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| Headline | Family adventures | | |
| MediaTitle | New Sunday Times | | |
| Date | 16 Dec 2012 | Color | Full Color |
| Section | Life & Times | Circulation | 156,910 |
| Page No | 3 | Readership | 295,000 |
| Language | English | ArticleSize | 331 cm ² |
| Journalist | N/A | AdValue | RM 10,799 |
| Frequency | Weekly | PR Value | RM 32,396 |



Family adventures

HOW has your year-end holiday been so far? I hope you and your family have done some fun activities together. I also hope that you are winning the battle against the electronic invasions in your home. Yes, school holidays can either be the best of times or the worst of nightmares depending on how we fill time.

Besides agreeing on some basic schedules for the holidays, parents also need to proactively plan for some quality time with the kids.

There are plenty of options especially if you enjoy the outdoors. Forget about the heat, instead focus on how much fun you can have in the sun. Here are several activities that my family and I have enjoyed together.

CYCLING AT PAYA INDAH WETLANDS

Just a few days ago we decided to revisit this place after eight years. After checking the Internet to find out its current situation, we were excited at the prospect of cycling around the wetlands and enjoying the fantastic scenery. After an hour's drive from the city centre, we reached our destination by about lunch time. There were a lot of people, but it wasn't over-crowded.

After a quick but delicious lunch, we grabbed our bikes. The rental was unbelievably cheap — RM5 per bike for two hours! So there we were, ready and eager to explore. The place had matured as compared

with our first visit. The trees have grown nicely to provide shade. We had one destination in mind, the Malay House, located two kilometres away but no one was complaining. The dirt road coupled with shady trees provided

the perfect setting for a great family outing.

SEASIDE PICNICS

If cycling is not your thing, then you can try picnicking by the sea. There are plenty of scenic spots around the country where you can lay the mat and enjoy food with the family. Among the popular ones for KL city folk are the Bagan Lalang beach with its perfect condition for kite flying, or Port Dickson for its convenience and beauty. Up north we have Pantai Teluk Senangin (Perak) and Batu Ferringhi (Penang), while those in the east coast can have a blast at Tanjung Jara (Terengganu), Bisikan Bayu (Kelantan) or Cherating (Pahang).

Venture out and look for spots that are a bit secluded. I smile to myself when I recall the great drive we've had along the Tanjung Jara beach. It was breezy and the turquoise blue sea was out of this world. Neither words nor pictures can adequately describe our feelings when we discovered this gem.

BBQ PARTIES AT THE WATERFALL

This is best done with friends and families. Plan ahead, choose a safe, nice location out of several options such as FRIM (Forest Research Institute of Malaysia), Janda Baik, Hulu Langat and Kanching Falls. All these great waterfalls or river streams are easily accessible and within an hour's drive from the city. Collect

some money from each family and buy basic barbecue needs. Assign the tasks properly so that the day is filled with fun activities for kids and adults.

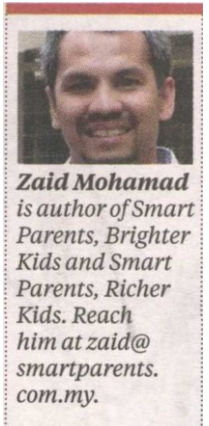
There's nothing like the aroma of grilled chicken, lamb and beef. It also provides the perfect time for your group of parents from schools or neighbourhood to catch up with one another while the kids have fun with their friends.

HISTORICAL TRAILS

Besides dirt roads, beaches and waterfalls, parents can also explore the many historical sites around the country. When was the last time you climbed the steep steps of St. John's Fort in Malacca? Have you been awed by the history of Istana Lama Seri Menanti in Kuala Pilah, Negri Sembilan? Have you explored beyond the regular sites in Penang? What about Gua Niah (Sarawak), Makam Mahsuri (Langkawi) or Kuala Pak Amat (Kota Baru)?

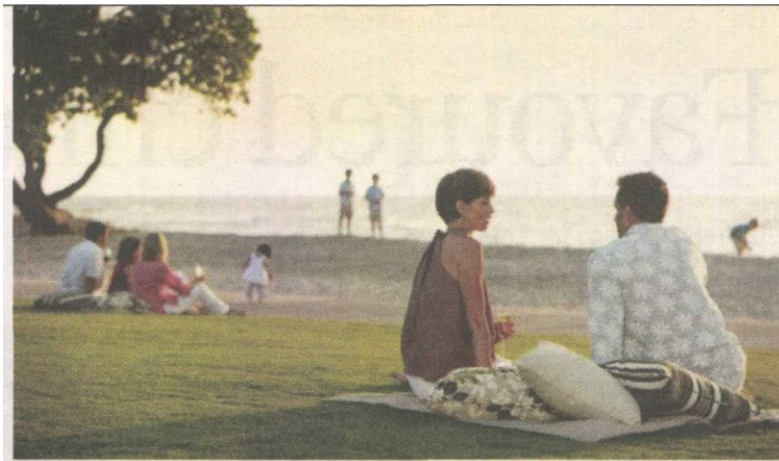
These places provide valuable lessons in history that no textbooks can ever offer. There's no other more effective way to go back in time than to look, touch and even feel the texture of history at any of these historical sites. If the kids protest, you can quote the lyrics of *Men In Black's* theme song, "But to understand the future, we have to go back in time." That would be utterly cool!

There are only two weekends left before the new school year starts. Congratulate yourself if you are already smiling, looking at the priceless photos taken during your fun trip in the sun. Otherwise, it's the perfect time to pack your gear and start exploring the great outdoors. Because it is not the destination but the journey that counts.



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Have fun in the sun with the family.