



Prince of Wales Island  
International School®

# Why Penang?

**A BRIEF INTRODUCTION**  
*to the Pearl of the Orient*



# Introduction

Penang, often referred to as the 'Pearl of the Orient', has drawn many to its sandy white shores.

Known for its pristine beaches, rich history and melting-pot of cultures, the small island has long been a crowd favourite with tourists, locals, and expatriates alike. In recent years, Penang has been recognised as the sixth 'Best Place to Retire Abroad in 2016' by CNN Money, and earned a place in the 'Top 10 Places to Retire in the World' in a list by American travel magazine, Conde Nast Traveler, as well as received praise from several international publications such as the Lonely Planet and Huffington Post. ECA International ranked George Town as

Malaysia's most liveable city, and the eighth most liveable city in Asia.

Founded in 1786, Penang was first known as the Prince of Wales Island. The island was among the first British possessions in the South-East Asia region, and has long kept its association with the United Kingdom. In 1957, Queen Elizabeth II declared George Town a city, and is one of the oldest cities in the country, with decades of rich and colourful history. Penang remains one of the most visited states in the country due to its unique character.



Penang's bustling streets still retain an old-world charm, and offer tourists rides on a traditional trishaw.



The clan jetties, set alongside the serene ocean, are part of the Penang Heritage Trail.

# Education

Penang has had a well established reputation as an education hub, with approximately 271 primary schools and 125 secondary schools on the island.

The very first English-medium school in Southeast Asia was built in Penang in 1816, along with several historical Chinese schools that are among the oldest in the nation. Three of the oldest and most established schools in Malaysia – Penang Free School, St. Xaviers' Institution and Convent Light Street – are all on the island, and continue excelling in both academics and co-curricular activities. The Chinese schools are also very well developed and have historically attracted students from Chinese communities in Thailand and Indonesia.

Among the dozens of national schools, there are a number of international schools, amongst of which POWIIS is rapidly establishing a distinctive and significant reputation.

There are also several tertiary education options, with three universities, three

polytechnics, and a wide array of private colleges.

Touted as the ideal place for students, many have chosen to enroll in schools and educational institutions within the island city. As it is not congested and over-developed, they have embraced the island lifestyle with open arms and prefer this over large cities. The environment is also suitable for students as there are not many distractions, and the attractions are mostly educational in a sense.

As an education hub, the safety of the residents is well-prioritised. The island has volunteer corps to ensure the safety in neighbourhoods and around town, as well as volunteer patrol teams. The police also regularly does bicycle patrols, whilst events and celebrations are always assisted by volunteer corps.



# Healthcare

Malaysia's healthcare is known to be amongst the best in the world.

Expatriates and locals alike enjoy the great health care at low costs, and there are several public and private medical institutions. The hospitals have highly trained doctors and offer very affordable care.

In Malaysia, medical tourism is booming. George Town and Kuala Lumpur are the main two medical centers in Malaysia, with both cities serviced by a multitude of international airlines from around the world. With some of the best-trained doctors in Asia, most are fluent in English and have trained abroad, with the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom being popular choices to further their medical education. Additionally, numerous hospitals in Penang have been awarded the prestigious Joint Commission International (JCI) certification. At the moment, there are around 8 JCI-accredited hospitals nationwide, and Malaysia is proud to be amongst Southeast Asia's first recipients of the celebrated certificate.

Penang houses several of the best treatment centers in the country. The hospitals here are have generally had high ratings, and offer a comprehensive range of healthcare services. Hospitals in Penang have received plenty of compliments, as patients praise the professionalism, and the affordable costs. Penang has also been a favourite choice for many, as there is little to no waiting time when one arrives. A simple registration process will suffice, and it is an almost hassle free process. There are plenty of hospitals and clinics in Penang, which include:

- Penang Adventist Hospital
- Pantai Hospital Penang
- Gleneagles Penang Medical Center
- Lam Wah Ee Hospital
- Island Hospital
- Loh Guan Lye Specialists Centre
- Balik Pulau Hospital
- Penang General Hospital
- Tanjung Medical Centre

# The Arts & Performing Arts

Not only famed for its centuries of history and culinary delights, Penang has also made its mark in the arts and performing arts.



The annual Hungry Ghost festival is celebrated widely in Penang when performances are held to appease the spirits.



Penang's unique artistic scene is known for its life-sized murals and the depictions of everyday life on the island.

Within George Town, visitors may notice unusual caricatures made up of wrought iron prominently displayed on the walls. Huge wall murals also decorate the already vibrant scene of the capital city, and depict local culture. Ernest Zacharevic, a Lithuanian artist, chose Penang to create a series of six wall murals in 2012. Since then, there has been encouraging response in the form of local talent and foreign artists who were invited to create new murals. Today, the sites are thronged with tourists standing next to the beautiful murals for photographs.

The art pieces may be categorised into:

- Works by **Ernest Zacharevic**.
- **101 Lost Kittens** – 12 cat-related street artworks by Natthapon Muangkliang, Louise Low and Tang Yeok Khang to raise awareness towards stray animals in Penang.
- **Urban Exchange 2014 and 2015** – An urban arts festival organized by Hin Bus Depot and Urban Nation that invites both local and foreign artists to contribute to the bustling art scene in Penang.
- **Marking Georgetown** – 52 wrought iron structures are sprinkled throughout Georgetown and provide historical anecdotes depending on the location the structures are displayed.

The art pieces may be found at:

- **Orange Zone:** Lebu Ah Quee > Lebu Pantai > Lebu Gat Chulia
- **Red Zone:** Lebu Armenian > Lorong Soo Hong > Gat Lebu Armenian > Chew Jetty
- **Yellow Zone:** Lebu Cannon > Lorong Lumut > Lorong Toh Aka
- **Green Zone:** Lebu Stewart > Jalan Muntri > Jalan Penang > Leith Street > Lebu Chulia

## Performing Arts

Not only famed for its centuries of history and culinary delights, Penang has also made its mark in the performing arts.

The 'Chingay' parade was started in 1919, to celebrate the birthdays of Chinese deities. Penang's version involves participants balancing flags on their hands or foreheads, and has gone on to become fairly well-known in and out of the country. The annual Hungry Ghost Festival in Penang features Teochew and Hokkien variations of Chinese opera to appease the spirits. Additionally, Malay opera was developed in Penang, with influences from the Indian, Western, Islamic, Chinese, and Indonesian cultures. The traditional Boria dance also has its grassroots in Penang.

# Culture

As a melting pot of cultures, Penang's locals are made of a mix of Chinese, Indian and Malay residents, alongside a significantly large community of expatriates who work and live here.

The expatriates range from countries such as Singapore, Japan, Australia, the United States of America, the United Kingdom as well as a host of other Asian countries. The island celebrates several festivities annually, including:

- **Thaipusam** is celebrated on a grand scale every year, with devotees travelling to Batu Caves by foot, attracting over one million devotees and thousands of tourists.
- The **Georgetown Festival** is a month-long celebration to commemorate the city's UNESCO World Heritage status and hosts performances, exhibitions and more.
- The **Penang Hot Air Balloon Fiesta** brings forth hordes of balloonists from Belgium, the United States, Netherlands and other countries.
- The **Penang International Lion Dance** on

Stilts competition is also held annually, and international teams from China, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Singapore congregate here to compete.

- The **Eurasia Fiesta** for the Eurasian community in Penang.
- **Penang International Green Carnival** which aims to work towards a cleaner, greener Penang.
- Penang also has a yearly **Bon Odori** festival for the expatriate Japanese population.
- The Thai community in Penang celebrate **Songkran** annually.
- Other celebrations include **Chinese New Year, Mid-Autumn Festival, Hungry Ghost Festival, Qing Ming, Hari Raya Aidilfitri, Hari Raya Haji, Deepavali, Thai Ponggal, Vesak Day, Good Friday, Christmas, Vaisakhi, and Easter.**



The Kek Lok Si temple, a seven-storey architectural wonder, is the largest Buddhist temple in Malaysia, and is an important pilgrimage centre for Buddhists from several Asian countries.



The Thaipusam festival is celebrated annually in Penang, and commemorates the occasion when Parvati gave Murugan a Vel 'spear' so Murugan could defeat the evil demon, Soorapadman. Thaipusam marks the day of Murugan's birth, and features chariot processions, and offerings to the Gods.

# Recreational Activities & Food

The island is also a favourite haunt for foodies, who flock to Penang in droves.

## Recreational Activities

Families enjoy living and visiting Penang. For shopaholics, a quick visit to the island's many malls and Batu Ferringhi's shopping street may reveal hidden gems, whilst foodies congregate all over Penang. The island's serene beaches and sandy shores call to the sun-lovers, while the more adventurous visitors prefer to hike through national parks and gardens. There is always somewhere to go and something to do in Penang!

## Food

The street food is particularly famous, having gained mentions as having the best street food in Asia by CNN, the Lonely Planet and Time magazine. The food incorporates Malay, Chinese, Thai, European, Indian and Peranakan flavours into the dishes, and also truly embodies the Penang culture. It is common to see tourists and locals alike snacking on Penang's ubiquitous street food whilst exploring George Town and other parts of the island.



An evening at Gurney Drive's hawker centre, where tourists and locals alike enjoy Penang's famous street food on the seafront.



Penang's beaches offer a wide variety of watersport and beach sport activities for the thrill-seekers, such as parasailing, jet-skiing, and riding on beach buggies.



Jungle trekking and hiking are popular recreational activities on the island. There are several jungle and adventure trails that allow a glimpse into the tropical rainforest.

Alongside the ubiquitous street food, many concept cafes have opened in George Town for patrons who want to spend a sunny afternoon enjoying a latte.



## Prince of Wales Island International School



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