

A town was founded nine centuries ago on the site of Vác, located at the spot where the Danube leaves behind the Börzsöny and Cserhát Mountains and can be forded at the foot of the hills running down to the river.

After the Magyar Conquest this area was occupied by the tribe of the ruler and later the first king of Hungary, Saint Stephen founded a bishopric here. Hungarian and German settlements sprang up under the protection of the bishop's castle. Their townsfolk built up a dynamic trade and handcrafts centre, while the priest created a centre of learning and the arts with a far-reaching influence.

Vác, with its several fine town-houses, churches and monasteries flourished until the destructive appearance of the Turks. In their wake the liberators in 1686 found a town almost entirely destroyed by sieges and fires, abandoned and sacked. The 18th century was a period of rebirth. The returning townsfolk, the new settlers and the bishops as patrons created a Baroque town from the ruins. From the 1760s on the bishops of Vác were renowned throughout Europe. Vác always influenced by the big centres of learning - Buda, Visegrád, Esztergom and Pest - but it preserved its own individual character.

It also has its own architectural character, shaped by the distinctive blend of small town buildings and imposing Baroque structures, in which the dome of the cathedral and the towers of the monastic churches dominate over the tiny houses of the Tabán and Burgundia districts in the townscape seen from the Danube or where, in Március 15. Square, the simpler houses of the townsfolk stand beside the Town Hall and the Hospital of Mercy and opposite is the old bishop's palace incorporating medieval ruins and later housing the Institute for the Deaf and Dumb.

The pearl of the Main Square is the Dominican Church, of which former crypt functioned as a place of burial between 1731-1801. Later it was bricked up and was forgotten about. The entrance of the crypt was re-found during the renovation work of the church in 1994 and there was a need to empty and re-construct the place of burial. With having special climatic conditions the corpses of the crypt had become mummified in a natural way in their coffins, the clothes, the accessories of burial and the coffins had been preserved in outstanding condition. The finds of significant importance in the history of culture were excavated by a group of experts in museology in 1994-95.

The ecclesiastical centre has an entirely different appearance. The main feature is the cathedral with its elegant facade, the work of Isidore Canevale, the only building in Hungary inspired by Parisian revolutionary architecture. Paintings by F. A. Maulbertsch can be seen inside the church. Other interesting sights are the Holy Trinity column, a masterpiece of high Baroque sculpture, the figures of saints on the bridge over the Gombás Stream in the Southern part of the town, and the triumphal arch erected in 1764 to welcome Empress Maria Theresa. The old and the new harmonize well. The downtown is the centre of the clerical education and commerce. The state education institutes moved to the suburban area of the town in a new and modern education centre. Thanks to its excellent transport links and its hospitable people, as well as to the attraction of its Baroque monuments, Vác is also playing a growing role in tourism.

Synagogue is a special building of the town. The synagogue had been built by the Italian architect Abbis Cacciari in 1864, in romantic style; reconstructed in 2005.

The Red House was built in 1733 in Baroque style and it is recognised as a listed building. Through more than two centuries it was the rural building of the bishopcy. Its striking colour was the result of the bricklayers from Naples working here. Around Rókus Chapel lay the cemetery where the victims of the 1740 plague epidemic were buried. After the epidemic with Mihály Althann's generous sponsorship and public support they built the chapel with a semicircle layout by public subscription in honour of Saint Rókus.