

Budapest 2026

Attendees: Jeremy Toone, Michael Green, Peter Owen, Peter Lee, Sir James Fairbrother, David Barrow, David Khan, Roy Davies, Damien McElvenney, Mr Russell Dymond, Lee Childs, Richard Seth and Ian Coleman.

The 2026 41 Club trip started with a very early departure from Manchester Airport and mindful of the recently introduced E-Gate requirements, we met even earlier than normal, to ensure we wouldn't encounter any problems. Notwithstanding, the Chairman, Mr Toone arrived late and received the first fine of the trip. Mr Khan quickly followed and after numerous attempts to scan his boarding pass at the E-gate that was switched off...

The 2nd hurdle featured checks of our baggage where Mr Childs eclectic outfits attracted excessive attention. Meanwhile, Mr Fairbrother was experiencing a new adventure by touring the airport wheelchair kindly pushed by Mr Owen. The temporary loss of two members raised Mr Shorts blood pressure and seemingly losing two of our 13 members meant he only had to manage the remaining 9..... (note to PL $13 - 2 = 11$)

Having cleared the airport formalities our trip began its "Safari" theme as we breakfasted at the Giraffe restaurant....

In comparison to previous trips the flight to Budapest was largely uneventful and even Mr Owen didn't feel comfortable flirting with the overweight, overly gay, flight attendant.

On landing, Jim forgot he needed a wheelchair and duly disembarked by the rear steps. Having been reminded of his requirements – he walked to the front of the plane, climbed the front steps and reminded the hostess of his disability.....

As we approached immigration, we were pensive of the potential duration of passport checks but our fears were unfounded and the highly efficient operation ensured we were processed in record time and moved onto our next adventure – baggage collection. Mr Davies's bag did not join the rest of the ensemble and he dejectedly began the process of reporting its loss. As the rest of us smugly stood by whilst he completed reams of documents – we started to contemplate its impact and in particular – how we would accommodate his lack of medication and underwear..... Thankfully, the conveyor belt started up again and a solitary bag slowly slid into our vision.

Taxis turned up on time and we were quickly driven into the centre of Budapest and the Ibis Centrum Hotel. The bar next door leaped into action and beers started arriving and the sergeant-at-arms pen burst into life. Mr Green was resplendent in a red shirt in contrast to the rest of us in uniform blue and the waiter made the surprising assumption that he was either a Man Utd fan or gay. Mr Childs decided to educate our palates and treat us to some Hungarian Dessert Wine only to discover they had none..... the waiter had slightly misunderstood and brought him a large Hungarian dessert....

After a few beers, gins and the odd glass of white wine – we strolled towards the Danube and found our rendezvous for lunch. Mr Seth was presented with his V-C Jewel which he struggled to put on and we enjoyed lunch and some more beers.

Free time followed and we aimlessly wandered the streets, looked at the river, called into the market and then returned to another bar where one of the barmen filled Mike Green's hooded jacket with beer.

An Irish Bar in close proximity to the hotel proved adequate for the evenings entertainment especially in light of our early morning start. Three members elected for an early night leaving the remaining "X" (where X is somewhere between 7 and 11) to absorb some more beer. Mike Green (still in red shirt) was adopted by a group of Serbian pouffters who were dancing enthusiastically to the music and he was instantly at home in their company. The Liverpool vs Villa game was being televised so it was good to see Scousers being embarrassed on more than one count.

Saturday

An uncharacteristic early rise for most of the trippers and following a leisurely breakfast various wallets were lightened by the fining process.

The safari theme continued as Mr Lee introduced us to a large assembly of Zebras and as we traversed from pavement to pavement in search of the lesser spotted bus stop. We finally managed to find a suitable method of transport and headed off to the Buda Castle District

Our first task was to purchase tickets for the Funicular Railway and having been informed that Credit Card was not an option, we researched an array of alternative payment methods and having eventually found a somewhat complex solution – we paid by credit card....

At the top of the ride it was comparatively easy to find a bar and the usual mixture of beers, gins and the odd glass of wine was completed with a wide diversity of coffee styles. Following a stroll around the Fisherman's Bastion we separated into 2 groups. The first group elected to walk down to the next scheduled event – lunch at Leo's Restaurant – whilst the second group returned to the original bar where we had left Mr Davies and also Mr Dymond's beer. Both were duly finished and we returned to the Funicular to descend to the restaurant.

Following a pleasant and expensive luncheon David Khan demonstrated his sleeping techniques and Ian Coleman proved a willing student. A nearby group of young ladies on a "Hen" weekend attracted the attention of Mr Short and Mr Long.

The Blue Mooner's departed to watch the FA Cup Final whilst some returned to the hotel to sleep. Most wished they'd done the latter. But City beat Chelsea 1-0 and ensured good spirits for the rest of the evening.

An Italian restaurant next door to the Irish Bar was the chosen venue and despite a significant shortage of staff – we eventually enjoyed a fine meal and some geography tuition into exactly where Hungary was.

Sunday

After another early morning breakfast and fines session, travellers split into different groups. Some went walking in the rain, some got taxis and some got the trams.

Roy Davies went to a pub bathroom and kindly held the door open for what seemed an elderly gentlemen. He entered into conversation with the chap for a few minutes only to eventually discover he was in fact, stood in front of a mirror.

Despite one of the groups having great difficulty in finding the restaurant, we eventually all found the Cafe Liszt which was a delightful venue. The food and drink costs were somewhat more than anticipated but we enjoyed a fine meal and only had to sell one of the Chairman's kidneys. Whilst some continued in the rooftop Skybar, others strolled home with the now essential refreshment stops.

The undoubted highlight of the tour was the Sunday night. We booked a couple of taxis and headed down to the Danube where we had tickets for a boat trip down the river taking in the magnificent scenery. This was enhanced by complimentary beer and Prosecco and the evening's banter was indicative of the many years pleasure we have enjoyed.

On leaving the boat, some of us strolled for a while before finding a venue open on a Sunday night and still serving drinks, namely the Blue Fox Hotel. Certain members of our group got separated when disembarking the boat but courtesy of WhatsApp, we were able to advise them of our location. However, it seems they were adopted by a group of young ladies who kindly escorted them back to their care homes believing them to be in their late 80s. In fairness, the ladies were extremely kind and likeable and whilst nothing "untowards" was ever occurring – there was some undoubted jealousy by other members of our group and a huge ego boost for those involved.

Elsewhere in the same bar lounge, the conversation took a much more basic tone with discussions sinking to basic human necessities and how they were controlled and maintained. The apparent difference in frequency of performing essential tasks such as "dropping the kids off" and involving the "number 2" was quite unusual – which just went to show that some were more full of it than others. The various techniques for getting ones basic task tested each year was extremely enlightening and a certain ex-accountant definitely got some assistance to balance the books.

Whilst the topic of conversation varied, the established theme continued to return and various appropriate song titles were proposed including:-

The Carpenters – You need to be, colostomy

The Who – I can see for Piles and Piles

Itchycoo Park – The Small Faeces

Bon Jovi – Shit through the heart

It proved a late night for some – but everyone was up for the final breakfast and fines.

Monday

There was a suggestion to visit Hero's Park which was around a 55min walk or a short Tram trip and again there were takers for both. Following another visit to see the Zebras, the tram took us directly to the park which comprised some wonderful buildings and incredible statues. After a stroll around we found a lake and more importantly, a coffee shop.

We continued to stroll around the museum whilst the other walking party caught us up and we then collectively got a bus to the Jewish Quarter and a search for a bar and some food.

On this occasion was had truly Hungarian cuisine at a price much more akin with our normal budget before either walking back to the hotel or getting a taxi. (or in some cases – getting into someone else's taxi).

After a final farewell beer in the hotel next door – we collected our bags and headed for the airport. Again being careful to allow sufficient time we still had several hours to kill before finally boarding and having an uneventful flight home.

Arriving in Manchester – it was late and the group had got separated so it proved a little lacklustre farewell – but nonetheless – it had been yet another extremely enjoyable 41 Club Trip. Thanks must go to Messrs Owen and Lee for the organisation of flights, hotels, restaurants and things to do – it involves a huge amount of time and effort and can be extremely stressful. So on behalf of the whole group – thank you Peter and Peter.

We should also make great thanks to Mike Green who spend some significant time ensuring that our expenditure was correct and reasonably distributed.

Budapest is a surprisingly beautiful city. Its architecture is simply breathtaking and there are so many wonderful sites embraced by the Danube River. It is also spotlessly clean with no noticeable litter. Transport was easy and mostly free – especially for those over 65. Food and drink was definitely affordable for most of the time. Our hotel was in a great location and all of the people we dealt with were welcoming and generally spoke very good English.

Added to that the usual camaraderie we share in our wonderful organisation it was yet another fantastic weekend.