

## Personal Guide to Conquering the Szechenyi Baths

Written by Jenny Kerr

Monday, 03 January 2011 00:00 - Last Updated Friday, 22 April 2011 09:13

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Travelers visiting Budapest in the cold winter months must take time to visit the largest bath complex in Europe.

The yellow metro line stops directly in front of the bath house. The actual name of the stop is Szechenyi, which makes it easy to know when to disembark. It takes roughly ten minutes on the metro from Vorosmarty Ter (Square) Remember, the main areas of the baths are coed so you will be able to enjoy them with your spouse or a group of friends.



### What to bring:

- Bathing suit

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- Flip Flops
- Towel
- If you plan on going out straight after, bring necessary toiletries and a plastic bag for wet items.

**Price:** around \$15 for an all day pass. Cash or credit accepted.

**How it works so you feel comfortable while heading in for the first time:**



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Sometime the lines to get in can move very slow because some elderly people have prescriptions from doctors. I suggest going on a weekday afternoon to avoid long lines. Make sure you keep your place in line, sometimes the elderly people try to push around you to get to the front desk. There were two main windows to pay so I had my friends stand in the opposite line to see which one moved faster. After paying at the front desk, they will give you what appears to be a watch to put around your wrist. As you proceed to the changing rooms, the attendant will activate your "watch" at the turn styles, essentially, this is your electronic key for a secure locker to store your belongings. **Do not take this off or lose it.** You will also receive a mesh bag attached to a hanger to store your clothes inside the locker. Once you proceed through the turn styles there will be several doors that lead to small two-way changing rooms. To lock these doors simultaneously, simply grab the handles at the front of the bench and flip it forward.

After you're done changing into your suit, head through the back door of the changing room into the locker area. There should be various open lockers where you can place your belongings. To lock it, place your "watch" on the circular lock and press in. Security is taken very seriously here, so you can be assured your items are safe. You can reopen these lockers as many times as you need to during the day. Don't forget your flip flops as you head out of the locker room. Once you're changed and ready, walk through the shower area, separated by men and women. It is imperative that everyone shower off before entering any of the pools.

Feel free to explore the labyrinth of indoor medicinal baths and saunas, then head out to the open air thermal pools. The pools are all heated and perfect for those cold winter days. The center pool is used for swimming laps so stay away from there if you're planning on relaxing. Be sure to check out the famous chess board, where Hungarian men gather around to play. Try not splash these men when walking in and out of the pool, they don't seem to like that too much! My other suggestion is to try not to scream like a tourist when you're scurrying from one outdoor pool to the other wearing only your bathing suit. It will draw some negative stares. Make sure you check out the opposite pool that is slightly cooler and wait around for the jets to be turned on. They create a current that allows you to ride around in the center in what feels like a calm version of a whirlpool or a lazy river, it's really a lot of fun.

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After enjoying the outdoor baths, it's fun to head back inside and check out the various saunas included in your entry fee. For an additional cost various therapeutic services are offered in the complex. If you plan on heading out for more sightseeing, bring shampoo, soap, etc. along with a change of clothes. They provide hair dryers in the locker rooms, so leave that at the hotel. Once you're cleaned up for the day, you must deactivate your watch before you head out of the turn style and return your mesh bag to the attendant.



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