

Cable car ride to Penang Hill in 2026

Passengers promised a scenic journey to the peak in under 10 minutes

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GEORGE TOWN: Locals and tourists can enjoy a cable car ride to Penang Hill by the third quarter of 2026 and it promises to be a scenic ride.

About 400m from Penang Botanic Gardens' front gate, the road will be turned into a pedestrians' promenade under shady trees.

As you stroll up to the fountains and water lilies decorating the front of the gardens, you will see the cable car station to your left.

The 1.2ha station will be called the Garden Station, where you will find more F&B outlets plus retail shops.

From there, you take a 2.73km cable car ride to the peak of Penang Hill about 700m above sea level in under 10 minutes, where the temperature is several degrees cooler than below.

At peak hours, a maximum of 1,000 passengers per hour may travel up this way and to minimise impact to the environment, only five pylon towers will be erected in the jungle while the remaining 10 towers will be built close to the upper and lower stations as well as the jeep track.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim did the groundbreaking ceremony yesterday for the Garden Station and reminisced his early days of visiting Penang Hill in his speech.

"Penang Hill is unique and its conservation was taken into account when the cable car was planned.

"There is an aspect of culture in its architecture.

"I hope the design will reflect



On the ground: Anwar, Chow (left) and Ravindran (right) during the groundbreaking ceremony of the Penang Hill Cable Car project at the Lower Station site outside the Penang Botanic Gardens in Penang. - CHAN BOON KAI/The Star

the beauty of the hill that is not only scenic but also historical and significant to the region as an important tourist destination," he said.

Penang Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow said the cable car system would provide a much-needed alternative and alleviate pressure on the century-old funicular train service.

"Hartasuma Sdn Bhd won the project with an investment of RM250mil made through a pub-

lic-private partnerships with the Penang government and now, we move on to the physical work.

"To alleviate concerns over limited parking during the construction phase, Penang Hill Corporation (PHC) has negotiated with Penang Hindu Endowment Board and Penang Island City Council to provide temporary parking at Arulmigu Balathandayuthapani Temple and Penang City Park," he said.

Chow added that Penang Hill is

a key destination in Malaysia, growing to 1.66 million visitors last year compared with 1.48 million in 2022.

"In the first five months of this year, there were 665,994 visitors, of which 40% were foreign tourists," he said.

Hartasuma Group executive director Tan Sri Ravindran Menon said the cable car system was a pivotal step in reenergising the appeal of the historic hill.

"Our goal for Penang Hill is to

create an experience that respects and upholds its history and natural beauty as a Unesco Biosphere Reserve," he said.

Aware of concerns surrounding this project, Ravindran gave assurance that the construction approach was rooted in respect for the natural environment.

"Extensive studies and careful planning were taken to minimise ecological disruptions and we have stringent measures in place to protect the flora and fauna," he said.

Hartasuma, a pioneer in the Malaysian rail industry, was awarded a 30-year concession for the Penang Hill Cable Car to design, finance, build and operate it.

The company appointed Austria-based ropeway market leader, Doppelmayr Seilbahnen GmbH, to supply the cable car system.

Doppelmayr has built over 15,400 ropeway installations worldwide, including 86 cable car installations located in Unesco heritage, geopark and biosphere sites as well as various national parks around the world.

Also present were Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing, PHC general manager Cheok Lay Leng and other state leaders.

NGO Sahabat Alam Malaysia, which previously objected to the project, could not be reached for comment.