

Singapore Senior Golfers' Society Social Outing.



[CLICK HERE](#) For the Photo Gallery

“Ladies and Gentlemen. We have just landed at Penang International Airport. The local time is 10.25 am. Please remain seated until we reach the terminal.. Thank you for flying Tiger Airways”.

Thus began the first SSGS Durian and Gourmet Tour to Penang Island held between 1st to 3rd June 2016. It was designed as a non-golfing tour especially for members who do not take part in our competitive monthly medals to allow our senior members to get together in a more social-friendly atmosphere.

Planning started three months prior to departure with three objectives: **Eat the Best Penang Durians; Eat Penang Hawker Food; and See The Cultural Sites.**

Sixteen members and spouses and guests signed up. Emerging View, a Malaysian based travel company, made all the arrangements and arranged for a very knowledgeable guide, Vincent Peh, to meet us at the Penang airport. First stop was the back side of the island known as Balik Pulau where we were greeted with broad stretches of durian trees planted on very hilly terrain. The scenery during the ascent was relaxing with magnificent views of the South China Sea.

The Bao Sheng Durian Farm is a well-established durian stop and they have even set up a small hotel with a dozen rooms on the premises. Our eating area was a wooden shack replete with tables and chairs. We were surprised to be served by a Hungarian man who had two little kids in tow. He opened the durians and the children gathered the shells.

Mr Hungarian had heard about the King of Fruits from a friend in France and so he decided to make a trip to Penang to see what the fuss was all about. The durians were of very top quality and all of us enjoyed tremendously the quality of D15, Black Thorns, Green Skin, Ang Bak, and Little Red. As we arrived early in the season, Red Prawn, Mao Siang King and Hor Lor were not ready at Bao Sheng.

The owner proudly presented the best fruits from the farm right from the start of our repast which is unlike a durian farm in Johor we visited previously where we were given only the ordinary ones from the beginning with the better varieties being brought out after we were full!

A lunch stop was made beside the beach right across from the Spice Farm which some patronised. We continued along the famous Batu Ferringhi sea front with its big name hotels and then found ourselves in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of George Town. Many old heritage buildings have survived from the British Colonial days and we were given a brief history of Penang as we wound our way through the busy streets to the Cititel Hotel, our lodging for the next two nights.

Dinner was at Perut Rumah, a heritage building serving Penang-style Peranakan food of high standard. Following this, the mandatory foot massage followed and a trip back to the hotel for a well-needed rest.

The Cititel boasts a most substantial breakfast with cuisines ranging from Japanese to Western to Malaysian. Suitably stuffed, we headed to the museum of the Khoo Clan who have made their presence known from Indonesia to Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. According to legend, the Khoos, who were and still are largely Western-educated, controlled the opium trade to China and consequently made a pretty penny which is reflected in their substantial presence in the real estate of the region.

The present Khoo Clan structure is surrounded on all four sides with rows of heritage shop houses with a well-ornamented temple taking pride of place. Tablets illustrating scenes from ancient Chinese themes with an emphasis on the importance of education adorn the façade.

In the memorial area, the names and photos of prominent Khoos are featured. We noted the inclusion of the late Khoo Teck Puat of Goodwood Park Hotel fame and his father who had come to Singapore from Penang.

The Peranakan Mansion was our next stop and we were entranced by the rich culture and heritage on show. Jewellery (with an armed guard!), period clothing, a matrimonial bed, the lounge for visitors were all on display in a well-designed layout. Frankly the displays were better than those known in Malacca.

The durians that day were from a well-known downtown temporary stall named Ah Leng, after the owner. He sources the best from all over the island and it's not surprising that he gets visitors from both China and Hong Kong aplenty. The durians were good but prices were very expensive ranging from RM 70 per kg for Mao Siang King and Black Thorn, Red Prawn at RM 45 per kg!

Dinner was at McAllister Road, New Lane Hawker Centre, for street hawker food. Back to the Cititel Hotel, some wandered over to the Red Garden Food Court across the road for drinks and to listen to live performance by Philippine Singers.

Our last day saw us heading up to the slightly cooler top reaches of Penang Hill via a tram car where we took in a birds-eye view of the bridges that link the island to the mainland. A buggy ride around the crest of the hill revealed black and white houses frequented by the rich and famous of Penang.

Kek Lok Si Temple was our next stop showcasing the tallest statue of the Goddess of Mercy in South East Asia. It was an arduous climb on foot to the top which can be circumvented by using a private hire car! Here again, the views of Penang island were priceless. But for some of us, the highlight was the famous Penang Assam Laksa stall at the base that daily served between 1,500 to 2,000 bowls of the fragrant, tamarind-rich noodle at RM4.50 each.

Some of our members commented that this was the best rendition of this famous dish they had ever consumed.

Tiger Air departed Penang that afternoon with 15 satisfied members (one decided to stay on in Penang) and touched at Changi Airport at 1800 hours. We all had a memorable holiday in Penang and came home loaded with Penang goodies.