

Mission: Portray THE BEAUTIFUL AND ROMANTIC!

We asked some of my Croatian friends and other locals for tips and advice. It made for a relaxing vacation; we ate well and saw some beautiful sights – thanks to the recommendations of kind and gracious Croatians we met along the way

AUTHOR IVAN KAŠTELAN

A little bit about her

► Shayma Saadat is an internationally published food writer, stylist, photographer and cook, who focuses on the food from her heritage – Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. She is the author of ‘The Spice Spoon’ blog, which was selected by The Independent newspaper as one of the world’s 50 best food websites. Born in Lahore, Pakistan, as the child of a diplomat, Shayma grew up in the USA, Nigeria, Kenya, Bangladesh and the UK. Seven years ago, true to her nomadic style, she moved from Rome, where she worked for the United Nations, to Toronto.

Shayma’s mission is to portray the beautiful and romantic aspects of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan through her writing. Her work has appeared in and been recognised by The Globe and Mail, CBC, BBC Good Food Magazine, The New York Times, Hello! Magazine, OK! Magazine, Edible Toronto, The Kitchn and Food52, among others.



1 *What food did you like the most in Croatia?*

Adriatic seafood. During our one-week stay on the island of Vis, my four-year-old son, husband and I took a trip to the beautiful cove of Stončica. After taking a few dips in the water, we headed towards the Složna brothers’ tavern, Konoba Stončica. We ordered Adriatic lobster, which Pave, one of the three brothers, prepared on an open flame grill. The lobster came to our table sizzling hot, anointed with the tavern’s signature fresh herb, olive oil and garlic sauce. Sitting at our table in the garden overlooking the turquoise cove, we ate the lobster with our fingers, alongside plates of charred fresh tomatoes, capsicum and aubergine. It paired beautifully with the local chilled white wine, made from Vugava grapes. It was our most memorable meal in Croatia.

2 *Favorite spot to have a drink?*

Cafe Vidilica at the foot of the Marjan Hill. We trekked – slowly, with a toddler in tow – to Telegrin, the peak of the hill, which is marked by the Croatian flag. At 178m above sea level, you have gorgeous views of Split, the harbor below, and the sea around it. Café Vidilica is at the summit of the hill, where you can relax after your hike, and take in the panoramic views of Split – and the islands beyond – while enjoying a sundowner (or apricot juice, for our son).

3 *Best new thing/ flavor that you tried in Croatia?*

I adored makovnjača, the poppy seed paste roll, which was a new flavour for me. Every morning, while in Komiža, Vis, I walked over to the local bakery, Pekara Kolderaj, to buy a loaf of this pastry, which when cut, reveals gorgeous swirls of poppy seed paste (initially, I had thought it was chocolate, because of the colour and intense, nutty taste). One of the ladies who worked in the bakery told me that this loaf is popular during Christmas and New Year, as poppy seeds are a symbol of wealth, with the tiny seeds representing coins. My family and I had slices of the loaf with our morning caffè lattes – a perfect way to start each day before heading to the beach.



4 *Best travel tip to other travelers?*

Slow travel is the best. We weren't research-obsessed prior to our trip to Croatia, nor did we have a checklist of cafes, restaurants and sights noted down. I know it sounds odd in this day and (electronic) age, but it worked for us. We had a paper map (old school) and when we needed help, we asked some of my Croatian friends and other locals for tips and advice. It made for a relaxing vacation; we ate well and saw some beautiful sights – thanks to the recommendations of kind and gracious Croatians we met along the way.

5 *Advice for people who work in tourism in Croatia, where they can do things better?*

If I were a professional in the tourism industry in Croatia, I would like to see more projects which promote sustainable growth of the tourist industry, given that the country – the Dalmatian islands in particular – has been inundated with tourists in recent years. The industry would benefit from sustainable tourism projects which preserve the natural beauty and socio-economic foundation of the local communities.

As a side note – as someone who loves ice cream and gelato – I'd be elated to see more local ice-creameries like Luka, in Split (the rhubarb-vanilla was mine and my son's favourite), and less of the ones which sell "gelato" with neon pink food colouring.

