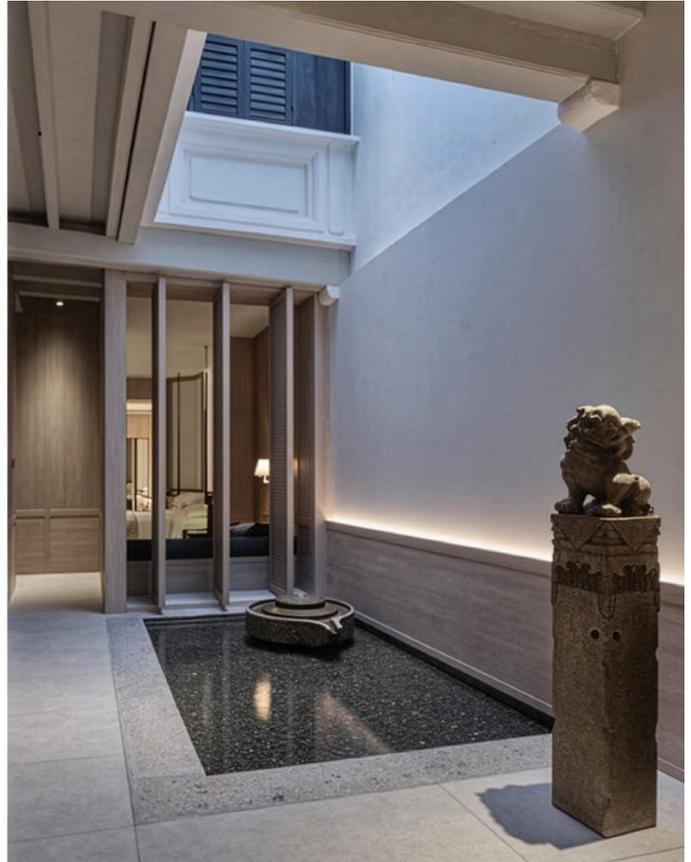


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GO HERE — by JOHN WOGAN

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A Malaysian Hotel Made Up of Renovated Shophouses



Left: the bar and lounge at the Soori Penang hotel in Malaysia, illuminated by a traditional air well, a defining feature of historic George Town shophouses. **Right:** reflecting pools divide each suite's living and sleeping areas. **Photo:** Aaron Pocock for Soori Penang

The shophouses of George Town, the capital of Penang Island in Malaysia, were mostly built in the late 19th century. The narrow, townhouse-like structures contained shops and homes belonging primarily to the city's Malay, Indian and Chinese inhabitants, who passed the dwellings down from one generation to the next. This week, the hotel Soori Penang will open in a renovated cluster of these houses in the city's historic core, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Soori Penang's founder, the Singapore-based architect Soo K. Chan, grew up in George Town. "Many design decisions were guided by my childhood memories," says Chan, 64, whose first hotel, Soori Bali, opened in 2017. "I remember the sound of rain entering through the air well and the granite courtyard during tropical downpours. Those sensory experiences informed the material palette of deep, dark tones contrasted with moments of light." Chan also introduced reflective pools, illuminated by skylights, in the living room area of every suite. In rooms and common areas, he added decorative details that nod to the architecture nearby: motifs that echo the ornate Khoo Kongsi Temple, carved stone sculptures reminiscent of guardian lions and hallways lit by onyx lanterns. A spa offers massages, while a tearoom hosts tastings and a lobby lounge and wine bar offer respite after a day of cultural excursions through town (the hotel can create custom itineraries for guests). A restaurant is scheduled to open later this year, specializing in local Peranakan cuisine. *From \$745 a night including breakfast, sooripenang.com.*