

# METROPLUS Travel



FOLLOW US:



metroplus.thehindu.com

facebook.com/thehindumetroplus

twitter.com/thmetroplus



Stay in a chalet in the Swiss countryside

page 2



A day on the beach with Rajini and Ajith

page 5

Ishaan and Janhvi talk about *Dhadak*

page 8



## GREEDY IN GAZIANTEP

With rolling green parks, restored buildings and forts and a thriving food scene, this city is a true Turkish delight

### CHEW ON THIS

#### KEBAPÇI HALIL USTA

Order the mixed kebab platter and have it with *ayran*, a yoghurt drink.

#### ŞEBÇILER LAHMACUN

Lahmacun is a flatbread with spicy mince that is rolled and eaten. Don't ever call it Turkish pizza.

#### METANET BEYRAN

Beyran is a spicy lamb and rice soup rich with fat. It's a breakfast dish that's also a cure for a hangover.

#### CIĞERCI ALI HAYDAR USTA

Known for its liver kebabs, everything is sold out between 5.30 am and 8 am.

#### ELMACI PAZARI GÜLLÜOĞLU

Go hungry to this baklava place and try them all.



✦ RISHAD SAAM MEHTA

The first time I heard about Gaziantep was when the thought of driving around Turkey was ruminating in my mind. As usual there were people concerned about safety. As if to strengthen their case, the news came in that yet another bomb had gone off in Turkey, this time in a police station in Gaziantep. I hurriedly checked Google Maps and learnt that the place is in Southeastern Turkey, close to the Syrian border. "That's certainly not on my route," I thought, because my road trip would take me along the usual tourist circuit from Istanbul to Antalya along the West and Southwestern coast

of Turkey. So I thought, but a few months later, I was on a flight from Antalya to Gaziantep.

I believe that delicious tasty food, (read sweet and meat) is one of mankind's greatest joys, and the Turkish nation on the whole endorses my belief. In the build-up to my trip, I had been following a few Turkish Instagram food accounts and this city kept popping up regularly. So, if "tummy tourism" is one of the pillars of your travels in Turkey, then you cannot skip Gaziantep that's vibrant with people picnicking in parks and hanging out in malls.

I had three days in Gaziantep and plenty of restaurants to try. My first goal was to go to İmam



### HOW TO GET THERE

Turkish Airlines flies to Istanbul daily from Mumbai and Delhi and also from Istanbul to Gaziantep.



Çağdaş, where the owner stated with conviction that meat chopped by machine has no soul. This is why in his kitchen a team of men reduced cuts of lamb to a fine paste with *zirh* (scimitar-like blades). Chopping by hand lets the cooks control the texture of the meat, so it's firm on the skewer, but crumbles under the fork.

The kebabs served with onions, peppers and yoghurt are delicious. I asked him what goes into the mince, but received a smile and a wink in reply.

*Ustas*, as kebab-makers are called, closely guard the mix that goes into the mince. On the way back to my hotel, I stopped at Katmerci Cumaali Usta. Gaziantep is

**Tummy tales** Tuck into *katmer*, *kebabs*, *kaymak* and more • RISHAD SAAM MEHTA

none of the hotel staff were perturbed, as these are a common occurrence in Gaziantep. However, the concierge did tell me I should head to Cığerci Ali Haydar Usta (*ciğer* means liver), a short walk away. This roadside joint grills succulent pieces of lamb liver and serves them for breakfast on flatbread with parsley, onions, *sumac* and lime.

Since I couldn't eat continuously, I decided to put my greed on hold and do a little sightseeing at the local market. But the call of *kaymak* and honey was too strong to resist. Soon I was sitting at a table with some strangers and dipping bread into thick cream (*kaymak*) laced with honey. Another Turkish breakfast staple.

With supreme effort, I managed to pull away from the food and head to the Zeugma Mosaic Museum. Zeugma (literally meaning bridge of boats) was a city founded by Alexander, where a bridge of boats crossed the Euphrates. The mosaics at this museum are from this ancient city. The most famous is the one of a girl with a scarf and earrings. The excavators joked she looked like a gypsy girl, but there are speculations that it might be Alexander the Great. The enigma only adds to her charm.

The next morning, I was rudely awakened by persistent tremors, the result of an earthquake 115 kilometres away. I ran down, but

**DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER**

The Spoonmaker's Diamond is an 86-carat pear-shaped diamond at the Topkapi Palace Museum and its most valuable single exhibit. It is considered the fourth largest diamond of its kind in the world.

By that evening, I was back to treating my palate, this time at Cumba Kunefe. Another pastry popular in the region, *kunefe* is made with shredded wheat, margarine, soft white cheese which is drenched in sugar syrup and sprinkled with pistachio dust. I really don't need to tell you it is delicious. But I can tell you this: if you're serious about food, three days in Gaziantep don't make the cut. A week is more like it.