

Penang Travel Tale



The northern gateway to Malaysia, Penang's the oldest British settlement in the country. Also known as Pulau Pinang, the state capital, Georgetown, is a UNESCO listed World Heritage Site with a collection of over 12,000 surviving pre-war shop houses. Its best known as a giant beach resort with soft, sandy beaches and plenty of upscale hotels but locals will tell you that the island is the country's unofficial food capital.

WEATHER



Penang enjoys a warm equatorial climate. Average temperatures range between 29°C - 35 during the day and 26°C - 29°C during the night; however, being an island, temperatures here are often higher than the mainland and sometimes reaches as high as 35°C during the day. It's best not to forget your sun block – the higher the SPF, the better. It's mostly sunny throughout the day except during the monsoon seasons when the island experiences rainfall in the evenings.

<http://www.penang.ws/penang-info/climate.htm>

CURRENCY



Malaysia coinage is known as the Ringgit Malaysia (MYR). USD\$1 roughly converts into MYR 3.00 – you'll find up-to-date conversion rates at the top banner of [penang.ws](http://www.penang.ws) website.

TIME ZONE



Malaysia is eight hours ahead of GMT +8 (the same as China, Hong Kong and Singapore).

ELECTRICITY



Main voltage in Malaysia is 220 volts. Connect to the reliable electricity supply (220V-240V, 50 cycles) with a UK-type three-square-pin or two-parallel-flat-pin (British BS-1363) plugs.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS



- Tourist Police	+604 261 2211
- Customs	+604 262 2300
- Civil Defence	991
- Fire	994
- Directory Enquiries	103
- Emergency Call From Mobile Phone	112
- Foreign Affairs	+603 8887 4000
- Immigration	+604 397 3011
- Tourism Malaysia Information Center	+604 643 0501
- MAS Airline	+604 643 0811
- AirAsia Airline	+604 644 8701
- Sunshine Radio Teksi	+604 642 5961

SIM CARDS AND DIALING PREFIXES



Malaysia's three main cell phone service providers are Celcom, Digi and Maxis. You can obtain prepaid SIM cards almost anywhere – especially inside large-scale shopping malls. Digi and Maxis are the most popular services, although Celcom has the most widespread coverage in Sabah and Sarawak. Each state has its own area code; to make a call to a landline in Penang, dial 04 followed by the seven-digit number. Calls to mobile phones require a three-digit prefix, (Digi = 016, Maxis = 012 and Celcom = 019) followed by the seven digit subscriber number.

GETTING AROUND



It's relatively easy to get around Penang as the island has a well-run public transportation system. To start with, there's a free shuttle bus service – the Hop-On Free Central Area Transit (CAT) – that runs a circuit of the island's major sightseeing spots. It runs every 15 minutes and stops are marked by signs of a number encircled in red. The main terminals for regular buses are located in Georgetown's Weld Quay and KOMTAR buildings. Alternatively, taxis are ubiquitous but they don't operate on a metre. Trishaws (RM35 per hour) can be found around Georgetown beside Cititel Hotel on Jalan Penang and along the Esplanade near Fort Cornwallis on Jalan Tun Syed Sheh Barakbah. Additionally, you can hire a car or motorbike from local and international firms – book one in advance at <http://www.penang.ws/carrental/>.

<http://www.penang.ws/penang-info/gettingaround.htm>

AIRPORT TRANSFERS



Penang has a fairly comprehensive public transportation system. From the Bayan Lepas International Airport, you can take a taxi – they operate on a coupon system and a trip to Georgetown takes approximately 30 minutes to get to your hotel. A cheaper alternative is the Rapid Penang bus U401 or U401E which will take you to KOMTAR and Pengkalan Weld. However, the best (and most convenient) way to get to your hotel is an airport transfer – it's cost friendly and you can book one in advance at <http://www.visit-malaysia.com/penang-tours/airport-transfer.htm>. Otherwise, hire a self-drive car at <http://www.penang.ws/carrental/> or at the airport to make your way around town.

<http://www.visit-malaysia.com/penang-transfer.htm>

PENANG AREA GUIDES



Characterised by a large Baba-Nyonya populace, Penang was once known for its untouched barren hillsides: these days' rows of 19th and early 20th-century architecture rub shoulders with skyscrapers. Though the island retains a firm hold on its rich, cultural heritage, its best known for its hawker fare which locals claim can't be duplicated elsewhere. The state capital, Georgetown, has been a UNESCO World Heritage site since 2008.

1. Georgetown

Named after the Prince of Wales, who later became King George IV, Georgetown has a long and illustrious history under its belt. On the northeast point of the island, the state capital, Georgetown (a World Heritage Site since 2008) is defined by four major streets: Lebuah Pantai, Lebuah Light, Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling and Lebuah Chulia. Playing host to over 12,000 surviving pre-war shop houses built by Chinese craftsmen and a skyline pierced by the Kompleks Tun Abdul Razak (KOMTAR) skyscraper, the city houses the island's most popular sightseeing attractions as well as the best hawker fare in the state.



2. Batu Feringghi

In the past, Penang's main beach, Batu Ferringhi was best known as a hippie hangout. These days it's a sprawling three km long white sand strip that plays host to scores of upmarket hotels. Also known as Foreigner's Rock, the area is mostly frequented by package tourists and is especially in vogue with Middle Eastern visitors. Though the ocean waters of this palm-and-casuarina-tree lined coast aren't crystal clear (holidaymakers just tend to stick close to the poolside of the plush resorts) it remains wildly popular. Batu Ferringhi's night market is legendary and good food is ubiquitous along this strip.



3. Tanjung Bungah

A twenty-minute bus ride from Georgetown's outskirts, Tanjung Bungah is a seaside suburb that was once a sleepy fishing village. It's risen in popularity in recent years to become one of Penang's most popular tourist destinations due to its close proximity to both Gurney Drive and Batu Ferringhi. Though the beaches here are not as pristine as those out further west, they're still pleasant and hotels here are shipshape ventures and generally offer much cheaper rates. The Penang Water Sports Centre is based here.



4. Gurney Drive

Though most people wouldn't classify this as a separate area in and of itself, Gurney Drive is so wildly popular that you should spend some time exploring it. Otherwise known as Persiaran Gurney, it's often referred to as 'the new Esplanade' (to differentiate it from the original Esplanade in Georgetown). There's a deluge of hawker centres, seafood restaurants and a healthy nightlife scene that really kicks off the instant the sun goes down here. The waterfront strip also plays host to Gurney Plaza – one of the island's best known shopping malls.



5. Bayan Lepas

20 km south of Georgetown and 36 km from Batu Ferringhi, Bayan Lepas is Penang's main industrial hub. Home to the Bayan Lepas International Airport, the area may not be the most aesthetically-pleasing spot on the island – there are a huge number of factories belonging to multinational companies centred here but it's still moderately charming. Besides sightseeing attractions such as the Snake Museum, Batu Maung, Penang War Museum and the Bukit Jambul Orchid and Hibiscus Garden and Reptile Garden, the island's biggest shopping mall, Queensbay Mall, calls this area home.



6. Seberang Perai

Penang Island is connected to its 760sqkm peninsular province (Seberang Perai) via the 13km-long Penang Bridge as well as ferry services. Dubbed Province Wellesley by the British, its chief town is Butterworth, an industrial town that doubles as a transportation hub for the whole area. Generally used as a halfway stop between Bangkok and Singapore, Seberang Perai's bus station, port complex, train station and taxi stand lie right on Butterworth's quayside. Of Penang's 1.4 million residents, 54% live on the mainland; rapidly expanding, its one of Penang's only areas enthusiastically embracing the 21st century.





BEST LUXURY HOTELS



1. The Eastern & Oriental Hotel, Georgetown ★★★★★

Built in 1885 by the Armenian Sarkies brothers, the palatial Eastern & Oriental is a throwback to the colonial area. In the past Somerset Maugham, Charlie Chaplin and Rudyard Kipling have made it onto its illustrious guest list; the five-star venture offers luxurious air con rooms with wooden floors, Wi-Fi, spacious beds, en-suite bathrooms and separate living areas. The hotel's list of facilities includes an outdoor swimming pool, a grand ballroom, gym, sauna, six function rooms, a sea-facing garden and six restaurants and bars. <http://www.asiawebedirect.com/malaysia/penang/georgetown/eastern-and-oriental-hotel/>



2. Shangri-La Rasa Sayang Resort & Spa, Batu Ferringhi ★★★★★

Another member of the Shangri La group, the five-star Rasa Sayang, is set on 30 acres of Batu Ferringhi's waterfront. Former Chinese president Hu Jin Tao, former Cambodian King Norodom Sihanouk, Barbara Cartland and Stephanie Powers figured on former guest lists. The Minangkabau-style resort has 304 spacious, air con rooms with flat screen TVs, DVD players, private verandas and attached bathrooms. Hotel facilities include three swimming pools, a gym, spa, aerobics studio, sauna, Jacuzzi, golf course, tennis courts and six restaurants and bars. <http://www.asiawebedirect.com/malaysia/penang/batu-ferringhi-beach/shangri-la-rasa-sayang-resort-and-spa/>



3. PARKROYAL Penang ★★★★★

PARKROYAL Penang, a family-friendly beachfront sanctuary set along Batu Ferringhi beach, is a five-star hotel with gorgeous environs that are often under-rated. It is almost hard to enumerate the property's list of onsite attractions: be it day or night, young or old Parkroyal Penang has something for everyone. The little ones are well taken care of with the Koko-Nut Kids Club, a play centre hosting fun-filled activities such as T-shirt painting, key chain creation, sand art, jewellery-making with beads and more. Meanwhile, adults can head to the hotel's onsite spa to enjoy a relaxing treatment or head to the gym or tennis court to burn off some calories: the hotel can also arrange for a golfing excursion if requested. <http://www.asiawebedirect.com/malaysia/penang/batu-ferringhi-beach/parkroyal-penang/>



BEST BEACH RESORTS



1. Hard Rock Hotel, Batu Ferringhi ★★★★★

Opened in 2009, Hard Rock Hotel is a four-star venture that looks like a genuine Las Vegas outfit with glitzy rock n' roll memorabilia and swanky furnishings and fixtures throughout. Rocking unconventional layouts, the American-style resort has 248 fashionable rooms with flat-screen TVs, state-of-the-art entertainment systems, Wi-Fi, trendy en-suite bathrooms, spacious and comfy beds and private balconies featuring views of the gorgeous sprawling pool, poolside café, a colourful kids' play pool area and the beach. <http://www.asiawebedirect.com/malaysia/penang/batu-ferringhi-beach/hard-rock-hotel-penang/>



2. Golden Sands Resort by Shangri-La, Batu Ferringhi ★★★★★

Golden Sands Resort by Shangri-La is a rambling award-winning property featuring 387 air con rooms with Wi-Fi, flat-screen TVs and DVD players. The four-star venture's facilities include two outdoor lagoon-style pools, three tennis courts, a golf course, private beach, gym, water sports centre, spa, free shuttle services to Georgetown and six bars and restaurants including the award-winning Peppino. There's also an Adventure Zone – an indoor air-conditioned kids' entertainment venue with drop slides, modular play equipment, a game zone and more. <http://www.asiawebedirect.com/malaysia/penang/batu-ferringhi-beach/golden-sands-resort-by-shangri-la/>



3. Copthorne Orchid Hotel Penang, Tanjung Bungah ★★★★★

Copthorne Orchid Hotel Penang is a fun, laid back and modern hotel set along Tanjung Bungah, offering a true seaside-vacation feel due to its secluded location, fine service and a comprehensive list of hotel facilities. The star of the show here is the hotel's secluded, sheltered white sand beach, where you can choose to lounge under the sun getting a tan or take a dip in the ocean. However, if you are not keen on the saltwater action, head to Copthorne Orchid Hotel Penang's outdoor swimming pool. Parents will be glad to know there is also a kids wading pool and play area, plus the hotel's list of other onsite facilities includes a spa, Jacuzzi, sauna, a ballroom and six function rooms. <http://www.asiawebedirect.com/malaysia/penang/tanjung-bungah-beach/copthorne-orchid-hotel-penang/>



BEST BUSINESS HOTELS



1. Traders Hotel, Georgetown ★★★★★

A business hotel featuring 443 carpeted, air con rooms with Wi-Fi, en-suite bathrooms and bay windows, the four-star Traders Hotel is one of Penang's most popular upper level chain ventures. Flanked by two major shopping malls – KOMTAR and Prangin Mall, facilities include two pools, a sauna, gym, ballroom, eight function rooms, an aerobics studio and two restaurants; the hotel also has a complimentary shuttle running between the city and beach. Guests are allowed access to Shangri La's Golden Sands Resort in Batu Feringgi.

<http://www.asiawebedirect.com/malaysia/penang/georgetown/traders-hotel-penang/>



2. Hotel Equatorial Penang, Bayan Lepas ★★★★★

Hotel Equatorial Penang, the island's only golf and convention resort, is a sprawling five-star property set on Bukit Jambul hill, just seven minutes away from the Penang International Airport. Adjacent to an 18-hole international golf course, driving range and putting green, it is the hotel of choice for golf enthusiasts visiting Penang. Besides that, there is a beautifully-landscaped outdoor swimming pool shaded by swaying palm trees, which comes complete with a waterfall and outdoor Jacuzzi. Those looking to work off a few calories will be glad to know the hotel has a well equipped fitness centre, aerobics studio, jogging track, floodlit tennis and squash courts, plus separate male and female saunas, steam rooms and indoor Jacuzzis.

<http://www.asiawebedirect.com/malaysia/penang/bayan-lepas/hotel-equatorial-penang/>



3. Georgetown City Hotel, Georgetown ★★★★★

Georgetown City Hotel, formerly known as Berjaya Penang Hotel, is a four-star property located along Jalan Burmah at the 1Stop Midlands Park, about five minutes away from Gurney Drive. Georgetown City Hotel is within ten minutes drive to several shopping centres such as Gurney Plaza as well as sightseeing landmarks like the Penang Botanic Gardens, Fort Cornwallis and the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion. However, that is not all that will keep guests busy here - within the hotel are a variety of first-class entertainment offerings to keep all ages happy. There is an onsite restaurant and bar, or guests can top up their tans by the outdoor swimming pool on one of the sun loungers or head to the spa for a pampering session: alternatively, the gym is well equipped to help guests work off some calories or just keep in shape.

<http://www.asiawebedirect.com/malaysia/penang/georgetown/georgetown-city-hotel/>



BEST BOUTIQUE HOTELS



1. The Campbell Times, Georgetown ★★

The Campbell Times is a fully restored historic boutique hotel and it offers old world charm and Penang walks of life. Each row has been uniquely decorated following its theme of old times of Penang. Reveling in the beauty of the oldest street is one thing, The Campbell Times is within a short walk from the heritage trails of museums, temples and the world famous hand-painted murals including the Little Children On Bicycle by renowned artist Ernest Zacharevic nestled at Armenian Street.

<http://www.asiawebedirect.com/malaysia/penang/georgetown/the-campbell-times/>



2. Hotel The Boutique Residence, Georgetown ★★★

Hotel The Boutique Residence is a three-star hotel set along Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling, in central Georgetown. A great value-for-money option that is perfect for families, backpackers and business travellers, nearby points of interest to the hotel include the Khoo Kongsi clan house and Goddess of Mercy Temple, which are less than a five-minute walk away. What's more, guests can explore the surrounding area on foot to see the island's famous street art pieces, such as the 20-foot high Little Girl In Blue, a mural of a young child on a building along Muntri Street. On the facilities side of things, Hotel The Boutique Residence is home to leisure offerings such as an indoor swimming pool, fitness centre, cafe and gift shop.

<http://www.asiawebedirect.com/malaysia/penang/georgetown/hotel-the-boutique-residence/>



3. East Indies Mansion ★★★

East Indies Mansion is an elegant and chic four-star hotel with a dedication to cultural heritage. This preservation is evident with vintage rattan furniture, an eclectic collection of Nyonya motif tiles and furniture, pots of bamboo ferns and shuttered windows. Its sense of timeless tradition is intensified by knick knacks in jewel tones in coordinating hues, and silks, brocades and satin as the prevalent fabrics. Located along Lebuhraya in Georgetown, it is conveniently-located for sightseeing, with some of the island's best attractions within walking distance. Within a two-km radius are some of Penang's best street art pieces, KOMTAR and Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion, while Khoo Kongsi, the Clan Jetties and Kapitan Keling Mosque are only a ten-minute walk away. <http://www.asiawebedirect.com/malaysia/penang/georgetown/east-indies-mansion/>

Penang Travel Tale

WHAT TO SEE IN PENANG



Prominent for its beaches and food, Penang is characterised by a large Baba Nyonya population. The lifestyle of these descendants of late 15th and 16th-century ethnic Chinese Straits Settlements inhabitants have saturated almost every aspect of life here. With atmospheric pre-war Chinese store fronts, refurbished colonial mansions and well-kept historic attractions, Penang's birthright is evident no matter where you go.

1. Khoo Kongsi

Built in 1898, the Khoo Kongsi is one of the most lavishly decorated clan houses in Penang. The ornate Leong San Tong (Dragon Mountain Hall) is the complex's pivotal building but you should also look for the hidden passageway that connects it to the Tua Pek Kong (Hokkien Kongsi) on Lebeh Armenian. It was built in the days when fighting between the secret societies were so intense that the houses built a clandestine escape route in case of an emergency.

Open: 9:00-17:00 - **Location:** 18 Cannon Square, Georgetown - **How to get there:** The free shuttle bus (every 15 minutes) stops nearby.

2. Penang Road

The most important thoroughfare on the island, Penang Road runs from Lebeh Farquhar in the north to Jalan Gurdwara to the south; it is split into four sections. Most important is Upper Penang Road (hemmed in on one side by The Garage and the City Bayview Hotel) which plays host to a number of pubs and restaurants as well as the monthly Little Penang Street Market. Alternatively, the cosmopolitan-in-the-1970s intersections of Lebeh Chulia to Jalan Burma house the famed Chowrasta Market.

Address: Georgetown - **How to get there:** Taxi or buses

3. Wat Chayamangkalaram Buddhist Temple

Sited along Lorong Burma, Wat Chayamangkalaram is the largest Thai temple in Penang. Home to Pra Chaiya Mongkol – the 32 m long gold-plated Buddha (the largest reclining Buddha statue in the world) – the iconic Buddhist temple is painted in yellow and blue. A 15-minute bus ride towards Batu Ferringhi brings you here and directly opposite is the less spectacular Dharmmikarama Burmese Temple (Penang's only Burmese temple) flanked by two giant white stone elephants at its entrance.

Open: 10:00 – 18:00 - **Address:** Lorong Burma, Pulau Tikus, Georgetown - **How to Get There:** Take the Rapid Penang bus 101, 102, 103, 104 or 105

4. Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion

Built in the 1880s by specifically-imported artisans from China, the magnificently-restored Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion on Lebeh Leith is modelled after a traditional Chinese courtyard house. Also called the Blue Mansion due to its indigo paint job, the three daily guided tours are the best way to see the 2000 UNESCO Conservation Award winner. The nineteenth century mansion doubles as a hotel so you can stay in one of the ornate 16 bedrooms. **Open:** Guided tours – 11:00 – 15:00 - **How to get there:** Taxi

5. Penang Hill

A short distance away from the Kek Lok Si Temple is the funicular railway that takes you 850 metres up Penang Hill. The first colonial hill station developed on Peninsular Malaysia, the views of Georgetown, the Penang Bridge and Butterworth are its best draw cards. Plus the hill offers lazy respites from the heat with temperatures that are generally five degrees cooler than Penang proper. The 1907 funicular train used to take 30 minutes to get to the top but a recent revamp has shortened it to 10 minutes.

Address: Central Penang. - **How to get there:** Take bus 204 to Ayer Itam Station then shuttle bus 8 to the railway

6. Fort Cornwallis

Opposite the Queen Victoria Clocktower on Lebeh Farquhar, the star-shaped Fort Cornwallis (named after the Marquis Cornwallis, a governor general of India) stands on the site of Francis Light's wooden stockade. Built between 1808 and 1810 using convict labour, only the ten-foot high outer walls remain; the main canon, the 17th century Seri Rambai, has gained a reputation amongst locals as a unique fertility charm with offerings of joss sticks and flowers often left at its base.

Open: 09:00 – 18:30 - **How to get there:** Taxi to the junction of Lebeh Light and Lebeh Pantai

7. War Museum

The well-preserved Penang War Museum was once a 1930s military fort constructed to protect Penang's southern front from foreign invasion. The latest addition to the island's tourist venues, the 20-acre complex is supposedly haunted and features a torture chamber, underground military tunnels and ammunition bunkers which are located nine metres underground. Visitors can also visit the British-built fortress' medical infirmary and canon firing bay. **Open:** 09:00 – 19:00 - **How to get there:** Free shuttle bus or Rapid Penang bus 401

8. Butterfly Farm

About one km up the road from the Teluk Bahang junction, the Penang Butterfly Farm is 'the largest tropical butterfly farm in the world'. Established in 1986, it houses 4000 butterflies from more than 120 species of Malaysian butterflies and acts as a butterfly breeding station and research centre. The best time to visit is the late morning or early afternoon when the butterflies are most active; approximately 20% of its butterflies are released into the wild.

Open: 09:00 – 17:30 Monday – Friday; 09:00 – 18:00 Saturday & Sunday - **Address:** No. 830, Jalan Teluk Bahang

How to get there: Bus 101 or taxi



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WHAT TO DO IN PENANG



Known for its temples, pre-war shop houses, beautifully restored Peranakan and colonial-style mansions, all-inclusive resorts, jungle-clad landscape, white sand beaches and street hawker fare, Penang is without a doubt, incredibly alluring. Boasting a medley of irresistible sights, sounds and tastes it's the whole package plus the capital, Georgetown, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. What more could you ask for?

1. Penang Day & Night Temple Tour

Tour Duration: 8hrs

With a multicultural, multiracial population, it's no wonder Penang's landscape is liberally dotted with a wide array of temples. And this tour takes you to the island's most dazzling ones – start off with a visit to the Snake Temple (check out the venomous pit vipers curled around the altars!) and the Wat Chayamangkalaram temple – home to the 33m-long gold plated Reclining Buddha statue (the longest in the world). Later head away from Georgetown to the rightfully popular Kek Lok Si Temple, one of the country's finest structures and then stop over at the Dharmikarama Burmese Temple. [Book now](#), call +60 3 2302 7555



2. Penang Fireflies Tour

Tour Duration: 3 & 1/2hrs

A relaxing tour that doesn't test your staying power, this excursion is a lazy, romantic sunset cruise that takes you to the mouth of Kerian River in Nibong Tebal. Besides watching the symphony of lights provided by the fireflies, you'll also get the chance to see mangrove trees and later enjoy a sumptuous fresh seafood dinner. [Book now](#), call +60 3 2302 7555



3. Penang Half Day Tour

Tour Duration: 4hrs

Some holidays are about giving yourself a break and simply enjoying lazy afternoons. If you want to explore Penang but don't want to be bombarded with a smorgasbord of facts, sights and history, then this is the tour for you. This half-day excursion starts off with a visit to Khoo Kongsi (the island's most elaborate Chinese clan house) and the Wat Chayamangkalaram Temple (housing the 33-metre long gold plated reclining Buddha statue). Afterwards, grab a breath of fresh air and check out the exotic plants at the Penang Botanical Gardens. [Book now](#), call +60 3 2302 7555



4. Penang Heritage Tour

Tour Duration: 4hrs

There's more to Penang than beaches, temples and excellent food and this heritage tour proves it. Start off with visits to the 12 ha Kek Lok Si Temple (the largest Buddhist temple in Malaysia), the Taoist Kuan Yin Temple and Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling – home to a variety of houses of worship. Then you're introduced to the island's beautiful undulating landscape with a stopover at the cool Penang Hill. Cap off your day with a sinfully sweet pop-in at a cocoa boutique.

[Book now](#), call +60 3 2302 7555



5. Penang Hill & Temple Tour

Tour Duration: 5hrs

Penang's diverse religious beliefs mean that there's a varied assortment of houses of worship scattered across the island. This tour is a must-do as it introduces you to the Kek Lok Si Temple – built in the early 1900s, its one of the youngest temples on the island and the Pagoda of Ten Thousand Buddhas is one of the country's finest structures. What's more? Visit Penang Hill – besides the stunning panoramic views of Georgetown, Penang Bridge and Butterworth, you'll get to cool down as the hill's generally five degrees cooler than the rest of Penang proper. [Book now](#), call +60 3 2302 7555



6. Penang National Park Tour

Tour Duration: 6hrs

Playing host to six beautiful beaches including Monkey Beach (look out for the macaques that feed on crabs!), the Penang National Park (the smallest national park in the world) is a verdant habitat to over 150 species of birds and plants. Survey them in their natural habitat on this tour of the 1381 ha park; formerly known as the Pantai Acheh Forest Reserve, the park is dominated by tropical rainforests, mangroves, beaches, rocky shores, wetlands and mudflats.

[Book now](#), call +60 3 2302 7555



7. Penang Night Tour

Tour Duration: 4hrs

Come and discover Penang's diversely-colourful landscape and sample its ethnically flamboyant way of life on the Penang Night Tour. With a route that includes a trip to Gurney Drive (where you can sample authentic hawker dishes and experience the energetic nightlife), KOMTAR Tower and an authentic multiracial, multicultural and vibrant pasar malam (night market).

[Book now](#), call +60 3 2302 7555



8. Penang Round Island Tour

Tour Duration: 7hrs

Penang's known for its vast array of attractions. With beautiful beaches, well restored colonial mansions, the best hawker fare in the country and an array of temples, it could get tricky trying to experience the island's best sightseeing spots. On this tour you'll get to visit the colourful Tropical Spice Garden, a traditional fishing village, the Butterfly Farm, Snake Temple, a pewter plant and batik factory. [Book now](#), call +60 3 2302 7555



WHAT TO EAT



Good food is ubiquitous in Penang and locals will tell you that it is the unofficial food capital of the nation. The island's thriving street food culture, which reflects Chinese, Nyonya and Indian-Muslim influences – is without comparison. Most stalls here have been in business for generations and islanders are zealous about their favourite places – Jalan Burmah, Love Lane and Ayer Itam are especially popular.

1. Asam Laksa

There are two types of laksa: curry laksa is a coconut curry soup with thick yellow noodles, bee hoon, tofu puffs, fish sticks, shrimp and cockles while asam laksa is a sour fish-based (mackerel) soup with tubular rice noodles. The distinctive spicy asam laksa is served with fish, prawn paste, shredded onions, cucumber, pineapple, daun kesum (Vietnamese mint) and bunga kantan (ginger buds) – this Peranakan dish is a Penang specialty. Other ingredients that give Penang's asam laksa its characteristic flavour include lemongrass, galangal (lengkuas) and chilli.



2. Char Kway Teow

A favourite hawker dish in Malaysia, char kway teow – flat rice noodles stir-fried with prawns, cockles, eggs, bean sprouts and chives in lashings of lard, chilli paste and soy sauce – is one of the most popular regional dishes in the country. A highly sought after dish by ardent local foodies, the noodles are best eaten piping hot after they've just been cooked in a huge wok. Char kway teow comes with a variety of garnishings ranging from strips of Chinese sausage to crab meat.



3. Cendol

The dessert that put Penang on the map, the sinfully-sweet cendol is a quintessential part of Penang's street food culture. This shaved-ice 'drink' is made from coconut milk, lots of gula Melaka (palm sugar) and served with pandan-flavoured worm-like 'jellies' (made from rice flour and dyed with green food colouring). Besides the jelly, some cendol makers add red beans, glutinous rice, grass jelly and creamed corn to the ice-cold drink. Due to its relative popularity, especially on hot and humid days, you'll come across variants such as cendol with vanilla ice-cream or cendol topped with durian.



4. Chee Cheong Fun

A Cantonese breakfast dish from southern China and Hong Kong, chee cheong fun consists of large, slightly transparent flattened sheets of rice noodles, steamed, rolled up and served with sweet sauce, chilli sauce, hoisin (Chinese dipping sauce), prawn paste and garnished with fried shallots and sesame seeds. Commonly served with dim sum (a wide variety of pork, chicken and seafood dumplings), chee cheong fun is found in kopitiam and Chinese restaurants. Penang's version uses a sweet black shrimp paste called hae ko.



5. Fruit Rojak

Fruit rojak consists of sliced cucumber, bite-sized pineapple, benkoang, bean sprouts, deep-fried tofu puffs and Chinese-style fritters. The fruit salad is tossed in a bowl with a thick, almost-toffee like belacan (shrimp paste), sugar, chilli and lime juice dressing and topped with chopped peanuts and a dash of ground or finely chopped bunga kantan (pink ginger buds). Penang fruit rojak adds jambu air (water guava), squid fritters, guava and honey to the mixture and mangoes and green apples are often used; the bean sprouts and fried tofu puffs are usually omitted from the dish.



6. Hokkien Mee

There are two types of hokkien mee – hokkien hae mee (hokkien prawn noodles) and hokkien char mee (hokkien fried noodles, commonly found in KL); Penang is famous for the former. This version of hokkien mee is an egg and rice noodle dish with lots of tiny prawns, bean sprouts and fried shallots in a spicy prawn-rib stock soup. Traditionally, small cubes of fried pork fat are added to the soup and it is garnished with sliced prawns, fish cake, leafy greens, crisp deep-fried shallots, spring onions, fresh lime and served with loads of sliced red chilli, light soy sauce and sambal.



7. Nasi Kandar

Steamed mildly-flavoured rice served with a variety of curries and side dishes, nasi kandar is a popular northern Malaysian mamak (Indian-Muslim) dish with roots in Penang. Nasi kandar started out when hawkers went from door-to-door with a pole balanced on their shoulders with two huge containers on either end from which customers would select the accompanying dishes to their rice platter. The rice is 'flooded' (banjir) with a variety of curries and accompanied with meat dishes such as fried chicken, curried spleen, cubed beef, fish roe, fried prawns and fried squid and vegetables such as brinjal (aubergine), bendi (okra) and bitter gourd.



8. Nyonya Kuih

A broad term referring to bite-sized snacks such as savoury cakes, cookies, steamed dumplings, pudding, biscuits and pastries, Malaysia is famous for its wide variety of kuihs. Each major ethnic group of the country has its own version of this before-and-after-meal snack – for example, Chinese kuihs are usually made from ground rice flour and Malay kuihs are especially sweet. Penang is famous for its Nyonya kuihs – common ingredients of this variant of the popular tea-time meal include grated coconut, coconut cream, pandan (screwpine) leaves and gula melaka (palm sugar).



BEST DINING EXPERIENCES



Penang's status as Malaysia's unofficial food capital means that there's no shortage of restaurants and street hawkers serving up good food. Hawker stalls, located either at permanent sites or springing up at by the roadside at mealtimes, dish out the cheapest meals. Penang's cuisine is not Malaysia's standard Malay, Chinese and Indian fare – instead it's subtly influenced by the island's Baba Nyonya culture.

1. 1885 Restaurant

1885 is a fine-dining restaurant offering classic cuisine in an elegant setting. Set in the [Eastern & Oriental Hotel](#), it was listed in 2011 by the Malaysian Tatler. Classy and elegant, its creative cuisine is accompanied by a superb wine collection. Additionally, the menu does not disappoint with a varied selection of tastes and textures and the wine list includes an extensive selection with a seasoned sommelier is continually adding to the well-rounded cellar. 1885 has a dress code.

Address: 10 Lebuhr Farquhar, 10200 Penang - **Tel:** +604 222 2000 - **How to get there:** Taxi



2. Amelia Café

Amelia Café is a small, quirky bistro run by a husband-and-wife team. Almost every conceivable surface is whimsically decorated: the walls, ceiling and menu feature colourful artwork while tables and shelves are covered with tiny trinkets. Raw and rustic, tiny Amelia Café restaurant is comprised of four tables and a counter that doubles as a dining bar and kitchen. Some may find it cluttered but the fantastic food (particularly the bacon bagels and pasta) more than makes up for its minuscule size.

Address: No. 6, Armenian Street, Penang - **Tel:** +6012 496 7838 - **How to get there:** Taxi



3. Beach Blanket Babylon Bar & Bistro House

Beach Blanket Babylon Bar & Bistro House restaurant is an up-market lunchtime favourite with Penangites. Fronting the sea, it is set in a heritage mansion with beautifully manicured lawns along Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah. Run by the owners of Bagan, the menu may be limited but the food is supremely good, Fusion and local specialties are served. The place is really popular on Sunday when Men's Night takes place: there are discounts on beer and half price on standard pours for all guys. **Address:** No. 32, Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, Georgetown - **Tel:** +604 262 2232 - **How to get there:** Taxi



4. Chin's Stylish Chinese Cuisine

Employing a tantalizing blend of spices from all over the world, the textures and flavours of the food here make it a welcome addition to Penang's culinary scene. Chin's has a menu of traditional Hunan and Sichuan recipes. That statement may be an oversimplification of this amazing restaurant though: the interior, richly decorated with ornate and opulent modern art plus unique fixtures, makes it difficult to focus on what's on your plate, while the food itself is without a question both elegantly presented and tasty.

Address: Church Street Pier, 8A Pengkalan Weld, 10300 Georgetown - **Tel:** +604 261 2611 - **How to get there:** Taxi



5. QEII

QEII is a posh, fine-dining restaurant that transforms into a buzzing, alfresco nightclub with vivacious house and dance music as the night progresses. Overlooking the marina and built on stilts over the water, it was opened in 1997 and was listed as one of Malaysian Tatler's Best Restaurants in 2011. Serving up Western continental cuisine, the generous food portions do not disappoint, making it a great place to enjoy a meal, accompanied by the sound of waves and cool breezes, before you don your kicks for a night of dancing and drinks.

Address: Church Street Pier, 8A Pengkalan Weld, George Town - **Tel:** +604 261 2126 - **How to get there:** Taxi



6. Suffolk House Restaurant

A charming fine-dining eatery richly decorated with period furnishing, Suffolk House is under the same management as the successful 32 Mansion. Try the classic char-grilled rack of lamb: the tender and succulent meat is served with mint lamb jus and fettuccine pasta with spinach and mushrooms. Also good is the pan-fried cod fillet in basil tomato coulis and garlic aioli: it is served on a bed of Basmati rice with flakes of basil and sautéed pea shoots and carrots. **Address:** 250, Jalan Ayer Itam, 10460 Georgetown - **Tel:** +604 228 1109 or +604 228 3930 - **How to get there:** Taxi



7. Kek Seng Coffee Shop

Penang has many variations of cendol and you'll find the best version at Kek Seng Restaurant. Founded in 1906, this kocha kopitiam (olden day coffee shop) has the usual array of hawker stalls – try the kway teow teng (flat rice soup noodles), asam laksa and loh bak (Chinese five-spice pork rolls). Nevertheless, hands down the best fare here is the cendol, durian flavoured ice cream and agar-agar jelly. It's a little unusual but as the queues will attest, it's supremely tasty.

Open: 11:00 – 16:30 - **Address:** 382 – 384 Penang Road - **How to get there:** Taxi or five-minute walk from KOMTAR Tower



Penang Travel Tale



WHERE TO GO FOR NIGHTLIFE

From Batu Ferringhi's tourist track to Upper Penang Road's extensive stretch dotted with watering holes, Penang has no shortage of after-dark spots. Live bands are ubiquitous at most drinking joints (check out Slippery Senioritas or Hard Rock Café Bar) but if you're not in the mood for them, head to dance clubs like MOIS or Boom Boom Chambre (Upper Penang Road) for super-fast music, lots of dancing and even cabaret acts.

1. AUTOCITY Seberang Perai

Indicative of its name, there are over 30 car showrooms at AUTOCITY but it's the nightlife venues that make the development so popular. Opened in 2003, the restaurants here are especially well-liked by locals but pubs and bars are pretty quiet. Usual opening hours are from 18:00 – 02:00 (some places stay open till the last customer leaves) and drinks can be expensive (except during happy hour). That being said, if you're staying on the mainland, it's good to know that it's not a sleepy backwater. As the night winds down it's not unusual for these nightspots to have impromptu karaoke sessions.

Location: Mainland Seberang Perai



2. Batu Ferringhi Night Market

With highlights that include pirated DVDs, fake designer merchandise, handmade crafts and souvenirs, home-deco items, native art, clothes and local snacks, it's no wonder that the Batu Ferringhi Night Market draws in the crowd. Open every night, hundreds of stalls line the strip and the best part is that you can bargain for the best prices. Once you're done here, dip your feet into the indoor pools of the super sleek and happening SixtyNine Mansion just down the road.



3. F.A.M.E (Glo)

Proudly proclaiming to have the best Ladies Night in the country, F.A.M.E (Fashion Art Music Entertainment) is the perfect place to see and be seen. Formerly known as Glo, the super-club definitely lives up to its brazen title and if you're looking for a place to dance till dawn and rub shoulders with yuppies and women in barely-there dresses, it's the place to head to. With live shows, guest DJs, loud bass, neon lights and a large dance floor, the smoke-filled club has a reputation as a meat market.



4. Gurney Drive

Even though Gurney Drive is usually acknowledged for its diverse hawker stall congregation (including one eatery which offers street fare with karaoke), the nightlife scene here is one of the best on the island with a number of popular after-dark hangouts. The busy avenue feels like a gigantic cross between a hipster club and a sports bar – the area's not posh but it's not a dive either. Lining one side of the Esplanade, ever friendly, popular bars include 75°C Restaurant & Bar, Martini Café, The Chillout Club and G Spot.



5. Kek Lok Si Temple

An elaborate complex, though it's possible to visit Kek Lok Si Temple during the day, its best if you visit after 17:00. That way you can tour the temple and then capture some postcard-perfect shots of the lighted-up temple when it closes after 18:00. Spread across 12 ha, the temple is modelled after the Fok San Monastery in Fuchow, China. There are three main sections – the Hall of Bodhisattvas, Hall of Devas and Sacred Hall of the Buddha.



6. Upper Penang Road

Most popular along this stretch is The Garage, an art deco garage which houses several bars and clubs including the vaguely-Spanish Slippery Senioritas. Opposite the Eastern & Oriental Hotel, it's popular with western expats and yuppie locals; there's live South American music, performing bar staff and a smart-casual dress code. Alternatively, the big hotels have in-house clubs and discos but if you're not a guest, there's a cover charge. Most of the places here are comfortable places to hang out but during peak season a few of them seem like meat markets on rowdy nights.



7. QEII

Penang is peppered with fashionable drinking joints and QEII is one of its most popular. Serving up a variety of good pizzas and pastas, the resto-bar is best known for its luxurious ambiance. Built on stilts over the water beside the Penang jetty, the DJ spins out slow house and funk music; whatever your choice of drink, the waterfront QEII is sure to keep you satisfied. The upper floor is an especially good place for a little romantic wining and dining.

8. Straits Quay

Sitting on reclaimed land, the newly opened Straits Quay is a behemoth complex that plays host to a host of shopping and entertainment venues. Developed by the same folks of the grandiose Eastern & Oriental Hotel, international retail names sit beside local brands here but it's the variety of F&B outlets that will tickle your fancy. For that perfect Guinness pint head to Weissbrau German Bar and Bistro or stop over at Finnegan's Irish Pub & Restaurant – winner of the 2010 Best Pub Grub at Time Out Kuala Lumpur's Food Awards.



More at <http://www.penang.ws/nightlife/>

Penang Travel Tale

WHERE TO SHOP

With shopping podiums scattered all over and an abundance of street markets, Penang's retail landscape is almost as comprehensive as KL's. Antiques are popular must-buy items on most trips to the island but be sure to wander through the nooks and crannies along the narrow alleyways off Penang Road, Jalan Burmah and Lebuah Campbell – you'll be surprised at the amazing finds you'll encounter.

1. 100 Cintra Street

A lovingly-restored late-1800s Chinese mansion that houses a tiny Peranakan museum with furniture and costumes depicting the Baba Nyonya heritage, 100 Cintra Street is a unique venture that doubles as a backpacker hostel. There's an antiques bazaar on the ground floor – a collection of stalls retailing a variety of merchandise ranging from porcelain pieces and novelty drinking glasses to funky, assorted bric-a-brac.

Open: 11:00 – 18:00 Tuesday – Sunday **Address:** 100 Lebuah Cintra **How to get there:** Taxi



2. Chowrasta Bazaar

In operation since the late 1800s, Chowrasta Bazaar is one of Penang's most popular markets. It's divided into a number of sections: the wet portion of the market (selling fresh meats including fish and vegetables) is the most popular amongst locals. Additionally, Penang food products such as traditional sweets and pickles can be bought at bargain prices here. On the second floor you'll find second-hand books, wooden furniture and inexpensive sarees (traditional Indian costumes). You don't have to shop to enjoy this strip: take a walk to soak in the lively ambiance. **Address:** Penang Road **How to get there:** Taxi



3. Gurney Plaza

Gurney Plaza may not be the largest shopping mall in Georgetown, but it's certainly the most flamboyant. There are a number of high end designer stores and shops selling the latest gadgets and gizmos but it's the vast stretch of alfresco cafés and eateries in the courtyard between the mall and G Hotel that are so wildly popular. Entertainment offerings include the 12-screen Golden Screen Cinemas on the top floor – the north's largest multiplex. **Address:** 170-06-01 Persiaran Gurney, Georgetown **How to get there:** Taxi



4. Him Heang Biscuit

Penang's known for its local food products – and its most popular one happens to be the tau sar peah (ground green bean) biscuits. Located along Jalan Burmah, locals will tell you that Him Heang Biscuits makes the best ones and you should trust them; a large number of these famous Penang bakery-desserts are made to cater to the large droves of tourists who flock to the store. Besides tau sar peah (also known as tambun biscuits), there's pnon pneh (pastry filled with caramel or molasses) and brown sugar tau sar peah (a Penang-only specialty).

Address: 162 Jalan Burmah **How to get there:** Taxi



5. Kompleks Tun Abdul Razak (KOMTAR) and Prangin Mall JMB

The view from the observation deck at the top of Kompleks Tun Abdul Razak (KOMTAR) makes a trip here worthwhile. Penang's tallest building has two department stores, hundreds of boutiques and some fast food restaurants; KOMTAR Walk (on the ground floor) recently experienced a facelift and now houses a collection of upmarket F&B outlets, a performance stage. It links Upper Penang Road with Prangin Mall – the only place in Georgetown with an ice rink.

Address: 10000 Jalan Penang, Georgetown **How to get there:** All Rapid Penang buses head to the KOMTAR bus terminal



6. Little Penang Street Market

Taking place every last Sunday of the month, the Little Penang Street Market is a small community project that was started in 2006. Clean and well-organized, it's become an indispensable part of every local's itinerary and a popular tourist must-visit. Stalls sell crafts and food but it's the live music performances, cultural shows, visual art displays and book readings that really draws in the crowd. Vendors are all smiles, the atmosphere is vibrant and the street buzzes with activity throughout the day.

Open: 10:00 – 17:00 Last Sunday of the month **Location:** Upper Penang Road **How to get there:** Taxi



7. Penang Batik Factory

The place to head to if you're looking for batik prints, beach sarongs as well as Indian fabrics and costumes, the Penang Batik Factory displays a vast collection of batik paintings and creations. Entrance is free and the batik works definitely merit a visit to the factory; demonstrations on how batik is made can be seen to the rear of the showroom. **Address:** 669 MK, 2 Teluk Bahang **How to get there:** Taxi.



8. Queensbay Mall

Featuring the same assortment of brands as Gurney Plaza (though there are more of them and they boast a wider selection) Queensbay Mall is Penang's latest and largest shopping podium. Located on Persiaran Bayan Baru, it's conveniently located near the airport (from Georgetown it's roughly a short drive down the island's eastern side) and there's also a good selection of eateries and electronics stores plus Golden Screen Cinemas has an outlet within the mall.

Open: 10:00 – 22:00 **Address:** 100 Persiaran Bayan Baru **How to get there:** Bus 307



Penang Travel Tale



TIPS AND GOOD TO KNOW

Do not ever leave home without...

1. An umbrella or raincoat for those unexpected showers.
2. Earplugs – to block out street noise when you stay at down-market hotels.
3. A bottle of water – Malaysia's weather is hot and humid, so you have to be sure to hydrate properly.
4. A photocopy of your passport – you never know when you might be asked to produce identification.
5. A universal electric plug.
6. High factor sun block.

Gastronomic tips

The country's staple dish is rice and noodles. Malaysian hawker fare is relatively safe but you should always take care not to dine out in the grungiest shops as their levels of cleanliness are ultimately debatable. When eating with your hands, wash them first and try to use your right hand; use utensils to take food from a communal plate, never your fingers. Muslims are forbidden from eating pork – and most of them are incredibly strict about this rule – so never offer pork to Muslims. Also don't offer Muslims alcohol – although there are plenty who do partake in a little liquid indulgence now and again, especially the younger generation.

Measurements

Malaysia uses the metric system for weights and measurements.

Negotiate your socks off

You can usually bargain to get prices for merchandise reduced at street markets – sticker prices generally apply for items in shopping malls. If there's no barcode or price tag, then by all means start negotiating. Keep in mind that you'll catch more flies with honey than vinegar – smile as you parley and you're more likely to get deeper discounts. The best way to get the best price on an item you're coveting is to walk away – you'll definitely be called back for last ditch haggling.

Taxi Scammers

There are unscrupulous taxi drivers in the city who love to take advantage of the purse strings of unsuspecting foreigners. These cabbies do not charge fares according to their taxi meters (as they are supposed to do) but charge inflated rates – the best way to deal with this is to refuse to pay the inflated price. Inform them that you are aware that they're supposed to use the meter and demand that they charge you the proper fare. A good rule of thumb is to knock off at least RM5 from the inflated price – but be warned that it's not a hard-and-fast rule; also be sure to take down the info of errant cabbies as you can report them to the authorities.

TV, Radio & Newspapers

The country only has two government TV channels (TV1 and TV2) and four commercial stations (TV3, NTV7, 8TV and TV9). In the KL area, radio stations include Traxx FM (90.3 FM), HITS.FM (92.9FM), Mix FM (94.5FM), Fly FM (95.8FM), Red.FM (104.9FM) and Light & Easy (105.7FM). The country's major newspapers include the News Straits Times, the Star and the Malay Mail.

Women Travellers

Malaysia's a fairly liberal nation but rules of propriety still exist. Women are especially subjugated to the laws of convention and female tourists are encouraged to adhere to these standards. Dress modestly and try to blend in with the locals by being respectful, especially in areas of stronger Muslim religious sensibilities, such as the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia.



EASY MALAY PHRASES

Selamat Pagi = Good morning

Selamat tengah hari = Good afternoon

Selamat petang = Good evening

Selamat malam = Good night

Selamat tinggal = Good bye

Jumpa lagi = See you again

Apa khabar? = How are you?

Khabar baik = Fine, thanks

Ya = Yes

Tidak = No

Tolong/ Silakan = Please

Terima kasih (Terima kasih banyak banyak) = Thank you (Thank you very much)

Boleh/ Sama sama = That's fine/ You're welcome

Maaf = Excuse me/ Sorry/ Pardon – Maaf

Minta maaf = I'm sorry

Dari mana asal saudara? = Where are you from?

Saya datang dari.. = I come from...

Siapa nama anda? = What is your name?

Nama saya ialah... = My name is

Boleh cakap Bahasa English? = Can you speak English?

La – thoroughly colloquial, 'la' is a word that is frequently added to end of a sentence/phrase by locals when speaking either English or Malay. It is merely added for emphasis to just about everything and has no real meaning.