

爱情至上

A Love Story Of Old Houses

(From top to bottom):
Chinese gateway and inner courtyard.



Once the home of a European family, 23 Love Lane later came under the ownership of a Chinese family. Near the end of its hundred years of existence, it had served as the Oasis Hotel, a backpacker's lodge, and finally, as its underlying wooden framework deteriorated, became uninhabitable. Take a look at how the buildings have been restored, with artisans from China brought in through a heritage grant, local craftsmen, and expert guidance from a renowned conservationist.

Set against the bewitching blue of the evening sky, the red glow of lanterns and warm yellow of tungsten from within a Chinese gateway is formidable, mysterious, and beckoning. Beneath a ridge of clouds, dragons, and phoenixes, the name plaque says "le lin", the Mandarin pronunciation of "love lane", which incidentally means a forest of joy; and by the ceramic scholars and warriors made in the traditional way, from fragments of porcelain bowls, the lanterns seek peace for the nation. Yet what you find beyond it is an Anglo-Indian bungalow, dating back to the 1860s. Recognisable by its pyramidal thatched roof, veranda with roll-down shades, and private garden, the Anglo-Indian bungalow was an adaptation of Bengal dwellings by British settlers.

A private corner.

Anglo-Indian Bungalow

The ground floor, which today is a lobby lounge, would have been a dining room in the olden days, with a corridor that led to the kitchen and servants' quarters at the back. The rooms on each side of the central hall have been converted into the guesthouse's office and the garden suite. On the second floor, exposed roof beams and rafters adorn the attic room over the porch. On one side is a petite bedroom, which overlooks the garden, and on the other is the library, surrounded by vivid oil studies of a bungalow and a street performer. Aside from Europeans, Indian Muslim traders, Arab magnates, and Malay nobles too favour the Anglo-Indian bungalow, dressed in intricate arabesque. Other bungalows might be raised off the ground with bricks, just as traditional Malay houses might be built on stilts, to keep safe from snakes, tigers, or monsoon floods. What might have been stables at the back of the house had a second story added to it in the 1880s. With their French windows, louvred shutters, and decorative Greek pilasters, the property had likely come under Chinese ownership, since that would have been a Straits Eclectic style. The orange tribal rugs underfoot, drop-front writing desk, and mounted canvases of a shophouse and a homeless boy seem to tell me that I am a free-spirited Bohemian backpacker, a wide-eyed adventurer in an exotic land.

Jack Roof Annex

Indeed, nothing could have prepared me for the sights and sounds which greeted me as I did a little exploring after night fell - the roadside hawkers dishing out noodles in a curry broth with deep-fried tofu puffs, as motorcycles whiz by alarmingly near; round the corner from the mamak shop crammed with old-school biscuits, canned drinks, and lottery tickets fluttering off cloths pegs, a minimalist coffee bar serves Melbourne-style brews and panini by a billiard table. Back in the 1920s, when wealthy families were waited upon by Hainanese cooks, dishes such as foo yong omelette with crabmeat, chicken rice with rice wine, and fried rice vermicelli with soy sauce might have emerged from the building now known as Jack Roof Annex. Named for the rafters, which support the roof, the kitchen had warm air out via the vent at the ridge, and cool air in through the eaves of the overhanging roof. The



Jack Roof Annex shares a wall with the Straits Eclectic Annex, and recessed brickwork gives away the secret that a doorway used to exist between the two.



Straits Eclectic Annex

Street art of an Indian main in a sampan.



Sitting area with vintage furniture and local art.

Indian Shophouses & Muntri Suite

The bedrooms seem to burst with the invincibility of youth, with black-and-white blinds, turquoise bed runner, and pop art of a race kart and a jumping toddler. Adjacent to the annex are the Indian shophouses. Built in the 1900s, the shops opened up to a five-foot way facing Stewart Lane, and might have had deep-fried murukku twists and laddoo coconut sweets displayed under garlands of scented jasmine and champaka blossoms. Before restoration work took place in 2009, all that was left of the shophouses were their columns and two walls, while passionflower creepers had over taken the façade, along with the entire inner courtyard. Timber was used to recreate the mezzanine, and wood battens and reclaimed terracotta tiles provide shelter once again. While the ground floor bedroom is soothing with pastel greens and yellows, the loft bedroom is absolutely irresistible in its cosiness, with two single beds under a sloping wood-panel ceiling, fuchsia pink and cyan blue cushions, and a reading corner by the side.

A short walk away is the Muntri suite, a pre-war shophouse in cornflower blue, with slatted shades over iron-bar windows on the top floor, and pink and green ceramic tiles on the five-foot way below. The five-foot-way, which protects pedestrians from the elements, was stipulated by Sir Stamford Raffles in 1822, based on the Dutch buildings he had seen in Jakarta. In fact, such rows of arches can also be found in Romanesque architecture, and in its shade you might find a fortune-teller, medicine man, or cobbler trying to make a living. Also found under the five-foot way might be a pushcart of kelinga mee with fritters and squid, topped with chopped lettuce and ground peanuts, and balanced in baskets off shoulder poles, steaming rice, fried chicken, spicy prawn, and curries.

THE RED GLOW OF LANTERNS AND WARM YELLOW OF TUNGSTEN FROM WITHIN A CHINESE GATEWAY IS FORMIDABLE, MYSTERIOUS, AND BECKONING.



Anglo-Indian bungalow



Chinese-Indian terrace

最浪漫的爱情巷

当马来西亚的檳城乔治市被评为世界文化遗产之后，许多老店或老房子就慢慢被投资者改为住宿或是餐饮服务，尤其是在乔治市的老街，你不难发现这种现象。小型的精品酒店或民宿都在这如雨后的春笋般的成长，而这类酒店的设计都融入了檳城文化的色彩。这次我们要入住的酒店就座落在有着浪漫又美丽的小巷里～爱情巷。我想如果能牵着自己心爱的人走在这一条街，应该是幸福的。《乐林》精品酒店（中文名字是直接借用 Love Lane 翻译过来）所提供的优质服务和高品复古风格住宿，带给我们有种宾至如归的生活体验。在古镇区爱情巷《乐林》是相当有名气的精品酒店，除了把别墅式的老建筑特别改装成俱有浓郁古典色彩的酒店，仅有十间房的《乐林》也成为旅客的“抢手货”。因为房间不多，即便客满也不会感到吵闹，所以比较喜欢清静的游客，应该

会喜欢这里。虽然是老式庭院建筑，但整个屋子的构造却非常美丽，房间很有设计感，整个别墅的古早味有种另类冲击时尚风。房间有很多艺术收藏摆设，如一些油画，摆设品，雕塑作品，还有一些复古的水缸，痰盂等等。庭院里静谧中在夜里的灯光下透露出主人精心的布置。这是个地理位置优越的酒店，离檳城的地标光大大大厦不远，如果你爱吃又爱喝两杯，周围晚上营业的街边摊还有pub必定能满足你。这里有适合全家人入住的家庭套房，或是双人情侣套房。檳城各族文化独有特色，经理说逐年受到国内外的旅客青睐，我问经理为什么有这么多游客来这里，何不把一间房当两间房来用？经理笑说，把十间房间酒店做到最巅峰，总好过做只有一般成就的二十间房酒店。这也许就是《乐林》精品酒店成功的秘诀之一。志偉

Pre-war Shophouses

In the past, when shophouses had their bathrooms constructed at the back of the house, going to the washroom at night was an affair fraught with fright to a small child, since the corridors were long and dark. If your parents ran a shop on the ground floor, you learn not to run about on the second floor, since the wood would creak. There might also be friction with cousins that you don't get along with, if several generations lived together. For the younger generation, however, who grew up in nuclear families in increasingly tiny apartments of concrete, there is heritage to be found in a traditional shophouse; it gives a glimpse into how people used to live in the olden days. With three bedrooms, family hall, and a kitchen, the shophouse could probably house three generations comfortably under one roof.

Not that you will need the kitchen, since you can find local fare such as sambal stingray grilled in banana leaf, roti canai Indian flatbread, and mutton soup with fennel, star anise, and cinnamon just a street away. Like Muntri suites, Stewart suite is a shophouse, with emerald green air vents embedded into low walls above the five-foot way, washed in a pale sky blue. Vintage enamel plates spray-painted with red and pink roses with foliage, a rooster with orange and green feathers, and a composition of banana, pineapple, and grapes ornament the kitchenette, and a breeze can be felt near the air well.

A miniature of the traditional Chinese courtyard, an air well collected rainwater off the roofs, which is why they were also known as sky wells. The water collected helps cool the house as it evaporates. In these family businesses, you might find antique dealers, sundry shops, salvaged goods outlets, roast pork stalls, or old-world coffeeshops. Many dying trades have now been succeeded by shops selling nostalgic bric-à-brac, bicycle rentals, and trendy cafés, breathing new life into the heritage architecture. In Penang, time slows, and all the material wants you've been chasing after don't seem so crucial anymore. Once in a while it is good to dawdle, re-assess your purpose in life, and emerge anew from an oasis like 23 Love Lane. QL

THE HOMELESS BOY SEEMS TO TELL ME THAT I AM A
FREE-SPIRITED BOHEMIAN BACKPARKER, A WIDE-EYED
ADVENTURER IN AN EXOTIC LAND.

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