

Review: The First Tournament in Budapest

THE JOURNEY (Feb 24)

I boarded the 10:49am train from Stirling to Glasgow Central station, walked to Glasgow Queen and took a train to Paisley Gilmour. After a bus, I arrived at Glasgow Airport a little early...so, I checked in and waited four hours for the Easyjet flight to London Luton. In London, I discovered they had rejected payment for the flight, so I spent the next hour convincing them to let me go! The Wizzair flight left at 8pm and arrived late, just after midnight, at Budapest Ferihegy. Nagy Gergely had waited for me, so we missed the last airport bus. Since my Hungarian needs polishing, I followed Gergely as he took a taxi, then we ran to catch the last bus into town. We talked about mouses and his difficulties arranging the tournament. After a walk, we reached his place at 1:30am, and talked for another hour before bed.

THE DAY BEFORE

We got up at 9, and Gergely refused to let me eat my food! Instead, he made jasmine tea and we emptied his fridge. Then, I made him teach me how to say the names of the bridges in Budapest for the next half hour! Since I had changed only half my money into forints, we visited the bank. Unfortunately, we had to visit 13 of them...It took four hours to find a place that accepted Scottish GBP. Luckily, Gergely is good company...

After lunch near Parliament, we walked back to Szabadság bridge, took a tram down Bartok Bela street and booked into the Griff Junior hostel. That done, he dropped me off at the Hungarian National Museum and went home to arrange the tournament. Afterwards, I went back as well and he taught me to play Nonosweeper...then we took the train at Kalvin square and the bus to meet Roman Gammel at the airport at 9pm. We talked in a cafe before heading back...Gergely went home and Roman and I went to the hostel. Talked until 2am...Roman had travelled since 4am Budapest time, so was exhausted.

THE TOURNAMENT (Feb 26, 2005)

Roman and I got up and took the tram to Moricz square for breakfast. Then we visited the cave chapel and climbed Gellért hill, walked around the citadel and toured the WWII bunker. The bunker museum was interesting...the Germans and Soviets fought over Budapest for 102 days, second only to the fighting at Stalingrad. Then we visited the monument of St. Gellért, crossed the Szechenyi bridge and found hundreds of farmers protesting against EU policy in front of the Parliament. An old lady who didn't like Soviets or Americans (!) followed us around Szabadság (Freedom) square, and we ate at the Burger King near Gergely's place.

At 1pm we met Christoph Marx, and one of Gergely's friends took us to the tournament. That's when we discovered Oli Scheer and Robert Benditz had missed their flight, and Martin Toft Madsen not arrived. Kricsfalusy István arrived, so we all introduced ourselves. However, none of us foreigners knew which Hungarian was Pap Gyula: we didn't find out then because the tournament started.

The players were arranged at about 25 computers, and all the top players were separated....Gergely put me in the back corner! We were given time to set up our mouses, then the tournament started at about 2:30. Rodrigo's clone was used to keep track of scoring. Two people walked around and wrote down our history files as we played for the next 3 hours. Then we were all taken out of the room as the judges reviewed scores.

That is when Gyula introduced himself...I overheard several Hungarian players saying that Gyula had made a lot of good scores, and they were quite excited. Roman had difficulty with his mouse setting and wasn't too pleased with the results. Players were ranked for their best 5 expert and best 5 intermediate games: Gyula came 2nd, Roman 3rd, Christoph 4th, Istvan 5th, Gergely 6th, followed by 18 more Hungarian sweepers.

After pictures, Gergely went home to write the results in the guestbook, while Roman, Gyula and wife Olga, Christoph and I went for dinner. We talked for several hours...it turns out I was the dumbest person! Roman and Gyula have math degrees, both Gyula and Christoph are studying combinatorics at university, Olga has a degree and, like Roman, works in insurance! (Istvan is a computer programmer, and Gergely studies Economics).

Then Gergely, István and another Olga (the 2nd best female player) picked us up and we all went to a tea house, played pool and talked. Afterwards, Christoph came back with Roman and I, so we talked into the night. Gergely came to visit as well. We talked about the tournament, JK Rowling getting a sub-100, a mysterious Ukranian who had cloned Rodrigo's clone, and a lot of strange topics...



Olga, Gyula, Gergely at the tea house.

THE DAY AFTER

Christoph left early, then Roman and I went out for breakfast. We caught a tram towards the castle, climbed the hill and spent several hours in the National Gallery. Then we walked around the castle district and visited the Fisherman's Bastion and Szent Matyas church. The inside was beautiful...there is nothing like that in North America...to Roman, of course, it was just average. We climbed down Buda hill and walked along the Danube until Margit bridge and ate at a pizzeria. It took a while to find Gül Baba's tomb amongst some really winding streets, then went to the Aquincum (the remains of a Roman amphitheatre). Later, we visited the Szent István Basilica. Roman finally admitted that this place was almost as nice as the cathedral in Moscow...high compliments from him! We spent the rest of the evening running around in the dark, trying to get photos of the Castle.



Fisherman's Bastion



Szent Matyas Templom



Szabadság (Freedom) Square

LAST DAY

Roman left early, and I met Gyula downtown at 10. He spent the next few hours showing me Parliament, Andrassy Avenue, Hosök (Heroes) square, the Széchenyi baths, City park, the State Opera House...all with running commentary! Gyula is very enthusiastic about history...and math. He took me out for lunch and showed me some of his maths papers, and we talked about the NP problem in minesweeper and the history of Magyar mathematicians.

Afterwards, I went back to Andrassy and tried to find the Liszt Ferenc Museum...it was a music school, and I couldn't find the museum section! Then, I crossed the Danube back into Buda to find the Bartók Béla museum. I got off at the wrong stop and ended running up Buda hill for an hour, trying to get into the castle district. (You can get through the walls in only some places). No one knew where it was and, when I found the place, it was closed for repairs!

I spent the rest of the night walking around Pest, trying to put everything into memory.



Hosök (Heroes) Square



Szent Gellért Square



Parliament



Skating in City Park



A view of Buda Castle and district from Erzsébet bridge