



Csárdák útja

On the Route of the Csárda Inns of Hortobágy



The projects of the Hortobágy National Park were supported by the European Union.

Origin of the inns

The first inns were built along busy carriageways between provincial towns and villages at the end of the 17th century, after the Ottoman-Turks were driven out of Hungary and public safety was increased. Inns were important sites for travellers, whether they took to the road on foot, on horseback, in carriages or coaches and they also had an important role in the recovery of transport and trade. Travellers and livestock drovers had a rest and fed and watered their animals at the inns, which were built at distances which could be conveniently covered by the different means of transport at that time. The inns were of great importance also for the shepherds grazing their animals in the neighbourhood and for the people living in the neighbouring farms and villages. Innkeepers, who leased the site from the municipalities for an annual fee, initially dealt primarily with selling drinks. Later on, they started offering food and accommodation as well. In the middle of the 19th century there were forty inns operating in the area. However, as transport slowly shifted to the railway lines and roads with a solid pavement, the era of inns was over.



Hortobágy Inn

The Hortobágy Inn, built along the „salt road” on the river Hortobágy next to the tax collector’s office / post office in 1699, was rebuilt and extended several times and received its current form at the beginning of the 19th century. The life of the inn was closely linked to the adjacent bridge and cart shed, which was a typical feature of the inns situated along major roads and river crossings. The famous Nine-Arch-Bridge was built of tuff stone and ashlar from the neighbouring hills between 1827 and 1833. Bridge fairs have always been important events in the life of the Puszta and the inn played an important role therein: whenever a good bargain was made, the contracting partners normally celebrated this by having a drink here. In the course of the history many famous people, notabilities, artists, scholars have visited the famous Hortobágy Inn. Travellers and tourists are heartily welcomed at this three-hundred-year-old inn today too.



Kadarcs Inn

The first inn, which was a very simple one, was built by a decision of the Municipality of Debrecen in 1761. The arcaded, neo-Classical building in its present form was built one year later as a station in the local network of inns. The inn is named after a small river nearby, which, like all rivers on the Puszta, used to flow once here, once there. The Kadarcs Inn was a rare type of inn because it had not only rooms for the guests but a cart shed with two large entrance doors as well. Travellers grazed and drank their animals in the vicinity of the inn. The poor could overnight on the columned porch or in the cart shed.



Meggyes Inn

The Meggyes Inn was built at the bottom of the huge Meggyes burial mound, which also served as the boundary-mark between the settlements Tiszafüred and Kócs. The current building, founded by the Municipality of Tiszafüred, was built from 1760 to 1770 after the previous inn had burned down. In 1902 the inn was bought for two thousand Hungarian Crowns by chief swineherd Janos Czinege, father of the famous chief herder “Count Czinege”. Since the patrolmen of the three neighbouring settlements, Füred, Kócs and Ohat, as a rule, stayed here for the night, this inn was not much frequented by the highwaymen of the Puszta. The operating license was withdrawn in 1952 and the building was converted into a warehouse operated by the Hortobágy State Agricultural Farm. Luckily enough, the inn was renovated in 1975 and was designated to be a museum. The life and the everyday atmosphere of the 19th century Meggyes Inn are very well represented in the layout and in the interior design of this inn museum.



Hortobágy Visitor Centre and Craftsmen's Yard

(Látogatóközpont)

In the Visitor Centre visitors and tourists can get information and advice on what to see and what to do at the Hortobágy and can also learn about the natural and cultural values of the national park: flora and fauna, different natural phenomena, herds-men's traditions, craftsmen's skills, local breeds. Admission is free to the Exhibition of Natural History and to the Craftsmen's Yard, where more than 30 masters can be seen at work.

Shepherds' Museum (Pásztor múzeum)

The formal cart shed, which used to belong to the Hortobágy Great Inn, operates today as the Shepherds' Museum. The building used to be an important shelter for travellers and for the traders of the Bridge Fair to protect their animals, carriages and goods. At the exhibition you can get a great insight into the lives of the shepherds and you can see their handmade clothing, tools and beautifully decorated articles of personal use on display.

Körszín Handicraft Exhibition and souvenir shop

The round-shaped building accommodates a unique exhibition of different types of craftsmen's art typical of this region. You can see true-to-life replica workshops of different craftsmen such as harness maker, potter, shoemaker, blacksmith, wood carver, weaver, felt and sheepskin coat maker, basket maker and bulrush weaver etc. from the turn of the 19th -20th centuries.

Water wells on the Hortobágy

Wells are indispensable sources of life-giving water. The wells on the Great Hungarian Plain, in particular, have always provided fast and secure water supply. With their unique shapes these wells have by now become the symbol of the Puszta. Well diggers used to work in teams. The best time for digging a well was the period between August and October. The wells on the plains were lined with bricks and they consisted typically of a branch, a pole, a whip and a wooden wall. The pole was equipped with a bucket and a counterweight was fixed on the other end of the pole. Depending on the number of the livestock intended to water, wells were equipped with one, two, three or four poles.

There are a number beliefs and superstitions about water wells. Many think that a well is the fountain of life and the symbol of fertility. Others believe that through the opening of the well one gets to the underworld. Popular belief says that if the water in the well becomes cloudy, rain can be expected very soon. In addition, shepherds normally gave signals to each other by putting the pole in different positions, sending herewith messages like "Lunch is ready", "Danger", "Beware, patrolmen are hanging about" etc. – these and similar messages were all communicated to each other in this traditional and easy-to-understand language of the Puszta.

Narrow-gauge railway at the Hortobágy Great Fishponds

The Hortobágy Great Fishponds were established on the territory of a formal wetland area, called "nasty land". The two-thousand-hectare large "Old Ponds", with nearly 300 registered bird species, are the richest bird habitats in the national park. The narrow-gauge railway is very popular with eco-tourists because it is a most convenient way to get to the faraway inner lakes where flocks of birds have their habitats. This is the only narrow-gauge railway in Hungary to run among fishponds. In the fishpond area there is also a nature trail signposted by information boards with useful information for hikers. In the most picturesque places along the trail, special wooden board platforms and lookout towers are installed where visitors can get a marvellous view of the area. The rich avifauna of open water and the reed bed habitats can be thoroughly studied from these lookout towers. You can also watch, among others, water buffalos swimming in the "buffalo pond" or the busy life of sand martins at their nest colonies.

The Hortobágy is the largest stop-over area of the Common Crane migrating across Europe. Every autumn some 70-80,000 migrating cranes fly around the area in large flocks. The Great Fishponds offer them superb places for overnight roost.

Join us on our tour on the Route of the Csárda Inns!

Tourists can refresh themselves and try delicious special local dishes in the Kadarcs and Hortobágy inns. There are several attractions along the thematic road in the Hortobágy National Park. From the East to the West: first the Szálkahalom Nature Trail, Then the Visitor Centre and Craftsmen's Yard, Nine-Arch-Bridge, Shepherds' Museum, Körszín Handicraft Exhibition in the village of Hortobágy all in the vicinity of the Hortobágy Inn. You can choose from a wide range of handmade gifts and souvenirs. After you cross the Nine-Arch-Bridge, you arrive at the Hortobágy Wild Animal Park along the river Hortobágy to the South. It is perhaps here and now that you can feel like calling it your first day on the Hortobágy.

Rooms can be booked in the field study centre "Swallow Nest".

On the next day you can make an exciting trip on the narrow-gauge railway in one of the most important bird habitats in Europe. Heading towards Budapest, you can visit the Meggyes Inn and the Góréz Bird Rescue Centre near the Egyek-Pusztakócs wetlands.

Take a tour along the Route of the Csárda Inns and you'll return home full of energy, with lots of unforgettable experience.

More information:

Hortobágyi Látogatóközpont és Kézművesudvar
Hortobágyi Nemzeti Park

4071 Hortobágy, Petőfi tér 13.
Telefon: 0036-52-589-000

www.csarda.info

e-mail: info@hnp.hu
www.hnp.hu

