

From Yesterday to Today – How History is Told? The Culture of Remembrance of Fascist Regimes in Europe

Budapest, 11-12 May, 2022

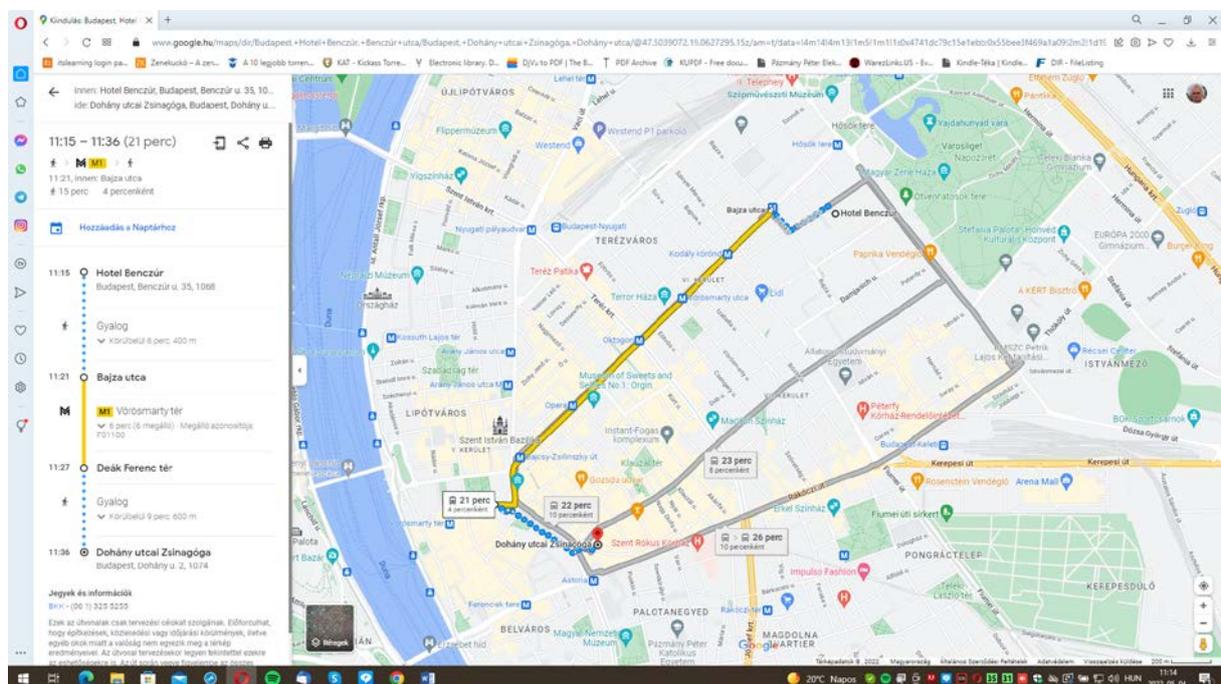
AGENDA

11th May, 2022

Meeting point: Reception of the Hotel Benczur
Time: 09:00

10:00 – The Dohány Street synagogue

<https://jewishtourhungary.com/en/about>



The Dohány Street synagogue is one of Budapest's touristic highlights as it is the largest synagogue in Europe and the second largest in the world. The synagogue was built in 1859 in the Moorish style and it can seat 3000 people. Its huge size demonstrates the significance and the high economic and cultural standards of the Budapest Jewry of the age.

The temple was designed by Ludwig Förster (1797-1863), a German architect, professor of the Vienna Academy. The clerk of works was the architect Ignác Wechseltmann (1828-1903) who later bequeathed his entire wealth to the Institute of the Blind. After Förster left, Frigyes Feszl, the famous architect of the Budapest Vigadó designed the temple's inner sanctum. The official consecration of the synagogue took place on 6 September 1859. The interior of the synagogue is 1200 square metres, the towers are 44 metres high. There are 1497 seats for men downstairs and 1472 for women in the galleries, altogether the seating capacity of the flat-ceilinged inner space is nearly 3000 people.

The Synagogue is the temple of the Neolog Jewry. It was built in Budapest's former Jewish quarter where many people of the Jewish faith still reside today.



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The memory of the Holocaust is strongly connected to the old Jewish quarter where the Synagogue is situated. Dohány Street constituted the border to the ghetto during World War II. The area which was planned as a garden is the burial place of nearly 2600 Jewish people who perished during the Holocaust. The Synagogue can be visited during weekdays. It is closed on Saturdays and for Jewish holidays.

The Synagogue is still predominantly a venue of worship but it also houses cultural programmes, such as concerts.

The building is a holy place!

- The building and the cemetery are holy places. Please comport yourself accordingly.
- Men are forbidden to enter the synagogue without covering their heads. If you have a hat or cap, please put it on. After ticket validation you will be given a kippah at the entrance that you have to wear in the complex at all times.
- Entry will be denied if you wear clothes inappropriate for a temple (e.g. sleeveless tops, short skirts or shorts). In such cases the ticket inspectors of the Synagogue will not grant you entry. Tickets are valid for 2 days. Clothing items can be purchased from the ticket inspectors.

Security check

- We conduct a security check upon entry. Please remove all metal objects and phones from your pockets.
- No entry with backpacks larger than hand-luggage.
- It is forbidden to eat, drink or smoke in the synagogue, the museum and adjoining areas. Consumption of food and beverages is allowed only in the café.
- No entry to cordoned areas.
- If you find unattended luggage or parcels alert security immediately.
- Please comport yourself in a way that helps us preserve our historic monuments and works of art.

During the tour the visitor can view the Synagogue, the Raoul Wallenberg Memorial Park and the graveyard.

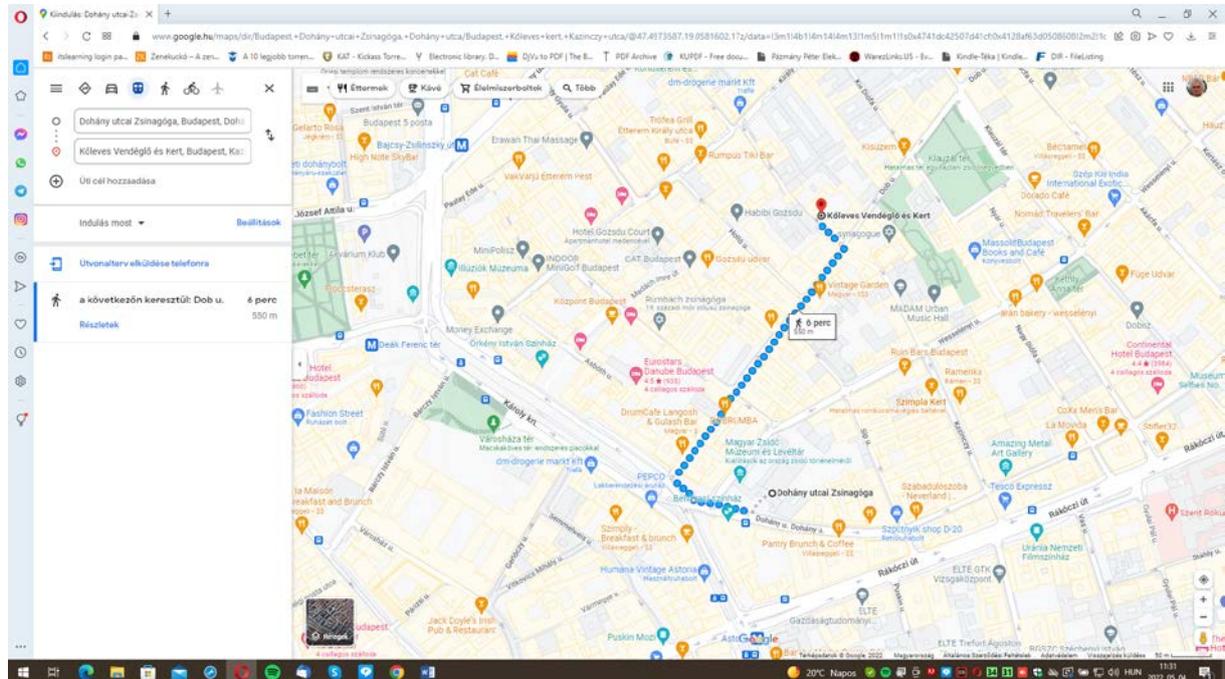


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13:00 – Lunch (Kőleves Restaurant)

<https://kolevesvendeglo.hu/en/frontpage/vendeglo/etlap>

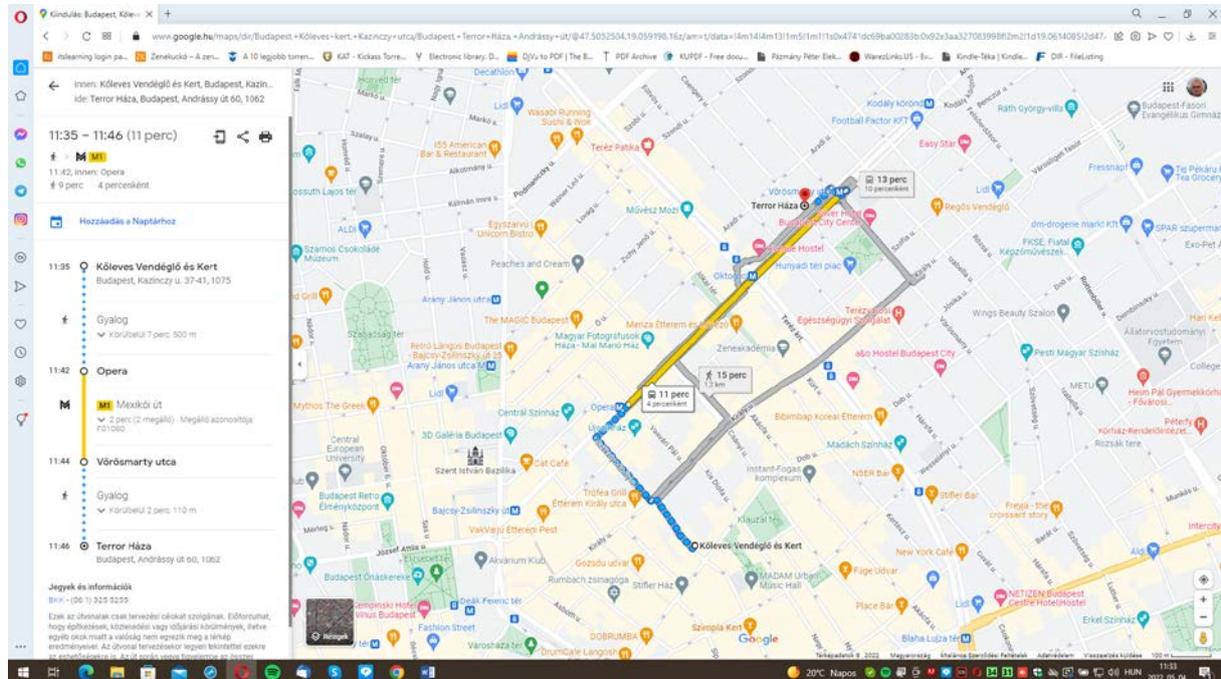


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15:00 – House of Terror Museum

<https://www.terrorhaza.hu/en/permanent-exhibition>



The permanent exhibition of the House of Terror Museum begins on the second floor. There are eight exhibition halls and a smaller projection room on this level. The themes of the exhibition follow the chronology of the Hungarian totalitarian dictatorships.

The first hall, which is a lead-in to the permanent exhibition, is the hall of double occupation. It introduces the visitors to the Nazi and Soviet occupation of Hungary. We have clearly stated the date when a foreign super power provided the circumstances for the creation of a totalitarian dictatorship: March 19th 1944, the day of Nazi occupation, the day when Hungary lost its independence.

In the next hall, the Passage of the Hungarian Nazis (Arrow Cross Party), we have also marked the starting point of the totalitarian dictatorships. In this hall the utterly cynical slogan: “Hold on, we’re coming!” is an introduction to all the horrors exhibited regarding this building. In the hall of the Hungarian Nazis (Arrow Cross Party) we were trying to reproduce the total, surreal chaos and horror which was signified by the terror of the Arrow Cross Party hitmen within the country.

The following room is the Gulag and Soviet forced-labour camps hall, which commemorates the Hungarians, both civilians and political prisoners, who were taken to Soviet forced-labour camps. The spaciousness of the room, the map which covers the floor, the reminiscences, the wood panelling on the wall clearly present the hopeless fate of 700 000 Hungarians who were living in barracks and imprisoned in the endless land of the Soviet Union.



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The following smaller exhibition hall presents the local changes taking place in the meantime: the room of Changing Clothes.

After the war was over, in contrast to the initial hopes, neither democracy nor market economy was established but a new totalitarian dictatorship and an economic system opposing common sense was created in Hungary. The installation rotating in the middle of the room with the Arrow Cross and Communist secret police uniforms stands for the change of dictatorships and their common core, seemingly opposing each other but in fact they are the two sides of the same coin.

Then the visitor may enter the everyday life of the fully developed communist dictatorship in the hall of the Fifties. In the first half of the room there are polling booths reminding us to the one-party ‘socialist democracy’; having seen the setting evoking official optimism and high spirits, we may also see what was going on behind the scenes: the arrangement of the second part of the room represents total control over society.

Then the hall of Soviet Advisors follows: as we alluded to the presence of the foreign ‘Big Brother’ in the room of the Arrow Cross Party, here we may have an insight into the world of those organisations which supervised the sovietisation of Hungary.

In the last exhibition hall a highly important theme is introduced, the long concealed topic of Hungarian resistance against communism. Visitors may have a seat in the projection room and watch full length contemporary propaganda films.

The exhibition on the first floor opens with the room of resettlement and deportation and pictures the era of collective persecution after the second world war.

More than 200 thousand Hungarians of German descent have been struck by the charge of the collective guilt and resettlement, while later the winner, the allegedly “friendly” Czechoslovakia forced nearly 100 thousand Hungarians to leave their homeland. As the visitors proceed they get to the interrogation chamber, which was commonly referred to as the gym by the henchmen of the era; this room remains a memento despite the multiple reconstructions of the building.

The room of compulsory deliveries, a labyrinth decorated with lard blocks, reminds us to the terror against the peasantry and to the smallholder, the kulak, the cottar, the labourer, who were often deprived of their last crops by the communist authorities. The exhibition leads us through the ÁVO portrait gallery/ (Anteroom of the Hungarian Political Police) to the room of the dreaded leader of the State Protection Authority, Gábor Péter, where the desk and the bunk facing it symbolize the practice of the dictatorship of the proletariat: the revolution devouring its own children.

The brutality of show trials, which were conducted on political order and were directly controlled by the party, is revealed to us by the files and documents of the Justice room and the scenes of the Imre Nagy trial shown in the centre. It is followed by the Propaganda and the Everyday life rooms, where the photographs and posters acquaint us with the absurdities of



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“socialism with a human face” and finally, through the room of aluminium, nicknamed the “Hungarian silver”, we reach the room of Churches and cardinal Mindszenty.

The cross in the room of Churches sunk into the floor with a loudspeaker blaring hate speech above, Mindszenty’s cape and the relics of religious orders which have been trampled upon symbolize the war of materialism with religion, inhumanity with humanity.

The ground-floor rooms, the staircase and the inner yard do not strictly belong to the exhibition space but is an integral part of the concept of the House of Terror Museum.

The two marble memorial slabs at the steps in the entrance hall and the short documentary played in the lobby, the interior of the café, the documentaries shown on the screens on the wall and the tank in the yard all warn us about one thing: this block of flats is not a usual one, similarly to this dark period of history which is presented in relation to the history of this block. The set of statues in the stairway allude to the contorted and bitter tragicomedy of dictatorships, to illustrate how lame and ridiculous their effort was to force their own way on the order of creation.

The cellar of No. 60 Andrassy Road became notorious during the months of the Arrow Cross regime. Arrow Cross thugs hauled the people, whom they had rounded up, to the cellar of their headquarters, where they were brutally beaten up. They kept their victims for shorter or longer periods in the former coal cellars, where many of them lost their lives.

The cells of the basement reveal a shocking, fatal human reality to our visitors. A lift moving slowly takes us into hell on earth leaving us the time for experiencing and perceiving. While descending an indifferent person reveals the method of the execution in a neutral tone in its own horrifying simplicity in a short documentary. Time ceases to exist and all that remains is the dark space. Upon getting to the basement people are rendered speechless; it is hard to say or ask anything, to illuminate with human speech.

Half of the basement is reconstruction, showing the original state from the middle of the past century encompassing the essence of the forties and fifties: fear, terror, damp darkness, inferno. The different cells leave no doubt about the creativity of the evil in humanity.

Wet cell: being in cold water up to your knees for day;

Fox-hole: the complete darkness in a room only a metre low ceiling...

Detention-cell: the insanity of confinement, in a pit with a half a metre of floor-space... a torture chamber which reminds us to the utter cynicism of authority.

We are not in a distant military prison, not deep down in a dungeon, but on the avenue of the civil world, just a half a metre from the pavement, from the everyday life.

The other half of the basement is the continuation of the exhibition: Internment, 1956, Retaliation, Emigration, each room following a chronological order.



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We leave behind the past revealed to us with the Hall of Tears (including the list of casualties) the Perpetrators' Wall, which is the list of people who took active part in maintaining the totalitarian regimes.

The full historical framework is concluded with the memorial of the Soviet troops leaving Hungary; our journey through the exhibition in a broad sense covers starts from foreign occupation to its end.

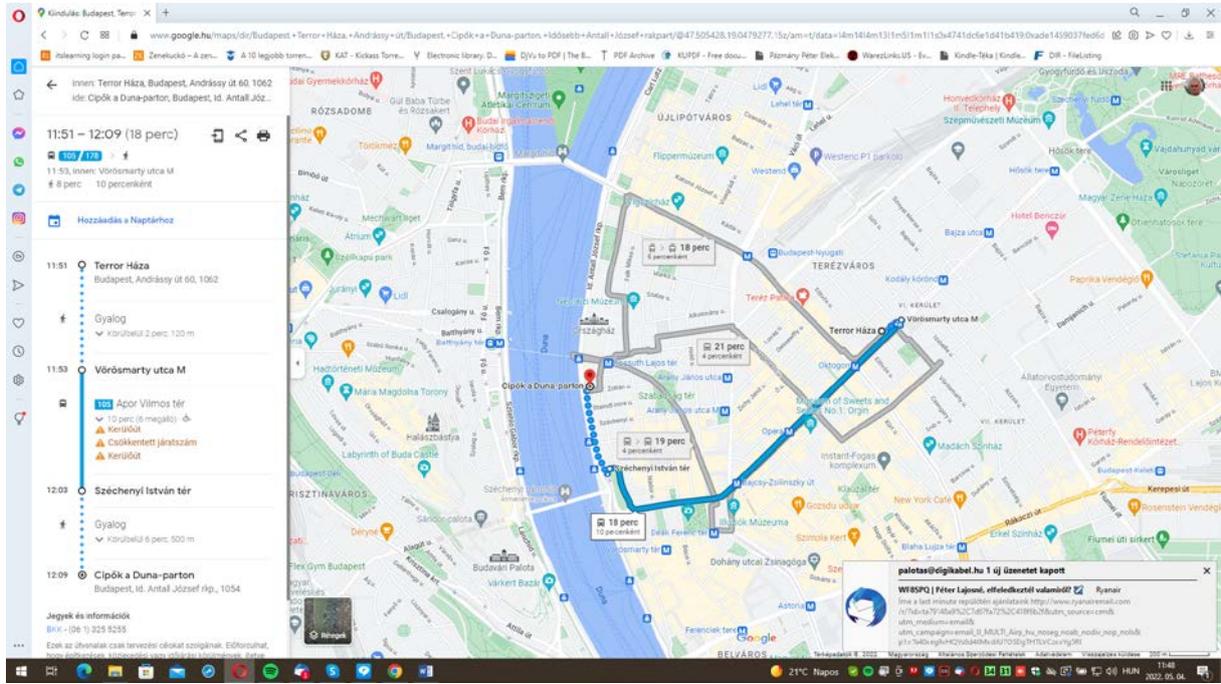


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18:00 – Shoes on the Danube embankment

https://www.budapest.com/city_guide/sights/monuments_of_art/shoes_on_the_danube_embankment.en.html



This world-famous composition, which comprises 60 pairs of metal shoes set in concrete on the Danube embankment, was set up in the year 2005. It commemorates the Hungarian Jewish victims of the killings committed by the Arrow Cross militiamen, the pro-German, anti-Semitic, national socialist party members of Hungary in 1944-1945. The killings usually took place en masse - the victims were lined up at the embankment, and shot into the Danube, execution-style. At three separate places of the memorial, cast iron signs read in Hungarian, English and Hebrew: „To the memory of victims shot into the Danube by Arrow Cross militiamen in 1944-45”. This is a very simple but very moving memorial.

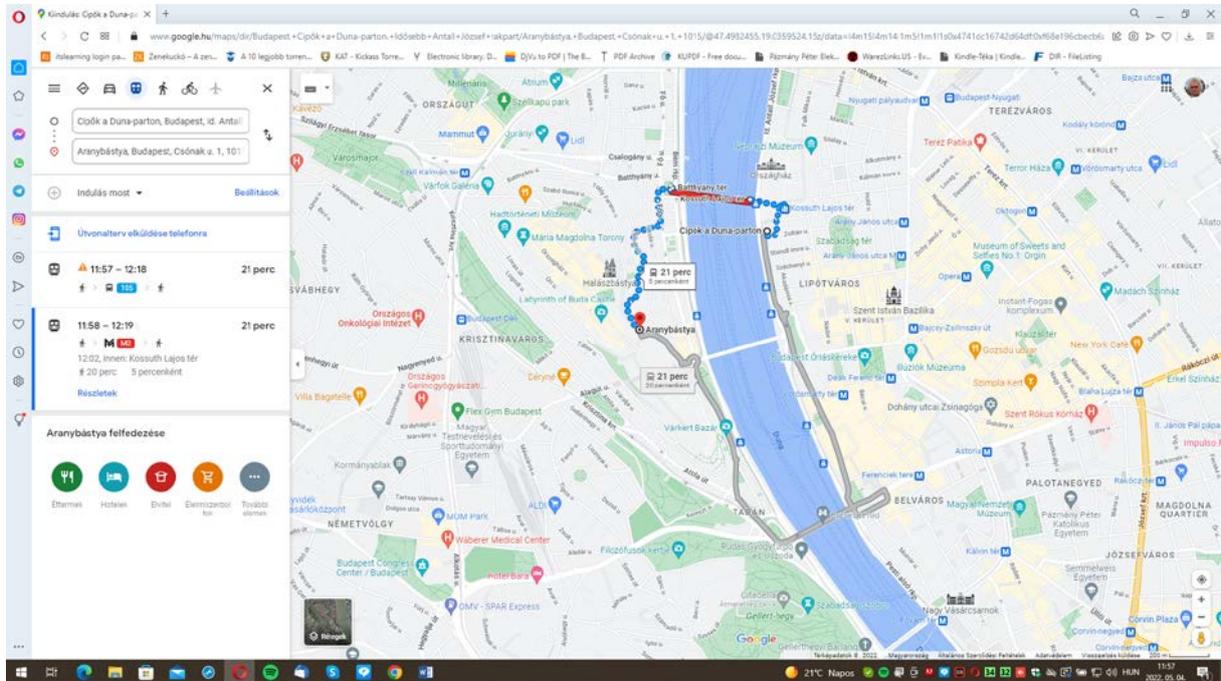


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19:00 – Dinner (Aranybástya Restaurant)

<https://aranybastya.com/en/menu-goldenbastion/>



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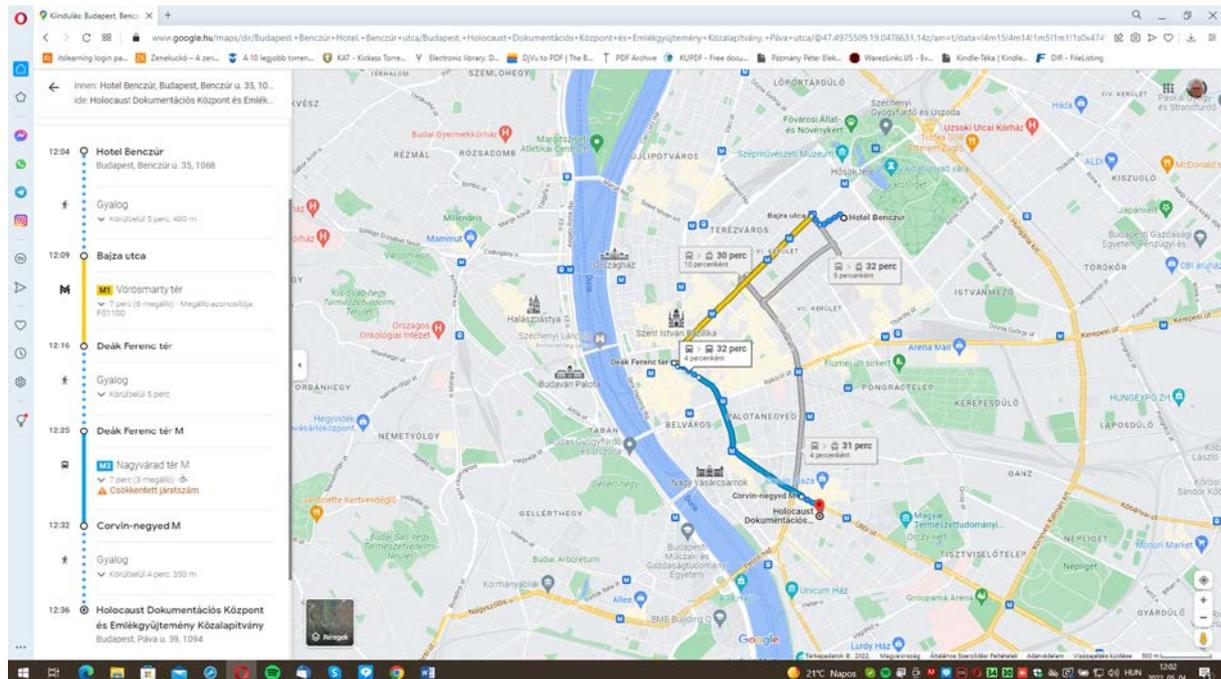
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12th May, 2022

Meeting point: Reception of the Hotel Benczur
Time: 09:00

10:00 – Holocaust Memorial Center

<https://hdke.hu/en/about-us/building/exhibition-hall/>



The permanent exhibition of the Holocaust Memorial Center, “From Deprivation of Rights to Genocide” is displayed on some 1500 sq. meters in the exhibition halls situated in the basement of the building.

For the periodic exhibitions the space of the refurbished synagogue, particularly its gallery is used.

Architect István Mányi placed the exhibition on the Holocaust Hungary in underground rooms, signaling that the displayed history represent a dark chapter of the human morality and ethics. The interior architectural elements (the sloped floor, division of space by columns) reemphasize this message, guiding the visitor into the developments, hinting that the events, once put on a historical slope led to the nadir, the genocide.

“The design of the permanent exhibition was not our task, but we have created its mental and physical frame, because without it, the whole building can’t be interpreted.

We have imagined the topic, where in a space defined by slopes, tilted columns and twisted ceilings, the story starts from the first Jewish Act, the numerous clauses, and through concentrations and deportations, it narrows to the Holocaust itself.



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From this spot, through the ascending stairs, one can already spot the reconstructed Torah ark. Walking upstairs, the space opens, the space of the reconstructed church, the space of remembrance, of respite. Catharsis.”

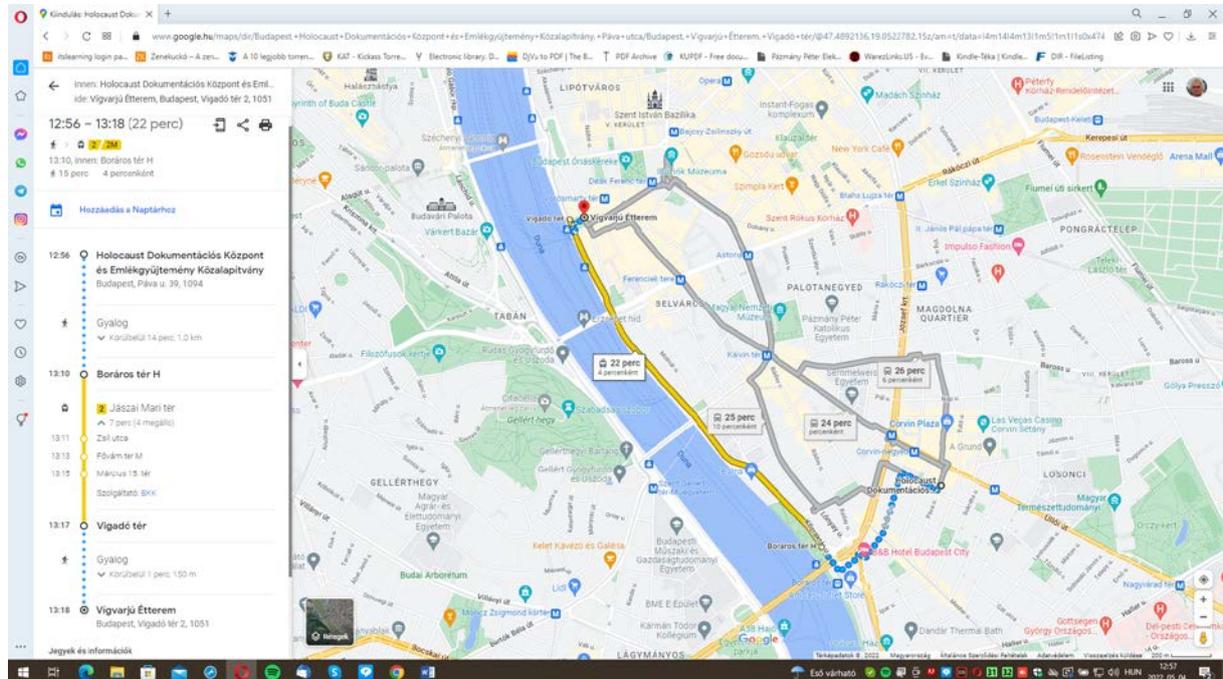


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13:00 – Lunch (Víg Varjú Restaurant)

<https://vigvarju.vakvarju.com/menu/?lang=en>



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Travel from Budapest Airport to the City Centre

By public transport:

https://www.bud.hu/en/passengers/transport/public_transportation/budapest_public_transportation

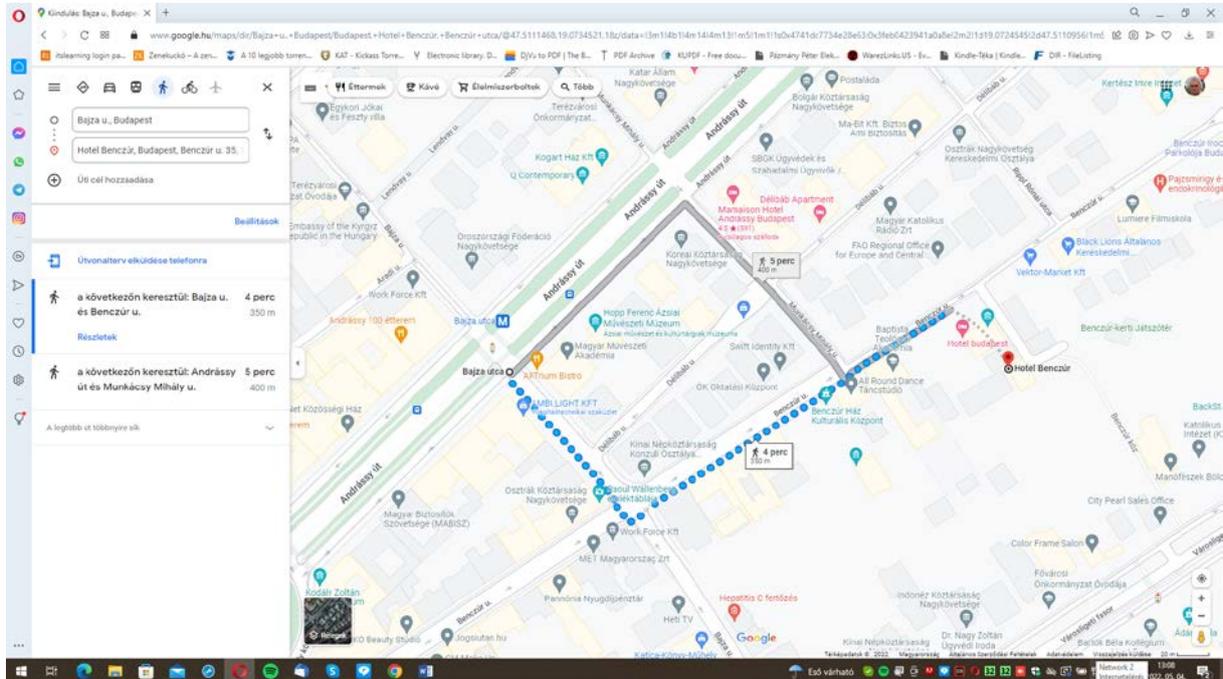


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Benczur Hotel:

- Metro Line 1 (M1, yellow): Bajza street Metro Station (Bajza utca),
- 350 m on foot (6 minutes)



We will travel by metro or tram during our programme. So please buy **72-hour Budapest-travelcard** before starting the official programme (before 09:00 on 11th May, 2022):

<https://bkk.hu/en/tickets-and-passes/prices/travelcards-valid-for-one-or-more-days/72-hour-budapest-travelcard.33/>

My telephone number: +36 30 680 8275

