

Suriname

The Amazon's Hidden Gem

A Greentours Itinerary

A staggering 95% of Suriname is covered in rainforest, which is to say that it has just about the highest percentage of natural habitat of any country on the planet – only neighbouring and perhaps even less well-known French Guiana can rival it. Its neotropical rainforest is amongst the most untouched and biodiverse in the whole of South America yet its small size seems to have rendered it hardly visible even to the most discerning of wildlife tourists.

During our visit we'll immerse ourselves in three wonderful areas of rainforest. We'll start in the Peperpot Nature Park, a protected area which reaches right to the edge of the capital. Then we'll spend some days exploring the upper Suriname River based at the Danpaati River Lodge, renowned amongst Dutch tourists seeking to see a little rainforest culture, but from our perspective in a butterfly and bird filled forest. The Pièce de la Résistance of the tour will be five days exploring the dazzling rainforests along the Kabalebo River in the Bakhuis Mountains of Western Suriname. Here the superb Kabalebo Nature Resort, only reachable by air and a hundred miles from the nearest road, provides the perfect base to explore rainforest trails and rivers.

Day 1

Depart UK

The direct flights from Amsterdam to Suriname depart very early in the morning so to catch that service we need to fly out to Amsterdam the evening before and overnight in the CitizenM Hotel in Amsterdam Airport

Day 2

Arrive Suriname. Transfer to Peperpot

Our flight lands in Paramaribo early in the afternoon and after we've completed arrival formalities we'll get our first taste of this intriguing and attractive city. The wooden buildings in centre are a World Heritage Site. We'll then head to our hotel situated on the banks of the wide Suriname River and settle in.

Days 3 – 5(am)

Peperpot

The Peperpot Nature Park is just twenty minutes from Paramaribo and with a name like that you'd be forgiven for thinking it is some kind of theme park. In fact it is a rather superb nature reserve protecting some fine rainforest full of the brilliant and the beautiful. Butterflies abound including such wonders as the impressive 'owl butterfly' *Caligo teucer*, blue-shot *Astraptes fulgerator*, striped *Arawacus aetolus*, the red and

cream 'postman' *Heliconius melpomene*, emerald *Philaethria dido*, bright orange *Temenis laothoe* and beautiful *Colobura dirce*. Hardly bigger than the finger-nail on your little finger but with a shimmering beauty and complex patterns, not to mention what looks like fur, *Sarota gyas*, is the epitome of a Metalmark. These strange butterflies reach an amazing diversity in Suriname. There's spangles and butterscotch *Helicopsis cupido*, burnt-orange *Calospila lucianus* and frosted *Livendula aristus*, the upperwings picked out with luminous violet filigree. More in this family at Peperpot include *Nymphidium cachrus*, *Nymphidium caricae*, *Mesosemia nyctea*, *Theope syngenes* and intricately-marked *Detritivora cleonus*. Various *Parides* Swallowtails are found here, so too *Battus belus* and the widespread *Heraclides thoas*. We'll also see widespread Neotropical species such as Gulf Fritillary and Malachite.

The kilometre-wide Suriname River runs right past our hotel. Snail Kite and Black-collared Hawk perch on riverside trees, Grey-necked Wood-rail and Wattled Jacana stalk the banks, and American Pygmy Kingfisher buzzes past regularly. Pale-throated Sloth can be seen in the riverside trees and Red-rumped Agoutis come out to graze on the hotel lawns. Glittering Blue-chinned Sapphires visit the hotel flower beds. Along forest trails we can find more hummers in the shape of Rufous-breasted Hermit and Long-tailed Hermit. Troupes of Tufted Capuchin and Weeper Capuchin cavort through the trees disturbing the lovely Green-tailed Jacamar from its seeming repose, though in fact this beautiful bird is merely waiting for its next insect meal. Likely it won't have to wait long for Peperpot is very productive for all manner of invertebrates. Anyone who enjoys macro-photography will love it here. The pretty green with a hint of blue *Ameiva ameiva* lizard is common on the lawns of the hotel and we'll see plenty of the impressively large Golden Tegu Lizards. Troupes of Squirrel Monkey chatter excitedly as they travel through the hotel grounds whilst Green-rumped Parrotlets and Orange-winged Parrots screech noisily as they pass overhead. Slender-billed Kite, Long-winged Harrier and Laughing Falcon frequent forest edge where we'll also see Wing-barred Seedeater, Crested Oropendola and the very bright yellow and violet-blue Violaceous Euphonia. Amongst a host of other species we will see are Little Cuckoo, White-tailed Trogon, White-throated Toucan, Arrowhead Piculet, Lineated Woodpecker, Plain-crowned Spinetail, Yellow-chinned Spinetail, Black-crested Antshrike, Barred Antshrike, Northern Slaty-Antshrike, Silvered Antbird, Helmeted Pygmy-tyrant, Pied Water-tyrant, Grey-crowned Flycatcher, Cinnamon Attila, Ashy-headed Greenlet, Black-capped Donacobius and Bare-eyed Robin

Days 5(pm)- 9(am) **Danpaati**

The Danpaati River Lodge is found on the banks of the upper Suriname River. Ox-bow lakes and riverine forest are home to plentiful fauna. Spectacled Caiman wait patiently, so patient in fact that the pretty little skimmer *Erythrodiplex Laurentia* sometimes perches on their heads. The delicate helicopter-damselfly *Mecistogaster lucretia* flutters about riverbanks where we'll see Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Capped

Heron and Black Skimmer. Green-and-Rufous Kingfisher pose on riverside boughs. Two particularly fine swallows hawk above the waters; Black-collared Swallow and the elegant White-banded Swallow with its shiny blue-black plumage, long forked tail and neat white breast band.

Swallowtails such as *Heraclides androgeus* and newly-described *Heraclides garleppi lecerfi* mud-puddle by the waters alongside various Sulphurs. We'll spend much time along a forest track full of wildlife. Glancing up we might see Linnaeus's Two-toed Sloth or the Red-handed Tamarin, another taxon forced to endure the use of the word 'red' in its name when so very clearly those hands are a bright orange! Working the trees are Cream-coloured Woodpecker, Golden-collared Woodpecker and Wedge-billed Woodcreeper, in the air we'll note Plumbeous Kite, Lined Forest-Falcon, Red-throated Caracara and that perfection of aerial elegance, the Swallow-tailed Kite. There are some lovely hummingbirds along this path, such as the Fork-tailed Woodnymph and the glittering gem that is the Crimson Topaz. Again those rainbow jewels among butterflies, the Metalmarks, are prolific. There's brilliant orange *Stalachtis calliope*, amazing triangular cobalt *Euselasia lisias*, ice-blue and black *Mesosemia philocles*, cadmium-orange *Adelotypa penthea* and beautiful *Nymphidium mantus*. There's also fiery *Calospila emylus*, *Metacharis lucius*, *Thisbe irenea*, *Mesosemia ibycus*, boldly-marked *Riodina lysippus*, and several more *Nymphidium* species. There are a number of Hairstreaks which include *Celmia celmus*, pretty orange-lined *Calycopis isobea* and *Theritas hemon* whose uppersides are shot through with the most intense blue imaginable.

Channel-billed Toucan and Black-necked Aracari visit fruiting trees, sometimes in company with Dusky Parrot. Iguanas sun themselves in the tree-tops, only mildly annoyed by the noisy parties of Variable Chachalaca. Down on the forest floor we'll encounter the whiptail *Kentropyx calcarata* and the skink *Copeoglossum nigropunctatum*. Here we might see a covey of Marbled Wood-quail or disturb a Blackish Nightjar or two. Also inhabitants of the undergrowth, *Pierella hyalinus*, *Cithaerias andromeda* and *Haetera piera* are all virtually transparent, their wings like glass etched with delicate veining and the occasional spot of iridescent blue. In this shady world are avian wonders such as Guianan Streaked-Antwren, White-flanked Antwren, Black-chinned Antbird, Spot-winged Antbird, Ferruginous-backed Antbird, Warbling Antbird and Black-headed Antbird. Back out along the open track butterflies are flying - *Heliconius antiochus*, *Bia actorion*, *Adelpha cytherea*, shapely black and white *Hypna clytemnestra*, and the intricately-patterned *Tigridia acesta*. Among the many other bird species we'll see here are Guianan Puffbird, Black Nunbird, Great Jacamar, Thrush-like Schiffornis, Buff-breasted Wren, Blue Dacnis, Yellow-rumped Cacique, Red-rumped Cacique, Epaulet Oriole, and the weird Bare-necked Fruitcrow

Day 9(pm)- 10(am)

To Paramaribo, overnight there, then to Kabalebo

During the afternoon of Day 9 we'll return to Paramaribo and then, the next morning, we will take a flight to Kabalebo.

Day 10(pm)- 15(am)

Kabalebo

The centrepiece of our tour is a five-night stay Kabalebo Nature Resort, delightfully set by the Kabalebo River in the Bakhuys Mountains of Western Suriname. This superb lodge is a bastion of elegance and comfort right in the midst of the rainforest. Beautiful rooms and grounds are surrounded by wildlife. Reachable only by air and over a hundred miles from the nearest road, this a truly remote, and beautiful, spot.

Brazilian Tapir is a regular presence around the lodge at Kabalebo and Giant Otters are in the river there. Another highlight is sure to be Harpy Eagle – not guaranteed - but seen regularly at this lodge. We'll encounter the red and yellow-spotted tortoise *Chelonoidis carbonarius*, and the smartly-attired Three-striped Poison Arrow Frog. We'll see Capybara, Common Squirrel Monkey, Brown Capuchin, Red Howler, Black Spider Monkey, and the 1970's glam-rock-a-like Black-bearded Saki. Macaws are abundant at Kabalebo with Blue and Yellow, Scarlet, Red and Green and Chestnut-fronted Macaws all on the agenda. Along the forest paths are a mesmerising variety of Antshrikes and Antbirds, as well as White-tailed Trogon, Cinereous Becard, Bare-necked Fruitcrow and many hummingbirds such as Grey-breasted Sabrewing, Reddish Hermit and Rufous-breasted Hermit. Morphos are much commoner here than elsewhere on the trip, we'll see Common Blue Morpho as well as *Morpho achilles* and *Morpho deidamia*.

Amongst a range of Metalmarks are *Mesosemia cippus*, *Mesosemia lacernata*, *Stalachtis euterpe*, *Stalachtis phaedusa* and the shimmering blue *Semomesia capanea*. We'll see the 'cracker' *Hamadryas Feronia*, *Eunica malvina*, and the lovely olivewings, *Nessaiea obrinus* with turquoise and orange flashes, and *Nessaiea batesii* with blue and orange flashes. By the river we'll see Cocoli Heron and Green Ibis, as well as many kingfishers, here a variety of species including Ringed, Amazon, Green, and Green-and-Rufous Kingfishers. The strange Grey-winged Trumpeter will be a highlight, so too the beautiful *Urania leilus*, a spectacular day-flying moth. Guans are well-represented at Kabalebo with Marail Guan, Blue-throated Piping-Guan, and Black Curassow. Other fine species we are likely to encounter are Double-toothed Kite, Black Caracara, Collared Forest Falcon, Blue-headed Parrot, Black-spotted Barbet, Green Aracari, Black-necked Aracari, Brown Jacamar, Paradise Jacamar, Long-tailed Tyrant, Fork-tailed Flycatcher and Green Oropendola.

Day 15(pm)

To Paramaribo

During the afternoon of Day 15 we'll fly back to Paramaribo.

Day 16

Paramaribo and then Departure

We've a relaxing morning in prospect exploring the World Heritage Site that is the centre of Paramaribo before enjoying lunch in town and then heading to the airport for the flight back to Europe.

Day 17

Arrive UK/Europe

Call 01298 83563 or visit www.greentours.co.uk for the report from our reconnaissance trip to Suriname. If you would like to ask about any other aspect of this holiday, please call 01298 83563 or email us at enquiries@greentours.co.uk.

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