Lydia Desmond Bangga, 23, captured the hearts of the judges and was crowned Miss Tourism Benak 2012 yesterday.

She walked away with a cash prize of RM1,500, trophy, certificate, sash, crown and a return Kuching-Kuala Lumpur air ticket.

An undergraduate with University Technology Malaysia (UiTM), Lydia was happy with her success in the contest and certainly made her parents proud.

Of pure Iban parentage and the youngest of three siblings, Lydia also loves to sing and dance during her free time.

Eleven beauties donning evening gowns look to the catwalk in the finals yesterday at the Budaya Ria Stage here.

Most of them took elegant and confident though there were some who looked nervous during the catwalk in front of more than 5,000 visitors at the event’s venue.

It was certainly an event worth waiting for and truly spiced up the final night of the annual Benak Fest.

In second place was Liyana Eddie Eskal Eyaw, 19, from Kuching while taking the third spot was Jacqualyn Jubin, 22, from Sibu.

Deputy Chief Minister and Layar Assemblyman Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Alfred Jabu Numpang who was at the Benak Festival site from afternoon until late evening also graced the beauty pageant.

Police at the finals were not only from Sri Aman. Some were from Kuching, Sibu and Miri. This contest also helped to sharpen their skills for the future contests of such kind.

Benak or tidal bore is a niche tourism product peculiar to Sri Aman, in the state and for the whole of Malaysia.

Foreign and domestic tourists should have a field day at the site as there were hundreds of stalls selling food and beverage, traditional costume, modern dresses with reasonable price.

There were also entertainment items and local products on sale.

Some of the visitors from other villages and areas set their camp at the river side for three days from 6 to 8 April as hotel rooms and other accommodation venues were all fully booked and occupied.

However, there were no reports yet of the hotel operators taking such advantage by overcharging customers for their rooms.
FAIREST OF 'EM ALL... Miss Tourism Benak Lydia Desmond Bangga (seated centre) flanked by on her left (Liyana) and on her right Jacqualyn Jubin, together with other finalists taking a group picture.