

GET READY FOR A NEW MOUNTAINTOP ADVENTURE.

By this time, paying customers would have already experienced Mountain Torq, the world's highest and Asia's first via ferrata, a mountain path consisting of a series of rungs and cables embracing the face of the 4,095-meter high Mt. Kinabalu, creating a protected pathway where the more daring outdoor adventurers can walk on.

This system allows access to scenic sections of Mt. Kinabalu, the highest mountain in the Southeast Asian region, even if the adventurer is not a hardcore rock climber or mountaineer. In fact, the adventure is open to climbers and non-climbers aged 10 to 70 — provided that the adventurer is fit and healthy, unafraid of heights and in need of a new mountain adventure.

Overweight people are a no-no, unfortunately.

Rising from 3,200 to 3,800 meters, making it the highest in the world as the highest in Europe, where the via ferrata originated during the first world war when soldiers used it to move around the Alps, reaches to only up to 3,600 meters high.

This Asian via ferrata will enable people of all ages to enjoy climbing Mt. Kinabalu's faces, giving them alternative routes and view the mountain from totally different angles than the normal climb route.

Adventure Factors Mountaineering Centre (AFMC), which was founded by a group of mountain climbers with an average 10 years' climbing experience, actually registered the company in 2006 but will started operations only last month as the company spent the last year building the course up there in the mountain.

"We are just centered on Mt. Kinabalu because of its granite rock face at the top, that is our area of expertise and there is so much we can do and offer to climbers using this surface. Mt. Kinabalu is rare in the sense that it is high but there is no snow and therefore no avalanches, it is very ideal and at the same time Sabah is accessible to neighboring Asian countries and beyond," said I-Gek Quek, from AFMC.

The route they use is different from the normal route going up to the peak.

"The Mt. Kinabalu guides will take climbers up to Laban Rata, about six kilometers up and from there, we take over and use our routes — either Walk the Torq which is for beginners about 350 meters long, the preamble for advanced group which is a three to four hours of one kilometer distance route that goes all the way up to 3,800 meters coming from 3,200 meters, or go from Laban Rata to Low's Peak. And there are even other alternative routes we can use," she added.

Aside from the six hour prior climb up to Laban Rata and the actual via ferrata route, the other challenge that would face a climber is the cold weather up there, around 20 degrees Celsius. But then the panoramic view from the top enabling one to see all the way to Kota Kinabalu and South China Sea, is worth it.

Their targeted market are the people who normally go up to Mt. Kinabalu and offer them other alternatives once they reach Laban Rata, or even from Low's Peak, they can take the via ferrata going down.

"We are focusing on both local and foreign market, and by the end of the year, we should be able to complete the construction of a 20-

Mountain Torq

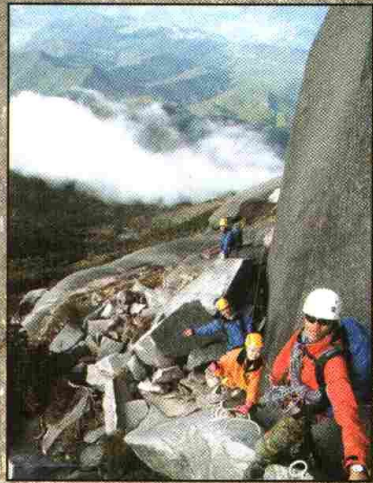
guest hostel of our own to be called the Pendant Hut."

Aside from the Mountain Torq, AFMC, which will become South East Asia's first mountaineering training center, also offers other activities like introductory sessions in single and multi pitch sports climbing, level 1 and 2 sport climbing, rappelling and rope ascending plus Alpine rock climbing.

Cost for the Walk the Torq is around ₱1560, the Preamble is around ₱3120 while the Low's Peak route will cost in the vicinity of ₱3600. The other packages range from around ₱2000 to ₱6500 and this does not include the other fees and insurance one pays going up to Mt. Kinabalu.

Costs may be high for some people but then, this kind of mountain adventure is also guaranteed to give one a big high.

A New Experience



By LITO CINCO
Photos: Adventure Factors Mountaineering Centre

