

# A wet weekend

**Abseiling down treacherous waterfalls, battling rapids and exploring dark caverns — Gopeng is perfect for adrenaline junkies.**

By **JOLEEN LUNJEW**

**A**hh, the great outdoors... wait, the great WET outdoors.

Being an adventure-seeking junkie, I find nothing beats spending the weekend enjoying what Mother Nature has designed for us.

When I heard about MMAAdventure's AquaAdventure, which included a spot of waterfall abseiling, white-water rafting and caving, I was absolutely thrilled and immediately signed up. My two-day adventure began with a leisurely drive to Gopeng town in Perak to meet up with Michael Manivanan, founder of the outfit.

My excitement went up a notch by the prospect of what lay ahead.

"We will be abseiling down that??!" That was my first thought as I eyed the towering 15m waterfall before us.

"Don't worry, it's easier than it looks," assured Michael.

He proceeded with a safety briefing.

"We use only the best of equipment here as safety is our priority. The Stops (gadget used to stop the ropes) are more expensive than the figure-of-eights used by other companies, but we insist on using them as the device is much safer."

With my harness and Stop in place, I eagerly climbed the hill to the top of the waterfall. Michael's team was already there, checking and securing the ropes. They made sure my harness was in place and gave me a refresher course on how to abseil.

My heart was beating fast as I looked down the steep drop. One slip and... well, let's just hope I don't slip.

I was the first to go down. All eyes were on me as I gingerly made my way down, the refreshing waterfall splashing all around me. My confidence grew with every step and soon I was taking bigger strides. It wasn't



**River rodeo:** Riding the rapids down Sungai Itek.

that bad after the initial vertigo. As luck would have it, I did slip on the mossy rocks but the ropes held perfectly.

By the time I reached the bottom, I was giddy from excitement and had only one thought on my mind: Can I go again?

## Swept away

Next on our itinerary was riding the rapids of Sungai Itek.

We were lucky as the water level was high because it had been raining. This meant higher-grade rapids and a faster and easier ride down the river because the rocks would be submerged.

Our guides divided us into groups of five per raft, and we were each given a helmet, life-jacket and paddle. They proceeded to brief us on the safety procedures, rafting commands, and what to do should a raft get stuck or capsize, and then how to pull someone back into the raft if he falls overboard.

Nothing is better than experiencing something for yourself, our guides reasoned, so they made us jump into the river to be swept away by the rapids. This was to simulate a rescue operation for when somebody falls into the water.

I quickly found that I was no match for the ferocious currents as I tumbled through the rapids.

What you have to do in such a situation is relax, lie on your back, keep your feet straight out in front of you, and let the current take you to safety. Our guide was at the end of the rapids ready with a rope.

I missed the rope the first time and only caught it on the second attempt. It was such a relief to hang on to that rope and be pulled to safety.

After all had had a taste of this, we hopped into our respective rafts and paddled down the river. We were blessed with 14 grade-three and grade-four rapids and managed to put our skills to the test manoeuvring the bends and dips of the river.

Our Sabahan guide was excellent as he managed to keep our raft afloat at all times but we did

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