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George Town Penang Malaysia – Full Travel and Food Review

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Penang George Town Malaysia

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This was our third time on Penang island. The previous trips took us to Batu Ferringhi, a suburb of George Town in Penang, Malaysia. Located along the northern coast of Penang Island and about 11 km (6.8 mi) northwest of George Town, it is the prime beach destination in Penang among locals and tourists. To cater to the influx of tourists, several major high-rise hotels have been established along the 4 km (2.5 mi) stretch of beaches.

The beach resorts along Batu Ferringhi also offer various water sport activities, such as parasailing. On a clear day, one could get a picturesque view of the Andaman Sea and Mount Jerai, which is located within the neighbouring state of Kedah. In addition, Batu Ferringhi is famous for its night market that offers a wide variety of merchandise and street food.

There had been human activity within Batu Ferringhi as early as 1592, when an Englishman, Sir James Lancaster, arrived and began pillaging other vessels around Penang Island. However, for much of its recent history, Batu Ferringhi was a quiet village, until the urbanisation of the area beginning in the 1970s.

George Town

This however, we decided to skip the sand and enjoy the pure feeling of history in a way that only George Town can deliver. **George Town**, is the capital city of the Malaysian state of Penang, is located at the northeastern tip of Penang Island. It



is Malaysia's second largest city, with 708,127 inhabitants as of 2010, while its metropolitan area, Greater Penang, is the nation's second most populous conurbation with an estimated population of 2.5 million. The historical core of George Town has been inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2008.

Established as an entrepôt by Francis Light of the British East India Company in 1786, George Town was one of the first British settlements in Southeast Asia. Together with Singapore and Malacca, George Town was governed under the Straits Settlements, which became a British crown colony in 1867.

It was subjugated by Japan during World War II, before being recaptured by the British at war's end. Shortly before Malaya attained independence from the United Kingdom in 1957, George Town was declared a city by Queen Elizabeth II, making it the first city in the country's modern history.

Due to the intermingling of the various ethnicity and religions that arrived on its shores, George Town acquired a large eclectic assortment of colonial and Asian architectural styles. It also gained a reputation as Malaysia's gastronomic capital for its distinct and ubiquitous street food. Moreover, the city hosts unique cultural heritage, such as the Peranakans, a hybrid ethnicity which has left its mark on Penang's architecture and cuisine.

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HOTEL

To enchant the colonial feeling that make this city so unique, we decided to book a suite at the Eastern & Oriental Hotel or, as more commonly called: E&O HOTEL:

Luxury Hotel Penang Malaysia @ Eastern &...



The Eastern & Oriental Hotel is the embodiment of both a special time and a special place. For well over a century, this remarkable hotel – known simply as ‘The E&O’ to generations of travellers – has stood as a testament to the grand elegance of the British colonial era.

In many ways, it has also come to represent Penang itself; its story inextricably woven into the island’s history, its traditions an indelible part of many a traveller’s treasured memory, its name

synonymous with the magical island once known as The Pearl Of the Orient.

Of the 2 separated wings we chose the The Heritage Wing, the historical heart of the Eastern & Oriental Hotel. Built in 1885, its Moorish minarets and soaring echo-dome lobby provide the backdrop for khaki-clad doormen and pith-helmeted bellhops to welcome guests to its 100 elegant suites.

Indeed, over its century-and-a-quarter history, the E&O's Heritage Wing has played host to some of the world's most celebrated artists, writers and heads of state. Attended to by the E&O's legendary butler service, each suite offers the perfect invitation to step back into the refined elegance and colonial grandeur of a golden age.

The hotel is Situated in George Town, declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2008, the E&O Hotel stands at the intersection of Farquhar Street and Penang Road. The hotel is 20 kilometres from the Penang International Airport and within walking distance from the food havens, shopping complexes and entertainment outlets of downtown George Town.

PENANG CUISINE

Penang, long known as *the food capital of Malaysia*, is renowned for its good and varied food. Penang's cuisine reflects the Chinese, Peranakan, Malay and Indian ethnic mix of Malaysia, but also shows some Thai influences. Its especially famous

hawker food, many served Al Fresco, strongly features noodles, spices, and fresh seafood.

STREET FOOD TOUR PENANG

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Penang was recognised as having the best street food in Asia by *Time* magazine in 2004, citing that “*nowhere else can such great tasting food be so cheap*“. In addition, Penang Island has been acknowledged as one of Asia’s top street food cities by the CNN, as well the top culinary destination in the world by Robin Barton of the Lonely Planet in 2014.

According to Barton, Penang’s “*food reflects the intermingling of the many cultures that arrived after it was set up as a trading port in 1786, from Malays to Indians, Acehenese to Chinese, Burmese to*

Thais. State capital George Town is its culinary epicentre“.

A bowl of Penang's *asam laksa*

The various street dishes and delicacies of Penang, feature a combination of Chinese, Peranakan, Malay, Indian and Thai influences, include (but not limited to) *asam laksa*, *char kway teow*, *curry mee*, *Hokkien mee*, *nasi kandar*, *oh chien* (fried oyster omelette), *rojak*, *tau sar pneah* and *chendol*. Penang is also famed for its traditional pastries, such as the *tau sar pneah* (bean paste biscuit).

These dishes and delicacies are ubiquitous throughout Penang, and served at very cheap costs at any of the countless roadside hawker stalls, hawker centres and *kopitiams* (coffee shops) all over the state.

By far, Gurney Drive has been touted as the most popular food destination in Penang, offering a wide variety of Penang dishes and seafood snacks. However, in recent years, prices at the Gurney Drive Hawker Centre have burgeoned due to its increasing popularity among tourists from outside Penang.

The other notable places within George Town to sample Penang cuisine include New Lane, Kimberley Street, Chulia Street and Penang Road, with the latter famous for the two *chendol* stalls nestled at one of the side streets. Burmah Road at Pulau Tikus is also famous for a number of dishes, such as *Hokkien mee*. Meanwhile, the old

market at Air Itam has become one of the more well-known places to sample *asam laksa*.

Another popular Penang dish, *char kway teow*, can be found all over the city, with the varying opinions on the best-tasting *char kway teow* include Siam Road, Burmah Road and Carnavon Street.

GEORGE TOWN FOOD TOUR

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Between May and August, tourists from all over Malaysia and Singapore flock to Balik Pulau to taste freshly picked durians.

NASI KANDAR EXPERIENCE

Nasi kandar is a popular northern Malaysian dish, which originates from Penang. It is a meal of steamed rice which can be plain or mildly

flavoured, and served with a variety of curries and side dishes.

The rice for a nasi kandar dish is often placed in a wooden container about three feet high, giving it a distinctive aroma. The rice is accompanied by side dishes such as fried chicken, curried beef spleen, cubed beef, lamb, fish roe, fried prawns or fried squid.

The vegetable dish would usually be (brinjal or “terong”) (aubergine), okra (lady fingers or “bhindi”) or bitter melon. A mixture of curry sauces is poured on the rice. This is called ‘banjir’ (flooding) and imparts a diverse taste to the rice.

Traditionally, nasi kandar is always served with its side dishes on a single plate. Nowadays, small melamine bowls are used for the side dishes. Nevertheless, the curry sauce mix is always poured directly onto the rice.

In recent years, several chain restaurants have appeared such as Nasi Kandar Subaidah, Nasi Kandar Nasmir, Pelita Nasi Kandar, Nasi Kandar Astana and Kayu Nasi Kandar. Purists have disputed its taste compared to the original Penang versions. In Perlis, the rice is coloured yellow with herbs and the dish is referred to as “nasi ganja”, though in fact no “ganja” (cannabis) is actually used in its preparation.

Malaysian Food - Street Food At "Rest.Taju...



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