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# Celebrating away from family

## Students celebrate Mid-Autumn Festival with friends

**T**HE Mid-Autumn Festival, also known as the Lantern Festival, Mooncake Festival or 'Zhongqiu', has traditionally been a family affair.

In Chinese culture, mooncakes are shared among family members as its round shape symbolises unity in a family.

Even in present times, the celebration is still observed even when family members are miles away from home.

### Friends are family

For university students, friends and classmates may even be considered one's own family when celebrating a festival.

Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) graduate Adrian Wong and his friends celebrated the Mid-Autumn festival every year together when they were in college.

"As the timing of the festival usually comes right in the middle of our semester, it was inconvenient for most of us to travel home to be with our families," said Wong, 23, who hails from Sibu, Sarawak.

"The idea started with only four of us, who were classmates in our foundation course.

"Over time, we invited more people to join, and the group expanded to 15."



**Really big:**  
Specially designed giant lanterns on display at the 1Malaysia Lantern Tourism Festival outside Central Market, Kuala Lumpur.



The group of friends, who studied broadcasting in the UTAR Petaling Jaya campus, had their celebrations at the home of a friend who lived nearby.

"As broadcasting students, we had to borrow equipment for our group projects and we normally stored them at this friend's house," explained Isaiah Saw, 22, who is from Taiping.

"The family was very kind to allow us to celebrate at their place every year as we dropped by regularly," said Saw.

Female classmates Lee Yong, 24, and Wai Leng, 22, also joined in the annual gathering, which would consist of a simple dinner, sharing of

mooncakes and strolling around the neighbourhood carrying paper lanterns.

"It was a great time for bonding among friends," said Wai Leng, who admits that they still met up occasionally, even though most of them were working.

### 'Break a leg'

Some others have played bigger roles in Mid-Autumn celebrations, like Universiti Putra Malaysia's (UPM) Zhong Hua Arts and Cultural Association students.

The association was invited to take part in a number of activities at the 1Malaysia Lantern Tourism Festival this year, which was held at Central Market, Kuala Lumpur for two weeks.

One of the highlights at the opening ceremony on Sept 14 was a traditional dance performance by the Xuan Dance Club, which comes under the association.

"This dance is called the *gao yuan qing* and it is a traditional Tibetan dance," explained 22-year old Chai Kah Mun, who hails from Raub, Pahang.

She is one of seven students who performed the dance, characterised by energetic, yet graceful move-

ments of the long sleeves of their colourful costumes.

"The costumes are fully hand-made.

"Our teacher helped us so much, so we wanted to do our very best," added Koh Chui San, another 22-year old student from Malacca.

For this performance, the students practised diligently every night, even in the absence of their supervising teacher.

"We were very excited about this performance.

"We have performed at many university events before, but this is our biggest one yet," said 22-year old Elizabeth Wong from Bentong, Pahang.

The group's effort was acknowledged when they received resounding applause from a packed crowd in front of Central Market at the end of their performance.

The association's other students also managed several booths at the event including the *diabolo* (Chinese yo-yo) workshop.

### Foreign lands

For some, travelling abroad to acquaint themselves with the Mid-Autumn Festival celebrations, is one way of gaining experience and learn-

ing of the way things are done overseas.

Choo Jia Yi, 23, volunteered to work at the Moon Lantern Festival event in 2012, organised by OzAsia Festival in Adelaide, Australia.

"I wanted to experience celebrating the Mid Autumn Festival in another country.

"I actually knew about the event when I was in Adelaide in 2009.

"But I only decided to check it out last year as I was about to graduate," she said.

From Choo's description, the event was in many ways similar to the annual celebrations at Central Market, Kuala Lumpur.

"The event was huge! The main attraction was probably the parade, where they displayed giant modern lanterns. Some were even designed after cartoon characters," said Choo.

Many food stalls were set up featuring all kinds of food from various Asian cuisines, with fireworks adding a grand finale at the end of the event.

"It was an interesting experience to see how Australians celebrated the occasion.

"I also got to meet people from many countries and made new friends," she added.

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### Telling everyone a story

A group of college students recently made it their mission to share their Malaysian stories with passers-by at a mall. Clad in brightly coloured T-shirts with the words "Ask me to tell you a story", the group made their



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way to Publika Mall in Solaris Dutamas, Kuala Lumpur.



### Star Wars wayang kulit

Tintoy Chuo, who specialises in character design and interactive content, has designed a wayang kulit in the form of the famous Star Wars characters. Believing that traditional wayang kulit is too old fashioned to capture younger audiences, Chuo decided to merge the traditional culture with a modern character known globally.



Intriguing: Dancers of the Xuan Dance Club performing the Tibetan cultural dance.



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