

When in Hungary, stay out of strip clubs

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Reporter

I don't claim to be particularly smart, but I do know a handful of things. I know not to pet stray dogs. I know how to say "I don't know" and "I don't remember" in French. I know righty tighty, lefty loosey. I would like to take this opportunity to pass along one of the more important things I know.

Stay out of Hungarian strip clubs. There you are. Thank you for your time.

What? You want to know why you should stay out of Hungarian strip clubs? You want to know how I know such things about the world? Well, I suppose I could tell you my tale of woe in hopes that you will not follow my example.

Arriving in Budapest, Hungary, on a class trip through Europe, the first thing I noticed was how incredibly cold it was. Wearing most of the clothes I had brought, I was still freezing. Our group took a long time to check into the hotel, so by the time we were on our own, it was already dark.

One of our assignments during this trip was to talk to average people about the European Union, which gave us an excuse to wander around bars all night. I won't bore you with the sights and sounds of this unique place; I know you want me to just get to the strippers.

As we walked through the city, we were approached by several strange men who seemed to be employed as carnival barkers for strip clubs. I would imagine a group of young American males was exactly the demographic they were looking for.

One identified himself as Mario, and told us that if we went to his strip club, we would see the most beautiful women in the world doing some of the most disgusting things. (That is the nicest way to put it.) Our group of five, whose names will remain anonymous, chatted among ourselves and decided that Mario seemed like a trustworthy fellow who would not do us wrong. It would cost the equivalent of \$3 to get into the club, so we decided to give it a shot. The worst-case scenario would be that we were out \$3. The best case would be seeing beautiful women doing disgusting things.

So there we were—young, stupid and walking into a strip club in a former communist state. The club was extremely small and extremely empty. The only other customer was an older gentleman who was slow dancing with a short stocky woman in a bikini.

The other women, who were mildly attractive, danced about the club with a slightly bored look on their faces. The woman on the main stage removed her top and looked at her watch.

There were no beautiful women doing disgusting things anywhere to be seen. We sat down in a booth, and a bartender immediately approached us. We got the impression that if we didn't order a drink, the bartender would revert to his position as bouncer. The drinks cost another \$3, a little pricey for Budapest, but we were willing to let it go.

There was still a glimmer of hope to see beautiful women doing disgusting things. We decided if things were not looking any better when we finished our drinks, we would get out of there and would have paid \$6 to learn that Hungarian strip clubs are boring. But things were about to get interesting.

At one point, the bartender/bouncer gave the signal to all the strippers at the bar to stop what they were doing and converge on our booth. "Hello," said the one who spoke English, "Ve vill sit vith you?" As we looked at each other doubtfully, the strippers made the decision for us and climbed into the booth. There were five of us and four of them, so my friend and I ended up sharing a conversation with the one who had been on stage. It went something like this:

"You are Americans, yes?"

"Yes."

"Ohhhh, vere in America?"

"New Jersey."

"Ohhhh, New Jersey is so nice."

"Yeah, I guess so."

"You vant dance?" The other girls had asked my friends the same thing. We tried to find out what this would cost us. She wouldn't tell, she just said, "I give you good dance." Locking my left leg and my friend's right leg together, she proceeded to give both of us a lap dance at the same time. The conversation could now continue.

"Vhy you come to Budapest? You come vith university?"

"Yeah."

"I go to university, become doctor someday," she said as she took her top off.

"You don't say. We are here learning about the European Union." I suddenly remembered the reason we were on this trip. "What do you think about the European Union? Do you think it could help Hungary if they became members?"

"Ohhhhh, yes. Ever since the Soviet Union collapsed, Hungary has had a difficult time in a capitalist society. Before, everyone had the same low pay and deficient housing, but at least everyone was taken care of.

"Now, there is extreme poverty and a huge homeless problem.

"Joining the European economic community would bring huge amounts of European business to Hungary, creating jobs for millions. It would also

bring the Euro. Most of all, it would help Hungary to leave its communist past and walk into the future with its new identity."

"Okay I made that up. What she really said was, "I don't know, you vant to touch?"

Soon, the lap dance was over and we noticed, to our horror, that the table was now filled with champagne glasses and another round of drinks. We asked what the hell all of this stuff was and they calmly told us, "You buy us drink." We had to get out of there.

The bartender/bouncer came over and handed us a bill. Now my math skills are not that great, but afterward, we figured out that the bill came to about \$250. We had just gotten to Hungary that night and had not had a chance to change much money. I looked around the table and saw a lot of nervous-looking Americans.

Suddenly, the club got a little warmer. We ended up emptying our pockets on to the table to leave that awful place.

I may not know a lot about the world. I may not know what the thing that hangs down in your throat is called. I may not know which fork is for salad.

However, I do have one piece of information covered. When in Hungary, stay out of strip clubs. And never listen to a guy named Mario.

Elon Diaries

By: Mario Gallucci

