

Guided Architectural Tours 2.

Art Nouveau and Eclectic Budapest

4 May 2011 • 14.00

Guide: **András Török** Author, Local historian

Meeting point  : 5 th distr. Honvéd utca 3. Art Nouveau Cafe

Public transport: Metro 2 (red) line, stop: Kossuth L. tér,

Merto 3 (blue) line, stop: Arany János utca, Tram 2, stop: Kossuth L. tér

Most of the sights that make Budapest interesting these days were more or less built in the long peaceful period that lasted from 1867 to 1914. You should bear in mind that Hungary, the 1000-year old country was much bigger then, and Budapest was one of the two capitals of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, a major power in Europe of the day. During the short walk we will see representatives of the last part of that period, and we will have a look at about a dozen buildings, partly designed in one of the Revival styles (mainly Neo-Renaissance), and in Art Nouveau. It is interesting to know that in those decades Hungarian opinion makers were convinced that the mightiest style was Gothic, consequently, for the Parliament building a Gothic Revival design was chosen out of the many plans submitted. The area is called Lipótváros (Leopold Town), what was given its name in 1790, and its street grid was laid out in 1805.



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1 Honvéd utca 3. (Bedő House, 1903, by Emil Vidor)

In 2000 the renovation was completed (two apartments was created in the loft space.) Inside there are fine details; stained glass windows in almost every apartment; nice, green doorframes; and brass peepholes on the front doors. The family of the one-time owner of the building still lives on the first floor. Later the shop fronts were reconstructed on the basis of a single photograph, and a museum and a café was launched. (www.magyarszecessziohaza.hu) Visit to a middle class apartment in that house



2 Houses of Parliament (1904, from the outside, by Imre Steindl)



Work on the Parliament started in 1885 and an average of 1,000 people per year worked on it for 17 years. The building is 268-meter long, 118-meter wide, and has a spire that reaches 96 meters above the ground. There are 691 rooms and the length of all of the stairs put together is about 20 kilometres. The building's spatial arrangement is easy to recognise, especially if seen from across the

river. On either side of the central hall under the dome, the council chambers of what were formerly the Commons and the Upper House are situated. "I did not want to establish a new style with the new Parliament because I could not build a monumental building of this kind, one that would be used for centuries, with ephemeral details. My desire was to combine this splendid medieval style with national and personal features, humbly and carefully as is required by art," the architect declared in his inaugural address at the Academy of Sciences.

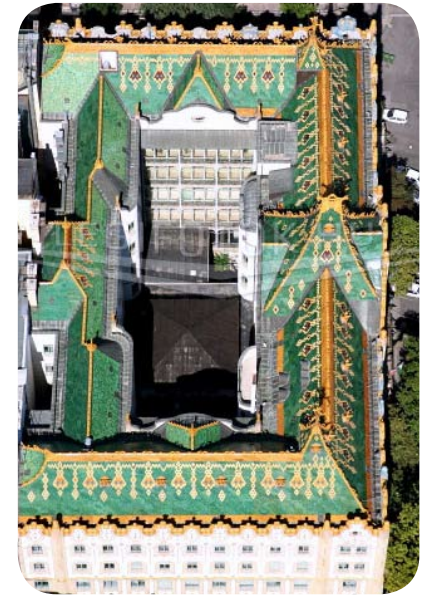
3 Crossing Hold utca Market Hall (1897, by Győző Czigler)



In a public hygiene campaign Budapest built five market halls at the same time, all of them were opened in February 1897. This one, renovated in the late 1990's is about 2000 square meter, not fully used these days.

4 Post Office Savings Bank, brief visit inside (1901, by Ödön Lechner)

"Hungarian style has no past but it does have a future", said Ödön Lechner (1845–1914), one of the most influential architects of Hungarian Art Nouveau. When he finished this building in 1901, it received a warm welcome from his contemporaries who admired the simplicity of its handling of space and its use of Hungarian folk ornamentation. The beautiful plainness of the main walls gives no indication of how restlessly alive the building is inside and at the roof level. The building's greatest attraction is undoubtedly its roof of green, yellow, blue and brown hexagonal tiles, hidden behind the yellow majolica waves that crown the top of the main walls. The roof is full of flowers familiar from folk embroidery, angel-wings, Turkish turbans and scary dragon tails. This, however, can only be inspected from further away. A disciple of the architect once asked him: "But tell me, master, why did you build a roof so ornamented, as no one will ever see it from street level?" Lechner answered: "the birds will."



5 Hungarian National Bank, brief visit inside (1904, by Ignác Alpár)



The stately bulk of the National Bank, which was originally the Austro-Hungarian Bank, shows how eclecticism was already lightening up under the influence of Art Nouveau. Eight Austrian and eight Hungarian architects were invited to the design contest, the winner was picked with an unanimous decision. Between the first-floor windows a fine relief shows people working, from peasants to mint workers to a tycoon signing a cheque. On the southwest corner, towards the square, you can see Hamlet pondering whether to be or not to be, actually holding the skull of "poor Yorick". (www.mnb.hu)

6 Szabadság tér



It can easily be called the nicest and most majestic one of Pest squares. It was built on the site of a former barracks that was pulled down as late as 1897. Most of the buildings in this square were built at the same time, just before and just after 1900.

The Soviet War Monument in the northern end is fenced off, since radicals poured red ink on the monument several times.

7 Pest New Main Street (2010)

A new north-south pedestrian axis was created recently starting from the very city-core. Contemporary design appeared in those streets for the first time in such abundance.

8 St. Stephen Cathedral: The “Basilica” (1851-1905, final design by Miklós Ybl)

St. Stephen's is the largest church in the city. It can hold 8,500 people and has a 96 meter- high spire. Work on the building began in 1851 when Pest was still a small town. The architect, József Hild, died in 1867, and was succeeded by Miklós Ybl, who was astonished to find cracks in the walls. He had a fence built around the half-completed church and had watchmen guard it. Eight days later, at 3 a. m. on January 22, 1868, the dome collapsed. More than 300 windows were broken in the area. Inferior building materials were blamed.

Ybl drew up new plans and work started again, almost from scratch. But he did not live to see the church finished and decorated, since he died in 1891. In 1906 the internal decoration was finished by József Kauser. Renovation was completed in 2003.



Podmaniczky Bench, the most complicated piece of public art, ever (1990)



Arany János utca metro station

The „Kányádi Bench” – a curious piece of recent public art (2003)



Bajcsy-Zsilinszky út

Podmaniczky Frigyes tér