

Sepeda Amal Borneo 2023: Reflections



The team all smiles outside the lobby of Promenade Hotel Bintulu after 6 days of cycling

Rebranded as the Sepeda Amal Borneo (Borneo Charity Cycle) from “Cycle for Cancer 2022”, this is the second year of the annual charity cycling event by the Malaysian Medical Association, covering 700+km from Kuching to Bintulu. The team consisted of 20 cyclists, including 2 cancer survivors and an above knee amputee; and a team of volunteers, police, and medics.



Our beneficiary this year was the ROSE (Removing Obstacles to cErviceal screening) Foundation which raises awareness through its program that features a self-sampling by women themselves to test for HPV with a secure, digital e-health platform. This approach can save lives and strives to eliminate cervical cancer among Malaysian women and you may read more about them here - <https://www.programrose.org>.

The pre-event dinner was sponsored and graced by Prof Datuk Dr Sim Kui Hian, Deputy Premier of Sarawak who gave a short speech and handed out goodie bags to each of the cyclists.



Cultural dance in front of Merdeka Palace Hotel Kuching just before flag off on Day one

On 16th July 2023 at 8am, YB Dato' Sri Hajah Nancy Shukri, Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture officiated the opening ceremony and flagged us off from Merdeka Palace Hotel, Kuching. A cultural dance for blessings of safety and peace was performed by the Orang Ulu just before the convoy left.

After a short 80km ride the team arrived in Serian to rest for the day. Everyone was in high spirits as it was a reunion of sorts for some, and for others the making of new friends. We had our usual dinner briefing for the next day before heading off to bed.



The team outside Roxy Hotel Serian just before flagging off to Sri Aman

The next two days covered 130km to Sri Aman where Hotel Seri Simanggang had very kindly sponsored 10 rooms for our team; and another 130km to Saratok, to Rumah Dana Kerupok Sebetan (a longhouse).

We enjoyed the warm hospitality, delicious food and invigorating drinks of the Rumah Dana longhouse. The Program ROSE team had arrived before us and were conducting health talks and screening test among the women. We were also treated to a session of playing local musical instruments and trying on the cultural costumes!



Cyclists gathering outside the longhouse at Rumah Dana Kerupok Sebetan, Saratok as they prepare to leave for Sibul.

Along the 140km journey to Sibul the next day, we had the pleasure of riding on a ferry twice to cross the Rajang River on the way to Sibul which was a real eye opener for many of the cyclists.



The team on the ferry crossing the Rajang River

Our last two days were also 140km rides to Mukah and then to our final destination at Bintulu. We were treated to lunch at Rumah Jandang, a long house on the way to Mukah; the food, drinks and rest was a timely break in the middle of a long ride.



The team resting at Rumah Jandang for a lunch break before heading on to Mukah

After six days of cycling the team finally reached Bintulu at 2pm on the 21st of July. We were welcomed by Prof Woo Yin Ling, founder of the ROSE Foundation and her team with local music, dances, and a chain of beads, symbolizing unity among all our diversity.

The event ended with a closing ceremony dinner, certificate presentation and sharing session. We had the honour hosting Dr Angela Muriuki, director of the Women's Health Programme of FIND, a non-profit organization that accelerating equitable access to reliable diagnosis globally.

Many tears were shed as the cyclists shared their experience with cancer, either in their own journey or in the lives of their loved ones. All in all, it was a very fruitful week, not so much of the distance we covered, but also the awareness created about cervical cancer and how we can eradicate it in Malaysia.



The SAB2023 team during the closing ceremony dinner at Promenade Hotel Bintulu handing over the cheque to Prof Woo Yin Ling, founder of ROSE Foundation

A special word of thanks to our sponsors – Kuala Lumpur Kepong Berhad, Khalid Aluminium Sdn Bhd, Medical Protection, TSM Global Berhad, Quanterm Logistics Sdn Bhd, Firestarter Experience Co, Palm World Sdn Bhd, Setia Medik Sdn Bhd and Lebuhraya Kajang-Seremban Sdn Bhd.

Our accommodation sponsors – Promenade Hotel Bintulu, Seri Simanggang Hotel Sri Aman, Merdeka Palace Hotel Kuching, Roxy Hotel Serian.

Apparel sponsors were 7AM kit (jerseys) and Spin Sportswear (t shirts). Eureka Sarawak provided energy drinks while Everise supplied us with mineral water. We also had the privilege of police and medical escort by the state health department.

The cyclists: Lee lee, Syazana, Chuah Yew Lay, Ernest, Chris, Anslem, Kristy, Seong, Ju Lin, May Wong, Sharman, Patricia, Jo Tan, Alan, Audrey, Sree, Indran, Vincent, Gabriel – thank you for taking up the challenge! Finally, those behind the scenes that made it all possible, ensuring our safety and taking care of logistics were our team of volunteers: Ika, Amelia, Sofia, Annei, Suria, Raden, Pijul, Insp Radzi and Akmal.

Till we meet again next year!

More information of the event including cyclists profiles here: bit.ly/SAB2023info. Other relevant links from the press are here:

<https://www.ipohecho.com.my/2023/08/05/reflections-on-the-sepeda-amal-borneo>

<https://www.thestar.com.my/lifestyle/family/2023/07/15/cyclists-ride-700km-to-raise-funds-for-cervical-cancer-screening>

<https://www.utusanborneo.com.my/2023/07/16/dua-bekas-pesakit-kanser-serviks-menyertai-kayuhan-amal-the-sepeda-amal-borneo-2023>

<https://www.sinchew.com.my/?p=4832492>

<https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/leisure/2023/07/16/sepeda-amal-borneo-a-700km-bike-ride-to-fight-cervical-cancer/>

<https://www.theborneopost.com/2023/07/23/medical-associations-kuching-bintulu-bike-ride-raises-rm200k-for-cancer-foundation/>