

AUTOVENTURE AMBASSADOR

Bubbly and energetic Chang Jie Lin is the latest face to front Autoventure. *Highway* catches up with the 23-year-old undergraduate after her 6D5N adventure in Penang and Hat Yai.



IN THE CONTEST TO BE THE NEXT AUTOVENTURE (AV) AMBASSADOR, WHAT DO YOU THINK MADE YOUR VIDEO ENTRY STAND OUT?

I had just returned from a road trip to Europe when I learnt of the competition. I decided to compete, and improvised with the shots I had and matched each scene with a voiceover that answered the competition question, "What makes a convoy adventure different?" I believe they liked that personal touch.

WHAT ARE YOUR DUTIES AS AN AV AMBASSADOR?

I had to produce a video of the 6D5N trip and share my experiences on social media such as Facebook, Instagram

EVERYONE SHOULD TRY IT (AN AV TRIP) AT LEAST ONCE BECAUSE THERE ARE ALWAYS SURPRISES OR SOMETHING NEW DOWN THE ROAD.

(IG) and YouTube. It was easy because participants were given a Roampass gadget for unlimited Wi-Fi connectivity. While in the car, we used the travel time to promote our IG stories and upload images via Roampass.

WHAT QUALITIES SHOULD AN AV AMBASSADOR POSSESS?

'Friendly', 'pleasant', 'inquisitive' and 'open-minded' are adjectives

that come to mind. He or she should be able to relax, be flexible, and enjoy the process rather than just focusing on reaching the destination. I enjoyed it when we were approaching each spot, when it transitions from roads and trees to the *kampungs*.

SHARE SOME HIGHLIGHTS OF YOUR FIRST AV TRIP.

Being a city girl, it was refreshing to experience rural life during the trip. My favourite part was visiting Kuala Sepetang Fishing Village, an hour's drive from Penang and inaccessible via public transport. Our guide pointed out how the people on each boat were catching a different type of fish; we also witnessed eagles being

fed. Every Chinese New Year, my mother buys giant pomelos from Ipoh's Tambun Pomelo Farm, which we visited on this trip. And Makro Wholesale Store was a dream come true for snack lovers. I fell in love with the food in Penang. I woke up early to try the island's famous Hokkien prawn noodles – some stalls open as early as 6am. I saw brown bananas at the morning markets and tasted *cempedak* for the first time!

WHAT MAKES AV TRIPS DIFFERENT FROM OTHER ROAD TRIPS?

On road trips, people are usually confined to their cars and often get lost even though they are armed with a map. AA Autoventure trips are organised and systematic. The convoy is led by a knowledgeable AA expedition leader, who is able to direct participants to interesting places beyond those listed in the itinerary. An expedition leader with good local knowledge is also vital for avoiding jams. For my recent trip to Penang and Hat Yai, we faced the weekend crowd after crossing the Thai border on the way to Makro. So our expedition leader took us down side streets, avoiding the main roads and, before we knew it, we had arrived. I felt well taken care of – thanks to the group personal accident insurance, walkie talkies to communicate between cars, and the presence of a recovery team in case of breakdowns – and was not worried about getting lost at all.

WHEN DID THE TRAVEL BUG FIRST BITE YOU?

My family has only gone on guided tours. My epiphany occurred in June 2017 while on a month-long visit to Europe with friends. We took road trips around Norway, Iceland and Netherlands. While we were in the Netherlands, we drove for two hours from the city of Amsterdam to Efteling Theme Park and spent the day with the locals – the landscape and peacefulness were so different; I realised then how much there was to explore.

WHAT IS SO REWARDING ABOUT TRAVELLING?

Travelling with friends is rewarding because I get to discover their habits and pet peeves, since we are together for so many hours. We learn more about each other through communication, respect and trust. I realised how understanding and considerate my friends were when I learnt how they gave my boyfriend and I 'couple time' whenever possible.

SHARE A COMMON MISCONCEPTION ABOUT TRAVELLING.

People often feel that you have to be rich to travel. Trips are affordable when you book early, plan well and pool with friends to split the cost. We maintained a budget of \$4,000 per person for an entire month in Europe, inclusive of air fare, car rental, accommodation, food and activities, with occasional splurges on apartments located outside the city to catch sunsets and sunrises.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE SOMEONE KEEN TO BE THE NEXT AV AMBASSADOR?

Firstly, get sufficient sleep the night before a trip to stay awake during the journey because that is part of the fun, so you can chat with your friends and observe



the surroundings. Secondly, be curious, have a sense of adventure and ask a lot of questions.

MY ROLE AS AN AV AMBASSADOR IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE...

Through my experience, people will know what it's like to experience an AV holiday with AA. Everyone should try it at least once because there are always surprises or something new down the road.

MY LIFE MOTTO IS...

You only live once. Live in the moment; enjoy what you have today.

CATCH THE CLIP

Scan the QR code on the right to watch Jie Lin's 6D5N Autoventure experience in Penang and Hat Yai.

