

Headline	The great outdoors		
MediaTitle	The Star		
Date	28 May 2012	Color	Full Color
Section	Metro	Circulation	304,904
Page No	9	Readership	1,026,812
Language	English	ArticleSize	531 cm <sup>2</sup>
Journalist	Robert Plachciak	AdValue	RM 24,634
Frequency	Daily	PR Value	RM 73,902



# The great outdoors

Many happy hours can be spent on healthy activities



**A**S I'm getting older I find myself more and more compelled to get involved in physical activities and outdoor pursuits, which is a return to the younger me some 15 years ago.

As is common knowledge, I'm a House House Hazard, although sometimes absent depending on work and location and I've probably mentioned briefly that I'm training for my first triathlon, although I'm doing the sprint distance to start, which of course comprises swimming, cycling and running, but at a shorter distance to the full triathlon, with an aim to training up to the full distance and a dream would be to complete an Ironman race.

My wife and I are in training for various things and we are toying with the idea of the Mount Kinabalu race.

We horse ride, mountain bike, go caving, swimming and hopefully later this year my wife will go diving for the first time.

I know what you're thinking, ahhh, the expat life, have caviar on toast and champagne on our cornflakes for breakfast, which is carefully prepared by our staff of six servants from ingredients airflown in for us, start work at 10am, play golf from 11am to 4pm, finish at 5pm, take our personal jet back to our mansion in our country estate. These guys all privileged ones, easy life *lah...* no stress, *just play play only.*

Ha, ha, ha... I'm almost choking.

Reality is getting up at 6am, starting work between 7 and 7.30am, the day is hot sweaty, dusty and noisy if you work in textiles and you finish when you are able to.

My lunchtime is now spent running, anything from 3 to 7kms, followed by some stair climbing in the factory and maybe a few press ups for good measure, then get home after the inevitable traffic stress, try to swim if possible, even that can be a chore when there's only one other

Headline	The great outdoors		
MediaTitle	The Star		
Date	28 May 2012	Color	Full Color
Section	Metro	Circulation	304,904
Page No	9	Readership	1,026,812
Language	English	ArticleSize	531 cm <sup>2</sup>
Journalist	Robert Plachciak	AdValue	RM 24,634
Frequency	Daily	PR Value	RM 73,902

person in the pool, but whatever lane you take, they move into it, so I have decided to start using the Kelana Jaya swimming pool, which is also quite busy but the benefit is that it's 50m.

But then how about the cycling? Those familiar with the Mont Kiara area will know it's rather a busy place in the early evening, so cycling is not

on my list of priorities, or rather being hit by a car isn't. However, to practise cycling at speed you need road and some undisturbed, long stretches of it. So I squeeze my cycling on Saturday afternoon after work and Sunday morning, in the general area, where it's safe and a little more quiet, before grocery shopping and trips to the dobi (that's the launderette by the way), yes, we actually don't have a maid.

Unlike most of us whiteys, I prefer to keep away from the sun, I never really gel with heat and some bits of me are so white they actually reflect sunlight.

My wife shares the same feeling about the sun, so we like to do our exercise at cooler, darker times.

For Labour Day, we decided to get out early and do some exercise and following the normal 6am wake up I would have for work, I busied myself making coffee and getting our gear ready for mountain biking, attaching the bike rack to the car and filling our back packs with water, whilst trying to figure out whether we go to Taman Tun Dr Ismail, Janda Baik or FRIM (Forest Research Institute Malaysia).

Once my wife had awoken from her

slumber and all systems were back up and running, we decided on FRIM and headed off to Kepong like excited children.

We arrived at about 8.15am to a very busy FRIM indeed, there were walkers, joggers, runners, cyclists, old folks, kids and families, mostly with a happy look of contentment from all that fresh air and beautiful surroundings combined with the self satisfaction that comes from a little well directed exercise I suppose.

It certainly restored my faith in the half of the population that actually do bother to get outdoors and do some exercise, although I would bet my last dollar that at least 90% of the people there went straight for *makan* afterwards to replace the MSG, fat and general spice levels that were depleted during exercise. Forget isotonic drinks, I'm going to invent the first spice-o- tonic drink, I'll be a millionaire overnight just from Malaysian sales.

Well, dreams of fame and fortune aside, I really enjoy FRIM, it's such a lovely breath of fresh air and you can safely run, cycle or just sit and relax.

It costs next to nothing to get in and what you get is priceless, with many of the trails well shaded by the trees, it's quite cool and there's not such a huge risk of looking like an overdone tosaï if you are out for a couple of hours.

I think almost every single mountain biker gave a nod of recognition or said "Hi", the same for walkers, just

smiling or passing with a "Good Morning", which was a pleasant contrast from being elbowed in the supermarket, pushed out of the way on the escalator or crushed in the lift by kids and shopping trolleys.

We had spent the previous weekend at the Old Smokehouse hotel at Frasers Hill, a beautiful old English themed hotel. It took me right back to my English roots and reminded me of the old cottage I used to own.

The temperature is so cool up there and if you like to walk, there's plenty of little paths. We were lucky enough to see a small snake, giant millipede and a gentleman who had rescued a tortoise that was crossing the road.

After a weekend of serene nature, we didn't think the exertion of biking in FRIM would come close to Frasers hill, but we were pleasantly surprised.

I think that the condition of FRIM reflects the mindset of those people who go there, it's clean, tidy and peaceful. There is no screaming and shouting, no pink plastic bags and Styrofoam packs, festering and stinking by the roadside. There is also no crazy erratic drivers, just trees, shade, forest and a lot of happy people, including my wife and I.

*A weaver by trade and general manager by profession, Rob has been residing in Malaysia the past 10 years after moving here from England in search of adventure and professional experience. He's a proud Hasher, a serious music lover and absent diver.*



**A matter of balance:** The Canopy Walk at FRIM is a popular draw.