

# Pedalling about Guyana

## Information for cycle tourists



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April 2012

## Introduction

We cycled around Guyana in March/April 2012. Below are details of the route we took as well as other information cyclists planning a trip may find useful. If there's anything else you'd like to know please email us at [pedallingabout@hotmail.com](mailto:pedallingabout@hotmail.com).

Guyana is unlike any other South American country we have visited. It feels more like the Caribbean with the laid back attitude, the twang of the spoken English and the fast bowling of the local cricketers on pitches across the country.

The 'trail' from Lethem to Georgetown is an adventurous stretch for cycling, with savannahs, dirt roads and thick rainforests. If the weather is in your favour it's a fantastic route, if not, well it's even more interesting. From Georgetown to the border with Suriname the terrain is much tamer, but there are enough friendly people and roadside roti stalls to keep you entertained.

## Our route



You can [view the live google map of our route](#) online.

	Distance (km)	Accommodation	Price (Guyana \$)	Notes
Border	-	-	-	
Lethem	5	Warmshowers - Joe & Christine	-	We hung hammock on the veranda of the house behind the Outdoor Store (next to airstrip).
<i>Pirara Ranch</i>	36	-	-	There is a stream just past the ranch where you can collect water.
<i>Johnsons Ranch</i>	37	-	-	
Point Ranch	8	Camped in farm building	-	We hung hammocks in one of the outhouse buildings.
<i>Toca village</i>	6	-	-	Small village, no shops, last house on right is home of village chief.
<i>Massara village</i>	8	-	-	
<i>Aranaputa village</i>	19	-	-	
<i>Oasis Service Centre, Annai</i>	5	-	-	Hot food available and small shop. Hammock spaces \$10 US per night.
Sumara turn-off	19	Hammock spot	-	Small shop and hammock spot run by Madonna, shower available.
<i>Iwokaramara Forest gate</i>	9	-	-	Police checkpoint, room for hammock if ask nicely. Gate to forest opens early morning.
<i>Canopy walkway turnoff</i>	18	-	-	Turnoff to canopy walkway, lodges available there, but track looked pretty muddy.
<i>Esseibo River Crossing</i>	56	-	-	Free for bikes. Ferry runs when cars want to cross, so may have to wait.
<i>Kurupukari village</i>	1	Hammock spot	1,000	Service station with bar, small shop, hammock spot and showers. Room for tents.
<i>Mabura</i>	103	-	-	Small village, police checkpoint, restaurants, probably hammock space.
<i>Mile 58</i>	20	-	-	Small settlement, restaurant, service station.
Linden	112	Guest house	4,000	1 block before 5-corners junction.

Timehri	66	Warmshowers – Joe and Christine	-	-
Georgetown	51	Rima Guest House	6,500	92 Middle Street, nice, clean, friendly
New Amsterdam	109	Church View Hotel	6,000	In centre of town. 5km from main road after river crossing.
Corriverton	78	Paramont Inn (?)	4,500	On main street.
Ferry crossing, Moleson Creek	13	-	-	-

## General Information

### Political situation

Politics wasn't a common topic of conversation with the Guyanese who we met. There is no major, issue concerning people, but we heard lots about trouble over the past few decades. As a result of the past turbulence a huge number of Guyanese, 500,000, live abroad. The current population stands at only about 750,000. We met lots of people visiting from the States and Canada, and spoke to others who had backup plans in Brazil for if thing went wrong again.

### Money

The currency is Guyanese Dollars, with an exchange rate of 320 to 1 British Pound in April 2012.

Georgetown was the only place in Guyana where we could easily get cash. Scotiabank's ATMs accepted our cards. There was possibly one in New Amsterdam as well, but we aren't certain. It's best to take enough cash on leaving Georgetown as there isn't much on the roads to the border and nothing on the road to Lethem. We didn't see an ATM in Corriverton, but there may have been one. We changed our Guyanese dollars into Suriname dollars with money changers at the ferry crossing.

We arrived in Lethem on a Saturday when the bank was closed for the weekend and there were no money changers around. The bank didn't have an ATM machine. We were able to exchange US Dollars with our host (people prefer larger value notes and you get a better rate for them) and also we were able to pay in US Dollars in the Savannah Inn store. If you're arriving from Brazil it's best to bring US Dollars or Brazilian Reals with you to be able to exchange.

### Costs

Guyana isn't particularly cheap, but accommodation and food is fairly reasonable, about the price in cheaper European countries. A good tip is to buy a hammock as it's much cheaper to hang a hammock than pay for a room, and it's much nicer than being in the tent in this climate.

### Getting in and out of Guyana

We crossed into Guyana from Brazil as there is no road connecting Venezuela and Guyana. There is a new road bridge connecting the two countries, with a clever system for changing traffic from left to right-hand drive on entering Guyana. Immigration on both sides was straightforward and we didn't get asked for a yellow fever certificate. As Brits we are eligible for a 90-day entry stamp but the official only wanted to give us two weeks, we managed to get him up to a month with some pleading.

We left Guyana into Suriname on the ferry crossing. The last accommodation before the ferry is 13km before, in Corriverton. There is nowhere to stay at the ferry terminal in Moleson Creek. We made the crossing the Thursday before Easter, so it was particularly busy, however locals said it is notoriously slow at all times, so expect a wait. It took us over six hours to get through immigration.

The ferry leaves Guyana twice a day:

- 9am departure (check-in 6.30-8.00)
- 1pm departure (check-in 10.30-12.00)

We arrived at 6.30 and the concourse was already full, we only just got in before the gates were closed, so get there as early as possible. The ferry costs 2,000GD per person, bicycles are carried for free.

If you need a visa to enter Suriname be aware that you cannot organise it at immigration, you must apply at the embassy in Georgetown. There are money changers at the gates of the ferry terminal in Guyana, you cannot change money on the Suriname side until you get to Nieuw Nickerie.

## Security

Guyana was a friendly place to cycle through and we felt safe around the country. Georgetown has a bad reputation for crime and it's not safe to walk around after dark. On Sunday, when the town was quiet, it had an eerie feeling, but we didn't experience any problems ourselves.

## Food and drink

Guyana has some fantastic food thanks to the mixture of people living in the country. You will find plenty of Chinese restaurants and Indian roti stalls, both of which are good options for vegetarians. There are also 'snackette' stalls selling small bites like egg rolls (boiled eggs wrapped in cassava and fried), sausage rolls and cheese pastries.

Roti stalls mainly serve the flat roti bread with curried chicken and potatoes. You can ask for it without meat and will usually get it with green beans instead. The Guyanese like their spice – taste your food first before accepting the offer of extra pepper!

Brits will be delighted to find a wide range of favourites from back home, including Cadburys chocolate, Tullocks caramel wafers and baked beans.

From Lethem to Linden there are hardly any places to buy food so you are best to stock up in Lethem. At Mile 58 there is a fantastic restaurant where you'll want to fuel up. From Georgetown to Suriname there are lots of supermarkets run by Chinese, which are reasonably priced. It's hard to find somewhere to eat in, which is surprising considering how built up there area is.

- Egg roll – 160GD
- Cheese pastry – 100GD
- Roti (bread only) – 120GD
- Fried vegetable rice (lunch) – 450GD
- Roti and curry (dinner) – 1,300GD

## *Drink*

Tap water in Guyana isn't potable and everybody either buys bottled water or uses a filter. Bottled water is expensive. Soft drinks/sodas are popular throughout the country. You get all the usual suspects from Coca-Cola and Pepsi. Banks is the most popular beer, followed by Carib.

- Water (1.5ltr) – 300GD
- Soft drink (1ltr) – 400GD
- Beer (bottle) – 300GD

## **Accommodation**

Accommodation in Guyana isn't cheap and not of a great standard. The average cost of a double room per night was 5,000GD.

However, we didn't need to stay in hotels very often. Joe and Christine are fantastic Warmshowers hosts in Lethem and Timehri, who we really enjoyed staying with.

We bought hammocks in Lethem and used them along the trail to Linden. Most villages have hammock spots where you can sleep for very little or even sometimes for free – they have bathrooms. It's much better than a tent as the ground can be wet, there are lots of insects about and also it's very hot for sleeping under canvas. We bought hammocks and mosquito nets from Savannah Inn for about US\$30 and would highly recommend them as they have been useful in the other Guyanas too.

The distances along the trail are quite far between villages. You could camp in the jungle if you don't have an irrational fear of snakes and jaguars, but there aren't many spots to pitch a tent as the jungle is thick.

## **Maps**

We used the Nelles map to Venezuela and the Guyanas at a scale of 1:2,500,000. Overall we were happy with the details the map showed, although it did miss off some of the smaller villages.

## **Roads**

Drivers are fairly courteous and it didn't feel unsafe at any point cycling around Guyana. Georgetown felt busy to cycle into, but is nothing to fear compared to other capital cities in South America. It's right-hand drive in Guyana.

*Lethem to Linden* – the road is a dirt track all the way. Along the savannahs it is flat and easily rideable. When you get into the rainforest it gets hillier with some steep climbs. If there has been rain the road can quickly deteriorate. We got stuck in thick mud and were wading through puddles. In the end we had to take a truck from Kurupukari to Linden as the road was in a terrible state – there are lots of drivers on the road who are willing to help if you get into trouble.

*Linden to Georgetown* – the road is paved from Linden, but the traffic is busy and there isn't much space for cyclists. It's built up all the way with houses and shops. We were glad to arrive in town.

*Georgetown to New Amsterdam* – the road is flat, in good condition, not too busy and with space for cycling. Before you reach New Amsterdam you cross a river with a floating bridge. You cannot cycle over it but the officials will help flag down a truck to carry you across.

*New Amsterdam to Moleson Creek* – the road is flat, in good condition and not too busy with space for cycling.

## **Bike maintenance**

We were lucky to have no problems with our bikes in Guyana, but we don't imagine we would have had any problems fixing them as most people have bikes.

## **Other stuff**

*Language* – the official language is English with a strong Caribbean accent.

*Guide books* – we used the Rough Guide and Lonely Planet guides to South America, which had enough information in on the places we wanted to visit.

## **Other sites**

We found the following sites usual for planning a cycle tour in Venezuela:

- [Crazy guy on a bike](#)
- [World biking](#)

## **Other Pedalling About posts on Guyana**

- [Mud wrestling: cycling 'the trail' from Lethem to Georgetown](#)
- [A little bit like cycling in Europe: Georgetown to Paramaribo](#)