

The Worlds of Széchenyi

Monday, 15 November 2010

Are you interested in a man who was loved by the most beautiful women of the century, who was not a scholar yet he founded an academy, who wrote the greatest Hungarian bestseller even though Hungarian wasn't his native language, whose castle boasted the first English toilet in the Carpathian Basin, who established the new Hungarian capital by building Chain Bridge and who, despite being ill, fought successfully for the freedom of his oppressed nation? If so, come and see The Worlds of Széchenyi exhibition at the Hungarian National Museum.

You can get a glimpse at the extraordinary moments of an extraordinary life in the rooms of the museum named after Archduke Joseph, Palatine of Hungary. You can see Szechenyi as a fine hussar captain, having returned from war, enjoying his first days of social success in Vienna. As he made a commitment to serve the nation with his good friend, Miklos Wesselényi. As the thundering run of the horses tore the tape at the first horse race organised by him. When in the eyes of Countess Seilern Cresence he first saw that she loved him back. When the parliament voted for the compulsory payment of toll on the bridge thereby breaking the monopoly of the nobility's tax free status in Hungary. When he held his son, Bela, in his hands for the first time. When the last chain on the bridge had found its place and the magnificent structure arched over the Danube in one swing. When he received news about the succes of his secret flyer, the Blick, which had been smuggled out of his sanatorium. When he could feel that the horizons finally darkened around him....

But life does not end with death. "The one who spend the treasure of his rich life on millions does not die, though his days pass" - as Janos Arany wrote about him. Another fascinating story unfolds from Istvan Szechenyi's posterity. How he was seen, how his words and his silences, his acts and his hesitations, his still standing and his never materialised creations have been interpreted and used by various people. What has been projected onto his figure and fortune by the following five generations of his countrymen over the past one hundred and fifty years of wars and dictatorships.

Lajos Kossuth, his great opponent deciphered the secret of Szechenyi's effect as: 'He, who comes early, stands isolated, and the steps of the one who stands alone will not be followed by irrevocable changes. [ý] He, who comes late, lights up the day and we can be grateful if his actions are merely useless [...] Count Szechenyi was grabbed by the needs of his age at a suitable moment. He became the language of his age; he gave words to the thoughts of the good of the nation. And the secret of his impact lies therein. [ý] Placing his fingers on the pulse of his age, he understood its palpitations. And for this, specifically for this, do I consider him the greatest Hungarian.ý

Prices:

Adults: 1.000 HUF

Reduced (students, seniors): 500 HUF

Family ticket: 1.800 HUF

Student group: 6.000 HUF

Combined ticket for adults (permanent & special exhibitions): 1.400 HUF

Combined reduced (students, seniors; permanent & special exhibitions): 700 HUF

Combined family (permanent & special exhibitions): 2.500 HUF