

"Hey Hamburger, why so white ah?"

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MONDAY, 5 JUNE - My name is Lukas Tretau, I am 25 years old and I come from Hamburg in Northern Germany (my friends sometimes call me 'Hamburger' when they are hungry).

I just finished my mobility exchange programme between University of Hamburg and Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS). Being here in this beautiful state of Sabah for two semesters, I gained lots of friends and experiences.

After a long but enjoyable flight I was relaxed and landed in Kota Kinabalu. Then

the officer at KKIA informed me that my luggage unfortunately didn't leave Hong Kong International Airport and that it might come two or three days later. *Biarkan sahaja*, I am in the tropics why would I need clothes!

Not long after that news I met my supervisors and contact persons from the international office of UMS who were very welcoming and supportive in finding a shelter for this *orang putih* and helped me in applying for a student visa.

It did not take long until I found friends who took me around Kota Kinabalu to show me the world and extend my horizon (excuse the drama here).

We went to experience the chilly weather in Kundasang and the ice cream from Desa Cattle – it was amazing, felt like home with all the cows and the cool wind.

Another trip and another group of friends took me to Pantai Rang Bulan in Kota Belud. A beautiful and empty beach welcomed us there to do a boat tour through the reefs and enjoy life. Luckily this bunch of people also liked to *main-main* so it was easy to convince them doing some rides on the Banana Boat, another great day in paradise. I was very lucky to meet so many open-minded and open-hearted people just after my arrival, still being a total stranger.

Nowhere else have I experienced such a welcoming atmosphere.

Whether we just went out for *lepak-lepak* (seriously, I still do not understand how Malaysian people can stay up that long at night and wake up again early in the morning) or Karaoke (that was a surprise and not a nice one, I am a really bad singer!), to visit the Sabah Tea Garden or Kudat; everyone was determined to include and integrate me to make me feel home. Now I can say that Sabah and KK especially feels like my second home.

Yes, my friends even helped me look pretty – am I not *cantik*?!

During my time in Sabah I experienced a lot. Local Muslim wedding, numerous sport events, local traditional

cultural events in Membakut and also festivities like Japanese Cultural Night within UMS called 'Bon Odori'. Unfortunately I did not get to experience *Kaamatan* and *Hari Raya*. Sabah's culture is super diverse: it does not matter where you are from. You are here and you are welcomed! Many countries in Europe can learn from that.

Many years ago when I was still young - obviously I am very old now - I was very active in athletics, especially short distance sprinting. Therefore I took the chance of competing at the Sabah Open competition in Likas stadium in early September. I took part in the 100m sprint event and what all I could say I finished last! Maybe it was the weather, maybe it was the other's fault but honestly I assumed that the sad truth is, I was just out of shape and slow.

In October, UMS gave us the chance of participating in the 'International Students Sports Carnival' organised by HELP University held in Kuala Lumpur. We represented UMS in Futsal, Badminton and 4x100m relay. We managed to get a silver medal for the sprint with smiling faces and a huge amount of fun. Our glorious team consisted of European, African, Chinese, Polynesian and Malaysian athletes, it was a blast!

Next to this kind of sports that I did for a long time, I started to play Frisbee, the game that is often mistaken and understood as a game for dogs where you throw a plate and it needs to catch it. Actually it is for human. The players are great and I enjoyed every time we gather and 'go tossing'. A small committee managed to organise a tournament in UMS. It was my first Frisbee tournament and super tiring because I am white, old and fat but it was so much fun with an amazing atmosphere and sweating smiling faces.

I did not only do sports here, but also have been studying (sometimes). As a 'Geography International' student from Germany I enrolled in the HG20 programme, Nature Parks & Recreation. Awesome choice! A great class, very sporting lecturers and super enjoyable field trips to places throughout Sabah!

After I studied one semester in UMS in the forestry faculty, I started my internship at Sabah Parks. Working in the Tunku Abdul Rahman Park, I had to go to the islands sometimes because I did a small research study on the crowding there. Asking tourists of their opinions about the islands, and after that went sunbathing and swimming during lunch time, such a hard life, *kan?* Still I missed climbing Mount Kinabalu and also didn't make it to Pulau Tiga. So I guess I will have to come back, Sabah be ready!

I could go on for a long time because I had a great time and did a lot of things but I will save the rest for another time. Also, I played a (very small) role in one movie that is about to be released. I even got made-up for it, *comelnya!* That was really exciting and I was very nervous because I was in front of the camera and although I





usually talked people to death, that was something very new.

Before going back to my old life I felt like I wanted to do something worth remembering and so I managed to organise a sports event called triathlon (1st UMS Mini-Sprint Triathlon) with the great support of a number of friends from UMS. This event consists of swimming, cycling and running in one go. It is very

popular in Germany and very enjoyable (but exhausting) and so I wanted to share my passion and introduce it here. It was marvellous and a success because hey: no one died!

I must say good bye and *jumpa lagi* for now but I will be back and if you feel like wanting to visit Hamburg, *boleh bah kalau kau!*