

# Suriname, a country in South America and a member of organization of Islamic Countries

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[www.suriname-tourism.org](http://www.suriname-tourism.org)



Suriname, the Beating Heart of the Amazon, home of various cultures a remarkable cultural tradition of divers ethnic population groups in city and districts. Suriname's history, a cultural melting pot, will take you to all parts of the world. For nature lovers, the beautiful interior with its meandering rivers, extensive rapids and abundance of flora and fauna will be a true revelation. The country has multiple tourist attractions which will make your visit an unforgettable experience. A pleasant and sunny stay in hospitable Suriname.

## Getting to Suriname

Suriname Airways and other airlines provide connections from Amsterdam, New York, Fort Lauderdale and Miami, with several regional hubs also linked with Suriname. These include the French Department of La Guyane, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Curaçao and Brazil (Belem).

The main airport is J.A. Pengel Airport at Zanderij. This is about

60 minutes from Paramaribo, and taxis and buses are readily available. By road, Suriname can only be reached by road from Guyana and French Guyana.

## Language

Dutch is the official language. English is widely spoken, while local people prefer Sranan Tongo and their own ethnic languages such as Samami (a Surinamese variation of Hindi), Javanese,





Chinese, Portuguese, the Lebanese version of Arabic, and several different Amerindian and Maroon languages.

### Currency

The local currency is the Surinamese Dollar SRD, and money exchange facilities are readily available in Paramaribo and the district towns.

### Weather

Typically of the tropics, Suriname enjoys generous amounts of warm weather cooled by ocean breezes for most of the year.

Suriname is outside of the hurricane belt and characterised by two dry seasons and two rainy seasons, Short dry season February – April, long rainy season May – August, dry season

September – November and short rainy season December and January.

## Visas

At this time, many tourists from outside of CARICOM require visas. These can only be provided at the airport if organised in advance by a local tour operator or contact. Alternatively they may be obtained from a Suriname diplomatic mission.

## Nature

More than 80% of Suriname is

covered by pristine rain forest, and the jungle is the treasure chest of nature. One of the great attractions of Suriname is the opportunity to discover some of our spectacular flora, both in the interior as well as around our cities and towns. Many of the indigenous plants are important for their traditional healing properties, and new species are being identified every year

Suriname's nature conservation is rooted in the Dutch tradition and dates back some 50 years. The country's impressive conservation system comprises 11 nature





reserves, one nature park and four multi-use management areas. In total more than 19,000 square km of Suriname are protected corresponding to more than 12 % of the country's total area of some 164,000 square km. The Central Suriname Nature Reserve (CSNR), declared a World Heritage site in 2000 and covering about 16,000 square km of pristine rain forest, probably the largest nature reserve in the whole of Caribbean.

The CSNR was established by Government Decree in 1998, merging three existing national nature reserves of Raleighvallen, Tafelberg, and Eilerts de Haan Mountains, all established in the 1960s. Another reserve of world importance is the Galibi Nature Reserve in the northeast corner of Suriname. Four endangered species of sea turtles nest here (see Turtle Watching under Activities). For details of the nature

reserves and protected areas  
check [www.stinasu.sr](http://www.stinasu.sr)

You can't get closer to nature than trekking along jungle paths, led by a local guide, who can describe the local trees and plants and how its used, identify the colourful birds and animals for you, and bring you from village to village. Treks can range from a few hours to several days, and can range from easy to the strenuous (even to the top of Mount Kasikasima) ... it's up to you.

One of the great opportunities in Suriname is to visit and stay in or close to traditional Amerindian or

Maroon villages. Understand their special culture; discover how the indigenous villagers live their lives and listen to the local storytellers. Accompany local guides as they move through the jungle and along the rivers; live in simple village huts, and enjoy local dishes prepared from fresh ingredients grown in the villages. It is not uncommon to see several different tribes living peacefully in harmony in the same village with their different languages and cultural values.

Suriname is home to about 700 species of indigenous birds





(including the famous Cock of the Rock) as well as many seasonal migrants. With extensive mudflats and mangrove swamps on the coast, as well as savannah and rainforest Suriname provides an amazing diversity of habitats.

In Suriname, birders can catch sight of colourful forest birds, a wide range of waders and water birds, as well as some important South American raptors.

3,000 km of rivers flow through Suriname. From the impressive Suriname, Corantijn, and

Marowijne Rivers that drain the rain forests of the Amazon basin into the Atlantic, to local rivers and smaller tributaries that create the many highways into the interior.

Travelling by water is a way of life for Surinamers, and what better way for visitors to relax and see Suriname from a different angle (see River Trips under Activities). The border rivers of Corantijn and Marowijne and the Suriname and Coppename Rivers comprise the backbone of the river system. Other important rivers include the Saramacca River in Central

Suriname, Commewijne and Cottica Rivers in the East, Nickerie, and Wayambo Rivers in the West and Sipaliwini and Tapanahoni in the South. The Blanche-Marie Waterfalls on the Nickerie River are the most impressive waterfalls in Suriname. On the Coppename River, Raleighvallen is home to more than 425 species of birds

and all Suriname's eight species of monkeys can be seen here. When travelling in dug-out canoes on any of the rivers in the interior, the combination of small and large rapids (sulas) makes an exciting experience. The largest rapids can be found Wonotobo in the Corantijn River.







## Heritage and Culture

### Paramaribo

Relics of Suriname's colonial past, especially from the Dutch era, as well as evidence of pre-Colombian and earlier Amerindian people, make Suriname special. The Old City of Paramaribo, part of our Capital and your gateway to Suriname, is now undergoing loving restoration, so history comes alive in Suriname.

Suriname's capital city. Now its historic old heart is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Wander through narrow streets lined by historic buildings from past centuries of English, French and especially Dutch origin. Discover the largest wooden Cathedral in the western hemisphere, as well as impressive temples, mosques, synagogues, churches and other places of worship. Explore the 17th century Fort Zeelandia set in a picturesque setting along the

Suriname River amongst neatly renovated buildings from days gone by. Walk around many of the restored houses which were built in past centuries. Discover the local markets, or sip a drink on Waterkant (the Waterfront) as you watch the busy life on the Suriname River go by. The Palm Garden, the back yard of the Presidential Palace at the lawns of Onafhankelijkheidsplein (which translates as Independence Square) is a place to spend a pleasant hour. Make sure you plan for several days in Paramaribo during your trip.

### Old Plantations

Plantations used to be the lifeblood

of Suriname; a little more than two centuries ago there were more than 650 estates. A number of the old plantation houses have remained to this day, and some are being restored. Discovering them in the Commewijne, Para, Saramacca and Coronie Districts makes a fascinating excursion by bicycle, car or boat. Spend a day here or take a leisurely tour for several days and experience the relaxed life of the local people.

### Nieuw Amsterdam

Nieuw Amsterdam, with its open air museum featuring interesting and historical reminders of a past when foreign powers fought to





control the land at the mouth of the Suriname River, is a great trip out from Paramaribo.

### **Cultural Diversity**

Suriname's immense cultural diversity manifests itself in the composition of its population comprising a variety of ethnic groups. While the East Indian and Afro-Surinamese (Creole) dominate the population composition with 33% and 30% respectively, there are sizable groups of Javanese (17% of the total population) and 8% Maroons

(Bush Negroes). The indigenous Amerindian population comprises 3% of the total population in Suriname, while Chinese, Lebanese, Jews, Europeans and others constitute 9%.

The variety of religions, thriving in harmony in Suriname, is another proof of the country's huge cultural diversity. 27% of the population are Hindu, 25% Protestant, 23% Roman Catholic and 20% Muslim, while 5% belong to other religious groups.