

Visegrád

"From Visegrád, the earthly Paradise " - is how the Pope's envoy, used to luxury and finery, signed a letter when he saw the wonderful **palace of the great Renaissance sovereign**, King Matthias (1458-1490), with its 350 rooms and red-marble ornamental wells. The gigantic building was one of the most luxurious royal residences of that age. The Renaissance Ornamental yard and the Hercules wells that poured wine on celebration days were excavated from debris 15-meters deep and renovated by archaeologists. The five-storey, thirteenth-century **Solomon tower** has its original wells and statues. It is one of the biggest and least-damaged Roman-era towers surviving in Central Europe. The courtyard today is used for mock battles. The tower is a part of the defence system connecting the thirteenth-century Water Bastion on the Danube side and the castle on Castle Hill. It defended the royal seat moved here from Buda in 1316.

The Sacred Crown was guarded for 200 years in the Citadel, built between 1245-55. The first "**Central European Summit**" was held in this building; here the participating countries signed an economic contract boycotting Vienna. The castle has a wonderful, panoramic view of the Danube Bend, and historical exhibitions are held in its renovated halls.

Three sites in the neighbouring peaks are worth mentioning: one is the **remains of the Roman military camp on Sibrik Hill**, built about 330 AD. The second is the **Nagyvillámi lookout tower** on Fekete Hill and the biggest hiking centre in the proximity of the capital, with a bobsled run, yurt-camp, camp, forest restaurant, playgrounds and game-preserve. The third lies in the Apátkút Valley: it includes the **Ördögmalom Waterfall, Magda Spring and the Telgárthy Pasture**, an ideal place for a picnic. A terraced, open-air bath with a 33-meter-long swimming pool was built on the thermal water well of Lepence Valley. In July, the 3-day-long Visegrád Palace Games recall the world of knights' tournaments.

SOURCE: Hungarian Tourism Ltd, <http://www.hungary.com>