

INSIDE: FASHION TRENDS FOR TRAVEL | KAYAK TO A GLACIER IN ALASKA | AN ASTRONAUT'S GUIDE TO EARTH

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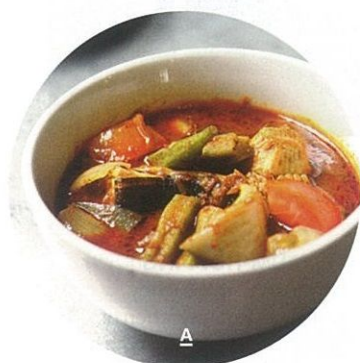
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LOCAL FLAVOUR

With legendary street eats, and exceptional fruit and seafood, Penang is one of South-east Asia's premier culinary destinations. A virtual microcosm of George Town's hawker fare is the Lorong Baru Hawker Centre (*corner of Jalan Macalister and Lorong Baru*), which serves good versions of almost every dish that has made the city famous, from char kway teow (stir-fried flat rice noodles) to otak-otak (steamed spicy fish custard).

If you prefer somewhere with a roof, Tek Sen (18 Lebuhraya) has to be the best restaurant in town. Come for the almost candy-like roasted pork with chilli padi or, for more delicate palates, the restaurant's delicious dishes prepared using homemade tofu.



WALK THE WALK

George Town, the capital of the state of Penang, is best known for its UNESCO-listed architecture. To best appreciate it, ideally with the help of a knowledgeable narrator, sign up for a private walking tour with George Town Heritage Walks (Tel: 601 6440 6823). They're led by Joann Khaw, an experienced guide and native of the city.

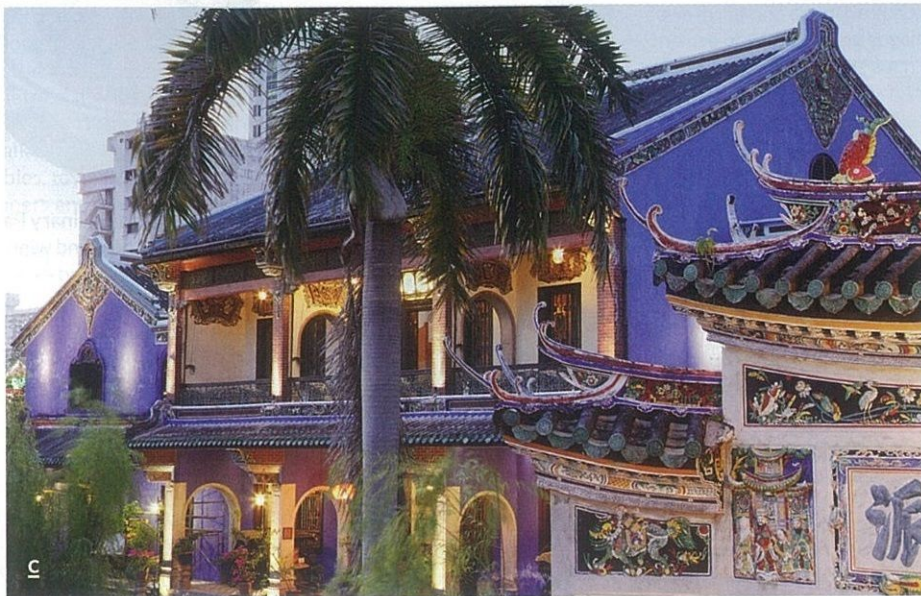
If your interests lean towards the culinary, join a tour led by food writer and George Town resident Robyn Eckhardt (eatingasia.typepad.com). Or, stop by the Penang Global Tourism office (mypenang.gov.my) for a copy of Marking George Town, a map of the city's famous street-art sites, which makes a fun self-guided tour.

The Essential
Quick Guide For
Discerning Travellers

5 MUST-DOS PENANG

BY AUSTIN BUSH





BOUTIQUE CHIC

Much of George Town's best boutique accommodation is housed in the city's unique buildings. Campbell House (campbellhousepenang.com), a former budget hotel dating back to 1903, has retained its old-world atmosphere – with the benefits of thoughtful service and a convenient location. Relative newbie Ren i Tang (renitang.com), a former Chinese traditional-medicine warehouse near Little India, shows hints of its previous life, blending nostalgia with modern comfort. And at 23 Love Lane (23lovelane.com), you can stay at the kind of secluded mansion you would otherwise only see from the outside.

HOUSE HUNTING

To see George Town's buildings from the inside, don't miss a visit to the city's excellent house museums. Boasting an emblematic shade of cobalt is the Blue Mansion (thebluemansion.com.my), the former residence of Cheong Fatt Tze, a wealthy Chinese businessman. A guided tour of the 18-bedroom mansion reveals decadent features such as imported Scottish cast-iron pillars and art nouveau stained glass, while also serving as a

crash course in feng shui.

Another peek into George Town's decadent homes can be had at the Pinang Peranakan Mansion (pinangperanakanmansion.com.my). The gorgeous two-storey former residence is positively stuffed with items that range from priceless treasures to household items. It is a fascinating insight into the lives of the Baba-Nonya, a predominantly Chinese community who adopted the ways of the local Malays.



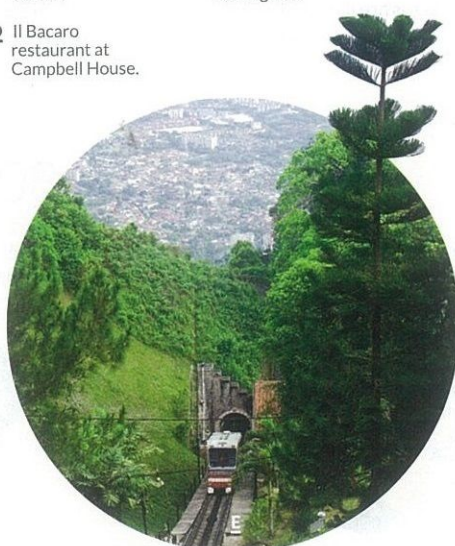
A Tek Sen's tasty stingray curry.

B Street artist Louis Gan's Brother and Sister on a Swing resides on Chulia Street Ghaut.

C The Blue Mansion features Chinese and European architectural details.

D Il Bacaro restaurant at Campbell House.

E Enjoy stunning views as you take the funicular up Penang Hill.



THE GREAT OUTDOORS

When the city gets intolerably hot, do as the English did and escape to Penang Hill (penanghill.gov.my), which is 833m above sea level. Reach its summit via a funicular and enjoy amazing views and cool weather. When you leave, take the 5km path that winds downhill through the jungle and ends at the Botanic Gardens (botanicalgardens.penang.gov.my).

For untamed green spaces, visit Penang National Park (Jalan Hassan Abas, Teluk Bahang). It has a network of marked jungle trails with flora and fauna such as pitcher plants and monkeys. There's also a meromictic lake containing layers of freshwater and saltwater that don't mix.

Fast Facts

CURRENCY
Malaysian Ringgit
US\$1 = RM4.24

VISA
Requirements vary.
Visit imi.gov.my for details.

BEST TIME TO VISIT
Avoid Penang's hot, muggy summer in February and March, and its rainy season from August to November.

HOW TO GET THERE
Singapore Airlines subsidiary SilkAir flies 35 times weekly to Penang.

MORE INFORMATION
tourism.gov.my

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