

**LONG STANDING:** The 13th century Church of St. Mark in Zagreb has undergone various alterations due to fires and earthquakes. The colourful glazed tiles on the roof depict the coats of arms of Croatia, Dalmatia, Slavonia, and the city of Zagreb.



# Must visit: Museum of Broken Relationships in Croatia

There's lots of other cultural stuff to do in Zagreb – but you can't *not* check out the place that contains memorabilia of all kinds of heartbreak. Oh and while in the city, check out their halal meat options



**HISTORY AT EVERY CORNER:** (Top) The tram is a popular mode of transport for Croatians. As is cycling. (Above) The Zagreb Mosque is the largest mosque in Croatia. Photos: Sarwat Nasir

Sarwat Nasir



**H**as your wife or husband left you? Did your dad abandon you as a child? No need to store tokens of your failed relationships in a box under your bed. There's an actual museum in Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, that displays souvenirs from your broken-hearted experiences. It's called the Museum of Broken Relationships. And it was founded in 2006 by two Zagreb-based artists, Olinka Vištica, a film producer, and Dražen Grubišić, a sculptor. In the last 11 years, it's received only some thousands of submissions from all over.

The submissions aren't just relics of failed marriages and unrequited love. There are also stories from people from when their parents abandoned them or passed away. Like the ceramic rolling pin, a submission from someone in Bedford, UK. The rolling pin symbolised the pain of being separated from a mother. The story next to the pin read: "All of the physical memories of my mother were burnt, discarded and buried. The most difficult part was that no one ever talked about her, so I had nothing. I had a ceramic rolling pin, which surprisingly missed the anger and emotional cleansing at that time. I kept it and it was wrapped carefully in each house move I had over the years." The note went on to read, "This was mine to hold on to, to remember the happy moments of being in the kitchen with mum as a small child making gingerbread men. It's a powerful memory evoking the actual feelings and memories of the day, the smells in the kitchen, the smell of my mum, being included, feeling happy. In October 2010, I was reunited with my mum. I now feel able to move forward in my life and donating the rolling pin means I do not have to cling to it anymore. Let the good times roll."

The rolling pin story seemed to be one of the few with a happy ending. There was a story from a woman in Taiwan who donated a set of house keys to the museum. The keys belonged to her husband who divorced her. She lost her husband and her unborn baby on the same day. The man left her because his mother did not approve of their marriage. Part of the story at the museum said: "Our relationship ended. I heard him crying so hard on the phone, saying he did not know what to do, because he loved both his mother and me. He couldn't abandon his family or me... I was rushed into the emergency room, left alone to face the truth that I was losing my baby and my husband... these small keys unlock the heartbreaking and the beautiful memories."

Among the several other submissions made by people were empty photo frames, stuffed toys, dresses and even a giant axe.



**TAKE ANOTHER LI'L PIECE OF MY HEART...** Do yourself a favour and spend half an hour browsing stories on [brokenships.com](http://brokenships.com). There are stilettoes, stuffed Snoopy figures and a bunch of bittersweet – but also only bitter, no sweet – stories with the photographed relics on the website. Seen above – a rolling pin, in memory of a mum, and bunch of keys that belonged to someone's ex-husband.

The museum is in Zagreb, where Emirates Airline will be launching a direct flight starting June 1. It's an eight-hour flight from Dubai. When I visited Zagreb last week, we had a stopover, so it was a bit of a nightmare. The direct flight comes as a blessing.

Besides the Museum of Broken Relationships, Zagreb offers a wide range of mouth-watering Croatian food, street art, beautiful architecture and easy and cost-friendly transportation services to tourists.

The country, a relatively new European Union member, relies heavily on tourism, so country leaders are making deep investments into halal tourism. They want to attract tourists from the Arab world.

There are 15 halal hotels all over Croatia and seven halal restaurants. The country also has a halal school, catering services, travel agencies and thermal spas.

As for transportation, residents in Croatia can be seen riding their bicycles everywhere, especially in Zagreb. People do have cars, and a number of residents also use the tram service.

As a tourist, I found the tram very convenient. They usually let tourists on for free, but I'm sure you actually have to pay a few Croatian Kunas. My driver was friendly, so I just hopped on for free.

I didn't submit anything to the Museum of Broken Relationships while I was there – I debated it, though – instead I enjoyed the low prices, going around the scenic city of Zagreb and getting a taste of the yummy food. I had beef steak and cherry strudel almost everyday! Oh and some divine locally-made virgin olive oil.

My most memorable experience though was my stay at the (built in 1925) Esplanade Zagreb Luxury Hotel. It's a popular place for presidents to stay at. Lucky for me, I ran into the president of Portugal while I was there.

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