



# Penang

📍04 / POP 1.65 MILLION / AREA 293 SQ KM

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## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Teksen (p176)
- ➔ Lg Baru (New Lane) Hawker Stalls (p177)
- ➔ Pulau Tikus Hawker Stalls (p177)
- ➔ China House (p176)
- ➔ Hai Boey Seafood (p189)

## Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Campbell House (p173)
- ➔ Museum Hotel (p174)
- ➔ 23 Love Lane (p173)
- ➔ Lone Pine Hotel (p185)
- ➔ Ren i Tang (p171)

## Why Go?

Located at the intersection of Asia's great kingdoms and Europe's powerful colonial empires, the island of Penang has long served as the link between Asia's two halves and an important outlet to the markets of Europe and the Middle East.

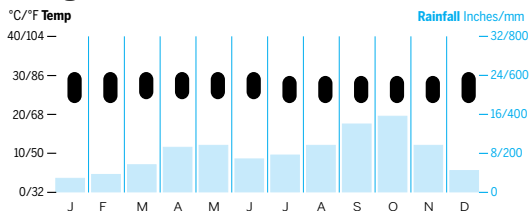
This history has resulted in a culture that is one of Malaysia's most diverse, cosmopolitan and exciting. The culmination of this is undoubtedly George Town, Penang's main city, and an urban centre that delivers old-world Asia in spades; think trishaws pedalling past watermarked Chinese shop-houses, blue joss smoke perfuming the air.

Yet it would be a shame to neglect Penang's abundant tropicalness, its palm-fringed beaches and fishing villages, its mountainous jungle and farms growing exotic produce such as nutmeg and durian.

If there's a more compact, convenient and exciting microcosm of the exotic East than Penang, we've yet to find it.

## 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.

**Nov-Dec** Penang's 'winter' is the most comfortable time to visit the island.



## Penang Highlights

- 1 Gorging on George Town's seemingly never-ending spread of **hawker food** (p177).
- 2 Getting a virtual crash course in feng shui at **Blue Mansion** (p159).
- 3 Hiking through jungles to monkey-filled beaches

- at **Penang National Park** (p186).
- 4 Learning about the city's architectural heritage from street level via a **walking tour** (p164) of George Town.
  - 5 Becoming familiar with the contents of your spice rack at the **Tropical Spice Garden** (p185).

- 6 Indulging in a stay at one of George Town's unique **heritage hotels** (p173).
- 7 Enjoying the cool breezes and fantastic views of the island from atop **Penang Hill** (p166).
- 8 Suntanning and cocktail drinking at a resort in **Batu Ferringhi** (p184).

## 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 (present-day Thailand).

Fifteen years later, Captain Francis Light, on behalf of the East India Company, took