

Hotel Review: Eastern And Oriental Hotel, Penang In Malaysia

Leonie Jarrett experiences a luxury stay at this iconic hotel on the shores of the Andaman Sea.

By [LLM Reporters](#) | August 18, 2025

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Words by Leonie Jarrett

What makes the Eastern and Oriental Hotel in Penang, Malaysia iconic? Is it the fact that it started life in 1885 via charismatic entrepreneurs, the Armenian Sarkies brothers, the very same brothers who later built Raffles in Singapore? Is it the fact that it has played host to so many famous people – from King Charles III to Charlie Chaplin to Rita Hayworth to Noel Coward to Somerset Maugham? Is it the fact that the E&O is the only seafront hotel in George Town? My mission during my stay was to find the answer.

Hotel



The Heritage Wing lobby showcases the colonial charm of the property

The E&O Hotel is an all-suite luxury hotel with two wings. The Heritage Wing, where I stayed, was renovated and reopened in December 2019 and holds 100 suites, nearly all of which have a sea view. The Victory Annexe is an extended wing that opened in 2013 and is named after the British victory in WWI. There are 118 studio suites and 14 corner suites here – all of which have a sea view. Every suite in the hotel has a bathtub and two bathroom vanities.

Even if you don't stay in the Heritage Wing, it is worth visiting the elegant lobby – you may recognise it from the opening scenes of the movie *Crazy Rich Asians*. A doorman dressed in a colonial pith helmet, shorts and knee-length socks helps you through the revolving door to the beautiful lobby.

The colonial ambience is evident here – all dark panelling teamed with white Carrara marble floors and copious seating. There are some unique features too – a cage lift which is one of the oldest electric passenger lifts in Malaysia, a classic hotel key rack and the Echo Dome. This unique dome virtually broadcasts sound to the entire lobby, so be careful not to whisper any secrets here!

To see opulence at its finest, visit the grand ballroom, which seats 400 people. The high ceilings, stage and gallery boxes with gilt accents deserve to be seen.

Room



This luxury property features spacious suites decorated in elegant and restful shades

I stayed in a deluxe suite king in the Heritage Wing – the 624-square-foot (58-square-metre) suite comprises a lounge area plus a bedroom and ensuite.

Due to a flight delay, I arrived very late, but the ceiling fan, air conditioning and all lamps in my suite were on. After a long day of travel, the soft light was welcoming and the cool room was inviting.

The suite has an elegant, colonial look including white plantation shutters, and the large windows had a stunning outlook to the Andaman Sea and the Heritage Wing pool.

The lounge area has dark timber polished floors, comfortable lounge furniture and lamps, a desk and chair and a flat screen television on the wall. Walking through an archway (with closing shutters) to the bedroom, there is a comfortable king size bed, a Nespresso and a tea station, and another flat screen TV on the wall.

Double doors (lockable) open to a massive, marble art deco look bathroom. There's two vanities and a bath plus a shower with a glass screen and a toilet with a lockable door, with Thai organic Pañpuri toiletries provided.

Food and drink



Sarkies serves breakfast, lunch and dinner with views across the Andaman Sea

There are several restaurants and bars at the E&O, but I only had time to try Sarkies, Palm Court and Cornwallis.

Sarkies is in the Victory Annexe and serves buffet breakfast, lunch and dinner. It has a large seating area inside looking out to the Andaman Sea and a seafront outdoor terrace.

The Sarkies breakfast buffet was an amazing spread – there were the usual sections for cereals, pastries, juices, Western hot items and an egg station. There was also an Asian section, an Indian section, a made-to-order noodles section and a vegetarian section. For something I have never seen before, there was even a selection of ice-cream and a separate station for toppings. Ice cream for breakfast? Why not?

In the Heritage Wing, I had cocktails and tapas-style canapés at Cornwallis, and dinner at Palm Court. Cornwallis is adjacent to the seafront pool and Palm Court's windows look out over the seafront.



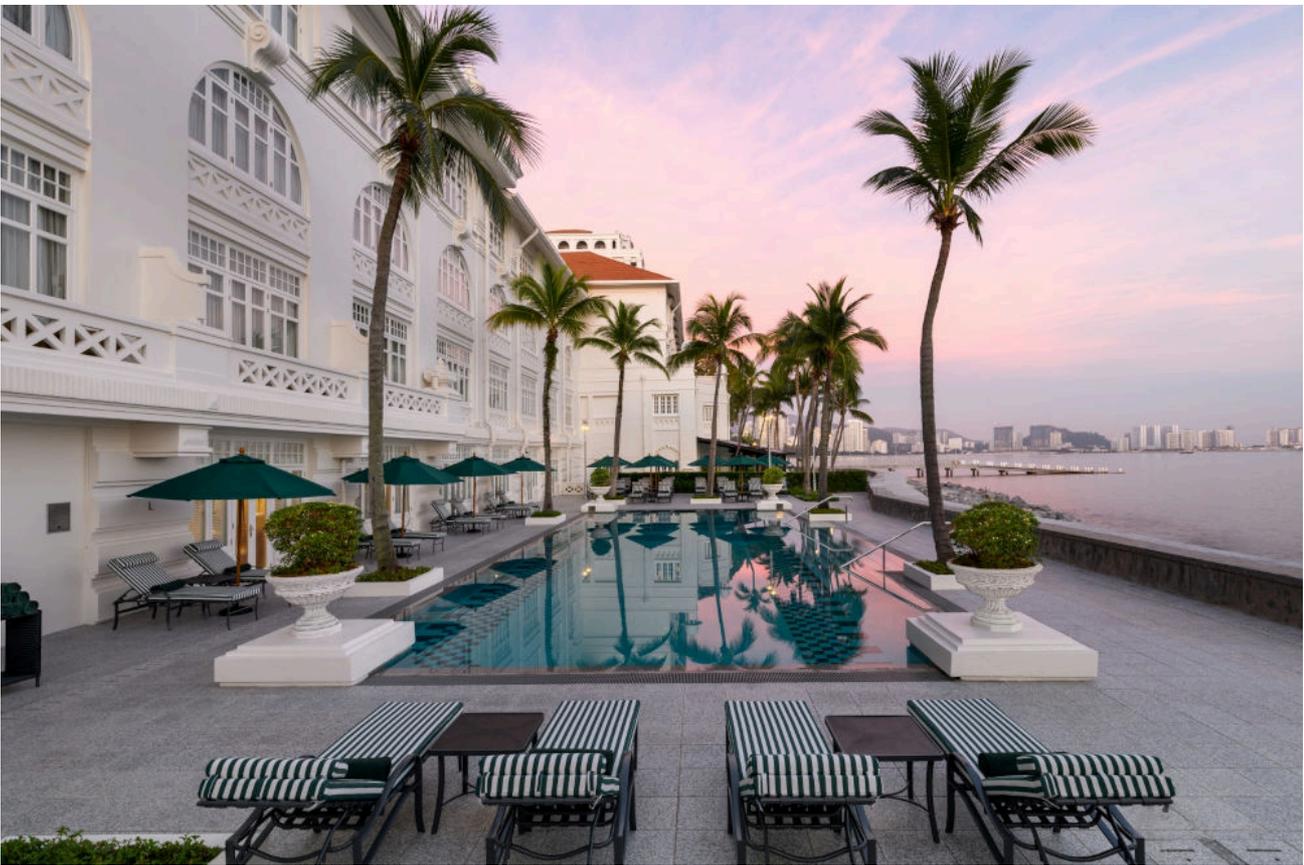
Palm Court is the perfect backdrop for guests to indulge in a traditional afternoon tea

Palm Court serves Asian food as well as casual dishes and a classic three-tiered English afternoon tea. Dinner for me was a delicious chicken satay. In keeping with the luxe feel of the hotel, crockery in the restaurants is monogrammed with the E&O logo.

What is the Heritage Wing or Corner Suite, Victory Annexe experience? A few key benefits available to these guests are your choice of venue for your included breakfast at Sarkies, Palm Court or Planters Lounge and access to complimentary non-alcoholic beverages in your in-suite minibar (replenished daily).

Something special was the cocktails and canapés in The Cornwallis or Planters Lounge from 6pm – 7pm. This included nightly benefit can easily suffice for dinner but no children under 13 are allowed.

Spa and wellness



The Heritage Wing seafront pool delivers a truly tropical experience

Each wing has its own pool. If you are a Heritage Wing guest or a corner suite guest in the Victory Annexe, you can use either pool. Otherwise, you are limited to the pool in the Victory Annexe, but that's hardly a consolation prize as this infinity pool is on the sixth floor with extensive views over the Andaman Sea.

The Heritage Wing seafront pool is surrounded by lawn and adjacent to a Java Olive tree older than the E&O Hotel. This Java tree is the oldest and largest of its kind in Penang. Sitting back on the padded and uber comfortable sun lounger beside this pool was a true tropical oasis experience.

There's a gym and spa too – both the gym and the Pañpuri Spa are found within the Victory Annexe.

To do



The World Heritage Site of George Town is a short walk or drive from the hotel. Image credit: Bigstock/venemama

George Town, Malaysia's gastronomic capital, is a short walk or drive away. George Town was awarded the status of World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2008 for being a remarkable example of a historic colonial town on the Straits of Malacca. An important trading port linking East and West, the meeting of many religions in George Town has created a unique architecture and a multi-cultural destination.

In a nutshell

So, after having stayed there, what do I think makes the Eastern & Oriental Hotel iconic? It's a combination of the grand elegance of the British Colonial era, the timeless style, the celebrated people who have come through the doors before me, entwined with the seafront location. This Grand Old Dame has charm in spades. The Eastern & Oriental Hotel is truly the Pearl of Penang.

Factbox

A studio suite can be booked from £100* per night. A deluxe suite king in the Heritage Wing (my room) can be booked from £324* per night.

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* This rate is subject to service charge, service tax, tourism tax and local government fee.

Images are courtesy of the Eastern & Oriental Hotel.