

George Town Heritage Celebrations 2026

18th Anniversary Celebration
GEORGE TOWN
UNESCO World Heritage Site



SUPPORTED BY



PROGRAMME PARTNERS



George Town Heritage Celebrations 2026

Perayaan Warisan George Town 2026

2026年喬治市入遺慶典

2026 - ஆம் ஆண்டின் ஜோர்ட்ஜ் டவுன்
பாரம்பரிய பண்பாட்டு விழா



KONGSI CERITA

4-7 JULY 2026

**GEORGE TOWN UNESCO
WORLD HERITAGE SITE**

18th Anniversary Celebration
GEORGE TOWN
UNESCO World Heritage Site



<https://gtwhi.com.my/>

[heritagecelebrations
gtwhi](https://www.instagram.com/heritagecelebrations_gtwhi)

George Town Heritage Celebrations
George Town World Heritage Incorporated

<https://www.youtube.com/@gtwhi116>

*All information correct at the time of printing.

INTERACTIVE DANCE FLOOR

Colourful Sailors of Boria
Kumpulan Boria Omara
(Omara Ventures)
5:00pm | 8:00pm

The First Step Dance
Malaysian-Japanese Society
5:20pm | 8:20pm

The Joyful Rhythm of Siam
Persatuan Masyarakat Siam
Pulau Pinang
5:30pm | 8:30pm

Kuchipudi Dance
Telugu Association
of Malaysia,
Penang Branch
5:50pm | 8:50pm

Sweetness at Your Fingertips

Leong San Tong
Khoo Kongsi
& SJKC Sin Kang
6:10pm | 9:10pm

**Synchronised Hands,
Synchronised Hearts**
Dikir Barat Suara Mutiara
6:20pm | 9:20pm

Enjoy the Beat of Dhol
Penang Dhol Blasters
6:40pm | 9:40pm

Traditions In Motion
Wak Long Music & Art Centre
7:00pm

WORKSHOP 5PM - 10PM

1. A Truly Artistic Parade
Penang Chingay Association
Penang Chingay Team
Penang Grocers' Association

2. Tanglung Tales
LUMA

**3. Iron Rod Puppet
Won't Rust**
Teochew Puppet &
Opera House

4. Baby's First Beads
Persatuan Warisan
Dato Koyah

5. In Every Single Note
The Penang Hindu Sabah

**6. Fairy Tales,
Schmairy Tales**
Malaysian-German Society

**7. The Painted Faces
of Kathakali**
North Malaysia
Malayali Samajam

**8. Rolling Rhymes,
Rolling Dice**
Penang Hokkien Association
Youth Section

**9. Fresh Leaves,
Fresh Weaves**
Badan Warisan Masjid
Melayu Lebuah Aceh
(Acheen Street)
Pulau Pinang

**10. Unbreakable
Siblings' Bonds**
Gujarati Samaj Penang

**11. Oral Wisdom from
the Nursery**
Penang Hakka Association

12. The Art of Relaxation
Penang Hindu Association

13. The Colours of Batik
Warisan Balik Pulau

**14. The Art of
Sculpting Patience**
Loh Ban Thatt &
Teoh Han Hoon Traditional
Dough Figurines

**15. The Drum Comes
A-Clacking**
Lum Yeong Tong
Yap Temple

16. A Lesson in Origami
Pink Hibiscus Club

17. Paper Folded Prayers
Thai Pak Koong
(Ng Suk) Temple

**18. Preserving Stone
Memories**
The Kwangtung &
Tengchow Association

19. Steamed Stories
Liga Muslim Pulau Pinang

20. Saved by the Lions
Sim Art Studio

21. Gaming the Past
Penang Hidden Gems

**22. Patterns of
Connection**
Nattukottai Nagarathar
Heritage Society

23. A Taste of Comfort
Gabungan Persatuan India
Muslim Pulau Pinang (GAPEIM)

**24. The Rice of a
Million Slices**
State Chinese (Penang)
Association

**25. All's Fair in Love
and Games**
Indian Muslim Community
Organisation Malaysia
(IMcom)

**26. The Board that
Connects Two Hearts**
Jawatankuasa Kariah Masjid
Kapitan Keling

27. Full Moon Traditions
Penang Hainan Association

28. Nectar from Heaven
Pertubuhan Kebajikan
Ayyappan Batu Uban
Pulau Pinang

**29. Sugar, Spice, &
Everything Nice**
Penang Eurasian Association

30. Ladies and Ladoos
Sikh Naujawan Sabha
Malaysia Penang Branch

31. Servings of Generosity
Persatuan Wadda Gurdwara
Sahib Pulau Pinang

**32. The Cookies that were
not Cookies**
Pertubuhan Pembangunan
Wanita Tamarai Pulau Pinang

33. Sambal Hustle
Seh Tek Tong Cheah Kongsi

George Town
Heritage
Celebrations 2026

RONGSI CERITA:
STREET FESTIVAL



Scan for more info



CONTENT

PAGE

01 GTHC 2026 MAP

02 FOREWORD

03 THEME

04 WORKSHOP

- 1 A Truly Artistic Parade
- 2 Tanglung Tales
- 3 Iron Rod Puppet Won't Rust
- 4 Baby's First Beads
- 5 In Every Single Note
- 6 Fairy Tales, Schmairy Tales
- 7 The Painted Faces of Kathakali
- 8 Rolling Rhymes, Rolling Dice
- 9 Fresh Leaves, Fresh Weaves
- 10 Unbreakable Siblings' Bonds
- 11 Oral Wisdom from the Nursery
- 12 The Art of Relaxation
- 13 The Colours of Batik
- 14 The Art of Sculpting Patience
- 15 The Drum Comes A-Clacking
- 16 A Lesson in Origami
- 17 Paper Folded Prayers
- 18 Preserving Stone Memories
- 19 Steamed Stories
- 20 Saved by the Lions
- 21 Gaming the Past
- 22 Patterns of Connection
- 23 A Taste of Comfort
- 24 The Rice of a Million Slices
- 25 All's Fair in Love and Games

PAGE

- 26 The Board that Connects
Two Hearts
- 27 Full Moon Traditions
- 28 Nectar from Heaven
- 29 Sugar, Spice, & Everything Nice
- 30 Ladies and Ladoos
- 31 Servings of Generosity
- 32 The Cookies that were
not Cookies
- 33 Sambal Hustle

37 INTERACTIVE DANCE FLOOR

- 34 Colourful Sailors of Boria
- 35 The First Step Dance
- 36 The Joyful Rhythm of Siam
- 37 Kuchipudi Dance
- 38 Sweetness at Your Fingertips
- 39 Synchronised Hands,
Synchronised Hearts
- 40 Enjoy the Beat of Dhol
- 41 Traditions In Motion

45 HISTORIC BUILDING OPEN HOUSE

47 ABOUT GEORGE TOWN UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE

55 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

57 STAMP COLLECTION

FOREWORD

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): Kongsī 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 held 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



KONGSI CERITA

Stories are gateways into other worlds.

Myths and legends, folklore and fables—we devoured them all, imagining what it would be like to be part of different countries, cultures, and even historical eras! Movies and dramas added sound and colour, making history exciting. Want to find out more about an annual celebration or event? There's probably a TikTok for that.

And yet, what we truly learnt about the world came from smaller, quieter moments. From stories our parents shared, from listening to them gossip with friends in kitchens and kopitiams. From asking ourselves, “What would Mum and Dad do in this situation?”

Often, we don't even know why we do these things because we've never thought to ask. What we've learnt is these habits were shaped by the generations that came before, for reasons that can be traced through culture and history.

How did Chingay come about, and where did *dikir barat* come from? Why do we make ketupat palas in northern Peninsular Malaysia while Eurasians make sugee cakes and tarts? And what do the colours of the Kathakali masks mean?

Follow Sara's stories as she discovers the many traditions of multi-cultural George Town. Join workshops, games, performances, and food demonstrations as the communities in George Town gather to kongsy cerita—sharing cultural heritages passed down through generations, not just through story and song, but through the very foods, arts, and crafts that we love.

Then kongsy cerita with your own community, preserving and extending the memories, voices, and wisdom that have shaped George Town throughout the years.

We'll see you around!



PENANG CHINGAY ASSOCIATION
PENANG CHINGAY TEAM
PENANG GROCERS' ASSOCIATION

1

A TRULY ARTISTIC PARADE

Sara had always been mesmerised by Chingay parades. The giant flags they carried were massive! And to be able to balance that 32-foot pole on your forehead or mouth? Following the flag bearers came the lion and dragon dances, showing off both acrobatic and artistic feats. She stared, captivated, as the strong, handsome young men continued down the road to the beat of the drums and cymbals.

“Did you know I once wanted to join the Chingay team?”
Dad said with a nostalgic sigh.



Sara looked at him in surprise. She couldn't imagine him doing that. “Why didn't you?”

“I tried out but my balance wasn't good enough.”
He shrugged. “It was thrilling because my kongkong witnessed the first Chingay procession during Kuan Yin's birthday celebration. Funnily enough, they were seeking divine protection from the plague, too.”



“Like Covid?” Sara asked, eyes wide.

“Yes. Many people died back then because they didn't have the advanced medicine and vaccines that we have now.”



“Oh wow, their prayers must have worked, since the parades are still happening every year.”



TANGLUNG TALES



Sara was putting the final touches on her butterfly tanglung. She was determined to have the most unique tanglung at the neighbourhood lantern walk this year—one that she'd made all by herself. But when evening came, it was pouring with rain. She stared glumly out the window.



"Maybe we can do something else?" Mum said, putting an arm around her shoulders.

"Like what?" Sara pouted. "How can you celebrate Mid-Autumn Festival without tangluns and mooncakes?"



"We have mooncakes," Dad said. "And we can light your tanglung and hang it up in the house. I'll talk to the other parents. We'll do the lantern walk tomorrow instead."

Delayed was better than nothing. As Dad hung up her tanglung, Tony joined them in the living room.

"Since we can't celebrate outside tonight," Tony said, "you wanna play this new game I just bought?"



The family spent the night playing Tanglung while munching on mooncakes. The next evening, Sara proudly showed off her glittery butterfly tanglung to the envy of all her neighbourhood friends under a clear view of the moon.



LUMA began its own cerita in 2012 as the creative initiative of Livewire Media. Our vision is to light up arts and culture in Malaysia through interactive mediums like tabletop games. By transforming local history and oral traditions into engaging play experiences, we hope to keep cultural stories vibrant for generations.



IRON ROD PUPPETS WON'T TRUST



Dad took Sara and Tony to see a Teochew Iron Rod Puppet show.

"My dad used to take me to watch these as a child," Dad said, rubbing his hands with glee. "It was the most exciting thing in the world before TV and Netflix!"



"How come we haven't seen any before?" Tony asked.

Dad sighed. "Not many people are keen on watching puppet shows, much less these traditional ones. That's why they are not performed as often these days."



At the end of the show, Ling Goh, a fourth generation performer invited them all to visit the Teochew Puppet & Opera House, where the history and tradition of the art form continue to be shared.



"I'm surprised these traditional puppets still look so good," Sara said, inspecting the showcase of the four main character types. "I thought they'd have rusted away."

"They wouldn't," Dad said, "Not when they've been taken care of with so much love."



Tony looked at the puppets closely. "Do you think we can come again soon?"

The Teochew Puppet & Opera House was founded by Goh Hooi Ling in 2014 to preserve and promote Teochew iron rod puppetry, opera, and drum ensemble tradition through performances, exhibitions, and educational programmes. Guided by the EPIC mission (Educate, Preserve, Innovate, Connect), it continues to share this living heritage with wider communities.



BABY'S FIRST BEADS



Sara's classmate, Fatima, was busy tying together strings of white and black beads during recess.



"Are you making a bracelet?" Sara asked, running a finger through the box. She'd seen babies and toddlers wearing bracelets with similar beads before.

"Yeah, I'm making a Paal Mani for my new niece," Fatima answered, nodding.



Sara frowned. "When did your sister get married?"

"Not my sister's. My cousin is having a baby."



With that cleared up, Sara went back to what Fatima had called the bracelet. "What's a Paal Mani?"

Her classmate gestured at the string and beads. "It's what we call this. We make it for babies to ward off negative energy and Kann Drishti, the evil eye."



"Huh," Sara said, looking thoughtful. "Can we make one to ward off annoying brothers?"

"Unfortunately," Fatima giggled, "I think it's too late for that."



First established in 1840 as a committee to administer Makam Dato Koyah, Persatuan Warisan Dato Koyah was officially registered in 2013 to enhance the management of the tomb as well as to preserve, promote, and safeguard Indian Muslim heritage in George Town, Penang.



IN EVERY SINGLE NOTE



Music blared from Leela's house. Sara had to knock and call a few times before Leela's husband opened the door.

"She's out in the garden," he said, a look of exasperation on his face. "Leela! Your cousin has arrived."



The music stopped. Leela shouted, "Come join me, Sara!"



Her cousin was standing just outside the back door, a nadaswaram in her hands. The traditional South Indian wind instrument was long and thin with seven holes along its body. There was a mouthpiece on one end and a flared bell at the other end. She blew a long note in welcome.

"Ooh, that's loud," Sara said. "When did you learn how to play this?"



"I've been practicing for two hours every evening this month!" Leela replied, grinning. She was about to continue playing, but her husband held up a hand to stop her.



"My teachers say that every single note of the nadaswaram carries centuries of culture," he said, "but maybe we can do with a little less culture for now?"



The Penang Hindu Sabah, established in 1912, has been the cornerstone of the Hindu community for over a century. It actively participates in community service, religious ceremonies, and education and cultural heritage programs while also promoting social welfare, fostering unity, and safeguarding Hindu traditions in Penang.



FAIRY TALES, SCHMAIRY TALES



Sara's father returned from a business trip to Germany with a book of fairy tales. She flipped it open eagerly, then frowned. She knew this story. She knew that one too. All these were really familiar, even if some of the endings were a little different.

"Did you buy me the wrong book?" she asked.



"Isn't that what you asked for?" Dad peered over his glasses at her. "Fairy tales from Germany? My client recommended the Brothers Grimm's collection in English."



"Yes, but I already know most of these stories!"



Dad looked up something on his phone. "Hmm, it says here that the Brothers Grimm collected these tales in Germany and published them in a collection in the early 19th century. They were later translated to English and became popular globally, especially after Disney made them into cartoons."



"What? But all those fairy tale characters sounded so English!"



"They had to translate the names as well, didn't they? It would be harder to read bedtime tales about Schneewittchen and Aschenputtel to you if we didn't know what they meant."



The Malaysian-German Society was founded in 1962 as a friendship society and a language centre striving for mutual understanding between Malaysians and Germans. It actively hosts cultural activities such as exhibitions, movie nights, and talks as well as social events like the Oktoberfest celebration.



THE PAINTED FACES OF KATHAKALI



Sara was excited to see her cousin perform for the first time! Leela had described Kathakali like a musical, with both dancing and acting, and Sara loved musicals. They arrived at the venue thirty minutes before the doors opened, so while her parents sorted out the tickets, she WhatsApped Leela.

"I'm still getting ready," Leela messaged back, "Why don't you come backstage?"



Sara skipped into the dressing room, then stopped and gasped in surprise. Everyone there, including Leela, had their faces painted with elaborate designs and vibrant colours—green, red, blue, and black.

"Leela! Why are you green?" she blurted. "Are you like the witch in the Wicked movie?"



"No, no." Leela laughed. "In Kathakali, a green face means you're a noble character. The evil ones have red faces."



Just then, a man with red face paint shouted through the open door, "It's almost showtime! Everyone who's not a performer, get out!"

With a shriek, Sara ran out to join her parents in the hall.

The North Malaysia Malayali Samajam was established in 1951 as the representative body for the Malayali community in the northern region to promote, nurture, and progressively assist in the development of the community in the fields of education and social development as well as the arts and culture of the community.



8

PENANG HOKKIEN ASSOCIATION
YOUTH SECTIONROLLING RHYMES,
ROLLING DICE

Sara and Lilian were arguing over the last mooncake.

"The two of you should play Bo Bing," Mum finally said, placing a bowl with six dice on the table. "The first person to get any lak-pok wins."

"Any kind? Including fours and ones?" Sara asked, narrowing her eyes. In the normal rules, a combination of six fours or six ones would win better prizes, but getting six of any kind was very difficult.

"Any," Lilian agreed. "We don't have all day. That mooncake is mine!"

The girls faced off across the dining table, the mooncake sitting tantalisingly next to the bowl. Lilian threw first, gaining three of a kind. Sara threw next, managing four fours. As Lilian took her next turn, Tony entered the room.

"Tiong-tshiu gueh-piánn tsit-bīn kiánn 中秋月餅一面鏡
"Tsiàu kah tuā-thiann kng-iánn-iánn 照甲大廳光映映
"Kue-thâu hāng bé puah gueh-piánn 街頭巷尾博月餅
"Tshù-lāi huah kah tuā-suè-siann 博著對堂安媽贏..."
he sang loudly.

Distracted and confused, they stared as he came right up to the table, warbling off-key. With a quick swipe of his hand, he grabbed the mooncake and ran off, leaving Sara and Lilian empty-handed.

The Penang Hokkien Association Youth Section, established in 1979, unites youth from thirteen Hokkien associations. It promotes Hokkien culture, education, sports, and community service, fostering leadership, talent, and unity among Penang's Hokkien youth.



9

BADAN WARISAN MASJID MELAYU
LEBUH ACHEH (ACHEEN STREET)
PULAU PINANGFRESH LEAVES,
FRESH WEAVES

If there was one thing Sara enjoyed, it was trying new foods. She wasn't sure if this counted as a "new food", however. It was quite like the ketupat she'd tried in previous Hari Raya open houses, but she'd never seen one that looked like this.

Her classmate, Norashikin, was folding leaves into triangle shapes and passing them to her father, who filled them with glutinous rice that had been cooked with coconut milk.

"Come join us," Norashikin called, waving her over. "I can show you how."

"Why doesn't this look like the square ketupat with the criss-cross weaves?" Sara asked as she took a seat at the table.

"Because this is our very own Ketupat Palas from northern Peninsular Malaysia," Norashikin's father answered. "Instead of using coconut leaves, which are thin strips, we use palas leaves, which are broader."

"What?" Sara exclaimed. "I thought they were made of plastic!"

"The plastic ones are just for decoration, Sara," Norashikin said primly. "For the ones we eat, we use actual leaves. They taste and smell better—especially when dipped into fish floss."

Badan Warisan Masjid Melayu Lebuah Acheh (Acheen Street) Pulau Pinang (BWMMLA) was established on 9 October 1993 to safeguard the cultural, historical, and religious heritage of the Masjid Melayu community in George Town, Penang. BWMMLA promotes the preservation of living traditions through documentation, education, and intergenerational transmission of knowledge.



UNBREAKABLE SIBLINGS' BONDS



Sara didn't hate Tony. He was just annoying in the way older brothers tended to be. He was loud and noisy, always stomping about the house. When he was bored, he would do things she hated to annoy her on purpose and tease her mercilessly until she cried.

At other times, he was nice, though. Like when he saved the last piece of her favourite cake for her. Or helped with her maths homework when she got confused. Or when he fought the neighbourhood bullies who pulled her hair.

Overall, she concluded, he was a better brother than an annoying one. That was why, when her classmate told her about Raksha Bandhan, she'd spent a whole week making a nice rakhi for him.

"What's this for?" Tony asked, when she tied the decorative thread around his wrist.



She shrugged, blushing. "Just to say you're a good brother."



"Aww, you're a great sister too," he said, giving her a hug. "I wouldn't want any other sister in the world."



Gujarati Samaj Penang was established in 1950 to safeguard and promote the social, cultural, religious, educational values, and the general welfare of the Gujarati and Marwari Hindu communities in Penang and more broadly across Malaysia. It promotes cultural heritage preservation and fosters unity amongst its members.



ORAL WISDOM FROM THE NURSERY

Grandma always had some Hakka saying up her sleeve. She claimed they were nursery rhymes and idioms she learnt as a child, but Sara sometimes thought she made them up. Then again, nursery rhymes were weird. Like Rock-a-bye Baby, where they swung the baby's cradle from a tree... Wait, didn't Grandma have one about a swing, too?



"The Swinging Song?" Grandma clarified, reciting the rhyme in Hakka. Then, after thinking a while, she recited it in English too:

"The swing sways to and fro,
Glutinous rice stir-fried with pork intestines!
Stir-fried till the stroke of midnight,
The children eat with mouths full of delight.
The little rascal climbs up high,
Smashes the clay pot!
The little rascal scrambles down,
Smashes the big copper ladle to the ground."

Sara licked her lips. Rhymes about food always made her hungry. Then she frowned.

"Hey...am I the little rascal in the poem?" she exclaimed to Grandma's laughter. "You're talking about Tony, right?"



The Penang Hakka Association was established in 1939 by a famous Hakka businessman, Aw Boon Par. It serves as a gathering place and provides cultural, educational, and social activities for the Hakka community while also maintaining connections with other Hakka organisations in Malaysia and abroad.



THE ART OF RELAXATION



Sara was so stressed she wanted to pull her hair out. Exams were coming, and no matter how many scholar's hats Grandma folded, Sara was convinced they wouldn't work.



"You need to relax," Leela said, pulling her away from her revision books. "You can't remember things well when you're stressed. It's a fact. Come, my mum can teach you some varma kalai. Saint Agastiar taught this thousands of years ago in Tamil Nadu. It'll help you feel better."

At this point, Sara would do anything to stop worrying. She spent an hour learning about energy points in her body and doing yoga stretches and poses. When the session came to an end, though her muscles were weary, she felt much better mentally.



"Okay, you're done for today," Leela called from the kitchen. "Now you can learn to de-stress my way. With a cup of masala chai and some crispy thosai!"

Sara liked Leela's method of relaxation best, biting into the tangy rice and black lentil crepe with crisp edges and a soft centre—made even more perfect with chutney.

The Penang Hindu Association was established in 2012 to serve the Hindu community through social welfare, education, religious, and heritage preservation programs. It supports charitable initiatives, organises cultural events, and promotes religious awareness while strengthening unity and preserving Hindu traditions in Penang.



THE COLOURS OF BATIK



Mum was on the quest to find the perfect batik cloth. Sara needed a dress for Malaysia Day, and she planned to make it from cotton batik. They drove to Balik Pulau to choose the cloth from the artisans themselves.



"What about this?" Mum asked. The cotton was a verdant green and rich with forest motifs.

"That was handmade by Cikgu Nadirah, our teacher," the shop assistant said.



Sara thought it was beautiful, but it looked like something Mum would wear. She shook her head, browsing until she reached a section where the batik designs looked more modern.

"Yes, teens these days like these patterns better," the shop assistant commented, grinning. "More abstract, minimalist designs."



"How do I know which is the best?" Sara asked.

"There's no 'best', adik," came the reply. "It's what you prefer! Now, this colour looks great with your complexion."



They went home that day with a deep red batik cloth, lined with Hibiscus flowers and trailing vines. Sara couldn't wait for Mum to turn it into a dress!

Warisan Balik Pulau is a community-based initiative established in 2017 to preserve and promote the traditional batik craft. It aims to safeguard the cultural heritage of the Malay community in Balik Pulau and provides hands-on experience with the craft.



THE ART OF SCULPTING PATIENCE



"Mian Su (面塑) is the art of dough sculpting," Madam Teoh said, explaining how dough figurines had once been used for rituals, but were now a traditional art form.

Sara prodded the dough in front of her, squishing it between her fingers as the instructor droned on and on. Her mind and hands raced faster than the demonstrations.

"It may be difficult at first," Madam Teoh concluded, "but, with patience, I'm confident that all of you will succeed in making beautiful figurines today." She walked around the room, stopping at each table to inspect their work and give them tips.

But Sara was impatient. She worked as quickly as possible, whilst Mum slowly and meticulously followed each step. Then the worst thing happened. As she was rushing to finish, Sara dropped her figurine with a great big splat. Tears welled up in her eyes, and she wailed,

"I don't want to do this anymore!"

"Slow and steady wins the race, Sara," Mum said, patting her shoulder. "Why don't we try that again?"

Loh Ban Thatt & Teoh Han Hoon Traditional Dough Figurines was co-founded by a husband-and-wife duo in 2019 out of their passion for traditional Chinese dough figurine art. After his passing, the organisation continues its mission to preserve and promote this heritage craft through workshops, demonstrations, and community engagement.

羅漢堂及陳漢雲
中國傳統泥塑人偶社
CHINESE DOUGHY DOLL



THE DRUM COMES A-CLACKING

Clack clack clack.

Sara looked up from her homework and glared at her brother. He spun the rattle drum in his hands harder, making the clacking sound speed up.

Clack clack clack clack clack.

"You're not an old-time street vendor," Sara said in annoyance, "so you don't need to announce your presence or your wares. Or are you experiencing your second childhood?"

Tony waved the rattle drum in front of her face. "I'm warding off evil spirits in the house, like they used to in the Han Dynasty. Be gone, foul spirit!"

"Stop it, Tony! I don't have any evil spirits." She put down her pen and reached across the table to snatch the rattle drum from him. Then she sat on it. There!

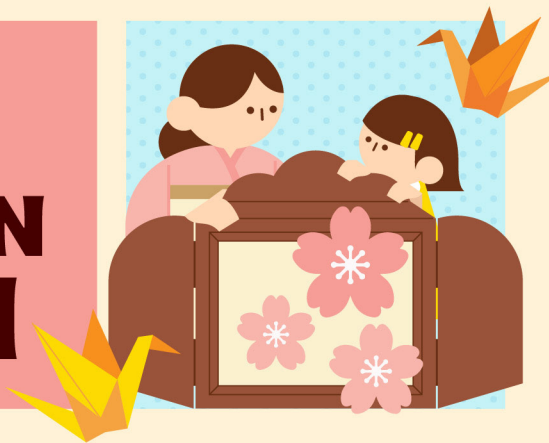
Tony pouted for a while before stomping out of the room. Several minutes later, Sara heard a crow of delight and a cackle. She groaned and slumped over the table as a new clacking sound emerged from down the hallway and came right up to her ear.

Clack clack clack clack CLACK!

Lum Yeong Tong Yap Temple was established in 1920 through the merger of two Yap clan groups, with its clan hall completed in 1924. Since its early days, the clan served as a place of shelter to support newcomers and continues to be a gathering place for clan members.



A LESSON IN ORIGAMI



Sara wandered into an empty room at the old folks' home, hoping Mum would finish her office business quickly. Inside, an old lady was busy folding pieces of paper.



"It's Japanese tradition to fold a thousand paper cranes to pray for a long life," the lady said, "or for a loved one to recover from illness."

Sara inspected the crane. "Are you making them for yourself?"



"I'm making them for my friends here," she answered, eyes twinkling, "so they'll keep me company for longer. Do you want to learn?"

Nodding, Sara sat down beside her. While teaching her to make all sorts of origami—not just cranes—the old lady regaled Sara with tales about gathering at street corners in Japan to watch Kamishibai as a child and how her whole family had moved to Penang in the 1920s to start a photographic studio.



"There you are!" Mum exclaimed two hours later. "I told you not to wander off alone."

Sara looked around in surprise. The old lady had disappeared—leaving behind an origami camera.

Pink Hibiscus Club was established in 2005 to introduce Japanese culture to the youth of Penang and to inspire their creativity and curiosity through craft, stories, dance, and cultural events.



PAPER FOLDED PRAYERS



Grandma sat at the kitchen table folding pieces of paper. Curious, Sara wandered over. She'd seen Grandma doing this before, but she hadn't thought much about it until her strange encounter with the Origami Aunt.

"Is this origami?" she asked.



"This is zhezhi (摺紙)," Grandma replied, shaking her head, "similar but different. I make this scholar's hat to offer to Wenchang Dijun (文昌帝君), especially when I pray for your upcoming exams."

Sara winced. There were quite a few scholar's hats. She quickly picked up the sycee, a Chinese gold ingot. "And this one?"



Grandma gave her a knowing look. "That's to pray to Thai Pak Koong (大伯公) for prosperity. Your father is planning on expanding his business, so I need to pray for blessings." She finished the paper folding she was working on and handed it to Sara. "And this lotus is to be offered to Zhusheng Niangniang (註生娘娘) on your cousin Leela's behalf."



Sara's eyes widened as Grandma whispered, "I heard Leela and her husband are trying for a baby. I really want a great-grandson soon."

The Thai Pak Koong (Ng Suk) Temple, comprising the main temple in Tanjung Tokong and Fu De Ci on King Street, have been jointly managed for over 200 years by representatives from five Hakka clan associations. It was awarded the UNESCO-Asia Pacific Award for Cultural Heritage Conservation Award in 2021.



PRESERVING STONE MEMORIES



Sara followed her relatives to the Mount Erskine cemetery for Cheng Beng (清明) every year. This year, she noticed a group of old men doing something mysterious with paper, brushes, and ink at an abandoned grave nearby.



"We're conservationists," one replied when she asked.

"Our job is to record the words on these tombstones before they're completely eroded by the sun and rain."



"It's a very old method of documentation from China," another said, showing her the paper with their rubbings.

"We thought photography would help, but taking photographs isn't helpful when you can't see the words anymore."



From where she was standing, the tombstone looked completely blank, but when she touched it, she could feel slight indentations where Chinese characters had once been carved.

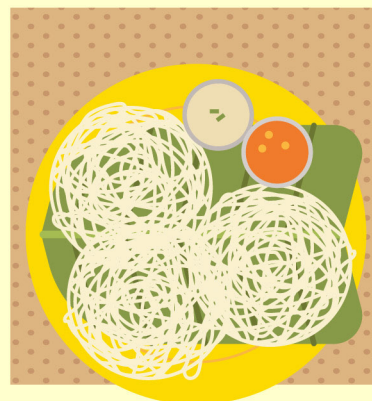
Sara rejoined her family thoughtfully. Would she need to make similar stone rubbings one day? The words on her great-grandparents' tombstones were still legible, so once they finished cleaning up, she took a picture with her phone to preserve her own memories.

The Kwangtung & Tengchow Association, comprising eighteen dialect groups in Penang, represents a robust intergenerational continuity and scale. Established in 1795, it is widely regarded as a unique cultural institution that has bridged the many dialect groups within the Malaysia-Singapore context since the eighteenth century.



廣東 潮州 會館

STEAMED STORIES



Fatima yawned as she walked into school with packets of idiyappam, idli, and kolkatai to share.

"I had to wake up way too early," she grumbled. "My ibu insists we make these the old way, no shortcuts."



Lilian snorted as she took some idiyappam. "My mum too— she says food tastes more authentic that way."

"And healthier, since these are made of rice flour and steamed," Fatima said, chewing on an idli. "She's really proud of the fact that we still use the same techniques her nenek used, says it builds character and resilience." Making finger quotes, she repeated her mother's words: "It's not just a recipe. It's an identity—and the story of our survival."



Sara nodded along as she munched on the kolkatai.



Suddenly, Lilian frowned and said, "Why don't we ever hear of you cooking with your mother, Sara?"

"My Grandma and Mum have banished me from the kitchen," Sara squeaked, "because I keep letting things burn—even when steaming pau. That's why I really love the microwave!"



Liga Muslim Pulau Pinang, or Penang Muslim League, was founded in 1949 to look after the welfare of the Muslims in the state. The founders were Indian Muslims who sought a platform to speak on issues closely related to the interests of their community.



SAVED BY THE LIONS



George Town was scary at night when you're thirteen and alone. Sara gulped as footsteps echoed behind her.

The stone lions at Kuan Im Temple will protect me, she thought. Grandma said the guardian lions of George Town protected everyone in need.

Suddenly, a metallic roar bellowed—the iron lions of Cheah Kongsì had sensed her distress from afar and raised an alarm. Reassured, she quickened her pace.

Sara gasped when she arrived at the temple. The lions were not there! They must have gone on patrol near the quay. Gritty growls answered the alarm, but the footsteps were now dangerously close. Panicked, she ran towards China Street.

Her ears picked up a reassuring purr. Taking a chance, she bolted into Queen Street. In front of Sri Maha Mariamman Temple, two guardian lions winked at her. Sara hid behind a lion as the purring shifted into a fierce snarl. The footsteps stopped, then receded into the darkness.

When Sara peeked out again, Dad was there—led to her by the Kuan Im Temple lions. Sara hugged him tightly, relieved to be finally safe.

Sim Art Studio was established in 1998 as a relaxing art learning space by father-daughter duo, Sim See San and Sim Jun Hui. As Fine Art graduates with backgrounds in education, they aspire to provide accessible and diverse art learning opportunities.



GAMING THE PAST



History was one of Sara's least favourite subjects. Although she knew it was important to understand events of the past, she found it boring to learn about things that happened centuries ago. After all, they couldn't affect her anymore—except during exam time. But today, Puan Suraya made an exciting announcement.

"Put away your textbooks," she said, placing a box on the table.

"Today, we're going to play a tabletop role-playing game designed by my friends at Penang Hidden Gems."

Norashikin asked what everyone in class was wondering: "But how does it relate to our lessons?"

"We've been learning about colonialism and the spice trade," Puan Suraya answered as she set out dice, maps, and other game pieces. "In this game, we'll be playing key historical characters in 19th century Penang. Will the choices you make recreate history, leading to the economic success of George Town as part of the Straits Settlements? Or will your decisions result in other consequences?"

"In other words," Sara sniggered, "are we smarter than dead people?"

Penang Hidden Gems was established in 2024 by a collective of history enthusiasts dedicated to uncovering and sharing the lesser-known cultural and historical narratives of Penang. It aims to revitalise local heritage through immersive storytelling and interactive experiences, ensuring local history remains vibrant and accessible for all.



PATTERNS OF CONNECTION



Sara was waiting for her Mum in the old folks' home again. As she wandered into the lobby, she noticed another old lady drawing intricate patterns on the floor using a white paste. She crept nearer to watch.



"Come, sit. No need to be shy," the lady said without looking around, startling Sara. Did all old ladies have eyes in the back of their heads?

"Um, what's that?" Sara asked, sitting beside her.
"Are you allowed to draw on the floor?"



The old lady laughed. "Nadu Veetu kolam is a traditional kolam drawn on the floor during festivals and rituals to bring auspiciousness. Why would they not allow it?"

Well, old people made the rules, so maybe this type of art was allowed on floors. As the large pattern grew closer to completion, the old lady often paused as if she were talking to someone, but their words were soft and garbled in Sara's ears.

When Mum found Sara peacefully napping hours later, there was no one by the brand new kolam.

The Nattukottai Nagarathar Heritage Society was established in 2014 to represent the Nattukottai Chettiars, a Shaivite merchant community that traces its roots to Chettinad in Tamil Nadu, India. It aims to preserve the rich Nagarathar cultural heritage and transmit the knowledge to the younger generations to safeguard its cultural continuity.

PERSATUAN WARISAN NATTUKOTTAI NAGARATHAR
(NATTUKOTTAI NAGARATHAR HERITAGE SOCIETY)
Gardikan Warisan, Amalkan, Ungkapkan, dan Rindukan

A TASTE OF COMFORT



Fatima had just moved. She invited her classmates to the housewarming party, beaming as she led them around their new apartment. After all the ceremonies and well-wishes were completed—and they had gushed over her room—the girls congregated in the dining room, where a feast had been laid out.



"We made paratha kanji," Fatima said, bouncing on her toes.
"You all have to try some. It's only for special occasions!"

"This is a special occasion, isn't it?" Sara said, turning to see what Fatima was pointing at.



She'd expected to see some kind of roti, but found a serving bowl of porridge that had shredded pieces of paratha in it and carried the scent of pandan, santan, and cinnamon.

Harmeet agreed as she filled her bowl. "It's not every day that you move into a new place and get a room of your own."



Fatima was all smiles as she savoured the sweet dessert.
"I was worried this place would be too new and strange, but now it finally feels and tastes like home."

GAPEIM was established in 2018 to empower and support the Indian Muslim community through collaborative efforts in areas such as socio-economic development, education, religious affairs, and community welfare. It serves as a driving force for the progress and unity of the Indian Muslim community in Penang.



24

STATE CHINESE (PENANG)
ASSOCIATION

THE RICE OF A MILLION SLICES



Sara knocked on Lilian's front door as her mum drove away.

Lilian opened it, looking a little harried. "Sorry, Sara, but my mum needs help preparing Nasi Ulam for dinner tonight. You can play on my laptop until I'm free."



"Can I help?" Sara offered.

Lilian brought Sara to the kitchen and gestured at the piles of raw herbs spread out across the table.



"That's a lot of...stuff," Sara said, eyes boggling. She recognised lemongrass, kaffir lime leaves, bunga kantan, and shallots, but she had no idea what the rest of them were!

"We need to julienne all of them—cut them into long, thin strips," Lilian explained at Sara's confused look. "Come on, Sara, the faster we do this, the more time we'll have to hang out later."



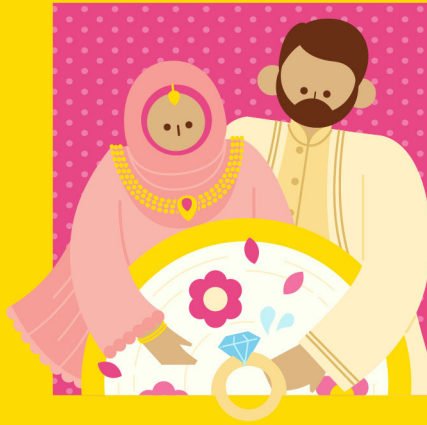
The State Chinese (Penang) Association, originally known as the Straits Chinese British Association, was established in 1920 and has since served as the centre of the Peranakan community to promote and safeguard Peranakan traditions, culture, and heritage. The association celebrated its 105th anniversary in 2025.



25

INDIAN MUSLIM COMMUNITY
ORGANISATION MALAYSIA

ALL'S FAIR IN LOVE & GAMES



When Fatima invited Sara to her sister's Seeve Katti, Sara was surprised and a little worried.



"Wouldn't it be weird?" she asked. "I don't really know your sister."

"It's fine," Fatima assured her. "You met Rasheeda during our housewarming. Besides, everyone's invited!"



Now, Sara watched, a little confused, as the bride and groom played a game called "Chocolate Coin Shower", where chocolate coins were poured onto the dupatta, or shawl, covering them. Then, they played "Finding the Ring in a Sombu", where the newly married couple raced to find a ring hidden in a bowl of water with flowers.

The whole event was nothing like the solemn weddings she'd been to. It was a huge party, filled with shouts of joy and cheers of encouragement. It didn't seem to matter who won, as long as everyone was having fun.

"Come on, Sara!" Fatima called as she raced to the next event.

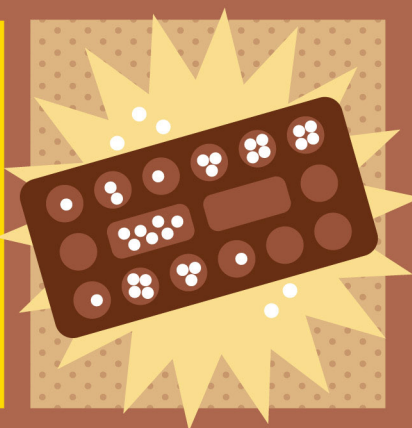


Sara ran to join Fatima and their classmates, just as Rasheeda claimed the hidden ring to shouts of victory.

The Indian Muslim Community Organisation Malaysia is a cultural community organisation committed to preserving and promoting the heritage, traditions, and customs of the Indian Muslim community in Malaysia. The organisation works to safeguard the cultural heritage through programs like cultural demonstrations, educational activities, and community engagements.



THE BOARD THAT CONNECTS TWO HEARTS



Sara was really glad that Fatima had invited her to Rasheeda's Seeve Katti. She hadn't realised that weddings could be so fun and enjoyable!

She was taking a short break from the activities to fill up on snacks, when Fatima called her back.



"They're going to play Pallanguli now! Come on, you can eat later," she said, dragging Sara over to where the game had been set up.

Pallanguli looked rather like congkak. There was a wooden board with fourteen pits filled with tamarind seeds. Rasheeda sat next to her husband, and they whispered back and forth before she made any moves. The wedding party cheered them on as the game progressed.

When they finally won, their opponent laughed, saying, "Well, I can tell from the way you play that you're going to have a great marriage. When my husband and I got married..."



As the older woman shared her own Pallanguli tales, Sara and Fatima went back to the buffet table to get more snacks.

Masjid Kapitan Keling was founded in 1801 by the Indian Muslim community during the early days of George Town. For over two centuries, the mosque has served as a centre for worship, education, and community development, while preserving the heritage, culture, and welfare of the local Muslim community.



FULL MOON TRADITIONS



Mum came home one evening carrying a red box. Sara perked up. That looked like food. Mum confirmed it as she opened the box, saying that one of her colleagues just had a baby a month ago. Sara thought she knew what was included in one of those full moon gift sets—red dyed eggs and pickled ginger, as well as ang ku kuih. Some even had nasi kunyit and curry chicken.

This one had something she had never seen in her life: a sticky rice cake covered with sesame seeds, ground nuts, and coconut.

"What's that?" she asked as Mum gave her a piece.



She bit into it. It was sweet and nutty, and a little sticky and chewy.

"My colleague called it Art Bua (押粿)," Mum said. "Her mother-in-law made it. She said it's a traditional Hainanese snack prepared for weddings and full moon celebrations."



Sara licked her fingers as she replied, "Well, it's definitely more interesting than cake! Can I have more?"



The Penang Hainan Association, founded in 1866, serves as a vital historical link between the Hainanese in Penang and within the region. It manages the Tian Hou Gong temple and founded the Aik Hua School in 1925, while promoting social welfare, cultural heritage, and education of the local Hainanese community.



NECTAR FROM HEAVEN



Old science fiction books were the weirdest. Sara flipped through more pages of the HG Wells book, wondering if she should just put it back in the bookshelf.



"What's with that face?" Leela asked as she sank down on the couch opposite her.

Wordlessly, Sara showed her the cover.



"Oh, that. That title is terrible—they don't even feed it to the gods." Leela brightened. "Hey, what if I told you we have the real food of the gods?"

Sara put the book aside and folded her arms. "Like nectar from heaven? In real life? Where would you even get it?"



Leela laughed at Sara's skeptical expression. "It's called panchamirtham—Five Nectars. The ingredients we use here are banana, jaggery, honey, sugar candy, and dates, though other places have slightly different recipes. Also we use it as an offering during puja so it's definitely closer to the 'Food of the Gods' than what's in your book."

"I can believe the gods would want to eat that," Sara said. "Where can I get some?"



The Batu Uban Ayyappan Service Society (BUASS), established in 2020, is a community-based organisation dedicated to preserving and promoting Ayyappan traditions, rituals, and values in Malaysia. Through spiritual, cultural, and community initiatives, the society fosters unity, discipline, devotion, and selfless service amongst devotees while contributing to the preservation of Ayyappan heritage.



SUGAR, SPICE, & EVERYTHING NICE



FREE CAKE AT CHRISTMAS MARKET!

VOTE ON THE BEST CAKE (MINE)

WINNERS BRING HOME CAKE AND UNDYING GRATITUDE

Sara read the handmade flyer over and over again. Pictures of cakes, tarts, and various raw ingredients were stuck haphazardly all over the A5 page. Huh. She didn't know these had cardamom, nutmeg, cloves, and star anise.

She handed the flyer to Mum, who said, "Oh, are they at it again?"



"It could be the younger generation," Dad said, looking up from his phone. "Maria was bragging about daughter's baking skills the other day."

Aunty Maria from down the road did bake very delicious cakes...

"Can we go?" Sara asked. "Please?"



"Hmm...There are four competitors, so if all of us vote differently, we will definitely bring home free cake..." Mum laughed at Sara's confused expression. "Of course we'll go, Sara. Every few years, Aunty Maria's friends argue over who makes the best sugree cake and pineapple tarts for Christmas. She won the last round, so now we have to support the best baker in our neighbourhood."



The Penang Eurasian Association was officially established in 1919. The Eurasian community in Penang traces its history back to 1786. The association was founded to support the wellbeing and growth for local Eurasians through cultural and social events to honour their heritage.



LADIES & LADOOS



Sara draped herself over the table, yawning. School was such a chore this early in the morning. She perked up when Norashikin passed a packet to their classmate, Harmeet.



"I saved some ketupat palas for you since you couldn't come to our open house," Norashikin told her, ignoring Sara's hopeful face.

Harmeet thanked her, pulling out a box from her own bag. "I brought some ladoos to share too. I made them with my great-aunt in Lahore. Oh this great-aunt! She loves singing, and she has a song for everything..."



Lilian and Norashikin listened to Harmeet's tale with rapt attention, but Sara's gaze kept wandering to the box between them. Her hand crept towards it as Harmeet shared her experience making ladoos.

"...chickpea flour, ghee, sugar, and cardamon...roll it into balls..."



Sara popped a whole ladoo into her mouth and reached for another.

"...and garnish it with almond slices," Harmeet said, pulling the box away from her. "Leave some for the rest of the class, you greedy guts!"



Sikh Naujawan Sabha Malaysia was officially established in 1967 as a voluntary organisation dedicated to the development of Sikh youths in Malaysia. It organises religious, cultural, and social programs to promote Sikh values, education, community service, and leadership amongst youths.



SERVINGS OF GENEROSITY

Sara and Harmeet were walking back to school for Dance Club when a homeless woman asked them for money to buy food. Although they had already spent their money on lunch, they searched their wallets. All they could scrounge up between them was two ringgit.



"Oh, I know!" Harmeet exclaimed. "There's a gurdwara down the road. Have you been there before?"

"Why? What's there?" the woman replied, shaking her head.



"Every gurdwara has a Langar," Harmeet explained. "It's a community kitchen that serves free food to everyone."

She looked surprised. "I didn't know that. Can you bring me there?"



Sara checked her watch. "We still have time."

Harmeet led them to the gurdwara, where the volunteers ushered them into a large canteen. Harmeet and Sara declined since they'd eaten, but sat with the homeless woman for a while as she was served with fresh chapatti and vegetarian dishes. As they were about to leave, the woman stopped them.

"Thanks for telling me about this," she said with a grateful smile. "This must surely be the best chapatti in the world."



Persatuan Wadda Gurdwara Sahib Pulau Pinang was established in 1901. It was originally stationed at Fort Cornwallis in 1882 for the sepoy before being moved to police barracks at Jalan Patani and finally established at its present location. Over the years, it has become integral to the Penang Sikh community as a hub for service, education, and community support.



THE COOKIES THAT WERE NOT COOKIES



"Cookies!" Sara exclaimed, rushing towards Leela's dining table. On it was a plate piled full of round, brown discs that looked, from afar, like oatmeal cookies.



Her fingers were already hovering over the plate when her senses caught up with her. She frowned, inspecting the 'cookies' critically. They were more golden brown than usual and had yellowish chips embedded in them. Those were definitely not chocolate chips or raisins. She drew a deep breath. The lingering smell in the air reminded her more of fried foods than baked goods.

She grabbed one. These cookie imposters were slightly oily and gave way under pressure, instead of being dry and firm. She bit into it, hearing the outside crunch as she chewed into the softer insides. A savoury taste filled her mouth, tasting like dhal, spices, and love.

Sara concentrated her five senses on finishing her not-cookie and decided that whatever it was called, it was delicious. She reached for another one.



Behind her, Leela screeched, "Hands off, Sara! Those are my paruppu vadai!"



Since 2013, TAMARAI has been serving as an educational platform that provides necessary skills training to lower income and underprivileged individuals in the community. It also provides income-generating courses aimed at improving the living standards of the community, achieving sustainable economic growth, and enhancing awareness of the importance of a healthy environment.



SAMBAL HUSTLE



The next time Sara went over to Lilian's house, she found her friend huffing and puffing in the kitchen with her grandmother.

"You're not going to make me help you cook again, are you?" Sara asked, eyeing the stone mortar and pestle Lilian was using to blend chillies, belacan, garlic, and small onions. They looked really heavy.



Lilian cackled. "We're almost done. Besides, you really liked the sambal the last time you were here, didn't you?"

Sara agreed, leaning closer. The tantalising smell of sambal wafted into her nose. Her mouth started watering.

"You know," she said after a moment, "there's this modern appliance called a blender that would make this much easier..."



"Yes, but it won't taste as good or authentic," Lilian said wryly. "I said that to my Ahma once, and she insisted we have a competition. Everyone in the family agreed that hers tasted better, even me." Sara winced in sympathy. "Ever since then, we've agreed to always make sambal the traditional way."

The Seh Tek Tong Cheah Kongsí was established in 1810 by early Chinese immigrants from the Sek Tong village in the Fujian Province of China. The organisation was created to support the Cheah clansmen who arrived in Penang in terms of social welfare, cultural connections, and mutual assistance.



34

RUMPULAN BORIA OMARA
(OMARA VENTURES)

COLOURFUL SAILORS OF BORIA



Sara sat in the school canteen, arms folded across her chest. Her audition for the year-end concert hadn't gone well. As her friends chattered excitedly, Sara grew grumpier and grumpier. How had she messed up so badly? Finally, Mr Lee called all of them back into the school gymnasium.

"Thank you all for auditioning. Our concert this year will be a boria performance taught by Encik Omara. We will need actors for the beginning sketch, a lead singer called the 'Tukang Karang', and a chorus of singers and dancers called 'sailors'." Mr Lee held up a sheaf of papers. "I will post the results on the notice board tomorrow. Remember to check it to find out what parts you're playing."



The next day, Sara's heart sank as she scanned the list. Almost all her friends were going to be sailors.



She was about to slink off in shame, when Harmeet exclaimed, "Hey, Sara! Look, you're in the opening sketch!"

Sara beamed. She couldn't dance and sing, but at least she could act.

Boria Omara was established in 2007 by Omar Hashim with the aim of preserving and promoting the cultural legacy of Penang boria. The group actively seeks and fosters new talents, while organising cultural performances, workshops, and programs to promote Penang's cultural heritage.



35

MALAYSIAN-JAPANESE SOCIETY

THE FIRST STEP DANCE



Sara needed to join a co-curricular club in school, but none of the school's clubs piqued her interest. Their activities were either too boring or too difficult.



After listening to her grumble for half an hour, Harmeet said, "Why don't you join the Dance Club with me?"

"I don't know if I can dance," Sara said doubtfully.



"I messed up half the moves last week and no one said a thing. Besides, it's fun. Mr Lee is on an international dance binge, so he brings in new groups every week to teach us cultural dances from all over the world."

That did sound interesting. Sara thought she might enjoy learning new dances as long as she wasn't graded on how well she danced.

On Sara's first day, Mr Lee invited a group from the Malaysian-Japanese Society to teach them Ippome Ondo, saying that all great achievements began with a first step forward. How apt!

The Malaysian-Japanese Society was founded in 1967 by Malaysian-Japanese pioneers at Malayan Marine Industries and Rubber Traders' Association. The society aims to strengthen ties between the people of two countries, with an emphasis on the exchange of technical, scientific and cultural knowledge.



36

PERSATUAN MASYARAKAT SIAM
PULAU PINANG

THE JOYFUL RHYTHM OF SIAM



This week, a group from the Penang Siamese Committee Association had come to teach them traditional Isaan folk dances from northeastern Thailand. First, they played videos with dancers in beautiful traditional costumes. Next, they taught the Dance Club students the steps, using the videos as background music.

Sara was delighted that the dances were easy to learn and didn't need her to master very complicated steps. However, they were still very tiring—especially since they had to repeat certain hand movements over and over again. At least she didn't have to sing while dancing!

After a while, she sat down for a break. Guzzling her bottle of water, she watched the instructors and her friends dancing. A thought struck her as she watched the video that was still playing.

"Huh, now I know why all the Thai dancers wear those really long fingernails," Sara observed, looking at her own short, stubby fingers. "They really make your hands look so much more graceful when dancing."

The Penang Siamese Committee Association was established on 21st September 1976 to foster unity, cooperation, and development among the Siamese community and better understanding with the other ethnicities in Malaysia. It promotes education and welfare of the Siamese community while nurturing national awareness in accordance with the Rukun Negara.

TELUGU ASSOCIATION OF MALAYSIA,
PENANG BRANCH

37

KUCHIPUDI DANCE

Mr Lee had started them off with community dances, but Sara knew that he would soon introduce a dance that required a lot of skill. That day had come.

"Kuchipudi is a classical dance form that originated in a village called Kuchipudi in Andhra Pradesh," the invited instructor said after her demonstration. "It is a dance-drama tradition that presents stories from epics such as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Every gesture has a deeper meaning that expresses our Telugu cultural heritage through movement."



She taught them a few movements, making them repeat the steps over and over again.

"I'm not graceful enough for this," Sara moaned at the end of the session. "My muscles feel like jelly after all that repetition—and this is only the first step!"



Harmeet wiped sweat off her brow. "My face cannot make those expressions."



"You're doing great, girls," the instructor encouraged them. "It takes time to get the rhythm right—our dancers practise for hours and hours!"



Sara and Harmeet exchanged glances, glad that they were only learning it for fun.

The Telugu Association of Malaysia, Penang & Seberang Perai Branch has been serving the Telugu community in Penang since 1970. Officially registered in 1989, the branch continues its efforts to preserve Telugu culture and language. Currently, an estimated 20,000 Telugu people reside in Penang.



SWEETNESS AT YOUR FINGERTIPS



Sara and her friends were at a Dance Club jamboree, where members of dance clubs from schools across Penang showcased their current choreography. Sara's club had already presented part of the boria performance they were preparing for their year end concert. After changing out of their costumes, they returned to the hall to watch the other clubs' performances.

It was now Sin Kang School's turn. Sara's stomach rumbled as the Nyonyas in kebayas on stage waved large, colourful pieces of nyonya kuih to the upbeat music.



"All that dancing is making me hungry," Sara whispered to her friends, "and all those kuih props look good enough to eat!"

"Psst, I have the real thing," her classmate, Lilian, whispered back, reaching into her bag. "My mum and I made them yesterday."



The fragrant scent of coconut and pandan soon wafted in the air as Sara stealthily lifted a small piece of kuih tamal to her mouth. There was a sharp shift around them as all the other club members turned to look, their stomachs growling in unison.

Leong San Tong Khoo Kongsi founded Sin Kang School in 1907. The school moved to Victoria Street in 1914, then to Thean Teik Estate in 1953, and was rebuilt with modern facilities in 1993. The Dance Club was established to offer students an opportunity to explore their interest in dance choreography.



SYNCHRONISED HANDS, SYNCHRONISED HEARTS



The school's dikir barat competition was next week, and Sara's class was hard at work. Not only did they use some of their class periods to practice, they even stayed back after school every day to perfect their performance. However, they had a secret advantage. Norashikin had shown a video of their performance to her uncle who was a member of Dikir Barat Suara Mutiara. He'd given her a list of notes, plus tips on how to improve.

Competition day came, and Sara's class performed with synchronised hands and synchronised hearts. Their hearts pounded as they watched the other classes perform—every single group was excellent. When the winners were announced, the class broke out in screams of excitement and shock. No one had expected a Form 1 class to win!

Sara was still squealing with joy when she told her family the good news that evening. Mum and Dad congratulated her, but Tony grimaced.



"Oh no," he groaned, "that means you're going to be competing against my team in the state-wide competition!"

"We'll beat you too," she declared confidently.



Dikir Barat Suara Mutiara is a Penang-based NGO dedicated to preserving and promoting the culture of Dikir Barat. The group works to uphold the originality and dignity of this tradition while sharing its cultural value, storytelling, and community spirit with people of all backgrounds.



40

PENANG DHOL BLASTERS

ENJOY THE BEAT OF DHOL



Today's Dance Club was slightly different. Most of the other invited guests brought along pre-recorded music or videos for them to dance to. The Penang Dhol Blast, however, brought along their instruments.



Harmeet jumped up in excitement when she saw the dhols. "I know how to play that!"

With Mr Lee's agreement, Harmeet joined the group at the front of the gym. The double-headed, barrel-shaped drum she was given looked big enough to swallow her up, but she strapped it across her shoulders. She tapped on the left with a curved drumstick, producing a deep sound. Then she tapped on the right with a straight drumstick, producing a higher sound. The group leader explained what they were going to play and Harmeet nodded. Then with a shouted count in, they started playing in unison, creating an infectious, energetic beat.

Sara giggled as she danced to the beat of the dhol, lifting her legs high and waving her hands in the air.

Penang Dhol Blast is a group of 'Dhol' players actively performing in various scenes and contributing to expanding the scope of tourism in Penang since its establishment in 2006. In 2012, Penang Dhol Blast was featured as one of the only four local artists to perform at the Penang World Music Festival 2012.



WAK LONG MUSIC & ART CENTRE

41

TRADITIONS IN MOTION

Mr Lee gave the Dance Club a break and brought them to watch a performance called "Traditions in Motion". Sara found the wayang kulit absolutely mesmerising and fell in love with the gamelan music. After the show, Sara was surprised to learn that the group had been performing for over fifteen years.

"They can't all have been doing this for fifteen years," Sara protested, gesturing at the younger performers. "They don't look old enough for that!"



Overhearing her comment, one of the performers laughed and came over. "You're right," she said. "The show has been running for that long, but the performers change over time, handing their roles over to the next generation like passing on a baton in a relay. That's how we keep our culture and traditions alive."

"You know what will help share it even more?" Sara said, pulling out her phone. "If we put it online for everyone to see!"



The performers joined Sara in making several dance TikToks before Mr Lee herded all the Dance Club members on the bus to return to school.

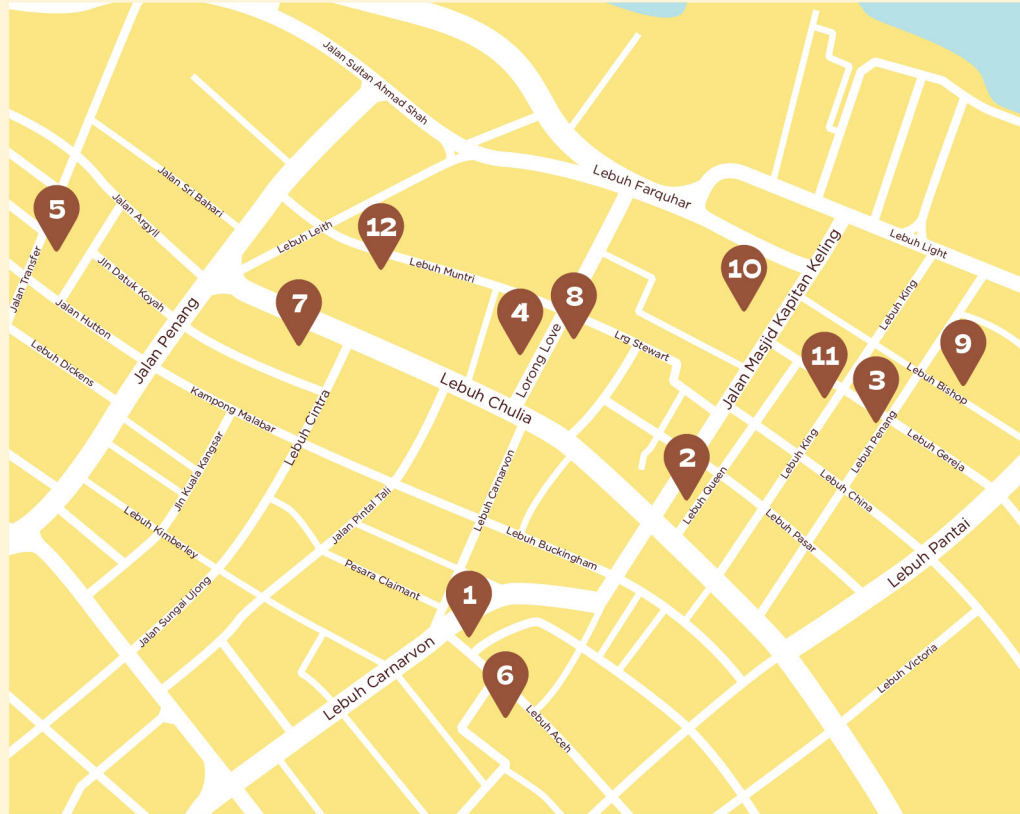


Wak Long Music & Art Centre was established in 2000 as a cultural centre that plays an active role in traditional cultural performances throughout the northern region, ranging from gamelan music and multicultural drum, to Malay traditional dance and wayang kulit. The centre also organises workshops on wayang kulit leather puppets and Wau Bulan.



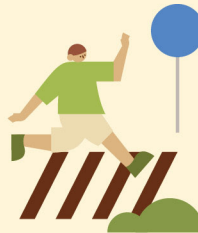


Scan for more info



RONGSI CERITA:

HISTORIC BUILDING OPEN HOUSE



9AM-5PM | 7PM-9PM

*Opening hours vary by location and date.

5-7

JUL JUL

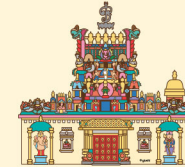


1 | George Town World Heritage Incorporated

No. 116 & 118, Lebuah Aceh

5-7 JUL

9AM-5PM | 7PM-9PM



2 | Arulmigu Sri Maha Mariamman Temple

No. 58, Lebuah Queen

5-7 JUL

9AM-1PM | 7PM-9PM



3 | Kwangtung & Tengchow Association

No. 50, Lebuah 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 Lebuah Aceh

Lebuah Aceh

5-7 JUL

9AM-5PM



7 | Nam Hooi Wooi Roon

No. 463, Lebuah Chulia

5 JUL

9AM-5PM | 7PM-9PM



8 | Soon Tuck Wooi Roon

No. 51, Lorong Love

5 JUL

9AM-5PM



9 | Sun Wui Wui Roon

No. 38, Lebuah Bishop

5-7 JUL

9AM-5PM



10 | St. George's Church

No. 1, Lebuah Farquhar

5-6 JUL | 7 JUL

9AM-5PM 9AM-5PM

(Heritage Cafe)



11 | Thai Pak Roong (Ng Suk) Temple

No. 32, 32A & 34, Lebuah King

5-7 JUL

9AM-5PM



12 | Thean Hou Temple (Penang Hainan Association)

No. 93, Lebuah Muntri

5-7 JUL

9AM-5PM

THE WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION



The 1972 World Heritage Convention is an intergovernmental treaty that aims to protect unique places worldwide with exceptional cultural and/or natural qualities shared by all humankind in the world beyond national boundaries.

As of 2026, the Convention has been signed by 196 countries. Malaysia ratified the Convention in 1988 and had its first World Heritage Site inscribed in 2000.

MALAYSIA CURRENTLY OWNS SIX WORLD HERITAGE SITES:

- Gunung Mulu National Park (2000)
- Kinabalu Park (2000)
- Melaka and George Town, Historic Cities of the Straits of Malacca (2008)
- Archaeological Heritage of the Lenggong Valley (2012)
- The Archaeological Heritage of Niah National Park's Caves Complex (2024)
- FRIM Selangor (2025)

There are other UNESCO conventions concerning cultural heritage. For example, the Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (2001); the Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression (2005). Malaysia signed the 2003 Convention in 2013.

WORLD HERITAGE SITES

UNESCO World Heritage sites are sites inscribed on the World Heritage List under the 1972 Convention for having cultural, historical, scientific, or other forms of significance, more commonly known as Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).

There are three main types of World Heritage sites: Cultural, Natural, and Mixed.

Several World Heritage sites are transboundary property, meaning that they exist along the territory of multiple State Parties with adjacent borders, such as the Qhapaq Ñan and the Andean Road System (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru).

Another type of site is serial property, which consists of two or more areas that are physically unconnected but related. An example of a serial property is Melaka and George Town, Historic Cities of the Straits of Malacca.

AS OF 2026, THERE ARE A TOTAL OF 1,248 SITES CONSISTING OF:

- 972 Cultural Heritage
- 235 Natural Heritage
- 41 Mixed Heritage

GEORGE TOWN WORLD HERITAGE SITE

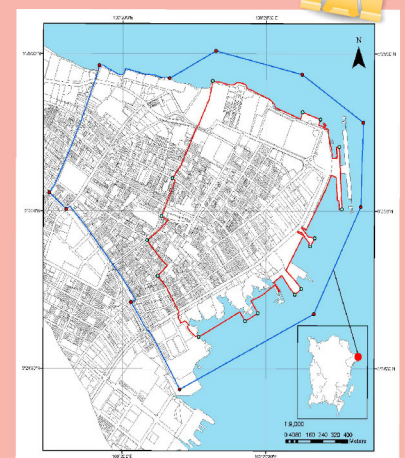
MELAKA AND GEORGE TOWN, HISTORIC CITIES OF THE STRAITS OF MALACCA

LEGEND

- Coordinates of the Property Boundary
- Coordinates of the Buffer Zone Boundary
- Area of the World Heritage Property (111.98 ha)
- Buffer Zone of the World Heritage Property (150.17 ha)

Total Area (262.15 ha)

© Map published by George Town World Heritage Incorporated, Malaysia, 2022.
Base map provided by the Town and Country Planning Department, Penang and Penang Geographic Information System Centre, Malaysia.



MAP OF THE HISTORIC CITY OF GEORGE TOWN

On 7 July 2008, George Town was inscribed on the World Heritage List under a joint inscription of Melaka and George Town, Historic Cities of the Straits of Malacca in the 32nd Session of the World Heritage Committee meeting.

The property of George Town World Heritage Site, also known as the Core Zone, covers an area of 111.98 ha. The property is protected by a Buffer Zone of 150.17 ha, making a total area of 262.15 ha of heritage zone. There are a total of 3,853 buildings listed as heritage buildings in the zone comprising 82 Category I Heritage Buildings and 3771 Category II Heritage Buildings.

The Outstanding Universal Value of GTWHS is being protected under the gazetted Special Area Plan: George Town, Historic Cities of the Straits of Malacca, which is the main document for the management and protection of the site.



UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE OF GEORGE TOWN – OUV

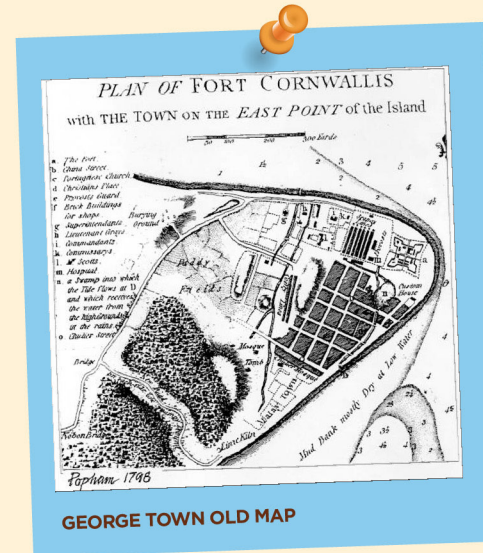
George Town (and Melaka) is recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site based on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of cultural diversity embodied and embedded in living heritage and built heritage.

Once an important port city in the Southeast Asian region that linked the East and the West, George Town has been home to a diverse group of people who came and built their lives here. They form the core of the living multicultural heritage of George Town where the many religions and cultures coexist harmoniously.

All these multicultural elements are expressed in George Town's unique architecture, culture, and townscape, which is a testament to its crucial role in the history of the region and the world.

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE OF GEORGE TOWN

– A TOWN OF MULTICULTURALISM



George Town exhibits an important interchange of human values, reflected through its historic urban fabric that remains intact until today.

The town's unique configuration is shaped by the existence of various ethnic enclaves that have settled close to each other. This multicultural social life is also expressed in the diversity of architectural designs of different communities.

North of these enclaves, towards Fort Cornwallis, is the Civic District, where the town's administrative function is located. The European-style administrative buildings along Light Street that extend from Beach Street to Weld Quay and its surrounding waterfront demonstrate the European influences on the town's urban architecture and planning, as well as the trading activities at the harbour.



At the local level, one may find a different reference to a street name depending on the community one meets, which marks the intertwined routines amongst segments of the multicultural society.



UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE OF GEORGE TOWN

– A TESTIMONY OF A MULTICULTURAL LIFESTYLE



George Town is a living testimony to the multicultural heritage and tradition of Asia and European influences. The multicultural aspects of tangible and intangible heritage are always present and can be observed in the daily routines of the town's inhabitants.

Religious buildings that exist close to each other along the major street, Masjid Kapitan Keling Road provide a glimpse of harmonious coexistence amongst the many communities in the town. Seasonal celebrations and festivals tend to be held in the street and open to the public. Over the years, these festive events have been part of the identity of the multicultural George Town, celebrated across the communities.

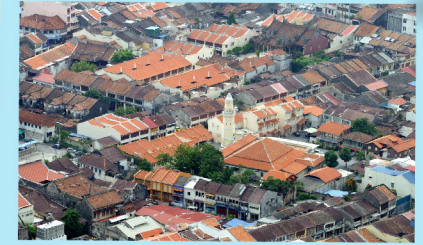


Another living heritage that expresses the rich diversity of George Town is the variety of cuisines as a result of the diverse ethnic communities within the town. One may hear multiple languages and dialects spoken at local gathering places like eateries or wet markets, as another testimony of the diverse yet harmonious lifestyle.

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE OF GEORGE TOWN

– UNIQUE ARCHITECTURE, CULTURE AND TOWNSCAPE

George Town is an example of a remarkable historic port town that has maintained its authenticity and integrity for over 200 years. The evolution of its architecture and building typology demonstrates a mixture of influences from the East and West and further exhibits its history as a former trading town.



The range of shophouses with their unique stylistic design of the facade serves as a useful reference point for stages of development of the town. Despite being separated by eras, these shophouses were built with similar materials and techniques which further contribute to the uniqueness of George Town's architecture.

All these architectural elements created George Town's streetscape that influences its buildings and land uses. They serve as the foundation for its historic urban fabric, providing the unique streetscape with both historical and aesthetic significance.

PROTECTING OUR WORLD HERITAGE SITE

Protecting our cultural and natural heritage is not just about saving buildings or preserving beautiful landscapes. Natural sites are vital parts of our planet that maintain and provide essential resources for all living things.



Cultural sites on the other hand are irreplaceable pieces of culture that tell the story of humanity, connecting us to the past and enriching our present. They are like a giant family album for humanity, showcasing the unique identities and values of different cultures. They remind us of where we came from, how we have progressed, and the beauty of our shared history. The protection of heritage could also contribute to inclusive and sustainable development, improving the overall well-being of humankind.

UNESCO works with other countries to enforce laws, support conservation efforts, and raise awareness to safeguard these cultural and natural heritage. More importantly, it is also our responsibility to ensure our future generations will continue to benefit from these heritages.



GEORGE TOWN WORLD HERITAGE INCORPORATED

– THE SITE MANAGER

George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI) was established by the Penang State Government on 21 April 2010 as the Site Manager of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of George Town.

As the site manager, our team is responsible for managing, safeguarding, and promoting George Town as a sustainable heritage city. Our work includes providing technical inputs in policy-making, providing free consultation to the public, facilitating opportunities for capacity-building, and empowering local communities to safeguard and conserve the heritage values that make George Town a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



GTWHI's logo features the five-foot way, a key feature of shophouses that define the historic built environment and streetscape of George Town. It is one of the essential elements that express the Outstanding Universal Value of George Town. The logo was launched on 7 July 2010 during the second George Town Heritage Celebrations.



GEORGE TOWN HERITAGE CELEBRATIONS

George Town Heritage Celebrations is an annual celebration organised by GTWHI to commemorate the city's inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage site on 7 July 2008. The Celebrations feature interactive and educational programmes such as workshops, performances, and street festivals that take place in the streets of the heritage enclave.



The George Town Heritage Celebrations is first and foremost a community celebration. Each year, the Celebrations showcase specific intangible cultural heritage themes to raise awareness of our cultural heritage and traditions, attributes, and Outstanding Universal Value of George Town.

It becomes a platform where local communities come together to celebrate and share their own cultural practices, performances, food, and crafts. On the other hand, the Celebrations are also an opportunity to nurture the local communities and cultivate George Town's rich, intangible cultural heritage.



TEAM LIST

Executive Producer

Dr Ang Ming Chee

Producer

Ng Boon Nee

Production Manager

Quah Swee Leang (Vick)

Finance Manager

Goh Seok Hong (Amy)

Programme Coordinator (Street Festival)

Tan Khai Li
Chan Xian Hwa
Chua Yi Qin
Yeap Lee Hua

Zone Master (Street Festival)

Ng Xin Yi
Chan Xian Hwa
Hidayah binti Jaafar
Chua Yi Qin
Wan Muhammad Syazwan Mohd Ezani
Yeap Lee Hua

Programme Coordinator (Historic Building Open House)

Ng Xin Yi

CH2 Groundbreaking Ceremony

Ting Siew Jing

Volunteer Coordinator

Tan Khai Li

Publicist

Siti Norhaida Abd Rahman

Publicist Assistant

Leong Chew Yee

Media Coordinator

Chuah Ai Kheng

Production Coordinator

Tan Chun Feng

Logistic Coordinator

Lim Wei Ming

Merchandise Counter

Goh Seok Hong (Amy)
Roobbasri A/P Shanmugam

F&B Coordinator (Staff welfare)

Goh Seok Hong (Amy)
Nor Faizah binti Md Akhir

Resource Coordinator

Gan Cheng Huat (Skye)

Copywriter

Anna Tan

Translator

Ng Xin Yi/*Mandarin*
Razan Rosman/*Malay*
Suseela Nagappan/*Tamil*

Proofreader

Dr Ang Ming Chee/*Mandarin*
Muhammad Hijas Sahari/*Malay*
Roobbasri A/P Shanmugam/*Tamil*
Ting Siew Jing/*English*

Homebase Coordinator

Muhammad Hijas Sahari
Flora Choo
Zahari Dahalan

Protocol Team

Muhammad Hijas Sahari
Ting Siew Jing

Videographer

Shishoki Production

Photographer

Adpix Studio

Master of Ceremony

Isabelle Oon
Kho Ying Han
Ng Kim Theng
Nicholas Ong Khang Ning

Creative Team

Loka Made
Jynn Design

Stage Manager

Tan Hock Kheng

Action Team

Lim Hao Wei
Ch'ng Jia Jie
Gan Chen Zhao
Gan Chun Pin
Harvard Chong
Hong Kah Soon
Koay Chin Hao
Lai Wen Hai
Leow Chen Xiong
Lim Jun Jia
Lim Zhi Tat
Nareshwar Sakkravarthi
Ng Zi Xiang
Tan Wei Jian
Yeoh Chun Heng

Production Execution

Avant Garde Grafik
Jynn Design

NOTES

Volunteers, both individuals and groups, whose time and hard work have contributed to the success of George Town Heritage Celebrations 2026.

Local community members, the heart of the Celebrations, whose support and understanding were crucial to the success of this event.

The technical team, whose expertise and meticulous attention ensured the smooth execution of all technical aspects for George Town Heritage Celebrations 2026.

Project staff, whose diligent coordination and unwavering commitment were vital in bringing the diverse elements of George Town Heritage Celebrations 2026 to fruition.

The staff of George Town World Heritage Incorporated, whose effort and dedication prove that teamwork is the ultimate key to success.

RONGSI CERITA:

LAYERING STAMP

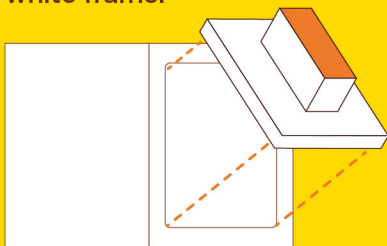
design by  **LOKA MADE**

4

JUL

5PM -
10PM

1. Align the stamp to the white frame.



2. Press firmly on notebook.



3. Go to next stamp station and collect next stamp.

-  GTWHI info counter
-  Jalan Kampung Kolam info counter
-  Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling info counter
-  Cheah Kongsi info counter
-  Lebuh Armenian info counter
-  Loka Made



4. Complete all 6 stamps to collect the full artwork!



Align stamp to white box