



# Country Report

## Hungary

### Overview

#### Overview

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Hungary is a landlocked country in Central Europe's Carpathian Basin, bordering Austria, Croatia, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine. Hungary's largest city and capital is Budapest, which serves as the country's main cultural, political, economic and transportation center. A member of NATO and the EU, Hungary is a parliamentary republic with an export-driven free market economy.

Political risks are LOW. Under Prime Minister Viktor Orban, the right-wing populist Fidesz party has maintained a large majority in the unicameral National Assembly. Some of Fidesz's policies have been divisive and controversial, though other groups have failed to produce meaningful, organized opposition. Civil unrest is a MODERATE concern due to protests against controversial issues. Corruption is a MODERATE risk, particularly in the form of low-level bribery.

Crime is a MODERATE concern, with petty incidents being the primary threat to foreign nationals. Additionally, as the country is a prominent tourist destination that hosts millions of visitors per year, property crime and vehicle theft are common. Terrorism is a LOW risk, although nationalist extremist groups have carried out isolated attacks and staged aggressive demonstrations against minority groups. Kidnapping is also a LOW risk, as it is exceedingly rare.

Infrastructure risks are MODERATE, as systems are generally well-maintained and well-developed in major cities but pose some concerns elsewhere. Rural roads can be poorly lit, narrow or winding, and the quality of other infrastructure varies. Otherwise, transportation infrastructure is generally of a good quality, and other concerns such as power and telecommunications outages are uncommon. Flooding is a seasonal issue, particularly near the Danube and Tisza rivers. Additionally, winters are typically accompanied by heavy snow that can severely impede road travel in rural areas.

### Political conditions

#### Political

- **Political concerns in Hungary are LOW due to the continued electoral success of Prime Minister Viktor Orban and the ruling Fidesz party.**

Hungary is a parliamentary republic with a president elected by the legislature who serves as head of state and a prime minister who serves as head of government. The president – currently Katalin Novak– serves a largely ceremonial role but does have the power to veto laws or send them to the Constitutional Court for review. Additionally, the president serves as the commander-in-chief of the Hungarian Armed Forces. The prime minister is typically the leader of the largest party and responsible for handling day-to-day government operations. Prime Minister Viktor Orban is the head of the ruling right-wing populist Fidesz party. The legislature, known as the National Assembly, is a unicameral body whose members serve four-year terms. The next parliamentary elections are expected in 2026.

Hungary has a stable political environment, and power has consistently transitioned peacefully between governments. Fidesz has been by far the largest and most popular party in recent years, winning an absolute majority of the vote in the April 2022 parliamentary elections. Fidesz's victory made Orban prime minister for his fourth consecutive term. Large legislative majorities during the course of Orban's premiership have allowed Fidesz to pass constitutional amendments and major laws along party lines, including several controversial changes to the country's political system. Orban's government is expected to continue its pursuit of nationalist policies.

Opposition parties and many international critics have characterized numerous government policies and reforms – such as a new electoral system for the National Assembly and limits on the power of the Constitutional Court – as power grabs and anti-democratic efforts intended to marginalize the regime's opponents. Along with allegations of cronyism and the country's worsening performance in international indices of transparency and democratic governance, these issues have led to periodic calls for the EU to impose punitive measures on Hungary, but the prospect of actions such as suspending Hungary's voting rights in the bloc is remote due to the stringent voting requirements mandated by EU treaties, which often require consensus from member states. Amid these concerns, opposition parties coalesced to form a single coalition in April 2022 parliamentary elections in hopes unseating Orban. The coalition lost the elections amid allegations of an uneven playing field during the preceding parliamentary campaign.

A recent point of contention between Orban and the EU regarded an EU-wide budget and coronavirus relief package, specifically a clause linking relief payments to EU rule of law. Critics have alleged Orban and others in the ruling government have failed to uphold EU rule of law, especially following the National Assembly's passage of legislation to expand Orban's powers amid the coronavirus outbreak. Hungary, along with leaders from Poland, blocked the EU budget and forced EU leaders to compromise with Hungary and Poland in December 2020. The debate highlighted divisions between EU powers, especially right-wing populist leadership such as Orban's.

Orban and Fidesz have primarily focused on increasing government influence in the economy and opposing the resettlement of migrants and asylum seekers into Hungary. Although Hungary's economic growth has been relatively consistent under Fidesz, immigration has been the single most prominent issue in Hungarian politics in recent years and a significant source of Fidesz's popularity, as the public is broadly supportive of restrictive immigration policies. The government has fenced off its borders with Serbia and Croatia to block unauthorized entry into Hungary since 2015, when large-scale migration into EU member states began. Additionally, Fidesz has firmly opposed any resettlement of migrants from other EU countries and threatened to impede any EU policies perceived as favorable to immigration. Though these positions have strained relations with other EU member states, Orban and his government have reiterated support for Hungary's continuing membership in the bloc.

### **Economy**

Hungary's economy is largely oriented toward exporting industrial goods, particularly heavy machinery. Economic growth has been among the highest in the EU in recent years and is expected to continue in the medium term, though the country remains dependent on consumer demand in other European countries. Unemployment rates have also been very low. Fidesz has generally pursued more interventionist economic

policies than his predecessors, including nationalizing the pension system and some businesses. While the country's immediate economic outlook is generally positive, the economic impact of Russian military activity in Ukraine remains unclear. Additional long-term concerns include the country's aging population and corruption.

## **Corruption**

- **Corruption in Hungary is a MODERATE concern, particularly in the form of bribery.**

Corruption is a significant issue and tends to occur most often in the form of bribing low-level public officials to expedite services or secure government contracts. While Hungarian law criminalizes bribery and other forms of corruption, enforcement is severely lacking, and authorities rarely investigate corruption charges transparently. Corruption risks are most elevated for those involved in business. Companies operating in Hungary have reported tax officials propositioning them for bribes, and public funds are often diverted to businesses with close ties to political elites in procurement processes. In general, corruption among police and other security forces is not prevalent but can sporadically occur. Most incidents are low-level attempts by officers to solicit fees or fines during routine traffic stops; however, such incidents are much less prevalent in major cities.

Transparency International, a nongovernmental organization that monitors global corruption, gave Hungary a score of 43 out of 100 in its 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). The CPI measures levels of perceived corruption, ranging from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (extremely transparent). Hungary's score suggests moderate levels of corruption, and the country was perceived as the 73rd least corrupt out of 180 surveyed.

## **Security issues**

### **General crime**

- **Crime in Hungary is a MODERATE risk for travelers and is most often petty in nature.**

Due to its status as a popular tourist destination, Hungary experiences elevated risks of petty theft. Bag-snatching, mugging and pick-pocketing are particularly common, especially at airports, train stations and other crowded public areas. Additionally, some foreign nationals have reported receiving exorbitant service charges at nightclubs in the central Pest district of the capital Budapest and being forcibly taken to ATMs to settle the bills under threat of violence. Law enforcement has addressed these risks by shutting down specific nightclubs, and instances of such crime have decreased; however, the risk nonetheless remains. Property crime such as burglary is also a growing concern. The elderly and those in rural areas are the most common targets for burglary due to their perceived vulnerability. Rates of violent crime, such as assault and homicide, are near the average for the EU as a whole. Police response times are generally adequate in urban areas but may be delayed in rural areas.

In recent years, extremist nationalist groups have gained popularity in some segments of society, and some have occasionally carried out attacks against minorities. Most such incidents have targeted the Roma population, and other incidents have targeted Jewish or LGBTQ individuals as well as non-white people. Protesters have targeted LGBTQ events and have carried out violence against organizers, and LGBTQ groups allege that security forces do little to stop such incidents. The most common form of attack has been assault, but incidents of arson have also been reported. These nationalist extremist groups do not typically target foreign nationals, but non-white travelers face an increased risk, as do LGBTQ visitors.

### **Terrorism**

- **Terrorism is a LOW concern in Hungary, although ethnic nationalist groups have carried out small-scale attacks against political figures.**

Hungary is at a low risk for terror activity, as no significant domestic or transnational terror groups are active in country. Some ethnic nationalist groups have carried out small-scale bombing attacks on opposition political groups, but these are sporadic and not a significant concern. Furthermore, Hungary has rarely been targeted by transnational terrorists; however, countries involved in the fight against the Islamic State (IS) – including Hungary – remain potential targets for future attacks. In August 2022 counterterrorism authorities arrested an individual convicted of committing terrorist acts. The arrest highlights continued counterterrorism and security infrastructure in place to monitor and prevent potential attacks.

## **Civil unrest**

- **Civil unrest is a MODERATE concern in Hungary, as anti-government sentiment has increased following controversial government initiatives.**

Large public demonstrations occur periodically over political, economic or social issues. The largest protests typically take place in the capital Budapest, with common protest sites including Heroes' Square, Liberty Square, the State Opera House and areas near Parliament or other government buildings. Such demonstrations are usually peaceful, but small-scale clashes and acts of violence are possible at any large public demonstration. In August 2022 approximately 1,000 environmental protesters held a series of demonstrations in opposition to the lifting of logging restrictions. Previous protests in July 2022 saw thousands of anti-government demonstrators in Budapest in opposition to proposed tax code changes. Demonstrators blocked traffic in several areas of the city over the course of several hours.

Political protests are somewhat common in Budapest and have different risk profiles. Protests staged by the opposition Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) and associated groups are generally peaceful but sometimes prompt rival protests, increasing the risk of clashes between such groups. Protests by right-wing groups, including extremist groups, occur with some frequency and have a higher risk of violent incidents, especially if authorities intervene to disperse crowds. Risks of violence or aggressive demonstrations are particularly elevated during protests involving the nationalist Jobbik party, the associated New Hungarian Guard group and other right-wing nationalist organizations. Political developments associated with the current Fidesz government have prompted sporadic protests, especially in Budapest; however, these demonstrations, though large, have not led to widespread, sustained unrest. Political controversies surrounding Fidesz are likely to lead to intermittent anti-government actions in the future. In June and July 2021 demonstrators gathered in Budapest in opposition to allegedly anti-LGBTQ legislation passed by the government. Similar protests resulting from controversial political and social issues are possible in the near term.

Economic issues also sporadically prompt protests. Strikes – usually by civic groups, public transportation workers or government employee groups – occur occasionally and can be highly disruptive. In March 2022 unions representing teachers organized a nationwide strike amid a dispute over pay and working conditions.

## **Kidnapping**

- **Kidnapping risks are LOW in Hungary, as incidents are rare.**

Kidnapping rarely takes place in Hungary; fewer than five incidents are typically reported per year. An incident in January 2022 in Pest county resulted in an express kidnapping where the alleged perpetrators demanded the victim sign ownership of a high-value car over to them before the victim's release. The incident was likely tied to organized crime. There have been no prominent cases of foreign nationals being abducted.

# Travel logistics

## Entering the country

### Entry/Exit requirements

- Hungary is a member of the Schengen Area; citizens of other Schengen countries can freely move in and out of Hungary, and holders of Schengen visas are entitled to enter Hungary.
- Citizens of countries outside the Schengen Area require valid passports for stays of up to 90 days.
- Hungary has visa-free agreements with several other countries, such as Argentina, Australia, Canada, Croatia, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico and the US. Citizens of other countries generally must apply for a visa before entering Hungary.
- As entry requirements vary by nationality and are subject to change, individuals should contact their nearest Hungarian diplomatic representation prior to travel for the most current information.

### Political/Security risks

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- Political concerns in Hungary are LOW due to the continued electoral success of Prime Minister Viktor Orban and the ruling Fidesz party.
- Corruption in Hungary is a MODERATE concern, particularly in the form of bribery.
- Crime in Hungary is a MODERATE risk for travelers and is most often petty in nature.
- Terrorism is a LOW concern in Hungary, although ethnic nationalist groups have carried out small-scale attacks against political figures.
- Civil unrest is a MODERATE concern in Hungary, as anti-government sentiment has increased following controversial government initiatives.
- Kidnapping risks are LOW in Hungary, as incidents are rare.

### Infrastructure

Infrastructure concerns are MODERATE. Systems are generally well-developed but may be outdated outside of major cities. Many infrastructure improvement projects are underway.

- Major roads are well-maintained, but rural areas may feature poorly lit, narrow or winding roads.
- Rail and bus transportation networks are extensive and efficient, although their maintenance may vary.
- Electricity, cell phone service and internet are reliable across the country.

### Air travel

The primary international airport is Budapest Ferenc Liszt International Airport (LHBP/BUD), sometimes referred to as Ferihegy Airport, which is approximately 14 mi (23 km) southeast of the capital's city center. The airport has facilities typical of major international airports, including shops, restaurants and currency exchanges. The airport is connected to the city by road; regular buses operate during the day, and taxi stands are present outside the terminals. Budapest's metro system has a station at the airport, and suburban and long-distance rail stations are also available. Private, pre-arranged transportation is recommended for all travel to and from the airport.

Regular domestic flights do not operate within Hungary due to its relatively small size, but chartered flights are available.

### Getting around

Hungary has a modern transportation network and well-developed public transportation in major cities, especially the capital Budapest. Private, pre-arranged transportation is recommended for all travel in Hungary.

- **Road** – Road travel is the most common method of transportation. Roads are in good to adequate condition through most of the country, although rural areas may feature poorly lit, narrow or winding roads. Traffic drives on the right.
  - *Vehicle rental* – Travelers must be at least 21 years old and have had a valid national driver's license for at least a year to rent a car in Hungary. Vehicles can be rented at Budapest Ferenc Liszt International Airport (LHBP/BUD) as well as at rental company offices in most major cities and towns. Driving habits are aggressive, and speeding and tailgating are reportedly common. Expressways require an electronic toll card known as a vignette. Outside of urban areas, cars must keep headlights on even during daylight. There is a zero-tolerance law regarding drunk driving; it is not legal to drive with any amount of alcohol in the system.
  - *Bus* – The national bus company provides intercity bus service as well as local bus service in smaller cities. Larger cities such as Budapest and Debrecen have their own local bus operations. Bus transportation is a common and popular way to get around the country. While buses are generally reliable, opportunistic petty crime is common on buses and at bus stops.
  - *Taxi* – Taxis are widely available in cities. Private taxis can be booked in advance or hailed off the street. In Budapest, taxi drivers have reportedly recommended restaurants or nightclubs that use the threat of violence to force customers to pay extremely high fees, of which the taxi driver usually receives a portion. Taxi drivers have also given change in outdated currency that is no longer valid.
  - *Ride-share* – Ride-share services operate primarily in Budapest. Risks include local driving habits, the quality of driver vetting and the maintenance of vehicles.
- **Rail** – The rail network radiates out from Budapest, which serves as a central hub for Hungarian State Railways' passenger service (MAV-START). Intercity (IC) trains are the fastest; secondary lines may not be well-maintained and are often slower. Additionally, Railjet (RJ) and other regional trains offer international service. Petty crime risks are elevated on trains.
  - *Metro* – Budapest has a rapid transit system called the Budapest Metro. This system has several lines that connect central Budapest to the surrounding areas. Risks of petty crime are elevated on the metro.
  - *Tram* – Several tram systems operate in cities and towns. The system in Budapest is one of the largest in the world, having approximately 100 mi (161 km) of track throughout the city and the surrounding area. Trams are often convenient but have elevated risks of petty crime.
- **Ferry** – Ferry services operate on the Danube River in Budapest as well as on Lake Balaton. Public ferry services operate throughout central Budapest and provide transit across the Danube to several locations in the city. The risk of petty theft is heightened on ferries and near ferry terminals as thieves may target foreign nationals and tourists for pickpocketing and bag snatching. Individuals should review ferry safety records prior to departure.

### Important dates in 2023

- 1 January – New Year's Day
- 15 March – 1848 Revolution Day holiday
- 7 April – Good Friday
- 9 April – Easter Sunday
- 10 April – Easter Monday
- 1 May – Labor Day
- 29 May – Whit Monday
- 20 August – Saint Stephen's Day
- 23 October – Republic Day
- 31 October – 1 November – All Saints' Day holidays

- 24-26 December – Christmas holidays

## Natural hazards

Flooding, most often due to heavy rain or melting snow, is a significant seasonal concern from April to June, especially along the Danube and Tisza rivers. The risk of wildfires is the most significant during the summer months from May – August, though fires are possible year round.

## Money

- **Currency** – The currency is the Hungarian forint (HUF). Banknotes are in 500, 1,000, 2,000, 5,000, 10,000 and 20,000 forints. Coins are in 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 100 and 200 forints.
- **Foreign exchange** – Foreign currency can be exchanged at currency exchanges and some banks. Currency exchanges can be found at airports and in major cities.
- **ATMs** – ATMs are widely available.
- **Credit cards** – Major credit cards are accepted in larger shops and restaurants, but many smaller restaurants and shops are cash only.
- **Tipping** – Tips of 10-15 percent are expected in restaurants, taxis, hair salons and hotels. In restaurants, it is considered rude to leave the tip on the table; customers instead tell the server how much to add to the bill. Some restaurants automatically add a service charge to the bill, and this is considered the tip.
- **Business hours** – Business hours are Monday to Friday from 09:00 – 17:00. Some businesses and government offices may close early on Friday. Shops are generally open Monday to Saturday from 10:00 – 18:00. Shopping centers are generally open on Sunday as well.
- **Banking hours** – Banking hours are Monday to Friday from 09:00 – 17:00, but some banks close earlier on Friday.

## Cultural factors

### Cultural tension

The vast majority of the population is ethnically Hungarian, but there is a significant Roma population and small numbers of Germans, Slovaks and Romanians. Ethnic nationalist groups have carried out attacks against ethnic minorities, particularly against Roma people.

### Etiquette and norms

- In Hungarian name order, the family name precedes the given name.
- Business is conducted very formally. Suits and ties are worn, handshakes are expected upon greeting and leaving, business cards should be exchanged, and punctuality is essential.
- It is considered inappropriate for women to be vulgar or loud in public.

### Dos and donts

- Individuals must carry some form of photo identification at all times, and police have the legal right to halt someone to ask for identification. For visitors, a photocopy of a passport is not sufficient; the physical passport is required.
- Same-sex relations are legal but controversial. LGBTQ individuals may encounter discrimination, and some pro-LGBTQ events have been violently disrupted by demonstrators. LGBTQ individuals are advised to exercise discretion.

## Useful information

## Useful information

- [Public holidays](#)
- [Weather forecast](#)
- [Maps](#)
- [Electricity](#): 230 volts, 50 Hz; for the most commonly used plug types, please [click here](#).

## Contact details

### Important contact details

- International dialing code: +36
- International dialing prefix: 00

### Emergency numbers

- Police: 107
- Ambulance: 104
- Fire: 105
- General emergency: 112

### Embassies

#### British Embassy

Fuge utca 5-7  
1022 Budapest  
Tel: +36 1 266 2888  
Fax: +36 1 266 0907

*Australia does not maintain a diplomatic presence in Hungary. Australian citizens should also contact the Canadian Embassy for assistance.*

#### Canadian Embassy

Ganz utca 12-14  
1027 Budapest  
Tel: +36 1 392 3360  
Fax: +36 1 392 3390  
Email: [bpest@international.gc.ca](mailto:bpest@international.gc.ca)

#### Chinese Embassy

Varosligeti fasor 20-22  
1068 Budapest  
Tel: +36 1 413 2400  
Fax: +36 1 413 2451  
Email: [protocol@chinaembassy.hu](mailto:protocol@chinaembassy.hu)

#### Dutch Embassy

Vizivaros Office Center  
Kapas utca 6-12  
H-1027 Budapest  
Tel: +36 1 336 6300



**German Embassy**

Uri utca 64-66  
1014 Budapest  
Tel: +36 1 488 3500  
Fax: +36 1 488 3505

**Japanese Embassy**

Zalai utca 7  
1125 Budapest  
Tel: +36 1 398 3100  
Fax: +36 1 275 1281  
Email: [consul@bp.mofa.go.jp](mailto:consul@bp.mofa.go.jp)

**Mexican Embassy**

Romer Floris utca 58  
1024 Budapest  
Tel: +36 1 326 0677  
Fax: +36 1 326 0485  
Email: [embhungria@sre.gob.mx](mailto:embhungria@sre.gob.mx)

**US Embassy**

Szabadsag ter 12  
1054 Budapest  
Tel: +36 1 475 4400  
Fax: +36 1 475 4248  
Email: [acs.budapest@state.gov](mailto:acs.budapest@state.gov)

## Health advisory

**Health infrastructure**

The standard of state-run medical facilities in main cities is usually acceptable. In rural and border regions, however, facilities are often more limited and lacking adequate emergency services. Private medical facilities in Budapest are generally equipped to international standards, but treatment tends to be expensive, and proof of insurance or another guarantee of payment is generally required before admittance. Serious medical problems may require evacuation to a neighboring country with more advanced medical facilities. Some doctors, particularly in Budapest, speak English; however, personnel at most medical facilities, especially in rural areas, speak little or no English. Pharmacies are available in all cities and towns, and basic medical supplies are readily available.

**Hospitals and clinics vetted by AIG**

*Uzsoki Hospital*  
Uzsoki utca 29-41  
1145 Budapest  
Hungary  
Tel: +36 1 467 3800, +36 1 467 3700

*FirstMed – FMC Kft*  
Hattyu utca 14, Floor 5, Hattyuhaz  
1015 Budapest  
Hungary  
Tel: +36 1 224 9090

## **Pre-travel recommendations**

The following vaccinations are recommended or required if traveling to Hungary:

- COVID-19 (recommended; may be required)
- Hepatitis A (recommended)
- Hepatitis B (recommended)
- Rabies (recommended)
- Tick-borne encephalitis (recommended)

Travelers should ensure that their routine vaccinations are up to date for influenza, chickenpox (or varicella), shingles, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus. Individuals should visit a doctor or clinic that specializes in travel-related medicine at least four to six weeks prior to their intended departure. This timeframe should allow any prescribed vaccinations to take effect. Travelers should visit a medical professional even if their departure is within four weeks. Comprehensive medical insurance, including provision for medical repatriation or evacuation, is strongly recommended. Travelers should bring with them an appropriate supply of any prescription medication accompanied by written doctor's instructions that explain the purpose and justify the quantities.

## **Significant diseases**

The following are some of the more significant diseases that might affect travelers to Hungary:

- Tick-borne encephalitis (TBE) is a viral infection of the central nervous system that is spread by Ixodes ticks. TBE is a risk for individuals visiting forested areas of the country between March and November. Most TBE cases are reported around Lake Balaton, in rural areas along the Danube River and in Nograd, Somogy, Vas and Zala counties.
- West Nile virus (WNV) is a viral disease that is spread through mosquito bites. WNV cases are reported in small numbers annually, mostly in August and September. Most cases occur in the southeast, although some have also been reported in northwestern areas.

## **Recent outbreaks**

- For information on COVID-19, please visit <https://www.travelguardworldwide.com/coronavirus>.
- Approximately 350 cases of hepatitis A were reported nationwide from January-July 2022. More than half of the cases were in the capital Budapest.

## **Food and water safety**

Travelers should consume only sterilized or bottled water; this precaution extends to water used for brushing teeth, making ice and washing foods. Individuals should not bathe or swim in rivers or lakes. Unpasteurized milk should be avoided, and fruits and vegetables should be consumed only if they have been peeled or cooked. Food from street vendors and undercooked meat and fish should be avoided.

## **Emergency response**

The number for an ambulance is 104, but service is limited. Private assistance companies offer English-speaking operators and tend to respond more quickly; however, many private ambulance operators expect payment at the time of delivery. For a medical emergency, travelers can also call the general European emergency number 112.

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