

Vörs Municipality in Somogy County, Marcali District



Official Name (Protected): "Capital of the Little Balaton"

Location

Vörs is situated in the northwestern corner of Somogy County, 12 km from Keszthely, 17 km from Hévíz, and 20 km from Zalakaros, some of the most prominent tourist destinations in the region. The northernmost point of its administrative territory is just 300 meters from the shore of Lake Balaton. The Buffalo Reserve of Kápolnapuszta is 13 km away, the Kányavár Islands (Little Balaton) 20 km, and the Little Balaton Research Center 9 km. From here, tours to Diás Island begin, where visitors can see the memorial house of the famous Hungarian writer István Fekete (1900–1970) and the hut of Uncle Matula, known from his novel *Tüskevár*.

The surroundings of the village offer wonderful opportunities for nature excursions: forests, floodplains, and a rich flora and fauna surround this small community

History of the Municipality

Vörs is a settlement dating back to the Árpád era. The name was first recorded between 1293 and 1364, at that time as the property of the Buzád branch of the Hahót clan. In 1496, the Csányi family held property rights in the area. The name appears as "Wers" in the 1536 tax list. During the Turkish era, Vörs was mentioned as a small settlement with only six houses in 1563, and just four houses in 1573–1574. Later owners included Bernát Csányi (1583), János Csányi (1598–1599), Farkas Bakó (1626–1627), and Miklós Sárkányiné (1660). Around 1703, Vörs came into the possession of Pál Festetics and later other members of the Festetics family. Only eight households were recorded here in 1715. Between 1726 and 1733, the village was owned by Kristóf Festetics, and in 1767 it belonged to Ferenc, Imre, and Györgyné Csányi. By the early 19th century, the principal owners were Count György Festetics and Judit Sallér. At the start of the 20th century, Duke Tasziló Festetics was the largest landowner.

In the 20th century, Vörs belonged to the Marcali district in Somogy County.

Attraction

The cultural center and community hub, located in the heart of the 563-resident village, has served as a cultural meeting point since the 1950s. Originally, servant quarters were located on this site. In 1993, the building was expanded, along with the mayor's office housed in the same building. Previously, the facility included a medical practice, library, and community room (KISZ hall). In the early 2000s, it underwent extensive renovations and is regularly updated through grants.

The building is perfectly suited to community needs, featuring multiple small and large rooms, a well-equipped kitchen, an atmospheric terrace resembling a castle, and a park. Its prime location in the center of the village is close to small shops, the Posta Presszó tavern, the charming "Fröccsterasz", a park, the fire museum, a bus stop, a youth club, the library, and Saint Martin's Church, which annually houses Europe's largest indoor nativity scene.



Youth club



Library



City administration, cultural center with community theater



Fröccs terrace



Tavern „Posta Presszó”



Coop shop



TŰSKEVÁR ABC

Nyitvatartás:

Hétfő:	6:00 - 17:00
Kedd:	6:00 - 17:00
Szerda:	6:00 - 17:00
Csütörtök:	6:00 - 17:00
Péntek:	6:00 - 17:00
Szombat:	7:00 - 17:00
Vasárnap:	7:00 - 11:00



Vörsi Kisbolt and GLS parcel center



General practitioner's office

Saint Martin's Church

The most significant architectural heritage of Vörs is Saint Martin's Church, consecrated around 1720. It was expanded 100 years later and renovated in the late Baroque style.

The church is first mentioned in 1261 in a charter in which King Béla IV granted Elek Wörs's property to Csák Bán after his heirless death. Inhabitants of Vörs settled on the present site of the village in the early 18th century during Pál Festetics's ownership. The Festetics family remained the largest landowner in the region thereafter.

Today a protected monument, the church received its characteristic Baroque tower in 1845 and its current form in 1906. The main altar features a statue of Saint Martin with a book and a white goose. The transept contains a modern stained-glass window depicting the scene from Amiens. Outside the church stands a Trinity statue featuring Saint Dominic, Saint Wendelin, and Saint Martin raising his hand in blessing.

Since 1948, the largest indoor nativity scene in Europe has been erected in the church every first Sunday of Advent. Made of natural materials like moss, lichen, and life-sized figures, it draws tens of thousands of visitors annually.



8711Vörs, Ady Endre u. 6.

Europe's largest indoor nativity scene:



The Vörs nativity scene can look back on a 74-year history dating back to 1948. At the initiative of villagers, the Sacred Heart altar in the church was dismantled and a small nativity scene was built in its place.

Apart from the human and animal figures, the huge nativity scene is made of plaster and exclusively natural materials. The construction takes 8-10 days and is carried out by an eager and well-organized team of villagers. With a completely different design and constant innovations, it welcomes tens of thousands of visitors from home and abroad every year.

Fire Museum



Brandschutz zur Jahrhundertwende

In 1983, the first fire museum in a rural area opened in the renovated fire station of the village of Vörs in Somogy County. A 70-square-meter room houses the permanent exhibition titled "Fire Protection at the Turn of the Century." Much of the exhibited material comes from the collection of the Budapest Museum.

The exhibition covers the period from 1890 to 1910, which was characterized by the diversity of fire brigades: volunteer, professional, factory, railway, industrial, and paid urban fire brigades were active. The volunteer fire brigade of Vörs was founded in 1883. In addition to typical equipment from this era, the museum showcases memorabilia from the organizations, certificates, medals, and the sculpture "The Life-Saving Fireman" by sculptor Ferenc Merkly. The use of a hand-operated fire pump model, known as the "emergency pull," is illustrated by a sculpture created by Margit Szilágyi.

At the center of the room are a hand-operated Geittner and Rausch pump and an advanced Köhler petrol motor pump. In 1989, the museum was expanded to include a storage area displaying equipment from the same period. The depot doors were sourced from the former fire station of Budapest's 9th district. The walls feature images and texts about the exhibited devices, many of which originated from the Budapest Museum's collection.

Among the displayed items are a horse-drawn ladder from the Mátrai factory, a steam pump, a motorized Köhler pump from Szeged, a sinking basin pump and wagon pump from Seltenhofer, a locomotive pump with a forecart, and the so-called "village pump" from Tamóczy.

The Fire Museum is open year-round!

Opening hours:

Monday: CLOSED

Tuesday to Friday: 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Saturday and Sunday: Only by prior appointment!

Contact for appointments: +36 30 722 4082

Admission fee: 500 Ft.

Address: 8711 Vörs, Ady Endre utca 36.

The famous stork Charlie



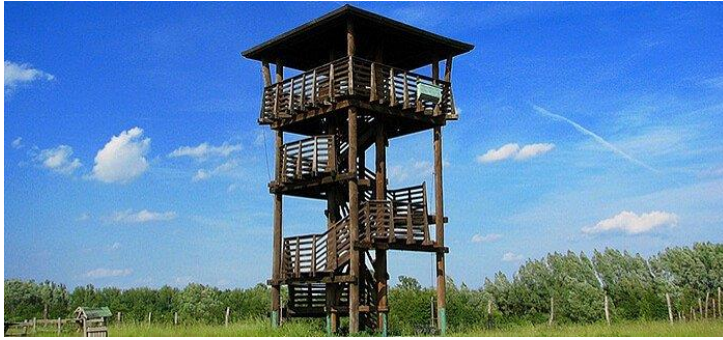
For 13 years, a stork named Charlie, heralding the arrival of spring, arrived in Hungary every year on February 26, bringing warmer weather according to the locals. His nest was on an electric pole near the local Tüskevár-ABC store. In 2011, Charlie arrived a little later, on March 5, and was found dead in a garden a few days later. Charlie was taxidermied and is now displayed in the rear exhibition room of the Fire Museum, allowing him to remain in Vörs forever.

Folk museum of Vörs (smoke kitchen with oven, exhibition on fishermen's lives)



The exhibition at the Folk Museum in Vörs, renewed in 2015, showcases the traditional tools used in the Kis-Balaton region, particularly those related to folk fishing. It also highlights the area's unique architecture and the way of life of fishermen who lived in the marshlands.

Scenic viewpoints in Vörs



The scenic viewpoints of Vörs are located in a beautiful marshland, just 8–10 km from the Lake Balaton cycling path, making them a worthwhile detour during a cycling tour.

Pap-Kerti Viewpoint

From the Pap-Kerti viewpoint, visitors can enjoy breathtaking views of the surrounding reed landscapes. The West Balaton and Kis-Balaton areas are ornithological paradises, especially during the autumn bird migrations. Birdwatching here is an educational and entertaining activity for both avid birdwatchers and families alike.

Fövényi Viewpoint

The Fövényi Viewpoint, located between Balatonszentgyörgy and Vörs, is most easily accessible from Vörs. This modest, single-story viewpoint offers panoramic views of the surrounding marshy landscape.

The scenic viewpoints of Vörs are just 8–10 km from the Lake Balaton cycling path, making them excellent stops during a cycling trip.

Vörsi-Berek Cycling tour (41 km)

Route: Balatonberény, municipal beach – Balatonszentgyörgy – Csillagvár – Hollád – Somogysámson – Sávolly – Vörs – Balatonberény, municipal beach

This mostly flat tour follows the border between Somogy and Zala Counties, through the Marcali plateau. Along the way, you'll see many beautiful, traditional homes and numerous roadside crosses. Starting from the shores of Lake Balaton, you can stop at *Csillagvár* (Star Castle), known for its unique design and interesting programs.

The second part of the route leads through the picturesque landscape between Nagyberek and Kis-Balaton, renowned for its internationally significant birdlife and scenic paths.

Route:

Our cycling tour begins in [Balatonberény](#), in front of the [municipal beach](#) of Lake Balaton. It's worth exploring the small park on the right side next to the cycling path. There you will find the 1956 Memorial, and at the Balaton beach, you can take beautiful photos.



The journey continues on the charming Kossuth Street. Along the way, you'll pass several old, traditional homes. One standout feature on the right side is the heritage museum, known locally as the "House of the Past".



Not only in Balatonberény but also in other villages along the route, you'll encounter many roadside crosses and crucifixes. At the end of the village, near one such cross, the road splits. Take the Mise Street, which branches off to the right, and leave Balatonberény. At this point, you'll already be able to see the church tower of the next village, Balatonszentgyörgy.

Following Mise Street, you'll arrive in [Balatonszentgyörgy](#) and reach the intersection with National Road 76. Take care here and turn right onto Road 76, but only for about 100 meters before turning left onto Csillagvár Street. On the left side, you'll see the village's cultural center, followed by St. George's Parish Church.

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Continue along Csillagvár Street. The street features numerous traditional and valuable homes worth admiring. Notable among them is the Talpasház (a characteristic stilted house) located about 500 meters from the church on the left-hand side of Csillagvár Street. Continuing along this road, you'll reach another cross where the road forks. Take the road on the right. About 800 meters past this fork, a sign indicates the left turn toward [Csillagvár](#), the Star Castle. This distinctive structure in Balatonszentgyörgy is a must-visit! Follow the signs onto the concrete road leading into a beautiful small forest where the castle is located. Take your time to explore the building and its surroundings.

[Csillagvár, Balatonszentgyörgy](#)

History of the Hunting Lodge Csillagvár

At the western end of Lake Balaton, atop a wooded hill overlooking the lake, lies the hunting lodge of the Festetics family. The star-shaped building is unique worldwide. In the central room of the castle, which features a cross-shaped layout, visitors can see a 30-meter-deep well, the captain's room, guard and rest rooms, a soot-blackened kitchen, and other functional spaces. The medieval wax museum housed here authentically depicts a day in the past: a castle captain arguing with a village priest, knights feasting, guards on duty, a blacksmith pulling a tooth, and women busy in the kitchen.

In the lower bastions, shaped like a Greek cross, is a Hussar Museum, another globally unique feature.

Since 2006, the 1.5-hectare fenced area surrounding the castle has hosted an artist's creative camp. Guests can also enjoy a converted restaurant in the former stables. A planned open-air stage will soon host the "Csillagvár Evenings" event series.

The south coast of Lake Balaton formed the frontline of fortifications during the Turkish wars, making the Somogy County region the scene of heroic battles. The castle, located about 40 meters above Lake Balaton, features unique architectural elements: sloping walls, a star-shaped structure, loopholes, lifting mechanisms, remnants of a former tower, and a spiral sandstone staircase connecting the basement to the attic. Numerous legends surround the castle's well, including tales of a bride and groom who jumped in together or bandits hiding in secret caves.

Although the legendary tunnel network has not been proven to exist, archaeological excavations revealed evidence of a timber-and-clay settlement on the site, destroyed during the Turkish invasion of Kanizsa. The history of Csillagvár owes much to the research of Béla Móricz and István László, who was born in the captain's room in the early 20th century.

Founders of the museum: Túri Török Tibor, -Marcell and Koroncz Ilona



Hunting Lodge Csillagvár in Balatonszentgyörgy

From Csillagvár, return to the fork in the road and take the path that previously led you to the castle. After 800 meters, you'll reach Battyánpuszt, part of Balatonszentgyörgy. A sign here points toward Hollád, 4 km away. Take the left turn toward Hollád. After 2.5 km, you'll cross a bridge over the M7 motorway and reach the junction with National Road 7. Enter the roundabout and take the second exit toward Hollád. From here, it's just 500 meters to Rákóczi Street, which leads to the village center. If time allows, you can make a detour to Hollád.



Beautiful crucifix between Battyánpusztá and Hollád

Tip: *he Szent Donát Chapel on Bari Hill, located in a picturesque setting, is worth a visit. However, the trip is recommended only for experienced cyclists and should only be undertaken if sufficient time is available. Several paths lead to the chapel. From the center of Hollád, take the gravel path marked with the symbol Z▲, which begins next to the Roman Catholic church. Pass the cemetery and follow the markings for 1.1 km until the path turns left. Continue following the marking until you reach the chapel, though certain sections may only be accessible on foot.*

Another option is to continue straight on an unmarked path where the Z▲ marking turns left. This section leads through a hollow way, and due to the terrain, it may be necessary to push your bike. Although only 600 meters long, the steep incline makes it challenging. At the end of the incline, you'll reach a crossroads and reconnect with the Z- marking. Turn left here, and after 1.2 km, you'll come to a crossroads where the path veers sharply to the left. From there, it's only a few meters to a signpost marking the way to the chapel. After visiting the chapel, return along the same route to Hollád. On the way back, pay special attention to where you transition from the marked path to the unmarked gravel road!

As the route description indicates, the journey to the chapel from Hollád is somewhat adventurous, so it's only recommended for cyclists with adequate preparation.



There is another, more accessible option to reach the chapel, suitable for both cycling and driving. This route involves traveling a short distance on the main road. Coming from Balatonszentgyörgy, do not take the Hollád exit at the roundabout but the next one toward Balatonkeresztúr. After 3.6 km on National Road 7 and crossing the M7 motorway, turn right onto a gravel path marked with Z- and follow it for 1.9 km to the chapel. A signpost on the right will indicate the way to the chapel. Although this route is cyclist-friendly, extra caution is required on the main road!

If you decide to skip the chapel, continue your journey at the junction of Rákóczi Street toward Hollád. Coming from Balatonszentgyörgy, proceed straight through Hollád without entering the village, and continue toward Somogysámson, slightly over 4 km away. In the village center, pass the Roman Catholic church. A sign on the right indicates the turn toward Sávol, just 2 km away. Follow Zrínyi Street to reach Sávol, entering via Petőfi Street, which leads to the crossroads in front of the Roman Catholic church. Here, turn right onto Rákóczi Street. The road soon takes a sharp left turn, bringing you to the junction with National Road 7. Cross the road carefully and continue along Szabadság Street.



The village hall from Somogysámson

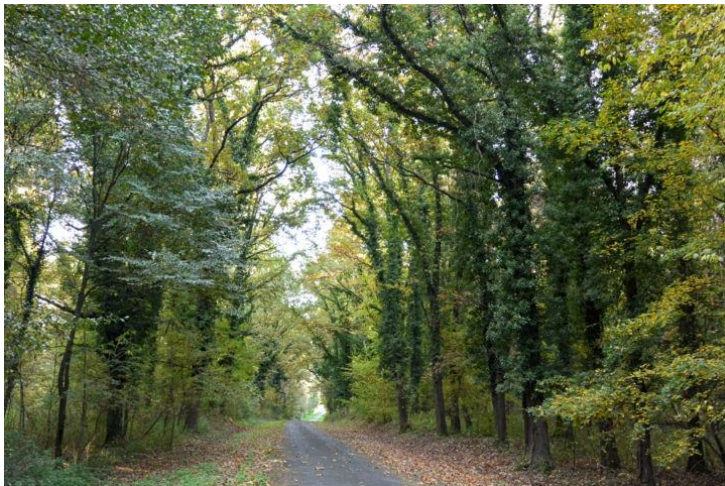
After passing the last houses of the village, cross the M7 motorway. The route then leads through a pleasant, short forest section. After about 1.5 km, you'll reach the railway crossing of the Budapest–Nagykanizsa line. After crossing the tracks, turn right and follow the road to the Sávoly train station. Continue on a field road parallel to the railway line.

This marks the most enjoyable section of the tour. To your left stretches the wild, romantic landscape of Kis-Balaton. The gravel road is easy to ride on and allows for good progress. Along the way, you'll pass a wooden birdwatching tower and soon reach a small wooden bridge over the Marót Valley Canal.

Continue along the field road, which turns sharply to the left after 800 meters. Here, a smaller path branches off to the right, continuing almost straight ahead. Stay on the main road, which turns left.

After another sharp curve, this time to the right, you'll reach a gentler left turn after 700 meters, leading to another wooden bridge. Exercise caution when crossing, as the gaps between the wooden planks could cause narrow bike tires to slip

!





HAfter crossing the bridge, the road turns right and makes one or two smaller curves. After 1 km, you'll reach a junction. To the left, you'll already see a wooden observation tower, accessible via a short detour. The tower offers a fantastic view of the endless reed fields of Kis-Balaton and is well worth a visit.

Returning to the junction, follow the main route of the tour to the right, soon crossing a third wooden bridge. After another 700 meters, you'll reach the railway crossing of the Budapest–Nagykanizsa line again. Upon crossing, you'll see the tower of Saint Martin's Church in Vörs in the distance. Upon arriving in Vörs, the Fire Museum is located on the right side of the road. A small detour further down Dózsa György Street leads to the Vörs Folk Museum, a summer attraction also known as the "Talpas House." Part of the Balaton Uplands National Park, the museum displays traditional tools of the Kis-Balaton region, especially those used in folk fishing, as well as traditional architecture and the life of fishermen who lived in the marshlands.

Vörs



After this detour, return to Ady Endre Street and proceed to the Roman Catholic church. Behind the church, turn left onto Alkotmány Street, then shortly afterward, turn right onto the main road, Kossuth

Lajos Street. This road leads out of the village, and after 1.5 km, you'll reach the road connecting Balatonszentgyörgy with Hollád. Turn left toward Balatonszentgyörgy, which is 1 km away. After passing under the National Road 76 overpass, take an immediate left after the bridge to cross the railway tracks again. Follow Berzsényi Dániel Street to National Road 76 but turn right onto the parallel bike path before reaching the main road. Cycle 1.3 km along the bike path until you reach the turnoff for the road leading to Balatonberény. Cross this road and turn right onto the Lake Balaton Bike Loop (Balatoni Bringakörút) toward Balatonberény and Balatonmárfiafürdő. After 2.7 km, you'll arrive in Balatonberény. From there, ride another 1.5 km to the start and endpoint of the tour—the municipal beach of Balatonberény

Gulyás József – the first nature conservation warden



His grave at the Vörs cemetery

József Gulyás, Hungary's first nature conservation warden, was born on the same day that the world's first national park was established in the United States. On March 1, 1872, this historic date was marked in Kiliti (now part of [Siófok](#)) within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. From a young age, Gulyás wore the uniform of a conservationist, complete with its distinctive rooster-feathered hat.

Because his wife came from a less wealthy civilian family and he was unable to pay the necessary marriage deposit, Gulyás left the gendarmerie. He took up fishing and settled in Vörs. Máté Gárdonyi wrote about his hometown in the chronicle *The Centuries of Balatonkiliti*:

"Kiliti was one of the centers on Lake Balaton for making traditional dugout boats – wooden watercraft carved from a single tree trunk. The last boat of this kind was built in Vörs in 1897."

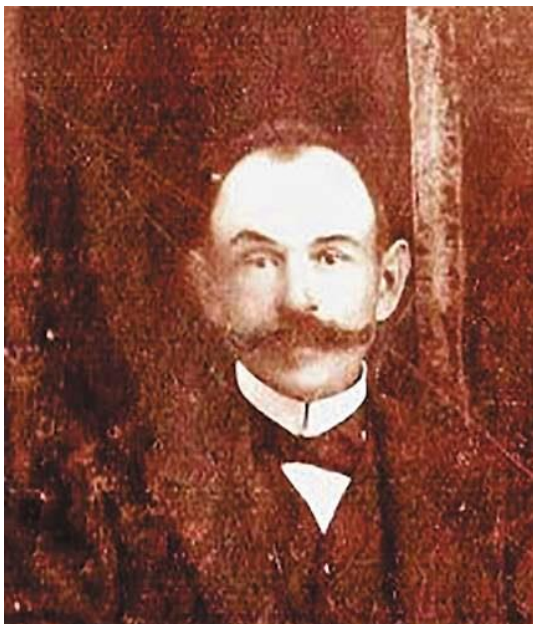
It is unknown whether this circumstance influenced Gulyás's move, but he eventually settled in the Kis-Balaton region.



The tranquil landscape of Kis-Balaton
Photo: Mihály Szilvia

Over time, Mihály Károlyi's Aster Revolution and the Hungarian People's Republic came and went. Gulyás was 47 years old when the Hungarian Soviet Republic was declared, lasting only 133 days. This was followed by a counter-revolution and the tragedy of the Treaty of Trianon.

By the age of 50, Gulyás was an experienced professional and a family man. In 1922, he was appointed "*Warden of Kis-Balaton*" through donations from Dutch and Hungarian bird conservationists and financial support from Regent Miklós Horthy. This role perfectly suited him, and his service marked the beginning of Hungary's practical nature conservation history.



Gulyás József, the legendary warden of Kis-Balaton

Later, he became a state employee of the Ministry of Agriculture. Together with colleagues from the ornithological institute under the ministry, he worked to save herons. His life and work are documented in numerous articles, reports, studies, and books. Even during World War II, he monitored the heron colonies in the marshes.

Gulyás's health deteriorated as the Red Army ousted the Arrow Cross government from the region. In 1947, the Hungarian Republic retired him due to poor eyesight. On April 2, 1954, in the fifth year of the socialist Hungarian People's Republic, Gulyás was laid to rest in the Vörs cemetery.



Photo: Mihály Szilvia

His memory was preserved even by the post-communist Hungarian Republic. He received his first posthumous honor from Hungary's official government in the new millennium.

In 2013, the relevant ministry, in collaboration with national parks, launched the "*Young Heron Warden*" program to honor József Gulyás's life work. A century after the first collaboration between Hungarian and Dutch heron conservationists, 70 years after the Kis-Balaton was declared protected, and 50 years after the Ramsar Convention, his final resting place was designated a protected site. Like the bird sanctuary he once guarded, it is located in Vörs, in Somogy County, known as the "*Capital of Heron Land*".



Great egret at Lake Balaton
Photo: Somogyi László

His life, spanning the eras of Franz Joseph and Mátyás Rákosi, reflects the turbulent history of Hungary and its nature conservation. Regimes came and went, but there were always dedicated wardens who stood for the protection of nature.

Park (Bust of Nagy Imre and the Santa Claus mailbox)



Bust of Nagy Imre in the park



The Santa Claus mailbox was crafted by local residents László Szép and Réka Futó