

TRIP TO GUYANA, SURINAME & TRINIDAD, 22 FEB. TO 2 MAR. 2012

SUBMITTED BY: WAYNE A. SCHILD, #S4461, AUSTIN, TEXAS, 11 MAR 2012

My wife, Darlene, along with our daughter, Kathy Sinton & her husband, Frank, recently returned from a 10 day trip to the north-eastern part of South America, where we visited the independent countries of Guyana & Suriname, along with Port of Spain, Trinidad. Previously we had visited French Guiana and Tobago while on a Princess cruise.

Very few U. S. citizens have ever heard of Guyana or Suriname, unless you mention Jonestown (in Guyana) and Jim Jones and his "Kool-Aid", which actually was "Flavor-Aid". (Event took place on Nov. 18, 1978, when 918 people died.) In 1988, ABC news did a short segment about Jonestown on their 20/20 program, so a few of the "older people" know about Jonestown.

There were 17 of us on this trip run by Adventures Abroad, 1-800-665-3998, 1124-Fir Ave., #101, Blaine, WA, 98230. It was the first time they had run this trip in 4 years, as there had not been enough interest to offer the trip. (They won't offer a trip with less than 8 people & have a maximum of 21.) This trip is not cheap, especially when the airfare is included. Previously the price from Miami was \$3,920 or \$4,270 from LA. When we booked, they had increased the fare. We paid \$4,560 each from Austin, TX. The only extra was \$143 for a double for an additional night in Georgetown, Guyana. (We had to forfeit this because we couldn't make our connection in time due to mechanical problems in Dallas/ Ft. Worth (DFW) on American Air.) Eliminating the \$143 and figuring the 9 days we were touring, the daily average was almost \$500/per person per day. For this, we had 2 daily meals included (breakfast & dinner), with an occasional lunch.

We flew from Austin, TX., to DFW to JFK (NYC) on American Airlines; then to Georgetown, Guyana, via Pt. of Spain (Trinidad), on Caribbean Air (BW). Georgetown is the capital & is the only English speaking country in South America. Like the English, they drive on the left-side of the road. We were did get to see a few highlights in Georgetown, such as their Zoo. Also, they were celebrating their 42nd year as a Republic, so we saw some colorful costumes for MASH day, but not their parade. From Georgetown we took a mini-bus and a very small high-speed boat to the Baganara Resort on an island in the Essequibo River. The boat trip was quite rough, with lots of banging as the boat bounced up and down over the waves. The resort was very laid back; no electricity during the day, no air conditioning, no TV, etc.

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In the evening we took a boat trip to see "the thousands of Amazonian parrots" that roost in the trees on "Parrot Island". Unfortunately, we only saw a few, mostly couples, come in to roost. Big disappointment! The following day we flew to see the Kaieteur Waterfall that has the longest single-drop in the world at 741 feet. (Angel Falls in Venezuela is the highest waterfall in the world at 3212 feet.) The next day we returned to Georgetown, again with a high-speed boat and a mini-bus. (We were supposed to return by air; they sent the planes back empty after the Falls!)

We left Georgetown at 3 AM the following morning, to enter Suriname via the road and a ferry. They had bridged over one of the rivers since the Adventures last trip. It was quite time-consuming to leave Guyana and then enter Suriname. (The people all over operate at slow speed, regardless of where you are.) Then we drove over to Paramaribo, the capital. Here we stayed at the modern Marriott where we had a very good dinner meal. We visited the Central Market and Fort Zeelandia, in the rain. (It rains a lot in all of these countries, even in the "dry" season.) The following day, we embarked on a river cruise on the Commewijine River to see some of the former colonial plantations. We had an included lunch at the Hotel Frederiksdorp. We also stopped at Marienburg which was the oldest former sugar plantation. It is now a large beef producing farm.

Our last stop was Port of Spain, Trinidad. We flew over there on Surinam Air. Again, we encountered rain downpours. We were supposed to visit the Botanical Gardens, but never did that. We had a panoramic view of the city from Lady Young Lookout. Following that, we drove to Maracas Beach on a road which the U. S. put in to transport soldiers to this lovely beach during WWII. Here we had lunch, on our own, featuring a sandwich called "Bake & Shark". The following day, we visited the Sadhu Hindu Temple which is also a cremation site. We saw cremation fires and also saw Hindus putting the ashes of their deceased into the adjacent river. (Many different religions exist in all of these countries.) We visited the Chaguanas fresh produce market and also had a photo stop at the Hanuman Hindu Temple. In the late afternoon we took a small boat to the Caroni Nature Sanctuary where we saw hundreds of scarlet ibis coming in to feed & nest. Our last day was spent at the Asa Wright Nature Center where we saw many colorful birds. We had lunch there, at our expense. We returned to the U. S. the next day.  
Writtten by: Wayne A. Schild, Austin, Texas; Sunday 11 March 2012.