

Destination: Penang Special

# FESTIVAL CITY



Penang is more than just artistic murals and heritage streets. Its lively line-up of festivals are worth noting and can inject plenty of entertainment to even the most solemn of business events.  
By S Puvaneswary



# Destination: Penang Special

**FESTIVAL:** Penang Hot Air Balloon Fiesta

**ORGANISER:** AKA Balloon

**WHEN:** February 9-10, 2019

**WHERE:** Padang Polo, Penang

**HIGHLIGHTS:** Ticketed tethered balloon rides will be available on first-come-first-served basis, where visitors can soar as high as 18m. The Night Glow show draws the crowd every evening, featuring 10 balloons lit up with the accompaniment of music and lights. Watch out also for the Cold Inflation activity, where visitors can walk into a balloon envelope that's filled with cold air as it lies on the ground. Supplementing the balloon-themed fun are art & craft and F&B stalls.

The massive balloons are inflated for displays thrice a day – from 07.00, from 18.00 and from 20.45. Displays are subject to weather conditions.

While there is no entrance fee, charges apply for certain activities such as tethered balloon rides at RM50 (US\$12) and Cold Inflation at RM5.



## FESTIVAL WONDERLAND

**FESTIVAL:** Penang International Dragon Boat Festival

**ORGANISER:** Penang Tourism Development, Culture, Heritage & Arts

**WHEN:** June 1-2, 2019

**WHERE:** Teluk Bahang Dam

**HIGHLIGHTS:** Held in conjunction with Pesta Pulau Pinang (Penang Festival), the Penang International Dragon Boat Festival draws hundreds of participants from around the world to compete for the prize money. They converge in Penang as part of a year-long world race circuit under the auspices of the International Dragon Boat Federation headquartered in Beijing. For visitors, it is an opportunity to enjoy a weekend of pulsating thrills and spills to the vigorous beating of drums and strong thrust of oars as the teams battle it out in the water. Expect colourful dragon boats and various stage performances to add vibrancy to the event.



**FESTIVAL:** Penang International Food Festival

**ORGANISER:** TLM Event

**WHEN:** April 13-28, 2019

**WHERE:** Across Penang

**HIGHLIGHTS:** The annual Penang International Food Festival (PIFF) celebrates Penang's reputation as the food capital of Malaysia. The 16-day event showcases new-age food invasion, such as through colourful food trucks, and offers themed dining experiences, cooking challenges and other mini festivals.

Now into its third year, PIFF has grown from strength to strength. The inaugural edition in 2017 presented the transition of Penang's food history from the authentic culinary methods of days past to the innovative fusion cooking of present and future cuisines. Last year, the event showcased Penang's varied street food as well as food scenes at cafes, restaurants and hotels.



On this page, from above: Penang Hot Air Balloon Fiesta, Penang International Dragon Boat Festival, Penang International Food Festival. Opposite page: George Town Festival



**FESTIVAL:** George Town Heritage Celebrations  
**ORGANISER:** George Town World Heritage Incorporated  
**WHEN:** July 7, 2019

**WHERE:** Across George Town

**HIGHLIGHTS:** George Town Heritage Celebrations is held every year to commemorate George Town's inscription as UNESCO World Heritage Site on July 7, 2008.

The day-long event commences with simultaneous activities across the heritage district, from site excursions and interactive workshops to a vibrant street festival which takes in performances and cultural shows.

No festival in Penang is complete without showcasing the local cuisine. Recipes handed down generations make a tantalising spread at the celebrations.

The collection of activities present visitors with numerous opportunities to immerse in the living traditions of George Town and to get a glimpse of what the future holds for the city.

**FESTIVAL:** George Town Festival

**ORGANISER:** TLM Event

**WHEN:** July 13-28, 2019

**WHERE:** Across George Town

**HIGHLIGHTS:** In past years, George Town Festival was a month-long celebration of culture, heritage, art and community, held in August and produced by Joe Sidek Productions.

However, for 2019, this festival get a new producer and will be



held in July for two weeks. Visitors can expect the same excitement surrounding the festival, when George Town is transformed into a global stage, showcasing world-class performances, installations, and collaborations from both international and local artists.

**FESTIVAL:** George Town Literary Festival

**ORGANISER:** Penang Convention & Exhibition Bureau festival director Bernice Chauly, with support and funding from the State Government of Penang

**WHEN:** November 21-24, 2019

**WHERE:** Across George Town

**HIGHLIGHTS:** The George Town Literary Festival (GTLF) is an international literary festival celebrating world literature, translations and literary arts. The event is world-renowned and in 2018 it seized The International Excellence Awards 2018: The Literary Festival Award at The London Book Fair 2018.

GTLF is an initiative by the State Government of Penang. Since its first edition in 2011, the GTLF is open to the public at no cost.

The festival provides a space for thinkers, writers and audiences at large to share and discuss some of society's pressing issues. It is an avenue for people of all walks of life to engage, inspire and be inspired. During the four days, there will also be free film screenings, performances, literary activities and book launches.

# PENANG

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## A DESTINATION THAT SHINES

Penang is armed with diverse charms for business events, opines Ashwin Gunasekaran, CEO of Penang Convention & Exhibition Bureau



### What makes Penang a unique destination for business events?

Penang is the ultimate 'Experiences Unfiltered' destination that provides both facilities and capacity. It also boasts the Penang Factor which comprises:

- Penang's rich heritage and culture which uplift the status of any business event held in Penang
- Penang's extraordinary venues which range from convention centres and hotel ballrooms to gardens, hills and traditional buildings
- Penang's famed street food and local cuisine which are available around the clock
- Excellent accessibility, made possible by Penang's direct connection with 25 major local and regional airports as well as over 100 destinations worldwide via Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Bangkok and Hong Kong. Within Penang, there is an integrated public transport system that connects the Rapid Penang bus services to the ferry, cruises and high speed rail
- A common language – hospitality. The friendly people of Penang are always ready to welcome visitors while venues

are always equipped with complimentary high-speed wireless Internet

- Penang's must-visit status, which has placed it on the world's Bucket List Destinations

### Planners today want unique destination experiences. What can Penang offer?

Penang is home to a few new outdoor attractions. Groups can escape into a tropical rainforest or the curated Tropical Spice Garden to watch mischievous dusky leaf monkeys and playful long-tailed macaques going about their activities.

Groups can also cycle past green pastures and explore animal farms in Teluk Bahang, away from the bustling city.

We have Penang Hill located 833m above sea level, offering 360-degree views of Penang. Up on the peak sits The Habitat where visitors can have a sunset cocktail party.

Yet another highlight is The Top Penang, a revitalised theme park with a plethora of activities, retail and F&B outlets. It also features the Highest Glass Skywalk in Malaysia as well as the Jurassic Research Centre.

### Penang is also a city of festivals. How can planners marry their business events with these festivals?

These festivals help to bring corporate groups out of the conventional meeting venue. There are festivals all year-round, from those that celebrate the arts to religious ones. The cultural festivals, such as Chinese New Year, Wesak, Thaipusam and Hari Raya, give business event attendees a chance to experience local customs.

### PCEB is the festival producer of the George Town Literary Festival (GTLF). How are you using this event to promote Penang for business events?

With GTLF, we might be able to attract and bid for more conferences related to the subject matter or literary-based conferences like the International Conference on English Language, Literature, Teaching and Translation Studies (CELLTTS), the 16<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Literature, Languages, Humanities & Social Sciences and many other potential ones.

Penang is also becoming a knowledge hub, which will further attract more educational conferences.

## FAST FACTS

**1** The Penang Convention & Exhibition Bureau (PCEB) has a year-old conference ambassador programme that comprises local and international association leaders who have experience in organising conferences or are industry leaders in their field of expertise, and who strongly believe in Penang as a business events destination.

**2** PCEB has a Strategic Partnership Agreement with Malaysia Airlines which includes providing value-adds to business event organisers, especially in terms of special rates for flights.

**3** The biggest convention held in Penang in 2018 was V-Malaysia 2018, organised by QNET and held in April. The five-day event held at Setia SPICE Convention Centre and Setia SPICE Arena was attended by 16,000 delegates from 70 countries.

**4** PCEB's efforts to grow inbound business events from India is intensifying, with the launch of the inaugural Penang International Travel Exchange (PITE) last September. Some 150 Indian buyers were hosted in Penang, where they attended a B2B session and attended

site inspections, destination education workshops and networking events with Malaysian suppliers. Aside from PITE, PCEB has been running roadshows in various Indian cities.

**5** The third edition of BE@Penang was held last December. The annual event started off as a gathering of local business event stakeholders and is now an international event that provides local suppliers and DMCs a valuable opportunity to broaden their global network and learn from international experts in the field.



# Destination: Penang Special



Hotel Equatorial Penang

## MASTERS OF CREATIVITY

### HOST YOUR EVENT HERE:

Tropical Spice Garden

### ADD A FESTIVAL SLANT:

Tropical Spice Garden showcases over 500 varieties of exotic flora and fauna, spices and herbs, spread over eight acres of secondary jungle. It is a great venue to visit and see the spices grown before visiting the Penang International Food Festival.

Planners can take advantage of pre-planned guided tours that are offered daily at 9am, 11am and 1.30pm, each lasting an hour and 15 minutes. Private tours are available upon request.

Another splendid idea is to have a hawker-style dine-around event held in the attraction's two indoor pavilions. This will give delegates a precious opportunity to sample much-loved local street food.

As well, a cooking class can be arranged, with Peranakan, Malay, Indian-Malay, Thai, Penang street food and Asian vegetarian dishes on the menu.

### CAPACITY:

Private spice tour, up to 120 people per session; cooking class, up to 20 people per session; dine-around, 100 people

### HOST YOUR EVENT HERE:

Hotel Equatorial Penang

### ADD A FESTIVAL SLANT:

Being only 20 minutes from UNESCO Heritage Site George Town, Hotel Equatorial Penang is perfect for private events tied

with the district's heritage festivals. The hotel has the flexibility and the capability to accommodate groups and events of all sizes, and venues are available both indoors and out.

Planners could kick off an incentive event during George Town Heritage Celebrations or George Town Festival with a welcome cocktail by the outdoor pool, before proceeding to ballroom or one of the 21 function rooms for the main party.

### CAPACITY:

Grand Ballroom, up to 70 tables; Matahari Ballroom, up to 170 tables; outdoor pool deck, 150 to 200 people cocktail style

### HOST YOUR EVENT HERE:

Khoo Kongsi

### ADD A FESTIVAL SLANT:

Leong San Tong Khoo Kongsi, or Khoo Kongsi in short, is one of the most distinctive Chinese clan associations in Malaysia. It is well known worldwide for its extensive lineage that can be traced back 650 years, as well as its closely-knit and defensive congregation of buildings and a magnificent clanhouse situated at the southwest of George Town. This clanhouse is the perfect venue for themed business events that coincide with the Chinese New Year festivities. One such event is the Penang Hot Air Balloon Fiesta, that falls on the ninth and 10<sup>th</sup> day of

Chinese New Year.

Here on the Khoo Kongsi grounds, which comes with a stage, planners can have a private event showcasing Chinese arts and traditions such as lion dance performances, Chinese opera, Chingay parades, *bian lian* or Chinese face changing.

### CAPACITY:

800 people cocktail style

### HOST YOUR EVENT HERE:

Sunway Hotel Georgetown and Sunway Hotel Seberang Jaya

### ADD A FESTIVAL SLANT:

Sunway Hotel Georgetown and Sunway Hotel Seberang Jaya both house function rooms, and are familiar with catering to corporate events.

Sunway Hotel Georgetown offers three function rooms which can be combined to form a single, large ballroom for up to 200 banquet guests or 300 pax in theatre style.

Sunway Hotel Seberang Jaya offers 11 meeting spaces of varying sizes, with the largest capable of accommodating 450 people in theatre style.

These hotels are ideal for private functions held in conjunction with Penang International Food Festival. Delegates can sample a wide selection of local food that Penang is known for, in the air-conditioned comfort of both hotels. Additionally, organisers can also arrange for cooking demonstrations.

### CAPACITY:

Sunway Hotel Georgetown ballroom, 300 pax theatre style; Sunway Hotel Seberang Jaya ballroom, 450 pax theatre style



Sunway Hotel Georgetown



# Destination: Penang Special

## HOST YOUR EVENT HERE:

The Eastern & Oriental Hotel Penang

## ADD A FESTIVAL SLANT:

With its links to the colonial era and offering great views of the Andaman Sea, The Eastern & Oriental Hotel Penang is a perfect venue for corporate events looking to have a literary spin with local or foreign authors as guest speakers.

## CAPACITY:

Grand ballroom, 400 people in banquet seating; six meeting rooms, 30 to 180 people in theatre seating

## HOST YOUR EVENT HERE:

Roof garden, Setia SPICE Convention Centre

## ADD A FESTIVAL SLANT:

The six-acre roof garden at Setia SPICE Convention Centre provides an outdoor space that is perfect for private concerts, cocktails and dinners as a finale to any gatherings themed around a festival in Penang. In the evenings, LED lights on the roof bring a sparkle to functions held in the roof garden. The lights can bear



Setia SPICE Convention Centre's roof garden

colours that reflect the event theme or corporate shades of the organiser/host.

## CAPACITY:

4,000 pax for standing cocktail; 1,500 people for sit down dinner

## HOST YOUR EVENT HERE:

Macalister Mansion

## ADD A FESTIVAL SLANT:

This century-old colonial mansion houses five unique indoor spaces of varying sizes as well as outdoor spaces which include

a large lawn and a pool area. Its beautifully conserved infrastructure provides an impressive backdrop for private events themed around the George Town Heritage Celebrations or George Town Festival.

Planners can put together an ethnic fashion show featuring the latest outfits from the various ethnic groups in Malaysia.

## CAPACITY:

Varies, up to 200 people on the lawn for example.

## MY PENANG

S Puvaneswary shares her favourite finds in the destination

## SEE

### TEDDYVILLE MUSEUM PENANG

I have had a soft spot for cuddly toys, so TeddyVille Museum Penang leaves me smiling. What's interesting is that the displays showcase the rich history and cultures in Penang. Visitors also get a chance to build their very own teddy.

### PENANG WAR MUSEUM

The Penang War Museum was originally a fort built by the British to protect the island from invaders but it was later taken over by the Japanese during the Japanese Occupation and was then used to incarcerate British prisoners of war. Today it is a sprawling complex exhibiting war paraphernalia, and features underground military tunnels and ammunition bunkers. Visitors are reminded not to take peace and freedom for granted. I recommend visiting during the early opening hours to avoid the afternoon heat.

## EAT

### TASTE CAFÉ AT G HOTEL

The highlight here is the lava stone barbecue, where meat and seafood are grilled on lava stones to retain their juiciness. This experience is only available for dinner, from 18.30 to 22.30, daily. I always

opt for the outdoor seating area which is breezy. Advance reservation is advisable.

### TOP VIEW RESTAURANT & LOUNGE

The draw here is its location on level 59 of Komtar, making Top View Penang's highest restaurant. Offering stunning 360 degree panoramic view of Penang, the restaurant is certainly the place to impress your guests. An international dinner buffet is available on Friday and Saturday, while an a la carte menu is offered for the rest of the time. I highly recommend the herb-crusted rack of lamb, beef wellington and salmon en croute. Also worth trying is the English tea service, available daily from 11.00 to 17.00.

## DO

### ESCAPE THEME PARK

Escape is both a waterpark and an adventure course that's sure to give every visitor an adrenaline high. The collection of exciting rides and activities is great for thrill seekers. What impresses me is that safety is of utmost consideration. Every visitor has to watch a safety video before they attempt the various adventure activities which are also well-staffed.



TeddyVille Museum Penang



Penang War Museum



Taste Café at G Hotel