

## Pesta Ubin Kayaking on Sungei Jelutong with NSS - A Reflection



As one of the most interesting mangrove rivers in Singapore, Sungei Jelutong is a gem in the heart of rustic Pulau Ubin.

YES! We are back! Last weekend, some excited and enthusiastic participants joined the Nature Society (Singapore) [NSS] for a leisure self-paddling on Sungei Jelutong as part of the Pesta Ubin celebration this year.

Volunteer guides shared interesting facts on the flora and fauna along the river as well as on the importance of our coastal mangrove forests, including the works going on in project R.U.M. (Restore Ubin Mangroves) Initiative and the need to protect and conserve our mangroves. The weather was great and we had an awesome time on the water with families and young excited children.



It was not easy to organise such an event during this time with the many restrictions and safety measures to follow. But with some faith and hope, we somehow did it. With the support of the team of fellow volunteer guides, I am glad I persevered and did not give up. The happy smiles from participants made it all worthwhile.



Pesta Ubin is an annual celebration of Pulau Ubin, where Ubin-loving community groups organise a series of events that showcases the rich natural and cultural heritage we have on the island. In the past, Ubin Day was the highlight of the festival, with all the fun and excitement at its peak. Unfortunately, sentiments for the last 2 years have been more subdued due to the pandemic and ceasing of big group gatherings.

This year, Ubin Day was held on 11 September to wrap up Pesta Ubin. The festival may have ended but Ubin remains alive and vibrant! If you have not visited Ubin, it is time to do so. A few of our participants had never been to Ubin before so signing up for this NSS mangrove kayaking activity allowed them to finally set foot on Pulau Ubin.



Due to the strict Safety Measures and Management (SMM) regulations in place, we regretfully could not have more participants than we would like to have. Nonetheless, we thank all the participants for their understanding and cooperation, and for adhering to all SMM guidelines which allowed us to run the activity efficiently, smoothly and safely for everyone.

With a guide to participant ratio of 1 : 4, each group was dispatched every 30 minutes. This allowed us to run many back-to-back 1-hour trips throughout the event. Upon returning, participants were requested to leave the kayak "launch/finish" station immediately so that we could receive and admit the next group of 4 participants.

We ensured that there was no mingling among participants from different groups and that everyone was required to wear masks throughout the leisure activity. Even on the water, our guides ensured that their respective groups stayed away from the others, thereby maintaining a safe distance from each other. All the volunteer nature guides were masked up too even though we had to talk and share throughout the paddling session. It was not the most comfortable thing to do under the sunny weather but we managed well.

NSS has supported Pesta Ubin since the revival of Ubin Day in 2014 after a long hiatus. Many thanks to my fellow volunteer guides who have been doing this with me since 2014 and we are still very happy and excited to be back paddling along the mangrove-lined Sungei Jelutong. With the exception of 2020 due to the pandemic, this is our 7th year organising and running this popular activity with the logistics support from our friends from Kayakasia. We appreciate all the support given by Kayakasia and of course, my event co-organiser and fellow NSS member, Say Chong.

*Text by Lisa Lim*

*Photos by Lisa and volunteer guides*