

CIRCLE - BUDAPEST REPORT

15. Annual Circle Meeting in Budapest 2004

Since we ran out of locations in former Western Europe we had decided to explore the treasures of the East for a change. Prague, our first choice opted for the Ice-hockey world championship instead for the Circle Meeting, so we turned our minds towards Budapest. Thanks to Monica, our local tour guide we spent an interesting and joyful weekend in the Hungarian capital.

Friday April 30, 2004

Jos had booked us in the fashionable Arthotel on the Buda side of the city, which turned out to be a great location for our explorations. To bring people together in a casual and relaxed manner, we had hired a boat on the Danube and did sightseeing, dinner, and warm-up chatting at the same time. The Danube separates the Buda and Pest side of the city and most of the major buildings are either on the riverfront or can be seen from the river. Perfect illumination and good food and wine made this trip a very good start for our weekend.

Saturday May 1, 2004

We did the classic sightseeing tour by starting on the Buda (Castle) side of the city, visiting the castle, Matthias church and Fishermen's Bastion. On Gellert hill we enjoyed the great view over the city but also the history of this very special location. In order not to overdo the serious culture stuff we escaped to Szentendre, a picturesque village where we did some serious wine tasting. We had wines from all different Hungarian regions and were impressed by the variety of the offering, although some of them clearly need some improvements, at least according to some of our stubborn west-bank drinkers...

Since the day was wasted for some serious stuff anyway, we went right to the Annual Circle Dinner at the Cosmo restaurant where more serious discussion were followed by serious drinking....The city of Budapest celebrated the entry of Hungary in the European Union (they found out only later that there is not much to celebrate...), so we could enjoy some fireworks and street-parties for free (talking about cost-conscious planning). Although we had the impression the city had received some warning about our group, since most of the stands seemed to close down upon our appearance....

Sunday May 2, 2004

We continued our city tour with the Pest side of the city. We visited the spectacular St. Stephan's Cathedral and finished with the Museum of Fine Arts; unfortunately some handover casualties could not fully enjoy it. Some authentic goulash soup worked its magic and with a long lunch another Circle Meeting came to an end.

We had the pleasure of hosting president emeritus Jos and Nathalie, the other emeritus Petter with his soon to be wife Angèlique, pretty relaxed although their great date was approaching soon. Equally relaxed Ina and Lars as well as Marlyse and Bernard, who told us about the finishing touches on their Provence home. It was good and a full pleasure to have Serge with wife and kids amongst us. His wife and him had great memories of Budapest, which hopefully did not wane after visiting the city with us. Paris and Victoria had joined us from Athens whereas Jan had brought his traditional local host, Marianne who enhanced the local flair. Luis and Oriol upheld the Iberian flag, whereas my old friends Bibi and Elisabeth strengthened the Austrian team.

Thanks again to Monica, who did a perfect job not only as a guide but also as a competent ambassador for her country. There is a serious threat that we might be back soon....