

# TOURISM'S IMPACT ON ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENT'S IMPACT ON TOURISM IN PENANG

By Martin Khor Kok Peng  
Director, Consumers' Association of Penang

## INTRODUCTION

In this brief paper I shall not be able to cover comprehensively the relation between tourism and the environment. An earlier book by CAP ("See The Third World While It Lasts") has dealt in detail on the social, cultural and environmental effects of tourism, with particular reference to Penang and Malaysia. This paper will deal with some selected critical current issues which I feel will be of importance to the future of Penang's environment, tourism and quality of life of local residents.

From the outset we should make it clear that we are not against tourism *per se*. Developed properly and catering to the right category of tourists, without destroying the environment or social values but enhancing them, tourism can bring many benefits both economic and cultural. However if tourist infrastructure is developed without proper prior planning nor proper care for conservation, it can cause great environmental damage. Moreover the reverse is also true. Environmental deterioration itself can tarnish tourism potential. This is especially so in a place like Penang which depends on its image of being a nature and environmental paradise for much of its tourist attraction. There can also be a vicious cycle where improperly planned tourism infrastructure can damage the environment which in turn diminishes tourist potential. And even setting aside the tourists, we find that the local population may become the biggest victims of the effects of both tourism and environmental damage.

The recent history of Penang unfortunately bears out this warning. This paper argues that:

- (a) The environment has deteriorated in Penang, posing health problems and having negative impacts on the quality of life of the local people;
- (b) This environmental deterioration will have negative effect on the image of Penang and thus on its tourist potential;
- (c) There is a threat that, if unchecked, plans for future tourist infrastructure development will further damage the environment and Penang's

image as a natural and environmental paradise and thus ironically spoil both the quality of life for local people as well as its tourist potential.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL DETERIORATION IN PENANG

Despite being generally regarded as the richest as well as most beautiful state in Malaysia, Penang is also one of the most polluted. Here are some relevant facts from the Department of Environment's Environmental Quality Reports for 1987 and 1988:

(1) "Faecal Coliform is used as an indicator of human and animal waste pollution....

The coastal waters of Pulau Pinang ranked the highest in terms of faecal contamination followed by Selangor and Negeri Sembilan". (EQR 1988:p38).

The report shows that of the 120 samples of seawater collected off Penang, almost 70% exceeded the standard for recreational purposes (i.e. 100 MPN/100 ml)

(2) Penang's rivers are extremely contaminated. The Juru River is one of four rivers in Peninsular Malaysia termed "very polluted" in 1985-87 (EQR 1987:p61). The Perai River is also contaminated. The Environment Quality Report 1988 says Sungai Perai and Sungai Juru are the rivers most affected by pollution by sewage and animal waste (thus resulting in high ammoniacal nitrogen content.) On the Island, the Sungai Pinang is a well-known disgrace, with oil, grease, chemicals and rubbish dumped into it; and worst of all the island's prime river is filled with blood, guts and rotting flesh and carcasses of dead animals dumped from the abattoir of the island's Municipal Council (MPPP). Hundreds of families living along these rivers are facing terrible conditions of health and discomfort.

(3) Penang's marine water quality is also alarming in terms of toxic heavy metals. The proportion of water samples exceeding safety standards was 100% for cadmium (Penang being the worst state), 100% for mercury (Penang being the worst state), 100% for nickel (Penang the worst state), about 90% for lead (Penang the 4th worst state) and about 90% for copper (Penang the 2nd worst state).

(4) Tests on air quality showed that in 1988 the total suspended particulates (or air pollutants) exceeded the recommended guidelines in Bagan Ajam Clinic, Butterworth and Police Headquarters, Penang (EQR 1988). In 1986, the annual mean concentration of dust fallout in Penang Island was 185mg/m<sup>2</sup>/day which exceeded the proposed standard of 130 (EQR 1985/86).

An earlier study in 1982-83 found that in all but one site sampled, the levels monitored in the island exceeded the proposed Malaysian air quality standard (MPPP Report of Survey, Penang Island Structure Plan p133). In Seberang Perai, it was found that the Seberang Perai Tengah district "faces pollution that is most serious from dust due to the presence of many industrial zones and small industries." (Seberang Perai Structure Plan Report of Survey).

The presence of small industries, workshops and motor vehicle mechanics in most residential areas in the state also poses health hazards to residents who have to breathe in lead caused by car spraying activities or burning of plastic and chemicals and deafening noise pollution.

(5) There are serious and increasing problems of soil erosion and flooding caused by construction activities and hill cutting. Extremely high sediment load was found in areas with construction activity such as Miami Beach, Mount Pleasure and Bukit Gambier. Coastal sediment pollution was serious off Batu Ferringhi Hills. The Penang Structure Plan Survey Report (p131-132) notes that soil erosion effects are not confined to areas where the soil is lost but are also evident "in areas far removed where the eroded soil is channelled to streams and coastal areas". River silting disrupts the lives of rural people. And erosion also increases floods. "Inadequate or absence of erosion control measures in land developments schemes involving the clearance of hill land in Penang Island have resulted in flooding of residential areas and sedimentation of drainage channels". The report also says that laws dealing with soil conservation and erosion are not being enforced.

The above are only some tested facts. Any Penang resident can testify to the qualitative deterioration in the environment that proceeded as rapidly as urbanisation, industrialisation and tourist infrastructure. Hills around the island are scarred; sea and river waters are silted seriously by soil erosion from construction works; flood incidence in residential areas (including middle-class areas like Minden Heights) has increased as drainage systems are clogged up; traffic has increased tremendously.

Worst of all Penang still lacks a sewage treatment system. Most of the island's raw untreated sewage is channelled into the sea off Jelutong, the rest flows through rivers and other channels eventually to the sea. As the Penang Structure Plan Survey Report puts it: "The total sewage load is discharged untreated into the Western Channel of the South Straits via the Jelutong Outfall. It is highly probable that the pollution along the East Coast may be attributed to the poor dispersion and dilution of the high volume of raw sewage that is continuously pouring out through the outfall" (p130-131). The tide carries the human waste

shore-ward. In pig-rearing and poultry rearing areas, animal wastes also end up in the sea creating a terrible stench. At Gertak Sanggul, the E-Coli count (indicating faecal contamination) was 1.8 million MPN per 100 ml in 1986 or 9,000 times above the safety limit of 200. The impact on human health through the food chain is extremely serious. CAP tests in 1986 found fish bought in Penang markets containing E-Coli (bacteria derived from human or animal waste) up to 16,000 times above the safety standard and cockles with E-Coli up to 400 times above the safety level. A separate test found seawater (taken off the Sungai Pinang mouth) contaminated with Coliform 13,000 times above the safety level and E-Coli 143 times above the safety level. (*Utusan Konsumer* June 1986).

By the second half of the 1980s, Penang unfortunately became known as a centre for a number of epidemics. In 1986 Hepatitis A took a heavy toll with Georgetown having the highest incidence rate (549 cases per 100,000 population) (*Star* 20 Oct 1986). In 1987 a typhoid epidemic hit Penang with over 200 cases reported and Georgetown again having the most number of cases. In 1988 there was a major cholera outbreak. A leading doctor told CAP in 1988: "Penang has become an infections disease centre. We have typhoid, cholera, gastro-enteritis and Hepatitis A. These disease are transmitted by the faecal-oral route which indicates a breakdown in sanitation".

It is very clear that a modern state like Penang with its Komtar and Bridge is sadly lacking in the most basic amenities of sewage treatment, sanitation and proper waste disposal. Being so surrounded by the sea, both the island and the mainland are especially susceptible to infections diseases spread through human waste which is all channelled untreated into the coastal waters. Through seafood, or even swimming in seawaters, the waste returns to us. The lesson is clear: we have to take care of basic needs on the ground (and in the waters) first even as big modern buildings go up. Otherwise health and quality of life suffer due to priorities being placed upside down. When through the years CAP repeatedly requested the state authorities to instal sewage treatment facilities the inevitable reply was "the lack of money prevents us from doing so." Yet billions of ringgit have been spent on expensive infrastructure (like the Bridge, Komtar) which are luxurious compared to sewage and sanitation.

Besides quality of life, the implications for tourism are all too obvious. Who wants to visit a centre of epidemics and infections diseases? Tourists were not very keen to come, or if they came they were frightened to sample some of Penang's famed hawker foods (especially those using cockles) during the years of disease outbreaks.

At the beaches, water contamination and beach pollution are all too evident. In Seberang Perai, "beaches all along the survey area faced problems such as dirty and muddy waters, waste materials and rubbish and serious erosion." (Seberang Perai Structure Plan, Report of Survey 1990). The report also notes serious presence of E Coli and heavy metals and the seawaters were thus "unsuitable for swimming" as it would cause skin and eye ailments. At the island beach hotel front of Batu Ferringhi, it is also well known that the seawaters are polluted, including by sewage from the hotels. The stench and suspended matter in the seawaters at certain times is an acute embarrassment. Frequent letters to the press by irritated tourists (plus of course from frustrated Penang residents) attest to the deep unhappiness with the situation. Again the lack of planning and control by the authorities has resulted in the neglect of basics even as the four and five star hotels rose up. The boomerang back on tourism is obvious as tourists report that the gleaming white beaches are mismatched by the suspicious substance and stench in the sea.

The beaches in Penang are also being destroyed by erosion. According to the State Works Committee chairman Haji Zain Omar, at least 13 beaches along the State's coastline face severe coastal erosion that posed a threat to property and farms (New Straits Times, 10.7.90). The erosion covers more than 45 km of Penang's coastline. In badly affected areas on both the island and mainland, the shoreline was retreating by two to 10 metres per year for the past few years. \$2.2 million is being allocated to build buffers to contain the erosion at Sungei Burung on the island alone. More millions will have to be spent on other stretches. This includes Gurney Drive, a prime recreation area where rocks have to be placed against the shore to briefly resist the rapidly incoming sea, as well as Tanjung Bungah, Batu Ferringhi and Seberang Perai. At Lone Pine Hotel in Batu Ferringhi the tall and proud pine trees are in danger of crashing down as their roots are dangerously exposed due to erosion; in fact one of these giants has already collapsed, the rest will surely follow if nothing is done to save them.

The erosion is at least partly caused by construction activities in the sea. The Seberang Perai Structure Plan Survey Report states: "*Kerja-kerja penambakan laut dan aktiviti tebus-guna tanah juga boleh menyebabkan masalah hakisan dan kelodakan air laut.*" (Sea-filling and land reclamation activities can also cause problems of erosion and sedimentation of sea waters).

The erosion of Penang's beaches has obvious negative impacts in depriving local residents of a prime source of recreation facilities; tarnishes the state's image as it destroys one of its greatest natural assets; and will of course make it a much less attractive tourist attraction. It would take many millions or hundreds

of millions of ringgit to restore seriously eroded beaches. The present plans for massive land reclamation off Tanjung Tokong and the CDD-21 plan off Jelutong could well cause further serious erosion of beaches elsewhere on the island and mainland. We therefore have to urgently look into the rehabilitation of Penang's beaches and the prevention of further beach erosion.

#### FUTURE TOURISM PLANS AND THE ENVIRONMENT: THE CASE OF PENANG HILL, YOUTH PARK, BOTANICAL GARDENS

In the above section, we have argued that notwithstanding the instalment of expensive infrastructure like the Bridge, hotels and high rise offices, the basic facilities such as sewage treatment and waste disposal were left neglected. So were public transport and recreation spaces and facilities for local residents. Lack of conservation awareness and environmental principles amongst the State leadership, authorities, planners and business community led to a deterioration in the environment and the dimming of the lustre of the Pearl of the Orient.

There are at least two ways to approach future development (including tourism and recreational development) in Penang. The first is the post-modern environmental or green approach which corresponds with current international development and planning principles and learns from the lessons of the past. This approach discards the obsolete "Man-Conquers-Nature" philosophy which would destroy natural resources and the environment in order to construct hideous buildings. Instead the green approach would advocate types of development that appreciate, harmonise with and enhance natural resources and natural assets not only to maximise human appreciation of nature but also ensure that development in the present generation does not harm opportunities for fulfilling human needs in future generations.

This kind of "ecological and sustainable development" is fast becoming not only a style of physical development but also a set of values and lifestyle among an increasingly important proportion of people in western countries and also in developing countries. Sustainable development, advocated by the Brundtland Report and lately the South Commission Report, is fast becoming the new wave of thinking worldwide. Corporations, planners of development projects and governments are re-examining policies, eschewing massive man-conquers-nature projects and instead promoting small-scale ecology-enhancing projects together with an appreciation of nature, natural resources, natural foods and natural products.

This is a fast growing trend, especially with the young, the young-adult and the professional groups. Of course this trend has implications for the kind of demand emerging in the recreation and tourist "market."

The second approach is the orthodox and still predominant thinking that to progress we must "develop", alter and change whatever is natural, and the bigger the project, the better and more spectacular. Hills, beaches; grass, gardens and fields; jungle and forests: all things natural are seen as "undeveloped" and primitive and constitute the potential for "commercial development." It was this kind of thinking that, for instance, transformed one of the loveliest stretches of stream in the Penang Botanical Gardens into a hideous huge "pond" shaped like Penang Island with a long mini Penang Bridge above it. The 50-foot bridge was built to cross what was once a lovely gurgling natural stream at most six feet wide. The grass beside this stream, where families would enjoy many a cool picnic, is now a ghastly flood plain as the natural flow of the river was jammed up by the artificial big pond. The whole effect is horrendous. Moreover what was before a great stretch of garden where young and old could run or walk across the greens has now been split up by a wide, long concrete pathway. One can imagine how a politician or planner saw that great expanse of green field and said: "How awful, so much bare grass. We must 'develop' it!" It will not be long before the last great stretch of green grass, up the hill that faces the Waterfall, where children run freely up and down, will also be "developed" by concrete roads and pavements. And this at a botanical *garden*, supposedly the most natural and beautiful in this part of the world, as it lies in the valley surrounded on all sides by the cool hills. The Botanical Garden's streams have also been choked the past few years by tons of silt and sediment brought down by construction works in building the road to Penang Hill. The road construction has also caused many landslips, soil erosion right down to the Garden's entrance and serious flooding.

However a positive development was the banning of motor vehicles into the Gardens. This resulted in an explosive increase in the number of Penangites who now use the Gardens every evening for jogging, walks and even Tai-Chi. At the nearby Youth Park large numbers of people also gather for running and family outings as they are able to enjoy the cool, natural and peaceful surroundings. There is even a recent plan by the state authorities to amalgamate the Youth Park and the Gardens into a huge natural recreation area which all Penangites could be grateful for.

Alas, what we saw happening in a small way to plaster Botanical Gardens with concrete, is now being planned further not only for the Gardens and Youth Park but also the whole of the majestic Penang Hill. What an official said,

"Develop It!", in respect to a part of the gardens, bigger officials are now saying to the whole of Penang Hill, the Park and the Gardens, which as everyone knows are the prime natural assets of Penang Island (apart from the beaches).

The plan (called the Penang Hill Resort Project) will drastically, radically and — may one say it, hideously — transform the whole of Penang Hill into a gigantic complex of hotels, condominiums, Acropolis, Disneyland and "adventure park." The complex will be a huge 900 acres in size, stretching from Crag Hotel and Richmond bungalow to Southview bungalow and from the Middle Station to the Top Station. This is one of the last remaining natural tropical forest areas left on the island, and certainly the most accessible and best loved since hundreds of thousands of Penangites have hiked up it, walked through it or stayed amidst it in one of the many government holiday bungalows in the hills.

It is of great, invaluable natural, scientific, ecological, aesthetic, emotional and sentimental value to Penang residents and surely also to the many thousands of tourists who have been there. Even more than the beaches, Penang Hill is to most Penangites the symbol and essence of all that is natural, beautiful and attractive of their island, which gives them a sense of belonging, and a feeling that "I am proud to live in Penang".

The proposed project will inevitably change the characters of the hills. There will be :

- (a) A new 200 room luxury hotel at the site of the old Crag Hotel;
- (b) A 350 unit condominium where the Lomond Bungalows now are;
- (c) An "Acropolis" at the Summit with a large dome containing a planetarium and theatre; a shopping centre, indoor sports, sauna and massage club facilities, cinemas, night clubs and discos;
- (d) Another 200-room hotel;
- (e) A complex of apartments and houses;
- (f) A walk-in aviary of 275,000 square feet occupying the valley below the Middle Station;
- (g) A forest lodge and many chalets at Southview;
- (h) A Tiger Hill Adventure Park with a golf course and 25 hectares of jungle walk which will include "features" such as a moon walk, space shuttle, crazy maze, shipwreck and "haunted mansion" with special effects.

To connect all these areas, trains will run on a railway track to be built on the existing roads. To get people up the hill, a cable-car system will be linked from Botanical Gardens to the hill top.

The project will also involve a "lowlands development" that includes a "Water World" of 10.2 hectares at the Youth Park that would be a series of water



chutes, super slides and a swimming pool, with a car park for 350 cars. The Botanical Gardens is seen as "under-utilised" and "underdeveloped" by the developers who want to make new investments to raise the gardens to a "more marketable standard". Large car parks for 1,000 cars are planned.

The above plans would convert the natural hills and gardens into Disneyland-type playgrounds. Many environmental effects can be predicted. Several hundreds of acres of natural forests will be devastated, many thousands of magnificent trees will be felled. The damage to forest, fauna and flora — some of which are unique to Penang Hill — would be immeasurable. The degree of soil erosion resulting from construction works and hill cutting will be immense. The river systems, streams, and drains will be clogged up by silt whilst vegetation and trees may perish from flooding and being covered up by the silt.

Another extremely dangerous possibility would be the threat to the island's water supply. The project area in Penang Hill is the island's most vital source of rivers and of several catchment areas including Sungei Pinang West (which supplies water for Balik Pulau), Air Itam Dam, Waterfall (which supplies Pulau Tikus residential areas), and Batu Ferringhi. The felling of forests would reduce the region's catchment capacity whilst the resulting soil erosion and damage to the river systems would further threaten the water collection and retention function of the whole area. The island's major sources of water supply could dry up. This effect alone would of course be disastrous beyond imagination.

For the purpose of protecting the island's strategic natural resources, the project area and much of Penang Hill is gazetted as 'closed forest' or a forest reserve to protect water catchments. The whole hill is also protected under the Soil Conservation Act 1960 which prohibits its use for cultivation or development in order to prevent soil erosion and loss. In an area harbouring the island's most important water catchments, developments on such a potentially damaging scale as proposed are unthinkable. To allow such a project, the state authorities would have to exempt the project from the strict laws laid down specifically to protect the ecology, the forest and water supplies. To do so in the name of tourist development and to create Disneyland-type playgrounds would not be rational.

Other environmental problems will also be caused. How will the several tons of rubbish and sewage to be generated daily be disposed off? At present the solid wastes are thrown down hillslopes in Penang Hill. As discussed earlier, even the human waste generated down in Penang town and the beach hotels are dumped untreated in the sea. Thus it cannot be assumed that waste disposal would be a simple problem to solve up the hill. There will also be contamination of the water and river systems from silt, sewage, pesticides and other wastes which in turn

would affect the quality of drinking water on the island. During the ten years of construction, there will be tremendous air and noise pollution. The tranquility of the hills will be destroyed.

For the local residents or even visitors who have treated the hill, garden and park as prime recreation areas and sources of rest, exercise and tranquility, the project will destroy the precious and rare natural character of these areas. The remaining free area of the Youth Park will be greatly diminished; one has to pay to enter the Water sports area. The Botanical Gardens will lose their quiet tranquility as the area will be the base of the cable car. The thousands of people now using the jeep track from the Gardens entrance to Moniot Road will make way for the lorries carrying building materials. And up on the hill summit, a rail track with trains will compete with people who want to enjoy a nature walk on the existing small roads.

The hill project could also cause an increase in the hill's temperature, keeping in mind that the temperature in Cameron Highlands has risen two degrees centigrade in recent years due to "development".

Perhaps more than even the loss of scientific, ecological and natural recreational resources, the proposed project would put an end to Penang Hill as we have known and loved it, the essence of the beauty and mystery of the natural environment that is Penang. The most valuable jewel in the crown of Penang would be tarnished forever.

To Penangites the destruction of the natural Penang Hill as it now is would be akin to logging or damming up Taman Negara. In fact, many will argue that the existing Penang Hill be considered as a national park due to its unique setting within Penang Island, being natural yet eminently accessible.

## CONCLUSIONS

Existing plans for large-scale projects such as the hill project and the reclamation schemes can be predicted to cause serious environmental problems even more than encountered till now. The reclamation projects could result in the acceleration of beach erosion. That may tarnish the image of Penang as a beach resort. The Penang Hill project could cause serious effects on the island's water supply as well as result in the loss of a source of natural recreation facilities. The type of Disneyland facilities, shopping and cinema complexes being planned in the project should not be located in the hills as they detract from the natural and peaceful environment. It is known that many of Penang's other hills are also

targetted for cutting to make way for other projects. The Pearl of the Orient might lose not only its lustre but find itself transformed into a mere plain stone. For Penang residents who have preferred to live here this would be a personal tragedy.

A high-ranking Singapore official who visited Penang last year told me he envied Penangites for their "sense for belonging to the land of Penang", a fierce pride in the geographical area and space, which was lacking in Singapore. This indefinable yet invaluable quality that Penang possesses — call it simply the state of being Penang — is perhaps the greatest source of pride and joy of Penangites, and that attracts from us this sense of loyalty and belonging that my Singapore friend wished so much that his countrymen had for Singapore. This great quality and characteristic should not be sacrificed in the name of tourism.

For it can also be argued that what attracts visitors to Penang is the same quality that attracts Penangites to their state; the natural beauty and tranquility, the sea, shore and hills of such timeless quality that has been lost in the modern materialistic rat race and which can be regained all in one place. Tourists don't come to Penang to admire Komtar or gape at the Penang Bridge, most of them have come to escape from their skyscrapers and flyovers. They want to enjoy the unpolluted seas (for they have swimming pools at home) and the tranquility of natural forests and hills — not the shopping complexes and artificial parks with haunted mansion and Disneyland features that they can find at home.

For Penang's future development, one that benefits local residents as well as caters to tourists, we should creatively seek another model.

First of all, we should put top priority in ensuring basic facilities for the state, such as sewage treatment plants, proper sanitation and solid waste disposal and an end to the dumping of animal wastes and carcasses into rivers and seas.

There should be environmental protection in terms of controlling toxic wastes, reducing air and noise pollution, limiting the flow of industrial effluents to within safety standards.

Public transport must be vastly improved especially in terms of the bus system, so that many commuters may choose to use it rather than private vehicles that pollute and choke the roads. The encouragement of the use of bicycles through well defined cycle lanes should be implemented.

More recreation facilities should be provided in all geographical community areas. There is no public swimming pool on the island, which is shocking. The Chinese Swimming Club which is a private pool acting as the only public pool is vastly overcrowded, thus indicating a great demand for pools. Swimming pools can be provided in each major area such as Green Lane, Bayan Baru, Pulau Tikus,

the city, Balik Pulau and similarly in Seberang Perai. Playing fields should also be made available in these localities as well as other recreational facilities.

The Youth Park and Botanical Gardens areas should be left as natural as possible. They could certainly be "nurtured" rather than "concretely developed" by establishing gardens with the many species of plants and flowers that inhabit the Malaysian and tropical regions (as in the Munich Gardens which is a major tourist attraction); or with a garden of traditional medicinal plants including exhibitions and explanations; or with natural trails and treks into the surrounding forests, with guides employed to give schoolchildren nature lessons. The campsite at Coronation Camp should not be dismantled; on the contrary a number of campsites can be established in the area (including the hills above Youth Park and in the quarry site near the Gardens entrance). The campsite could even have fulltime or part-time employed guides with responsibility to take care of or even guide the young campers.

On the hills of Penang natural trails into the forests could be established to add on to existing ones, and the trails clearly mapped out so that trekkers can easily hike and criss-cross the hills. Simple facilities can be provided. One only has to think of the great and popular service offered by an old retired pensioner who has set up a coffee kiosk at the Moniot Road junction of the road from the gardens entrance to Penang Hill to see how such simple facilities can encourage hundreds of hikers onto a healthy hiking-cum-nature enjoyment culture.

The authorities can fully but properly exploit the beautiful natural assets of Penang by building holiday chalets or more holiday bungalows that blend into and harmonise with the environment rather than disturb it. The bungalows, or rooms in them, can be rented out to tourists and local residents either as whole bungalows or as bed-and-breakfast style rooms. The rentals can be medium priced or low-priced but at levels sufficient to recover costs with reasonable profit. These could be in the hills as well as the beach.

In this way the hills of Penang could be conserved yet used as tourist attractions for visitors who would like to trek through the tropical forests and stay within them in chalets and bungalows that are homely and in tune with the environment, rather than in the midst of supermarket and Disneyland modernity. Small-scale well-dispersed development spread out over the hills, with natural trails and treks, so that one may enjoy the thrill of nature: such could be the unique tourist potential of our Penang hills. And given that the love of tropical forests is the fastest rising component of the fast-increasing environment trend both in the west as well as in our region and country, it would be easy to "sell Penang" in this way to the tourist market. Moreover it would be so

attractive that Malaysian tourists (and Penangites too) would come here instead of holidaying abroad, thus saving us leakage in tourism abroad.

Penang also has many historical buildings and monuments which we can preserve, conserve and highlight as tourist attractions. Outstanding examples of local culture (such as a good Malay house within a traditional kampong) could also be identified and highlighted as tourist attractions.

There are many other examples which well planned can serve as tourist attractions that harmonise with and enhance Penang's natural beauty and environment as well as local cultures and even local artists of which Penang has a number of outstanding ones. And of course Penang's famed variety of foods, which should not be underestimated as tourist attractions.

The economic benefits from such a model of tourist development could be as great as the present model of large-scale development. It would have much less negative side effects (or economic costs). It would provide many jobs and spread out the benefits more equitably. It would also be ecologically sound and appeal to the rising generation of environmentally conscious citizens of this country and other countries. It would also be more creative than a model prompted mainly by commerce and attracting the temporary sensations of visitors. It would be satisfying and fulfilling, that caters to the finer qualities of local residents and visitors alike and that would enhance both Penang's natural beauty and the friendliness and generosity of its people.

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