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WELCOME TO THE LAND OF EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL BEINGS

The Nobel Prize winning Italian physicist, Enrico Fermi, was once asked - do extra-terrestrial beings exist? -. Fermi, without hesitation answered - "Yes! They are already here among us, they are called Hungarians..."

Probably most of you have heard about our famous ambassadors who can be found in every corner of the world, from the Hollywood crowd - including Casablanca's Mihály Kertész alias Michael Curtis - through influential musicians like Béla Bartók to Nobel Prize winning scientists like John von Neumann.

Hungary's exquisite foods, wines, architecture, beautiful capital, Budapest as well as our often scenic countryside are also well respected around the world.

But could everyone confidently point to Hungary on a map...?

Don't worry if you are a bit hesitant - we have grappled with the burning question of where we are and who we are for nearly a thousand years: should we consider ourselves orientals or occidentals? According to an old saying, Hungary is located in the "navel of Europe", that is, right in the middle between East and West. Our wise men have written libraries about this dilemma and there has been ample time to look at the question from every angle since King Stephen I established Christianity in the country around the year 1000. While eastern elements are still present, and a certain orientalism lends a special flavour to Hungarian art, poetry and folk music, Hungarians also like to see their country as part of Western Europe.

Another heated debate concerns the nation's aims. Should we still be proud of our horsemen, the descendants of the tribe who came into the Carpathian Basin around 896 with Chieftain Árpád, or rather boast about the developments and enormous changes that have taken place since we got rid of the burdens of communism a decade before the millennium.....?

What Hungarians really like is recognition of their science and art. If you want to please a Hungarian, mention casually that you find it wonderful how a relatively small nation gave the world fourteen Nobel prize winners (twelve in scientific fields) and culture through numerous great musicians like Franz Liszt and Zoltán Kodály.

We are proud and passionate; we are sentimental, warm-hearted and willing to make an effort even in the bleakest situation. And most of all, we are eager to see the world become curious about us and our country.



"János Bolyai sculpture by István Kiss"

"To propagate our heritage, in 1998 "The Bolyai Award Foundation" was founded by a number of successful, Hungarian entrepreneurs. Every 2 years the foundation awards a Hungarian scholar who, through research, achieves results that are acknowledged internationally and gives rise to world-wide economic and social benefits

(<http://www.mta.hu/english/aktualis/szemelyi/p01.htm>) The Award was named after an exceptional Hungarian scholar and personality János Bolyai (1802-1860). Bolyai's work in absolute and hyperbolic geometry helped Einstein explain the general theory of relativity. Bolyai was also an accomplished violinist and the best swordsman and dancer in the Austro-Hungarian Imperial Army.

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