Sandwiched between a café populated by abandoned teddy bears and a performing arts center, the large black gate on Tüzoltó utca in Budapest’s IX District opens into Élesztő (“yeast”), Budapest’s own craft beer playground. Clinking glasses and animated conversation set the soundtrack to this industrial garden, where drinkers spill into a buzzing hidden plaza filled with the smell of grilled sausages.

Metal piping, flaking wallpaper and mismatched furniture are synonymous with Budapest’s “ruin bars,” abandoned spaces-cum-quirky watering holes; this 100-year-old space was once a glass-blowing factory. Today, it serves 21 Hungarian craft beers by the glass, from Keşerű Méz (“bitter honey”) to HopLanger (a triple-hopped strong lager) to Fekete Ered (“black forest”), a dense malty concoction accented with fruits, chocolate and pruny roast. The names might be inaccessible, but the bar staff at Élesztő know both English and their beers, and are happy to make recommendations. Nearly 200 imports are available by the bottle.

Beer lovers can dream upstairs in the Hopstal (yes, a hostel) on hop-filled pillows, or delve deeper in a homebrew course at the Brew! Studio. Down the line, Élesztő will also include an apartment-themed restaurant and a microbrewery.

Jennifer Walker