

HOW TO STUDY ABROAD IN HUNGARY



Hungary has become an increasingly popular study abroad destination

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Introduction

Bridging Central and Eastern Europe, Hungary combines many of the attractions of both regions – but above all prides itself on having its own distinctive identity. This pride is not without foundation. Though relatively small, Hungary has much to offer visitors; from the architectural and cultural delights of capital city Budapest to vineyard-covered hills and historic castles.

With so many natural and manmade attractions, combined with relatively low living costs and a strong focus on internationalisation, it seems likely that Hungary's popularity as a study destination will continue to grow.

Universities in Hungary are welcoming growing numbers of international students, both on exchange programs and for full degrees, and are increasingly offering courses taught in languages other than Hungarian, most commonly English.

Nine universities in Hungary appear in the QS World University Rankings® 2022, including Széchenyi István University.



About Széchenyi István University (SZE)

Széchenyi István University (SZE), is a dynamically developing university with nearly 13,500 students. The university has seen a steady annual rise in the number of international students, now representing approximately one tenth of the total number of full-time students and originating from 65 nations.

This growth has been paralleled by the increase in the number of international programmes. International applicants to SZE now have a choice of over 30 English-taught programmes across both undergraduate and postgraduate level.



Why study in Hungary?

In recent years, Hungary has become an increasingly popular study abroad destination. The small country is not only rich in history, culture and beautiful scenery, but it's also home to several universities offering top undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

We caught up with four international students from Széchenyi István University – a three-star rated institution in the QS Stars University Rankings – to find out what makes studying in Hungary, and especially in the university town of Győr, so special.





A hub for diversity and culture

While Hungary might not often be recognised for its cultural diversity, it has recently become a vibrant hub for international students from all continents. Khalil, a PhD candidate from Jordan studying business administration and management, says Hungary is one of the “best places” in the world to study abroad in.

He said: “The country is not only a member of the European Union, but also a Schengen State. Many of the universities in Hungary are fully open and welcoming of international students. We can mix up with other cultures and other countries in the world.”

Waldo, a BSc in Logistics Engineering student from Mexico, echoes Khalil’s sentiment.

“I wanted to have an international experience, live in Europe and discover how big the world really is. Hungary has opened its doors and really welcomed me.”

Waldo
Student- BSc in Logistics Engineering

Great student cities

According to all four international students, one of the biggest perks of studying in Hungary is being able to live in student-friendly cities like Győr.

Anas, a marketing student from the Occupied Palestinian Territories, said: “Győr promotes the perfect balance between your student life and personal life. You can achieve a lot in your studies and still have a good time outside of them. You learn to live, socialise, adapt, be independent and, most importantly, be happy.”

Khalil agrees. He said: “Győr is lovely – full of culture and renowned for its rich history and heritage. Wandering around the city on a Sunday afternoon will make you fall in love with its architecture.”

And there’s more: compared to traditional student cities in popular study abroad destinations – such as North America and the UK – Győr offers great living standards at a more affordable cost.

Waldo said: “Having previously lived in Szeged and Budapest, I’d definitely say that the best place to be a student is Győr. Without the big distractions and hectic rhythm of the capital, as well as a strategic location in the country and great lifestyle opportunities compared with Szeged, I have found in Győr a home.”





Supportive and affordable university environments

While Hungarian universities are known for their variety of degree offerings – many of which are in English, making it easier for non-Hungarian speakers to study locally, what you might not know is that they also provide a highly welcoming, supportive and affordable environment for international students, with low tuition costs and plenty of initiatives to encourage integration within student communities.

At Széchenyi István University, for example, international applicants can take advantage of the government sponsored Stipendium Hungaricum (SH) scholarship programme, which covers tuition fees, accommodation and medical insurance costs, and partial living expense fees for all winners.

What's more, upon arrival all international students get paired with a mentor who will personally guide them throughout their degree, whether by offering career advice or helping them complete administrative tasks.

Donovan, a South African master's student and recipient of the scholarship said: "Being awarded the SH scholarship gave me the opportunity to visit a new place and explore opportunities outside of my home country, as well as to complete my master's degree at a much lower cost than I would have in South Africa.

"The most positive aspect of this experience has been meeting new people, growing academically, and enjoying an amazing city full of activities. It has taught me a lot about the world and has allowed me to really develop on a personal level."

"Being awarded the SH scholarship gave me the opportunity to visit a new place and explore opportunities outside of my home country,"

Donovan
South African master's student

Top student cities in Hungary

Budapest

Split into two halves (Buda and Pest) by the Danube River, and known for its attractive architecture, Budapest is undoubtedly one of Europe's most aesthetically appealing cities. The city's architectural and historic importance has earned it a place on the UNESCO World Heritage list, where it's described as "one of the world's outstanding urban landscapes".

Budapest doesn't just look beautiful; it also offers plenty to do and explore, from world-renowned spas, art galleries and classical music, to trendy cocktail bars, bohemian cafés and outdoor clubbing venues. The best-known of Budapest's cultural events is the huge Sziget music festival, held on Óbudai Island in the centre of the Danube every August – but there's plenty going on all year round.

Debrecen

Debrecen is Hungary's second-largest city, although far smaller than Budapest, with 207,000 residents compared to the 1.7 million residents of the capital. Debrecen has briefly been the capital city of Hungary during two periods of history; after the Hungarian revolution in 1848 and again at the end of World War Two in 1945.

The city is the administrative, economic, educational, scientific and cultural centre of the eastern region of the country, and the usual range of activities are available here, including theatre, live music, nightclubs and (in true Hungarian style) natural hot springs and spas.

The city is also well known for its lively festivals, including the Flower Carnival in August, which involves millions of flowers being used to decorate a procession of floats.

Győr

Széchenyi István University (SZE), is located in the city of Győr in the north-west of Hungary, with a population of 131,000, and around 300,000 in the agglomeration. Together with Vienna, capital of Austria, and Bratislava, capital of Slovakia, Győr is on the so-called golden triangle. Győr's location in Central Europe, at the very heart of the continent, makes many of the region's capitals easily accessible. Ranking as the sixth largest city in Hungary, the city's dynamic industrial base produces an impressive one tenth of the country's exports.

Due to its location, Győr has become a leading hub of the industry and the base of the world's largest engine factory: Audi Hungaria Zrt. The company enjoys an organic cooperation with Széchenyi István University, which carries out industrial research activities for and in conjunction with the company.





4 things to know about studying in Hungary

Ask anyone that has studied in Hungary and they'll tell you it's one of the most desirable European countries for studying abroad. Here are the key things you need to know before you apply to study here.

You'll always be exploring beautiful old streets and buildings

Hungary is a country of unique national heritage, full of beautiful, historical buildings, streets and towns where you can truly feel the Old European spirit still going on beneath the trappings of modern society and globalization. Compared to popular European study destinations like France or Germany, Hungary really offers the chance to experience local culture and traditions, without too many tourists getting in the way.

You won't need to learn Hungarian (but you should still try!)

While most major universities now offer English-language teaching, you may still want to learn the Hungarian language and engage with the local culture. If so, you should check out some of the language-focused educational programmes at your university. There are all types of programmes available, and for all levels, undergraduate and graduate.

Hungarian is a Finno-Ugric language and it isn't related to any other European language, which makes it a bit difficult to learn and understand. However, those with persistence and determination can easily master it. However, if you're living in a city it's not necessary to be proficient in speaking Hungarian, as most of the people living there will be able to communicate in basic English.





You'll experience a familiar, western-style education

There's no particular difference between academic life in Hungary compared to the US or Western Europe. In line with the Bologna Process, which aims to make higher education systems across Europe more compatible, universities in Hungary offer three levels of degree: alapképzés (bachelor's), mesterképzés (master's) and doktori képzés (doctorate).

Bachelor's programmes typically last three or four years, master's programmes one or two, and doctorate programmes three years. In some subjects, it's also possible to complete a single five- or six-year course, which combines the bachelor's and master's levels.

You'll spend your free weekends exploring spectacular countryside

The north and west areas of Hungary have beautiful mountains, while the rest of Hungary is mainly flat. The River Danube is the second longest in Europe and its beauty captivates everyone who visits Budapest. There's also Lake Balaton, which stretches over 200km and is best to visit during spring and summer when you can enjoy its shallow clear waters and the amazing castles that surround it.

