

Michael Jackson
earns more in death

B5 | Indonesian pop star
in trouble over sex tape

B6

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**MORE THAN
BARGAINED FOR.**
The author traveled
8000 miles to see
this painting, and was
not disappointed. It's
okay, you can look a
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(ALMOST) BUSTED IN BUDAPEST

Plantation Bay Resort and Spa's **Manny Gonzalez** gives us a few laughs as he recounts in this travelogue his unusual adventures and quirky insights while visiting "The Queen of the Danube".

When I arrived in Budapest, it was cold, bitter cold. Hurricane-force winds were blowing. Tourists by the dozens were getting blown off the Chain Bridge into the frigid Danube river below. Day and night, police helicopters hovered over the water, trying to pick up survivors.

Well, not really. I just made that up. But as I crossed the bridge with the wind howling, visions like that did flash through my mind.

I had started out with two reasons for wanting to see Budapest. One was a particular painting. Another was a cave. As far as reasons to visit cities go, I guess you could say I'm easy.



AS BLUE AS IT GETS. The Danube river flows right through the city, separating the Buda and the Pest sides. You may have heard of Strauss's waltz "The Blue Danube". Well, this is as blue as it gets.

continued from B1

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Anyway, the labyrinth seemed well-lit enough and from the map at the entrance it looked like there was an exit at the other end, so I dove straight in without much thought. But about 10 minutes later, deep inside the caverns, my thought processes suddenly came to life.

The ceilings had gotten a lot lower. The lights were dimmer, so dim that I could barely see my hand. At that point I also remembered that I am claustrophobic. And afraid of the dark.

You will no doubt be glad to learn that, guided only by my unerring sense of direction, I made it out eventually, though not before sweating bullets. You should go see the Buda caves some day. If you dare.

Woman Bathing. Upon exiting I headed straight for the Hungarian National Gallery of Art to find my painting. (And as you will see, this was not just any painting.) With growing excitement, I paid the admission fee, strode up the marble stairs, and started looking. Finally, there it was.

You might want to refer to the photo right about now. There. Most museums elsewhere in Europe display paintings with Bible stories or Greek mythology as an excuse to show naked women. Here, in the Hungarian National Gallery, hangs this absolute masterpiece by one Karoly Lotz, titled *Woman Bathing*. No hypocrisy, no pretension, just a really hot-looking babe naked. You can look at the picture longer. Don't worry, it's Art. Enjoy.

And that was my visit to Budapest.

No sin tonight. Okay, just kidding. The next item in my Budapest To-Do list was Vaci Utca, the principal shopping and nightclub street. I wanted to go because my guidebook had more or less warned me not to. "When you stroll down Vaci Utca," the book advised, "be wary of attractive women acting friendly with you." The book did not spell out the hideous fates which awaited me at the hands of said "attractive women", so I strolled down this hotbed of potential sin, wanting to find out.

First, I walked down Vaci Utca.

Then I walked up it.

The round trip was about five kilometers and in sub-zero temperatures. I am totally desolated to report that if there were any attractive women there whose mission was to



TOP SECRET. The most beautiful chambermaid in the world works at this hotel. However, to protect her privacy, I cannot reveal its name.



JUST LIKE IN THE MOVIES. The Chain Bridge area is fairly spectacular at night, just like in the movie "I Spy".

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Almost busted. My guidebook, however, redeemed itself the following day. I was minding my own business when a man came up to me claiming to be a lost Greek tourist; then he mumbled something about needing to change money. At that point a second man came out of the shadows flashing a badge, and said "Police! You are under arrest!"

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slightest of peccadilloes. In California, I once turned against a red light, and got busted. Living in England, I once imported a stereo and accidentally forgot its age (0 months) on the Customs declaration, and got busted. In Washington DC, I parked in my own driveway at my own townhouse, blocking a trespassing car owned by a Congressional staffer, and got busted (while the trespasser got off absolutely free; next time you meet Americans who ridicule Filipino corruption, tell them they're no different, except they're willing to be corrupt for smaller stakes, like parking spaces).

Anyway, this very scam had been described by my guidebook. Having intimidated me with a badge, these two would take me to an alley and relieve me of my wallet. But, forewarned, instead of meekly going to said alley, I instead threw up my hands in blind panic and shouted "No!", then turned around and walked away, wondering when the knife would sink into my back. But they must have thought my hand-raising was kung fu, because no knife came.

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Going to the movies. After dinner at Mo, it is but a short walk to the Chain Bridge, which is more or less the tourist center of town, near the end of Vaci Utca on one side, and leading to the funicular up Buda hill on the other. Wait until dark; the city lights on both sides are lovely.

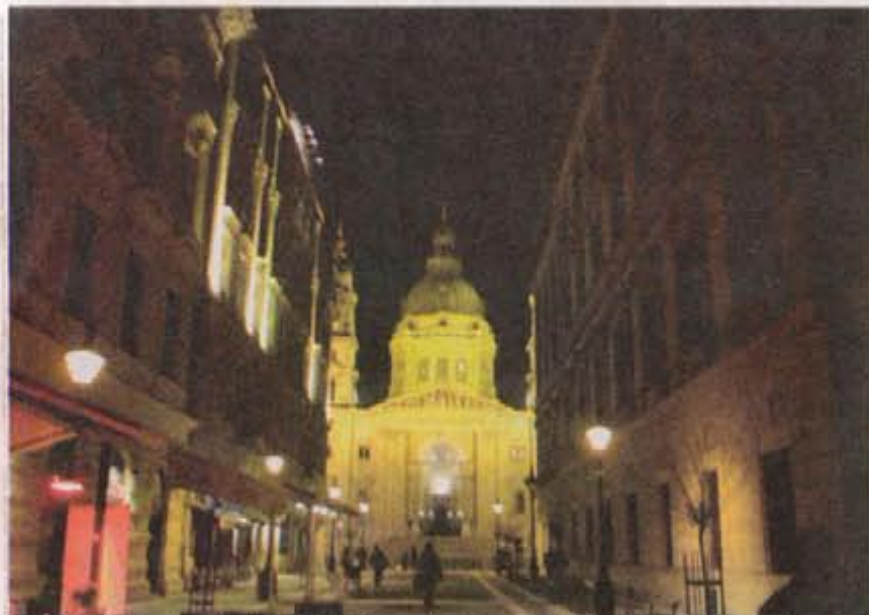
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The most beautiful chambermaid in the world. By the way, guided only by my unerring sense of good taste, I found a great hotel to stay in. Situated near the Pest end of the Chain Bridge, it had a lot of good qualities: a large bathroom, a very comfortable bed, and foie gras on the breakfast menu.

And the most breathtaking chambermaid I have ever seen in my life—slender, with a finely-turned ankle; plump, pink lips; Nordic-blond hair; and a smile that would melt Greenland. Of course, I only admired her chastely, from afar.

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MUST SEE. Among the attractions for Catholics touring Budapest is the Mummified Hand in St. Stephen's Basilica.

(Almost) Busted in Budapest

Travelogue/Humor by Manny Gonzalez, Plantation Bay Resort & Spa

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