

KONGSI CERITA: FROM SOUL-TO-SOUL

I started 2026 on a sick bed, reflecting on life and searching for ways to live more meaningfully. From that experience emerged this year's theme for George Town Heritage Celebrations (GTHC): Kongsu Cerita—a space where souls may meet, stories may be shared, and where we shall fall in love with George Town all over again.

As we mark the 18th anniversary of George Town's inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage Site this year, George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI) continues its efforts to strengthen GTHC as a healthy ecosystem and a shared platform for collective action in safeguarding and celebrating our heritage.

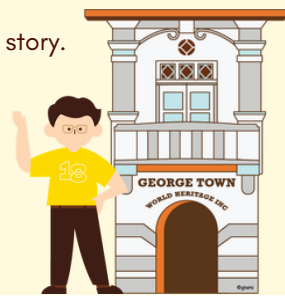
From 4 to 7 July 2026, we hope souls may meet, conversations may flourish, and reflections may be made. During this celebrations, it is timely for us to grow and rethink our roles and responsibilities in the stewardship of George Town's heritage, which we shall pass on to the future generations.

The Street Festival on the evening of 4 July has expanded into a larger area to accommodate 42 workshops hosted by our community partners. The 5km family-friendly George Town Heritage Walk on 5 July has seen stronger participation from young families and youths. The Historic Building Open House programme returns from 5 to 7 July, featuring 12 heritage buildings. The Cultural Heritage Hub (CH2) groundbreaking ceremony will also be hold on 7 July 2026 to create a vibrant hub for creativity, collaboration, and cultural exchange.

GTHC 2026 is only possible with the strong collaboration and support of our 62 communities and partners, comprising more than 800 dedicated souls who have worked alongside us since January 2026. Our deepest appreciation also goes to our 19 full-time staff, 60 project staff, 331 volunteers, and more than 200 contractors and subcontractors, whose enduring commitment has ensured that these celebrations come to life. Above all, we are indebted to the Penang State Government, GTWHI Board of Directors, especially YAB Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow, for their unwavering support and the much-needed resources that have made all this possible.

So come and enjoy the city. Create memories. Fall in love. Tell your story. We are listening.

Dr Ang Ming Chee
Executive Producer



HISTORIC BUILDING OPEN HOUSE

As George Town celebrates the 18th anniversary of its inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Historic Building Open House invites the public to step inside the living heritage that shapes the city's unique identity. Through this special programme, 12 diverse historic buildings within the George Town World Heritage Site—including community association buildings, a church, a Chinese temple, a Hindu temple, a mosque, and a local Indian Muslim memorial—will open their doors to welcome visitors.

More than a simple visit, the Historic Building Open House offers a profound opportunity to discover the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of George Town through meaningful encounters with historic environments, local stories, and community memories. Visitors will experience the rich narratives embedded within these spaces while celebrating the enduring traditions that continue to define the city. The programme aims to inspire the public and younger generations to actively participate through volunteering and visiting, nurturing a deeper appreciation and a lasting sense of stewardship for our shared heritage.



1 | George Town World Heritage Incorporated

No. 116 & 118, Lebuh Aceh

5-7 JUL

9AM-5PM | 7PM-9PM



2 | Arulmigu Sri Maha Mariamman Temple

No. 58, Lebuh Queen

5-7 JUL

9AM-1PM | 7PM-9PM



3 | Kwangtung & Tengchow Association

No. 50, Lebuh Penang

5-7 JUL

9AM-5PM



4 | Loo Pun Hong

No. 70, Lorong Love

5-7 JUL

9AM-5PM



5 | Makam Dato Royah

No. 43, Jalan Transfer

5-7 JUL

9AM-1PM



6 | Masjid Melayu Lebuh Aceh

Lebuh Aceh

5-7 JUL

9AM-5PM



7 | Nam Hooi Wooi Koon

No. 463, Lebuh Chulia

5 JUL

9AM-5PM | 7PM-9PM



8 | Soon Tuck Wooi Koon

No. 51, Lorong Love

5 JUL

9AM-5PM



9 | Sun Wui Wui Koon

No. 38, Lebuh Bishop

5-7 JUL

9AM-5PM



10 | St. George's Church

No. 1, Lebuh Farquhar

5-6 JUL | 7 JUL

9AM-5PM 9AM-5PM

(Heritage Cafe)



11 | Thai Pak Koong (Ng Suk) Temple

No. 32, 32A & 34, Lebuh King

5-7 JUL

9AM-5PM



12 | Thean Hou Temple (Penang Hainan Association)

No. 93, Lebuh Muntri

5-7 JUL

9AM-5PM

GEORGE TOWN WORLD HERITAGE INCORPORATED

Built in 1921 as the Universal Pharmacy and maternity hospital, this historic building now serves as the office of George Town World Heritage Incorporated, the site manager of the George Town UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The building reflects the Art Deco architectural style, featuring geometric forms, a streamlined façade, and decorative details that represent the architectural transformation of George Town in the early 20th century. Its design is similar to other works by local architect Chew Eng Eam (1894-1972), including the Majestic Theatre and the Penang Chinese Chamber of Commerce.

This building continues its legacy of public service by transforming from a healthcare facility into a centre for heritage consultation, research, and community engagement.



ARULMIGU SRI MAHA MARIAMMAN TEMPLE

Established in 1833, this site is the oldest Hindu temple in Penang, functioning as a primary place of worship for the local Hindu community. Built in the South Indian Dravidian architectural style, its most prominent architectural features include the towering *Vimanam*, an ornate *gopuram* (entrance tower), and the *pinpuram* (rear entrance). From its inception, the temple has served as a vital sanctuary for early Indian immigrants.

Today, it remains an important cultural landmark and plays a key role in the annual Thaipusam procession, contributing to the multicultural heritage landscape of George Town.



KWANGTUNG & TENGCHOW ASSOCIATION

This building serves as the association building of the Kwangtung and Tengchow Association, a district association representing immigrants from the Kwangtung (present-day Guangdong) and Tengchow (present-day Changting and neighbouring areas in western Fujian) regions of China. Tracing its origins back to 1795, the association has played an important role in supporting the Chinese immigrant community in George Town.

The current four-storey building, designed by London-born architect Charles Geoffrey and completed in 1941, reflects the Art Deco architectural style. It features a rusticated façade, a three-bay front elevation, and side bays extending into tower-like structures topped with Chinese-style pyramidal roofs.

Today, the building continues to function as a communal institution for 18 regional associations, preserving traditions through communal activities, ancestral practices, and the management of shared cemeteries.



LOO PUN HONG

This site serves as both a temple and a guild hall (*hong*) for the Loo Pun Hong, which was established in the early 19th century to support Cantonese carpenters in George Town. The temple was built in the late 19th century to honour Lu Ban (*Loo Pun*), a legendary master architect, engineer, and inventor from ancient China who is revered as the patron deity of the carpentry trade.

Architecturally, the building represents the traditional Guangdong style, featuring a three-bay façade, a spacious courtyard, and side gable walls decorated with intricate Shek-Wan pottery. The roof is adorned with a decorative ridge featuring a central raised pearl motif flanked by dragons. Inside, the main hall showcases exquisite timber carvings, while the first-floor gallery preserves and displays the craftsmanship of generations of carpenters.

Today, the building continues to serve as a place of worship and a cultural space preserving the traditions and skills of the carpentry community.



MAKAM DATO KOYAH

This site is a memorial shrine and tomb dedicated to Dato Koyah, also known as Syed Mustapha Idris, a respected spiritual figure among the local Muslim community. The structure reflects South Indian Muslim architectural traditions, featuring decorative motifs and design elements similar to other historic Indian Muslim shrines in George Town, including the Nagore Dargah.

The Makam represents the heritage of the Indian Muslim community, particularly the Tamil Muslim community, and continues to serve as a place of remembrance, worship, and community gathering. The compound also features a gallery sharing the story of Dato Koyah and the communities connected to this historic site.



MASJID MELAYU LEBUH ACHEH

This site serves as an important place of worship and a landmark for the local Muslim community in George Town. The mosque reflects a unique blend of Moorish, Chinese, and Classical architectural influences, featuring a verandah extension, decorative internal columns, and an octagonal minaret with a staircase leading to a balcony.

Historically, the surrounding area was known as “Second Jeddah” due to its role as a major gathering point for pilgrims departing from Penang to perform the Hajj in Makkah. The mosque and its surrounding compound preserve traces of the area’s social history, including traditional kampung houses that continue to reflect the lifestyle and community identity of its residents.

Beyond its religious function, the mosque remains a living heritage space where religious practices and community traditions continue.



NAM HOOI WOUI KOON

Established in 1828, this building is the Nanhai (*Nam Hooi*) Association building (*wooi koon*), the oldest overseas Nanhai association outside China. It was founded as a district association for immigrants from the Nanhai district of Guangdong province.

The building features a distinctive 200-foot-long layout stretching from Lebu Chulia to Kampung Malabar, reflecting the scale and prominence of the association. Built in the traditional Cantonese style, it features a granite gatepost and a roof ridge decorated with Shek Wan pottery.

Beyond its architectural significance, the association continues to host cultural practices and communal activities, including Chinese New Year gatherings, Spring and Autumn Ancestral Rites, and Mid-Autumn celebrations.



SOON TUCK WOOL KOON

This building serves as an ancestral and community anchor for Cantonese immigrants from the Shunde (*Soon Tuck*) district of Guangdong province. Established in 1838, the association provided members with community support, including social networking, mutual aid, hospice services, and funeral arrangements.

The current building was constructed in 1928 in the Late Straits Eclectic style, forming a corner unit within a row of two-storey terrace houses. It is also connected to the legacy of the Majie, Cantonese domestic workers who were active in George Town from the 1930s to the 1970s.

Today, it continues to function as a living community institution, maintaining cultural practices such as lantern lighting ceremonies, ancestral rites, and the celebration of Guan Di's birthday.



SUN WUI WUI KOON

This building serves as a district association (*wooi koon*), supporting immigrants from the Xinhui district (*Sun Wui*) of Guangdong province. Established in 1828, it remains the only Sun Wui district association in Malaysia, reflecting the long-standing presence of Xinhui migrants in George Town.

The current building, constructed in the late 19th century, adopts a traditional Cantonese clan hall design. Its architectural features include a three-bay façade, bow-shaped beams, granite gate posts, a stone fence, and a roof ridge decorated with Shek Wan pottery. The roof features a pair of Chiwen, mythical creatures with a dragon's head and fish's body, traditionally believed to protect buildings from fire.

Today, the association continues to serve as a social and cultural centre for the Xinhui community, maintaining communal ties through mutual support and activities.



ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH

St. George's Church is the oldest Anglican church in Southeast Asia and remains an active place of worship in George Town. Built in the Neoclassical style, the church features a grand portico supported by Doric coupled columns and a restrained façade characteristic of early colonial ecclesiastical architecture.

A memorial to Francis Light is located beneath a domed pavilion in front of the building. Nearby, a historic mahogany tree planted in 1885 stands as a living remnant of the site's wartime history, having survived the bombing of the church grounds in December 1941.

The church continues to function as a living place of worship, with services conducted in multiple languages, including English, Mandarin, Tamil, and Malay, reflecting its multicultural nature within George Town.



THAI PAK KOONG (NG SUK) TEMPLE

This historic Chinese temple is dedicated to Tua Pek Kong, a deity widely worshipped among Chinese communities in Southeast Asia and associated with protection and community well-being. With origins dating back to the early 19th century, the temple has served as a place of worship for the communities along King Street.

Unlike the neighbouring Cantonese association buildings, it adopts the Minnan architectural style, featuring *jian nian* (cut-and-paste porcelain) decorations, ornate stone carvings, and traditional craftsmanship on its façade. Its restoration was recognised with the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation in 2021.

Today, the temple continues as a living cultural space where rituals, festivals, and community activities preserve the traditions of local worshippers and residents.



THEAN HOU GONG (PENANG HAINAN ASSOCIATION)

Established in 1866 by early Hainanese migrants in Penang, *Thean Hou Gong* (lit. Palace of Heavenly Queen) serves a dual purpose as both a community association building and a temple dedicated to Mazu, the guardian deity of fishermen and seafarers. The organisation later developed into the Qiongzhou Association in 1925 and was renamed the Hainan Association following the establishment of Hainan as a province.

The building reflects Lingnan architectural influences, featuring traditional temple elements such as decorative stonework and timber structures. A major restoration was carried out between 1994 and 1995, during which detailed stone carvings from Quanzhou, Fujian Province, were added. Inside the temple, Qing Dynasty artefacts and plaques remain well preserved.

Today, the association continues to function as a cultural and religious centre for the Hainanese community, maintaining worship activities and festivals, including the annual celebration of Mazu's birthday.



Acknowledgements To Our Building Custodians

GTWHI extends its sincere gratitude to the following custodians, associations, religious institutions, and communities of our participating historic buildings:

- Arulmigu Sri Maha Mariamman Temple
- Kwangtung and Tengchow Association
- Loo Pun Hong
- Makam Dato Koyah
- Masjid Melayu Lebuah Aceh
- Nam Hooi Wooi Koon
- Soon Tuck Wooi Koon
- Sun Wui Wui Koon
- St. George's Church
- Thai Pak Koong (Ng Suk) Temple
- Thean Hou Temple (Penang Hainan Association)

Thank you for your dedication to safeguarding George Town's living heritage, and for your generosity in opening these spaces and sharing their stories with the public.





- Pintu Dibuka, Kisah Dikongsi -

Every stamp is a historic door you opened; this stamp is the final seal on the stories you gathered. Thank you for completing the GTHC 2026 journey and helping us

KONGSI CERITA!

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