

AMERICAN EXPRESS - PENANG HERITAGE TRAIL



1 Fort Cornwallis

Welcome to the American Express-Penang Heritage Trail. Fort Cornwallis stands at the very tip of the cape of George Town. Today, it is a privately-managed cultural venue which can be visited for a small admission fee. The

ramparts overlook the harbour in the North Channel and the port activities which extend along the eastern waterfront. At the northwestern point of the fort is a Dutch cannon from 1603, called the Seri Rambai. Local women place flowers on the barrel in supplication for improved fertility. In 2000, the fort was restored and part of the moat was reinstated.

State Assembly Buildings

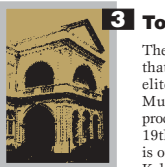
Along the southern side of the field or Padang, are the State Assembly buildings along Lebu Light. This handsome ensemble of buildings, with Greek porticos date from the mid-19th century, formerly served as the Police Courts. From the Fort, you can walk along the Esplanade towards the City Hall which is just across the Padang. The Esplanade is popular among locals for evening strolls. At the City Hall end there is a seaside hawkers centre.



2 City Hall

The majestic City Hall is the jewel in the Municipal Council's crown. The Council Chamber, where the 24 Municipal Councillors regularly convene, is located on the ground floor. The most monument you see on the

Esplanade is the Cenotaph, a memorial to victims of World War I.



3 Town Hall

The Town Hall, like the City Hall, has a balcony that overlooks the Padang. In olden days, the elite used to gather on the balconies of the Municipal Council buildings to view the processions and games held below. The exquisite 19th century fountain next to the Town Hall is one of Penang's many Victorian memorials.

Koh Seang Tat, who donated the fountain, lived behind the Town Hall in a grand mansion which once stood at the site of the present Dewan Sri Pinang. He entertained the Duke of Edinburgh in 1869, and thereafter his residence was called Edinburgh House and the road leading to it was named Duke Road. From the fountain, follow the broad grey sidewalk, keeping to the right side of Lebu Light.



4 Court Buildings

The Court Buildings today house the High Courts. Logan's Monument is located in the grounds. The dedication proclaims Logan, who died in 1869, as "an erudite and skillful lawyer, an eminent scientific ethnologist" who has

"founded literature for these settlements". Apart from being a fearless advocate, the prolific intellectual was also the editor of the *Penang Gazette* and founder of the *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* in 27 volumes, also called Logan's Journals.

Convent Light Street

At the end of the road is the Convent Light St, or Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus, a girls' school established by a French Sisters' Mission in 1852. Within the walled complex is one of the oldest buildings in George Town, the bungalow of Francis Light which dates back to around 1793. As the seat of the Penang Government in the early 19th century, it was called the "Government House".

Stamford Raffles, founder of Singapore, worked here from 1805 to 1810 as Deputy Secretary to the Governor of Penang. The Convent which took over the site then added a chapel, cloisters for the Sisters, an orphanage, a boarding house for student boarders and many classrooms. Today, it is the most important inner city school in Penang and the oldest school complex in the country, having remained on this site for almost one and a half centuries.

Follow the wall of the Convent around the corner to Lebu Farquhar and cross the road at the overhead pedestrian bridge.



5 State Museum

As you walk around the Court Buildings, you will see a building with twin towers - this is the Cathedral of the Assumption built in 1860. Your next stop is the State Museum, which grants admission for RM1. The

Museum only occupies half a building, as the eastern half was destroyed in World War II bombing. The statue of Francis Light which stands in front of the Museum was modelled after a portrait of his son, William Light, founder of Adelaide. The Penang Heritage Trust Museum shop operates from a former Penang Hill Railway Carriage.

St. George's Church

The St. George's Church dating from 1818 stands at the corner of Lebu Farquhar and Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling. The edifice was designed by Captain Robert Smith, a military engineer whose oil paintings of early Penang are displayed in the Museum. This is the oldest Anglican church in the country, modelled after a large church in Madras. In front of the church is a handsome memorial to Francis Light, who died on October 21, 1794. The Church maintains much of its original setting.

Goddess of Mercy Temple

You can walk along the church wall down Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling, formerly Pitt Street. This street which is sometimes called the "Street of Harmony" was reserved for the places of worship important to Penang's multicultural community. Proceeding beyond the church, you will see a Chinese temple on your right.

The Goddess of Mercy Temple was founded around 1800 and features a sweeping roof with ornately decorated copings and ridges. Today, it is a very popular temple, visited by young and old alike offering sandalwood incense. Chinese opera or puppet theatre is performed in the granite-paved forecourt on the Goddess of Mercy's feast days, which are celebrated three times a year.

Little India

Proceed along Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling, past the flower-sellers' stalls, and then cross the road toward Lebu Pasar, formerly Market Street. This is the part of George Town commonly known as Little India, as there are a number of South Indian stores and eating places here. You may want to browse and shop for saris, garlands, spices, trinkets, sculptures or Indian music.

Mahamariamman Temple

Turn right to Lebu Queen until you come to the Mahamariamman Temple. This is the oldest Hindu temple in town, dating to 1833, with a magnificently sculptured entrance gate.

At the end of Lebu Queen is the Penang Teochew Association, a 19th century South Chinese district association temple. Note the granite beams and the beautifully gilded paintings of door gods at the facade. From Lebu Queen, turn right along Lebu Chulia until you come to the traffic lights, where you should turn left on to Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling. Here you will find many Indian Muslim money-changers and jewellers. The four-storey landmark at the junction of Lebu Chulia and Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling is a Chinese medical hall known as Eu Yan Sang.

Kapitan Keling Mosque

Cross the road to visit the Kapitan Keling Mosque, a monumental mosque crowned by yellow domes. This is the largest historic mosque in town, founded before 1800. Originally a rectangular building with verandahs and a hipped roof, the mosque has been enlarged several times. British architects commissioned by the Muslim and Hindu Endowments Board gave the mosque its British Moghul Revival appearance in 1916. The elegant minaret dates from this time.

Walk in a counter-clockwise direction around the mosque, past the ablution area, the former mosque official's quarters behind the mosque and exit near the old well onto Penang's own Buckingham Street. Turn left onto Lebu Buckingham and you will come back to Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling. Proceed south to Lebu Armenian.



6 Yap Kongsu Temple

As you approach Lebu Armenian, you will see the Acheen Street Mosque minaret straight ahead in the distance, the Yap Kongsu temple on the right, and on the left, a corner coffeeshop, with the entrance to the Tua Pek Kong

Temple next to it. The Tua Pek Kong Temple, dedicated to the Chinese God of Prosperity, was formerly the base of the Straits Chinese secret society called the Tua Pek Kong Society.



7 Dr Sun Yat Sen's Penang Base

Follow the graceful curve of Lebu Armenian. The low and rickety shophouses on your right survive from the early 19th century, when this area was a village composed mainly of Malays and Sumatrans. In the mid-19th century, the Straits Chinese moved into the area and built residential shophouses which were of a fine standard for their time. You will come to a blue shophouse on your right, No. 120 Lebu

Armenian, which dates from the 1870s. The first owner was a Straits Chinese named Cheah Joo Seang, a trustee of the Cheah Kongsu. The shophouse has kept its original historic interior, with carved timber screens and air wells.

From 1909-1911, it was the base of Dr. Sun Yat Sen, leader of the historic Chinese Revolution, and the headquarters of the Southeast Asian branch of the Tung Meng Hooi. The local Chinese of that time supported Dr. Sun Yat Sen in the great movement against the Manchu government and the foreign imperialists in China. In 1911, China became the first republic in Asia and Dr. Sun Yat Sen became its first provisional president.



8 Syed Alatas Mansion

Proceed towards the junction of Lebu Armenian and Lebu Acheh. On your left is a children's playground. On your right is a lovely double-storey bungalow set in a walled compound. This is the Syed Alatas Mansion, recently restored in a government-funded pilot demonstration project undertaken with French technical assistance in 1993. Before restoration, the bungalow was occupied by Indian Chettiar scrap

dealers and was used as a collection yard.

Syed Mohamed Alatas was a wealthy Achehese merchant of Arab descent who traded between Penang and Aceh. After the Dutch laid siege on Aceh in the early 1870s, he was instrumental in smuggling arms to the Achehese resistance. Syed Mohamed Alatas resided here with his first wife, a Malay of royal descent. His second wife was the daughter of Khoo Tiang Poh, a leading Straits Chinese pepper merchant, shipping tycoon and a leader of the Khoo clan.

Lebu Acheh

From here you can turn right onto Lebu Acheh. In the late 18th and 19th centuries, this was the street of Sumatran and Malay traders. The Arab and Achehese pepper merchants of North Sumatra, such as Syed Mohamed Alatas, were the leaders of this community. In the old days when the Muslim pilgrimage was more often made by ship rather than by airplane, this street was the centre of Haj activities.

Pilgrims came from North Sumatra, South Thailand and the Northern Peninsula to make their travel arrangements and embark on the Haj. In this area, bustling with travel agencies, shops, restaurants and lodging-houses, the pilgrims mingled, shopped and attended religious gatherings while awaiting the ships that would take them to Mecca. Today, there are still some shops in front of the mosque selling Islamic books and prayer accessories.



9 Malay Mosque, Acheen Street

The octagonal minaret marks the entrance to the Acheen Street Mosque, founded in 1808 by a wealthy Arab merchant prince from the Achehese royal family. The mosque is located in the middle of a large compound, surrounded by detached houses which are rare survivors of the mid-19th century village. You can walk clockwise around the mosque, passing the cemetery where the mosque founder, Tengku

Syed Hussain, is buried.



10 Khoo Kongsu

Coming out of the mosque compound, walk straight ahead onto Lebu Cannon. This street is supposedly named after a hole in the ground made by cannon balls fired into the area during the Penang Riots of 1867. These were the

secret society wars, fought between local groups, which the British tried to suppress. The Straits Chinese from the surrounding clan associations together with the Acheen Street Mosque community formed an alliance against later Chinese immigrants and the Rope Walk Mosque community.

On your left, you will see a row of Straits eclectic-style terrace houses from the late 1930s, faced with Shanghai plaster. On your right are a plainer row of shophouses from the late 19th century. Enter the *porte cochere* in the middle of the row to visit Penang's most famous historic monument, the Khoo Kongsu at Medan Cannon. You will walk through a charming street flanked by rows of mid-19th century shophouses. Turn right and you will see the recently renovated Khoo Kongsu office building before you come to the majestic Khoo Kongsu, a gloriously ornate late Ch'ng dynasty temple, and the theatre building. Both were recently restored.

The Khoo Kongsu is a clan association of the Leong San Tong (Dragon Mountain Hall) clan, whose forefathers came from Sin Kang clan village in Hokkien province. The Khoos were among the wealthy Straits Chinese traders of 17th century Malacca and early Penang. In the 19th century, the clan complex resembled a miniature clan village, with its own self-government as well as educational, financial, welfare and social organisations. The clan temple was built in 1906 when the Khoo clan was at the height of its wealth and eminence in Penang society.



11 Cheah Kongsu

Like the Khoo Kongsu and the Acheen Street Mosque, the Cheah Kongsu is located in a large compound accessible only through a narrow entrance. Coming through the gateway, you will find a little surprise - a splendid double-storey Chinese temple with an open balcony and sweeping roof, decorated with British lionheads, standing on the edge of a small but well-kept lawn. Straight ahead is the

association's office building, with a charming heritage interior. You can ask for permission to enter the office building and the temple during office hours.

Next steps

Emerging from the Cheah Kongsu, you have several options. You can head back to Fort Cornwallis, catch a bus from the Lebu Victoria bus station or you can proceed to the clan jetties at Gat Lebu Armenian.

OPTION 1

To head back, you can turn left onto Lebu Armenian and then left again onto Lebu Pantai. If you continue north to the end of Lebu Pantai, you will see the Fort Cornwallis at the end of the street.

OPTION 2

To get to the bus station, you can turn left onto Lebu Armenian, turn left onto Lebu Pantai, turn right onto Lebu Chulia and then turn left again onto Lebu Victoria until you come to the bus station. On the way you will pass the Beach Street Fire Station and the Yeoh Kongsu, another Straits Chinese clan association, at the junction of Lebu Chulia and Lebu Victoria.

OPTION 3

To make a detour to the clan jetties, just continue east along Lebu Armenian and Gat Lebu Armenian until you reach Weld Quay along the waterfront. Then cross the road and you will come to the Chew Jetty.

This is a clan jetty, a village built on stilts over the sea and populated by members of the same clan. Altogether there are six clan jetties along Weld Quay. Of these, the Chew Jetty is the most attractive, with a large community of petty traders, fishermen, stevedores and their families. Their homes are the attap-roofed timber houses on stilts built over the water, their streets are the wooden plank walkways and jetties.

Exploring The Streets of George Town

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Introduction

Penang, Pulau Pinang, Isle of the Betel-Nut, Pearl of the Orient. Its capital city, George Town, has an extensive heritage environment of shophouses and villas. Its special attraction is that it has retained its historic communities and living traditions.

The historic core of George Town can be surveyed on foot or by trishaw. Such leisurely exploration is the best way to appreciate the old world charm of the old shops and coffeeshops. The cultural diversity of the place is expressed in the minute details of architecture and lifestyle, which normally escape those who only see the city from the tour bus.

While Fort Cornwallis and the religious monuments along Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling are included in most packaged city tours, highlighted on this walkabout trail are several other interesting locations, especially those in the Lebuah Armenian and Lebuah Aceh area, that give you further insight into the multicultural history of Penang.

The American Express - Penang Heritage Trail will take one and a half hours for a leisurely stroll, or up to three hours if you investigate each cultural attraction along the way.

200 Years of Multicultural History

Penang was part of the sultanate of Kedah until Captain Francis Light established the British trading post for the East India Company on the island. Light first landed at the site of Fort Cornwallis to take possession of the island in 1786. He supposedly encouraged the local inhabitants to clear the ironwood trees by firing coins out of the cannon into the forested swamp.

It was Light who laid the grid of the commercial town, bounded by Light Street (now Lebuah Light), Beach Street (Lebuah Pantai), Pitt Street (Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling) and Chulia Street (Lebuah Chulia). Beach Street then ran along the beach and Pitt Street was reserved for places of worship.

A handful of military and civilian Europeans settled along Light Street. The Eurasians from Kuala Kedah and Phuket settled along Bishop Street (Lebuah Bishop) and Church Street (Lebuah Gereja). The Straits Chinese traders from Kedah and Malacca settled along China Street (Lebuah China). The various ethnic groups mingled at Market Street (Lebuah Pasar). The early Indian traders, of whom the majority were Tamil Muslims, settled along Chulia Street.

By the early 1800s, the town was extended by two more streets - Armenian Street for the Armenians and Acheen Street for the local community comprising Achehnese, other Sumatrans and Malays. Each ethnic group was allotted its own street with a section of the waterfront along Beach Street. However, Penang was established without the formal segregation that characterised the foundation of other colonial towns like Singapore, Hong Kong or Yokohama.

Traders and settlers came from Europe, the Arab world, India and China to the port of Penang. They also came from other parts of the Indonesian archipelago, Thailand and Burma. For almost all of the first hundred years of Penang's history, the most important items of regional trade were pepper from the Achehnese ports, spices such as clove and nutmeg from the local plantations, and textiles from India. Tin gained importance in the mid-19th century and then rubber.

Penang enjoyed great fame as a tourist destination. The former British Straits Settlement was known to have the most delicious food, the poshest residences, the best schools and sporting grounds, and the most pleasant recreational spots in the region.

You will find Penang a joy to get to know. The city is full of little surprises. Daily life spills out onto the five-footways and into the streets. The local people are friendly and English is widely spoken.

The historic communities in the city still keep alive their dialects, occupations, religious traditions and street festivals. For over 200 years, the influences of various ethnic groups have intermingled and this has resulted in its beautifully eclectic architecture, a colourful and varied lifestyle, and last but not least, the hybrid street foods that make Penang world famous as a hawker's paradise.

Food And Shopping

Penang offers a wide range of shopping possibilities. The area in the vicinity of the Heritage Trail is a good place to begin. Most of the antique and curio shops are found along Jalan Penang (near the E & O Hotel), Lebuah Chulia, Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling and Lebuah Bishop. Along Lebuah Chulia you will find craft shops making timber slats and rattan furniture, as well as budget hotels, internet cafes, pubs, ethnic clothing and souvenir shops catering for backpacker tourists. Along Campbell Street are traditional Chinese medicine shops, as well as shops selling bags, shoes, leather goods and clothing.

If you are looking for something special, you could select specially-mixed perfumes from Badjenid & Sons, at the junction of Lebuah Chulia and Lebuah Pantai. The shop is run by three generations of Yemenite traders. Along Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling are Indian Muslim jewellery shops and money-changers.

The old quarter of Penang is famous for its Indian Muslim food - you will find lunch time spots at Lebuah Union and Lebuah Bishop. There are several hawkers' centres which offer a variety of ethnic foods. There are two which mainly feature Malay food - the hawker centre next to Fort Cornwallis caters to the lunch crowd while the one by the Esplanade is most popular in the late afternoon and evening. Along Lebuah Pasar (Market Street) you will find many Indian foodstalls especially busy in the morning and at night. Vegetarians can opt for Indian or Chinese vegetarian food. For Chinese food, try some of the coffeshops along Lebuah Union, Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling, Lebuah Pantai or Lebuah China. 100 Cintra Street and The Garage both have a collection of attractive shops housed in refurbished heritage premises.



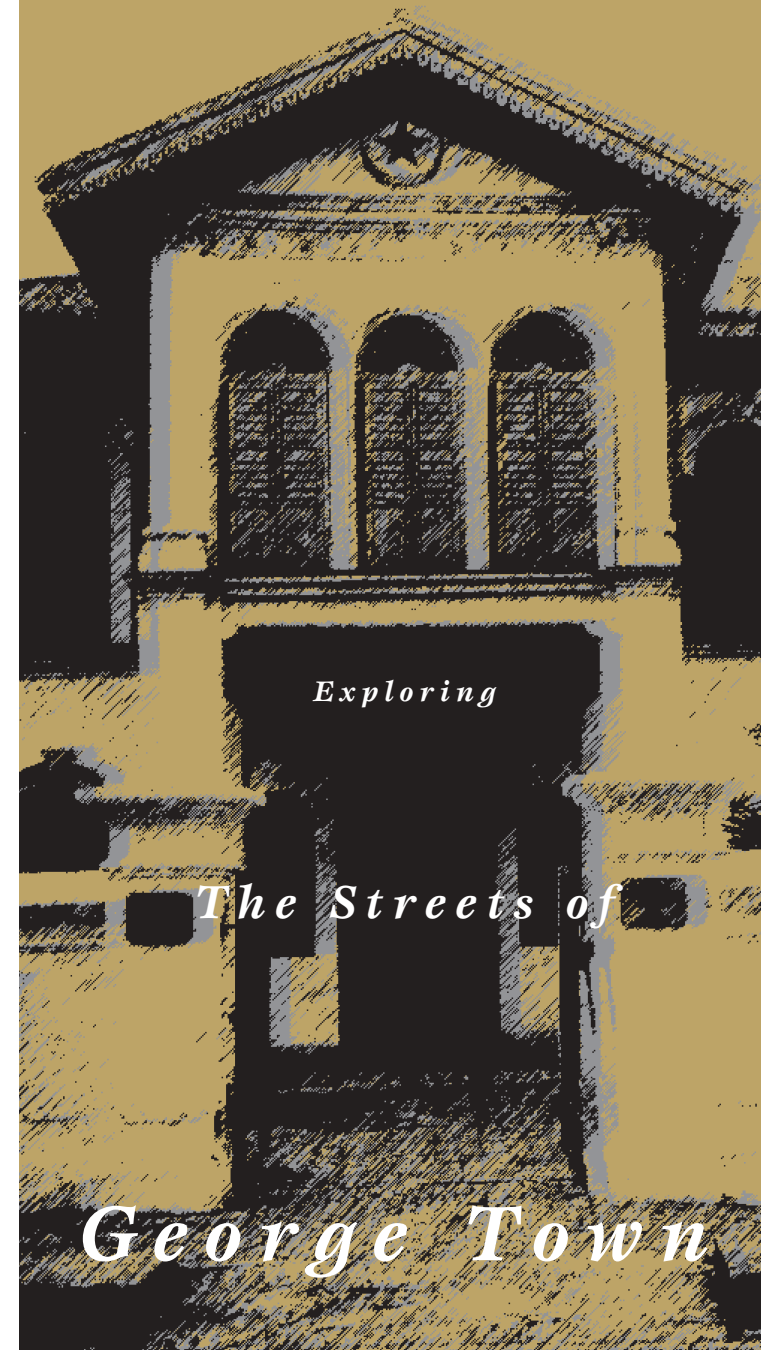
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