

# Mum of two on a nature quest

**Peak achievement:**  
Sumathi atop  
Mount  
Kinabalu.



By JEANNE SYLVESTER  
brats@thestar.com.my

NATURE holds a special place in Sumathi Narayanasamy's heart – so much so that she is willing to traverse physically demanding terrain just to experience its beauty.

In fact, she has done it multiple times, conquering world-renowned peaks such as Mount Kinabalu in Sabah, Mount Fuji in Japan and the Everest Base Camp in Nepal.

"A sense of fulfilment filled me when I reached the top. I just love being in solitude and witnessing God's greatest blessing from the mountains," she said, reflecting on her 2022 hike up Mount Kinabalu, the first mountain she ever climbed.

Of all her ascents, the 48-year-old considers her 2024 trek to the Everest Base Camp – 5,364 metres above sea level – her most challenging.

"It was a gruelling hike due to the elevation and extreme cold, but the views were magnificent, unlike anything I had ever experienced," she recalled.

Sumathi's love for nature has spanned decades. It began in childhood, when she would admire the greenery and beauty surrounding her home from the rooftop – a vantage point that sparked her interest in mountain climbing.

However, it was only after the movement control order was lifted following the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021 that she began to take her childhood dream seriously, first by joining a hik-

ing group on social media.

Learning from the experiences of seasoned hikers motivated her further, eventually leading her to scale Mount Kinabalu.

There has been no looking back since, as she continues to explore mountains both at home and abroad – each experience, she said, pushing her to persevere and savour the surreal feeling of reaching the summit.

Conceding that endless complications can occur during a mountain hike, sometimes making the experience "traumatic", she shared that she once got separated from her team in the Bukit Chenuang jungle in Selangor while it was raining heavily during their descent.

Relying on her resilience, she followed the river stream for three hours.

"It was scary, but an adrenaline-filled experience I will never forget," she said, adding that all her boot camp exercises had paid off as she was able to maintain her stamina throughout the hike.

Sumathi said mountain climbing had changed her perspective on life and the environment, teaching her to be responsible for keeping her surroundings clean.

"It's people's choices that reflect on the environment. A simple gesture to give back to Mother Nature would be to avoid littering," she said.

To keep her passion alive, Sumathi, a mother of two teenagers, thrives on being a multitasker – she plans her hikes during weekends and holidays, and

does weekly outdoor boot camp workouts, plays badminton and goes for runs to build her stamina. Exercising by taking the stairs in her condominium is also her go-to workout.

On the most important skill a mountain climber should have, she underscored the importance of mental and physical strength, especially during tough situations marked by fatigue and discomfort.

"Resilience is also required to push you through the climb," she shared.

She added that to stay motivated during long hikes, one should never compare one's climbing pace with others.

"Everyone is different, with their own pace and physical capacity. It is good to take breaks and slow down when you need to," she cautioned.

To beginners, she recommended joining hiking groups.

"The support of experienced hikers definitely helps to ease jitters and plays a positive role in creating new friendships," she said, adding that training the muscles consistently is another thing beginners should do.

Moving forward, Sumathi said she intends to "keep climbing, one step at a time".

Jeanne, 17, a student in Selangor, is a participant of the BRATS Young Journalist Programme run by *The Star's* Newspaper-in-Education (Star-NiE) team. For updates on the BRATS programme, go to [facebook.com/niebrats](https://facebook.com/niebrats).