

Academy of Language Studies  
UiTM Cawangan Pulau Pinang

# e-Lingua

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*Connecting Cultures  
One Word at a Time*

你好

Apa Khabar?

Bonjour

Hello

مرحبًا

Hallo

こんにちは



# Interesting Places in Penang for Dark Tourism

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Foley and Lennon (1996) introduced the phrase “dark tourism.” Visits to areas of death, tragedy, or atrocity are referred to as dark tourism (Foley & Lennon, 1996). In Malaysia, dark tourism is a growing industry with enormous potential to help interpret cultural heritage, build national identity, and enhance regional tourism (Mahdzar et al., 2025). According to Jamin et al. (2020), dark tourism is one example of a tourist product that can appeal to both local and international travellers seeking new and exciting experiences.

## *Penang War Museum*

The Penang War Museum is widely recognized as the largest war museum in Southeast Asia which is situated strategically on Batu Maung Hill. The Penang War Museum possesses key characteristics that position it as a significant site for dark tourism. The museum’s physical setting, historical background, and interpretive exhibits make it a

compelling destination within this tourism niche. Originally built as a British military fortress in the 1930s, the museum preserves authentic wartime infrastructure, including cannon-firing bays, anti-aircraft pits, underground tunnels, lockups, and command centres. Exhibits such as the guillotine stand, bullet-marked walls, and testimonial records of survivors convey narratives of oppression and human tragedy. Rather than presenting war as abstract history, the museum confronts visitors with tangible reminders of violence and loss, encouraging reflection on the human cost of conflict. This emotional engagement is a defining feature of dark tourism experiences.

### *Crag Hotel*

The Crag Hotel on Penang Hill holds strong potential as a dark tourism site due to its layered history, abandonment, and associations with past conflict and mystery. Once a prestigious colonial health resort that served European elites and government officers, the hotel later



Penang War Museum

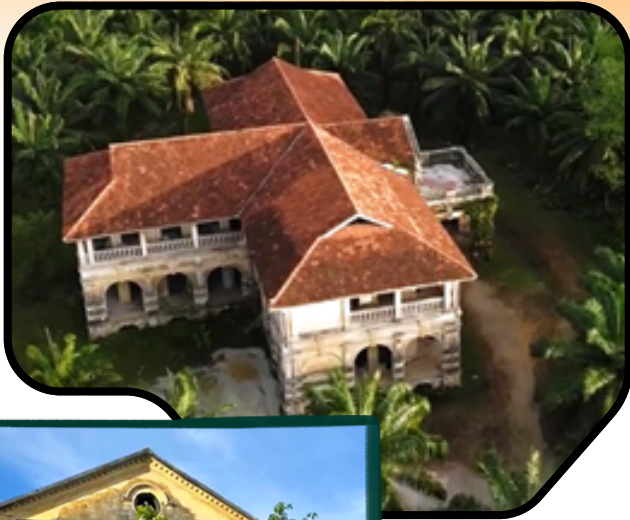
experienced significant historical transitions that mirror broader socio-political changes in Malaya (Jia-Ju, 2022). Its occupation by the Japanese army during World War II links the site to a painful period of wartime control and disruption, giving it historical gravity beyond its original hospitality function (Jia-Ju, 2022). Its eventual abandonment in 1977 left the structure to decay, transforming it into a haunting ruin. Today, the crumbling remains, mist-covered setting, and isolated hilltop location create an atmosphere of eerie stillness that attracts curiosity seekers and heritage enthusiasts. Rumours of ghost sightings and unexplained incidents, though unverified, add to the site's mysteriousness and emotional intrigue. Its use as a filming location for period and colonial-themed productions further reinforces its haunting visual identity. As a result, the Crag Hotel offers dark tourism visitors a reflective encounter with forgotten colonial heritage, wartime disruption, and decay.



*Crag Hotel*

## ***99-Door Mansion***

The 99-Door Mansion, originally known as Caledonia House, embodies many characteristics of a dark tourism site through its association with tragedy, mystery, and historical decay (“Caledonia House: An Abandoned Mansion...”, 2025). Built in the 1840s by the wealthy Ramsden family, the mansion once symbolised colonial affluence and economic power (“Caledonia House: An Abandoned Mansion...”, 2025). However, its history took a darker turn in 1948 when John St Maur Ramsden was murdered on its staircase under unresolved circumstances (“Caledonia House: An Abandoned Mansion...”, 2025). The unsolved nature of the crime has generated decades of speculation, transforming the mansion into a site of intrigue and unease. The building’s later



*99-Door Mansion*



occupation by Japanese forces during World War II further ties it to a period of wartime domination and social disruption (“Caledonia House: An Abandoned Mansion...”, 2025). Following its abandonment in the 1960s, the mansion gradually deteriorated, leaving behind crumbling walls, overgrown vegetation, and a silent structure that evokes loss and neglect. Its unusual architectural design, featuring multiple doors per room, adds to its maze-like and unsettling atmosphere. Local legends of hauntings and supernatural sightings, though unverified, have amplified the mansion’s eerie reputation. Together, its violent past, wartime associations, abandonment, and haunting narratives position the 99-Door Mansion as a compelling dark tourism destination where visitors encounter both historical memory and emotional curiosity.

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