision-making.*

*Since 2011 he lives in Brussels.*

*The Hungarian Europe Society (HES) is a Budapest-based NGO. Since 2000 HES has organised numerous conferences and workshops on current international affairs, focusing especially on European Union issues. The organisation aims that Hungarians understand the role and values of the European Union and Hungary takes full part in the wide range of policies and activities of the Union.*

**7:30 pm**

**Wrap-up of the Budapest visit**

**Farewell dinner hosted by Zsuzsanna Szelényi and Ferenc Karvalits**

Venue: Budapest II., Törökvész út 129/b.

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**Wednesday, July 11th**

**am**

**Departure to the airport according to the flight schedule**

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**PLEASE COMPLETE THE ONLINE EVALUATION FOR THIS CITY!**

*Do you want to write about your experience for the MMF newsletter?*

*Send your contribution to: [mmfinfo@gmfus.org](mailto:mmfinfo@gmfus.org)*

## Introduction to Hungary

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### General Information

- [U.S. State Department Background Note on Hungary](#)
- [Britannica on Hungary](#)
- [Wikipedia on Hungary](#)
- [Rough Guide on Hungary](#)
- [Lonely Planet on Hungary](#)

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### News

- [The Budapest Sun](#)
- [The Budapest Business Journal](#)
- [The Budapest Times](#)

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### History

- Molnár, Miklós. [A Concise History of Hungary](#)
- Lendvai, Paul. [The Hungarians: A Thousand Years of Victory in Defeat](#)
- Matthews, John P. C. [Explosion: The Hungarian Revolution of 1956](#)

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### Host City

- [Budapest: a History from its Beginnings to 1998](#). Ed. Andras Gero and Janos Poor
- Luckas, John. [Budapest 1900: A Historical Portrait of a City and Its Culture](#)
- Nemes, Robert. [The Once and Future Budapest](#)

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### Biographies

- Marton, Kati. [The Great Escape: Nine Jews Who Fled Hitler and Changed The World](#) (On Kindle)
- Rainer, János M. [Imre Nagy: A Biography](#)
- Walker, Alan. Franz Liszt: [The Virtuoso Years, 1811-1847](#); [The Weimar Years, 1848-1861](#); and [The Final Years, 1861-1886](#)

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### Classic Novels

- Jókai, Mór. [The Baron's Sons: A Romance of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848](#)
- Kosztolányi, Dezső. [Anna Edes](#)
- Krúdy, Gyula. [The Adventures of Sindbad](#) (On Kindle)

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### Contemporary Novels

- Kertész, Imre. [Fatelessness](#) (On Kindle)
- Kondor, Vilmos. [Budapest Noir: A Novel](#)
- Konrád, György. [The City Builder](#)



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### Classic Feature Films

- Géza Radványi. [Somewhere in Europe](#)
- Péter Bacsó. [The Witness](#)
- Márta Mészáros. [Diary for my Children](#)

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### Contemporary Feature Films

- István Szabó. [Sunshine](#)
- Ildikó Enyedi. [My Twentieth Century](#)
- Krisztina Goda. [Children of Glory](#)

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The recommendations above are not endorsements of the German Marshall Fund, but rather a representation of popular culture.