



The  **INDEPENDENT**

"Lake Balaton, south-west of Budapest and our next stop. The weather is back on track, and it is clear why this lake – the size of the Isle of Man – has flourished as Hungary's summer playground. We ignore the signs to the popular southern shore resorts, however, and head around the northern shore to the Kali Basin, where an undulating landscape of meadows, vineyards and copses seems to strike a perfect balance between Hungary's northern uplands and eastern plains.

Our base is Sarffy House, in the tiny village of Dorgicse. Here, Tamas Giebiser and Kati Sipeki have converted a 19th-century residence into a collection of B&B apartments. The décor and detail are all you might expect from a designer couple from Budapest. The pair have thrown themselves into rural life, baking rough-hewn bread from a huge clay oven in the garden and serving homemade goats' cheeses for breakfast in the converted barn. Add local artists and musicians who drop by, and the result is a place with a distinctly Tuscan ambience.

For three days, we laze around Sarffy House, exploring the farmland, dozing in a hammock beneath the walnut tree and – when we get our act together – following Tamas's directions to local attractions. Top for us are the discreet beaches and towering monastery of the forested Tihany Peninsula – which juts out into Lake Balaton – and the "sea of stones" in Kali Basin, a perfect rock playground for children."

Mike Unwin ventures beyond Budapest to find quintessential rural Hungary, where nature is tempered by the good things in life

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