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**Balaton 365**

# BALATON MOMENTS



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# Balaton Has It All

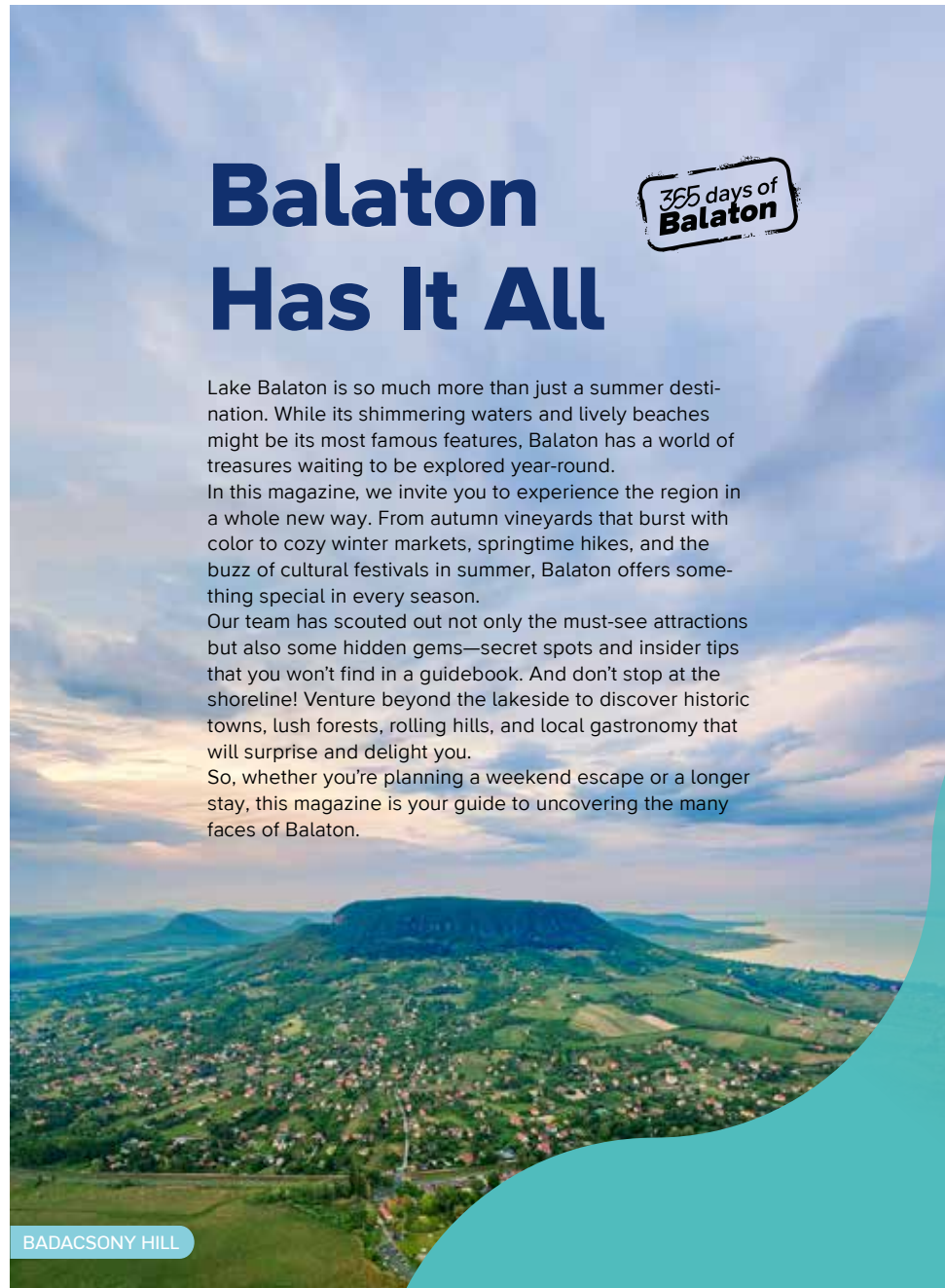


Lake Balaton is so much more than just a summer destination. While its shimmering waters and lively beaches might be its most famous features, Balaton has a world of treasures waiting to be explored year-round.

In this magazine, we invite you to experience the region in a whole new way. From autumn vineyards that burst with color to cozy winter markets, springtime hikes, and the buzz of cultural festivals in summer, Balaton offers something special in every season.

Our team has scouted out not only the must-see attractions but also some hidden gems—secret spots and insider tips that you won't find in a guidebook. And don't stop at the shoreline! Venture beyond the lakeside to discover historic towns, lush forests, rolling hills, and local gastronomy that will surprise and delight you.

So, whether you're planning a weekend escape or a longer stay, this magazine is your guide to uncovering the many faces of Balaton.



BADACSONY HILL



# The Treasures of Lake Balaton

Whether it's the peaceful northern shores with their vineyards and charming villages or the lively southern coast full of festivals and sandy beaches, Lake Balaton promises unforgettable experiences for families, party lovers, as well as travelers seeking for nature and tranquility.

## WINE, NATURE & ROMANCE

The northern coast of Lake Balaton is a treasure trove for adventurers and romantics alike. Here, deep waters beckon swimmers, with many upgraded beaches offering modern amenities, active recreation opportunities, and inclusive accessibility for all. The region's charm lies in its tranquil villages, where rustic countryside romance is the norm. Picture rows of enchanting vineyards stretching over rolling hills, painting the landscape with a palette of greens and golds. For wine lovers, this is paradise—panoram-

ic wineries serve up both breathtaking views and exceptional vintages. Hikers and nature enthusiasts will find their match in the area's scenic cycling routes and diverse walking trails, including the 1172.4 km long National Blue Trail that runs through the most beautiful sights of Hungary. And let's not forget the cultural gems: towns like Tihany, Balatonfüred, and Keszthely are brimming with museums, stately villas, and grand castles, perfect for a stroll through history.

## ENDLESS FUN FOR EVERYONE

Meanwhile, the southern shore of Lake Balaton is where the action happens! Known for its vibrant nightlife, it's a magnet for festival-goers and party enthusiasts. *Zamárdi* hosts some of the region's biggest music events, while *Siófok's* buzzing party district keeps the energy alive well into the night. Families with young children will love the southern shore's many free public beaches, featuring shallow waters and sandy stretches that are perfect to splash and play. The easily accessible beaches invite bathers from May to October, with water temperatures reaching up to 28°C in the summer. One of Lake Balaton's best perks? It's just a quick trip away—2 hours from Vienna, 1.5 from Bratislava, and only an hour from Budapest! And let's not forget the stunning sunsets! As the sun dips below the horizon, it paints the sky in warm hues, with the iconic witness hills of the northern shore providing a dramatic backdrop. For those seeking adventure, there are plenty of options, from thrilling adventure parks to exciting water parks and other kid-friendly destinations. The southern shore is a haven for families, offering memorable moments for all ages.



Photo: Bulcsu Bórczky

## A HUB FOR FESTIVALS AND RELAXATION

Around Lake Balaton, there's a vibrant array of events, especially during the summer season, catering to every taste. The largest festivals around the lake include the *STRAND Festival* in Zamárdi, where popular Hungarian and international pop and rock bands rock the stage; the *Paloznaki Jazzpiknik*, offering a quality selection of jazz music paired with a laid-back picnic atmosphere; *VeszprémFest*, a celebration of jazz, classical, and world music in the historic town of Veszprém; and *KeszthelyFest*, where music, local food, and cultural experiences come together in a lively bash.

For motorsport fans, the *Balaton Park Circuit* near Balatonfőkajár is an exciting new addition to the area. This 4.115-kilometer-long racetrack will host major events in the near future, including MotoGP and Superbike races starting in 2025, bringing adrenaline-pumping action to the region. When it comes to relaxation, Lake Balaton boasts budget-friendly apartments, campgrounds, family hotels, romantic guesthouses, private quarters, and luxurious five-star hotels, ensuring everyone can find accommodation that suits their needs.



BENEDICTINE ABBEY, TIHANY

# Town Hopping

Lake Balaton's character emerges not just through its sparkling waters, but through the distinctive towns gracing its shores. These destinations weave a tapestry of unique experiences, from lakeside promenades to royal splendor.

## SIÓFOK

Nestled at the mouth of Sió Canal on Balaton's southern shore, Siófok captures the lake's ever-changing magic across the seasons. When summer arrives, this charming town becomes Hungary's most vibrant resort destination. Sun-kissed beaches and a buzzing nightlife have earned it the title "Party Capital of the Balaton", while a rich cultural program, from the New Orleans Jazz Festival to open-air concerts, keeps visitors entertained through autumn's theater and classical performances. The landmark Water Tower's panorama café offers breathtaking views above the shoreline frenzy, complemented by modern attractions like the towering Ferris wheel and the whimsical Upside-Down House. For those needing respite from the bustle, the beautiful Jókai Park and lakeside Rose Garden provide peaceful sanctuaries, and a stroll among the town's elegant villas reveals its golden age as a turn-of-the-century resort. Add cultural gems like the Mineral Museum and Kálmán Imre Memorial House, plus regular boat excursions to nearby shores, and Siófok proves the perfect base for discovering Lake Balaton's many treasures.

## BALATONFÜRED

As Hungary's first resort destination, Balatonfüred holds a special place in Lake Balaton's history. While its roots trace back to Roman times, its transformation began in the late 18th century with the discovery of its carbonated springs. These healing waters attracted European nobility and intellectuals, establishing Füred as a prestigious spa destination. The Reform Era (1825-1848) marked Balatonfüred's cultural golden age, introducing traditions like the Anna Ball, which celebrates its 200th anniversary this year. This illustrious event, held annually near Saint Anne's Day, continues to attract distinguished guests, culminating in the Ball Queen's carriage ride through the streets with hussar escorts. Balatonfüred's cultural heritage is perhaps best embodied by the Tagore Promenade, named after the Nobel Prize-winning Hindu poet who planted its first linden tree after recovering at a local sanatorium in 1926. Today, the tree-lined avenue features commemorative trees planted by notable scientists and artists, and hosts cafés, restaurants, and the popular August wine weeks. Historic sites like the Jókai Mór Memorial House and the House of Jewish Excellence complement perfect hiking destinations such as the Jókai Lookout, the Lóczy Cave, and the Koloska Valley, while year-round festivals and cultural programs add a contemporary flair to this historic spa resort.



FIRE TOWER, VESZPRÉM



FERRIS WHEEL, SIÓFOK





FESTETICS PALACE, KESZTHELY

### TIHANY

Perched on a promontory jutting into Lake Balaton, Tihany commands spectacular views of Central Europe's largest freshwater expanse from its volcanic heights. The village's crown jewel, the recently refurbished Benedictine Abbey, stands on the precipitous eastern edge where King Andrew I established it in 1055. This landmark holds profound significance as the home to one of Hungarian language's first written records, now enchanting visitors with its baroque interiors and royal crypt.

The 300-meter Pisky Promenade connects Echo Hill to the Abbey, revealing panoramic vistas, charming cafés, and cultural gems like the Tihany Country Houses and the Pottery House. In the village center, the Paprika House celebrates Hungarian cuisine's signature spice, while the slopes between the Csúcs and Apáti Hills display another local treasure: lavender fields planted in 1926, which create a fragrant purple medley among almond trees each summer.



JÓKAI LOOKOUT, BALATONFÜRED

The Inner Lake (Belső-tó), a 30-hectare sanctuary elevated 26 meters above Balaton, was also shaped by ancient volcanic forces. Here, protected ground squirrels scamper through grass kept trim by grazing Hungarian grey cattle. Whether strolling around the peaceful lake or watching wildlife from the shore, you will find yourself immersed in natural serenity.

### KESZTHELY

At the westernmost corner of Lake Balaton, Keszthely blends historical grandeur with 21st century resort life. Its centerpiece, the Festetics Palace, proclaims aristocratic heritage through authentically reconstructed interiors, Europe's largest intact noble library (with around 80,000 volumes), a renovated English garden, and an impressive collection of historic carriages. The Balaton Museum, established in 1898, offers fascinating insights into the region's heritage, from local aquatic life to the evolution of lakeside culture since the 18th century. Meanwhile, the town beach combines traditional pleasures with modern amenities, featuring adventure pools and entertainment venues. Holidaymakers can rent electric boats, ride paddle boats, play mini-golf, or simply explore the charming streets of the capital of Lake Balaton.

### VESZPRÉM

Often called the 'Rome of Transdanubia' for its seven hills, Veszprém has transformed its medieval heritage into a vibrant cultural hub as a 2023 European Capital of Culture. The city earned its other nickname 'City of Queens' through profound royal connections: King Stephen I bestowed Veszprém upon his wife, Queen Gisela, inaugurating a tradition that made the city the domain of all future Hungarian queens. The Castle District, heart of this historic prestige, rises dramatically above the Séd Valley, where the 13th-century Gizella Chapel showcases medieval frescoes alongside the towering 48-meter Fire Tower and the Neo-Romanesque St. Michael's Cathedral, built on Hungary's oldest episcopal foundations. Below the castle, the revitalized Séd Valley

### WEST BALATON

For a perfect day trip, explore Mediterranean-flavored Tapolca, where the mirror-like Mill Lake reflects terraced cafés along its charming waterfront promenade.

Nearby rises Sümeg Castle, a medieval fortress crowning a solitary peak. Below the castle, medieval feasts and knight tournaments entertain families, while in town, the baroque Bishop's Palace reveals hidden chambers and secret passages behind its magnificent façade. Spa enthusiasts can venture to the stunning thermal lake of Hévíz or discover Zalakaros, the gem of Little Balaton, both offering exceptional wellness experiences.

weaves through Veszprém's history, connecting past and present along a picturesque trail. Medieval monuments dot the landscape, including two monastery ruins - one famous for embroidering the coronation mantle, another once home to Saint Margaret of Hungary. Today, these hallowed grounds embrace modern life with playgrounds, walking paths, and climbing spots. The city's cultural renaissance reaches its culinary peak during the Balaton Wine & Gourmet Festival, where centuries-old Hungarian traditions meet contemporary gastronomy. This international celebration mirrors Veszprém's broader evolution, from the cutting-edge performances at the Hangvilla Cultural Center to the traditional Christmas market that brings cobblestone streets alive with crafts and seasonal delicacies. For a perfect end to your visit, seek out the small park at the end of Harmat Street, where the Castle Hill reveals itself in all its medieval glory.

# Architectural Heritage

Lake Balaton's architecture reads like a fairy tale: ancient castles topping volcanic hills, church ruins whisper timeless stories, tiny chapels nestle in vineyards, and storybook villages stand frozen in time. Step away from the shore to discover these remarkable monuments of Hungary's past.

The historic castles dotting the region weave fascinating tales of centuries past. **Szigliget** has crowned its volcanic peak for over 750 years, withstanding Turkish sieges only to fall to a lightning strike. Today, its restored walls host cultural events while offering spectacular views across the Tapolca Basin and the lake's glistening waters below.

Since the 1260s, **Sümeg Castle** has commanded its landscape with similar grandeur. Now meticulously restored, it ranks among Hungary's most authentically preserved strongholds. At its foot, the baroque **Bishop's Palace** adds another layer of history, showcasing treasures from Hungary's largest baroque stove to fascinating Napoleonic graffiti.

In **Nagyvázsony**, Kinizsi Castle draws visitors seeking cultural adventures. Named after King Matthias's legendary commander who never lost a battle, this 15th century fortress captivates with its multi-storey museum tower, explorable walls, and sweeping panoramic views.

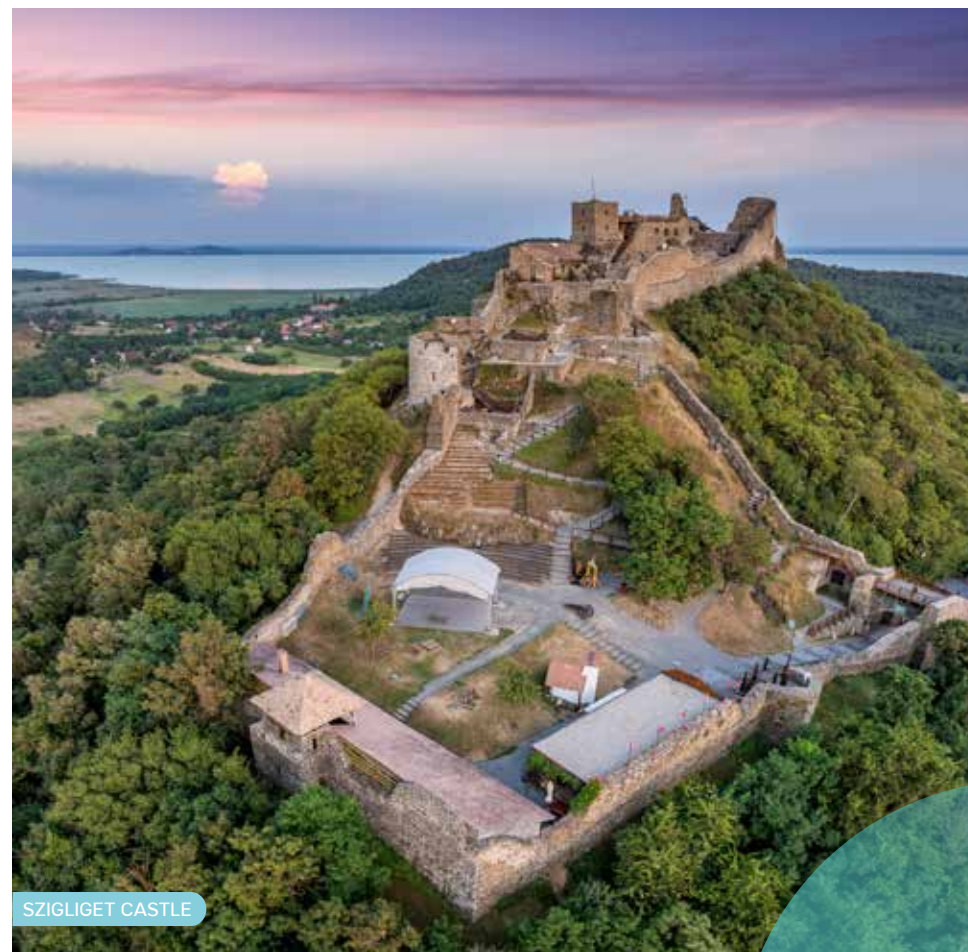
South of Siófok, **Ozora Castle** offers a different glimpse into history, bringing Renaissance Florence to Hungarian soil. Built by Filippo Scolari, this architectural gem combines historic features like its ancient kitchen with refined Renaissance chambers and engaging exhibitions of knightly culture. Uniquely, visitors can fully immerse themselves in this historic atmosphere by spend-

ing the night in period-furnished rooms within its centuries-old walls.

Just a half-hour drive from the eastern shores of Lake Balaton, you'll find the charming village of **Nádasdladány**, home to one of the most enchanting castles of the Historicist era. Recently restored, this magnificent building is surrounded by a stunning 20-hectare English garden, perfect for a leisurely stroll.

Sacred architecture adds another layer to this historical tapestry. The 12th century Saint Balázs Church in **Szentantalfa** mixes Gothic and Romanesque styles, and even served as an Austrian occultist's summer house in the 1920s. **Dörgicse** boasts three medieval ruins, including the impressive three-storey tower of the Blessed Virgin Church on Gernye Hill. The nearby clearing doubles as a perfect picnic spot, complete with fire pits and stunning lake views. Rising like an ancient exclamation mark from **Somogyvámos's** golden wheat fields, a weathered 21-meter tower stands in splendid isolation. This last remnant of a vanished medieval settlement watched Knights Hospitallers care for the sick in its shadow and Ottoman armies march beneath its walls.

Some chapels have fared better over time. The Baroque **Lengyel Chapel** sits proudly atop Szent György Hill, its 1880s tower featuring figures of saints and a lion-head fountain for weary hikers. Meanwhile, **Saint Donát Chapel** has protected



SZIGLIGET CASTLE

Photo: Bulcsú Boróczy

Csobánc Hill's vineyards since 1830, with a historic bell still carrying prayers for the grape harvest. Completing this architectural journey are the storybook villages along Balaton's northern shore. **Salföld** preserves its rural heritage with traditional peasant houses and a historic manor that now showcases Hungarian horsemanship and ancient farm animals, from racka sheep to grey cattle. Nearby **Vászoly** mesmerizes with its spring-fed lake, thatched houses, and a 200-year-old pálinka distillery, while **Mindszentkál**'s ancient streets and wine cellars capture authentic village life.



# Chasing Views

Lake Balaton is surrounded by some of the most breathtaking viewpoints in the country. Whether you're hiking, cycling, or strolling, the area offers a wealth of trails for anything from short walks to multi-day adventures. These paths lead to locals' favorite secret spots, where you can enjoy unparalleled views of the shimmering waters, rolling hills, and charming villages that make the region so special.

## ON TOP OF THE WITNESS HILLS

The breathtaking panoramas of the Balaton Highlands owe much to its towering witness hills, each offering a unique spectacle and experience. *Csobánc* stands out with its medieval castle ruins at the summit and the classicist St. Donát Chapel, built around 1830, which rewards hikers with unparalleled views of the surrounding landscape. The 415-meter-high *Szent György Hill*, one of the renowned volcanic formations of the Tapolca Basin, captivates visitors with its dramatic basalt organ pipes and scenic trails, while the southern side features the historic Lengyel Chapel, built in 1760, adding a touch of cultural charm.

For those seeking a more adventurous climb, *Tóti Hill*, the smallest at 346 meters, impresses with its distinct cone shape and is a favorite among seasoned hikers due to its 180-meter elevation gain. Meanwhile, the striking silhouette of *Haláp Hill*, shaped by 20th-century quarrying, invite visitors to explore its unique basalt formations along a specially designed nature trail. Last but not least, the iconic *Badacsony*, the most famous of these hills, rewards those who reach its peak with breathtaking vistas. Here, the 1857 Ranolder Cross and the Kisfaludy Lookout Tower, the highest vantage point in the Tapolca Basin at 437 meters above sea level, offer awe-inspiring views, making the journey well worth the effort.

## BALATON'S BEAUTY FROM AFAR

You can also enjoy breathtaking views of Lake Balaton from its eastern and western points. The *Szépkilátó* (Beautiful Lookout) in Balatongyörök offers one of the lake's most stunning panoramas, including the Tapolca Basin's hills and Szigliget Bay, with its castle. Accessible by walking trails or car, it's a must-visit for hikers and sightseers alike. Closer to Budapest, the *Magaspart* (High Shore) in Balatonakarattya features the Kisfaludy Promenade, a scenic walkway offering sweeping views of the lake. On clear days, you can spot landmarks like the Tihany Abbey and Badacsony. For a closer look, wooden stairs from the nearby Kisfaludy Lookout lead down to the lakeshore.

## SOUTHERN SHORE VISTAS

The southern shore of Lake Balaton doesn't lack gorgeous sunsets and enchanting viewpoints that showcase the region's beauty either. Balatonboglár's *Gömbkilátó* (Sphere Lookout), standing 165 meters high, is a striking landmark offering breathtaking views. Nearby, the recently opened *Magasösvény* (High Trail) treetop walkway lets visitors explore 10 meters above the ground along its 500-meter path for a small fee, providing an unforgettable perspective of the area. In Fonyód, the *Panorámasétány* (Panorama Promenade), also known as the Szaplanczay Promenade, lives up to its name with spectacu-



CSOBÁNC HILL



BALATONGYÖRÖK



SPHERE LOOKOUT, BALATONBOGLÁR

lar vistas of the northern shore's hills, the lake's gleaming waters, and the stately villas nestled along its shaded path. It's a perfect spot for a peaceful stroll or a dreamy sunset date. Balatonlelle's *Kishegy* combines the charm of top-tier wineries with captivating landscapes. Here, visitors can savor local wines and dishes before heading to the picturesque *St. Donát Chapel* or exploring the tranquil Park Forest. At the peak, a panoramic terrace at 300 meters rewards visitors with sweeping views that complete the experience.

# Cycling around Lake Balaton

Ready for the ultimate adventure around Lake Balaton? Whether you're an avid cyclist looking for a challenge or just in the mood for a scenic family ride, the Balaton bike routes have something for everyone. From the 200 km Balaton Circle, which goes around the entire lake, to shorter routes perfect for a one-day excursion, you'll discover breathtaking landscapes, charming villages, and plenty of opportunities for relaxation.



BALATONBIKE365

## THE FULL EXPERIENCE: BALATON CIRCLE

This circular route covers more than 200 kilometers, and you can start anywhere, but the official start is in Balatonalmádi, which is super easy to get to from Budapest by train or car. Known as the Balaton Circle, this route runs around the lake, and if you take breaks for swimming and relaxing, you can do it in just a few days. It's ideal for sports lovers or big groups of friends looking for a fun, memorable experience. As you ride, you'll explore Balaton's natural beauty, see the differences between the southern and northern shores, and catch a glimpse of life in the small villages along the way. Along the route, you'll find several campsites, so you can even sleep right by the water in a picturesque, nature-filled setting.

## CYCLING WITH THE FAMILY: THE SMALL CIRCLE

If you're cycling with the family, there are some easier options that are just as scenic. Every journey begins with a single step! A great one-day ride is to go around the eastern basin of Lake Balaton, which is kind of like a warm-up for the full 200 km circle. Start in Balatonfüred, cycle clockwise around the eastern basin, cross the lake with the Szántód-Tihany ferry, visit Tihany, then head back to Balatonfüred. It's about 80 kilometers, and along the way, you can relax at the Balatonfűzfő promenade, enjoy the views from Balatonakaratya's High Shore, check out the former party spot Club Aliga, and take in the gorgeous ferry views. If you're looking for something shorter, a perfect family-friendly ride is around Kis-Balaton (Little Balaton), which is a 65-kilometer route that takes you through the most beautiful areas with must-see spots like Kányavári Island, Kápolnapuszta Buffalo Reserve and the Kis-Balaton House.

## WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Check out [balatonbike365.hu](http://balatonbike365.hu) or download 'The Best App of 2021,' BB365 on your phone! You'll find 1000 km of bike paths, over 70 themed tours, 22 rest stops, 5 service centres, and 3600 cool, mostly bike-friendly spots and services including bike rentals. You can choose from an impressive selection of 950 premium electric and traditional bicycles, all featuring cutting-edge technology and guaranteed to be less than two years old. It's super easy to plan a bike tour around Balaton, a weekend getaway, or even a full vacation. Plus, the app lets you track the kilometres you ride.

If you are up for a real challenge, you can aim for the KK400, the 400-kilometer trail that circles Lake Balaton and takes you off the beaten path, avoiding the traditional bike routes. It offers a mix of easy and challenging terrains, with sections of paved roads that are part of the BalatonBike365 network—a well-marked system of over 1,000 kilometers. These paths are less crowded than those closer to the shore, allowing you to enjoy a more peaceful ride while immersing yourself in nature. The route showcases stunning, varied landscapes, from the Balaton Highlands to the rolling hills of Zala and Somogy counties, each offering unique charm. Along the way, you can explore castle ruins, unwind in quiet villages, or savor local wines without missing a thing. It's the perfect adventure for those seeking beauty, culture, and a little thrill on two wheels!

[www.balatonbike365.hu](http://www.balatonbike365.hu)





# Family Fun

Lake Balaton isn't just for sunbathing and swimming—it's a treasure trove of family adventures! Whether you're seeking fun, education, or a mix of both, Balaton offers countless opportunities to create lasting moments with your loved ones.



## HOP ABOARD!

Exploring Lake Balaton by boat is a must-do activity that guarantees fun for the whole family. The iconic *ferry* between Tihany and Szántód offers a quick and scenic eight-minute ride, running every day year-round, making it a convenient way to cross the lake while enjoying its beauty. For a more leisurely experience, *scheduled cruises* are a fantastic option. These often include special themed journeys, such as panoramic sunset cruises that showcase the lake's stunning evening views, playful sparrow boats designed especially for children, and lively party ships for those seeking a festive atmosphere.

## ADRENALINE ADVENTURES

If you're craving an adrenaline rush and ready to push your limits, Lake Balaton's adventure parks and bob tracks are here to deliver! Head to *Balatonfűzfő's BalatoniBob*, where you can race down two thrilling tracks while soaking in panoramic views of the lake. The *Balatonboglár Adventure Park* offers an array of exciting activities, including ziplines, climbing walls, and even bungee jumping for the bravest visitors. In addition, *Csopak Theme Park* is perfect for thrill-seekers, featuring extreme bike tracks and quad-driving experiences tailored for kids and adults alike.



TAPOLCA'S LAKE CAVE

## ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS

Lake Balaton is home to several fantastic zoos and wildlife parks, making it a perfect family destination. A must-visit is the *Veszprém Zoo*, one of Hungary's most popular zoos, offering exciting encounters with animals in a beautiful setting. For a more rustic experience, head to the *Manor in Salföld*, where you can meet traditional Hungarian farm animal breeds and learn about rural heritage. If aquatic life fascinates you, the *Bodorka Balaton Aquarium* is the largest in the area, showcasing the lake's diverse fish species and ecosystems. For an exotic twist, the *Africa Museum* introduces visitors to African wildlife, allowing you to see animals like zebras and camels without leaving Hungary.

## LAVENDER HAZE

Lake Balaton is not just a destination for water lovers but also a haven for those who appreciate lush greenery and the calming aroma of lavender. Among its treasures is the *Folly Arboretum*, often called the "Eden of Balaton." This botanical gem is more than just a collection of exotic cedars and cypresses—it's a testament to a family's

passion and dedication through generations. Lavender enthusiasts will also find plenty to admire. *Köröshegy Lavendery* offers visitors the chance to pick their own lavender while soaking in stunning views, while in *Dörgicse*, you'll not only wander through picturesque lavender fields but also explore unique handmade products like soaps, perfumes, and even lavender beer.

## RAINY DAY ESCAPE

If you're looking for a rainy-day escape around Lake Balaton, the region's extraordinary caves offer a unique adventure. Start with *Tapolca's Lake Cave*, where you can explore a stunning karst cave system. The cave features a 300-meter walking path and the opportunity to row a boat through crystal-clear underground waters, creating a one-of-a-kind experience. In Balatonfüred, the *Lóczy Cave*, a 141-meter-long and 20-meter-deep cave, is open every day for visitors. First opened in 1934, it was upgraded with a modern visitor center to enhance the experience. Lastly, head to the *Csodabogyós Cave*, where you'll encounter incredible formations like stalactites and impressive fissures during your cave tour.

# A Taste of Lake Balaton

While most visitors come to Lake Balaton for its sparkling waters and summer sunshine, the “Hungarian sea” harbors another treasure: a rich tapestry of wine regions, innovative restaurants, and traditional markets that make it one of Central Europe’s most exciting gastronomic destinations. From volcanic hillside vineyards to Michelin-recognized restaurants, the region offers a feast for all senses throughout the year.

This is particularly true of its wine culture, with six distinctive wine regions creating a 9,000-hectare wonderland of vineyards around the lake. Nature has crafted perfect wine-growing conditions here: the lake’s reflected sunlight and ideal microclimate, protected by the Bakony mountains and rolling hills of Zala and Somogy, combine with diverse geology - from volcanic basalt to limestone - to create unique terroirs for great wines.

Take a journey around Balaton, and you’ll discover a world of flavors. On the northern shore, Balatonfüred-Csopak charms visitors with elegant Italian Rieslings, their fine acidity perfectly capturing the region’s character. In volcanic Badacsony, you’ll find full-bodied, mineral-rich wines and the rare treasure Kéknyelű - an ancient Hungarian grape variety that grows nowhere else in the world. The romantic Balaton Uplands, with its picture-perfect villages and nature reserves, produces complex wines shaped by warm autumn days and cool nights.

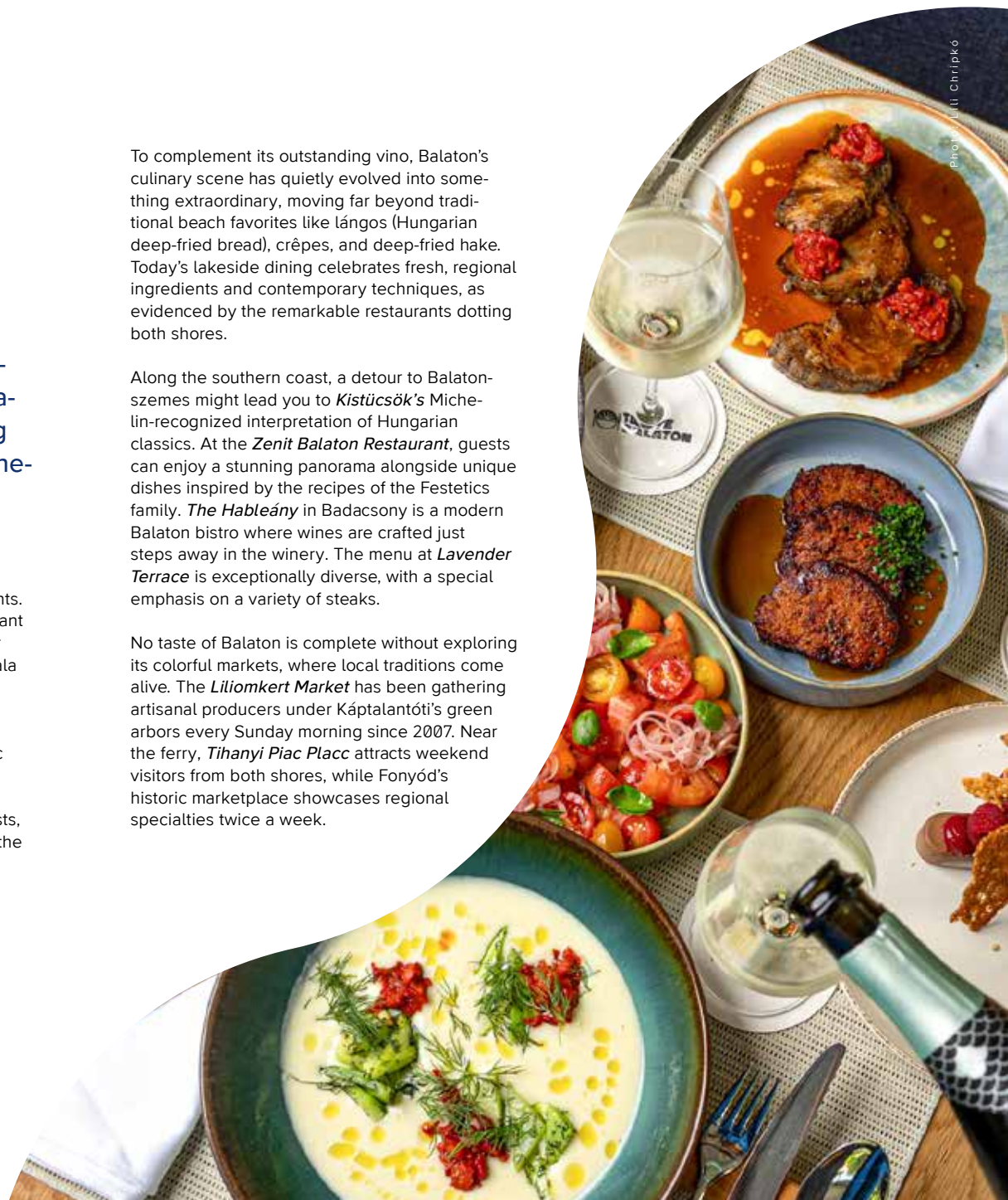
The southern shore holds its own enchantments. The Balatonboglár region excels in light, elegant whites and reds, and has become a center for sparkling wine production. To the west, the Zala region embraces the Little Balaton, producing distinctive white wines in its gentle rolling landscape. Perhaps the most intriguing area is Nagy-Somló, marked by a dramatic volcanic cone rising north of the lake. Though one of Hungary’s smallest wine regions, it rivals the famous Tokaj in excitement for wine enthusiasts, with its crown jewel being Juhfark, known as the wine of wedding nights.

The volcanic character of the Badacsony Hill is captured in bottles by the *Laposa Estate*, while the *Dobosi Estate Center* combines centuries-old traditions with contemporary innovations. On the southern shore, even the labels of the *Bujdosó Vineyard* evoke Lake Balaton, and the defining varieties of the *Légli Winery* are Olaszrizling and Rheinriesling.

To complement its outstanding vino, Balaton’s culinary scene has quietly evolved into something extraordinary, moving far beyond traditional beach favorites like lángos (Hungarian deep-fried bread), crêpes, and deep-fried hake. Today’s lakeside dining celebrates fresh, regional ingredients and contemporary techniques, as evidenced by the remarkable restaurants dotting both shores.

Along the southern coast, a detour to Balatonszemes might lead you to *Kistücsök’s* Michelin-recognized interpretation of Hungarian classics. At the *Zenit Balaton Restaurant*, guests can enjoy a stunning panorama alongside unique dishes inspired by the recipes of the Festetics family. *The Hableány* in Badacsony is a modern Balaton bistro where wines are crafted just steps away in the winery. The menu at *Lavender Terrace* is exceptionally diverse, with a special emphasis on a variety of steaks.

No taste of Balaton is complete without exploring its colorful markets, where local traditions come alive. The *Liliomkert Market* has been gathering artisanal producers under Káptalantóti’s green arbors every Sunday morning since 2007. Near the ferry, *Tihanyi Piac Placc* attracts weekend visitors from both shores, while Fonyód’s historic marketplace showcases regional specialties twice a week.





# A Paradise for Bathing

Renowned for its excellent water quality, Lake Balaton boasts a range of beaches perfect for every type of traveler. From the shallow, family-friendly southern shores to the peaceful northern coastline with its deep waters, there's a spot for sunbathing, water sports, or just unwinding. Explore the best beaches of Hungary's beloved lake for an unforgettable summer experience.

## FREE PUBLIC BEACHES

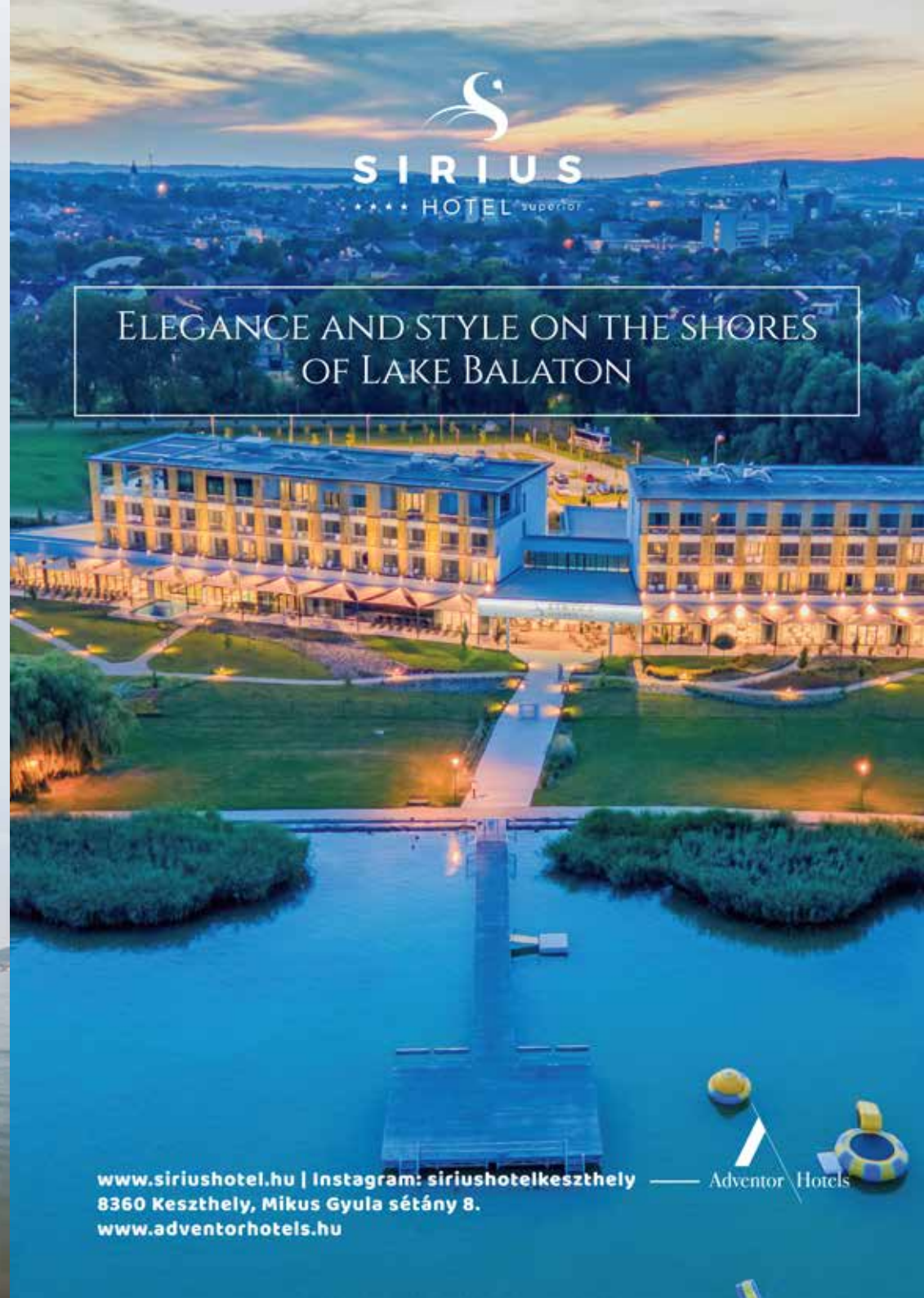
Dozens of free public beaches invite you to experience the ultimate carefree bathing at Lake Balaton! The southern shore is a haven for beachgoers, with hotspots like Fonyód, Balatonlelle, Zamárdi, and Siófok offering free access to sparkling waters, delicious snacks from local beach bars, fun paddleboat rides, and plenty of shady spots under leafy trees. On the charming northern shore, you'll uncover hidden gems near the Tihany Peninsula—smaller, serene beaches perfect for a peaceful escape.

## TOP DOG BEACHES

- » Keszthely Dog Park and Beach
- » Fonyód Dog Beach
- » Balatonföldvár Dog Beach
- » Inner Lake, Tihany (only for dogs)

## WATER PARKS FOR FAMILY FUN

Lake Balaton is not only famous for its natural beauty but also for its exciting water parks that offer fun for all ages. The *Keszthely Water Park* is a family favorite, featuring thrilling slides, splash zones, and areas for relaxation right near the western tip of the lake. In Balatonfüred, the *Annagora Aquapark* is a highlight with its wave pools, high-speed slides, and wellness facilities, ensuring a mix of adrenaline and relaxation. Over on the southern shore, the *Zamárdi Fun Park* combines water attractions with other activities like adventure courses, while the *Bebó Aquapark* in Siófok offers floating inflatable obstacle courses directly on the lake.



  
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ELEGANCE AND STYLE ON THE SHORES  
 OF LAKE BALATON

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LAKE HÉVÍZ

## Wellness Destinations

Lake Balaton's shores might draw summer crowds, but the region's true treasures bubble up from deep below: thermal waters that have offered natural healing for generations.

At the heart of this wellness wonderland lies *Lake Hévíz*, Europe's largest natural thermal lake. Fed by springs from a 38-meter-deep karst cave, this remarkable body of water maintains its therapeutic warmth year-round, completely renewing itself every 72 hours. The healing power of its mineral-rich waters is legendary: in 1914, they even cured the Budapest Zoo's young elephant named Nelly of her rheumatic ailments. Just a few minutes' drive away, *Kehida Thermal Bath* presents a perfect blend of wellness and recreation across its 2,400-square-meter expanse. From a thrilling 94-meter water slide to therapeutic baths renowned for their anti-aging properties, its diverse pools cater to both adventure seekers and wellness enthusiasts. Southwest of Lake Balaton, *Zalakaros Spa* cele-

brates six decades of wellness tradition, with its 96°C waters rushing up from over 2,500 meters below ground. Set among peaceful gardens, this modern facility seamlessly combines family entertainment - including a 400-square-meter children's world - with serious therapeutic treatments and comprehensive wellness services. Those venturing slightly further will discover *Igal's* flourishing spa complex, born from a fortunate accident during the 1940s oil exploration. Its thirteen pools and four saunas offer a tranquil escape, adding another gem to the collection of thermal havens that showcase the very best of Hungarian spa culture, proving that Balaton's waters work their magic well beyond the lake's famous shores.



# Where to Stay

Lake Balaton isn't just about breathtaking views and thrilling activities; it's also home to a diverse range of accommodations tailored to every type of traveler. Dive into the best places to stay and ensure your Lake Balaton getaway is as comfortable as it is memorable!

## ACCOMMODATION FOR EVERY TYPE OF TRAVELER

Exploring Lake Balaton's attractions is exciting, but finding the right accommodation is just as important for a memorable trip. Luckily, the area boasts a variety of options catering to all tastes and budgets. For those seeking luxury, there's been a boom in 4- and 5-star hotels offering stylish rooms, gourmet dining, and premium amenities. If you prefer a balance between comfort and affordability, wellness hotels with relaxing spa areas are great choices. Families or nature lovers can opt for cozy apartments or private cottages, providing a homey feel amidst picturesque surroundings. With so many choices, including budget-friendly options, Lake Balaton ensures you'll find the perfect spot to unwind after a day of fun!



## THERMAL WATER WONDERS

Hévíz, Kehidakustány and Zalakaros, just a 15-30-minute drive from Lake Balaton, are renowned for their exceptional thermal and wellness spas, making them ideal destinations for year-round relaxation. While the lake draws sunseekers in the summer with its campgrounds and hotels, the off-season unveils a tranquil charm perfect for rejuvenation. Hévíz boasts the world's largest biologically active thermal lake, where visitors can soak in mineral-rich waters amid a serene natural setting. Zalakaros complements this experience with its modern thermal baths and wellness centers offering indulgent treatments tailored to unwind.

## THE ULTIMATE EXPERIENCE: CAMPING

Adventure seekers and budget-conscious travelers will love camping near Lake Balaton, as it offers an affordable and nature-filled getaway. With numerous well-loved campsites right on the shores of the lake, you're sure to find a great option near your destination. The largest waterfront campsite on the northern shore of Lake Balaton is the *Füred Camping & Holiday Village* in Balatonfüred, connected by a renewed promenade to the vibrant city center full of activities and programs. Nearby, the *Strand-Holiday Camping in Balatonakali* boasts an extra-long lakeside section, while *Napfény Camping* in Révfülöp offers proximity to the scenic hiking destinations of the Káli Basin. On the southern shore, the 4-star *Pelso Camping* lies between Alsóörs and Palóznak. This spacious yet family-friendly campsite is situated directly by the lake and features amenities that rival Western European standards. For those who want to experience the closeness of nature and the charm of waking up in a tent without compromising on comfort, glamping is an ideal choice. One luxurious glamping destination is *Delta Glamping* in Balatonederics, offering a blend of natural serenity and high-end accommodations, while *Rendes Glamping* in Balatonrendes is a family-friendly gem in the beautiful Káli Basin.

## VAN-FRIENDLY STAYS

If you're traveling by van and love the freedom of exploring on your own schedule, Lake Balaton is a dream destination for van life. The lake is surrounded by numerous well-equipped stellplatzes, where you can park, unwind, and take advantage of essential services like electricity, water, and waste disposal. Many of these spots offer breathtaking views, letting you enjoy the serene beauty of the lake right from your van or park just a few feet away from the water.







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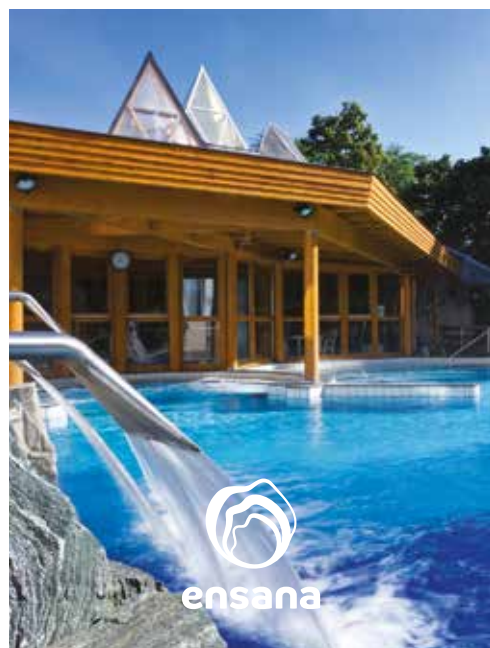
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