



## IDENTITIES ABROAD

As you prepare for your education abroad program, you may be considering how your own identities may or may not interact with the host culture in similar or different ways than they do at home. Below you will find country-specific information on potential challenges for students who are from backgrounds traditionally underrepresented in education abroad programs. This information, adapted from the Diversity Network's Country Diversity Notes (via [Diversity Abroad](#)), is intended to assist you in exploring how you might be received abroad based on your race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, religion, or ability.

The information below features a country overview for Hungary as well as information pertinent to the socio-cultural climate that U.S. students of diverse backgrounds can reasonably expect while living in the country. It also offers bulleted information noting facts that may directly relate to student experiences in the country. Links with additional information resources on the various topics are also offered.

The below information provides a bird's-eye view of diversity matters in the country as they pertain to U.S. students. Purchase understands the below information is not exhaustive or inclusive of all possible student identities and experiences. We encourage you to conduct further research and chat with relevant points of contact including your program advisor, faculty leader, or peers who have traveled to Hungary, to gain a greater understanding of your host country and/or city.

If you would like to speak with us about any questions pertaining to diversity and inclusivity abroad, please contact us at [study.abroad@purchase.edu](mailto:study.abroad@purchase.edu) and we will answer your inquiry to the best of our ability and/or refer you to others with the expertise that you need. Additionally, if you are interested in discussing other geographical locations, please don't hesitate to contact us.

## COUNTRY OVERVIEW

### FAST FACTS:

**Capital:** Budapest

**Population:** 9,728,337

**Language(s):** Hungarian (official) 99.6%, English 16%, German 11.2%, Russian 1.6%, Romanian 1.3%, French 1.2%, other 4.2%.

**Religions:** Roman Catholic 37.2%, Calvinist 11.6%, Lutheran 2.2%, Greek Catholic 1.8%, other 1.9%, none 18.2%, no response 27.2%.

**Ethnic groups:** Hungarian 85.6%, Romani 3.2%, German 1.9%, other 2.6%, unspecified 14.1%.



Hungary is a Central European country which is surrounded by Austria, Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia. It is slightly smaller than the state of Virginia, about the same size as Indiana. The country is divided into 19 counties and one capital city, which is Budapest, located in the central norther region. The national language is Hungarian and it is a mostly flat country with some rolling plains and low mountains in the north on the Slovakian border. The Danube is the major river in the country and essentially divides it in half. Two other rivers in the country are the Drava and the Tisza and central Europe's largest freshwater lake, Lake Balaton, is located in the central western part of the country. The climate is cold and cloudy with humid winters and warm summers. Hungary is known for the Hot Springs and Thermal Spas, as well as the production of Paprika.

The Hungarian economy has transitioned from centrally planned to market-driven, but in recent years the government has taken a stronger position in managing the country's economy. After the 1990s, Hungary saw a sharp decrease in exports and financial assistance from the former Soviet Union. In an attempt to combat this, a series of economic reforms were attempted, including a reduction of social spending programs, the privatization of state-owned enterprises and other efforts to try to re-gain footing and establish trade with the West. While these attempts did help encourage growth and reduce the country's debt burden and fiscal deficits, living conditions for the average Hungarian citizen initially deteriorated as they saw an increase in inflation and unemployment shot up. However, things started to balance out throughout the 1990s and early 2000s.

The Ottomans gained their first victory over Hungary in 1526 and continued to expand their territory for the following thirty years, during which time, the country experienced a great deal of political chaos. Two kings were elected simultaneously, one of Hungarian-German origin and one Austrian. Then the Turkish army conquered Buda (the early capital of Hungary), effectively splitting the country into three parts. The northwest part of the kingdom (present day Slovakia, western Croatia, and part of present-day Hungary) was under the rule of the Austrian born king, King Ferdinand of Habsburg. The eastern part of the kingdom was under Turkish rule and the remaining central area (which is most of present-day Hungary) became the province of the Ottoman Empire. A majority of the people living under Ottoman rule became Protestant (predominantly Calvinist). In 1686, an operation to re-take the Hungarian capital began and the army of the Holy League had over 74,000 men which included German, Croat, Dutch, Hungarian, English, Spanish, Czech, Italian, French, Burgundian, Danish and Swedish soldiers. This force was able to defeat the Turks and throughout the next few years, all former Hungarian land was taken back and at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Transylvania became part of Hungary again as well. In 1718, the entire kingdom of Hungary was removed from Ottoman rule.

A general war began in 1914 with a declaration of war on Serbia by Austria and Hungary which evolved into the first world war after the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Together with Germany, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire, the Central Powers, the defeated Serbia, but then Romania declared war. The Central Powers defeated Southern Romania and the capital Bucharest while fending off attacks from the Russian Empire in the east. By 1918, the war had left the country in economic distress and the union between Austria and Hungary was dissolved. Between the two World Wars, the Austro-Hungarian monarchy politically collapsed, and the former Prime Minister was murdered in October of 1918 during the Aster Revolution. The new Prime Minister proclaimed Hungary a Democratic Republic and he was named president and he tried to build this new republic as an "Eastern Switzerland", asking non-Hungarian minorities for their loyalty to the country and ordering the disarmament of the Hungarian army. Surrounding states were quick to take advantage of this and occupy parts of the country and in November 1918 armed forces of the Slate of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs along with some French support attacked the southern parts of the Kingdom of Hungary.

Towards the end of World War II, the Soviet Army occupied Hungary and the capital was largely destroyed including a number of bridges that were blown up by the Germans to slow the Soviet progress. Under the Soviets, Hungary fell to Communist rule and the Communist Party was legalized and allowed to join the postwar government. The new Provisional National Government which reorganized the public sector, modernized education, started land reform and called for elections. In 1947 the Peace Treaty of Paris was signed and Hungary lost the territories it had gained between 1938-1941. Hungary was ruled by communist dictatorship at this time and its economy collapsed in the 1950s and the quality of life for Hungarians fell. There was a great deal of social dissatisfaction and an uprising resulted in the withdrawal from the Warsaw act in 1956. Slowly, consolidation began, and Hungary started liberalizing its economy and introducing what was referred to as "Goulash Communism". Quality of life began to increase and Hungary started to become a prosperous nation again. Many changes started to take effect at the end of the 1980s after the retirement of Janos Kadar, the former Prime Minister. In 1989, Hungary tore down a barbed wire fence and opened its borders to Austria once again and later in that year the Hungarian Republic was proclaimed. In 1990, the first democratic general elections were held as Hungary became a free, democratic European Country.

Review current travel risks for Hungary: [U.S Department of State Travel Risks](#)

According to the Institute of International Education (IIE) [Open Doors Report 2019](#), 1,231 students from the United States studied abroad to Hungary.

## ETHNIC MINORITIES IN HUNGARY

### SOCIAL CONTEXT:

A few of the main minority and indigenous communities in Hungary today include the Roma, Germans, Slovaks, Romanians, Croats, Serbs, Ukrainians, Poles, Bulgarians, Ruthenians, Armenians, and Slovenes. Many of these populations, with the exception of Slovenes, has grown a great deal in the past 20 years (since the last census) and it is estimated that there are between 250,000-800,000 Roma throughout the country. The Roma and Jewish populations have been subjected to discrimination, hate speech and targeted violence for a while now and economic crisis and unemployment issues may exacerbate this situation even further. Hungarian politics has shifted towards the right for the past 10 years under Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and the political climate has become more authoritarian with media and human rights activism even more constrained. The European refugee crisis has also increased xenophobic attitudes and ideals towards refugees and migrants in Hungary, a message which pro-government media outlets have amplified. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance has expressed its concerns about a rise in racism in public discourse, and the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights has raised similar concerns about the rise of extremism and called for political party leaders to stop xenophobic or anti-Roma statements. Another continuing issue is the segregation of Romani children in schools and their misdiagnosis as mentally disabled. The public education system has not provided an adequate education for minority students in their own language (which is required by law) and resources such as schoolbooks in their language and qualified teachers are stretched too thin.

One of the main organizations inciting these behaviors and causing such a shift in the political climate is the Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom or "Movement for a Better Hungary" (also known simply as Jobbik) which is an extreme right-wing political party with an anti-Rom and anti-Semitic agenda. Another far right party is Mi Hazánk or "Our Homeland" which is mostly concentrated in the southern part of the country.

### POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR:

- There is an extremely small population of Muslims in Hungary, fewer than 6,000.
- In 2016, an estimated 30,000 people applied for asylum in Hungary, many of which came from Afghanistan, Syria, Pakistan, Iraq and Iran. However, the rejection rate for these applications is currently over 90%.
- Students of color may experience instances of staring or people asking about their hair, etc. in Hungary, but may find that this is far less common in larger cities like Budapest than in smaller towns in the country.

### ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples- Hungary, [Minority Rights Group International](#)
- [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 in Hungary](#) (see Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons; National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities), US Department of State
- [I'm a Black American in Budapest. Here's Why I Feel Safer Here Than Home](#), Fodors.com
- [Being Black in Hungary](#), youtube
- [Hungary Human Rights](#), Amnesty USA

## SEXUAL ORIENTATION IN HUNGARY

### SOCIAL CONTEXT:

Homosexual activity has been legal in Hungary since 1978 and civil unions between same-sex partners have been legal since 2009. Same sex marriage is still banned by the Constitution, however, meaning same-sex couples are not eligible for all legal rights available to heterosexual married couples. Currently, there is no legal recognition of non-binary gender in the country and in May 2020, the parliament voted to make it impossible for individuals to change their legal gender. Same-sex adoption is also not legal. In July 2021, a new law went into effect which prohibited the "promotion" of sexual and gender differences to children in educational settings, films, and advertising. However, LGBTQ+ discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity is illegal and there are protections against discrimination in housing and employment.

## POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER OR QUEER STUDENTS:

- It is advised to keep overt displays of public affection to a minimum in Hungary.
- Younger Hungarians are much more open than older Hungarians, many of whom may still not even admit to being a member of the community. But there are a number of cafés and other establishments that are LGBTQ+ friendly and frequented by both generations.

## ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [LGBT Rights in Hungary](#), Equaldex
- [LGBT Travel Information](#), U.S. Passports & International Travel
- [LGBTQ Travel Safety](#), Asher Fergusson
- [Sexual Orientation Laws in the World \(December 2019\)](#), ILGA, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association
- [What's it like to be LGBT in Hungary amid Orban's rights crackdown?](#) Daily Tribune USA
- [Gay Budapest](#), Queer in the World

## DISABILITY IN HUNGARY

### SOCIAL CONTEXT:

Hungarian law prohibits discrimination against persons with in areas including employment, education, transportation, and access to health care. Renovations to public buildings to make the accessible to those with physical disabilities are underway, but many remain inaccessible. NGOs in the area have also reported continuing issues with accessibility of public transportation in Hungary. But one positive aspect is that many attractions within the city are very close to one another, meaning visiting more than one may not necessitate the use of public transportation.

## POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES:

- Students with disabilities will find that the tourist areas in the capital city will be the most accessible in Hungary. A variety of transportation options, accommodations, and restaurants in these areas have adapted options to accommodation visitors who use wheelchairs.
- Trams are the most accessible option of public transportation for wheelchair users to get around the city. Buses are typically very accessible as well, they have a ramp that the driver can put down in order to allow a wheelchair user to board. The metro lines are not as accessible as the tram or bus, but Line 4 does have an elevator installed at each station.

## ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Mobility International USA](#) Resources for Americans Traveling Abroad with Disabilities
- [Information for Students with Disabilities Traveling Abroad](#) U.S. Department of State (see section under Local Laws & Special Circumstances)
- [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016](#) (see Persons with Disabilities).
- [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 in Hungary](#) (see Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons; National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities), US Department of State
- [Traveling with Disabilities and Medications](#), Transportation Security Administration
- [How to travel in Hungary](#), Angloinfo
- [Accessible Budapest: Discovering the Hungarian Capital with Limited Mobility](#), Culture Trip

## RELIGION IN HUNGARY

### SOCIAL CONTEXT:

A majority of Hungarians identify as Roman Catholic (51%), the next largest population are Calvinist Reformed (16%), 4% identify as Lutherans and nearly 1% are Jewish. About 2% of the population identifies as “nondenominational” or “other” and 23% reported no  
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religious affiliation. Hungary has the second largest Jewish population of the region, second only to Russia, and a majority of Hungarian Jews live in the capital city. However, many Hungarians do not formally belong to or regularly practice any religion, but still frequent churches and places of worship for baptisms, weddings, and funerals.

During the socialist regime, there was an official campaign against all religions and those who openly practiced any religion were often discriminated against or punished. During this time, the state closed down most parochial schools and disbanded religious order and institutions. However, after 1989, many of these establishments and institutions were returned to churches and as compensation, the state now financially supports parochial schools and religious institutions. Today, some of the population does exhibit religious indifference, and sometimes even antireligious attitudes. Recently, Hungary has seen a shift towards more right-wing ideology, which has resulted in more instances of Anti-Semitism as a result of the revival of myths about a Jewish economic conspiracy. Media-outlets that tend to skew more towards pro-government have been accused of inciting hatred towards the Jewish community in Hungary.

#### POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS STUDENTS:

- Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Alliance is a right-wing national-conservative political party in Hungary that has gained a lot of support recently. This party has very strong anti-immigration stances and has spread anti-Muslim and anti-Islam messaging since 2015. Assaults or hate-crimes against Muslim Hungarians has not been recorded, but Muslim students should keep in mind that this political population and ideology exists in Hungary.

#### ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Countries and Their Cultures: Hungary](#) (see section on Religion and Expressive Culture), EveryCulture
- [Faith-Based Travel Information](#), U.S. Passports & International Travel
- [Hungary Buddhist Directory](#)
- [A Guide to Finding Halal Food in Hungary](#), Halal Trip
- [Hungary](#), World Jewish Congress
- [2018 Report on International Religious Freedom: Hungary](#), U.S. Department of State
- [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 in Hungary](#) (see Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons; National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities), US Department of State
- [Mosques & Prayer Time in Hungary](#), IslamicFinder.org

### WOMEN IN HUNGARY

#### SOCIAL CONTEXT:

Hungary historically has very traditional heteronormative gender roles where the men are expected to work and provide whereas women are expected to take care of the household and the family, but these roles have begun to shift in the last few generations. Higher rates of divorce and re-marriage had been reported since the late 1980s in the Post-Communist era. In 1989 women's and feminist groups began to form to address the needs of Hungarian women. Domestic violence has been a major topic of conversation in the country over the past two decades.

Hungary is considered to be very safe for female travelers. Public transportation is typically reliable and safe, but it is advised that travelers watch out for pickpocketing and be wary of scams. As with any tourist destination, there are bound to be higher numbers of pickpocketers and thieves that can take small personal items when someone is distracted. There may also be more individuals trying to offer unwanted assistance or deliberately overcharging for a service if they believe a traveler is not familiar with the currency or is not aware of what a fair price for something may be in the area.

#### POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FEMALE STUDENTS:

- Always keep an eye on personal belongings and stay alert of surroundings and do not leave drinks unattended.
- If possible, avoid crowded areas and walking alone late at night. Try to travel in a group if possible.
- Stay alert when walking near or crossing streets, Hungarians are considered to be a little more careless when driving than drivers in the United States.

#### ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016](#), (see Section 6 subheading for Women) U.S. Department of State.
- [Sexual Harassment and Prevention In College Students Studying Abroad](#)
- [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 in Hungary](#) (see Section 6 on Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons, subheading for Women)
- [Information for Women Travelers](#), U.S. Department of State
- [Is Hungary Safe? 4 Tips to Avoid Petty Crime](#), World Nomads
- [Countries and Their Cultures: Hungary](#) (see section on Gender Roles and Statuses), Every Culture
- [How Safe is Hungary for Travel?](#) Travelsafe-abroad.com

#### REFERENCES

Maps, flag, and country facts are from the [CIA World Factbook](#). Accessed online in October 2021  
[IIE Open Doors Report](#) | [Lonely Planet Hungary](#)

**Please note: The content within the resources provided were last reviewed in November 2021 and as such could have changed. Views expressed in links provided or in sub-links within the document do not necessarily reflect the views of the Office for Global Education.**