

Hungary (Magyarország)



QUICK FACTS

Population: 9,897,541

Area: 93,028 sq. km (lightly smaller than Indiana)

Capital: Budapest (1.74 million)

Languages: Hungarian (official) 99.6%, English 16%, German 11.2%, Russian 1.3%, French 1.2%

EDUCATION

Hungary has a free and compulsory 10-grade education system for ages 6-16. Most continue to 18, graduating high school with a diploma. After secondary school or a four-year vocational school, students gain a certificate. Grading is on a 5-point scale (5 =excellent, 1 =unacceptable). The literacy rate for 15 and older is 99%. In 2003, Hungary introduced the credit system in all higher education institutions, trying to create a knowledge-based society in order to meet the EU standards and have Hungarian diplomas recognized abroad.



Updated: 7/23/16

Children in traditional Hungarian dress

The name "Hungary" is adapted from Hungaria, the medieval Latin term derived by writers from the name of the people (H)ungari or ungri. Hungarians call their country Magyarország, derived from Magyars which likely refers to the most prominent Hungarian tribe known as the "Megyer." King Stephen I (997-1038), defeated various tribes, implementing Christianity, and ultimately founding the Hungarian state. After World War II, Hungary fell into the Soviet sphere. In 1956, Hungarians tried to put an end to Soviet control. Although their attempt was unsuccessful, the communist government made some concessions and eventually collapsed in 1989.

RELIGION

The largest religion in Hungary is the Roman Catholicism (37.2%), followed by Calvinism (11.6%), Lutheranism (2.2%), and Greek Orthodoxy (1.8%). Much of the country's Jewish population was driven out or killed during the Holocaust of World War II. A small Jewish community lives in Budapest and is religiously active. Many Hungarians are not religiously affiliated (18.2%).

ETHNICITY

Magyar or Hungarian implies a nationality, ethnicity or language, although not all citizens are ethnic Hungarians. While Hungarians make up 8.4 million of the population, there is a sizeable Roma minority. The last census revealed that minorities such as Germans, Romanians, and Russians have doubled since 2001.

FAMILY, RELATIONSHIPS & CUSTOMS

Hungarians hold family values high, even though after the fall of communism the rate of divorce has increased. Extended families, grandparents, parents and children, support their members often living together. Both parents take care of children although women tend to spend more time with children and domestic chores than their husbands. A big number of Hungarians prefer to commute rather than move closer to work. They put time and money in their friendships and consider their entourage a sort of "social capital." Hungarians offer their guests a large variety of dishes and expect them to taste them all. One of the traditional dishes is goulash, a spicy soup or stew usually with beef and pork. Goulash gave its name to the second Sunday out of the seven that precede Easter in Hungary. Two old Easter customs are still alive today: green sprigging and sprinkling. Women and girls are tapped with a sprig, an old ritual of fertility. For the second folk custom, men greet women with the lines of a humorous poem and sprinkle them with cologne. In the past, peasants used water as a cleansing element and symbol of fertility.



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CONTEMPORARY HUNGARY

The fall of communism was peaceful in Hungary, mainly due to the fact that Hungary was already one of the most liberal countries of the Eastern Bloc. Already home to a free market niche within a socialist controlled economy, Hungarians enjoyed high living standards, a less controlled press and more travel rights than the rest of the communist countries. During the summer of 1989, negotiations between representatives of the communist regime and various fractions of the opposition ended with the decision to organize free elections and develop a free market economy. In 1990 the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), a center-right party, won the elections. Facing free market challenges, the newly elected parliament decided to reduce state subsidies drastically and to control inflation by fiscal austerity.

Hungary joined NATO in 1999 and the EU in 2004, and provided military support to NATO operations in the Balkans and Afghanistan. In 2006, riots broke out due to government austerity policies and the perceived dishonesty of the ruling Socialist Party's leaders. The 2007-2008 global financial crisis hit Hungary with particular severity, causing the country to declare bankruptcy and receive an EU bailout. These factors have contributed to Hungary's decisive move to the political right since 2010. The right wing Fidesz party, led by Viktor Orbán, authored a controversial new constitution in 2011, which has been characterized as highly conservative in nature. The far-right Jobbik party, which has been accused of being anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant, and homophobic, has had a marked rise in popularity, winning 20% of the vote in 2014. The Hungarian government has also pursued a harsh policy to the refugee crisis, constructing a wall along its southern border in September 2015 to keep out refugees, and in March 2016 declared a national state of emergency.



View of Parliament in Budapest

HUNGARIANS IN THE USA

In the 18th and 19th centuries many settlers, missionaries, and adventurers arrived in North America. The most noted among them was Colonel Michael de Kováts (1724-1779), one of the founders of the American cavalry. Another group, the "forty-niners," emigrated to escape Austrian authorities after the defeat of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848-1849. Many participated in the Civil War joining the Union Army. Economic crisis at the turn of the 20th century led to another massive migration. Between the 1930s and 1958, three more waves of highly educated intellectuals arrived.

The flag dates to the national movement of the 18th & 19th centuries.

According to folklore, red is for strength, white for faithfulness, & green for hope; alternatively, the red is seen as being for the blood spilled in defense of the land, white for freedom, & green for the pasturelands.



Traditional embroidery

FAMOUS HUNGARIANS

Famous people with Hungarian roots include: Drew Barrymore, Louis CK, Milton Friedman, Mariska Hargitay, and Harry Houdini. Estee Lauder billionaire financier, George Soros, who sponsored the change in former communist countries through philanthropic efforts such as the establishment of the Budapest- and Prague-based Central European University, and Andrew Grove (born András Gróf), the founder of Intel Corporation, are also of Hungarian descent.

LANGUAGE

Hungarian belongs to the Finno-Ugric group of the Uralic language family, which includes Estonian and Finnish. The language is spoken by minorities in Romania, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Serbia, Ukraine and Austria. It is not part of the Indo-European family.

HUNGARIAN WORDS

Hi	Jó napot
Bye	Viszontlátásra
Good morning	Jó napot!
Yes	Igen
No	Nem
Please.....	Kérem
Thank you	Köszönöm
You're Welcome.....	Üdvözlét
How are you?	Hogy vagy?
I do not understand	Nem értem
What is your name?.....	Hogy hívják?
My name is	A nevem
I need help	Kérem, segítsen

USEFUL LINKS

[CIA World Factbook: Hungary](#)

[BBC Country Page: Hungary](#)

[National Geographic: Hungary](#)

[The Budapest Times](#)