

123 hot springs supply

70 million litres per day



PHOTO MTI — VADAS AND BALASSA

The Széchenyi baths



The Gellért baths.

Budapest, the city of medicinal waters of curative value, has enhanced its fame abroad in recent years. An increasing number of foreign tourists have visited the Hungarian capital to seek cures with the help of natural spring waters of various chemical compositions, medical effects and temperatures. In fact, there is hardly another place in the world like Budapest—with such an abundance of medicinal springs for drinking, or bathing purposes.

In the geographical area of Budapest, there are 123 deep-level natural hot springs with curative waters. Some of the springs bring up water from natural reservoirs lying several thousands of metres deep in the ground. Their combined output daily is 40 million litres of hot and 30 million litres of tepid water.

History

As early as the age of the Celtic settlement of this region, the Celts called their capital here "Ak Ink"—a name preserved in the Latin name of "Aquincum", a major outpost of the Roman Empire at the time of the Ceasars, whose remains are a famous landmark in the north of Budapest. The ill soldiers of the Roman legions stationed in Pannonia (today's West Hungary) were cured with the help of these medicinal waters, copiously gushing forth at that age as well. Bertrand de la Brocquière, councillor of Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, praised the effects of these waters on his way back home from the Holy Land in 1433, while 150 years later Baron Wratlaw Vencel, member of an Embassy sent by Emperor Rudolf II of the Holy Roman Empire to Constantinople, extolled the effects of these waters.

This is what Turkish traveller and scholar Evlia Chelebi wrote 300 years ago:

"There is no other city in the country of the true faith, or perhaps in the whole world, like Buda with its universally curative springs which gush forth their waters in wonderful abundance..."

The baths

One of the most popular swimming and medicinal baths in Budapest is the *Gellért*. Its basins are supplied with water from 18 natural hot springs. As early as 750 years ago, a bath-house stood at the spot where a large bath-and-hotel complex stands today. Its radioactive water, containing calcium-hydrocarbonate is eminently suitable for the treatment of pains in the joints, muscle rheumatism, lumbago, sciatica and diseases of the respiratory system. But many hundreds, in summer thousands, of people frequent the covered bubbly-water basin and the open-air swimming pool, with artificial wave generator and beautiful garden plots to rest in.

A few hundred metres north of the Gellért stands the *Rudas* bath, frequented by muscle and nerve patients. Its water also acts as a restorative in cases of bodily or mental exhaustion. The Turkish Pasha Sokoli Mustapha built its domed central building, with the roof structure resting on eight columns, in 1560

In a nearby valley between two hills lies the *Imre* bath, once the court bath of the Hungarian Renaissance King Matthias. Its central spring supplies 1,200,000 litres of 43.3°C water daily. Its water is radioactive and contains calcium-carbonate. In the north of Buda are the *Király* (King) bath, overtopped by a Turkish dome, excellent for liver, spleen and bone patients—the *Lukács* bath, with its carbonic-acid and other curative-water baths, rheumatism hospital, and steam

bath (with the building's outer walls covered with tablets of thanksgiving in many languages, tributes to the institution by cured patients) the *Császár* (Emperor) bath, the oldest bathing establishment in Budapest, supplied by 15 natural springs.

Favourite swimming baths with natural water sources are the large-size *Palatinus* bath in Margaret island, with accomodation for 20,000 bathers at a time, the attractive *Széchenyi* baths in the City Park, and the *Szabadság* bath near the Danube—the last-named two being on the Pest side of the Danube, and being equally suitable for swimming and medicinal purposes.

— E. Sebes —