

FROM VIENNA TO BUDAPEST BY RIVER

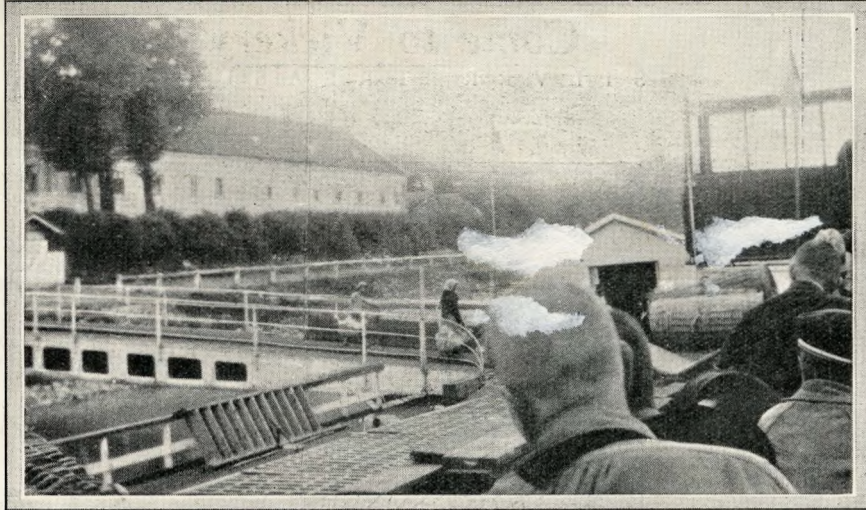
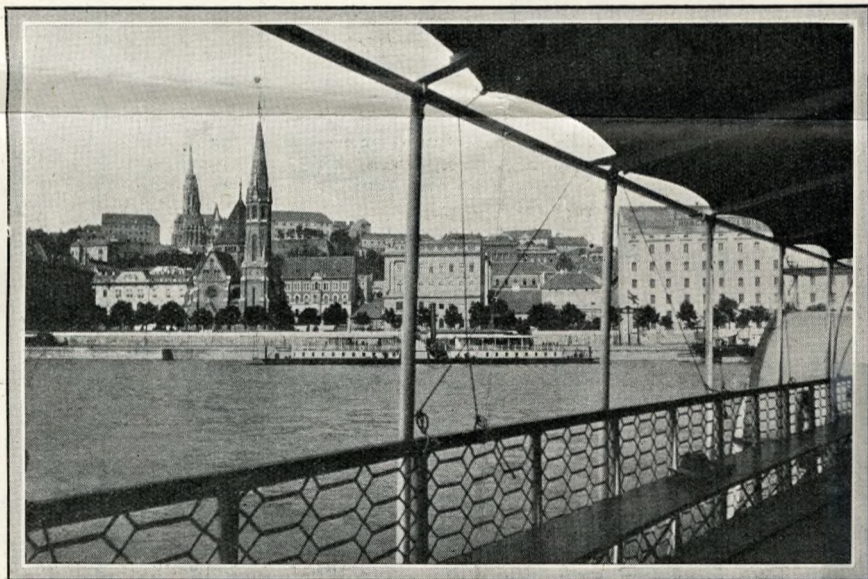
THERE are several ways of travelling from Vienna to Budapest. Thus, one can cover the distance (about 160 miles) by train, or by motor, or (if sufficiently adventurous) by aeroplane. The really energetic person can bicycle; and, of course, the one with whom time is no object can walk. This merely means despatching luggage in advance, and setting off with nothing but a rucksack strapped to one's shoulders. An ideal way of seeing the country, perhaps. Still, not to be commended for people in a hurry.

Far the pleasantest method of going from Vienna to Budapest is to travel by steamer. This is comfortable and cheap; and quite quick enough for any ordinary individual—it takes twelve hours from start to finish.

But, in addition to the initial advantage of comfort and cheapness, the river trip is memorable for the delightful panorama that is offered at every step. On the journey from the Austrian to the Hungarian capital one passes a long succession of castles, villages, and mountains; and everywhere great stretches of woods and meadowland. Also there is much to interest the antiquarian, for many chapters of Roman history are connected with the district traversed. Thus, Carnuntum (where Marcus Aurelius composed his "Meditations") is near the starting-point, and Severus and Diocletian also lived there when the world was younger.

The starting-point for the steamer from Vienna to Budapest is the Praterquai, where the Danube Canal, which divides Vienna into two halves, joins the main branch of the river. As the voyage begins at 7 a.m., and the vessel (like time and tide) waits for no one, this early hour often means something of a rush. Still, it can be avoided, for, by paying a small additional sum—certainly less than would be involved by an hotel bill—it is possible to book a cabin and spend the previous night on board. Also, the early bird gets the best deck chair, and the choicest spot on which to instal it.

BY the time a very few miles have been covered, the steamer has left Austria and is sailing between Czecho-Slovakia and Hungary. The first place of any importance at which it touches is Bratislava (formerly called Pressburg) where the Hapsburg monarchs used to be crowned in the Gothic cathedral. At Komarom-Ujvaros, a little further off, the river is spanned by a bridge, connecting it with the Czecho-Slovakian town of Komarno. Here the scenery is flat and riparian, with long stretches of meadowland, and numbers of gulls and cranes circling overhead.



Peasants bringing live geese on board at Bratislava (Pressburg)

The steamer does not stop long at the different points *en route*. As a matter of fact, only just long enough to run out a gangway, and put one set of passengers ashore, and another aboard. It is quite interesting to watch the crowd. A babel of languages, and a medley of costumes. Stout Austrians in abbreviated shorts and Tyrolese hats from which project tufts of feathers; British tourists in plus-fours and club ties; commercial travellers from different parts of Europe in frock coats and caps; and Czechs and Hungarians and Slavs in their national dress. Everybody laughs and talking goes on in a dozen tongues. Guttural German, sibilant French and Italian, English and American; and, rising above the din, snatches of Magyar.

Presently, an attentive steward suggests luncheon. It seems a good idea. Good, too, is the luncheon. Then, the meal over, one returns to a comfortable deck chair under an awning, ready for more scenery.

There is no lack of this. One has scarcely settled down, when, straight ahead, rise the great cupolas of Esztergom. In accordance with the custom in this part of the world, it has two names, the one more generally used being Gran. It is a place of some importance, being the official residence of the Primate of Hungary, and has a very fine Renaissance cathedral and palace.

AT this point the river landscape changes somewhat. The Danube becomes broader, and the steamer, skirting the Bakony forest, with the Carpathians on the opposite side, calls at Nagymaros. Here, too, is the ancient stronghold Visegrad, where once lived and loved the Kings of the House of Anjou. It is a favourite holiday resort, especially during the summer months.

After Visegrad has been left behind, the end of the journey is at hand. Twilight falls, for one has now been on board nearly twelve hours. Presently, a glimmer of lights in the distance ahead. With each turn and bend of the river, the lights come nearer. Soon, there seem to be thousands upon thousands of them, twinkling from different elevations above the dark surface of the water.

"Budapest!" says someone.

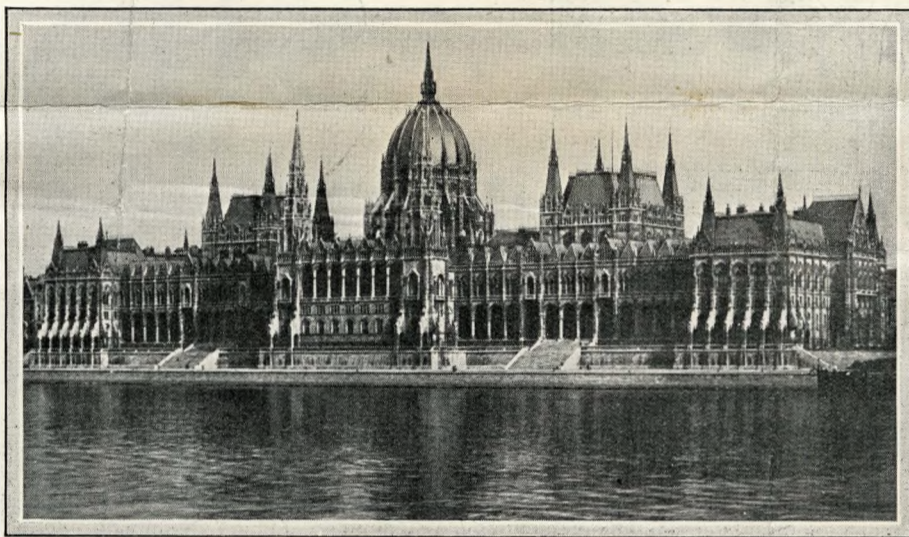
Five minutes later, the vessel is moored alongside the quay, and the voyage is finished.

The first glimpse of Budapest, especially when approaching from the river, is an unforgettable one. The broad expanse of the Danube is dotted with steamers, and crossed by a number of bridges. On the Buda side, among a background of wooded hills, stand the Royal Palace (a vast edifice in Baroque style), the Fischer Bastion, and the dark walls of the Citadel; and, jutting out into the Danube itself, is St. Margaret's Island, a charming pleasure-resort with a park and bathing-station.

Budapest, as one knows it to-day, was originally three separate towns, Buda, Alt-Ofen, and Pest. In 1872 they were united under the one name of Budapest. From that moment began its real prosperity, for it then came to be regarded as the natural emporium of commerce between the Occident and the Orient.

Perhaps the man who did most for modern Budapest was Count Szechenyi, who, assisted by an English engineer, Adam Clark, built the first suspension bridge across the Danube. To show their gratitude to the Englishman, the Hungarians named a street after him.

Pest, which extends over a plain, and immediately fronts Buda, is the quarter with which the average visitor is most familiar. This is because it contains the principal shops, banks, hotels, theatres, boulevards, and public buildings. Foremost among the latter are the Houses of Parliament, the Ministry of Justice,



The Houses of Parliament at Budapest have a magnificent river frontage

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and the chief museums and art galleries, etc. It is on this side of the river, too, that, at the end of the Andrassy-Ut, is the famous Városliget, or Town Park.

The heart and life of Budapest centre principally along the Franz Josef Quay. This, lying along the Danube, is where all the leading hotels and open-air cafés are to be found. On a summer night the scene there is a brilliant one. As before, there is a mixture of costume and of language—Magyar and Czech, Serbian and Polish, with a good deal of German, a little French and Italian, and an occasional sound of English. Everywhere, music and light and life and laughter; and always the beautiful Danube flowing into the mysterious distance.

HORACE WYNDHAM.