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TRAVEL — *by* BLOOMBERG PURSUITS

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The restaurant at the soon-to-open Soori Penang hotel. Source: Soori Penang

Heritage is hip on the multicultural island of Penang. The Sino-Portuguese shophouses of George Town, its candy-colored capital, are being refitted for a new generation of design-savvy travelers, with arched colonnades, wooden shutters and kaleidoscopically tiled courtyards echoing centuries of trade between Europe and Asia.

Homegrown creatives lead the charge. Among them is architect Soo K. Chan. After opening the acclaimed Soori resort in Bali almost a decade ago, he returns to his roots with **Soori Penang**, set in the same row of heritage shophouses he grew up in. Opening in early 2026, the hotel's 15 suites will blend the buildings' original architectural features with modern, muted interiors and insider access to the adjoining Khoo Kongsi temple.

A few blocks away, hotelier Chris Ong has just opened Argus Residence, inspired by Penang's Eurasian community. Soon, the 1926 Heritage Hotel, a colonial-era landmark on Burma Road, will celebrate its centennial with a gut renovation, adding decadent marble baths and butler service for its garden- and pool-facing rooms.

All the architectural interest adds to Penang's more perennial appeal: the food. The island's mix of Malay, Chinese and Indian traditions has shaped it into one of Southeast Asia's best cities to eat your way around. Don't miss Peninsula House, an ambitious new restaurant spotlighting local produce with global flavors — think snapper carpaccio with peppercorn yam chips and pineapple gin ponzu. Fittingly, it's breathing new life into an art deco gem with a turreted staircase and floor-to-ceiling windows that had been dormant on Beach Street for decades.

WHEN TO GO

December and January usually see the least rain and oppressive heat. The city is liveliest during its many religious festivals throughout the year. In February you can catch the wonderfully tumultuous Thaipusam procession or the Lunar New Year celebrations.

WHEN NOT TO GO

Penang is characterized by tropical heat year-round, but particularly during March and April, when it's often uncomfortable to stroll around the city.

WHOM TO CALL

Asia Concierge
