Pedalling about Suriname
Information for cycle tourists

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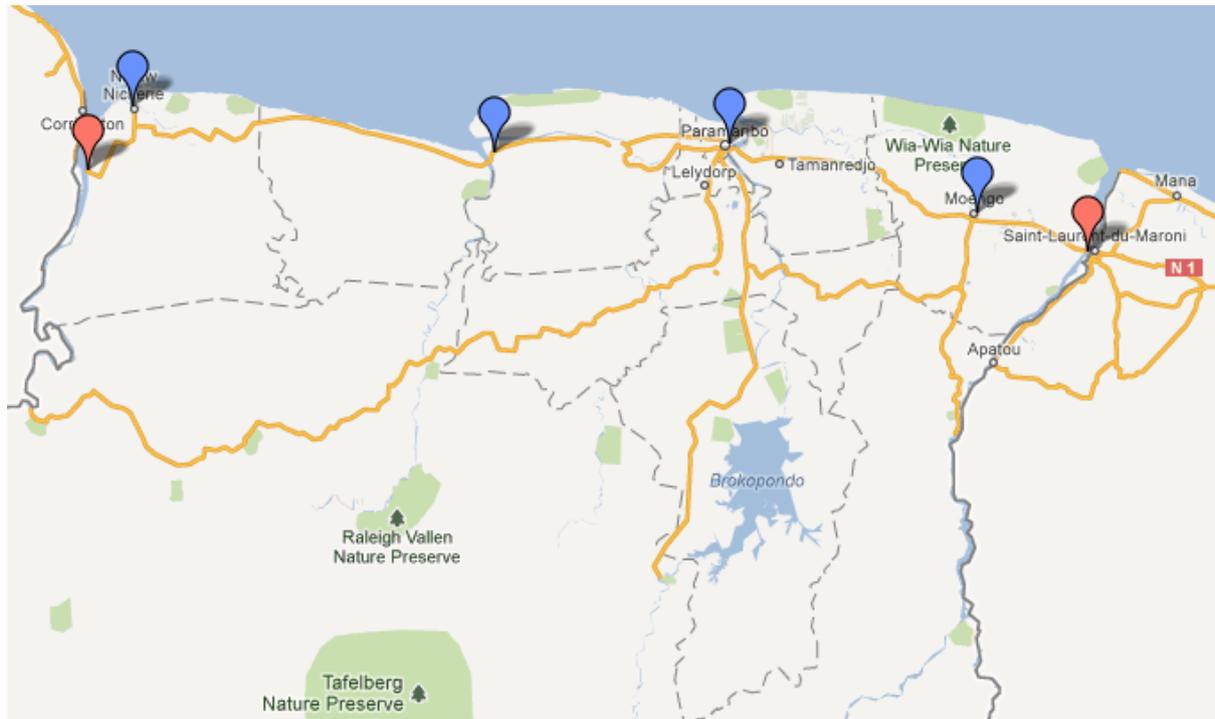
April 2012

Introduction

We cycled across Suriname in 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.

Suriname has many similarities to its former colonial power, the Netherlands. Dutch is the principal language, canals and waterways cover the country and the coastal terrain is as flat as a pancake. The coastal road spends most of the time in the jungle, with small villages cut out of the bush. The population changes from Indian in the west to Black in the east, a result of redistribution of people after the abolishment of slavery.

It doesn't take long to cycle through Suriname, but time spent there is nice, with friendly people, great food and a beautiful city in the form of Paramaribo.

Our route

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

	Distance (km)	Accommodation	Price (Suriname $)	Notes
Border	-	-	-	-
Niuew Nickerie	40	Concord Hotel	50	
Totness	95	-	-	There was a guest house in the village.
Hammock spot Saramarca	61	-	-	There was a carbet in the village to hang hammocks, but it felt a little exposed.
Tourist camp (under construction)	2	Hammocks in room of construction workers	-	The tourist camp is set to open in 2013-14
Paramaribo	89	Double room with bathroom in Twenty4 Hostel	150	We arrived on Easter Sunday and this was the only room we could find, but prices are normally less.
Moengo	110	Private apartment	100	There should be a guest house in the town, but we never found it. Ask at blue and orange café for details of apartment.
Albina (border)	53	-	-	-

General Information

Money

The currency is Suriname Dollars, with an exchange rate of 5.25 to 1 British Pound in April 2012.

We were able to withdraw cash from ATMs in Nieuk Nickerie, Paramaribo and Moengo. RBTT and DTB(?) banks would accept foreign cards.

There is no money facility at the ferry crossing to Guyana. If you are coming from Guyana you can exchange with money changers there, in Moleson Creek. There are big signs up in Suriname saying that exchanging money, other than in a bank or official change office, is illegal. There were plenty of money changers in Albina though, where we changed leftover Dollars into Euros at a good rate.

Costs

Suriname isn't particularly cheap, but accommodation and food is fairly reasonable, about the price in cheaper European countries. A good tip is to stock up on supplies in the many Chinese supermarkets, which have some good bargains. Shops in Albina aren't such good value because of inflated prices for day-trippers from French Guyana, so best to stock up in Moengo.

Getting in and out of Suriname

We crossed into Suriname from Guyana on the ferry crossing. The last accommodation before the ferry is 40km before, in Nieuw Nickerie. There is absolutely nothing at the ferry terminal in Suriname. 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 the whole border crossing.

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 or Cayenne. We applied in Georgetown. You can either purchase a multiple entry visa for $45US or a tourist card for $25US, which allows you one entry and a stay of up to 90 days. If you want to apply for a tourist card you need to take a print out of your return ticket or proof of other onward travel. The office is open for a visa on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. There was a sign saying you could apply for a tourist card every day of the week. You need to dress smart to enter the embassy – long trousers, proper shoes, shoulders covered, etc. We were turned away at first!

We left Suriname into French Guyana at the border crossing in Albina. Immigration is along the river just south of the centre of the town. It was a straightforward process to exit. There is a car ferry that crosses the river twice a day. However, you can also pay a water taxi to take you across. You can either organise with somebody in town to pick you up from immigration, or there were also people hanging around the immigration office. It cost 20SD per person (with bike) for the ride.

Security

Suriname was generally a friendly place to cycle through and we felt safe around most of the country. It's safe to walk around the towns and cities after dark. The east of the country has a reputation for petty crime and the town of Moengo had a dodgy feeling to it. We wouldn't have felt safe sleeping in the open in this area of the country and were warned not to stay in Albina at all.

Food and drink

Suriname 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.

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 Surinamese like their spice – it's wise to taste your food first before accepting the offer of extra pepper

Between towns there is very little on the roads so it's best to stock up before you start cycling. There are lots of Chinese supermarkets, which are reasonably priced.

- Fried vegetable rice (lunch) – 7SD
- Vegetable curry and roti – 7SD

Drink

Tap water in Suriname isn't potable (except for in Paramaribo) 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. Parbo is the most popular beer which is brewed locally and tastes and looks like Amstel, followed by Heineken.

- Water (1.5ltr) – 2.50SD
- Soft drink (1ltr) – 2.50SD
- Beer (500ml) – 3SD

Accommodation

Accommodation in Suriname varied in price. In Nieuw Nickerie there are some good, cheap options. Paramaribo has some nice hostels set up for tourists at reasonable prices (just don't turn up at Easter without having booked!)

We used our hammocks once, staying in the home of people along the road to Paramaribo, and some small villages have carbets where you can sleep in hammocks for the night although we didn't use them as they felt a bit exposed.

In Moengo we stayed in the house of a local guy who lets out two apartments. It wasn't cheap – we bargained down to 100SD – but we were desperate at that point for somewhere to sleep. We'd left Paramaribo late and arrived in the dark into Moengo, which wasn't a welcoming place. If you have a similar experience, ask at the orange and blue café on the left hand side next to the turnoff for Albina. There should be a guest house in town though, we just never found it.

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 Suriname. Paramaribo was busy to cycle into, but is nothing to fear compared to other capital cities in South America. To exit the city heading to Albina you cross the Suriname River. You can either cycle across the huge bridge (2km up and another 2km down) or take a five minute driver in a water taxi for 30SD for two people and bikes. It's right-hand drive in Suriname.

Guyanese border to Nieuw Nickerie – a beautiful new road through the forests and along Dutch canals. There's nothing on it though so stock up in Guyana.

Nieuw Nickerie to Totness – the road is in pretty good condition and is flat. There are a few bars / cafe along the road, but there are more services in Totness.

Totness to near Jenny – the road is in pretty good condition and is flat. There's nothing on the road and we never actually found a village called Jenny, although is appeared on all the maps.

Near Jenny to Paramaribo – across the long bridge, the road starts off ok, but the last 40km into Paramaribo it is in a poor condition, so expect a bumpy ride. It's also much busier traffic-wise close to the city.

Paramaribo to Moengo – you can either exit Paramaribo via water taxi or the bridge. After the crossing there are some shops and services, but soon after these disappear and the road mainly goes through jungle. The road is currently being resurfaced – in some parts it's beautiful, but mainly it's mud, potholes and stone, so pretty miserable.

Moengo to Albina (border) – more of the same as repair work is going on here too. It also gets a bit hillier.

Bike maintenance

People cycle throughout the country so there are no problems finding general repair places and the Chinese hardware stores stock many spares. There are some specialist cycle shops in Paramaribo, ask for Cycling World of Suriname. The Zus and Zo hostel in the centre hires out bikes and were helpful too.

Other stuff

Language – the official language is Dutch but many Indian people spoke Hindi instead. Enough people spoke English for us to be able to communicate.

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.

Paramaribo – the capital city was a lovely place to visit, with interesting sights and historical spots.

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 Suriname

- [A little bit like cycling in Europe: Georgetown to Paramaribo](#)
- [Cyclisme en France: Paramaribo to Cayenne](#)