

Lifestyle



Tourists and guests swim in the hot water of a Cave Spa in Miskolc, an unique labyrinthine cave complex located 185 kms far from Budapest, Hungary.



General overview of the lake of Heviz, the world's largest biologically active natural thermal lake.



*Cold shower for  
Hungary's famed hot baths*

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A child swims in the lake of Heviz, the world's largest biologically active natural thermal lake.



General overview of the Szechenyi Spa in Budapest, Hungary.



Tourists and guests swim in the water of the Gellert Spa.



A child swims in the lake of Heviz, the world's largest biologically active natural thermal lake in Heviz, Hungary.



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Hungary's grand thermal baths are struggling to stay afloat, buffeted by rocketing energy bills. For many tourists a highlight of a trip to Budapest is a relaxing soak at one of its many ornate bathhouses. The capital boasts an array of spectacular venues, from neo-baroque pools where bathers can play chess to sumptuous art nouveau confections and exotic Ottoman-era hammams. But running the energy-guzzling baths "costs 170 percent more than last year," said Edit Reffy of Budapest Spas, which operates the city's bathhouses.

While much of the water is naturally hot, the large historic buildings cost a fortune to run and heat. "It's a daunt-

ing challenge," she told AFP, saying they have had to up ticket prices, reduce opening hours and cover outdoor pools. Prices at historic Budapest baths like the Gellert have been hiked "by more than 30 percent," said Reffy, including at the Szechenyi Spa, famed for its wild parties or "sparties".

**Cave baths**

Cheaper and less well known countryside bathhouses have been hard hit by the energy crisis, with several closing. "Spas carry heavy burdens... A quarter of all bathhouses nationwide are restricting their opening hours," according to Zoltan Kantas, head of the Hungarian Baths Association. Hungary

has more than 1,300 sources of thermal water including the unique labyrinthine cave complex in Miskolc in the northeast.

The world's largest biologically active natural thermal lake is at Heviz in the southwest. Its geothermally-heated water stays above 22 degrees Celsius (71.6 degrees Fahrenheit) in winter and can reach 38 degrees Celsius in summer. Hungary's thermal bath culture was first developed 2,000 years ago by the Romans and continued under the Ottomans in the 16th century.—AFP



Tourists and guests swim in the lake of Heviz, the world's largest biologically active natural thermal lake.



for offenses including credit card fraud and forgery, the statement said.

The sheriff's office would not reveal exactly how the men exploited the flaw in the prison's construction. "Due to the fact that this weakness presents itself throughout the facility, and until all weaknesses are identified and secured, we will not discuss the situation further for security reasons," the statement said.—AFP

This image released by the Newport News Sheriff's Office, shows a captured poster with escaped inmates John Garza and Arley Nemo. — AFP photos

**US prisoners use toothbrush to dig hole, go for pancakes**

It was almost a clean getaway: two American inmates dug their way out of prison with the help of a toothbrush—only to be arrested hours later at a pancake restaurant. The two men, identified as John Garza, 37, and Arley Nemo, 43, were reported missing from the Newport

News Jail Annex Monday evening in the state of Virginia.

They used makeshift tools made from a toothbrush and a metal object to take advantage of what the sheriff's office called a construction flaw in a wall of the prison to gain access to unsecured reinforcement bars used in construction. Using the reinforcement bar, they punched a hole through that wall and scaled another to make their escape.

But their taste of freedom was brief, as they were arrested in the wee hours of Tuesday at a branch of a pancake restaurant chain called IHOP in the nearby town of Hampton. The sheriff's statement did not say if the men were inside or outside the restaurant when they were caught. "I'm thankful for the citizens who observed Garza and Nemo at

the IHOP and notified law enforcement. It reinforces what we always say, 'see something, say something,' Sheriff Gabe Morgan said. Garza was in custody on charges including contempt of court and probation violations, while Nemo was in



This image released by the Newport News Sheriff's Office, shows the hole made by inmates John Garza and Arley Nemo to escape from jail.