



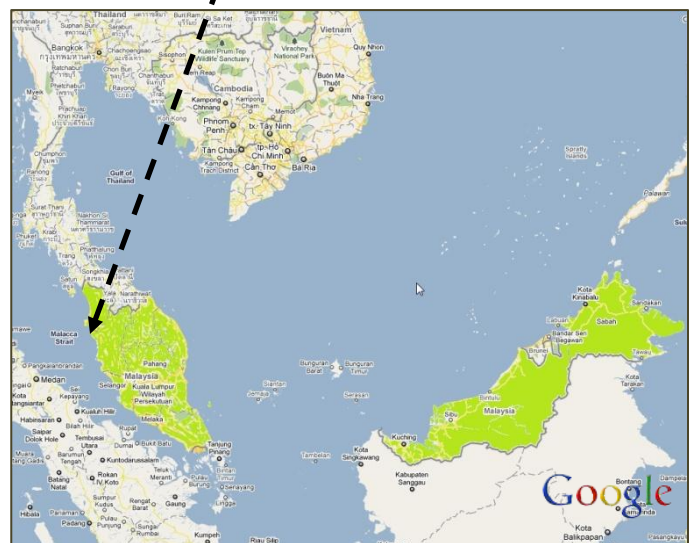
Trekking the Planet

Discovering the Cultural and Natural Significance of the World



Where are we now?

- Darren and Sandy are in Penang, Malaysia, located at 5° N and 100° E.
- We have traveled approximately 21,021 miles (33,830 kilometers) from our starting point in California.



People and Culture

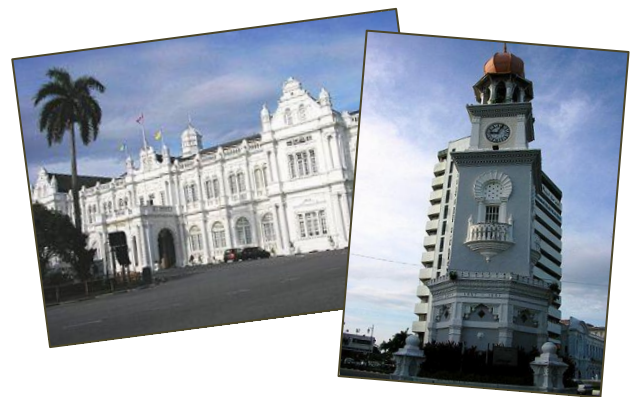
- Trade on the Malay Peninsula with China and India was established as early as the 1st century BC. The Malays were influenced by Islamic culture in the 15th century.
- Penang, known as the "Pearl of the Orient", is the name of both a Malaysian state and island. The British established it as an East India Company trading post in 1786. It was their first settlement in today's Malaysia.
- Rubber trees were imported by the British and laborers were brought from India to work plantations in Malaysia. Tin mining was also carried out by the Chinese near what is now Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia's largest city and capital. The current 27 million inhabitants of Malaysia include sizable Chinese, Indian and Malay ethnic groups.
- The Japanese occupied Malaysia during World War II. After the war ended, the British created the Federation of Malaya in 1948. Malaysia became an independent country in 1963.
- Penang is the only Malaysian state with a Chinese majority. George Town, the capital city, is the site of a historic Hindi temple and Anglican Church, as well as one of the largest Buddhist temples in Southeast Asia. The center of George Town was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2008.

Did you know?

Located on Penang Island is the Temple of the Azure Cloud or "Snake Temple". It was built in 1850 and legend has it that the poisonous pit viper snakes of the jungle came to the temple, of their own free will, after it was completed. The snakes inhabit the temple today and, although usually aggressive, it is believed that the burning incense makes them drowsy. The temple can be visited and the snakes have been de-venomed as a precaution.



sources: Wikipedia.org,
Travelmalaysiaiguide.com



George Town center (source: Wikitravel.org)

Nature and Environment



Malaysian Turtles

Of the seven varieties of sea turtles in the world, four are found in Malaysia. These are the leatherback, green, hawksbill and olive ridley turtles. The leatherback is the largest turtle in the world, weighing about 1,320 pounds (600 kilograms). It does not have a hard shell. All species have declining populations and the leatherback (below) and hawksbill turtles are critically endangered.

*sources: Angelfire.com,
Penang-hotels-review.com,
Turtleconservationcentre.org*

- The country of Malaysia is about the size of the state of New Mexico and includes land on the Malay Peninsula and the northern portions of the island of Borneo.
- The peninsula has a tropical climate with the temperature rarely deviating from about 86°F (30°C) during the day. Peninsular Malaysia comprises about 40% of the country's total land area.
- Logging has contributed to deforestation in the country. Over 60% of the peninsula's forests have been cleared, with most of what is remaining found in national parks.
- Penang Island is located about 1.8 miles (3 kilometers) off the coast of the Malay Peninsula, in the Indian Ocean. It gets its name from the betel nut tree ("Pinang"), once commonly found on the island. The island is about 15 miles (24 kilometers) long and 9 miles (14 kilometers) wide.
- Taman Negara Pulau Pinang (Penang National Park), located on the northwest corner of the island, is one of the world's smallest national parks at about 3,000 acres (1,213 hectares) in size.



View of Penang National Park from the coast (source: Wildlife.gov.my)

Our Plans

- We are spending a couple of days in Penang, staying in George Town and paying visits to the religious and historical sites. We also plan to sample some local cuisine and hike in the national park.
- Next, we will take an overnight train to Thailand. There we plan to visit the former Siamese kingdom of Ayutthaya and the northern city of Chiang Mai. Then we will make our way to Laos and our first Asian trek.
- Send us any questions that you have about our upcoming plans and we will try to include them in our next email.

Borneo

This island, located in the South China Sea, is the third largest in the world. The countries of Indonesia, Brunei and Malaysia are located here, with Indonesia comprising about 73% of the island's area.. The Borneo rainforest is one of the oldest in the world and the island is also one of the most biodiverse on the planet. Heavy logging has contributed to deforestation of the island.



source: Wikipedia.org

More Information

- <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107751.html>
- http://www.tourismpenang.net.my/about_penang_traveller_should_know.html#01
- <http://www.maps-malaysia.com/penang/map.htm>
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malaysia>
- <http://www.geographia.com/malaysia/penang.html>
- <http://www.travel-penang-malaysia.com/penang-national-park.html>

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