

SPEED

DEMONS

*Thrill seekers have been whooping it up
on jet-skis for some years now
and its popularity shows no signs of abating.
Salina Mohamed braves the waves to find out what it's all about*

Pictures by John Ong & Kenny Yap



"Have you ever been on a jet-ski before?" The Mines Resort's watersports attendant Ruhaizad Shairi asks as I climb onto the jet-ski and seat myself behind him. No, I reply. "Don't worry," he assures me, "Jet-skiing is easy. You're going to like it."

With that, he speeds off. The craft shoots forward and I find myself screaming my head off as we go through a few gravity-defying sharp turns. "Hey, that's only 45 miles per hour," he chuckles as we slow down. "We haven't reached 60 yet."

It's the fear and excitement that get people hooked on this thrilling watersport. Yes, so we've read the news about the by-law and the accidents. We know the dangers.

But the number of jet-ski owners continues to increase.

Ed Salman Kassim, The Mines Resort's Club Manager says, "The resort is packed on weekends, especially on school holidays as the crowds (who come to watch) are typically made up of youngsters."

"A craft can carry two to three people. Jet-ski owners are mostly professionals who are members of the watersports club. They bring their own machines to the resort on weekends. Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim (the Deputy Prime Minister) used to jet-ski at The Mines until early 1995. Perhaps he is too preoccupied to come down again," he adds.

To go into jet-skiing, the first thing you should have is the machine itself. Its price ranges from

RM19,000 to RM26,000. There are three types of jet-skis. The 'roundabout' is capable of reaching 60mph, but the craft can go faster with a few modifications. The roundabout is the easiest machine to handle. Bigger in size, it is good for beginners. Just sit on it, press the the ignition button and speed away. Not surprisingly, it is very popular among jet-ski lovers.

The 60mph 'stand-up' jet-ski is a favourite of the staff of The Mines. It is more flexible as it is smaller, lighter and the steering is highly adjustable. To ride it, one has to either kneel or stand. The stand-

(right)
Ed Salman
Kassim

(below)
Azizi on a
stand-up
jet-ski





up can be used to make a quick "dive" into the water and generally perform some fantastic stunts. The Mines uses models such as Sea Doo GTX, Sea Doo XP, Tiger Shark and Kawasaki EXI. Most of them are imported from Canada and the United States.

The fastest model is the 'sports class'. It's not much different from the roundabout or the stand-up except that it goes faster than 60mph because it is made for racing.

Owning a jet-ski alone is not enough. A life-jacket is a good precaution. Wet-suits are not necessary owing to our warm waters. Just wear the appropriate clothes ~ swimsuits or shorts and T-shirt ~ for the sport.

"Jet-skis are easy to operate," Ed notes. "You can get the hang of it within a couple of hours." Beginners, however, are cautioned against taking too many risks. "Beginners tend to lose their heads when they get the thrills. It's dangerous when you get over-excited because you tend to ignore the risks. The only danger is in a collision. Unfortunately, no watercraft with brakes has ever been invented. So even when the engine stops, the craft can still glide."

The most important thing is to avoid reckless jet-skiing. "Don't consume alcoholic drinks or drugs

before jet-skiing. Obey the rules imposed by the club or the authorities," he adds. If the rule requires you to stay some 500 metres away from the beach or move in one direction, follow it. Slow down when nearing docking areas. Switch off the engine and let the jet-ski drift forward to the jetty or the beach. Last but not least, never perform stunts near or in crowded areas. "In The Mines lake, swimming is not allowed to prevent fatal accidents," Ed says.

How to jet-ski? Simple. First you get on. Then press the ignition button and throttle away! It's just like riding a motorcycle, except that this machine floats on water.

The idea is to manipulate the waves or ripples on the water while trying not to get yourself thrown off the craft.

The staff at The Mines performed their stunts on stand-up jet-skis for the magazine. The stand-up is Azizi's personal favourite. "It is much more thrilling because it can do a lot of tricks," he says.

Azizi and the guys spent an hour doing stunts for the camera. The sharp turns and the dives can only be achieved at great speeds. But that's where the danger lies. When a craft is speeding up, the bottom barely touches the water surface. A craft can easily be toppled by a big wave if the rider is not experienced enough to exploit it.

Jet-skis are not dangerous, but the way the machines are manipulated can make jet-skiing a risky sport. If you fancy challenging yourself, and putting your life at stake for that, this is the sport for you.

Either you love it or hate it. The thrill is in feeling the nervous tension as the craft hurtles over the water with that underlying element of risk. There's a sort of perverted edge to it. The feeling, when you slow down to catch your breath is orgasmic. Why do people love jet-skiing? It's the speed ~ it gets your adrenalin going.

If I had 15 grand in my bank account, I'd probably be doing this every weekend. ♦

(top)
A Mines
Resort
attendant
on a
roundabout
jet-ski

Jet-ski regulations

The new by-law imposed by some local district councils on jet-skiing requires jet-ski owners to obtain permits for excursions in public places. However, this may not apply to those who jet-ski at abandoned mining pools. It depends on the respective district council.

The Port Dickson District Council requires a permit for jet-skiing along its beaches. Those who operate jet-skis and water

scooters without permits are committing an offence under Section 81(K) of the Local Government Act 1976. The fine imposed is between RM500 and RM2,000.

At the moment, The Mines Resort is the only place in Kuala Lumpur that opens its jet-skiing facilities to the public. Price: RM40 for 15 minutes. The facilities are open from 4pm to 11pm every day.