

APRIL 2012 MAIDEN ISSUE

STEPS

THE NEWSLETTER OF
UPAAS **THE WALKERS**



THE WALKERS TURNS 5!

ABOUT US: History, objectives, organizers and more

WALKING TRAILS: Places we have trudged since 2007

SNAPSHOTS: Pictures from 2007 to present

REVIEWS: Musings, anecdotes, testimonials, etc.



A

The Walkers

Walk. Eat. Laugh.

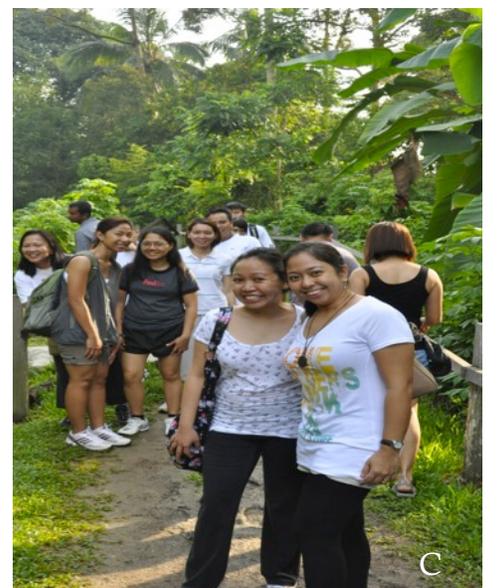
The Walkers is the recreational group of the University of the Philippines Alumni Association Singapore (UPAAS) which aims to encourage members to adopt a healthy lifestyle through walking. Once a month, our group organizes walks to explore interesting places in Singapore. The types of walk vary: from leisurely strolls on parks to theme-based trails such as heritage, academic, nature, night walks. Our group also conducts walks outside Singapore.

An active and fun-loving group, the *Walkers* is composed of UPAAS members and friends of different age groups with diverse backgrounds. We usually visit parks, check out historical sites, explore nature trails and discover notable locations in Singapore. We even visit museums from time to time. Occasionally, we venture further afield and explore new walking trails just to discover what these places have to offer. All our walks are free. We conclude our walks with hearty brunches and enjoy each other's company.

Since 2007, we have now completed more than 50 walks in different parts of Singapore, including an overseas walk in Malacca, Malaysia.



B



C

Objectives

Walking in group provides a relaxed way to meet friends and have fun while doing something healthy. We firmly believe that meeting new people and bonding while walking is equally important as getting some good exercise.

Our objectives are:

To encourage UPAAS members and friends to adopt a *healthy lifestyle*;

To be an *avenue* for UPAAS members who share the same interest to meet up;

To *discover* walking trails and nature walks in Singapore;

To have *hearty breakfast* after the walk;

To share stories about *Singapore, Philippines, etc.*



E



F



D

A. Arab Street (Dec 2011)

This is the third leg of our Heritage walk, after the KTM and Joo Chiat. Here we explored the Arab and Malay influence in Singapore.

B. NUS Walk (Sep 2011)

Second leg of our academic walk.

C. HSBC Treetop (Oct 2011)

One of the frequently visited trails of the Walkers, the HSBC Treetop is a great place if you want to try the hanging bridge within a forest.

D. KTM Track (Jul 2011)

After the closure of KTM Raidroad track, The Walkers immediately explored the green corridor.

E. Orchard Road (Dec 2011)

Christmas walk followed by a Christmas dinner, then watched a concert in Esplanade.

F. Pulau Ubin (May 2011)

Explored Check Jawa via walking and cycling then had a sumptuous lunch at Cheong Lian Yuen.

History

UPAAS

11 Jul 2003 - UPAAS get its accreditation from UPAA

27 Nov 2003 - ROS approved the UPAAS registration

10 Dec 2003 - UPAAS was officially registered and published in the Government's Gazette dated 26 Dec 2003

The Walkers

The idea of UPAAS Walk was mooted after the March 2007 AGM and upon the directive of Raymond Barlis, current (2007/08) UPAAS president and Butch Centeno, 2006/07 UPAAS president. Chippy Garcia, Kathryn Vasquez and Chi Ching spearheaded this initiative in 2007.

As of May 2011, the group has been renamed as **The Walkers**, a *UPAAS recreational group*.

Walking destinations and schedules are monitored by Denise Simbol, Nanette Villajos, Ed Vinluan and Chi Ching. The logo was designed by Marc Zara



G. ROS Submission (L-R)
Chi Ching, Mary Ann Chua, Margo
Encarnacion, Diane Jorolan, Katz Vasquez

H,I. First Walk (Singapore Botanic Gardens, 14 Apr 2007)
H: Chippy Garcia, Katz Vasquez, Portia Dizon-Ho, Chi Ching
I: 1st row: Portia, Katz, Chi, Myra Beltran
2nd row: Chippy, Lito Ocampo, Butch Centeno

Walking Trails

Since 2007, UPAAS' The Walkers have conducted more than 50 walks, going to places where our active feet take us - parks and gardens, academes, heritage sites, and even overseas! we have explored the nooks and crannies this tiny island has to offer!

Year	Walks
2007	9
2008	10
2009	12
2010	9
2011	13
2012	3
Total	56

Types of Walks	No of Walks
Parks and Gardens	26
Overseas	1
Nature Reserves	6
Urban	5
Islands	5
Heritage	5
Academic	2
Others	6
Grand Total	56

14-Apr-07	Singapore Botanic Gardens
21-Apr-07	Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve
12-May-07	Mount Faber Park
02-Jun-07	Fort Canning Park
07-Jul-07	Bukit Timah Nature Reserve
04-Aug-07	Changi Beach Park
08-Sep-07	Bukit Timah Nature Reserve
06-Oct-07	Pulau Ubin
10-Nov-07	Sentosa Cove
26-Jan-08	Fort Canning Park
23-Feb-08	Kent Ridge Park
15-Mar-08	Marina Bay - Keppel
05-Apr-08	Singapore Botanic Gardens
10-May-08	MacRitchie Reservoir Park (HSBC Treetop Walk)
07-Jun-08	Bukit Timah Nature Reserve
05-Jul-08	Hort Park and The Southern Ridges
16-Aug-08	East Coast Park
12-Sep-08	Pulau Ubin
18-Oct-08	MacRitchie Reservoir Park
17-Jan-09	Chinese Garden
14-Feb-09	Mountbatten and Tanjong Rhu
08-Mar-09	Bishan Park (1 and 2)
25-Apr-09	Pasir Ris Park
23-May-09	Singapore River
27-Jun-09	Little Guilin and Bukit Batok
27-Jul-09	Bedok Reservoir Park
22-Aug-09	Ang Mo Kio Town Garden West
12-Sep-09	Clementi Woods Park
10-Oct-09	East Coast Park
14-Nov-09	Hort Park and The Southern Ridges
12-Dec-09	Orchard Road (Christmas Walk)
30-Jan-10	Malacca, Malaysia (2D Overseas Walk)
20-Feb-10	MacRitchie Reservoir Park (HSBC Treetop Walk)
20-Mar-10	Marina Barrage
17-Apr-10	Singapore Botanic Gardens (with Dr. Ben Tan)
28-May-10	Hort Park and The Southern Ridges
19-Jun-10	MacRitchie Reservoir Park
04-Sep-10	Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve
10-Sep-10	Singapore Zoo
27-Nov-10	Pulau Ubin





- 29-Jan-11 Marina Bay - MBS
- 19-Feb-11 Bukit Timah Nature Reserve
- 05-Mar-11 Labrador Park
- 23-Apr-11 East Coast Park
- 14-May-11 Pulau Ubin - Check Jawa Wetland Reserve
- 22-May-11 ComChest Charity Walk
- 23-Jul-11 KTM Railroad Tracks (Repeat on 30-Jul)
- 23-Aug-11 Nanyang Technological University
- 24-Sep-11 National University Singapore
- 02-Oct-11 MacRitchie Reservoir Park (HSBC Treetop Walk)
- 12-Nov-11 Joo Chiat
- 03-Dec-11 Arab Street and Kampong Glam
- 17-Dec-11 Orchard Road (Christmas Walk)
- 28-Jan-12 Chinatown
- 18-Feb-12 Little India
- 24-Mar-12 Hort Park and The Southern Ridges

J,K Chinatown Heritage Walk (Jan 2012)
L. Hort Park (Mar 2012)





Meet The Organizers

Think they only do walking? Think again.

Get to know the faces behind "The Walkers" and the sports and recreation activities that they do.

Chi Ching is a ladies' "A" team captain for 8 years in NUSS Guild House. She is also active in the Singapore Inter-Club and women's tennis circuit. Apart from that, she was a UP Tennis Varsity Team from 1973 to 1975.

Ed Vinluan ran two full marathons in Singapore and Malaysia, trekked three mountains in Malaysia and Indonesia including Mt. Kinabalu (13,435ft); all these in 2011. He likes playing guitar in his spare time.

Nannette Villajos plays bowling and table tennis. She also participates in several running events in Singapore. These days she is busy catching up on her reading and returning to her first love: creative writing..

Denise Simbol is a member of the Canadian Dragons Singapore, one of the expat dragon boat teams in Singapore. She has trained in Filipino boxing and has been running since 2009. She will run her second half marathon this month.



Review: KTM Tracks

23rd July 2011 – Ed Vinluan

Life is hard; it's like walking on a railroad track in flip flops.

Upon the arrival of "the late" Ka Tong (8:15AM) our KTM heritage walk finally kicked off. The Bukit Timah Railway Station, which opened in 1915 was the starting point of our 3km walk. Everyone was excited to explore this unfamiliar course, a view far different from the landscape outside its corridors. We had our customary group picture taken first, this time by a very good photographer Arnold, our latest UPAAS recruit and a member of PinoyGraphers.

The moment I saw the "long and winding" track, I immediately realized that it won't be an easy walk. You'll find handful (maybe feetful) of detached sole of shoes along the track. My poor flip flops seemed no match to the uneven bed of rocks surrounding the steel rails. But life must go on, and so our walk.

Families, barkadas, different groups of walkers like us were also present, maybe to check the railway one last time before it goes into the pages of Singapore's history books. We passed by the truss bridge at Bt Timah Rd where we snapped some pictures again. We saw countless distance markings, old signal lights, electrical boxes, and more. Seeing all these remnants along the way, I was imagining scenes of a typical day along the KTM tracks. I was picturing at the back of my mind the life of the people and the community that exists on these tracks for the past 80 years. That gave me nostalgia, something poignant about the place. (Though I don't have much memories here except the KTM train ride I took from Tanjong Pagar to Johor Bahru one day before it's final trip).

After an hour, we reached in a valley (next to Bukit Timah Nature Reserve where lush green trees are everywhere). That 'green spine' was so serene and very refreshing to look at. Canopy of trees framing the railway reminds me of the academic oval in the Diliman campus. You'll find lots of birds flying around the railway, some even walked with us.

Towards the end of our walk, the kids within us came out as we found a cool and high signal light. Each one of us climbed that post and have our pics taken.

The walk lasted two hours. Then we went to Loida's home for brunch. Armed with DSLRs (I think four of them), we were stopped by the guard at the gate thinking that we were having a shoot of the condo. But all was settled after the guard saw Loida's banquet prepared. Arroz caldo, adobo, longganisa, pandesal, lugaw, and more were served. We walk more, we eat more! Excited on the outcome of our photoshoot (aka walk) we watched the pictures in TV (see Flickr link below for the pics). We all had laughs on the pictures. We packed-up around 1PM already.

A landmark of the industrial growth in the early 1900, the KTM railway is now just an silent station, abandoned posts, and rusty tracks. It is now just a memory.. And as I reflect on my busy and sometimes stressful life in the midst of the railway, I realized one thing: everything has an end. Everything in life, from the words of King Solomon is meaningless. Soon, we'll all be forgotten. Life is hard, it's like walking on a railroad track in flip flops. So let's make the most in this life's journey.

And yes, my flip flops have survived.





Review: Check Jawa – Pulau Ubin

14th May 2011 – Ed Vinluan

I arrived early to catch the morning sun along Changi Beach while waiting for my fellow walkers. Sunrise was indeed breathtaking at the coastline. While I was taking photos by the promenade, heavy rain suddenly poured. It took twenty minutes before the rain finally ceased. Then we all congregated at Changi Jetty Point. Seeing the rainbow as a sign, we embarked in the bumboat and headed towards Singapore's last kampung. Only ten minutes from mainland, we reached Pulau Ubin.

Colorful Chinese lanterns matched with bright colored banners greeted us in the jetty. I learned that they're celebrating Tua Pek Kong Festival in honor of Tua Pek Kong, a Chinese Taoist deity considered as the guardian of the island by the villagers. After our customary group picture, we started our 3.3 kilometers journey towards Check Jawa wetlands. The air was so refreshing, especially after the rain. Free from urban development, the simplicity of life in this quintessential kampung can be felt. It was like taking a step back in time, the old Singapore landscape: old wooden houses, lush trees, swamps, and of course, spiders (it reminded me of spider fightings we usually enjoy when I was still a kid). After forty minutes kampung-walk, we finally reached Check Jawa wetlands.

We rest for a while at a 1930s Tudor-style house, now turned visitor center in Check Jawa. While waiting for the rest of the walkers, we took some more pictures of the area, and ourselves as well. Then, we started to stroll the 1.1 kilometer coastal boardwalk loop. You can find a lot in the rich ecosystem of the wetlands: mangrove forests, sea plants, coastal sands, coral rubbles, nipahs and more. Then we hiked the seven-storey viewing tower (Jejawin Tower) to have a better view of Check Jawa, all the way to the Straits of Johor. After that, we head back for lunch near the jetty. Three of us decided to jog back, Hector cycled while the rest took the village taxi. While jogging, I was stopped by the entralling scenery of the quarry lake. The blue-green waters and the cliff was so beautiful that I snapped some photos before I went back. Then, we had all lunch at Cheong Lian Yuen's place. We left Pulau Ubin at 1pm.

Today's my first time in Pulau Ubin and definitely, it's not the last.



Review: Singapore Zoo

23rd Oct 2010 – Ed Vinluan

It was a bit hazy when we went to Singapore Zoo yesterday for our regular morning walk. Sixteen young-at-heart walkers showed up despite the difficulty of waking up early and the remoteness of the location. We all met at the entrance and started the walk/tour with of course, a group picture taken while we're still fresh looking. We just started the walk but the kamustahan seems never-ending. Chippy, our ever reliable and ever patient tour guide had a hard time keeping us all in pace because we were really slow. Like little ones, we were amazed by all the animals we've seen along the way: kangaroo, white tigers, otters, warthog, giraffes, orangutans to name a few. We learned a lot as well. Most of us can now differentiate alligators and crocodiles. We were even debating whether the lifeless-like croc in the water was real or not. Of course we never failed to take some snaps of ourselves with these animals.

We discovered different types of vegetables in the Tropical Crops Plantation section of the zoo. We tried to spot all the plants in the children song "Bahay Kubo". We've seen talong, sitaw, patola, luya, and more. We were more thrilled to see the beautiful orchids in the Orchid Garden.

Like a kid, Charlet was saddened when she found out that Panda are still not in the zoo. It's her dream to see those gentle creatures. Seeing a sun bear though made her smile again.

The child within us were all unleashed when we saw two elephants crossing our path. Faces beamed with fascination. Some ran with glee to ensure they could get some snaps besides the elephants (though scared). We even greeted "Komali" the elephant a hello. We all laugh as we turned into kids at that very moment.

Another instance was when we heard two monkeys talking to each other in a loud whooping sound. Hector tried to interpret the conversation to us. Some tried to converse with the monkeys as well by mimicking their whooping.

We finished the walk at 11AM, just right for our feeding time (in zoo terminology). All of us, fifteen adult walkers, unanimously decided to have our brunch, where else but Kid World Zone (we feel we belong there). We all went to KFC and ordered fried chicken (we all love fried chicken) and more, courtesy of our bday celebrants Chi and Chippy. We all sang happy birthday then Chi and Chippy blew the candles in the cake. The bday party won't be complete without slices of banana cakes for tapao courtesy of the birthday celebrant Chi.

Age is really just a number.



Snapshots: 2010-2012

From: L-R, T-B
Tong Meditation @ NTU Walk
Charlie's Angel @ Christmas Walk
Brunch after Hort Park Walk, with our youngest walker
War Remnants @ Labrador Park
Group Pic at Orchard Rd
Crossing street @ Chinatown

Singapore Botanic Gardens:
In front of Tembusu Tree (the tree in your \$5 bill),
Chippy stopping the rotation of the ball,
Dr. Ben Tan giving guided tour





Snapshots: First Year

From: L-R, T-B

3rd Mar 07, Singapore Heart Foundation, Marina Park
14th Apr 07, Singapore Botanic Gardens
21st Apr 07, Sungei Buloh

12th May 07, Mount Faber
2nd Jun 07, Fort Canning Park
4th Aug 07, Changi Village Boardwalk & Changi Beach

6th Oct 07, Pulau Ubin
10th Nov 07, Sentosa Cove Walk
26th Jan 08, Fort Canning Park

23rd Feb 08, NUS Keng Ridge Park
15th Mar 08, Marina@Keppel
5th Apr 08, Singapore Botanic Gardens



The UPAAS walk experience is superb! I commend Ma'am Chi for taking the lead for five years, greatly enjoy the company of the walkers!!!

Olive B.

I enjoyed my first walk a lot(from Hort Park to Faber then movie at Vivo). The walkers were very welcoming, I felt at home.

Jennel S.

UPAAS Walk is habit forming. It allows you to better appreciate the uniqueness of Singapore together with great companionship and great food!

Nowella L.

UPAAS walks make me get up early in the morning so as not to be late but it's ok, for a change of my weekend. Hehe. It's always nice to catch up with friends and meet new ones. It's the bonding and fun that maket it worthwhile.

Jean M.

Thank You Everyone

It's like a haven or tambayan on foot. The places may change, but the company is always a welcome sight.

Hector S.

UPAAS walks were a great way for me to see Singapore sights, plus get out of the house and be active. Also I got to know fellow walkers better .

My testimonial can be that I liked and enjoyed the UPAAS walks and fellow walkers' company so much that I'm willing to host the Hong Kong walk

Mark Y.

Testimonials

As they say, walking is a great exercise. But there's more to it if you join the UPAAS walkers. I was able to meet and make new friends, chat with them about almost anything under sun. I got to see very nice places in Singapore and eat amazing meals with the crew. So if you don't want your Saturdays to be ordinary, come and join the walkers.

Cherry M.

I like the walks as it is a very playful and relaxed venue to get in touch with friends. Add to this the nice surprises we somtimes see on walks.

Chippy G.

exploring wonderful places with awesome people, learning history and wonderful experiences from great minds while pampering my body thru an enjoyable exercise.... that 's how I describe every step i have only @ the UPASS walk

Charie D.

*I went for health, to find friendship, food and fotography! Happy anniversary and many thanks to Chi ;**

Loida C.

I'm a lazy walker and I can't recall exactly how many UPAAS walks i've joined through the years. I vividly remember five of the walks though - and that's because of the brunch that followed right after. The bonding over the meal, more than the walk itself, did it for me! Either lakaran or kainan ang gusto mo, sama na!

Cindy Z.

Congrats for 5 years and more..! Thanks to the efforts and dedication of Chi @ the group to make this happen. And welcoming everyone of UPAAS @ friends (including me). In many ways its a very worthwhile endeavor..getting to know our adopted country, catching up with news from the Phil and promoting healthy lifestyle (dunno about that...what with a sumptuous meal every time .. LOL)

Amy O.

Testimonials

I know what it takes to organize a 'walk' and to have a 'walk' once a year is already considered a blessing. In UPAAS, it's indeed fantastic to have the chance to join a walk every month. What else can you ask from Ms. Chi and her team? You only need to be physically present and everything is taken care of including a wake up call if you wish. The camaraderie is fantastic as well as the chance to get to know alumni from different 'walks of life.' Happy 5th year Anniversary UPAAS Walkers and may you continue to bless us to enjoy this opportunity of outdoor walk with added benefits to our social life.

Amie M.

When I arrived in SG in 2008, one of the first things I wanted to do was to find a recreation group that was into sports or outdoor activities. My batchmate Gene Navera recruited me into UPAAS and that's when I learned about the Walkers Group. The first walk that I joined in was the 'Heart Walk' (I'm not sure though if this was a Walkers Group walk) where I met for the first time, Guen, Len, Ka Tong, Nanette and hubby, and Ms Minnie. The scheduled monthly Saturday walks provided an opportunity for me to meet equally interesting people and become friends with Denise, Guen, Len, Nanette and Ms Chi (my Ate). I like the idea of walking with a purpose to get to know Singapore, and of course, I especially enjoy the walk-then-free brunch. Happy 5th anniversary to the Walkers Group. See you in HK in Oct. Let's walk and conquer the world!

Charlet Q.

Kudos to you and the group for organizing this as one of the most (if not the most) regular and longest surviving group/interest activity for UPAAS. I still remember that one fine AGM day when Chi gave an introductory talk about the group and its intentions.

A big milestone indeed having reached 5 years! Open to all 'walks' (pun intended!) of life - Filipinos, Singaporeans, other nationalities, graduates and non-graduates of U.P. alike, it has come a long way promoting our adopted country's heritage and modern trails to inculcate a healthy lifestyle regime in our otherwise busy schedules. Congrats and all the best for the next five years and beyond!

Ernan B.

Well done! The UPAAS Walkers' monthly early morning two hour treks followed by brunch in a nearby area is for me an "I-look-forward-to-event" every month.

First, the company. It is a joy to discover many parts of Singapore with UPAAS friends.

Second, it is informal and we get to know each other better as we walk and chat and laugh and eat. We are not confined in a space so you really get to know each other.

Third, you have knowledgeable guides and photographers! If you want your love ones to know what you have been up to, just send them the UPAAS Flickr link and voila, they will see what you are up to!

Fourth, you are free to suggest new areas or themes for the walk-- hence we had the University walk around NTU and NUS. We had Heritage Walks in Joo Chiat/Katong Area, Arab Street, Chinatown, and Little India. I climbed the HSBC Tree Top Walk but prefer the Hort Park- Henderson- Telok Blangah Canopy Walk. There was that Changi Point Walk and then of course the Pulau Ubin Trail.

Fifth, Chi always recce's the place first before we go, so you will sure-footed, you will not fall and know exactly where you will be going. **Sixth**, the walk is good for your health. It is a de-stress factor, breath in fresh air, enjoy the jokes and just be yourself.

Lastly... that is for you to discover...

Mary Ann C.

Thank You

We would like to thank everyone who became our **Food Sponsors** in one way or another: PP Mary Ann, Portia, Butch, Ernan, Howie, Minnie, and Joni. Thanks also to Loida, Amie, Margo E, Cristy, Olive, Ruby C, and Chippy. To FrUPPAS Amy O. Jane V as well. And for Susan for always cooking for us everytime we visit Chi's place.

And for everyone we missed,
Maraming Salamat.



UPAAS Walk

by Sherren Manaois

I

Ang walk ang unang activity na aking sinalihan
Sa UPAAS na isang kakaibang samahan
Sa gilid ng kalsada dun sa may Marina
Nag-antayan at nagkita-kita.

II

First impression lasts ika nga! (OKs pala itoh!)
Napabilib ako nina Ma'am Chi at Ma'am Portia
Nina Ma'am Amy, Sir Butch, Nanette at iba pa
Kaya naman pagsali ko ay naging tuluy-tuloy na.

III

Sumunod kong nakita sina Xty at Ma'am Loida
Na sa simula pa lang ay mai-impress ka na
Di lang sa talino, sa kaseksihan at ganda
Lalo na sa kabaitan at kababaang-loob pa.

IV

Ang ibang miyembro ay sunud-sunod ko'ng nakilala
Nakabonding at nakwentuhan ang marami sa kanila
Pagkakaiba sa edad at katayuan sa buhay ay walang wala
Pagkat sila'y parang kapuso, kapamilya at katropa.

V

Kaya naman payo ko sa mga bagong miyembro
Kung kayo ay nahihiya pang makihalubilo
Ang "walk" din ang unang aktibidad na samahan niyo
Sa isang oras na lakaran, agam-agam niyo'y burado!

Upcoming Walks

05 May – TBA

02 Jun - Bare Your Sole Walk

21 Jul - TBA

26 Aug – ComChest Walk

26-28 Oct – Hong Kong Walk

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STEPS: The Newsletter of the
UPAAS The Walkers

Prepared by: Ed



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and Chi



The Walkers

a UPAAS recreation group