

Rediscovering ADVENTURE

Text and photos by Chua Wei Yu

Every festive season, it is my family's custom to travel back to my grandparent's home in Malaysia. As a kid used to a cosmopolitan city with all its abundance and convenience, being stuck in a rural area with poor connectivity and slow Internet speeds brought me great frustration and boredom. However, it also provided me the opportunity to be curious about my surroundings and to explore the local wilderness with my cousins. It made me realise that life can be enjoyable and exciting without any gadgets and that it is the people around you that matters.

Growing up in Singapore, I started seeking opportunities, or clubs that provided me the opportunity, to venture outdoors. In secondary school, I joined the Scouts and experienced my first taste of adventure. We spent our holidays cycling around Singapore and Pulau Ubin, and I experienced sleeping on Pulau Ubin alone as well. It was a really life-changing experience and I enjoyed every single bit of it. It was then that my appetite for such adventures grew.

I wanted to stretch my limits and pursue greater adventure.

In junior college, I made the best decision of my life in joining the Outdoor Activities Club. My first mountain was Mount Ophir in Malaysia. It was my first mountaineering experience and I can still remember swimming in the river with my friends, cooking our meals on the mountain and huddling under the night sky for a heart-to-heart talk. Scaling the mountain and catching the sunrise gave me an indescribable sense of satisfaction and happiness, and everyone around me shared that same feeling. Throughout that year, we hiked across Singapore and participated in vertical marathons, "Amazing Races" and anything that excited us.

At the end of the year, I climbed my second mountain, which was Xueshan (Snow Mountain) in Taiwan. It was my first taste of climbing in icy conditions, and the climb up was breath-taking. The mountains resembled those of a Chinese calligraphy painting. I saw the clouds

running in front of my eyes and I was at a loss for words. As we sat on the grass and looked into the endless horizon, it was as though time had stopped for us to appreciate its beauty and warmth. Staring into the unpolluted sky, we spotted stars and constellations. On that breezy night, everything seemed so comfortable and possible. During the descent, I nearly slid off the slope to my doom, but thankfully a rock stopped my path. At that point, it made me realise that every adventure has its limit and that it was important to be keenly aware of my surroundings.

As the GCE A Levels came, life came to a pause while we prepared for our examinations. At the same time, we began planning for the trip of our lifetime. Knowing that freedom and adventure beckoned, I poured my heart and soul into studying for my GCE A Levels, burning the midnight oil, waiting for the day to come.

Immediately after my last paper, I went straight to Changi Airport and



flew to Australia. In Australia, we dived, kayaked across islands, wave boarded, and climbed our third mountain. It was an unforgettable two weeks as we travelled from the Gold Coast to Brisbane, staying at Airbnb rentals and exploring the neighbourhoods. At the end of the day, it made me realise how privileged I was to have the opportunity to pursue my passion together with a group of like-minded friends.

However, in 2020, COVID-19 and the lockdown came. Travelling around the world seemed impossible. My dreams of conquering mountains in Europe and the Himalayas were quashed. At that point, I felt that I had explored all of Singapore and there was nothing left to see here. I was quite devastated that the best and fittest years of my life would be wasted due to the pandemic.

As time went by, however, I realised that I should perhaps “rediscover” Singapore. I cycled along the Coast-to-Coast trail as well as East Coast Park. I went island hopping to Pulau Hantu, Lazarus Island and St John’s Island. Strolling along the inter-tidal walk at Pulau Hantu and seeing the serenity

of natural environment, I began appreciating the moment and the people with me. As I stood in the cool water at Lazarus Island, it brought back memories of the mountains I have climbed, waters I have swam in and the passion I had for adventure. Together with adventure-seeking friends, I’ve explored mangroves, islands and hiked around Singapore. More recently, as I begin my clinical attachments to various hospitals/ polyclinics, my clinical group would explore the neighbourhood for the best cafes and hawkers.

I hope that this article will spark readers to explore the hidden gems in Singapore. Despite being a cosmopolitan city and concrete jungle, Singapore still offers untouched greenery and nature that are definitely worth the trip. Moreover, exploring Singapore with your friends or loved ones will create fond memories and experiences in your life. To me, whenever I face difficulties and obstacles in life, I always fall back on my adventures to remind myself to continue persevering, because at the end of the thunderstorm is a rainbow waiting. ♦

Legend

1. Pulau Hantu intertidal walk
2. Sunset at Xueshan, Taiwan
3. Camp at Mount Ophir, Malaysia

Wei Yu is a third-year medical student at NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine. As someone passionate about the outdoors, he enjoys travelling and exploring new places. He enjoys art, nature and appreciating the beauty of life.

