

Off to 'ferry' new destinies

'Pulau Rimau' all set to offer multi-cuisine dining experience

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GEORGE TOWN: Penang's iconic ferries are sailing into a new chapter, albeit on different paths. As one struggles to stay afloat, another begins life anew as a vibrant eatery, capturing the hearts of Penangites and tourists alike.

Pulau Rimau, a 600-tonne ferry plying the waters between Butterworth and George Town in the 1980s, has been reimagined as a unique culinary and entertainment space named Marina de Captain.

Managed by South Star Empire Sdn Bhd, the vessel located behind the Queens Waterfront in Bayan Lepas, started welcoming customers from Monday by offering a multi-cuisine dining experience across three levels, with each maintaining the ferry's historical ambience while delivering an open-air setting where patrons can enjoy the sea breeze.

The first level of Marina de Captain boasts an impressive array of global flavours, with dishes representing 11 countries, including those from the Middle East as well as South Korea, Hong Kong, Japan, Thailand and Australia.

The second level serves as both a dining area and a versatile event space, capable of hosting up to 300 people for private functions, making it a prime venue for gatherings in a distinctive maritime setting.

The new owner has kept the ferry's interior as original as possible, from the lighting fixtures to the toilets, because Penangites



Looking ship-shape: Onlookers marvelling at Penang's first floating ferry restaurant 'Pulau Rimau' which has been transformed into Marina De Captain docked at Queens Waterfront. — ZHAFFARAN NASIB/The Star

have such fond memories of this iconic vessel from the 1980s.

For those seeking a more relaxed atmosphere, the third level known as 'Captain Morgan' has been transformed into a bar with live music and an ocean view, and can accommodate up to 180 patrons.

With more than 15,000sq ft (1,393sq m) of pork-free dining space, Marina de Captain brings back the charm of Penang's ferry era, but with a modern twist, after seven months of refurbishment.

Engineer BK Ong, 55, said the food hall is a nice place to bring the family to, adding that he is happy to see that the operator has tried to keep the original fittings.

"The first places I checked were the toilets on both decks, remembering how dirty they were when I had used the ferries as a teenager.

"I'm pleased to see they are now much cleaner, with the old squat toilets replaced with modern ones.

"I also feel that the ferry's original khaki colour should have been retained; the current colours are a bit gaudy in my opinion," he said.

As *Pulau Rimau* sails smoothly into its new role, the ferry *Pulau Pinang* faces choppy waters. Intended to become the Penang Ferry Museum, it is currently under repair at the Swettenham

Pier Cruise Terminal (SPCT).

The ferry, which was once a proud symbol of Penang's maritime heritage, sprang leaks after it was towed to the SPCT through the Bagan Dalam slipway on Oct 3.

It began keeling over at an extreme angle until workers managed to bail out water and plug the leaks.

Pulau Pinang was the last vehicular ferry to serve commuters, and it was repaired and refurbished at a cost RM1mil.

Another ferry, *Pulau Kapas*, sank in July, but was recently salvaged for scrap. A company was hired to cut up the two decks and air balloons were used to lift the hull.