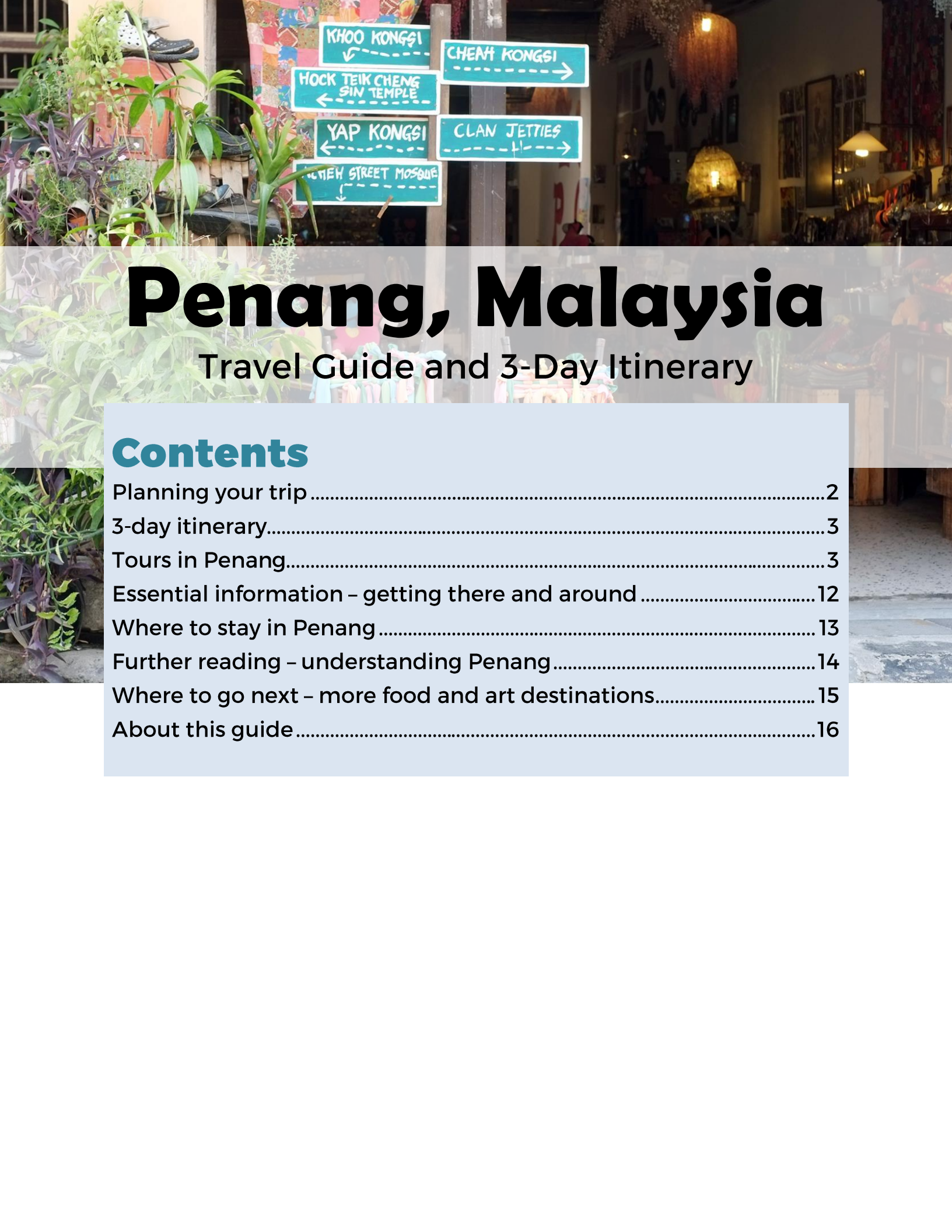




Penang, Malaysia

Travel Guide and 3-Day Itinerary

Contents

Planning your trip	2
3-day itinerary.....	3
Tours in Penang.....	3
Essential information – getting there and around	12
Where to stay in Penang	13
Further reading – understanding Penang	14
Where to go next – more food and art destinations.....	15
About this guide	16

Planning your trip

Use this checklist to plan your trip to Penang, Malaysia. Click on the links for helpful information and travel sites.

Pre-trip essential information

- ☐ [General visa information for travel to Malaysia](#)
- ☐ [Health information for travelers to Malaysia](#)
- ☐ [Get a travel insurance](#)

Getting there and around

- ☐ [Flights to Penang](#)
- ☐ [Rental cars](#)
- ☐ [Private intercity transfers](#)
- ☐ [Hop-on hop-off buses in Penang](#)

Real-time deals on accommodations

- ☐ [George Town \(city\)](#)
- ☐ [Batu Ferringhi \(seaside\)](#)

Trip essentials

- ☐ [Data SIM card](#)
- ☐ [Grab ride-sharing app](#)

3-day itinerary



[Tourist map: Use this Google map to plan your trip](#)

Day 1 – Explore George Town through architecture, art, and food

Start the day with dessert

Exploring George Town requires a lot of fuel, and the best place to fill up in the morning is Lebu Keng Kwee. Just beside the crowded Chowrasta and Kimberley street, this relatively quiet street houses the [best cendol stall in Penang](#).

From Jalan Penang, turn towards Lebu Keng Kwee. Look up and you'll see a street [mural of a boy enjoying a bowl of cendol](#), Penang's most famous dessert. The refreshing pandan-flavored noodles in light coconut milk topped with shaved ice is just what you need to beat the Penang heat, so join the line directly underneath the mural and start your day with dessert.

Afterwards, sample other Penang classics along Lebu Keng Kwee – the spicy, sour, and minty fish noodle Penang asam laksa (a must-try at rank #7 in [CNN's world's 50 best foods](#)), the ochien or oyster omelette, and char kway teow.

While you can navigate George Town's food scene by yourself, if you want local insights into the city's cuisine and culture, join a food tour like [this for brunch](#), or [this for lunch or dinner](#).

Once you've had your fill, walk around the markets and fruit stalls along Chowrasta and feast your eyes and nose on all the colors and scents of tropical produce.



Penang's story as told by the streets

From Chowrasta, walk east until the food markets give way to colonial-era mansions, ornate temples, and sprawling buildings. They tell the story of George Town's multicultural heritage, so preserved that it makes [UNESCO'S world heritage list](#) as a city where Asian and European elements come together to create unique architecture, culture, and townscape.

How did all these elements come together? Penang was founded in 1786 by Francis Light of the East India Company. It soon became a major and prosperous trading hub, bringing in traders and laborers from China and India, as well as producing grand houses like the Blue Mansion, the Peranakan Museum, and the Khoo Kongsi. Fast-forward to the 1960s when the Rent Control Act was imposed, landlords became unable to raise their rent until they were eventually unable to maintain their properties. George Town's economy declined, and while the coastal part of the island, Batu Ferringhi, continued to draw tourists, George Town itself fell into neglect.

In 2008, George Town was deemed a UNESCO heritage site and artists were brought in to spruce up the streets and tell the town's story through wrought iron

caricatures and interactive street art. Presently, the most popular murals are those by [Ernest Zacharevic](#), who draws [inspiration](#) from daily scenes around the city. [Penang street art continues to evolve](#) and superimposing the interactive and temporary nature of street art on the ageing historical buildings has given George Town a fascinating open-air, living museum quality – definitely a place you can only understand through its streets.

Walking tour of George Town

If you want to see most of the city's art and architecture, there's no straight and narrow path. You'll have to weave your way around the city, going in and out of side streets and through the various ethnic enclaves that comprise the island's cultural landscape. Take frequent breaks from the heat by ducking into any of the dozens of cafes where you can try the local white coffee and teh tarik (milk tea). For caffeine-free options, try a mango lassi, calamansi juice, nutmeg juice, or soya milk to stay hydrated.

Make your way to Cheong Fatt Tze, also known as the Blue Mansion for its indigo-blue outer walls. Cheong Fatt Tze is named after the merchant that built it at the end of the 19th century, who used the 38-room mansion as his private residence and business operations center. The mansion draws from multiple architectural influences – Gothic and Art Nouveau windows and Stoke-on-Trent floor tiles all built according to the principles of Feng Shui and heavily influenced by Chinese imperial design.

You can see parts of the house and learn more about it by joining an [English-speaking tour](#), or if you want to live like royalty for a few days, you can actually [book a stay with them](#) (it's surprisingly affordable, too!).

Continue walking towards Chulia Street. Keep your eyes peeled for the caricatures and murals, and make sure to go into side streets and to look up. While the street art scene is constantly changing, this [tourist map](#) can lead you to the most popular ones.

Walking a little further east will bring you to Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling (also: Pitt Street) where all of Penang's cultural elements come together. At the east end,

you'll see St. George's Church, the oldest Anglican church in Malaysia, erected by Penang's British colonial administrators in the early 1800s. Early British houses surround the church, giving this area a European feel.

A few steps along the street, the British houses give way to Chinese storefronts. At the intersection of Pitt Street and Lebuh China (China Street), the Kuan Yin Teng (also: Kong Hock Keong; Temple of the Goddess of Mercy) stands as the oldest and main temple for the Taoists in the city. The temple was originally dedicated to the patron saint of seafarers, where the Chinese community gathered for divine protection for their journeys across the South China Sea. As they became less dependent on the sea and turned to more urban livelihoods and pursuits, the temple transitioned to honor Kuan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy, effectively evolving to stay relevant to the community's needs.

Take some time to look around Kuan Yin Teng. If you walk down Lebuh China towards the sea, you can make it to the clan jetties, which are Chinese settlements on stilts over the sea. As it's a bit far from the center of George Town, we'll reserve it for day 2.

Continue along Pitt Street to the Sri Mahamariamman Temple, one of the oldest Hindu temples in Penang. The temple was built by the Tamils and South Indians in the early 1800s in what is now Little India. Its most impressive feature is the tower or *gopuram*, which rises above the entrance and features Hindu deities. You can enter the temple at certain times of the day, but ask for permission from the priests first.

A few more steps will bring you to the impressive Kapitan Keling Mosque, the place of worship for the city's South India Muslim community, and a perfect sight especially during sunset. The whitewashed mosque is topped with Mughal-style domes, crescents, and stars, and has a towering minaret from where calls to prayer can be heard. The mosque was built in 1801 by Penang's first Indian Muslim settlers, and named after the head of the Indian Muslim community. The term "keling" is derived from the ancient Hindu kingdom on the Coromandel coast of South India, and was eventually used to call all those who came from the southeast

Indian subcontinent. You can avail of free guided tours by inquiring at the Islamic Information Center at the ground floor of the minaret.

Follow the lights to Little India

As dusk falls and the streets light up, take a short walk to the whole new world of Little India. If you're exhausted, a walk along Little India's neon lights, colorful fabrics, and fragrant spices will bring you back to life. End your day with a delicious dinner at [Sri Ananda Bahwan](#), where you can feast guilt-free on roti and a spread of vegetarian dipping sauces.

If you're not ready to sleep just yet, make your way to Love Lane for drinks and music.

Day 2 – From the Clan Jetties to Penang Hill

Day 1 gives a great overview of the center of George Town. For day 2, we'll be exploring its edges.

Sunrise at the jetties

If you can be up and about by dawn, head to the clan jetties for a spectacular sunrise.

The clan jetties are water villages on the Weld Quay (Pengkalan Weld) on the eastern coast of George Town. These were established by Chinese immigrants over a century ago, at a time when Penang's maritime trade was booming. Chinese immigrants worked at the docks as laborers and boat operators. To secure work opportunities, they built their homes close to the action.

Each jetty is named after a Chinese clan, the oldest being the Chew Jetty which was established in the mid-19th century. This is also the most tourist-friendly among the jetties, where you can walk along the wooden piers and take in views of the sea. This is a good place to pick up some souvenirs, as well as try more street food.



From the clan jetties, head north along the coast to Fort Cornwallis. The star-shaped fort – designed to defend against multiple fields of enemy fire – was built in 1786 on the site where Captain Francis Light first set foot on the island, making it one of the oldest structures in Penang. It will take you less than half an hour to explore the fort, where you'll see prison cells, barracks, and canons.

Visit Kek Lok Si, one of Southeast Asia's largest Chinese Buddhist temples

From George Town, take a half-hour ride to Air Itam, where we'll spend the rest of day 2. You can go by taxi or [Grab](#), or take bus 203 or 204 from the Komtar Bus Terminal.

Before entering the temple grounds, have a bite at Sister's Curry Mee, a street food stall that has been serving delicious curry noodles since the 1946. If you prefer asam laksa, look for the line to Air Itam Asam Laksa instead. Afterwards, make your way to Kek Lok Si, one of the largest and finest temple complexes in Southeast Asia.

The Kek Lok Si temple was first built in 1891 under the direction of Beow Lean, the chief monk who noticed that the sprawling hill in Air Itam village where the temple now stands has the right feng-shui. The most famous landmark within the complex

is the Kek Lok Si Pagoda, which is designed with a combination of Chinese, Thai, and Burmese architecture.

Now, it continues to attract Buddhist pilgrims from all over Southeast Asia, as well as travelers wanting to see the beautiful historic buildings and relics, enjoy the views, and immerse in the inspiring atmosphere of the temple complex.

End the day at Penang Hill

From Kek Lok Si Temple, make your way to Penang Hill, also in the Air Itam district. Penang Hill is actually comprised of a group of hills, with the highest point at Western Hill at 833 meters above sea level, offering a fantastic view of the island.

Penang Hill was first used as a retreat during the British colonial period, when the expats would crave cooler weather. It was the first colonial hill station developed in the Malaysian peninsula, and you can still see beautiful colonial mansions on top of the hill.

At present, Penang Hill is still a popular tourist destination, both for foreigners and locals. It's generally about 5 degrees cooler than George Town, making it a quick and easy way to escape the city's heat and humidity.

To get to the top of the hill, you can ride the funicular. Built in 1923, it is one of the world's oldest funicular systems, with a 2,007-meter long track going through dense forests and up the hill. There are also hiking trails to the peak, but make sure to check advisories regarding the trail's usability before starting your climb.

On the top, you'll find a food court, [a fancy restaurant](#), a temple and a mosque, and plenty of green spaces. Make sure to wait for the sun to set and watch as Penang lights up for the evening.

While you can easily get to Kek Lok Si and the Penang Hill funicular's lower station using public buses, taxis, and ride-sharing apps, this [organized day tour](#) makes visiting both sights much more convenient.

Day 3 – venturing to Penang’s jungles and green spaces

If you’ll be in Penang for at least 3 days, set aside a day or half to explore Penang’s jungle trails and green spaces.

If you’re particularly fit and adventurous, head north to [Penang National Park](#) via bus 101 or 103. Stop by the park office to register, then choose one of two trails that you can take – one that follows the coast and leads you to the more popular Monkey Beach to the north, or one that goes through the jungle and leads you to the more remote Turtle Beach. Both routes have moderate hiking trails with some strenuous stretches and can take half a day or longer, so don’t plan on visiting both in one day. Remember to bring food and water, and hike with a group if you can.

If you prefer tamer green spaces and would rather steer clear of the jungle, head to the [Tropical Spice Garden](#) instead. This is also at the northern side of Penang and can also be reached by the Rapid Penang Bus 101. You can take a leisurely walk around the 8-acre garden and learn about the different tropical plant and animal species. This is also a great place to pick up some unique souvenirs, like spices and spa products, and learn to cook Penang-style.

Whether you go jungle or garden, end your day watching the fiery seaside sunset along the Batu Ferringhi beach. Afterwards, eat dinner (try [Enca Restaurant](#) or the Long Beach hawker center), then try out your haggling skills at the Batu Ferringhi night market.

Note – if you have to fly out by the third day, you can go to Penang National Park and Batu Ferringhi on your second day. You wouldn’t want to miss the gorgeous sunset from the western side of the island; it’s really no match to what you can see from Penang Hill.

Tours in Penang

While George Town is certainly walkable and compact enough to explore in 1-2 days, if you factor in the heat and humidity plus the sheer number of heritage sites, it can be exhausting to see as much as you want.

Here are several food and heritage tours that you could take to give you a great overview of Penang's rich culture and history.

Food tours

George Town is Malaysia's food capital and [one of Asia's great street food cities](#), so experiencing the local cuisine is a must! If you want to fully enjoy the flavors and the stories behind them, join one of the food tours below on your first day. Once you get a lay of the foodie land, you'll be more confident exploring the streets and grazing on your own.

- [Brunch food tour](#)
- [Lunch/dinner food tour](#)

Heritage tours and nature trips

You can cover more of George Town with these sightseeing tours, and get a better understanding of the city's history and traditions with insights from a local guide.

- [George Town heritage tour](#)
- [Penang Hill and Temple Sightseeing](#)
- [Tropical Spice Garden](#)

Essential information

Getting there

Flying: Penang Island has its own international airport – you can [check for flights here](#). Even if you're traveling from Kuala Lumpur, taking a flight to Penang may come out more economical and convenient than land transportation.

Driving: If you're coming from elsewhere in Malaysia, you can [get a rental car](#) and drive to Penang. It's about a 350-KM drive from Kuala Lumpur to Penang and may take at least 4 hours with light traffic.

Private car: [Private intercity transfers](#) are a great option for bigger groups (up to 7 persons in one van) coming from elsewhere in Malaysia.

Public transportation: You can also get to Penang using Malaysia's public transportation system. A bus ride from Kuala Lumpur takes about 4 hours. You can also go by [train to Butterworth](#) and by [ferry to the island](#).

Getting around

The [Penang Hop On Hop Off Bus](#) passes through most of the important tourist landmarks. The Rapid Penang buses also ply to most destinations in the island – here are [route maps](#) you can use to plan your trips.

A faster and more convenient way to go around the island, though, is by private cars through ride-sharing apps like [Grab](#).

However you plan to go around Penang, it's a good idea to get a [Malaysian SIM card](#) as you enter the country – the data plans are really cheap and mobile Wi-Fi is a great thing to have when finding your way around the country.

Where to stay in Penang

There are two main areas to stay in Penang Island. For a full-on city experience with lots of food stops, art, and heritage walks, stay in George Town. For a relaxing tropical holiday closer to beaches, nature trails, and blazing sunsets, stay in Batu Ferringhi. Note that wherever you choose to stay, you can get to most areas in the island within an hour's ride. Here are the best hotels for both spots.

Best hotels in George Town

★**Travelers' Pick:** [The Edison Mansion](#) tops our list as a Penang favorite with its great central location, rich colonial décor, and excellent service. Their rooms are comfortable and equipped with most amenities you'll need during your trip, plus you get access to a 24-hour lounge with free-flowing snacks and tea. The only catch? They're almost always fully booked so reserve your rooms early. [Double rooms start at USD 140.](#)

For a uniquely "Penang" experience, book a stay at the iconic [Cheong Fatt Tze Blue Mansion](#), one of the island's most important historical and architectural landmarks. You'll live like royalty in this beautifully restored mansion where you can enjoy traditional Malaysian food and easily walk to George Town's UNESCO heritage sites. [Double rooms start at USD 130.](#)

For bigger groups, look at beautiful serviced apartments like [Seven Terraces](#) (apartments for four start at USD 330), [Mansion One](#) (apartments for six start at USD 90), and the [Seafront Holiday Duplex](#) (apartments for 12 start at USD 100).

For budget stays in George Town, check out the [Betel Nut Lodge](#) (twin rooms start at USD 50), the [Islander Lodge](#) (double rooms start at USD 30), and the [Queen's Hostel](#) (beds start at USD 15).

Best hotels in Batu Ferringhi

★Travelers' Pick: [Shangri-La's Rasa Sayang Resort and Spa](#) is all about giving you the ultimate tropical holiday experience. You'll get to enjoy amazing views, easy access to the beach, lovely gardens and pools, bars and restaurants serving European and local dishes, impeccable customer service, and spacious and comfortable rooms in an overall relaxing resort environment. This is especially perfect for special events and anniversaries. [Double rooms start at USD 170.](#)

Other luxury hotels worth checking out are the [DoubleTree Resort](#) and the [Lone Pine Hotel](#).

For bigger groups, look into holiday homes like the [Rumah Batu](#) (holiday homes for 12 start at USD 130) and [By The Sea Suites](#) (suites for 5 start at USD 175).

For a budget stay, check out [Rasa Motel](#) (double rooms start at USD 15).

Further reading – understanding Penang

- [George Town builds on its historic past](#)

In 2008, George Town was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site and what followed soon after was a renaissance of sorts. Historical buildings were restored; the old streets spruced up with fresh, contemporary art; and cafes and boutique hotels began popping up amidst the old shop houses and hawker centers. Follow along in pictures as George Town's many faces change.

- [The road to Penang – the other side of Malaysia](#)

Author John Brunton takes a road trip from Kuala Lumpur to Penang, discovering northern Malaysia's old mansions, eclectic cuisine, and exciting cities.

Where to go next – more food and art destinations

- [Busan, South Korea](#) – This seaside city has an art village and a delicious offering of seafood dishes, all in a milder subtropical climate.
- [Siargao, Philippines](#) – Another tropical island destination with its own style of indie, homegrown artsy vibe and an eclectic international cuisine.
- [Manila, Philippines](#) – Fancy another challenging destination? Hit the streets of Manila and work through its chaotic streets to uncover the archipelago's best dishes and indie art scene.



About this guide

Thank you for downloading this guide! I hope you find the information here useful and I wish you happy travels to Malaysia. Feel free to forward to friends!

You (or your friend) originally downloaded this guide from the [Little Holidays travel website](http://LittleHolidays.travel). The information is current as of May 2018 – check the website for updates or visit the relevant links listed in the guide for current information.

If you have more questions about travel in the area, send me an email (hello@littleholidays.net) and I'll be happy to help you!



A quick favor from Little Holidays!

I'd love to know what you think!

Can you spare 5 minutes to answer a quick survey about this travel guide? This will help me make better and more helpful guides in the future. ♥

TAKE THE SURVEY HERE!

If you enjoyed this guide and would love to get special offers and updates on what's new at the Little Holidays travel website:

SIGN UP: LITTLE HOLIDAYS MAILING LIST

Thank you for your support! ♥