

A fascinating journey into the Culture and Heritage in Penang and Kuala Lumpur

The Goddess of Mercy Temple, located on Pitt Street in the city of Penang, is a shrine dedicated to Kuan Yin and is frequented by many religious followers daily as she is known to bless suffering souls with peaceful thoughts and provides relief for those in need. Kuan Yin is believed to have been a devoted follower of Buddhism and is known to have achieved the state of total serenity known as Nirvana



This clan house of the **Khoo** family reminds us of the very first period the Chinese came to Penang. The Khoo family that built this Kongsi came originally from Sin Kang village in the Hokkien province of China. They actually began migrating overseas in the 16th century. They came to Penang sometime in the late 18th century. By 1835 their numbers were large enough that they formed a clan group and purchased the land and building for the first Kongsi. The Khoos were among the the wealthy Straits Chinese traders of 17th century Malacca and Penang.

Hai Kee Chan, also known as Chung Keng Kwee Mansion, and presently housing the **Pinang Peranakan Mansion**, is one of the most ornate private homes in George Town. Built by one of the most illustrious personality in 19th century Malaya, the house has a long and colorful history. After decades of collecting dust, the mansion was bought by a property developer. He restored it and turned it into a museum to showcase his collection of Peranakan antiques. With much passion and care, he rehabilitated the mansion, bringing back its former glory, and once again, opening it for all to appreciate.



Kek Lok Si is one of Southeast Asia's finest Buddhist temples Built in tiers, the temple culminates with the beautifully crafted, 7-story, 30 meters high "Pagoda of Ten Thousand Buddha's". The work of ancient Burmese, Chinese, and Thai craftsmen, it took more than 20 years to be built. Featuring a turtle pond, gardens, sculptures, and shrines, the temple is set against scenic surroundings of beauty and tranquility. The entrance at the foot of the hill takes visitors up 193 steps lined with stalls selling all manner of handicrafts and bric-a-brac. Mahayana Buddhism and traditional Chinese rituals blend into a harmonious whole, both in the temple architecture and artwork as well as in the daily activities of worshippers.

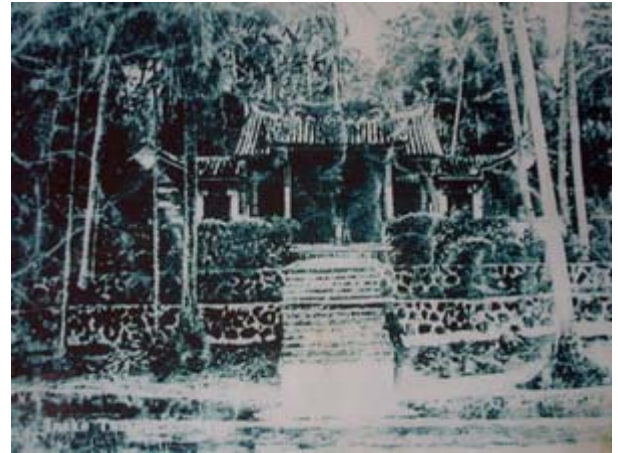
Dharmikarama Burmese Temple. This temple is an outstanding masterpiece of artistic work and eye catching architecture. The temple proudly exhibits its rich heritage. The temple dates back to 1803, and was built by Nyonya Betong, a Burmese. This is the first ever Burmese temple in Malaysia. Visitors can see the striking features of the temple like pagoda, Sime Hall, Shrine Hall and a well. The Sime Hall comprises of Lord Buddha's gigantic statue. The most attractive feature of the temple is the pair of statues of Panca Rupa. Panca Rupa is the Guardian Protectors of the World. They possess features of different beasts standing on the globe. The ground of the temple is dotted with spiritual Bodhi trees.





A tourist visiting **Wat Chaiyamangalaram** and the opposite Dhammikarama Burmese Temple can be a very different experience from visiting a Thai temple in native Thailand. The main difference is the mix of various cultures of different religion as well as schools of Buddhism. Wat Chaiya and the not distant away Wat Buppharam blend local practices, merging the likes of Thai, Indian and Chinese origin rather than just Thai essence in design, statues expressions as well as decoration. You can called it unique in the sense where here in Penang, the locals believing in a more common state under the roof of Buddhism where differences of both Theravada Buddhists and Mahayana Buddhism is less distinguished than any parts of the world. And this perhaps has made visiting a Thai or temples in Penang more meaningful.

The **snake temple** in Penang is a good example of the extensive culture background of the Chinese population in Penang. The cultural aspect of Penang should not be forgotten. The Chinese and Indian population both play a significant role to preserve that. The Chinese, many are Hokkiens, descendants from immigrants who originally resided in Fujian province, just north and east of Hong Kong and Guangzhou (Canton, if you like). The temple was build in the memory of Chor Soo Kong by a Buddhist monk who had immigrated to Penang. Chor Soo Kong had healing powers. According to legends Chor Soo Kong had given shelter to snakes when he lived in the jungle. As the story goes, snakes entered the temple after completing and have never left to pay respect to Chor Soo Kong.



The mansion built by the merchant Cheong Fatt Tze at the end of 19th Century has 38 rooms, 5 granite-paved courtyards, 7 staircases & 220 vernacular timber louvre windows. Other features of the house include Gothic louvered windows, Chinese cut and paste porcelain work, Stoke-on-Trent floor tiles, Glasgow cast iron pillars and Art Nouveau stained glass. The mansion was originally built with careful attention to the principles of Feng Shui. For example, it faces the sea and has Penang Hill behind it; the domestic block is built in front of it to prevent any road being built to create a T-Junction in front of it; it has water running through it and is built with a step in the middle to create a slope. The distinctive blue colour of the mansion is the result of mixing lime with natural blue dye made from the Indigo plant. The blue was very popular in the Colonial period and the dye was imported from India. The lime wash was very effective in a tropical weather as it absorbed moisture and cooled the house. However the blue is a colour of death in Chinese culture and the practice was never introduced in Hong Kong. The house was originally painted white in the time of the owner, and the indigo was applied much later.

PETALING STREET: CHINA TOWN

Kuala

Lumpurs original Chinatown, where shopping is a whole new experience. In the heart of KL's bustling Chinatown is Petaling street located. The shops in China Town are open throughout the day, but after 6pm, the Pasar Malam (night market) takes over, the road is closed to traffic and the street comes alive with stalls, restaurants and crowds.

Petaling Street = good bargains. This street is notoriously famous for its all-day parade of sidewalk stalls that sell imitation goods of all sorts. The unmistakable Oriental atmosphere is evident particularly at night when petty traders spread out their wares along the street. Be warned though, this place can get rather crowded, hot and noisy as it is both popular amongst tourists and locals alike. In Petaling Street you can buy anything from imitation handbags to souvenirs, watches (Rolex), clothes, herbal remedies and local trinkets. Bargain hard! A must for any tourist.

