



After a day's sightseeing, where better to take it elegantly easy than at Gerbeaud's coffee house?

HUNGARY

DELICIOUS BUDAPEST

Sit back to enjoy coffee and cakes in the Hungarian capital's cafés, lavishly restored after years of communist neglect.

Standing on Budapest's Vörösmarty Square, the 150-year-old Gerbeaud is the stately doyen of the city's *kávéházak* (coffee houses). Here, Hungarian old-timers mingle with tourists as they sample patisserie laced with nostalgia for the grand old days of the Habsburg empire. Savor the neo-Renaissance splendor inside or relax on the terrace outside as you relish cakes and pastries that include Gerbeaud *torta* (chocolate cake spiked with fruit brandy), chocolate-and-caramel Dobos *torta*, and Gerbeaud *szelet*—apricot jam and ground walnuts layered with dough and topped with chocolate. The Sissi coffee (espresso, apricot liqueur, and whipped cream) commemorates Elisabeth (“Sissi”), the Emperor Franz Josef’s wayward, beautiful wife, who used to visit Gerbeaud. Farther north, the modishly fusty Centrál Kávéház has regained its one-time bohemian atmosphere. Treat yourself to inspired desserts, such as *somlói galuska*—a sponge cake fusing chocolate, vanilla, walnut biscuits, chocolate sauce, and vanilla cream. A 20-minute walk from the Centrál, the arcaded interior of the New York Kávéház drips with chandeliers, gilt, and marble, beneath frescoed ceilings. In its heyday, the New York was a watering-hole for writers, who on the café’s opening night in 1894 reportedly threw its key in the Danube so that it would never close.

When to Go The most pleasant weather is in May and September. The Spring Festival is a two-week showcase of Hungarian culture. The hugely popular rock festival on Sziget Island takes place in August.

Planning On a hill above the Danube, the Budavári (Buda Castle) district is a dreamily atmospheric place to stay, with some historic cafés. Places here tend to close early, especially out of season, although the boho Café Miró stays open till around midnight. In winter, many hotels offer the fourth night free.

Websites www.gerbeaud.hu, www.centralkavehaz.hu, www.boscolohotels.com, www.gundel.hu

Budapest's Restaurants

■ Oozing belle époque luxury, **Gundel's** restaurant, founded in 1894, remains one of Budapest's essential eating stops. The best time to sample its desserts is the Sunday buffet brunch. Not to be missed is the Gundel pancake, filled with rum, raisins, walnuts, and lemon rind, and topped with chocolate sauce.

■ The elegant contemporary **Onyx** restaurant, originally Gerbeaud's takeout, is a winning place to observe how far Hungarian food and wine have evolved since the 1990s. Try its aptly named Hungarian Evolution five-course meal.



A *szelet* from Gerbeaud