



TOUR INFORMATION FOR GUYANA

These notes are designed to help you prepare for your tour. Please read carefully.

ENTERING GUYANA: United Kingdom citizens will need a passport which is valid for six months beyond the intended length of stay. A visa is not required by British citizens but you do need at least one blank page left in your passport for entrance and exit stamps. Citizens of other countries should contact their nearest Guyanan Embassy or Consulate for entry requirements. Tourist cards will be issued by the airline on which you arrive.

It is always a good idea to take a photocopy of your passport and air ticket with you when travelling abroad. They can prove invaluable in helping you get replacements if your originals are lost or stolen. Obviously you should keep the photocopies in a separate bag to the originals.

FLIGHTS TO GEORGETOWN: If you have asked Sunbird to book your flights, we are most likely to book you onto an airline carrier which flies via Port of Spain (Trinidad) or via Barbados. Flights from the UK may have better routing through Barbados, arriving at the regional airport (Ogle) instead of the international airport (Cheddi Jagan).

There are flights via the USA (Miami, for example) to Georgetown, Guyana. However, if you fly to Guyana using a combination of different airlines via Miami, your airline at the departure airport may claim they can check your luggage all the way to the Georgetown airport, but the transfer of your luggage to the Caribbean Airlines counter (at the connecting airport, typically Miami) has taken days! We recommend you check your luggage to your connecting airport and recheck it at the Caribbean Airlines counter before the flight to Georgetown, and this would require a much longer connection in Miami being necessary.

FLYING VIA THE USA: If travelling via the USA under the visa waiver programme (see below), all nationalities will require a machine-readable passport. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has made changes to the immigration requirements. Travellers seeking to travel under the Visa Waiver Program must pre-apply for authorisation using the Electronic System for Travel Authorisation (**ESTA**). **ESTA** must be completed online via their website.

Having an **ESTA** is a mandatory requirement and applications should be made online at least 72 hours before departure via their website <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> as although the majority of responses are immediate, it can take 72 hours for approval in some cases. There is a small fee to pay as a processing charge followed by a small fee when authorisation has been granted.

For further information, or if you don't have access to the internet, please contact the Embassy of the United States in London on 020 3608 6998.

Citizens of other countries should contact their nearest US Embassy for entry requirements.

Once you've applied for your ESTA please remember to print it out and take a copy of that document onto the aircraft with you.

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All visitors to the USA's first port-of-entry have their index fingerprints taken by an electronic scanner at Passport Control. You will also have your photograph taken at the same time. Although the process itself only takes a few minutes the queue can be quite long if several flights arrive at the same time!

You will then need to reclaim your checked-in luggage in the US airport, go through security, then hand your luggage back to the airline staff who will be waiting nearby to give assistance. Once your luggage is back with the airline please proceed to the departure gate for your onward flight to Guyana.

Keep in mind that many international flights arrive in Georgetown in the late evening. If your flight arrives late, you might want to consider arriving a day early to avoid missing the first dinner and make sure you're well rested for our first early morning of birding (04:30am departure from hotel with a picnic breakfast). We do not recommend flying via Miami as luggage has been known not to arrive into Georgetown until the following day!

INTRODUCTORY MEETING: The tour begins with a group meeting in the evening in the lobby of our hotel in Georgetown, followed by dinner. This informal meeting gives the leader the opportunity to introduce everyone to each other and to let you know generally what to expect on the trip – pace of the tour, daily routine, etc.

TIME DIFFERENCE: Guyana is 4 hours behind Greenwich Mean Time.

CURRENCY: The local currency is the Guyanese Dollar. As the tour price includes all travel, accommodation, meals and a drink with meals, you will require only enough currency to cover snacks, extra drinks or other purchases of a purely personal nature such as laundry, postcards, souvenirs, etc. We suggest that you bring a small amount of U.S. Dollars in cash, which can be changed at our hotel in Georgetown.

LANGUAGE: English is the national language of Guyana and is widely spoken. Some of our hotels are run by indigenous groups, and local languages prevail.

CLIMATE: Guyana's dry season lasts from October to April. Temperatures in the Guyanese lowlands can reach the 90's (°F) at midday and humidity can be high. Rain can occur at any time, and you should therefore have an umbrella and waterproof footwear with you at all times.

ALTITUDE: The tour visits only lowlands, and we remain below 2,000' elevation for the duration of the tour.

PACE OF TOUR AND DAILY ROUTINE: Our tour will have occasional long days and several walks of a few miles or more on trails that may be uneven, muddy or hilly. Participants should be reasonably fit and expect to be on their feet for fairly long periods of time – a folding stool might come in handy.

We'll make early starts most days in order to be in the field in the coolest part of the day. Our earliest departures will most likely be Days 2, 12, and 13 (leaving the lodging as early as 04:30). For the rest of the tour, our standard breakfast time is 05:30 or 06:00. In most areas we'll bird all morning, usually returning to our lodging for lunch and a mid-day break during the slower and warmer hours. We'll then make an afternoon outing, by foot, boat, or vehicle, before returning to our lodge about an hour before dinner and checklist.

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HEALTH: It is essential that you contact your own doctor to obtain the latest information on the regions you are visiting. Please contact your doctor well in advance of your tour's departure as some medication must be initiated weeks before the period of possible exposure.

It is recommended that you are up-to-date on routine vaccinations. These include measles-mumps-rubella (MMR), diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis, varicella (chickenpox), polio, and your yearly flu shot. It is further recommended that most travelers have protection against Hepatitis A and Typhoid.

Yellow Fever: A Yellow fever vaccination is recommended for all travellers to Guyana. The Guyanese government requires proof of yellow fever vaccination from all travellers arriving from countries where yellow fever is present.

Malaria. There is a risk of malaria in some parts of the country, and resistance to Chloroquine has been reported. It is recommended that a traveler who is on an appropriate antimalarial drug has a greatly reduced chance of contracting the disease. In addition, other personal protective measures, such as the use of insect repellents, help to reduce malaria risk.

Useful information on all aspects of malaria, including how to reduce your chances of being bitten can be found at the website <http://www.preventingmalaria.info>.

Leishmaniasis: This is a rare but present disease in the areas we visit. The only way to prevent leishmaniasis is to avoid insect bites (in this case sand flies) using long-sleeved shirts, trousers, and insect repellent. The probability of getting leishmaniasis during a short trip to Guyana is quite low, but travellers should pay attention to skin sores after the trip.

Miscellaneous: Biting insects are not very numerous, but this depends on recent weather conditions and there can be areas with mosquitos and small sand flies. Chiggers can be especially troublesome. Note that chiggers especially are difficult to avoid, and are almost inevitable at some point on a tour in Guyana. They seem to be most likely on our first day of birding along the coast, but are possible elsewhere. We recommend tucking pants into socks, or wearing rubber boots, and spraying insect repellent around your ankles and legs.

Several species of biting insects act as vectors for parasitic agents in Guyana, and the prevention of bites is the best remedy possible. A can of spray repellent should provide adequate protection against the mosquitoes, sandflies and black flies, while chiggers and ticks can normally be avoided by staying out of the grass on the trails and road. If you are especially sensitive to insect bites, bring an antihistamine.

Tap water is not safe to drink. Bottled water, including large jugs to refill personal bottles, will be available at all our lodges. We recommend bringing your own refillable water bottle to minimize plastic waste.

It may be difficult to obtain any special medication during the tour, so bring all you are likely to need.

For further information on health advice refer to the Medical Advisory Services for Travellers Abroad website www.masta-travel-health.com

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ACCOMMODATION: Our hotel in Georgetown is modern and contains all the usual amenities of a standard resort hotel. The Iwokrama River Lodge is well appointed (electricity 24H, Wi-Fi, cell phone signal). The facilities at Atta, Surama, and Caiman House are more rustic, with basic but comfortable accommodations. Note that at the more remote lodges electricity might not be available 24h after the generators are turned off for the night or when the solar batteries are emptied because of lack of sun or too much use by the guests.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry services are available at all our lodges at a relatively inexpensive cost.

ELECTRICITY: 110V AC 50Hz. American-style plugs are required so an international travel plug is useful and can be bought in most airport departure lounges. You may find the following website helpful: <http://www.power-plugs-sockets.com>.

FOOD: Guyanese food is a wonderful mix of Caribbean, Indian and indigenous tastes, with excellently flavoured sauces, vegetables and rice and meats. The constant supply of fresh tropical fruits and amply apportioned dinners are a great bonus as well.

Sunbird tours are all-inclusive and no refunds can be issued for any tour meals participants choose to miss. While we will try to do all we can to accommodate the requirements of all participants, please note that we cannot guarantee all causes of food allergies can be avoided at every destination. Many restaurants offer set menus and are unable to accommodate all special requests within a group. Thus, participants with significant food allergies or special dietary needs should bring appropriate foods with them for those times when their needs can, regretfully, not be accommodated. Our tours are carefully scheduled to insure the best possible birding experience and although the leaders will do all they can to make sure the group eats at a reasonable time; sometimes early or late lunches and/or evening meals cannot be avoided. Any participants who need to eat at specific times may need to bring supplemental food with them.

DRINKS: Bottled water, a soft drink or a beer (or wine if appropriate) are provided at meals, as is coffee or tea. In addition, we keep a supply of bottled water on the tour vehicles. Bottled or filtered water may also be provided in some of the rooms where we stay.

INTERNET ACCESS. Wi-Fi internet access using satellite connections is available at most of the lodges and is usually charged around \$5 for one hour. Hot showers are only available at our hotel in Georgetown. All the other accommodation used during the trip only have 'cold' (room temperature) water (but it is warm enough not to need hot water!). All the lodges provide mosquito netting over the beds.

FIELD CLOTHING: Dress is informal throughout. Shorts are not appropriate in hotel restaurants in the evenings but would be fine for the interior locations.

Sun hat	Lightweight cotton trousers
Comfortable, sturdy footwear	Shorts
Light shoes/sandals	Loose clothing for hot weather
Short-sleeved cotton shirts	Lightweight raincoat/waterproof
Long-sleeved cotton shirts	Folding umbrella (essential in tropical downpours)
Light sweater	

When birding on forest trails, we recommend that you use darker field clothes and avoid white or light ones to lower the disturbance to birds or other wildlife (and to increase your chances of seeing them).

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MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS: You should bring the following:

Notebook and pencil	Alarm clock
Small rucksack/day pack	Torch and spare batteries
TSA-approved luggage locks	Insect repellent
Sunglasses and sun screen	Plastic bags (rain protection for optics)
Water bottle/canteen	Universal sink plug
Personal medication	Ear plugs (if you are a light sleeper)

Optional: Telescope & tripod (recommended if you have them), camera, film or memory cards, spare binoculars and spare spectacles (in case of loss or damage), field guide.

Note: The most effective insect repellents are those containing at least 35% of the active ingredient diethyltoluamide (DEET). The higher the percentage, the greater the effectiveness. However, care must be taken to avoid getting the repellent on to optical equipment as it dissolves rubber and plastic and can damage coated lenses. A reasonably effective alternative, which isn't corrosive, is Mosi-guard, produced by MASTA, and we recommend this. It is available in most high street chemist (including those at the airport). Camping supply stores sell a product containing permethrin 0.5%, which must be applied directly to clothing in advance of wearing and allowed to dry. This non-staining, odourless chemical is non-toxic to humans and protective on clothing through several launderings. Please make sure you never to spray insect repellent inside the vehicle or when you are standing close to other participants – it may drift on to their optical equipment.

LEADER'S EQUIPMENT: The leader will have a spotting scope, birdcall playback equipment, a spotlight, a laser pointer, a small first aid kit, and maps and copies of the more important field guides and references.

LUGGAGE: Our Final Information document, which will be sent to you approximately three weeks before departure, will give details about baggage weight and size restrictions imposed by the airline used for this tour.

Internal Flight restrictions: Baggage weight and cargo limits on internal flights in Guyana are strictly enforced – it's imperative to keep this in mind when packing. The combined carryon and checked baggage weight limit on internal flights in Guyana is technically 9.1kg (20lbs), a weight limit that is difficult to meet even for the lightest of travellers.

The airline will allow overweight luggage on the aircraft (within the limits of safety), but they will charge an overweight baggage fee of about US\$0.98/pound, one way. To offset this, Sunbird/WINGS will cover overages up to 9.1kg, for a total baggage weight of 18.2kg (40lbs). **TO RECAP: YOU HAVE A LIMIT OF 40 LB (18.2 KILOS) TOTAL PER PERSON FOR CARRY ON AND CHECKED BAGGAGE ON THE INTERNAL FLIGHTS.**

Note: with the new itinerary now including a stop at Kaieteur Falls we will use a charter flight to travel into the interior and there will be less of an issue with baggage weight restrictions. However, the return flight from Lethem to Georgetown will be on the regular service, subject to the weight restrictions described above. Bring what you need, but carefully consider the utility of each item. You may securely store extra gear at the Georgetown hotel before the first internal flight but remember that you won't have access to this gear until the last night of the tour.

Also, we are required to ask each participant their body weight (with travel clothes on) and submit this to the internal airline company for the same reasons as above.

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If possible, please bring your luggage in soft-sided bags or cases (rather than large hard 'Samsonite'-type suitcases) as these pack more easily into our vehicles during the tour. Please note that on many tours there are no porters to carry your luggage so please ensure that **no bag is so heavy that you are unable to lift and carry it yourself**. As a general rule, in addition to using your luggage labels, it is a good idea to fix identification to the *inside* of each piece of luggage.

PHOTOGRAPHY: Scenery and memory shots will be plentiful and easy to obtain, but birds are very difficult to photograph in tropical rainforests. During our days in the forested areas of Iwokrama there will be little opportunity to photograph birds. However, during our visit to the open habitats in the savannas, along the rivers of the interior and on the canopy tower, there will be good opportunities to photograph birds.

Bring all your film or memory cards with you as it may be difficult to find precisely what you need during the tour. Camera equipment should be packed in moisture- and dust-proof bags, as a precaution. "Digiscoping" is perfectly compatible with the tour, though it is recommended you bring your own telescope as the leader's telescope is not available for this activity. There will be plenty of opportunities to take photos of birds, mammals and scenery and the leaders will do all they can to accommodate anyone wishing to take photographs. However, if you are a serious photographer please bear in mind that this is first and foremost a birdwatching tour. Please do not allow your photographic desires to conflict with other participants' birdwatching activities.

TRANSPORT: We will employ a variety of transportation methods during this tour, including modern passenger buses, high-speed and small watercraft, small aircraft, jeeps, pickup and even ex-British military trucks! The leader will arrange a seating rotation. Participants should be able to ride in any seat in tour vehicles.

SMOKING: Smoking is not allowed in the vehicles or when the group is gathered for meals, checklists etc. If you are sharing a room with a non-smoker, please do not smoke in the room. If you smoke in the field, we ask that you do so well away and downwind from the group if possible.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: Travel insurance is essential and we insist that you take out suitable cover as soon as your tour is booked. If you are bringing expensive optical equipment or other valuable items, please make sure they are also adequately insured on your home contents policy, as most travel insurance policies do not cover very expensive individual items. You may wish to consult your insurance broker regarding coverage. Please also ensure that your policy covers you in the event of a medical emergency, cancellation of a trip or severe delays. Medical costs abroad can often be extremely expensive. Please note that Sunbird is not liable for any medical or repatriation costs resulting from injury or illness during a tour or for covering any costs resulting from a flight delay such as extra hotel accommodation.

If you wish, insurance can be arranged by Helen Fisher, Bullerwell Independent Insurance Brokers, 13 Goldington Road, Bedford, MK40 3JY. Tel: 01234-866964. Please contact Helen for a quote and she will send the schedule directly to you.

TIPPING: All tour-based tips are included in the tour price. These include tips to local guides, drivers, hotel porters, and waiters and waitresses when we have group meals together in restaurants. You only need to pay tips for personal services such as room service or drinks from the bar.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Birds:

Ascanio, David, et al. 2017. Birds of Venezuela. ISBN 978-1408105357. Helm Field Guides.

Hilty, S. 2003. Birds of Venezuela. ISBN 0-7136-6418-5. Christopher Helm, London. A superb field guide to the country's birds with modern plates and a first-class text. Note: Please do not bring the earlier edition of this guide by Meyer de Schauensee, as the names and taxonomy in that volume are now well out-of-date and very confusing. This is the **recommended** book for Guyanese birds, although a few species are not illustrated.

Restall, R., Rodner, C. and Lentino, M. (2006). Birds of Northern South America: An Identification Guide. Volume 1: Species Accounts. ISBN 9780713672428. Volume 2: Plates and Maps. Paperback 656 pages; 306 color plates and 2308 maps. ISBN 9780713672435. Yale University Press.

Mammals:

Eisenberg, John F. 1989. Mammals of the Neotropics. The Northern Neotropics. Volume 1. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London. A useful guide to South American mammals with excellent color plates. This first volume covers Venezuela and surrounding countries. Too bulky for field use, so best referred to before and after the tour.

Emmons, Louise H. and Francois Feer. 1990. Neotropical Rainforest Mammals - A Field Guide. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London. An excellent portable book with good colour plates. **Recommended**.

OBTAINING BOOKS: Most of the field guides and the major ornithological references in print are available by mail order from booksellers specialising in natural history titles.

Natural History Book Service Ltd
Tel: 01803 865913
www.nhbs.co.uk

WildSounds
Tel: 01263 741100
www.wildsounds.co.uk

MAPS: Maps of the region may be available from:

The Map Shop
Tel: 01684 593146
www.themapshop.co.uk

Stanfords
Tel: 020 7836 1321
www.stanfords.co.uk

NEOTROPICAL BIRD CLUB: Please support this charity which aims to raise money to support conservation projects, encourages an interest in the conservation of birds, and liaises with and promotes the work of existing societies within the region. You will find their contact details and further information about the Club at www.neotropicalbirdclub.org

FINAL INFORMATION: Final information with instructions for meeting the group, hotel addresses, etc, and your air tickets will be sent to you about three weeks before the start of the tour. Other news will be communicated as necessary. If you have any questions about any aspect of the tour, please contact us.