

## Surrendering to Solin

The once forgotten city of Salona, for some time now, has reclaimed its place in tourism and history. However, it might be the simple, more current soul of the city that makes it the tender, charming place it is. This city penetrates your heart and leaves a mark on the depths of your soul.

Of course, historically Solin, first known as Salona, is an archeologists and archeology buff's paradise. One is easily



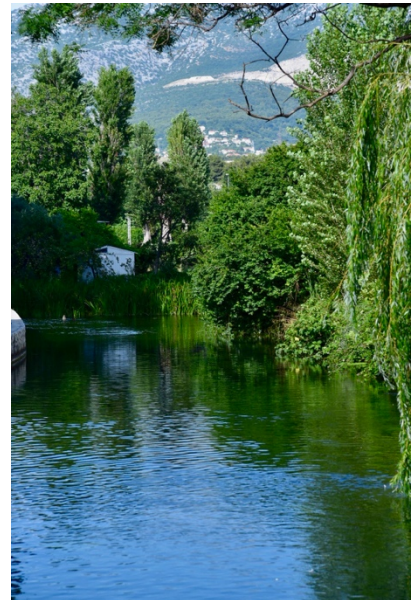
transported back to Roman rule, gladiators, unforgiving emperors and pure-hearted martyrs of Christianity.

Around 300 AD Saint Dominus (Sv. Dujе), the Patron Saint of the city of Split and Bishop of Salona, was martyred and buried here. Christianity breathes here. This region is even mentioned in the Bible.

According to 2 Timothy 4:10, St. Paul sent his apostle, St. Titus to Dalmatia. It is believed that he spread the Gospel in the then-capital of Dalmatia: Solin. It truly is a spiritual place.

There is no shortage of sights in Solin for

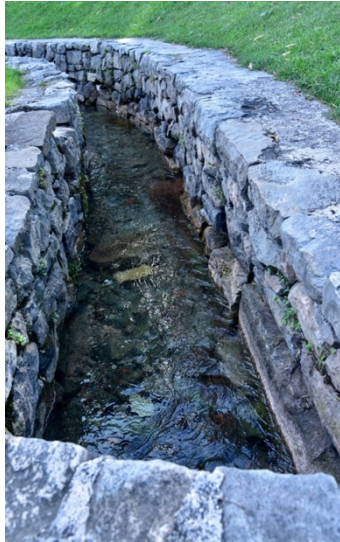
the history enthusiast. But it is not only the ancient and historic that makes this town endearing. It is that poetic, quaint Present coalescing with the historical, aged Past that creates the exquisiteness of Solin.





Driving on the picturesque street of King Zvonimir, you cannot help feel that you have entered a special, endearing place. The Jadro River curves and winds, kindly sharing its waters with wildlife, nature and humanity. In the distance, the Kozjak mountains, beckon as they present a compelling and commanding force of beauty and strength.

But the Jadro, stubborn in its travels, gentle yet determined in its winding curves is set on its destination--the Adriatic Sea, which patiently awaits its arrival. So, the town and its people let it pass and be free, as they quietly whisper, *Jadro...*



My three daughters, husband and I, met the Jadro one summer afternoon. We were meeting a man as special as the town itself. His voice and song had kept me

company for many years in the US. His songs always spoke to me; brought me to tears with nostalgia and memories of home. They touched the depths of the soul and called out with love for Dalmatia, Split and all its



magnificence. The previous night he had won a prestigious award and was leaving the following day. However, because of his gentle, humble and kind heart, he managed to squeeze in time to meet a family from the US, simply because of a little girl, my

youngest daughter, Jacqueline, who tremendously adored and connected with his music. Her wish when coming to Croatia was to meet him. She excitedly and a bit nervously waited, as he was about to make her wish come true...





We arrived early and were introduced to the stunning city of Solin. Ducks paraded with shimmering colors and quick, webbed feet, as they shook their tails with pride at the beauty of the home they *chose* to make theirs.



The Jadro whispered gently, almost motionlessly in certain spots and then quickly started frolicking with the land it touched, playfully racing and bubbling over tiny rocks, creating charming, pubescent waterfalls in some places.



A peacock showed off his feathers, when he chose to grace a passerby with his unrivaled beauty.



The trees reached for the clouds, flirtatiously wooing them from the sky, but never quite succeeding.

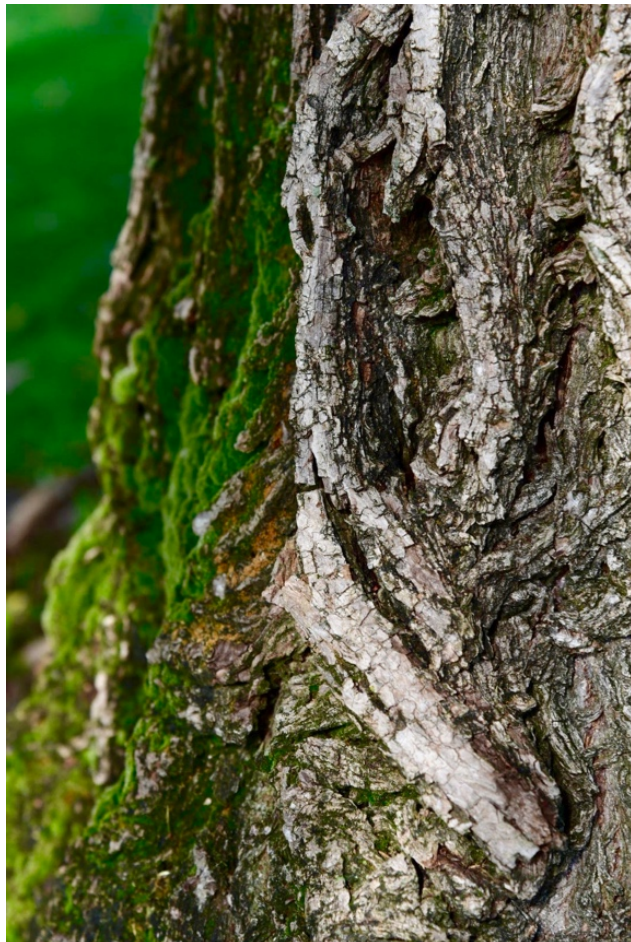






Three women gossiped in the shade, under a broadening tree as they ate sweet, succulent figs. I wondered what the news of the day was. My girls found a little, shallow well and decided to throw a few nickels and pennies in hopes of more wishes coming true. Possibly we were too greedy. This vacation had already brought the most important gift of all: my girls' discovery and my rediscovery of family roots. My husband had fallen in love with Croatia and her people. What more could we wish for? Alas, as we made our way

from the petite well, the fig connoisseurs quickly and unforgivingly made their way to it, rolled up their pants and dug around to see the value of our wishes. I suppose their thought was when you see an opportunity, grab onto it, like the piece of Kairos' hair. It made me smile. The girls' wishes were safe, whether or not they stayed in the well. I knew those were innocent and pure wishes and those wishes turn to prayers that float to God. Especially in a place like this.



The vivid, green moss made us feel like Hansel and Gretel,

showing us the path north. Yet we were lost by choice. Lost in the past and present, melting together like a Dalmatian song of love, seagulls, the sea and old olive trees.







We gazed in awe at the stunning church tower, statues with words that would speak to any, even remotely religious soul... "Christ. Yesterday. Today. Always." "We are



witnesses." "Pray for us." We were surrounded by faith, God and all the beauty He touched. It was all around us. We truly were in God's country.

Timeworn, green shutters of my youth, a quaint stone bridge and the stunning views in all directions left us in an authentic state of enjoyable observation and welcomed saturation of the fusion of God, man and nature.



After our stroll through the town, we relaxed at a picturesque cafe and excitedly waited for our guest. Not soon after, we saw a





lanky gentleman with a genuine, big smile walk in. Jacqueline's dream, at that moment, became a reality. She gave him a bouquet of wild flowers the girls had picked for him. We were touched by his sincerity, kindness, simplicity and humility. He was the old and the new, the heart and the soul of Split, and now Solin.



We spent the next hour talking with a man whose unpretentiousness and grace were coupled with a tender heart and youthful charm. He conversed with the adults, but he also made a point of giving Jacqueline that extra attention. He played a mosquito game with her. She recently had lost her two front teeth so her gap-tooth smile was even more sweet and comical. Her eyes lit up and she wondered how he was able to do the trick of the crazy, disappearing and loud mosquito. Her dimples could have held several drops of the Jadro, while his eyes held all the love a man could possibly have for a child he just met... He touched us all, deeply, because meeting such a man is not only rare, but a true gift.





He then captivated all three of my girls with his musical bongo cheeks that made quite the variety of tones. He has no ego, only love. With a bit of time and attention to some strangers—three little American-Croatian girls—whom he most likely would never see again, he created a life-time of memories. That is the kind of wish at a well that lives forever.

Our goodbyes were filled with respect and warmth. It was nearly impossible to believe that this was the star whom we watched take home the respected award on TV the night before. It was easy to surmise that it wasn't TV that made him a star. It was his heart and his love, coupled with a grand collection of days like today, which prove that people, their hearts and art, not fame, make true human beings, change lives and change the world. And with advance apologies, yet hope for understanding, it is because of his humility and privacy, I choose not to share this special and remarkable artist's name.



We left quaint, striking Solin with music, tenderness and beauty in our hearts. The old town of Salona



guided us and whispered to us; the saints prayed over us; the martyred lives that created this town held our respect and the current Solin beckoned us to follow it into the present and always return in the future. I know my daughters will forever carry it in their hearts, long into the future. As will my husband and I.

In Solin, the past, present and future



unified. As Albert Einstein is quoted saying, "The distinction between the past, present and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion." Solin allowed us to dismiss that distinction and surrender the illusion. It was the greatest gift a town could ever give.

