



Penang

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Best Places to Stay

- » 23 Love Lane (p164)
- » Straits Collection (p164)
- » Lone Pine Hotel (p177)
- » China Tiger (p166)
- » New Asia Heritage Hotel (p163)

Best Places to Eat

- » Lorong Baru (New Lane) Hawker Stalls (p170)
- » Teksen (p167)
- » China House (p167)
- » Sea Pearl Lagoon Cafe (p169)
- » Gurney Drive Hawker Stalls (p170)

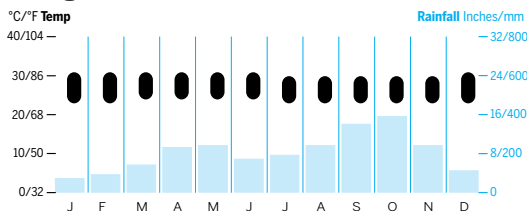
Why Go?

'Pearl of the Orient', Penang's nickname, conjures romantic images of trishaws pedalling past watermarked Chinese shophouses, blue joss smoke and a sting of chilli in the air; or maybe it's ornate temples, and gold-embroidered saris displayed in shop windows, next to mosques sending a call to the midday prayer. But really, whatever you're imagining, chances are that Penang *is* that reality. Add surprises like slick cafes, antiseptic shopping malls, jungles and white beaches and you'll have an even sharper image.

Historically, Penang was the waterway between Asia's two halves and the outlet to the markets of Europe and the Middle East. As such, the island sits on the juncture of Asia's great kingdoms and colonial empires. Today the culture of this region, forged over decades of colonialism, commercial activity and hosting tourists, is one of Malaysia's most tolerant, cosmopolitan and exciting, especially on the palate.

When to Go

George Town



Jan–Feb Book accommodation in advance if visiting George Town during Chinese New Year.

Jun–Jul Penang's famous durian and other fruit are at their peak during summer.

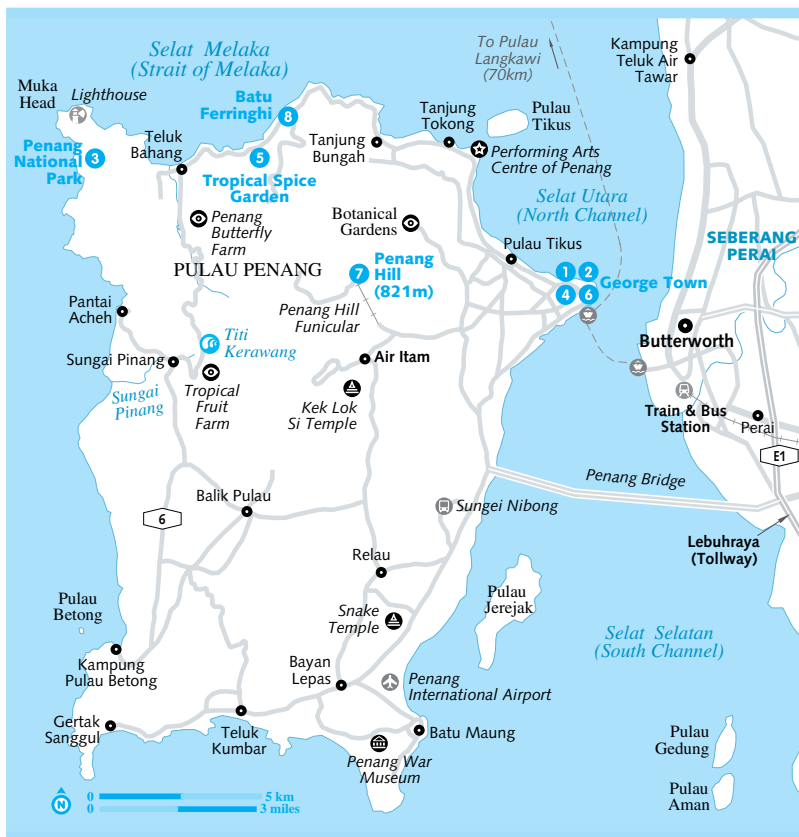
Jul The George Town Festival lights up the entire month with theatre, dance and music.

History

Little is known of Penang's early history. Chinese seafarers were aware of the island, which they called Betelnut Island, as far back as the 15th century, but it appears to have been uninhabited. It wasn't until the early 1700s that colonists arrived from Sumatra and established settlements at Batu Uban and the area now covered by southern

George Town. The island came under the control of the sultan of Kedah, but in 1771 the sultan signed the first agreement with the British East India Company, handing them trading rights in exchange for military assistance against Siam.

Fifteen years later Captain Francis Light, on behalf of the East India Company, took possession of Penang, which was formally



Penang Highlights

- 1 Gorging on George Town's seemingly never-ending spread of **hawker food** (p167)
- 2 Getting a virtual crash-course in feng shui at the **Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion** (p159)
- 3 Hiking through jungles to monkey beaches

at **Penang National Park** (p179)

- 4 Learning about the city's architectural heritage from street level on a **walking tour** (p161) of George Town
- 5 Becoming familiar with the contents of your spice rack at the **Tropical Spice Garden** (p177)

- 6 Indulging in a stay at one of George Town's unique **heritage hotels** (p162)
- 7 Enjoying the cool breezes and fantastic views of the island from atop **Penang Hill** (p157)
- 8 Sun-tanning and cocktail drinking at a resort in **Batu Ferringhi** (p176)