

# Penang

Penang has a population of 1.2 million people of diverse races and cultures. It is truly Malaysia's melting pot. Visitors will come to realise just how wonderfully multi-racial this state is after visiting the various heritage buildings and sites representing the island's many ethnic groups.

For decades, tourists from other countries like Japan and Australia have flocked to this isle to enjoy its slow way of life, tropical beaches, clear blue seas, mouth-watering hawker food and historical sites.

The state's history dates back to 1786 when an English captain established it as the first trading post in the Far East. Sir Francis Light persuaded the Sultan of Kedah to cede Pulau Pinang to the British in exchange for military protection. Over the years, Penang became a major trading port for tea, spices, china and textiles. Today it is a bustling metropolis with a unique identity that reflects its glorious past.

## GETTING THERE

Penang is accessible by air, sea, train and road. Malaysia Airlines connects Penang directly with major cities around the region like Singapore and Bangkok. The airline also operates daily frequent flights between Kuala Lumpur and Penang. AirAsia offers daily flights on the same route at very affordable fares.

The Penang Bridge, links Seberang Perai to Gelugor on the Island. Ferry services from Butterworth to the island operate 24 hours a day. Travelling to Penang by car from other states within Malaysia is convenient and safe. The North-South Expressway (NSE) links Bukit Kayu Hitam at the Malaysia-Thai border in the north and to Johor Bahru in the south. The East-West Highway links Butterworth to Kelantan on the East Coast. Taking the train from Singapore and Kuala Lumpur to Butterworth is also possible.

## MAJOR ATTRACTIONS

### RECREATIONAL FORESTS

Teluk Bahang Forestry Recreational Park

Within the 100 ha Teluk Bahang Forestry Recreational Park are fresh water pools, a children's playground, rest huts, jungle trails and a Forestry Museum. Various species of tropical timber, timber products and insects are showcased in this museum.

Pantai Acheh Forest Reserve

Declared a Penang National Park in 2003, Pantai Acheh is unique as it contains several different types of habitats including wetlands, mangroves, mudflats, coral reefs and turtle-nesting beaches. Green turtles make their way here from April to August while the Olive Redley visits the shore from September to February.

### AGRO TOURISM ATTRACTIONS

Tropical Agro Farm

Tropical Agro Farm cultivates and preserves tropical and sub-tropical fruit trees from neighboring countries. It is a 25-acre farm with four acres covered with durian trees, while the remaining land is planted with 140 different types of fruits. The trees are cultivated on hill terraces that enable easy inspection. The terraces of trees also make a nice setting for photographs. Visitors can also buy the juicy fresh fruits from the farm. Guided tours are available.

#### Mengkuang Titi Village

Located 30km away from Georgetown, this village cultivates agriculture treasures such as rubber, oil palm, padi and coconut. Small home industries here include the production of Mengkuang leaf handicrafts, germination of bean sprouts, preparation of traditional herbal potions and pottery. Although the pottery products are made using simple equipment and traditional methods, the craftsmanship is still of high quality.

#### Pulau Aman

Pulau Aman, which means 'The Island of Peace' in Bahasa Malaysia, is a centre for aquaculture. Aside from its cockle culture project, the island is also home to activities such as kayaking, fishing and jungle trekking. There are also other historical spots like an ancient graveyard, a cave used by pirates in the past and a World War II ammunition depot. Chalets are available for those who want to spend a night here.

#### MAJOR LANDMARKS

##### Fort Cornwallis

Fort Cornwallis is a historical site where Captain Francis Light first landed in 1786. A moat and a fort of Nibong stockade once surrounded it until 1804, when convict labour reconstructed it with bricks. Today you will find a crafts shop, an open-air auditorium and a bunker within the fort. Historical photographs and documents are well kept and displayed here.

##### Dewan Sri Pinang

Located at Lebu Light, west of Fort Cornwallis, the hall houses the Penang State Library and Penang Art Gallery. The island's colourful culture is reflected in the many artworks on showcase. It is also the venue of many art and cultural events.

##### Penang State Museum

A statue of Captain Francis Light occupies a spot at the courtyard in front of this museum, which is situated at Lebu Farquhar between the Cathedral of the Assumption and St. George's Church. The museum displays artefacts, costumes, paintings and embroidery that detail the rich cultural heritage of Penang's many ethnic groups.

##### Cathedral of the Assumption

Built in 1860 and was known as the Church of the Assumption, it was later renamed Cathedral of the Assumption.

##### St. George's Church

Convicts built this Anglican church situated at Jalan Farquhar in 1818. It is regarded as the oldest Anglican church in Malaysia and one of the oldest buildings in Penang.

##### Kuan Yin Teng Temple

This famous temple is decorated with finely crafted dragons and lion sculptures. It is the oldest temple in Penang and was built in 1800 as a dedication to Kuan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy and Mar Chor Poh, the patron saint of seafarers. Devotees come here to worship all year round and especially during anniversary celebrations on the 19th day of the second, sixth and ninth months of the Chinese lunar calendar. Visitors come to join in the celebrations and enjoy the colourful puppet shows and opera performances.

#### Sri Maha Mariamman Temple

Built in 1883 and located in Lebu Queen, this temple showcases interesting sculptures of Hindu deities. Its interior is fascinating and a feast for the eyes. During the annual Thaipusam festival, the temple comes alive with colour and the sounds of spiritual chanting.

#### Kapitan Kling Mosque

Located at the former Pitt Street (now called Jalan Kapitan Kling), this mosque was named after Indian Muslim merchant and headman of the South Indian community, Caudeer Mohudeen, who built the mosque in 1880. It features a dome-shaped minaret and architecture that reflects Indian Muslim influences.

#### Tua Pek Kong Temple

Tua Pek Kong is next to the Yap Kongs. Founded in 1844 by Khoo Teng Peng as a dedication to the Chinese God of Prosperity, the temple used to be a base for the Tua Pek Kong secret society.

#### Dr. Sun Yat Sen's Penang Base

Dr. Sun Yat Sen, the leader of the Chinese revolution against the Manchu government, is also known as the father of modern China. He used this shop-house at 120, Lebu Armenia as the meeting venue for supporters of his movement between 1906 and 1911. On November 13, 1910, he planned the Penang Conference, which resulted in the Canton Uprising of Spring in 1911.

#### Syed Alatas Mansion

Situated at the junction of Lebu Armenia and Lebu Aceh, Syed Alatas was a wealthy merchant during his heyday and the mansion is a reflection of his wealth and taste. He was leader of Bendera Merah (Red Flag), a Muslim underground society. Today, the mansion plays a more subdued role as an office for Penang's Heritage Centre.

#### Acheen Street Mosque

This is the oldest extant mosque in Penang. Syed Sheriff Tengku Syed Hussaid Aidid, a wealthy merchant from Aceh, founded it in 1808. The architecture symbolises the unique mix of the Achese, Anglo-Indians and Chinese. The unique features of this mosque are the pagoda-like minaret; swallow tailed roof and fanlights. The tomb of the founder remains in the compound of the mosque.

#### Khoo Kongs

Khoo Kongs is a grand temple that shines brightly along Lebu Cannon. It was built to serve as a clan-house for members of the Khoo family. The walls, pillars and roof are richly decorated with intricate carvings and the beams are made from wood of the finest quality. The temple was rebuilt in 1902 after it was gutted by fire. During the seventh lunar month, the temple comes alive with Chinese opera performances.

## Weld Quay

Weld Quay comprises water villages first occupied by the early Straits Chinese who were stevedores. The villages are made up of houses on stilts. Also known as jetties, the biggest and liveliest here is the Chew Jetty.

## Nagore Shrine

The shrine is a memorial to the caliph Syed Shahrul Hamid and is inspired by Mogul architecture. It is located at the junction of Lebu Chulia and Lebu King. Faithful devotees come to offer prayers here on Thursdays.

## Wat Chayamangkalaram

A Buddhist temple of Thai architecture that houses a 33-metre long gold plated reclining Buddha, Wat Chayamangkalaram is one of the longest in the world. Behind this statue, there are niches with urns containing the ashes of devotees. A pair of serpents adorns the entrance, which leads to the inside of the temple where statues of Buddhist deities with gold leaf finishing can be viewed.

## Dharmikarama Burmese Temple

The Dharmikarama was founded in 1805 and has a prominent pair of white stone elephants, which welcome their guests at the entrance. Magnificent images of Buddha are housed in the temple. Within the pagoda grounds stands a Bodhi tree and a wishing pond. It is the venue of many interesting festivities, especially during April's Buddhist water festival.

## Nattukotai Temple

Nattukotai Temple is situated at Jalan Kebun Bunga. It is dedicated to Lord Bala Subramaniam. The grand Thaipusam festival is also celebrated here.

## State Mosque

The State Mosque in Jalan Masjid Negeri symbolises Islam as the state's official religion. Its architecture is a clever mixture of Islamic and modern influences. The biggest numbers of worshippers congregate at the mosque every Friday, which can accommodate up to 5,000 people. Permission to visit the mosque can be obtained from the State Religious Department in Lebu Pantai.

## Kek Lok Si Temple

The Kek Lok Si (a.k.a. the Temple of the Supreme Bliss) stands with dignity atop a hill overlooking the Air Hitam Valley. It is perhaps the finest Buddhist temple in Southeast Asia. Built between 1893 and 1905, the attention-grabbing Pagoda of Ten Thousand Buddhas was skilfully built in tiers. It combines a Chinese octagonal base, a middle tier of Thai architecture and a Burmese crown, reflecting the beliefs of the followers of Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism. Among other interesting features are lush scenic gardens, a turtle pond, shrines and beautiful sculptures. This is one of Penang's most famous attractions.

## Bukit Jambul Orchid, Hibiscus and Reptile Garden

This garden is located along Persiaran Bukit Jambul, near Equatorial Hotel. The many different species of hibiscus and orchids offer a wonderful experience to blossom lovers. There are also many species of snakes and iguanas that have found their home here.

## Kompleks Tun Abdul Razak (KOMTAR)

Better known as KOMTAR, this building is a prominent Penang landmark that houses government departments, commercial offices, department stores, shops and restaurants. The 65-storey building stands at the southern end of Jalan Penang. It also houses theatres, squash courts and a geodesic dome, which serves as a multipurpose hall. A panoramic view of the city can be seen from the 58th floor, where the Tower Tourist Centre is located. KOMTAR also serves as Georgetown's main bus and taxi terminal.

## Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion

This is Penang's high profile private restoration project that was conferred the inaugural UNESCO Asia Pacific Heritage Conservation Award in 2000. Today, it serves as an exclusive hotel. It is a mansion specially tailored based on Feng Shui and incorporates 38 rooms, five courtyards, seven staircases and 220 windows. Fine interior decorations such as sculptures make it a classic treasure.

## Botanic Gardens

Charles Curtis, the first Superintendent of the Botanic Gardens, founded this green spread of over 30 ha at Jalan Ayer Terjun. The view of plants, trees and flowers of various hues makes it a heavenly place to visit. The species that are cultivated here are of great importance in the world's herbarium. Hiking is also possible here, where the nature trail leads up to Penang Hill and Mount Olivia.

## Penang Hill

Rising 830 metres above sea level, Penang Hill is a popular rendezvous for locals and tourists. It is accessible via a funicular train service from the base at Jalan Air Terjun or powerful four-wheel drives on tarred road. Nature lovers can expect to see flora and fauna, small farms, fruit orchards, farmers' houses and old colonial buildings during the train ride. The summit offers refreshing cool air and an impressive panoramic view of Georgetown. A 12-room hotel offers accommodation to visitors who want to enjoy the hill's lush green treasure.

## Penang Butterfly Farm

Located at Teluk Bahang, the farm is a sanctuary of tropical butterflies. It is a conservation unit for butterfly species that suffer from habitat destruction. The farm is also home to more than 4,000 colourful butterflies of 120 different species. Flora, fountains and streams finally make it all the more charming. The Asian Gallery of Asian Artefacts is also here, the largest display of Southeast Asian art in the country, as is the Insect Museum.

## Penang Bird Park

On the mainland in Seberang Jaya, one can find the two-hectare Penang Bird Park, a paradise housing 300 species of birds from around the world. An impressive collection of orchids, hibiscus, palm trees and other interesting flora decorate the park. There is a bus service KOMTAR to the park.

## BEACHES

The beaches of Penang offer stretches of golden sands, crystal blue sea and coves with clusters of rocks. A range of beachfront resorts of famous international chains line the shore of Tanjung Bungah. Some resorts provide sea adventure facilities such as parasailing, windsurfing and water-skiing. Tanjung Tokong comes alive after sunset as most of the nightclubs and karaoke bars are here. Delightful hawker food can also be found at the Fettes Park residential area. Then there is Batu Ferringhi. Apart from its beautiful beaches, this spot offers delicious local and international food and

souvenir shops. Teluk Bahang is situated at the extreme northwest corner of the island, hence its past name The End of the World.

## SHOPPING COMPLEXES

### Island Plaza

Fronting the busy Jalan Tanjong Tokong, this beautifully-designed shopping mall offers a well-planned tenant mix comprising an anchor tenant, family entertainment & amusement centre, regional/local cuisine restaurants, food court, cineplexes and more than 150 specialty shops.

### Gurney Plaza

It is one of the largest shopping malls in Penang. Located along Gurney Drive and just five minutes from Georgetown, Gurney Plaza houses 500 retail stores. There are also a wide variety of restaurants, cafes and bistros here.

### 1-Stop Midlands Park

1-Stop Midlands Park Centre is located on Pulau Tikus. It is a mall with five shopping levels that house more than 300 stores. A food court that caters to local favourites is on the sixth floor. Funzone and Great World Park on the seventh floor offer simulated rides and high-tech game machines. Diners can also opt for popular fast food chains or restaurants offering Thai, Japanese or Chinese cuisine. Its 32-lane bowling alley is also a favourite for those looking to relax after a hard day of shopping. The Water Theme Park on the rooftop offers a fun time for family and friends with its exciting water slides and rides.

### Super Komtar

This is a leading departmental store and supermarket in Penang. It is located within Komtar

### The Garage

A part of heritage conservation on upper Penang, The Garage has an exquisite interior. It houses over 30 shops, galleries, cafés and restaurants. The shops here retail unique, exclusive yet affordable gifts, antiques, collectibles, outfits and accessories.

### Local Handicrafts

There are some places to visit in Penang for its hidden treasures of local handicrafts. Avid curio and antique lovers will find some interesting items at Lebuah Bishop and Lebuah Chulia. Ladies will find Jalan Pinang and Lebuah Cambell a delight as skilful goldsmiths produce some of the finest oriental jewellery on the island along these roads. A bazaar offering cane and wicker crafts can also be found at Jalan Pinang. The Chowrasta Market, Air Hitam Market and Kek Lok Si Temple offer local snacks like preserved nutmegs, betel nuts and satay fish that tantalize the taste buds. For art aficionados, the galleries in Penang are a must-visit. The reputable ones are Penang Cultural Centre in 1-Stop Midland Park, Yahong Art Gallery in Batu Ferringhi, Penang Arts in Lebuah Leith, Conservatory of Fine Arts in Gelugor, Arts of Asia in Teluk Bahang and Equator Academy of Arts in Jalan Anson. Most galleries showcase masterpieces of local talents.

## EATING OUT

Penang is just the place to be for mouth-watering hawker food. Among its irresistible hawker delights are laksa, nasi

kandar, char koay teow, pesembor, loh bak and roti jalar. Its appetizing array of Nyonya food includes otak-otak, enche kabin and curry kapitan. Balik Pulau and Ayer Hitam Market are famous for laksa while nasi kandar stalls can be found at Burma Road, Jalan Dato Keramat, Magazine Road, Pitt Street, Penang Road and Chowrasta Lane. Treat yourself to local favourites such as chicken rice, bee-hoon and prawn noodles at open-air conventional Chinese cafés around Lebuah Chulia. Dining at 8-row in Krian Road will give you a pleasant experience as its restaurants and bistros boast heritage settings. Shopping malls also offer hawker food in comfy, air-conditioned environments. Delicious fresh seafood is found in abundance along Jalan Batu Ferringhi and Teluk Bahang.

## ENTERTAINMENT

Penang is indeed an island in the sun but it is just as lively after dark. Nightclubs, pubs, spas, bars, lounges and other hangouts cater to all types of tastes. Popular nightspots and places to wine and dine are all along the prestigious Belissa Row. Numerous pubs along Jalan Gottlieb, The Garage and Esplanade offer beers, cocktails, foosball, pool, dance floors and feet-tapping music.

## SPORTS AND LEISURE

Golfers will not feel left out in Penang as there are four excellent golf courses, namely the Bukit Jambul Country Club on the island and Bukit Jawi Golf Resort, Kristal Gold Resort and Penang Golf Resort on the mainland. These courses not only come with challenging greens but also well-designed clubhouses. For example, the Bukit Jambul County Club has a fantastic clubhouse with an Olympic-size swimming pool, an all-weather tennis court, squash courts, a gymnasium and a 32-bay driving range. There are numerous other sports clubs in Penang including the Penang Motor Sports Club, the Penang Rifle Club, the Penang Swimming Club, the Penang Squash Centre and the prestigious Penang Yacht Club that fronts the sea.