I arrived in Hungary early in September 2010 to start my international detail. My focus was to exchange expertise on soil classification systems, soil survey methods, and laboratory analyses, as well as to learn about the current soil survey activities in Hungary and within the international soil science community. The host for my international detail was Dr. Erika Michéli, a soil professor at Szent István Egyetem, the main education institute of agriculture in Hungary, located in Gödöllő. She organized a three-week program to view a variety of soil profiles in Hungary (Fig. 1), visit three County Agricultural Offices, discuss human-transported soils and classification systems, and attend a European Soil Bureau Network plenary meeting and European Commission climate change conference in Belgium.

Two Weeks in Hungary

I first visited the soil science department at Szent István Egyetem to introduce myself and explain the variety of work I do as a USDA-NRCS soil scientist. Szent István Egyetem is surrounded by beautiful well-kept gardens (Fig. 2). Inside the soil science department are light-filled classrooms with soil monoliths lining the walls. After talking with the students I learned that the soil science program enables students to acquire a high standard of knowledge through exchange programs with other countries. The program also takes on students from other countries and has them study in Hungary for a semester. New exchange students were due to arrive within the next 2 wk, so the soil science department was quite busy preparing for the international students as well as attending to us.

During the first week of my detail I was introduced to Dr. Cornie van Huyssteen from the University of the Free State in South Africa. He is well traveled and a very inquisitive person. He had come to work on a project with Dr. Erika Michéli and her students and spent some time with us viewing soil profiles and teaching us about South African taxonomy. Not only did he teach me about South Africa and that their most dangerous animal in the field is a hippopotamus (the poisonous snake that lies in footpaths is second), but he also taught me that you should always try to learn a few words from the country you are visiting and to ask questions about how they live in their country. I soon realized that a few words go a long way and that people love to talk about their culture, where they live, and how they got into soils. In return, I think they enjoyed teaching me Hungarian words and asking me just as many questions. There was a recurring question as to whether I cooked at home and what meals I cook—I can only guess American television programs must show us eating out all the time.

Soils and Agriculture of Hungary

The first soil profile I viewed was at the Szent István Egyetem Experimental and Demonstration Farm in Józsefmajor, Hungary. This 270-ha, medium-size model farm was established in 1990 to demonstrate farm economics and management. After the political transition period of 1989 to 1990, it became clear that a mixed type of farming structure would...