

Penang



Penang (Pulau Pinang), affectionately known as the Pearl of the Orient, is one of the best-known and most-visited corners of Malaysia, and is the only one of the country's 13 states to have a Chinese majority population, giving the island a very distinct character all of its own. Its main centre, Georgetown, attracts the most tourists with its impressive stock of colonial architecture, temples and museums, lively Chinese culture, great shopping and even better food. But there are many attractions elsewhere on the island, including Malaysia's newest, and smallest, national park on the northwest headland, beaches on the northern coast, charming Penang Hill with its funicular and colonial hill station, and the amazing Kek Lok Si Temple – the largest Buddhist shrine in the country.

Circling the island, you'll discover a varied landscape of jungle and coast, farmland, plantations and fishing villages, though you'll need your own transport to do it justice. Sights further afield include the eerie Penang War Museum, the slithery Snake Temple and the inland town of Balik Pulau. Georgetown also has air and bus links to other towns in Malaysia and beyond.

Penang state also encompasses a narrow strip of mainland coast known as Seberang Perai (or Province Wellesley), although there's little to see or do other than change buses or trains in the main town of Butterworth, a major transport hub with many more bus connections to other cities in Peninsular Malaysia, as well as trains running between Kuala Lumpur and Thailand.

HIGHLIGHTS

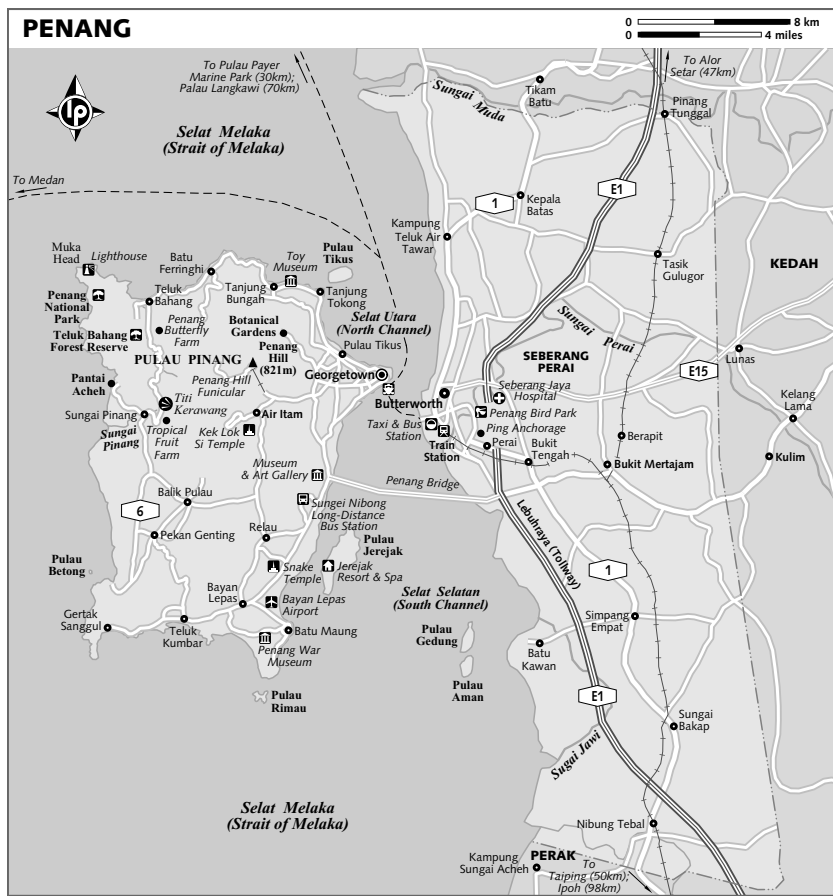
- Riding a trishaw around the colonial heart of **Georgetown** (p173)
- Admiring the theatrical splendour of the **Khoo Kongsi** (p178)
- Climbing the pagoda at the **Kek Lok Si Temple** (p189) for awe-inspiring views
- Taking in the sights, sounds and exotic scents of Georgetown's lively **Little India district** (p179)
- Sitting down to tiffin in the opulent surroundings of the **Eastern & Oriental Hotel** (p183)
- Going **shopping** (p187) for a piece of Penang pewter, art, crafts or antiques
- Hiking through **Penang National Park** (p191)
- Relaxing on the beach at **Batu Ferringhi** (p193)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 04

■ POPULATION: 1.31 MILLION

■ AREA: 1031 SQ KM



History

Little is known of Penang's early history. Chinese seafarers were aware of the island, which they called Pulo Pinang (Betelnut Island), as far back as the 15th century, but it appears to have been uninhabited. The English merchant-adventurer Captain James Lancaster swung by in 1593 and at this time Penang was still an unpopulated jungle wilderness. It wasn't until the early 1700s that colonists arrived from Sumatra and established settlements at Batu Uban and the area now covered by southern Georgetown. The island came under the control of the sultan of Kedah, but in 1771 the sultan signed the first agreement with the British East India Company, handing

trading rights in exchange for military assistance against Siam. In 1786 Captain Francis Light, on behalf of the East India Company, took possession of Penang, which was formally signed over to them in 1791. Light renamed it Prince of Wales Island, as the acquisition date fell on the prince's birthday. It's said that Light fired silver dollars from his ship's cannons into the jungle to encourage his labourers to hack back the undergrowth for settlement. Whatever the truth of the tale, he soon established the small town of Georgetown, also named after the Prince of Wales who later became King George IV, with Lebu Light, Lebu Chulia, Lebu Pitt and Lebu Bishop as its boundaries. By 1800 Light had

negotiated with the sultan for a strip of the mainland adjacent to the island; this became known as Province Wellesley, after the governor of India.

Light permitted new arrivals to claim as much land as they could clear, and this, together with a duty-free port and an atmosphere of liberal tolerance, quickly attracted settlers from all over Asia, and by the turn of the 18th century Penang was home to over 10,000 people.

The local economy was slow to develop, as mostly European planters set up spice plantations – slow-growing crops requiring a high initial outlay. Although the planters later turned to sugar and coconut, agriculture was hindered by a limited labour force.

In 1805 Penang became a presidency government, on a par with the cities of Madras and Bombay in India, and so gained a much more sophisticated administrative structure.

Penang briefly became the capital of the Straits Settlements in 1826 (including Melaka and Singapore) until it was superseded by the more thriving Singapore. By the middle of the 19th century, Penang had become a major player in the Chinese opium trade, which provided more than half of the colony's revenue. It was a dangerous, rough-edged place, notorious for its brothels and gambling dens, all run by Chinese secret societies.

In 1867, the simmering violence came to a head when large-scale rioting broke out between two rival Chinese secret societies, who had each allied themselves with similar Malay groups. Once the fighting had been brought under control, the British authorities fined each group the then huge sum of \$10,000, the proceeds going to establish a permanent police force in the colony.

Although Penang thrived as a centre of international trade, it never saw the rapid development experienced by Singapore, resulting in much of its early colonial architecture remaining intact to this day.

A royal charter awarded city status to Georgetown in January 1957, just seven months before Malaysian independence, and in the 1960s Penang became a free port. The island enjoyed rapid economic growth in the following decades, but lost its duty-free status to Langkawi in the 1980s. Since then, numerous international high-tech companies have set up in Penang, earning

it the title of 'Silicon Valley of the East', while tourism has become one of the state's most lucrative industries.

Climate

Penang has a tropical climate, with temperatures of between 21°C and 32°C year-round. Brief, torrential downpours occur at all times of year, though the period between May and October sees more rain. Humidity is normally 85% to 90%.

Dangers & Annoyances

Although a reasonably safe place to wander, Georgetown, like any big city, does have its seamy side. Foreign tourists have been attacked and mugged in Love Lane and other dimly lit side streets, and it's unwise to linger in these areas alone after dark. There have also been reports of Peeping Toms spying through the walls of certain Love Lane hostels.

Robberies have occurred in some backpacker hostels, so you should never leave valuables, especially your passport, unattended. Meanwhile, drug dealing still occurs in Georgetown, despite Malaysia's very stiff antidrug laws; don't get involved.

Getting There & Away

The mainland strip of Seberang Perai is easily accessed by road and rail from other parts of the peninsula. Butterworth is the transport hub, and the departure point for ferries to Penang, which is also linked to the mainland by road-bridge. Buses to all major towns on the peninsula leave from both Penang and Butterworth. Georgetown also has ferry links to Langkawi and to Medan in Indonesia, and an airport with regular flights to Kuala Lumpur (KL), Singapore, Johor Bahru and Langkawi.

AIR

- Airline Offices**
- Air Asia** (Map p174; ☎ 261 5642; 463 Lebu Chulia, Georgetown)
- Cathay Pacific** (Map p174; ☎ 226 0411; Menara PSCI, Jln Sultan Ahmad Shah, Georgetown)
- Malaysia Airlines** (Map p174; ☎ 217 6323; Jln Sultan Ahmad Shah, Georgetown)
- Singapore Airlines** (Map p174; ☎ 226 3201; Wisma Penang Gardens, Jln Sultan Ahmad Shah, Georgetown)
- Thai Airways International** (Map p174; ☎ 226 6000; Wisma Central, 41 Jln Macalister, Georgetown)

PENANG

PENANG

Domestic Flights

There are several daily connections between Penang and KL (RM300), Johor Bahru (RM480) and Langkawi (RM120).

International Flights

Penang is a major centre for cheap airline tickets, although international air fares are less competitive than they used to be. Long-running, reliable agents in Georgetown are listed (p176). Example fares include Singapore Airlines to Singapore (RM390), Thai Airways to Bangkok (RM850), and Malaysia Airlines to Sydney (RM2050). Naturally, prices change from day to day.

BOAT

Both **Langkawi Ferry Service** (LFS; Map p174; ☎ 264 2088; www.langkawi-ferry.com; PPC Bldg, Pesara King Edward) and **Ekspres Bahagia** (Map p174; ☎ 263 1943; PPC Bldg, Pesara King Edward) currently operate a shared ferry service to Medan in Sumatra. These land in Belawan, and the journey to Medan is completed by bus (included in the price), usually taking about 4½ hours (but sometimes as long as five or six). The ferry leaves both Sumatra and Georgetown at 9am every day (one way/return RM110/180).

The same two companies also run daily ferries from Georgetown to Kuah on Langkawi (one way/return RM45/85, 1¼ to 2½ hours). Boats leave at 8.30am and 8.45am; the second service calls in at Pulau Payar first, but you won't be able to disembark unless you're on a diving or snorkelling package (see Activities, p181). Boats return from Langkawi at 2.30pm and 5.30pm. Try to book a few days in advance to ensure a seat.

BUS

Long-distance bus services leave from the express bus station on Jln Sungei Nibong, just to the south of Penang Bridge. While it may be more convenient to buy your tickets from travel agents on Lebu Chulia or some guesthouses and hotels, it's a safer bet to buy your ticket in person at the bus company offices at the station.

From Sungei Nibong there are several daily buses to KL, as well as less frequent buses to Kota Bharu, Melaka, Kuala Terengganu and elsewhere – book well in advance. There are five daily buses to Tanah Rata in the Cameron Highlands (RM28).

Minibus 25 runs regularly between the more central Komtar bus station (Map p174) and Sungei Nibong long-distance bus station (Map p168). A taxi will cost RM20 from Georgetown.

Many more buses leave from across the channel in Butterworth next to the mainland ferry terminal, and a few long-distance buses also leave from other parts of Georgetown. **Newsia Tours & Travel** (☎ 261 7933; 35-36 Pengkalan Weld) is a major agent.

Many long-distance buses depart in the evening. Typical one-way fares:

Destination	Fare
Alor Setar	RM6.30
Cameron Highlands	RM28
Ipoh	RM10.70
Johor Bahru	RM49
Kota Bharu	RM27.90
Kuala Lumpur	RM26-50
Kuala Perlis	RM9
Kuala Terengganu	RM40
Kuantan	RM43
Lumut	RM10.50
Melaka	RM36
Singapore	RM53
Taiping	RM5.90
Tapah	RM25

From the bus station at Komtar, there are also bus and minibus services to Thailand, including Hat Yai (RM20); Phuket (RM52); Ko Pipi (RM60); Ko Samui (RM50); and even Bangkok (RM88), though it's a long haul. The minibuses don't go directly to some destinations; you'll probably be dumped for a change of vehicle in Hat Yai or Surat Thani, sometimes with significant waiting times. It's better to buy your ticket from a guesthouse that contracts directly with a minibus agency, instead of from bucket shops on Lebu Chulia. Then, in the case of your minibus showing up two hours late, or not at all, you have someone to hold responsible. However, you might get cheaper tickets if you buy directly at the bus station.

TAXI

Long-distance taxis operate from a depot beside the Butterworth ferry terminal on the mainland. Typical whole-taxi fares are higher than anywhere else in Peninsular Malaysia – although still negotiable – and

include such rip-offs as Ipoh (RM180), KL (RM300), Kota Bharu (RM300), Lumut (RM200) and Taiping (RM180).

TRAIN

The **train station** (☎ 323 7962) is next to the ferry terminal and bus and taxi station in Butterworth. There's one daily train to KL and one in the opposite direction, to Hat Yai in Thailand. Fares and timetables change rapidly; check with the station before you travel.

Getting Around

Seberang Perai and Penang are linked by road-bridge and a 24-hour ferry service. Georgetown is well served by bus, and trishaws (see p172) are a popular way to get around the city centre.

Buses from Georgetown to other parts of the island are less frequent and getting around the island by road is easiest with your own transport, particularly since the road does not run along the coast except on the northern side, and you have to leave the main road to get to the small fishing villages and isolated beaches.

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Penang's **Bayan Lepas International Airport** (☎ 643 4411) is 18km south of Georgetown. There's a coupon system for taxis from the airport. The fare to Georgetown is RM25.

Taxis take about 45 minutes from the centre of town, while the bus takes at least an hour. Yellow Bus 83 runs to and from the airport (RM1.50) hourly from 6am to 9pm, with stops along Pengkalan Weld, Komtar and Lebu Chulia.

BOAT

There's a 24-hour ferry service between Georgetown and Butterworth. Ferries take passengers and cars every eight minutes from 6.20am to 9.30pm, every 20 minutes until 11.15pm, and hourly after that until 6.20am. The journey takes 15 minutes. Fares are charged only for the journey from Butterworth to Penang; returning to the mainland is free. The adult fare is RM1.20; cars cost RM7.70 (depending on the size).

BUS

There are several main bus-departure points in Georgetown, and half a dozen bus companies. The main city bus terminal

is at **Komtar** (Map p174; Kompleks Tun Abdul Razak, Jln Penang), and almost all local buses (including minibuses) stop here. Another main stand is at Pengkalan Weld, next to the ferry terminal jetty. TransitLink (TL) city buses all run via Pengkalan Weld, originating from the company's own terminal nearby on Lebu Victoria; and Yellow Bus (YB), Hin Bus (HB) and Sri Negara (SN) buses all swing by the Pengkalan Weld stand. Most TransitLink buses also have stops along Lebu Chulia.

Fares around town vary, but are typically under RM1. Some handy routes, as well as the operators, route numbers and pick-up points, are set out in the 'Penang Bus Routes' table (p173). Minibuses all cost a standard 80 sen (exact change required), and you can only be sure of catching one at the Komtar bus terminal, as wherever else they happen to stop along their route depends on the driver's whim.

There are no buses on the west coast of the island.

CAR

Penang Bridge is one of the longest bridges in Asia at 13.5km. If you drive across to the island, there's a RM7.70 toll payable at the toll plaza on the mainland, but no charge to return.

Rental

Penang's a good place to rent a car, but you'll probably have to reserve in advance, especially for weekends and holidays or if you need an automatic car. Rates start at around RM100 per day plus insurance, but drop for longer rentals. Good deals can be found at smaller agents, though the main companies are also worth trying for special deals.

There are many car-hire companies in Georgetown:

Avis (☎ 643 9633; Bayan Lepas airport)

Budget (☎ 643 6025; Bayan Lepas airport)

Hawk (☎ 881 3886; Bayan Lepas airport)

Hertz (Map p174; ☎ 263 5914; 38 Lebu Farquhar)

MOTORCYCLE & BICYCLE

You can hire bicycles from many places, including travellers' guesthouses and shops along Lebu Chulia, or out at Batu Ferringhi. It costs RM10 to rent a bicycle, and motorcycles start at RM30 per day. Before

heading off on a motorcycle, just remember that if you don't have a motorcycle licence, your travel insurance in all likelihood won't cover you.

TAXI

Penang's taxis all have meters, which drivers flatly refuse to use, so negotiate the fare before you set off. Typical fares around town cost around RM4 to RM8. Outlying sights serviced by taxi from Georgetown include Pulau Tikus (RM12), Batu Ferringhi (RM30), Botanical Gardens (RM25), Penang Hill Funicular/Kek Lok Si Temple (RM25), Snake Temple (RM25) and Bayan Lepas airport (RM25).

TRISHAW

Bicycle rickshaws are an ideal way to negotiate Georgetown's backstreets and cost around RM30 per hour – but, as with taxis, it's important to make sure you agree on the fare before departure. You won't have any trouble finding a trishaw – more often than not, the drivers will hail you! From the ferry terminal, a trishaw to the hotel area around Lebu Chulia should cost RM10 (or you can walk there in about 15 minutes).

SEBERANG PERAI

BUTTERWORTH

☎ 04

You probably won't spend much time in the industrial town of Butterworth, as the main reason most travellers come here is to cross the channel to visit Penang. The town has a large ferry port and an air-force base.

The sole point of interest is the **Penang Bird Park** (Taman Burung Pinang; ☎ 399 1899; Jln Todak; adult/child RM15/7.50; ☎ 9am-7.30pm), 7km east of the ferry terminal across the river. This landscaped park has more than 300 species of birds, mostly from Southeast Asia, including parrots, hornbills and hawks. To get there, take one of the frequent buses from Butterworth bus station to Seberang Jaya (RM1).

Most of the land transport (buses, taxis) between Penang and other places in Peninsular Malaysia and Thailand leaves from Butterworth's taxi and bus station next to the terminal for ferries going to or from Georgetown.

Sleeping & Eating

There's little to detain you in Butterworth, but there are several hotels if you do wish to stay. All the hotels listed here have private bathrooms.

Ambassadors Hotel (☎ 332 7788; 4425 Jln Bagang Luar; r from RM40; 🏠) This sleepy Chinese hotel above a cheap *kedai kopi* (coffee shop) of the same name is a fair, if rather timeworn, budget option. Air-con rooms cost RM63, and all have attached bathrooms.

Hotel Berlin (☎ 332 1701; 4802 Jln Bagang Luar; s/d from RM100/120; 🏠) A few doors down from the Ambassadors, the Berlin offers a bit more comfort, and discounts are normally available. There's a gym and sauna, and breakfast is included in the price.

Sunway Hotel (☎ 370 7788; www.sh.com.my; 11 Lebuh Tenggiri Dua, Seberang Jaya; s/d RM180/195; 🏠 📺) This modern tower close to the Penang Bird Park in the suburb of Seberang Jaya is aimed primarily at business travellers, with the usual smart international setup. Rooms sport 'oversized beds', and you can even get 'karaoke on demand' through your TV.

There are numerous cheap Chinese cafés scattered around the town centre. One of the better places is **Sri Ananda Bahwan Restaurant** (☎ 323 6228; 2982 Jln Bagang Luar; mains from RM3; 🍳 breakfast, lunch & dinner), a popular Indian place that serves vegetarian/nonvegetarian set lunches for RM3.50/5. It has a particularly good selection of colourful, hand-made Indian sweets, which you can have wrapped up in a box to take away.

Getting There & Away

See the Getting There & Away (p169) and Getting Around (p171) sections for information on transport services to/from Butterworth.

PENANG

Penang, or Pulau Pinang as it's officially known, is the oldest of the British Straits settlements in Malaysia, predating both Singapore and Melaka. Penang's capital city, Georgetown, is often referred to as Penang.

Central Georgetown is a relatively compact city, steeped in history, with a slightly ragged, old-fashioned character that's now

PENANG BUS ROUTES

Destination	Operator & Route No	Pick-up
Air Itam	TL 101 or 130; YB 85	Pengkalan Weld, Lebu Chulia, Komtar
Batu Ferringhi	HB 93; TL 202; Minibus 21A or 88A	Pengkalan Weld, Lebu Chulia, Komtar
Bayan Lepas airport	YB 83	Pengkalan Weld, Lebu Chulia, Komtar
Botanical Gardens	TL 202	Lebu Chulia, Komtar
Gurney Dr	HB 93; TL 202; Minibus 26, 31A or 88A	Pengkalan Weld, Air Itam, Komtar
Penang Hill Funicular	TL101 or 130	Air Itam
Pulau Tikus	HB 93; TL 202; Minibus 26, 32 or 88	Pengkalan Weld, Komtar
Snake Temple	YB 68 or 69; Minibus 32	Pengkalan Weld, Lebu Chulia, Komtar
Teluk Bahang	HB 93; TL 202	Pengkalan Weld, Komtar
Thai Consulate	SN 136 or 137; TL 202	Pengkalan Weld, Lebu Chulia, Komtar

disappearing under the onslaught of high-rise, neon-lit globalised modernity. It remains one of the must-see stops on the well-trod backpacker trail, and is a place that certainly rewards exploration.

The beaches along the north coast are the most visited and most accessible, but while the main resort area of Batu Ferringhi has its appeal, the beaches are unimpressive compared to elsewhere in Malaysia. Nevertheless, the top-end hotels that dominate here see plenty of visitors. Penang National Park, further west beyond Teluk Bahang, is another draw, while other, lesser, attractions are found on the southeast of the island.

GEORGETOWN

☎ 04

Georgetown is a bustling, colourful and largely Chinese city, full of tumbledown shophouses, impressive colonial architecture and countless trishaws ferrying tourists and locals alike around the maze of broad streets and narrow lanes. Ancient trades such as rattan weaving, joss-stick making, woodcarving and fortune-telling still go on, in scenes which probably haven't changed in a century, while the soaring skyscrapers of modern Georgetown gleam blankly overhead.

Chinese and Indian temples, neoclassical reminders of the Raj and a plethora of old-fashioned little shops sprinkled across the city make Georgetown a fascinating place to wander. Most visitors to the island stay in the city, which has countless hotels, restaurants and all the usual urban facilities. Those looking for the beach (such as it is)

head to Batu Ferringhi or the less developed Teluk Bahang, a little further west.

Orientation

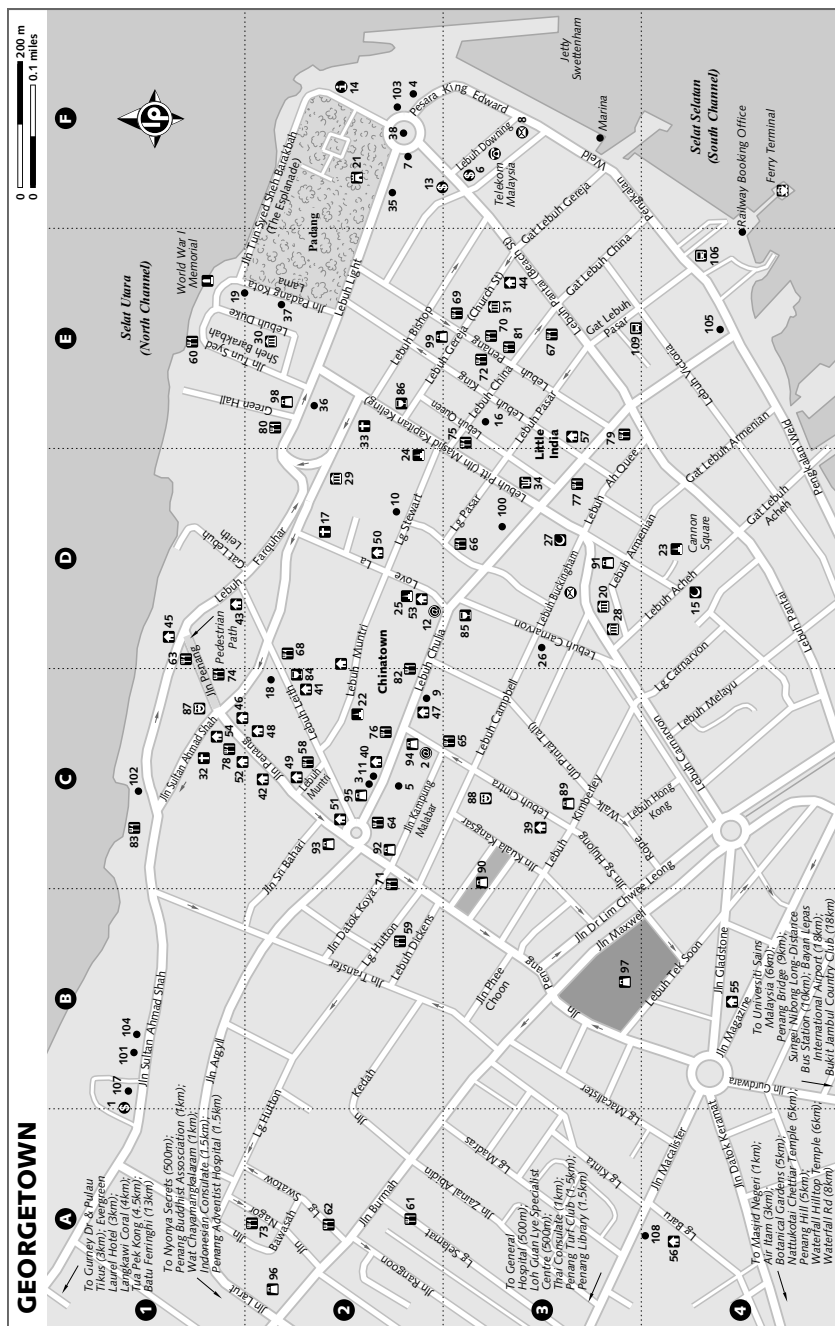
Georgetown is on the northeastern corner of the island, where the channel between island and mainland is narrowest.

A 24-hour vehicle- and passenger-ferry service operates across the 3km-wide channel between Georgetown and Butterworth on the mainland. South of the ferry crossing is the Penang Bridge, reputedly the longest in Southeast Asia, which links the island with Malaysia's Lebuhraya (North-South Hwy).

Georgetown is a compact city and most places can easily be reached on foot or by trishaw. The old colonial district centres on Fort Cornwallis. Lebu Pantai is the main street of the 'city', a financial district crammed with banks and stately buildings that once housed the colonial administration. After dark, exercise caution as this area becomes eerily deserted.

You'll find many of Georgetown's budget hotels and hostels along Lebu Chulia in Chinatown, where a cosmopolitan array of backpackers congregate in the cheap restaurants and bars. At the northern end of Lebu Chulia, Jln Penang is a main thoroughfare and a popular shopping street. In this area are a number of midrange hotels and, at the waterfront end of the street, the venerable Eastern & Oriental (E&O) Hotel. (See the boxed text, p184, for this hotel's amazing story.)

If you follow Jln Penang south, you'll pass the modern multipurpose Komtar shopping centre, and eventually leave town



INFORMATION		SLEEPING		Restoran	
Citibank	1 B1	100 Cintra Street	39 C3	Restoran Tomyam	79 E3
Eighteen Internet Café	2 C2	Blue Diamond Hotel	40 C2	Spice & Rice	80 E2
Happy Holidays	3 C2	Cathay Hotel	41 C2	Sri Ananda Bahwan	81 C2
Hawaii Travel & Tours	4 F2	Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion	(see 18)	Stardust	82 C2
HS Sam Book Store	5 C2	Cititel Hotel	42 C2	Thirty Two	83 C1
HSBC Bank	6 F3	City Bayview Hotel	43 D1	TJ Café	(see 63)
Immigration Office	7 F2	D'Budget Hostel	44 E3	DRINKING	
Jim's Place	(see 47)	Eastern & Oriental Hotel	45 D1	20 Leith Street	84 C2
Main Post Office	8 F3	Hotel Continental	46 C1	Betelnut Café	85 D3
NJ Books Centre	9 C2	Jim's Place	47 C2	Farquhar's Bar	(see 45)
Penang Heritage Trust	10 D2	Malaysia Hotel	48 C2	Pitt Street Corner	86 E2
Popular Bookshop	(see 97)	Merchant Hotel	49 C2	Slippery Senoritas	(see 63)
Silver-Econ Travel	11 C2	Oasis Hotel	50 D2	Soho Free House	(see 52)
Spider Web Internet	12 D2	Oriental Hotel	51 C2	ENTERTAINMENT	
Standard Chartered Bank	13 F2	Peking Hotel	52 C1	Coco's	87 C1
Tourism Malaysia	14 F2	Pin Seng Hotel	53 D2	Glo	(see 63)
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		Segara Ninda	54 C1	R&B Pub	(see 49)
100 Cintra Street	(see 39)	Shangri-La Traders Hotel	55 B4	Rock World	88 C3
Acheen St Mosque	15 D4	Sunway Hotel	56 A4	SHOPPING	
Alpha Utara Gallery	16 E3	Vintage Coral	57 E3	Bee Chin Heong	89 C3
Cathedral of the Assumption	17 D2	EATING		Chowraster Bazaar	90 C3
Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion	18 C2	1885	(see 45)	Fuan Wong	91 D3
City Hall	19 E1	Bake 'n' Take	58 C2	Hong Giap Hang	92 C2
Dr Sun Yat Sen's Penang Base	20 D3	Coco Island Traveller's Corner	(see 40)	Hong Seng Arts & Crafts	93 C2
Fort Cornwallis	21 F2	Esplanade Food Centre	60 E1	Komtar	(see 97)
Hainan Temple	22 C2	Food Stalls	61 A2	Lean Giap Trading	94 C2
Khoo Kongsi	23 D4	Food Stalls	62 A2	Oriental Arts & Antiques	95 C2
Kuan Yin Teng	24 D2	Garage	63 D1	Penang Plaza	96 A2
Loo Pun Hong	25 D2	Gloria Jean's Coffees	(see 63)	Prangin Mall	97 B3
Market	26 D3	Hana Shima	(see 63)	Renaissance Pewter	(see 63)
Masjid Kapitan Keling	27 D3	Hang Chow Café	64 C2	Royal Selangor Pewter	98 E2
Penang Islamic Museum	28 D3	Hong Kong Restaurant	65 C3	Royal Gifts and Crafts	99 E2
Penang Museum	29 D2	Hsiang Yang Fast Food	66 D3	TRANSPORT	
Peranakan Museum	(see 39)	Hui Sin Vegetarian Restaurant	67 E3	Air Asia	100 D3
Pinang Gallery	30 E2	Jaipur Court	68 D2	Cathay Pacific	101 B1
Pinang Peranakan Mansion	31 E3	Kafeteria Eng Loh	69 E3	Ekspress Bahagia	(see 104)
Protestant Cemetery	32 C1	Kayu Nasi Kandar	71 C2	Hertz	102 C1
St George's Church	33 E2	Madras New Woodlands Restaurant	72 E3	Langkawi Ferry Service	103 F2
Sri Mariamman Temple	34 D3	Nyonya Baba Cuisine	73 A2	Malaysia Airlines	104 B1
State Art Gallery	(see 30)	Opera	74 C1	Newsia Tours & Travel	105 A4
State Assembly Building	35 F2	Peace & Joy	75 E3	Pengkalan Weld Bus Stop	106 A4
Supreme Court	36 E2	Restoran Ali Selamat	76 C2	Singapore Airlines	107 B1
Town Hall	37 E2	Restoran Kapitan	77 D3	Thai Airways International	108 A4
Victoria Memorial	38 F2	Restoran Sup Hameed	78 C1	TransitLink City Bus Station	109 E3

and continue towards the Bayan Lepas International Airport. If you turn west at the waterfront end of Jln Penang, you'll follow the coastline and eventually come to the northern beaches, including Batu Ferringhi. This road runs right around the island back into town, via the airport.

Finding your way around Georgetown can be slightly complicated. Jln Penang may also be referred to as Jln Pinang or as Penang Rd – but there's also a Penang St, which may also be called Lebuhraya Pinang! Similarly, Chulia St is Lebuhraya Chulia; Pitt St is sometimes Lebuhraya Pitt, but is shown on some maps and signposts as Jln Masjid Kapitan

Keling. Many streets are still referred to locally by their English names; Lebuhraya, for example, is Church St, and Lebuhraya Pantai is Beach St. Maps are sold at bookshops (see below).

Trishaws are the ideal way of getting around Georgetown, particularly at night when travelling this way takes on an almost magical quality. See p172 for more information.

Information BOOKSHOPS

For secondhand books, check out the small shops along Lebuhraya Chulia.

HS Sam Book Store (☎ 262 2705; 473 Lebu Chulia) One of the best for secondhand books, the self-proclaimed 'most organised used bookshop in town' has a fair range of popular paperbacks. The owner also organises car and bike rental, and provides luggage storage.

NJ Books Centre (☎ 261 6113; 425 Lebu Chulia) Also buys and sells secondhand books.

Popular Bookshop (Komtar) Stocks novels, travel books, maps and a selection of books on Penang and Malaysia.

IMMIGRATION OFFICES

Immigration Office (☎ 261 5122; 29A Lebu Pantai)

INTERNET ACCESS

Eighteen Internet Café (☎ 264 4754; 18 Lebu Cintra; per hr RM2; ☎ 11am-2pm & 5-9pm Mon-Sat)

Jim's Place (☎ 264 2960; 433 Lebu Chulia; per hr RM2)

Spider Web Internet (☎ 263 3335; 322 Lebu Chulia; per hr RM3)

LIBRARIES

Penang Library (☎ 229 3555; 2936 Jln Scotland; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun)

MEDICAL SERVICES

General Hospital (☎ 229 3333; Jln Hospital)

Loh Guan Lye Specialist Centre (☎ 228 8501; 19 Jln Logan)

Penang Adventist Hospital (☎ 222 7200; www.pah.com.my; 465 Jln Burma)

MONEY

Branches of major banks are on Lebu Pantai and Lebu Downing, near the main post office, and most have 24-hour ATMs.

At the northwestern end of Lebu Chulia, there are numerous moneychangers open longer hours than the banks and with more competitive rates. Moneychangers are also scattered around the banks on Lebu Pantai and at the ferry terminal, although you'll probably get better rates on the mainland from the moneychangers at the Butterworth taxi and bus station (Map p168).

TOURIST INFORMATION

Penang Heritage Trust (☎ 264 2631; www.pht.org.my; 26A Lg Stewart; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-4.30pm Mon-Fri) Information on the history of Penang, conservation projects and heritage walking trails. At the time of research, it was preparing to move to new quarters on Lebu Gereja. Check the website for updates.

Tourism Malaysia (☎ 262 0066; 10 Jln Tun Syed Sheh Barakbah; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri) Georgetown's main tourist information office.

www.gloablethickenang.net Information on the Penang Global Ethic Project, a local interfaith group that organises talks and exhibitions on religions and peace issues.

www.tourismpenang.gov.my Details of sights and restaurants in Penang, not updated very often.

Also extremely useful is the monthly *Penang Tourist Newspaper* (RM3), which has comprehensive listings of shops, tourist attractions and hotel promotions, as well as detailed pull-out maps. It's usually available free from tourist offices and some hotels.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Most, but not all, of the agencies in Georgetown are trustworthy. Reliable operators that many travellers use to purchase discounted airline tickets:

Happy Holidays (☎ 262 9222; 432 Lebu Chulia)

Silver-Econ Travel (☎ 262 9882; 436 Lebu Chulia)

Sights

COLONIAL DISTRICT

As the oldest British settlement in Malaysia, many grand colonial buildings can still be found in Penang. Captain Francis Light stepped ashore in 1786 on the site of **Fort Cornwallis**, which is the main attraction, and a good place to start a tour of the colonial district around the waterfront. Many of the buildings in the area are marked with signs explaining their history and significance. You can follow the 'Heritage Trail' walking tours, that also take in temples and mosques in Chinatown – pick up a pamphlet of the routes at the tourist office or the Penang Heritage Trust. There's also a free bus shuttle (7am to 7pm Monday to Friday, to 2pm Saturday), which runs between the jetty and Komtar, winding its way through the colonial core of Georgetown. It's a good way to get a quick overview of the town, and you can get on and off at various numbered stops. A map of the route is in the *Penang Tourist Newspaper*.

Opposite the southeastern corner of Fort Cornwallis is the **Victoria Memorial Clock Tower**, a gleaming white tower topped by a Moorish dome. Donated by a local Chinese millionaire to honour Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, it stands 18m (60 ft) tall – one foot for each year of her reign.

A typical feature of Malaysian colonial cities is the *padang*, which is an open playing

field surrounded by public buildings. Georgetown's *padang* stretches west from Fort Cornwallis to the **Town Hall** and **City Hall**, two of Penang's most imposing buildings, with fine porticos. The Town Hall, completed in 1880, is Penang's oldest municipal building, and its beautiful, recently restored ballroom is a regular venue for temporary exhibitions. Behind it is the modern **Pinang Gallery** (Lebu Duke; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat), with a rotating display of contemporary local art.

On the southern side of the *padang* is the neoclassical **State Assembly building** (Dewan Undangan Negeri), and northwest along Lebu Light is the equally impressive **Supreme Court**.

Behind the Supreme Court, **St George's Church** (☎ 261 2739; ☎ services 8.30am & 10.30am Sun) on Lebu Farquar is the oldest Anglican church in Southeast Asia. This gracefully proportioned building, with its marble floor and towering spire, was built in 1818 with convict labour. In the grounds there is an elegant little pavilion, housing a memorial plaque to Captain Francis Light. Also on Lebu Farquar is the double-spired **Cathedral of the Assumption**, named for the feast day on which its Catholic founders landed here from Kedah.

In the **Protestant Cemetery** on Jln Sultan Ahmad Shah, the mouldering tombs of colonial officials huddle together under a canopy of magnolia trees. Here you'll find the graves of Captain Light and many others, including governors, merchants, sailors and Chinese Christians who had fled the Boxer Rebellion (1900) only to die of fever in Penang. Also here is the tomb of Thomas Leonowens, the young officer who married Anna – the schoolmistress to the King of Siam made famous by Deborah Kerr in the *King and I*. The 1999 remake, *Anna and the King*, was filmed in Malaysia, including some scenes in Penang.

Fort Cornwallis

Among Penang's oldest sights are the time-worn walls of **Fort Cornwallis** (☎ 261 0262; Lebu Light; adult/child RM3/2; ☎ 9am-6.30pm). 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.

Today only the outer walls of the fort are standing, and the area within is now a park. A bronze statue of Captain Light stands near the entrance. It was modelled on the likeness of his son, William, who founded Adelaide in Australia, because no pictures of him could be found. The small **chapel** in the southwest corner was the first to be built in Penang; ironically, the first recorded service was the 1799 marriage of Francis Light's widow, Martina, to a certain John Timmers. There are exhibitions on the history of Penang in a series of cells on the south flank of the fort, and you can also wander the battlements, which are liberally studded with old cannons.

Seri Rambai, the most important and largest cannon, faces the north coast and was cast in 1603. It has a chequered history; the Dutch gave it to the sultan of Johor, after which it fell into the hands of the Acehnese. It was later given to the sultan of Selangor, and then stolen by pirates before ending up at the fort.

Penang Museum

From the town's foundation site, it's only a short stroll to the **Penang Museum** (☎ 261 3144; Lebu Farquar; admission RM1; ☎ 9am-5pm Sat-Thu), 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.

Upstairs is the history gallery, with a collection of early-19th-century watercolours by Captain Robert Smith, an engineer with the East India Company, and prints showing landscape scenes of old Penang. You can also watch videos of Penang's many cultural festivals.

Outside, one of the original Penang Hill funicular railcars is now a kiosk selling an unusual array of souvenirs, including antique costume jewellery and coins; all proceeds benefit the Penang Heritage Trust.

CHINATOWN

Inland from the old colonial district lie the twisting streets of the old city, dotted with temples, mosques and traditional businesses.

The large **Chinatown** stretches from Lebuah Pantai to Jln Penang. It's centred on Lebuah Chulia, which is still the lively heart of Georgetown, but pockets of Indian and Malay areas remain within and around it.

Chinatown is a delight to wander around any time of day. Set off in any direction and you're certain to find plenty of interest, whether it's the beautiful old Chinese shophouses, an early-morning vegetable **market**, a temple ceremony, the crowded antique shops or a late *pasar malam* (night market).

All the usual Chinese events are likely to be taking place: colourful parades at festival times or elderly women setting up their stalls for a day's business. All around you'll hear those distinctively Chinese noises – the whining, high-pitched music on TVs inside houses; the trilling of caged songbirds; and excited conversations at numerous coffee-shop tables.

Khoo Kongsi

Near the end of Lebuah Pitt (Jln Masjid Kapitan Keling) is the **Khoo Kongsi** (☎ 261 4609; 18 Cannon Sq; adult/child RM5/free; ☞ 9am-5pm). 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.

Penang has many *kongsi*, but the clan house of the Khoo is by far the finest and is not to be missed. Work began in the 1890s, and was so magnificent and elaborate that nobody was surprised when the roof caught fire on the night it was completed in 1901; the misfortune was put down to divine jealousy of the ostentatious design, so the Khoo rebuilt it in a marginally less extravagant style.

The present *kongsi*, which dates from 1906, is also known as the 'Dragon Mountain Hall'. It's a wildly colourful mix of dragons, carved columns, lanterns, paintings and ceramic tiles, while at ground level there is an exhibition on the lineage of the Khoo clan. Facing the *kongsi* is a permanent stage for Chinese opera.

Kuan Yin Teng

On Lebuah Pitt is the temple of **Kuan Yin Teng** (☞ 9am-6pm) – the goddess of mercy, good fortune, peace and fertility. Built in the early 19th century by the first Hokkien and Cantonese settlers in Penang, the temple is

not large or especially impressive, but it's very central and popular with the Chinese community. It seems to be forever swathed in smoke from the outside furnaces where worshippers burn paper money and from the incense sticks waved around inside. It's a very busy place, and Chinese theatre shows take place on the goddess' birthday, celebrated on the 19th day of the second, sixth and ninth lunar months.

Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion

Built in the 1880s, the magnificent 38-room, 220-window **Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion** (☎ 262 0006; 14 Lebuah Leith; admission RM10; ☞ tours 11am & 3pm Mon-Sat) was commissioned by Cheong Fatt Tze. He was a local Hakka merchant-trader who left China as a penniless teenager and eventually established a vast financial empire throughout East Asia, earning himself the sobriquet 'Rockefeller of the East'.

The mansion blends Eastern and Western designs, with louvred windows, Art Nouveau stained glass and beautiful floor tiles, and is a rare surviving example of the eclectic architectural style preferred by wealthy Straits Chinese of the time.

The building was rescued from ruin in the 1990s and is currently run as an exclusive homestay hotel (see p183).

Acheen St Mosque

A short walk from the Khoo Kongsi, the Malay **Acheen St Mosque** (Lebuah Acheh) is unusual for its Egyptian-style minaret (most Malay mosques have Moorish minarets). Built in 1808 by a wealthy Arab trader, the mosque was the focal point for the Malay and Arab traders in this quarter – the oldest Malay *kampung* (village) in Georgetown. Only Muslims can enter the mosque.

Penang Islamic Museum

The **Penang Islamic Museum** (☎ 262 0172; 128 Lebuah Armenian; adult/child RM3/1; ☞ 9.30am-6pm Wed-Mon) is housed in a restored villa that was once the residence of Syed Alatas. A powerful Acehnese merchant of Arab descent, Syed led the local Acehnese community during the Penang riots of 1867. Today it holds a wordy exhibition on the history of Islam in Malaysia, along with some 19th-century furniture and a life-sized diorama of a dock scene upstairs.

Hainan Temple

This small gem demands a closer look. Dedicated to Mar Chor, the patron saint of seafarers, the **Hainan Temple** (Lebuah Muntri) was founded in 1866 but not completed until 1895. A thorough remodelling for its centenary in 1995 refreshed its distinctive swirling dragon pillars and brightened up the ornate carvings. The small compound is usually buzzing with activity.

Loo Pun Hong

The tiny **Loo Pun Hong** (70 Love Lane) is one of the most unobtrusive of Penang's many Chinese temples. Built in the 1880s, it is dedicated to Lo Pan, the legendary inventor of carpentry tools, and is Malaysia's oldest carpenters' guild house. Set back from the lane, it has an ornate altar inside, along with a giant drum and bell.

100 Cintra Street

Dating from 1881, and restored a century later, this old house at **100 Cintra Street** (☎ 264 3581; adult/child RM5/2.50; ☞ 11am-6pm Tue-Sun) contains the tiny Peranakan Museum on its top floor, celebrating Penang's rich Baba-Nonya heritage. Furniture, costumes, porcelain and household items are displayed in recreations of late-19th-century interiors. There's a small antiques bazaar and a café downstairs, as well as accommodation on the middle floor.

Dr Sun Yat Sen's Penang Base

This well-preserved 19th-century **town house** (☎ 262 0123; 120 Lebuah Armenian) was where the founder of modern China, Dr Sun Yat Sen, organised the Penang Conference and planned the Canton Uprising which established the Republic of China in 1911. The ground floor, with original tiled floors, furniture and Nonya-style kitchen, is open to visitors by advance reservation.

LITTLE INDIA

Centred on Lebuah Pasar, **Little India** is a bustling enclave suffused with the scents of sandalwood and spices, and alive with the sounds of Hindi music blaring from numerous Bollywood video stores. It's an area full of sari shops, elaborate temples and restaurants, and although relatively small, it has a distinct atmosphere and is an inviting place to wander.

Sri Mariamman Temple

About midway between Kuan Yin Teng and the Masjid Kapitan Keling (Kapitan Keling Mosque) you'll find this Hindu temple, another example of Penang's religious diversity. The **Sri Mariamman Temple** (Lebuah Pitt) is typically South Indian; an elaborately sculpted and painted superstructure representing Mt Meru (the cosmic mountain that supports the heavens) rises above its shrine. Built in 1883, it's Georgetown's oldest Hindu temple and a testimony to the strong Indian influence you'll find in this otherwise most Chinese of towns.

Penang's **Thaipusam** procession begins here (see p181), and in October a wooden chariot takes the temple's deity for a spin around the neighbourhood during Vijaya-dasami festivities.

Pinang Peranakan Mansion

The beautifully restored **Pinang Peranakan Mansion** (☎ 264 2929; 29 Lebuah Gereja; adult/child RM10/free; ☞ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) recreates the typically ornate home of a wealthy Baba-Nonya family of the late 19th century. It's filled with antiques and furniture of the period, and architectural features such as the colourful tiled floors and ironwork have been preserved. There's also an exhibition on Nonya customs, and guided tours take place at 11.30am and 3.30pm.

Masjid Kapitan Keling

Penang's first Indian Muslim settlers (East India Company troops) built **Masjid Kapitan Keling** (☞ 9am-5.30pm) in 1801 at the junction of Lebuah Buckingham and Lebuah Pitt. The mosque's domes are yellow, in a typically Indian-influenced Islamic style, and it has a single minaret. It looks sublime at sunset. Mosque officials can grant permission to enter.

Alpha Utara Gallery

Housed in an attractively renovated traditional town house, the **Alpha Utara Gallery** (☎ 262 6840; www.alpha-utara.com; 83 Lebuah China; admission free; ☞ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun) was opened in 2005. It is an exhibition space for paintings by contemporary local artists, based around the works of Penang-born artist Khoo Sui Hoe. There are temporary exhibitions spread over two floors, and a bookshop downstairs.

OTHER SIGHTS

Wat Chayamangkalaram & Dhammikarama

At Lg Burma just off Jln Burma, the main road to Batu Ferringhi, is the **Temple of the Reclining Buddha** (☎ early morning-5.30pm). This brightly painted Thai temple houses a 33m-long reclining Buddha, draped in a gold-leafed saffron robe. The claim that it's the third-longest in the world is a dubious one but it's a colourful temple and worth a visit.

The **Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple** stands opposite, with two large stone elephants flanking the gates. Penang's first Buddhist temple, built in 1805, it has been significantly added to over the years.

You can get to both temples on TransitLink bus 202; Minibus 26, 31 or 88; or Hin Bus 93 from Komtar or along Lebuhs Chulia.

Penang Buddhist Association

Completed in 1931, this unusual Buddhist temple is situated on Jln Anson about 1km west of town. Instead of the typical colourful design of most Chinese temples, this particular temple shows Art Deco influences and looks like a frosted cake, all white and pastel. Interior Buddha figures are carved from Italian marble, and glass chandeliers hang above. Penang's Buddhist community gathers here on Wesak Day (April/May) to celebrate the triple holiday of the Buddha's birthday, attainment of enlightenment and death.

Other Mosques & Temples

The glossy, modern **Masjid Negeri** (State Mosque) is at Air Itam, about 5km west of town. It's the biggest in Penang with a striking 50m-high minaret.

Nattukotai Chettiar Temple on Waterfall Rd, near the Botanical Gardens (see p189), is the largest Hindu temple in Penang and is dedicated to Bala Subramaniam. Further along on the left side is a gate leading up to the **Waterfall Hilltop Temple**, the destination of the Thaipusam procession from Little India's Sri Mariamman Temple.

Northwest of Georgetown, past Gurney Dr out at Tanjung Tokong, **Tua Pek Kong** is dedicated to the God of Prosperity and dates from 1837.

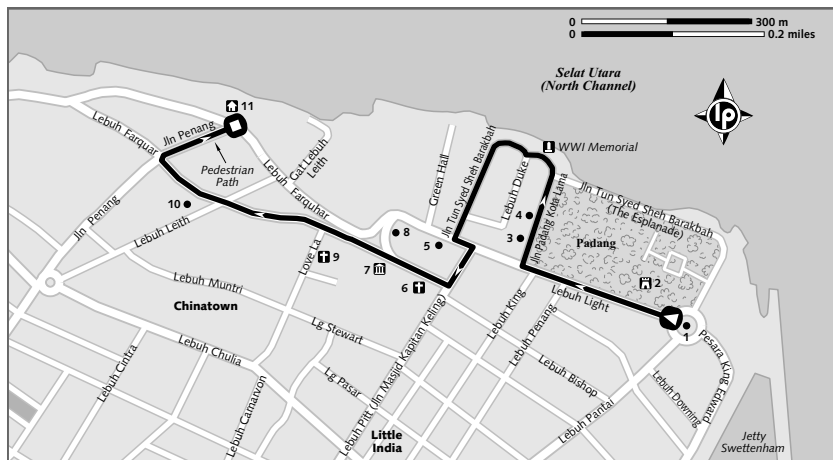
Walking Tour

With so much traffic, Georgetown isn't too pedestrian-friendly, but most of the sights are to be found in a reasonably compact area and this walk will take you around most of the main colonial landmarks.

Start off at the eastern end of Lebuhs Light, where you will see the **Victoria Memorial Clock Tower (1)**. Walk westwards along

WALK FACTS

Start Victoria Memorial Clock Tower
Finish Eastern & Oriental Hotel
Distance 2km
Duration One hour



this road, following the walls of **Fort Cornwallis (2)**, entering through the main gate for a quick look around. Walking past the *padang*, turn north up Jln Padang Kota Lama, admiring the grandiose architecture of the **Town Hall (3)** and **City Hall (4)** on the way. At the top you'll come to the seafront and a WW1 memorial. Walk west and then turn back down Jln Tun Syed Sheh Barakbah, coming face to face with the **Supreme Court (5)**.

Continue southwards onto Lebuhs Pitt, then go west onto Lebuhs Farquhar. The elegant **St George's Church (6)** is on your left. A little further on is the **Penang Museum (7)**, which is worth a visit. At the corner of Lebuhs Light you will see **Convent Lebuhs Light (8)**, a girls' school established in 1852. Before that, the building was the office of the early-19th-century Penang Government. Continuing on Lebuhs Farquhar you'll pass the **Cathedral of the Assumption (9)**.

Keep going west, where, at the corner of Lebuhs Leith, you'll come upon the deep-blue façade of the **Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion (10)**, before emerging on Jln Penang. Turn right (north) up the pedestrianised section of this street, finally reaching the majestic **Eastern & Oriental Hotel (11)**, where you can reward yourself with tiffin or a cocktail on the lawn.

Activities

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 is located at **Bukit Jambul Country Club** (☎ 644 2255; 2 Jln Bukit Jambul; 18 holes from RM50) near Bayan Lepas airport. *Golf Malaysia* magazine rated it the second most beautiful course in Malaysia, and the stunning and very challenging 18 holes were carved straight out of the rocky jungle terrain.

At the **Penang Turf Club** (☎ 229 3233; www.penangturfclub.com; Batu Gantong) horse-racing events take place over two consecutive weekends every two months. Seats are cheap, but gambling is illegal. **Horse riding** is sometimes offered Monday to Friday.

Diving and snorkelling excursions to tiny Pulau Payar, around 32 nautical miles north of Penang, are run by **Langkawi Coral**

(☎ 899 8822; www.langkawicoral.com; 64 Jln Tanjung Tokong; snorkelling/diving RM250/320). It also does day trips to Langkawi (RM300/200 per adult/child).

Tours

Ping Anchorage (☎ 397 7993; www.pinganchorage.com.my; 25B Jln Todok 2, Seberang Jaya) over on the mainland runs several tours including the four-hour Hill and Temple tour, visiting Penang Hill and the Kek Lok Si Temple, round-island tours and trips to Penang National Park. All cost RM129 (cheaper for groups of three or more), including pick-up from your hotel.

Penang Heritage Trust (☎ 264 2631; www.ph.t.org.my; 26A Lg Stewart; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-4.30pm Mon-Fri) organises a few walking tours, including the 'Little India Experience' and the 'Heritage Trail', taking in the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion. Both last around three hours, and cost RM60, including entry fees. It also has free brochures with details of self-guided walks, such as the 'World Religions Walk' and 'Historic Georgetown Trails'.

Several agents around town book a range of tours at similar prices. **Happi Holidays** (☎ 262 9222; 432 Lebuhs Chulia) and **Hawaii Travel & Tours** (☎ 262 6755; Pesara King Edward), a few doors from the Tourism Malaysia office, sell tickets for the half-day 'Round-Island Tour' (RM35) and 'Georgetown by Night Tour' (RM40) among others.

Festivals & Events

All the usual festivals are celebrated in Penang, but with this island's extraordinary enthusiasm. Current events are listed in the *Penang Tourist Newspaper*.

January-February

Thaipusam This masochistic-looking festival is celebrated as fervently as in Singapore and KL, but without quite the same crowds. The Sri Mariamman, Nattukotai Chettiar and Waterfall Hilltop Temples are the main centres of activity in Penang.

Chinese New Year Celebrated with particular gusto in Penang. The Khoo Kongsi is done up for the event, and dance troupes and Chinese opera groups perform all over the city. On the night before the 15th day of the new year, a fire ceremony takes place at Tua Pek Kong temple.

Chap Goh Meh The 15th day of the New Year celebrations, during which local girls throw oranges into the sea

from the Esplanade. Traditionally, the girls would chant: 'throw a good orange, get a good husband', while local boys watched and later contacted their dream girl through matchmakers. New Year is also one of the only times to see Baba-Nonya performances of *dondang sayang* (spontaneous and traditional love ballads).

May-August

Penang International Dragon Boat Festival

(May/June) A colourful and popular regatta, featuring the traditional dragon boats.

Penang Food & Cultural Festivals (August) Highlights the best of Penang's multiethnic heritage.

September-December

Lantern Festival (mid-September) Commemorates the end of Mongol rule in China. Celebrated by eating moon cakes, Chinese sweets once used to carry secret messages to underground rebel leaders in ancient China.

Deepavali (October) The Hindu 'Festival of Lights' is celebrated with music and dancing at venues in Little India.

Pesta Pulau Penang (November-December) The annual Penang Islands Festival features various cultural events, parades and a fun-fair.

Sleeping

Penang has all the accommodation possibilities you would expect in a big, bustling tourist city, from the grungiest hostels to the swankiest hotels. Midrange options are mostly found along Jln Penang, consisting of a string of high-rises. Lebu Chulia and Love Lane make up the heart of Penang's backpacker land, crammed with cheap hostels and hotels. The quality varies enormously, and it certainly pays to check a few out before parting with your cash. There are some pretty rosey dives here, while others are basically fronts for brothels; back rooms full of scantily clad ladies and ladyboys in the lobby offering massages might arouse your suspicions. There are a handful of top-end hotels in Georgetown, but most are strung out along Gurney Dr and Batu Ferringhi, and tend to be of the gargantuan chain resort persuasion.

Be warned that during holidays, most notably Chinese New Year, hotels tend to fill up very quickly and prices can become ridiculously inflated; if you intend to stay at this time, book well in advance.

All budget options listed have shared bathrooms, while midrange and top end all have private bathrooms.

BUDGET

D' Budget Hostel (☎ 263 4794; 9 Lebuh Gereja; dm/s/d from RM7/15/22; 🚻 📺) Large hostel with a variety of rooms, all looking a bit knackered and neglected. Some are very small and many are windowless, so check out several before deciding to stay. The pricier air-con singles/doubles (RM22/25) come with showers and are marginally preferable.

Blue Diamond Hotel (☎ 261 1089; 422 Lebu Chulia; dm/s/d from RM8/20/25; 🚻 📺) Basic rooms in a creaky old villa with a popular café out the front. There are lots of comings and goings and a sociable atmosphere. Air-con rooms with private showers cost RM45.

100 Cintra Street (☎ 264 3581; 100 Lebu Cintra; dm/s/d RM9.50/25/38) Upstairs in a wonderful old Peranakan house which also incorporates a café and small museum (p179) is this collection of very simple but striking budget rooms. Open the sliding iron door to your room and step into the past (thankfully a cleaned-up version). You get a mattress on a wooden platform, with a mosquito net and fan for that colonial Eastern experience. The dorm, though, is less private, with five beds arranged on an open landing. A proper dorm room is planned for the future.

Oasis Hotel (☎ 016-495 2345; 23 Love Lane; r RM18-20) Probably the best choice on this dingy lane, this dilapidated old house is set back from the road in its own grounds, and has lots of character. There's a courtyard with a fish pond and tatty sofas, and rooms are a bit rough but OK for the price.

Pin Seng Hotel (☎ 261 9004; 82 Love Lane; s/d RM20/25) This small hotel tucked down a little alley has the usual bottom budget setup with slightly shabby fan rooms and shirtless locals snoozing in the foyer. It's friendly and reasonably priced.

Vintage Coral Shine Hostel (☎ 261 8407; 99 Lebu King; s/d from RM20/30; 🚻 📺) Friendly hostel above a mobile-phone shop in the bustling, and noisy, Little India area. The fan rooms are very simple, with thin mattresses, and it's worth paying the extra RM10 for a larger air-con room. The shared bathrooms are very modern.

Jim's Place (☎ 264 2960; 433 Lebu Chulia; r RM20-30; 🚻 📺) This handful of fan and air-con rooms are above a popular travellers' café. It's the usual backpacker-basic arrangement, with shared bathrooms, and the owner can arrange bus tickets and Thai visas.

MIDRANGE

Peking Hotel (☎ 263 6191; 50A Jln Penang; r RM57-69; 🚻 📺) This dusty, old Art Deco block is in a convenient location, though its best days are far behind it. There's a two-level pub in the same building, so not one for light sleepers.

Oriental Hotel (☎ 263 4211; www.oriental.com.my; 105 Jln Penang; r from RM69; 🚻 📺) On the corner of Jln Penang and Lebu Leith, the Oriental is handily placed and offers good value. The décor doesn't seem to have been changed in decades, though rooms are clean and comfortable.

Cathay Hotel (☎ 262 6271; 15 Lebu Leith; s/d RM69/92; 🚻 📺) This atmospheric old Chinese mansion is a fine midrange choice with reasonable prices. Rooms are large and clean, with tiled floors, and some have TVs. Cheaper fan rooms go for RM57.50.

Segara Ninda (☎ 262 8748; www.segaraninda.com; 20 Jln Penang; s & d RM70-100; 🚻 📺) This elegant century-old villa was once the town residence of Ku Din Ku Meh, a wealthy timber merchant and colonial administrator in what is now southern Thailand. His home has been tastefully renovated, incorporating original features such as the carved wooden ventilation panels and staircase and tiled floors. There are 14 simply furnished rooms of varying sizes, and some are very 'compact', so it pays to check a few out before deciding.

Malaysia Hotel (☎ 263 3311; 7 Jln Penang; s/d from RM76/88; 🚻 📺) This well-located high-rise has comfortable, decent-sized rooms, with TVs and both baths and showers. Rooms at the back are quieter and have views of the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion and the Penang Bridge.

Merchant Hotel (☎ 263 2828; 55 Jln Penang; s & d/tr from RM78/98; 🚻 📺) The rather dark, spooky lobby is hardly inviting, but this hotel has neat rooms, all with TVs and fridges. However, there's a pub on the 1st floor that is open till the early hours.

Hotel Continental (☎ 263 6388; 5 Jln Penang; r/ste from RM80.50/172.50; 🚻 📺 📺) Another gigantic modern hotel with 200 comfortable but unremarkable midrange rooms, with fridges and TVs. It all feels a bit anonymous, although the small rooftop pool is a pleasant spot. Prices vary throughout the year.

Sunway Hotel (☎ 229 9988; www.sh.com.my; 33 Lorong Baru; s/d RM145/160; 🚻 📺) The Sunway is a soaring glass tower geared towards

business visitors, west of the town centre. It offers 240 fairly spacious rooms of the standardised chain persuasion and good business facilities. It also has three restaurants and a British-style pub.

City Bayview Hotel (☎ 263 3161; 25A Lebu Farquhar; r RM150-185; 🚻 📺) Plush and sparkling high-rise chain hotel, topped by a revolving restaurant with great views over Georgetown and the mainland. There are a couple of other restaurants too, as well as a 'fun pub' with regular live music.

TOP END

Cititel Hotel (☎ 370 1188; www.cititelhotel.com; 66 Jln Penang; s/d from RM220/250; 🚻 📺) You can't miss this concrete giant lording it over Jln Penang. It's a brightly lit and always busy hotel, offering the regulation business traveller comforts along with a few restaurants. Discounts are normally available.

Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion (☎ 262 5289; www.cheongfattzemansion.com; 14 Lebu Leith; r from RM250; 🚻 📺) Exclusive and unique owner-hosted homestay, which is also a tourist attraction (see p178). The opulently furnished suites are individually styled, and each comes with a personal valet.

Shangri-La Traders Hotel (☎ 262 2622; www.shangri-la.com; Jln Magazine; r from RM250; 🚻 📺 📺) Huge shiny hotel near the Komtar shopping centre. All the top-end facilities you could expect are here, including a gym, several restaurants and an 'executive club' floor. Guests can also enjoy the facilities of the Shangri-La Resort in Batu Ferringhi at no extra charge; a free shuttle bus runs between the two.

Eastern & Oriental Hotel (☎ 222 2000; www.e-o-hotel.com; 10 Lebu Farquhar; ste from RM485; 🚻 📺 📺) Undoubtedly Penang's grandest hotel, it's an all-suite hotel, and those with a sea view (RM574) are worth the extra outlay. The spacious suites are elegantly furnished in a colonial style, and there are a number of very good restaurants too. The sea-facing lawn, where you'll find the biggest and oldest java tree in Penang, is the perfect place to relax. The pith-helmeted, short-trousered porters may be a touch over the top, though. (See the boxed text, p184, for more details.)

Evergreen Laurel Hotel (☎ 226 9988; www.evergreen-hotels.com; 58 Gurney Dr; r from RM485; 🚻 📺) One of several five-star high-rises strung

THE EASTERN & ORIENTAL HOTEL

The historic Eastern & Oriental Hotel stands at 10 Lebuhr Farquhar, dominating the waterfront end of Jln Penang. It was built in 1884, as the Eastern Hotel, which became so popular that the following year it was expanded and renamed the Eastern & Oriental Hotel (E&O). The stylish E&O was the archetypal 19th-century colonial grand hotel, established by two of the famous Armenian Sarkies brothers, Tigram and Martin, the most famous hoteliers in the East, who later founded the Raffles Hotel in Singapore.

In the 1920s the Sarkies promoted the E&O as 'The Premier Hotel East of Suez' (a catchy phrase the brothers later used to advertise *all* of their hotels), which supposedly had the 'Longest Sea Front of any Hotel' in the world, at 842ft. High-ranking colonial officials and wealthy planters and merchants filed through its grand lobby, and the E&O became firmly established as a centre for Penang's social elite. Rudyard Kipling, Noel Coward and Somerset Maugham were just some of the famous faces who passed through its doors.

The Sarkies almost closed the E&O when the rent was raised from £200 to £350 a month. Arshak Sarkies, a third brother (a gambler by nature), convinced the family to open the Raffles Hotel instead. Arshak's generosity was legendary; he often paid the £50 to £60 passage back to England for broken-hearted (and empty-pocketed) rubber planters and tin miners himself. Some observers said that Arshak ran the E&O not to make money, but to entertain: he seemed more keen to waltz around the ballroom with a whisky and soda balanced on his head than to add up a balance sheet. Shortly before his death, Arshak began lavish renovations to the E&O; this expense, coupled with loans to friends that were conveniently forgotten, finally bankrupted the family business in 1931. Still, Arshak's funeral was one of the grandest Penang has ever seen.

In the 1990s the E&O closed and fell into disrepair, but a huge renovation programme was begun to rescue one of Georgetown's most prominent and glamorous landmarks, and in 2001 it once again opened for business. Today, the E&O offers some fine dining, and a visit to Penang isn't complete until you've taken tiffin on its grand lawn (see p186).

The E&O features in several stories by Somerset Maugham, who was a regular (and often difficult) guest. For more on dashing Arshak Sarkies, read George Bilainkin's entertaining *Hail Penang! Being the Narrative of Comedies and Tragedies in a Tropical Outpost Among Europeans, Chinese, Malays and Indians*.

out along the shoreline on Gurney Dr, 4km west of the city centre. It has tennis courts, a gym, business centre and all the other top-end facilities, and rooms at the front have great sea views.

Eating

The quality and variety of food in Penang is legendary, and deservedly so. You can try a vast array of Asian cuisine in a very small area, with numerous Indian, Chinese, Malay and Thai restaurants jostling for trade, and seemingly always full.

Laksa *assam*, or Penang laksa, is a fish soup with a sour taste from tamarind (*assam*) paste; it's served with special white laksa noodles. Originally a Thai dish, *laksa lemak* has been adopted by Penang. It's similar to the Thai dish, except tamarind is substituted for coconut milk. Apart from Melaka, Penang is one of the best places to try Nonya (Straits Chinese)

cuisine, although you will have to look hard to find the real thing. Seafood is also very popular in Penang, and there are many restaurants that specialise in fresh fish, crabs and prawns – particularly along the northern beach. Despite its Chinese character, Penang also has a strong Indian presence and there are some popular specialities to savour. Curry Kapitan is a chicken curry that is supposed to have been named when a Dutch sea captain asked his Indonesian mess boy what was to eat that night. The answer was 'curry, Kapitan', and it's been on the menu ever since.

CHINESE

There are so many Chinese restaurants in Georgetown that it is difficult to give recommendations. A wander down any street in Chinatown is likely to turn up hidden gems, and there are very basic coffee shops all over the city.

Kafeteria Eng Loh (cnr Jln Gereja & Lebuhr Penang; mains from RM2.50; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) A very simple, and rather frayed, coffee shop, always full of locals chatting over bowls of *kway teow* and chicken-rice.

Hui Sin Vegetarian Restaurant (☎ 262 1443; 11 Lebuhr China; meals around RM4; ☺ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) This excellent-value buffet restaurant is the place to go for a filling meat-free lunch. Take what you want from the selection of vegetables, curries and different beancurds on offer, and you'll be charged accordingly. Wash it down with a glass of Chinese tea.

Peace & Joy (87 Lebuhr China; mains from RM4; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Basic and ever-busy Chinese coffee shop, serving up cheap roast pork and rice dishes.

Ye Beng Vegetarian Food (☎ 262 9161; 20 Lebuhr Dickens; meals around RM5; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Popular self-service place for cheap and mostly vegetarian food, of the tofu and green vegetables variety. It also serves fish curry.

Hong Kong Restaurant (☎ 264 4375; 29 Lebuhr Cincin; mains from RM6; ☺ lunch & dinner) Very popular seafood and dim sum restaurant with an extensive menu.

INDIAN

Little India is replete with cheap eating places, especially along Lebuhr Pasar and Lebuhr Penang, serving up curries, roti, tandoori and biryani. Other places are scattered all around town. Several small restaurants and stalls in this area offer cheap North and South Indian food.

Restoran Kapitan (☎ 264 1191; 93 Lebuhr Chulia; mains from RM3; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Very busy restaurant specialising in tandoori chicken and biryani, along with fish and mutton curries. It also serves some excellent masala tea.

Madras New Woodlands Restaurant (☎ 263 9764; 60 Lebuhr Penang; mains from RM3; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Very good vegetarian restaurant offering tasty banana-leaf meals and North Indian specialities, including lots of traditional sweets.

Sri Ananda Bahwan (☎ 264 4204; 55 Lebuhr Penang; mains from RM3; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Basic Indian eatery, seemingly forever full of chatting locals, serving up tandoori chicken, *roti canai* (unleavened flaky flat bread) and *murtabak* (*roti canai* filled with meat or vegetables). There's an air-con dining hall if you prefer more comfort.

Kaliannans (☎ 262 8953; 43 Lebuhr Penang; mains from RM4; ☺ lunch & dinner) Smart air-con restaurant serving North and South Indian cuisine, as well as Western food such as pizza. Best value are the tasty banana-leaf set meals.

Spice & Rice (☎ 261 8585; 1 Green Hall; mains from RM10; ☺ lunch & dinner) One of the more up-market Indian restaurants, featuring white linen, candles and a sotto-voce atmosphere. Goanese fish curry, chicken tikka and, ahem, goat-brain masala are just some of the menu items.

Jaipur Court (☎ 263 0306; 11 Lebuhr Leith; mains from RM12; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Top-notch North Indian cuisine is on offer at this smart restaurant in a restored town house, decked out with traditional carvings and paintings. Prices are a little high and the service is slow, but the samosas and tandoori dishes are tasty.

MALAY

Restoran Ali Selamat (☎ 262 6794; 416 Lebuhr Chulia; mains from RM3; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This typical *nasi kandar* (Malay rice buffet) café specialises in fish and chicken curries. It's a busy place, and you serve yourself.

Restoran Sup Hameed (☎ 261 8007; 48 Jln Penang; mains from RM3; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This is basically a roadside stall that has grown over the years, and offers lots of cheap soups and curries. Curried squid is the house speciality.

Kayu Nasi Kandar (☎ 264 4767; 216 Jln Penang; mains from RM4; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Popular food court-style place serving up cheap and tasty Malay and Indian dishes, including fish curry, tandoori chicken and vegetarian options.

NONYA

Penang, like Melaka and Singapore, was the home of the Straits-born Chinese, or Baba-Nonya, who combined Chinese and Malay traditions, especially in their kitchens. Penang's Nonya (or Nyonya) cuisine is a tad more fiery due to the island's proximity to Thailand. These days, though, true Nonya cuisine is becoming harder to find and restaurants are a bit out of the way.

Nyonya Baba Cuisine (☎ 227 8035; 44 Jln Nagore; mains from RM6; ☺ lunch & dinner Thu-Tue) Near Nyonya Secrets, this is a great place to sample authentic Nonya food – try the deep-fried fish or *hong bak* (pork in thick gravy).

Nyonya Secrets (☎ 227 5289; 32 Jln Service; mains from RM8; ☺ lunch & dinner Wed-Mon) This tiny place hidden down a nondescript side street offers a menu of spicy Nonya favourites, such as *otak-otak* (fish wrapped in banana leaves) and sweet and spicy *kerabu* prawns. It does excellent-value set lunches for RM12.

THAI & JAPANESE

Restoran Tomyam (☎ 632 592; 21 Lebu Chulia; mains from RM6; ☺ lunch & dinner) Simple place serving interesting spicy combinations from Islamic southern Thailand, like steamed fish with garlic and sour plum.

Hana Shima (☎ 263 1819; the Garage, 2 Jln Penang; mains from RM15; ☺ lunch & dinner) Good quality Japanese restaurant offering sushi and sashimi set menus (RM15 to RM29).

WESTERN

There's a concentration of smart Western restaurants and coffee bars on the short pedestrianised section of Jln Penang leading up towards the E&O Hotel.

TJ Cafe (☎ 261 2188; the Garage, 2 Jln Penang; mains from RM6.90; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Simple little café with a choice of cheap set lunches. Pasta, fish and chips, noodles, steaks and soups are on the menu.

Opera (☎ 263 2893; 3E Jln Penang; mains from RM18; ☺ lunch & dinner) Cool jazz murmuring in the background, Oriental artworks and crisp linen tablecloths provide a chic atmosphere for some interesting Western and Asian dishes, including 'hazelnut fish and chips' and stir-fried ostrich. The seats are a bit low though.

Sarkies Corner (☎ 222 2000; 10 Lebu Farquhar) No visit to Penang is complete without sitting down to a fine tiffin lunch at this coffee shop in the grand Eastern & Oriental Hotel. Served between noon and 2pm from Monday to Friday (RM19) in elegant surroundings, it's a filling and surprisingly inexpensive meal, consisting of various items such as mussels, curried chicken and lamb, with a view out onto the lawn and the sea beyond. Try a pot of 'Prince of Wales' tea afterwards. The dress code is smart casual, so no shorts or sandals.

Thirty Two (☎ 262 2232; 32 Jln Sultan Ahmad Shah; mains from RM40; ☺ dinner) Genteel restaurant in an elegant seaside mansion. Lobster, steaks and roast lamb and duck are on the menu. There's also a cocktail bar and live jazz on

Friday and Saturday evenings. Dress code is smart casual.

1885 (☎ 261 8333; 10 Lebu Farquhar; mains from RM45; ☺ dinner) The elegant main restaurant of the E&O Hotel serves excellent Western cuisine, such as sea bass with truffle sauce, and roast duck. Open for dinner only, with a smart casual dress code (no T-shirts, shorts or sandals).

QUICK EATS

Georgetown has a big selection of street stalls, with nightly gatherings at places like the seafront Esplanade Food Centre. This is one of the best hawker centres, as much for the delightful sea breezes as the Malay stalls serving delicious Penang specialities.

Lg Baru, just off Jln Macalister, is another lively location where food stalls set up in the evenings. Two other hawker areas can be found northwest of Komtar, just off Jln Burma on Lg Selamat and Lg Swatow.

Chinatown is full of coffee shops and hawker stalls, and one of its most popular outdoor fast-food places is Hsiang Yang Fast Food, just off Lebu Chulia. It's really a hawker centre, with an inexpensive Chinese buffet, noodles, satay and *popiah* (rice-paper roll) vendors. Lebu Chulia itself has a concentration of Western-style cafés catering to backpackers.

Gloria Jean's Coffees (the Garage, 2 Jln Penang) Popular place for 'gourmet' coffees and light meals, with soft sofas and free newspapers at hand.

Coco Island Traveller's Corner (☎ 264 3608; 273 Lebu Chulia; mains from RM4; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Another popular traveller hangout, with noodles, rice and steaks on the menu. It's in the courtyard of the Blue Diamond Hotel.

Stardust (☎ 263 5723; 370D Lebu Chulia; mains from RM5; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Busy backpacker café serving up economical breakfasts and light meals, with films (in English) showing in the evenings. There are also a few fan rooms upstairs (RM25) if you want to stay.

Hang Chow Café (☎ 263 7609; 511 Lebu Chulia; mains from RM5; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Basic little café serving a wide range of quick and cheap meals, such as omelettes, ham and eggs, and pizza.

Bake 'n' Take (☎ 263 8323; Lebu Muntri; mains from RM5; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Small bakery with a sit-down café serving light snacks, rolls, sandwiches and cakes.

Komtar has a supermarket and numerous fast-food outlets. On the 5th floor there's a lively, crowded hawker centre serving all the usual Chinese and Malay dishes, plus some Indian food.

Drinking

Pitt Street Corner (94 Lebu Pitt) Push open the saloon-style swing doors and take a seat in this friendly, atmospheric and authentic little Indian bar. It's a great place to enjoy a cold beer on a hot day while watching Bollywood musicals on the wall-mounted TV, and visitors are made to feel very welcome.

Farquhar's Bar (10 Lebu Farquhar) Colonial British-style bar inside the E&O Hotel, serving beer, traditional pub food and cocktails; try its signature drink, the Eastern & Oriental Sling (RM16.50) brought to you by a white-coated barman.

Soho Free House (50A Jln Penang; ☺ noon-midnight) Rather dimly-lit British-style pub spread out over two floors, serving, allegedly, Malaysia's biggest selection of draught beers. It shows live sports on satellite TVs on Saturday.

20 Leith Street (20 Lebu Leith; ☺ 4pm-2am) Situated right opposite the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion, this lively bar promises 'the cheapest beer in town'; happy hour is 4pm to 9pm.

Slippery Senoritas (the Garage, 2 Jln Penang) Vaguely Spanish-style bar that has occasional live music. The dress code is smart casual, and it's popular with Western expats.

Betelnut Café (☎ 012-456 7849; 317 Lebu Chulia) Walls plastered with travellers' graffiti in many languages lend the friendly Betelnut that authentic backpacker ambience. A laid-back spot for a few beers.

Entertainment

Coco's (☎ 263 8003; cnr Lebu Farquhar & Jln Penang) This popular expat hangout is open till late and has an attractive beer garden at the front. There are dance shows on Wednesday and various live acts other times.

R&B Pub (1st fl, Merchant Hotel, 55 Jln Penang; ☺ 9.30pm-2.45am) 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.

Glo (☎ 261 1066; the Garage, 2 Jln Penang) Glitzy club with a packed weekly programme.

There's cabaret on Friday, game shows on Saturday and dance shows and talent competitions on other days. Ladies get free drinks on Wednesday and Thursday.

Rock World (☎ 261 3168; off Lebu Campbell) One of Penang's oldest venues, definitely looking its age. It still gets lively on weekends though, and features local Chinese bands. You can't miss the gargantuan neon spider web hanging over the front.

Shopping

Penang is a good place to shop, with plenty of outlets for local crafts and antiques as well as cameras and electronics at competitive prices, although KL has a wider range. Bargaining is usually required, except in department stores. Jln Penang is the best shopping street in Georgetown. A good souvenir is **Penang Pewter**, a rather more affordable version of the better-known Royal Selangor Pewter, though of equal quality.

ANTIQUES

Lean Giap Trading (☎ 262 0520; 443 Lebu Chulia; ☺ 10.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat) This jumbled-up little store sells a miscellany of goods, including silverware, Oriental furniture, porcelain and glass.

Oriental Arts & Antiques (☎ 261 2748; 440 Lebu Chulia; ☺ 11am-6pm Mon-Sat) Anything old seems to end up in this place, with a selection of porcelain, furniture, jewellery, toys and general bric-a-brac.

100 Cintra Street (100 Lebu Cintra) A small collection of antique stalls occupies the ground floor of this old building. One sells only drinking glasses, others sell porcelain and assorted knick-knacks. For more information about this place, see p179.

ARTS & CRAFTS

Bee Chin Heong (☎ 261 9346; 58 Lebu Kimberley; ☺ 10am-8.30pm) This interesting outlet sells a colourful, bewildering assortment of religious statues, furniture and temple supplies; if you're after a huge Chinese couch, a household shrine or have RM55,000 to spend on a 2m-tall carved wood Buddha, this is the place to come. Even if you're not buying, it's still worth a look round.

Fuan Wong (☎ 262 9079; www.fuanwong.com; 88 Lebu Armenian; ☺ 11am-6pm Mon-Sat) This small gallery showcases the exquisite fused-glass creations of Penang artist Wong Keng Fuan.

Colourful bowls and quirky sculptures are for sale.

Hong Giap Hang (☎ 261 3288; 193-195 Jln Penang; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun) If you're looking for pewter products, this place has one of the best ranges in town. It also sells woodcarvings, jewellery, porcelain, crystal and batik.

Renaissance Pewter (☎ 264 5410; the Garage, 2 Jln Penang; ☎ 10.30am-7pm Mon-Sat) Locally made Renaissance pewter is another, much cheaper, alternative to Royal Selangor. Decorative tankards, tea caddies, vases and keyrings can be had here.

Royal Selangor Pewter (☎ 263 6742; 30 Lebu Light) The top name in Malaysian pewter. This outlet stocks the current range, and pewter-making workshops can be arranged here, costing RM50 for about one hour. Book at least two days in advance.

Siddhi Gifts and Crafts (☎ 264 1005; 34 Lebu Penang) Indian woodcarvings, incense sticks and pewter souvenirs are sold at this little shop.

SHOPPING CENTRES

Chowraster Bazaar (Jln Penang) This shabby old market hall is full of food stalls downstairs, with lots of fruit on display. Upstairs there are clothes stalls, secondhand book stalls and simple cafés.

Komtar (Jln Penang) A vast modern mall with hundreds of shops selling everything from clothes, shoes and electronics to everyday goods.

Prangin Mall (Jln Penang) Adjoins Komtar and houses a huge number of shops and restaurants, including smarter chain stores such as Parkson Grand, with a wide range of clothes, cosmetics, household goods and suchlike.

Getting There & Away

See the Getting There & Away (p169) and Getting Around (p171) sections for information on transport to and from Georgetown.

AROUND THE ISLAND

You can make a circuit of the island by car, motorcycle or bicycle, but it's not possible to circle the whole island by bus. If travelling by motorcycle or car, plan to spend about five hours, with plenty of sightseeing and refreshment stops. If you're on a bicycle, allow all day.

It's 70km all the way round, but only the north-coast road runs beside the beaches. The route takes you from Georgetown around the island clockwise. The road to Bayan Lepas and the airport is congested and built up, but it gets much quieter further around on the island's western side.

Penang Hill

Rising 821m above Georgetown, the top of Penang Hill provides a cool retreat from the sticky heat below, being generally about 5°C cooler than at sea level. From the summit there's a spectacular view over the island and across to the mainland. There are some gardens, a simple food court, with one of the original cable-cars kept on show outside, a hotel, police station and post office at the upper funicular station. At the top are an exuberantly decorated **Hindu temple** and a **mosque**. Penang Hill is wonderful at dusk as Georgetown, far below, starts to light up.

Penang Hill was first cleared by Captain Light soon after British settlement in order to grow strawberries (it was originally known as Strawberry Hill). A trail to the top was opened from the Botanical Gardens waterfall and access was by foot, packhorse or sedan chair. The official name of the hill was Flagstaff Hill (now translated as Bukit Bendera), but it is universally known as Penang Hill.

Efforts to make it a popular hill resort were thwarted by difficult access, and the first attempt at a mountain railway, begun in 1897, proved to be a failure. In 1923 a Swiss-built funicular (one way/return RM3/4, every 30 minutes 6.30am to 9.30pm Sunday to Friday, to 11.30pm Saturday) was completed. A tiny **museum** (admission free) inside the station displays some photographs and oddments from those early days. The trip takes a crawling 30 minutes, with a change of carriages at the halfway point. On the way, you pass the bungalows originally built for British officials and other wealthy citizens. Queues on weekends and public holidays can be horrendously long, with waits of up to 30 minutes.

A number of roads and **walking trails** traverse the hill. You can walk the 5.5km to the Botanical Gardens (Moon Gate) in about three hours from the trail near the upper funicular station. The easier Jeep track from the top also leads to the gardens,

just beyond the Moon Gate. A signboard on the hill shows walking trails going as far as Teluk Bahang, but these are not well marked and not recommended.

The 11-room **Bellevue Hotel** (☎ 04-829 9500; penbell@streamyx.com; s & d/f RM132/154) is the only place to stay here, but while the garden offers some splendid views over Georgetown, it's a little frayed at the edges and overpriced. The hotel has a restaurant and a small **aviary garden** (adult/child RM4/2; ☎ 9am-6pm) featuring exotic birds.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

From Komtar, or along Lebu Chulia, you can catch one of the frequent TransitLink buses (101 or 130), or Yellow Bus 85 to Air Itam. From Air Itam, walk five minutes to the funicular railway station. A taxi from the ferry terminal in Georgetown to the funicular station is RM15.

The energetic can take one of the walking trails to/from the Botanical Gardens.

Kek Lok Si Temple

The largest Buddhist **temple** (☎ 9am-6pm) in Malaysia stands on a hilltop at Air Itam, near Penang Hill. Founded by an immigrant Chinese Buddhist, construction started in 1890, took more than 20 years to complete and was largely funded by donations from Penang Straits Chinese elite. The temple is still being added to.

To reach the entrance, walk through a maze of souvenir stalls, past a tightly packed turtle pond and murky fish ponds, until you reach the heart of the complex, where you'll find **Ban Po Thar** (Ten Thousand Buddhas Pagoda; admission RM2), a seven-tier, 30m-high tower. The design is said to be Burmese at the top, Chinese at the bottom and Thai in between. In another three-storey shrine, there's a large Thai Buddha image that was donated by King Bhumibol of Thailand. There are several other temples here, as well as shops and a **vegetarian restaurant** (☎ 828 8142; mains from RM5; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun), while a **cable-car** (one way/return RM4/2) whisks you to the highest level, presided over by an awesome 36.5m-high bronze statue of **Kuan Yin**, goddess of mercy. Sixteen highly decorated bronze columns (still under construction) will eventually support a roof over the statue, and 1000 2m-high statues of the goddess are planned to surround this area.

Also up here are a couple more temples, a fish pool and statues of the twelve animals of the Chinese zodiac.

It's an impressive complex, though crowded with tourists and shoppers as much as worshippers. The temple is about a 3km walk from Penang Hill station (see opposite), or you can hop on TransitLink buses 101 and 130 or Yellow Bus 85 to Air Itam.

Botanical Gardens

The 30-hectare **Botanical Gardens** (Map p168; ☎ 227 0328; Waterfall Rd; admission free; ☎ 5am-8pm) are also known as the Waterfall Gardens, after the stream that cascades down from Penang Hill. They've also been dubbed the Monkey Gardens for the many long-tailed macaques that scamper around. Don't be tempted to feed them; monkeys do bite, and there's a RM500 fine if you're caught. Within the grounds are an orchid house, palm house, bromeliad house, cactus garden and numerous tropical trees, all labelled in English. A path leads to the top of Penang Hill.

TransitLink bus 202 runs past on the way to Teluk Bahang.

Museum & Art Gallery

Six kilometres south of Georgetown, on the sprawling campus of Universiti Sains Malaysia, is the **Museum and Art Gallery** (Map p168; ☎ 657 7888; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Sun-Thu, 10am-12.15pm & 2.45-5pm Fri, 10am-1pm Sat). It holds a collection of traditional Malaysian and Indonesian musical instruments (including several full gamelan orchestras), aboriginal and Baba-Nonya pieces, and fascinating contemporary Malaysian art and photography.

Take any Yellow Bus (except buses 82 and 85) from Georgetown, but be sure to get off at the university stop before the bus turns onto the Penang Bridge and carries you away to the mainland.

Pulau Jerejak

Lying 1.5 nautical miles off Penang's south-east coast, Pulau Jerejak (Map p168) is a thickly forested private island that has been home to a leper colony and a prison in its time, and is today occupied by the **Jerejak Resort & Spa** (Map p168; ☎ 658 7111; www.jerejakresort.com; r RM220-450; ☎ ☎). It has some beautifully furnished chalets and a spa

offering various kinds of massage, as well as a less luxurious 'adventure village' complex with simple doubles (RM150) and dorms (RM230/330 for four/six beds), though you will need to book the whole dorm room.

The resort has its own jetty, and day-trippers are welcome. Boats leave roughly every two hours (RM20/16 per adult/child). The price includes a light snack, or one-hour bike rental, and there are several activities on the island including jungle trekking (one hour, RM20); wall climbing (RM10); mountain biking (RM15); and a suspension-bridge trail (RM15).

No buses run past the jetty; a taxi from Georgetown will cost around RM30.

Snake Temple

Three kilometres before the airport, you'll see Penang's **Snake Temple** (Temple of the Azure Cloud; Map p168; ☎ 9am-6pm) on the western side of the road. The temple is dedicated to Chor Soo Kong, a Buddhist priest and healer, and was built in 1850 by a grateful patient. The several resident venomous Wagler's pit vipers and green tree snakes are said to be slightly doped by the incense smoke drifting around the temple during the day, but at night slither down to eat the offerings. There's a small **snake exhibition** (adult/child RM5/3) with tanks containing various snakes, including pythons and cobras. Persistent snake handlers will charge RM30 for taking your photo holding a snake.

Yellow Bus 68 and 69 and Minibus 32 run every 30 minutes from Komtar past the temple.

Fishing Villages

About 3km after the snake temple, you reach the turn-off to the Chinese fishing village of **Batu Maung** (Map p168). The renovated seaside temple here has a shrine dedicated to the legendary Admiral Cheng Ho, also known as Sam Poh. The temple sanctifies a huge 'footprint' on the rock that reputedly belonged to the famous navigator. Devotees pray before his statue here and drop coins into the water-filled footprint. The Best View seafood restaurant is outside. Yellow Buses 68 and 69 pass Batu Maung.

Back on the highway, the road climbs up, then drops down to **Teluk Kumbang** (Map p168), from where you can detour to the fishing village of **Gertak Sanggul** (Map p168),

which has stalls on the seaside selling fresh fish. You'll pass some pint-sized scenic beaches on the way, although none are particularly good for swimming.

Penang War Museum

Heading west of Batu Maung on the road to Teluk Kumbang, you'll soon come upon the **Penang War Museum** (Map p168; ☎ 626 5142; Bukit Batu Maung; adult/child RM25/12.50; ☎ 9am-7pm), perched on top of the steep Bukit Batu Maung. The former British fort, built in the 1930s, was used as a prison and torture camp by the Japanese during WWII. Today, the crumbling buildings have been restored as a memorial to those dark days. Barracks, ammunition stores, cookhouses, gun emplacements and other structures can be explored in this eerie, atmospheric place, and there are information boards in English all over the site.

Yellow Bus 69 from Georgetown swings by below the hill.

Balik Pulau

☎ 04 / pop 120,000

Balik Pulau (Map p168) is the main town on the island circuit. There are a number of restaurants, food stalls and a daily market here, but no accommodation. It's a good place for lunch and the local speciality, *laksa balik pulau*, is a must. It's a tasty rice-noodle concoction in a thick fish-broth, with mint leaves, pineapple slivers, onions and fresh chillies.

Balik's Catholic **Holy Name of Jesus Church** was built in 1854, and its twin spires stand impressively against the jungle behind. The town's other claim to fame is its orchards of durian, clove and nutmeg trees.

Balik Pulau is the terminus of Yellow Bus 66 from Georgetown.

Sungai Pinang to Pantai Acheh

After Balik Pulau you pass through an area of Malay *kampung* and clove, nutmeg, rubber, even durian plantations. Sungai Pinang, a busy Chinese village built along a stagnant river, is worth a peek. Further on is the turn-off to Pantai Acheh, another small, isolated fishing village.

About 2km further along the road to Teluk Bahang, the **Tropical Fruit Farm** (Map p168; ☎ 227 6223; ☎ 9am-6pm) cultivates over 140 types of tropical and subtropical fruit trees, native

and hybrid. The two-hour tours (RM20/14 per adult/child) are very educational and include a fruit sampler tasting. Most visitors come on organised trips. The infrequent Yellow Bus 76 runs between Balik Pulau and Teluk Bahang four times a day, passing Sungai Pinang and the fruit farm.

Titi Kerawang

☎ 04

After the turn-off to Pantai Acheh, the road starts to climb and twist, offering glimpses of the coast and the sea far below. During durian season, stalls are set up along the road selling the spiky orbs, and you can see nets strung below the trees themselves to protect the precious fruits when they fall.

The jungle becomes denser here and soon you reach Titi Kerawang. Until recently, a waterfall flowed into a natural swimming pool just off the road, but the nearby dam has left the stream a trickle.

As you descend towards the north coast you'll pass the new dam and come upon the **Teluk Bahang Forest Reserve** (Map p168; ☎ Ranger's office 885 1280; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun, 9am-noon & 2.45-5pm Friday). Several kilometres south of Teluk Bahang, it has gentle trails through the jungle, a few waterfall pools and a small, specialist **Forestry Museum** (☎ 885 2388; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun, 9am-noon & 2.45-5pm Fri).

A little nearer the coast is the **Penang Butterfly Farm** (Map p192; ☎ 885 1253; 830 Jln Teluk Bahang; adult/child RM15/7.50; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat & Sun), with several thousand live butterflies representing over 150 species. You can also see some fascinating beetles, lizards and spiders.

From here it's 1km north to the bus stop in Teluk Bahang, passing an **Orchid Garden** (Map p192), where the colourful display of blooms is sure to delight horticulturalists, and the **Craft Batik** (Map p192; ☎ 885 1302) factory and shop, a somewhat touristy and overpriced outlet for sarongs and the like, along the way.

Teluk Bahang

☎ 04

The village of Teluk Bahang marks the western end of the island's northern beach strip. It's a sleepy fishing village with not a great deal to see or do other than go for a hike around **Penang National Park**, which at

just 2300ha is the smallest in Malaysia. It encompasses the headland, and has some interesting and challenging trails through the jungle.

From Teluk Bahang you can trek down the beach to **Muka Head**, the isolated rocky promontory at the extreme northwestern corner of the island marked by a lighthouse, which is off limits. This is a reasonably easy walk, taking around 3½ hours. The trail passes the University of Malaysia Marine Research Station and the privately owned Teluk Duyong beach, also called Monkey Beach, after the numerous primates who scamper about here.

A more difficult trail heads inland towards **Pantai Keracut**, a beautiful white-sand beach which is a popular spot for picnics. Nearby is the unusual **meromictic lake**, a rare natural feature, composed of two separate layers of unmixed freshwater on top and seawater below, supporting a unique mini-ecosystem. It's possible to camp beside the lake.

The small **Penang National Park office** (☎ 881 3500; Jln Hassan Abbas; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon & 2-4pm Sat & Sun) is near the park entrance in Teluk Bahang. It has a few maps and leaflets. Guides cost RM100 for a full day, although they may be hard to find on weekdays.

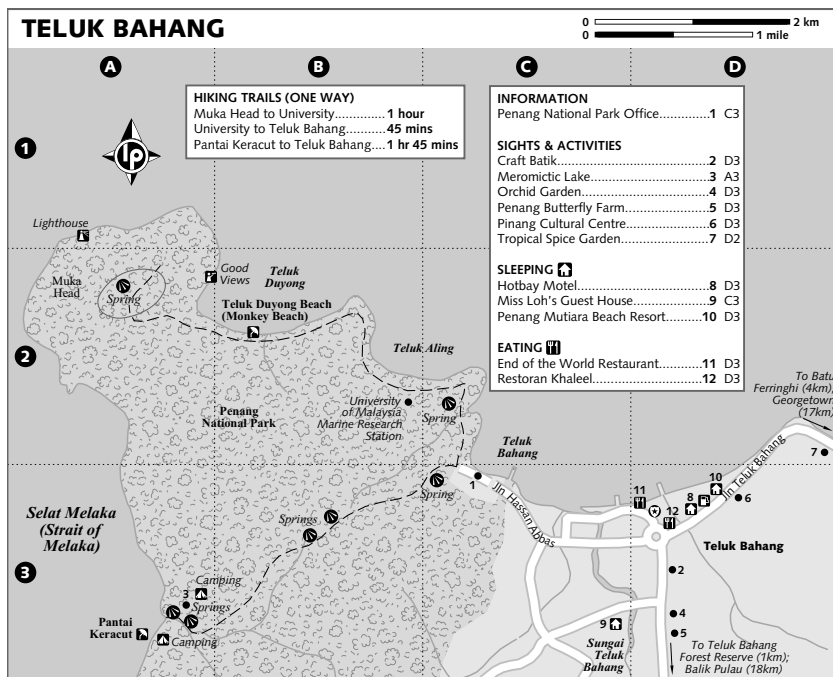
The **Pinang Cultural Centre** (☎ 885 1175; Jln Teluk Bahang), down the road from the Penang Mutiara Beach Resort, only opens for large, pre-arranged tour groups. Local handicraft exhibitions, cultural shows and buffets are held here. Your hotel should have the latest details and costs.

Nearby is the **Tropical Spice Garden** (☎ 881 1797; www.tropicalspicegarden.com; Jln Teluk Bahang; adult/child RM12/6; ☎ 9am-6pm), a tranquil botanical garden planted with more than 500 species of flora, with an emphasis on spices. Ferns, bamboo, ginger and heliconias are among the lush vegetation.

SLEEPING

Rooms have private bathrooms unless otherwise noted.

Miss Loh's Guest House (☎ 885 1227; off Jln Teluk Bahang; dm/s/d with shared bathroom from RM8/15/30; ☎) This peaceful, ramshackle place is set in a large garden away from the seafont, with several cats and dogs wandering about. The accommodation is about as basic as you can get, but travellers keep returning, and some



stay for months on end. Rates are negotiable for longer stays, but Miss Loh won't accept telephone reservations. There are communal shower and toilet blocks.

Hotbay Motel (☎ 016-455 9062; Jln Teluk Bahang; r RM75-85; 🏠) Situated in the main shopping area east of the roundabout, Hotbay Motel offers fair motel-style rooms, with a communal TV lounge at the front. Rooms with five and seven beds are also available (RM150/210).

Penang Mutiara Beach Resort (☎ 886 8888; www.mutiarahotels.com; 1 Jln Teluk Bahang; r from RM455; 🏠 🚗 🏊) The Penang Mutiara Beach Resort is the biggest and most luxurious hotel development here, with an attractive and spotless beachfront location. Large comfortable rooms have balconies and big bathrooms. There's a water-sports centre, Chinese, Japanese and Italian restaurants, tennis and squash courts and a small putting green. Discounts are often available.

EATING

With all those fishing boats in the harbour, fresh and tasty seafood is guaranteed.

Restoran Khaleel (mains from RM4; 🍳 breakfast, lunch & dinner). This little food court next to the Hotbay Motel offers the best value along here. The usual Malay specialities such as nasi goreng and fish-head curry are available.

End of the World Restaurant (☎ 885 1189; mains from RM15; 🍳 lunch & dinner) At the western end of the village by the jetty, this restaurant is famous for its fish dishes and has a huge range of seafood on the menu. It's a little overpriced though.

The main shopping area along the road heading east to Batu Ferringhi also has a few coffee shops where travellers can find cheaper Chinese dishes and seafood, as well as a couple of good South Indian places which sell dishes such as *murtabak* and *dosa* (savoury Indian pancakes).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Hin Bus 93 runs from Georgetown every half-hour all the way along the north coast of the island as far as the roundabout in Teluk Bahang, as does the hourly Transit-Link bus 202.

Batu Ferringhi

🏠 04

The road from Teluk Bahang along the coast to Batu Ferringhi is a picturesque stretch of small coves and more beaches. Batu Ferringhi (Foreigner's Rock) is a resort strip stretching along Jln Batu Ferringhi, the main drag, which is lined with big hotels, tourist shops and restaurants. There's a good night market and the **Yahong Art Gallery** (☎ 881 1251; 58D Jln Batu Ferringhi) sells a vast range of Asian antiques and art, including jewellery, pewter, batik paintings, woodcarvings and, less appealingly, ivory. Also on Jln Batu Ferringhi is **Enca Internet Café** (☎ 881 4101; 101A Jln Batu Ferringhi; per hr RM5; 🕒 10.30am-12.30am).

The beach is fine for sunbathing, but doesn't compare to Malaysia's best, the water being not as clear as you might expect. The beach itself can be a little scruffy in parts, especially on weekends when hordes of day-trippers visit. Though it can get crowded with holiday-package groups and backpackers, the luxury hotels offer good deals and there are several budget options.

ACTIVITIES

There are a few companies offering water-sport activities on the beach. **Wave Runner Watersport** (☎ 881 4753) operates from the guesthouse of the same name. Among the activities on offer are jet-skiing (RM100 for 30 minutes), water-skiing (RM60 for 15 minutes) and parasailing (RM50 for 15 minutes). You can also book a deep-sea fishing trip (RM250 for three hours).

After that you might need a relaxing massage. Try the beachfront **Deluxe Foot Reflexology** (☎ 017-429 0722), which offers a 45-minute foot massage for RM40.

SLEEPING

Batu Ferringhi, along with Teluk Bahang, was once a favourite stopover on the budget travellers' trail, and although there's still a clutch of backpacker hostels near the beach, these days the place is dominated by huge luxury developments. Outside high season (roughly December to February), big discounts are often available. Budget places all have shared bathrooms except where indicated, midrange and top-end options all have private bathrooms.

Budget

ET Budget Guest House (☎ 881 1553; 47 Batu Ferringhi; r RM25-60; 🏠) A double-storey house with basic rooms, most with shared bathroom. The pricier air-con rooms come with TVs and showers.

Victor's Guest House (☎ 881 1005; 399 Jln Batu Ferringhi; r RM30-45; 🏠) Down a dusty lane off the main road, Victor's is a friendly Indian guesthouse with large clean rooms upstairs and down. The bare brick walls are a bit cheerless, but it's good value and in a quiet location with chickens pecking about outside.

Shalini's Guest House (☎ 881 1859; ahlooi@pc.jaring.my; 56 Batu Ferringhi; r RM30-60; 🏠) This old two-storey wooden house has a friendly family atmosphere. Rooms are basic but neat and some have balconies. The priciest ones have private bathrooms.

Baba Guest House (☎ 881 1686; babaguesthouse2000@yahoo.com; 52 Batu Ferringhi; r RM30-60; 🏠) Tidy family home with plain rooms, most with shared bathrooms. The dearer air-con rooms come with fridges and showers.

Ah Beng Guesthouse (☎ 881 1036; 54C Batu Ferringhi; r RM50-70; 🏠) Pricier than most of the beach chalets here, this place has small but comfortable rooms, some with sea-facing balconies. The most expensive rooms have hot water, TVs and fridges.

Ali's Guest House (☎ 881 1316; 53 Batu Ferringhi; r RM50-80; 🏠) Simple budget place with a popular open-air bar and restaurant at the front. There's a selection of rooms of varying sizes, most with air-con, and some with TVs. Breakfast is included.

Midrange

Wave Runner Beach Chalet (☎ 019-472 7789; 54 Batu Ferringhi; r RM80; 🏠) Right on the sand, this brick chalet block has just five rooms, so it's often full. Rooms are fresh and clean, with tiled floors, two double beds, TVs, kettles and private showers. There are a few food stalls on the doorstep.

Top End

Lone Pine Hotel (☎ 881 1511; www.lonepinehotel.com; 97 Jln Batu Ferringhi; r from RM325; 🏠 🚗) Batu Ferringhi's original hotel, established in 1948. In contrast to the nearby megaresorts, it's a relatively small, low-rise hotel, with only 50 rooms. It has retained a charming colonial ambience, even though it has been completely renovated. Tastefully furnished rooms

open out onto balconies or terraces with sea views, over a shady lawn just off the beach.

Shangri-La Rasa Sayang Resort (☎ 881 1966; www.shangri-la.com; Jln Batu Ferringhi; r from RM450; 🏠 🍷 🍷) Vast luxury resort on a fine stretch of beach. All rooms have balconies, many with sea views. There's a health club, tennis courts, putting green and several restaurants.

Holiday Inn Resort (☎ 881 1601; www.penang.holiday-inn.com; 72 Jln Batu Ferringhi; r from RM450; 🏠 🍷 🍷) Big, family-friendly resort with accommodation blocks either side of the main road; rooms in the sea-facing Beach Wing are dearer (from RM530). There's a wide range of rooms to choose from, including themed 'Kidsuites', which come with TVs, videos and PlayStations. There's also a well-equipped Kids Club, tennis courts and a gym.

Bayview Beach Resort (☎ 881 2123; www.bayviewbeach.com; Jln Batu Ferringhi; r/ste from RM475/770; 🏠 🍷 🍷) At the western, and quieter, end of the beach, this is a gigantic place set in lovely palm-filled gardens. It has everything you could wish for, including a water-sports

centre, gym, squash courts, shops and bars, including one in the middle of the large swimming pool.

Grand Plaza Park Royal (☎ 881 1133; www.penang.parkroyalhotels.com; Jln Batu Ferringhi; s/d/ste from RM500/520/1200; 🏠 🍷 🍷) With 330 rooms, this place still isn't the biggest resort here, but it is one of the better ones. The lobby lounge, with its squashy sofas and piano bar, leads out onto a clean and attractive stretch of beach. Rooms are large and those with sea views are, of course, preferable. Nonguests can use the gardens and pools for RM25 per day, including lunch.

EATING & DRINKING

Batu Ferringhi Bistro (Batu Ferringhi; mains from RM6; 🍷 6pm-4am) This is a basic beach bar with a small menu of Chinese and Western dishes. There are tables on the sand, and it's a pleasant place to relax with an evening beer.

Palace (☎ 881 1313; 78 Jln Batu Ferringhi; mains from RM12; 🍷 2-11pm) Very gaudily decorated Indian restaurant specialising in tandoori dishes; it also serves Italian and Arabic cuisine.

Ship (☎ 881 2142; 69B Jln Batu Ferringhi; mains from RM15; 🍷 lunch & dinner) You can't miss this one; it's a full-size replica of a wooden sailing ship, specialising in hefty steaks and seafood. Escargots and oysters are also on the rather overpriced menu. It's quite smart inside, but rather dark.

Ferringhi Walk (☎ 881 3325; 16 Jln Batu Ferringhi; mains from RM16; 🍷 dinner) At the western end of the beach, this place has an outside seating area and a varied menu, featuring lots of Chinese dishes, seafood and grills.

Eden Seafood Village (☎ 881 1236; 69A Jln Batu Ferringhi; mains from RM20; 🍷 dinner) Huge barnlike place serving seafood plucked from aquariums at the entrance. Oysters, crab, lobster and countless kinds of fish are available. There's a free dance show every evening at 8.30pm.

There are basic food stalls on the beachfront near the budget guesthouses, where you can enjoy fresh fish. On the corner of Jln Sungai Emas, Global Bay Food Court has cheap Western and Chinese meals.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Hin Bus 93 (half-hourly), TransitLink 202 (hourly) and Minibuses 31A and 88A from Komtar take around 30 minutes to reach Batu Ferringhi.

Pulau Tikus

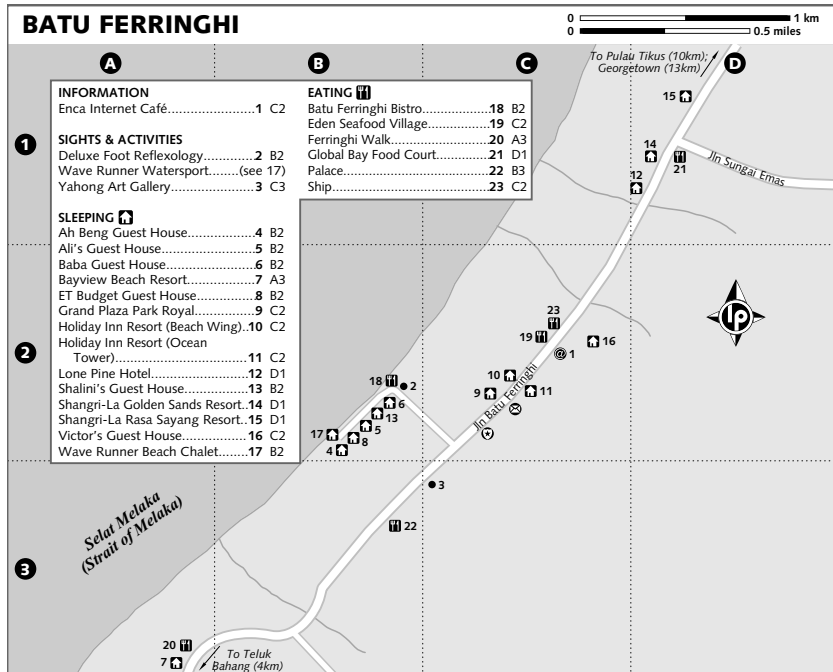
☎ 04

Heading back into Georgetown from Batu Ferringhi, you'll pass **Tanjung Bungah** (Cape of Flowers), the first real beach close to the city, but it's not good for swimming. Inexplicably, big hotels and apartment blocks are cropping up everywhere, but Batu Ferringhi is still a better option.

After Tanjung Bungah, you'll enter the Pulau Tikus (Midlands) suburbs, full of discos, wining-and-dining venues, cinemas, and megamalls like Midlands 1-Stop and Island Plaza. A taxi from Lebu Chulia to Midlands costs RM10.

Pulau Tikus is the beginning of scenic Gurney Dr, with its great sea views and hawker food. Eventually it intersects with Jln Sultan Ahmad Shah, formerly Millionaire's Row, where nouveau riche Chinese in the early 20th century competed to see who could build the most impressive mansion. Many of these mansions have now been demolished or abandoned, or taken over by squatters, fronted by office space or even converted into fast-food outlets.

Hin Bus 93, TransitLink 202 and Minibuses 26, 32 and 88 from Komtar all go to Pulau Tikus.



© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'