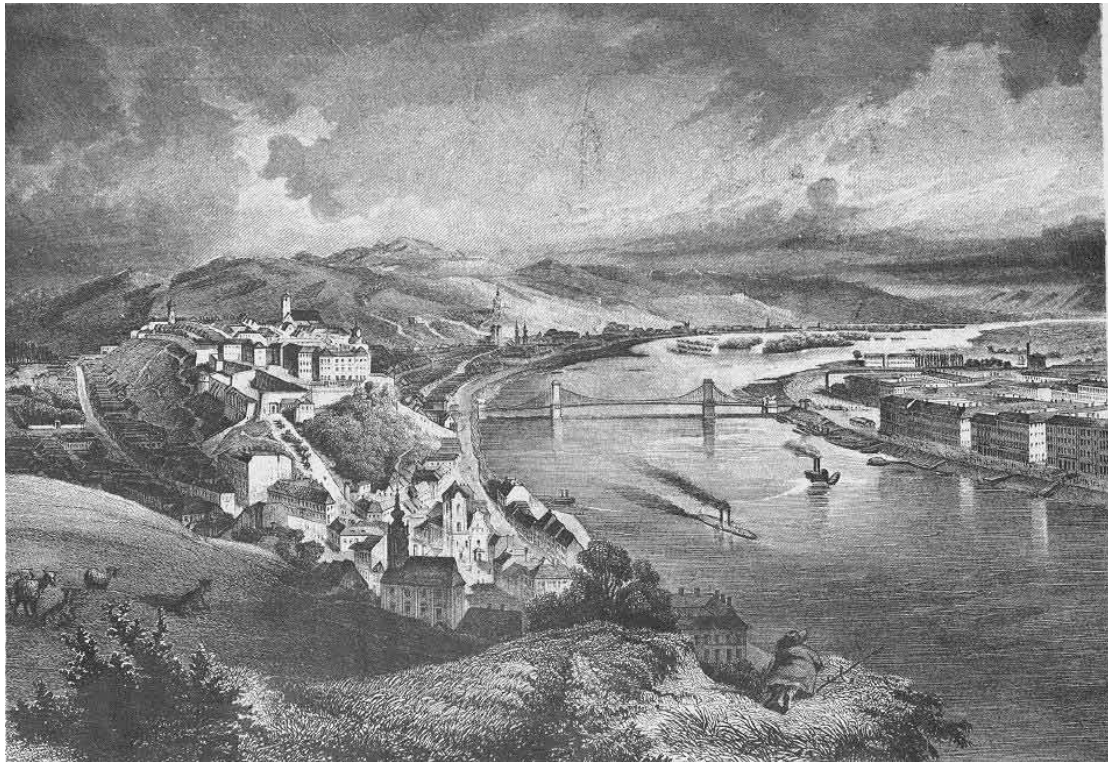


# Budapest

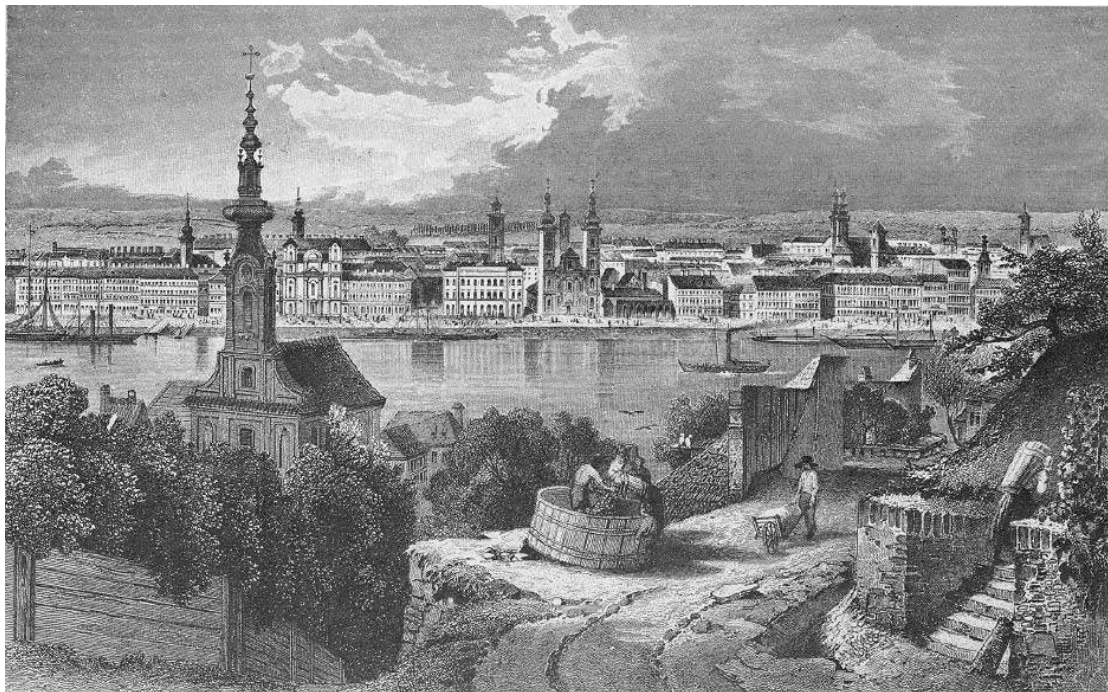




## The Royal Palace in Budapest



Owing to the construction work still going on, the former Royal Palace, which houses valuable collections, is at present best reached either on foot from Szarvas tér near [Elizabeth Bridge](#) or from the southern end of the [Castle District](#), from Dísz tér, or by car following the road leading south from the Buda end of the [Chain Bridge](#).





The construction of the Royal Palace was begun in the middle of the thirteenth century, and was continued in the fourteenth century by King Louis the Great who had a keep built here.

The building of the outer walls and of the western fortifications was not finished until the end of the century. In the fifteenth century Sigismund of Luxembourg continued the construction and added a chapel and a palace. Construction - work reached its peak with King Matthias, who had the - southeastern fortifications built, as well as a Renaissance royal palace. In the late fifteenth century the King of Hungary's palace was one of the most splendid royal seats in Europe. His famous library, the Bibliotheca Corviniana, according to his contemporaries, equaled the Medici Library in Florence.

During Turkish times the palace became increasingly neglected and was finally destroyed in the great siege of 1686. In 1715 the medieval ruins were cleared. The building of the southern wing of the present-day palace was started in the eighteenth century during the reign of Maria Theresa, first to the plans of the chief court architect J. N. Jadot and later according to the designs of F. A. Hillebrandt and Ignác Oracsek. The other parts were built at the end of the nineteenth century, during the reign of Francis Joseph I, to the plans of Alajos Hauszman (1847-1926) and Miklós Ybl (1814-1891). (From 1790 the Palatine representing the Habsburg kings lived in the palaces.) In March 1800 Joseph Haydn conducted in it his oratorio *The Creation*.

In the siege of 1945 the palace collapsed and was burnt down. During its rebuilding the remains of the medieval palaces and fortifications were excavated. When completely reconstructed and repaired, the entire complex of buildings will serve cultural purposes.





Visiting the Palace should begin with a look at the exterior of the palace. The main façade overlooking the Danube is 304 meters (334 yds.) long, with columns arranged symmetrically, in Baroque style on both sides of the dome. In front of the central part of the building there is a statue of Prince Eugene of Savoy who was one of the leaders of the armies that liberated Buda Castle in 1686.

The statue at the gate of the palace garden represents the [Turul](#), the mythic bird of the ancient Magyars. The neo-Baroque groups of buildings towards the south and north are simpler in style. The fortifications of the palace date from the Middle Ages. To the south, facing [Gellért Hill](#), the large Round Bastion, 40 meters (44 yds.) in diameter, and the Gate Tower with its tent roof, dominate the scene. In front of the Round Bastion on the slope of the hill a group of excavated Turkish tombstones presents an interesting sight. Passing through the Baroque gate cut in the outer wall we reach the walls and passages of the fortifications.



## **Castle district of Budapest**

The Castle District in Buda is the ancient kernel of the capital's right-bank settlement. Everything that surrounds it was once only suburbs. From whatever direction you reach the Castle District, you cross the ramparts which completely encircle Castle Hill. The whole area within the ramparts is protected as an ancient monument: the lines of the streets and the foundations and architectural remains of the buildings retain the atmosphere and memories of the medieval and eighteenth and nineteenth-century capital.

### **A short history**

The building of the town began in the middle of the thirteenth century. At the time of the 1241 Mongol invasion the town of Pest, built on the plain on the site of today's Inner City and thus completely defenseless, had been burnt down and its population put to the sword. Thus it seemed safer to build a new city protected by ramparts on the other side of the river, on the plateau on top of the steep limestone hill.

The Royal Castle was built at the southern end of the plateau, the civilian town to the north. At first the town was protected only by fences and the walls of the houses, but by the early sixteenth century it was surrounded by strong ramparts.

A street in the Castle District-as it was destroyed in the Second World War is why the Turks in 1541 did not lay siege to Buda but captured it by trickery; later they further fortified the ramparts. It was only after repeated sieges that the united Christian armies succeeded in 1686 in recapturing Buda Castle. The country then came under the rule of the Habsburg Emperor Leopold. The city of Buda was almost completely destroyed by the siege and only a handful of inhabitants remained; therefore, in order to repopulate the town, settlers were invited from abroad. The former capital sank to the status of a small provincial town in the Habsburg Empire. Then, during the eighteenth century, a little Baroque town grew up on the medieval ruins.

Not much more than 150 years after the Turkish devastation, in 1849, during the Hungarian War of Independence, the Castle was again besieged and it was only in 1867- when, as a result of the Compromise with the Habsburg dynasty, an independent Hungarian government was created-that the Castle District once more became the administrative centre of the country.

Towards the end of the Second World War, it was in the Castle District that the last Nazi German troops concerned treated and held out, from the end of December 1944 until the middle of February 1945, when the Soviet Red Army liberated the capital after a siege lasting almost two months. As a consequence of the Germans' bitter resistance the Castle District again suffered enormous damage. Part of the medieval remains that can now be seen were discovered during the reconstruction of houses which were found to have been built upon the foundations of earlier ones.

(Source: <http://www.fsz.bme.hu/hungary/budapest/bptour/bpcast01.htm>)



