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Fast facts

Penang

The body of water dividing Penang island from the mainland is called Selat Utara (North Channel) to the north of Georgetown and Selat Selatan (South Channel) to the south of Georgetown. The Penang Bridge and a ferry link the 3km stretch between Butterworth and Georgetown. Penang Island is a somewhat turtle-shaped island with a mostly forested interior, its highest point being the western peak of Penang Hill (821m).

The coastal plains are narrow, the most extensive part forming a triangular peninsula in the northeast where Georgetown, the state capital is located. Many of Penang's sights such as the Botanical Gardens and Kek Lok Si Temple are located in this flat area

between Georgetown and Penang Hill. The coastal area around the island heading east from Georgetown is mostly urban, past the Penang Bridge and towards Bayan Lepas International Airport at the island's southeastern corner. From here, pass fishing villages and rural towns up to the island's northwestern point, where you'll find the walkable Teluk Bahang Forest Reserve and the 2300 hectare Penang National Park. Penang's best beaches are along the north coast at the resort town of Batu Ferringhi, only 13km from Georgetown.

SIGHTS

Penang Hill

Rising high above Georgetown, Penang Hill provides a cool retreat from the sticky heat below. There are spectacular views over the island and mainland, gardens, an old-fashioned kiosk and a restaurant, as well as a lavishly decorated Hindu temple and a mosque at the top. The Swiss-built funicular was completed in 1923 and has trundled up and down ever since.

*from Air Itam, walk 5min to the funicular railway station
10km (6mi) from city centre
Penang Hill*

Kek Lok Si Temple

The largest Buddhist temple in Malaysia was founded in 1890 by an immigrant Chinese Buddhist. To reach the entrance, walk through arcades of souvenir stalls, past a tightly packed turtle pond and murky fish ponds, until you reach Ban Po Thar, a seven-tier, 30m (98ft) tower. The design is said to be Burmese at the top, Chinese at the bottom and Thai in between.

*Air Itam
3km (1.8mi) walk from Penang Hill station*

Penang Museum

The Penang Museum is one of the best presented museums in Malaysia. There are engaging exhibits on the customs and traditions of Penang's various ethnic groups, with photos, documents, costumes, furniture and other well labelled displays. Look out for the beautifully carved opium beds, inlaid with mother-of-pearl.

*Colonial District
Lebuh Farquhar
tel: 261 3144*

Khoo Kongsi

Near the end of Lebuh Pitt (Jln Masjid Kapitan Keling) is the Khoo Kongsi. A *kongsi* is a clan house, a building that's partly a temple and partly a meeting hall for Chinese of the same clan or surname. This is Penang's most famous and ornate clan house.

*18 Cannon Sq
Chinatown
tel: 261 4609*

Fort Cornwallis

Among Penang's oldest sights are the timeworn walls of Fort Cornwallis. It was here that Captain Light first set foot on the virtually uninhabited island in 1786 and established the free port where trade would, he hoped, be lured from Britain's Dutch rivals. At first a wooden fort was built, but between 1808 and 1810 convict labour replaced it with the present stone structure.

*Lebuh Light
Colonial District
tel: 261 0262*

DINING

Spice & Rice

Southern Indian food is served with class on crisp white table clothes laden with wine glasses and candles. There's an OK (but good for Penang) wine list, cocktails are on offer and the service is excellent. Goanese fish curry, chicken tikka and, ahem, goat-brain masala are just some of the menu items. There's live jazz on Thursday and Friday nights; otherwise you'll have to suffer through the pseudo-soft rock and country and western music that's pumped through the stereo.

*1 Green Hall
Little India
tel: 261 8585*



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Penang

Opera

This place is all about fusion with steel-grey walls, black-and-white table cloths, all accented with Asian hardwoods. Cool jazz murmurs in the background. The food mixes things up even more with some interesting Western and Asian dishes including 'hazelnut fish and chips' and stir-fried ostrich.

Chinatown
3E Jln Penang
tel: 263 2893

Kirishima

Japanese living in or visiting Penang head straight here, and many foreigners cite it the best sushi they've ever had. The setting is dark Japanese chic, with saki bottles lining the walls. As well as sushi there is also excellent seafood. Reserve in advance for peak hours.

66 Jln Penang
Chinatown
Cititel Hotel
tel: 370 0108

Teik Sen

At first glance this open cafe looks like any other popular Chinatown establishment. On closer look you'll notice that patrons are dressed up – button shirts and high heels. Once you try the food you'll understand. This is a step up from the everyday delicacies of Chinatown - just when you thought it couldn't get better, it did.

Chinatown
Lebuh Carnavon

Thirty Two

Genteel restaurant in an elegant seaside mansion with a small garden and nice little alcoves. Dishes like six-spice marinated barbecue chicken, lobster, steaks and Osso Bucco lamb are on the menu but the house speciality is the crab laksa. There's a cocktail bar, and live jazz on Friday and Saturday evenings. Dress code is smart casual.

32 Jln Sultan Ahmad Shah
Chinatown
tel: 262 2232

ENTERTAINMENT

R&B Pub

Inside the Merchant Hotel, this lively club features live music most nights. There's also a dart board and pool table, but shorts and sandals are no-nos here.

1st fl, Merchant Hotel
Chinatown
55 Jln Penang

Club Momo

This place has a Middle Eastern and Mediterranean theme going, complete with a Harem Club with sofas and Moroccan tents. There's a special dance floor and alcoves for VIPs, live music and theme-music nights. On Wednesday women get in free. Alfresco Asian-fusion dining is on a leafy patio.

The Bungalow
N of City Centre
tel: 262 3030

Bagan Lounge

A restaurant, as well as a bar, this cosy, secluded place is popular with hip under-thirties and expats. There's a sultry jazz diva who enhances the décor of cooshy couches, giant mirrors, fairy lights and ceiling fans. This is also a great place for a romantic dinner. Gay and lesbian friendly.

18 Jln Bagan Jermal
3km NW of City Centre
NW of City Centre
tel: 226 4977

Slippery Senioritas

Come to this see-and-be-seen Latin club for live music, salsa dancing and a Tom Cruise *Cocktail*-esque show, put on by the bar staff, involving flames, fruit and cards among other things. This is a place for dressing to the hilt, so don't show up in your flip flops. It's popular with Western expats, and the adjoining restaurant serves tasty Western and Mexican fare.

Chinatown
2 Jln Penang

Bukit Jambul Country Club

Malaysia is becoming a popular golfing destination and Penang has some exceptionally affordable international-standard golf courses - Japanese businessmen fly in for just a day or two to take advantage of them. The island's premier course, the Bukit Jambul Country Club, was rated it the second-most-beautiful course in Malaysia by Golf Malaysia. The stunning and very challenging 18 holes are carved straight out of the rocky jungle terrain.

2 Jln Bukit Jambul
18km S of City Centre
near Bayan Lepas International Airport
S of City Centre
tel: 644 2255

HOTELS

Eastern & Oriental Hotel

The historic E&O is Penang's grandest and most famous hotel, founded in 1884 by the Sarkies brothers. The all-suite hotel has a variety of spacious, tastefully furnished rooms and it's worth the extra outlay for one facing the sea.

Georgetown
From Komtar bus station, walk straight up Jln Penang for about 25min till the end. The E&O is right in front of you on Lebuh Farquhar.
10 Lebuh Farquhar
tel: 222 2000

Cititel Hotel

You can't miss this concrete giant lording it over Jln Penang. It's a brightly lit, airy, modern hotel with a range of well-equipped rooms on offer, including suites. There are also a few good restaurants and a nightclub.

66 Jln Penang
Georgetown - Chinatown
From Komtar bus station, walk up Jln Penang for about 15min. Hotel on the left.
tel: 370 1188

Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion

Exclusive and unique owner-hosted homestay, Cheong Fatt Tze is a beautiful old mansion which is also one of the city's premier tourist attractions. The elegantly furnished suites are individually styled, and each comes with a personal valet.

14 Lebuh Leith
Georgetown - Chinatown
from Komtar, walk up Jln Penang for 15min until you come to the junction with Lebuh Leith; hotel is at the end of this road, on the left
tel: 262 0006

Evergreen Laurel Hotel

The Evergreen is one of several five-star high-rises strung out along fashionable Gurney Dr, 4km (2.5mi) west of the city centre. It has tennis courts, a gym, business centre and other top-end facilities. Rooms at the front have great sea views.

Gurney Drive
Drive W from central Georgetown along Jln Sultan Ahmad Shah, then turn right at the roundabout onto the seafront Gurney Dr. The hotel is along this road, on your left.
58 Gurney Dr
tel: 226 9988



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Penang

Shangri-La Traders Hotel

Right near the Komtar shopping centre in an area swarming with traffic but little charm, this massive, shiny hotel rides the line between very classy and old-fashioned. Rooms are spacious, with comfy beds and views of the city.

Chinatown
JIn Magazine
tel: 262 2622

FAST FACTS

Population

1310000

Language

English
Tamil
Chinese
Malay

Currency

Malaysian Ringgit
MYR

Money and costs

There are enough 24h ATMs around, so getting access to cash in Penang is never a problem. Staff in upmarket hotels and bars expect a small tip for attentive service.

When to go

Penang's weather shouldn't influence your decision regarding when to go – its muggy tropical climate is fairly consistent year-round. Why not coincide your trip with one of its many cultural festivals?

Electricity

240V

Phone

country dialling code: 60
mobile network: GSM 900/1800, ETACS 900

Local Cathay Pacific contact information

Reservation numbers: 60 (4) 226 0411
86 (20) 8388 2498 (International Roaming/ Overseas)
Check-in counters: Penang International Airport,
Counters 43 – 49

