

POLITICALTOURS

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Orban's Hungary

Dates: 5 nights

February/ March 2022, Friday 25th February - Wednesday 2nd March

Budapest, Szeged

Led by Nick Thorpe

A new breed of populist politician is emerging across Europe and Hungary's Victor Orban is foremost among them. Once a liberal opponent of communism, he is now at the vanguard of an anti-immigrant nationalist movement that seems unlikely to disappear anytime soon.

Our five day tour takes us south to the recently constructed fence with Serbia designed to keep out the waves of immigrants that once crossed Hungary's borders. We meet the large numbers of supporters in the towns and countryside swept up by Orban's brand of nationalism. His party, Fidesz is accused of riding roughshod over basic democratic rights – but appears unchallenged at the polls.

Abroad Orban envisages a shake up of the EU with less power in Brussels. There is room too, he says, for an illiberal state on the continent. Brussels in turn has sought to sanction Hungary for its breach of its values. It is far from clear who will prevail.

For an insight into some of the most critical issues dividing Europe at the moment, it is a tour not to be missed. The tour expert is veteran BBC correspondent, **Nick Thorpe**, who has lived and worked in Hungary since the mid-1980s.

Price: £3500.00

Single Supplement: £400.00

Like all our tours the itinerary is focused on current affairs. Events on the ground may change and the final schedule may be adjusted accordingly.

Itinerary

Day One:

Meet in **Palazzo Zichy Hotel** in Budapest at 6:30 pm. Introduction by Nick Thorpe, BBC Central Europe Correspondent who will be leading our tour over dinner. Introduction to Orban and Fidesz, and its transformation. *Overnight Budapest – one night*

Day Two and Three:

Depart for **Szeged** and the southern border and the location of the recently constructed fence. Our aim here is to look at the growth of support for Fidesz and how the immigration crisis of 2015 was key to that. Visit to **Rösztke** – one of the main bottlenecks of the 2015 migrant crisis, still home to one of Hungary's 2 Transit Zones, where small numbers of asylum-seekers are allowed into the country, then kept in detention while their applications are assessed. In neighbouring **Asotthalom**, a village of 3,000 inhabitants, we meet a leader who bitterly opposed migrants. He was the first to propose building a border fence. Immigration became an obvious touch-stone for ordinary Hungarians.

Fidesz's support goes wider than that. Orban Fidesz makes sure all EU subsidies are paid on time (he took part in tractor protests under the Socialist government over late and inefficient payments.) We meet the mayor of a village close to the point where the Hungarian, Serbian and Romanian borders meet. He has rebuilt his village economy, including a restaurant, cafe, and solar energy, despite opposing central government.

Meeting with a senior member of Fidesz in the region and discussions over dinner.

In Szeged we stay at the **Tiszavirag Hotel**, the best hotel in the region. *Overnight Szeged – two nights*

Day Four and Five:

Return back to the capital, where we have briefings with a variety of speakers. We will be visiting the parliament as well as meeting with think tanks and diplomats.

Meetings with a series of senior politicians and analysts.

Please contact us for further details.

Overnight Budapest- two nights

Expert

Nick Thorpe is a writer and award-winning BBC journalist, specialising in eastern Europe, born in England in 1960.

He studied Modern Languages at the Universities of Reading (UK), Dakar (Senegal) and Freiburg (Germany), graduating in 1982.

He has lived in Budapest since 1986. He reported on the fall of Communism throughout eastern Europe and the break-up of Yugoslavia for the BBC, Observer, Guardian and Independent newspapers, including the wars in Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia.

He has been Central Europe Correspondent for the BBC since 1996.

With BBC colleagues, he won a Peabody award for his coverage of the Refugee crisis in 2015.

He is the author of 3 books and many essays, including:

The Danube – A Journey Upriver from the Black Sea to the Black Forest (Yale University Press, 2013)

1989 – The Unfinished Revolution – Power and Powerlessness in Eastern Europe (Reportage Press 2009, Endeavour Press 2015).

A Jar of Wild Flowers – essays in honour of John Berger (Zed Books, November 2016)

The Road Before Me Weeps – Refugees on the Route to Europe (Scolar Kiado Budapest, April 2018/ to be published by Yale University Press, April 2019.

He has directed 10 films:

The Fairy Island (documentary, 1993)

Vigilance (feature, 1997)

The Vineleaf and the Rose (documentary, 2001)

The Travels of a Gadjo in Romanistan, seven 52 minute documentaries on Roma communities in 9 European countries (Duna TV, 2015).