

And now for something completely different: why not visit Suriname — or even spend the hurricane season there?

Elaborating on the 'Info & Updates' item in *Caribbean Compass's* May issue about Guyana, why not hop onward to Suriname? Guyana and Suriname share the Nickerie River, at the entrance of which you'll find Nieuw-Nickerie (6°N, 56°59'W), also called "the western capital" of Suriname. And from there it is only an overnight trip to the capital, Paramaribo (5°50'N, 55°10'W).

Suriname is located well outside the hurricane belt, at a distance of approximately 500 miles from Trinidad & Tobago. The trip directly from T&T will take four to six days, depending on wind, current (which runs against you) and luck. If you start from Barbados you will get a better angle to the wind.

Suriname's popularity among yachtsmen is growing, perhaps because it is one of the safest countries in South America AND something completely different: friendly and extremely hospitable people combined with impressive flora and wildlife. The official language is Dutch, but almost everyone speaks English; Suriname, a CARICOM member, is very much part of the Caribbean. Visas are needed for most nationalities, including the Dutch, but easily obtained once you are there. The currency is the Surinamese dollar (SRD) and ATMs are all around.

WHY NOT SUMMER IN SURINAME?

by Petra and Jan Willem Versol

DESTINATIONS

Entering the Suriname River is a piece of cake as the entrance and the whole river up to Domburg is very well buoyed. And even better, all buoys are lit. The estuary seems rather shallow and your depth sounder will sometimes show alarming figures as it picks up floating mud, but don't worry: big bauxite freighters also go in and out without running aground. Start your approach at the outer marker at low water and you can navigate upriver on one tide past Paramaribo up to Domburg, where most of the yachts are moored. Domburg is only eight miles upriver from Paramaribo, but a much safer place to anchor as there is less current.



Arriving aboard a ptogue at Galibi on the Marowijne River, near the border of French Guiana

In Domburg moorings are available at low cost, but you can also drop your anchor in six to eight metres. On the waterfront you'll find several supermarkets, an ATM, internet, pubs, little restaurants, a vegetable market — and Irene, who not only sells fruits but also takes care of your laundry. Local buses run to town from 6:00AM onwards and the last bus to Domburg leaves Paramaribo around 5:00PM.

Officials are easy on you and you are not required to start the Immigration procedures immediately upon arrival. They understand that you need time to clean up your boat before heading into town to obtain a visa (around US\$40 per person) and visit Immigration with three copies of your crew list. No other costs are involved here and you are allowed to stay for three months. Clearing with Customs is not necessary; they are not interested in yachts. Your crew list, stamped by Immigration, will serve as outward-bound clearance.

Suriname gained its independence in 1975 and you will find many reminders of Holland, but the country is also very much itself as a reflection of its inhabitants. The indigenous people are Carib Amerindians and they still populate the large interior, together with "marrons", who are descendants of slaves who fought themselves to freedom in the 18th and 19th centuries. After the abolition of slavery, contract labourers were invited — Chinese, Indians and Indonesians from Java — so the current population is an interesting mix of cultures. They all have their own (religious) holidays, which are shared among the different ethnic groups. Overall, 20 languages are spoken in Suriname, but almost everyone speaks English.

Once in Suriname, you'll want to make a trip into the impressive jungle to enjoy the abundance of nature and the overwhelming hospitality and spontaneity of the people living in picturesque villages. Although tours with the bigger tour operators can be quite expensive and force you to travel in a group, you can do and see the same things on a budget and on a more private level. Touring the country is not restricted to road trips; you can do it in your own yacht. The Commewijne River is navigable for a long stretch and if you go up on the Cottica River, you can drop your anchor in the middle of a jungle near one of the many lovely marron settlements. Be polite and you will be guest of honour in their villages.

If you stay over during the hurricane season, try to arrive before the first of July: Emancipation Day should not be missed! Bring your camera, as people are dressing up for the celebration and proud to show themselves.

Before you leave, stock up in one of the huge and well-stocked supermarkets in Paramaribo. But chances are that you fell in love with Suriname and you never want to leave!

Petra and Jan Willem Versol have been cruising the Caribbean on the 40-foot ketch Witte Raaf for five years and also have a home in Suriname. You will find lots of information on their website, www.witteraaf.info, or contact them at pjwersol@hotmail.com; they are happy to be of assistance.

Detailed pilotage information on Suriname is available at www.cruisertog.com/wiki/index.php?title=Suriname.



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MERIDIAN PASSAGE OF THE MOON



JUNE & JULY 2011

Crossing the channels between Caribbean islands with a favorable tide will make your passage faster and more comfortable. The table below, courtesy Don Street, author of Street's Guides and compiler of Imray-Iolaire charts, which shows the time of the meridian passage (or zenith) of the moon for this AND next month, will help you calculate the tides.

Water, Don explains, generally tries to run toward the moon. The tide starts running to the east soon after moonrise, continues to run east until about an hour after the moon reaches its zenith (see TIME below) and then runs westward. From just after the moon's setting to just after its nadir, the tide runs eastward; and from just after its nadir to soon after its rising, the tide runs westward; i.e. the tide floods from west to east. Times given are local.

Note: the maximum tide is 3 or 4 days after the new and full moons.
 For more information, see "Tides and Currents" on the back of all Imray Iolaire charts. Fair tides!

June DATE	TIME	21	0420	10	2002
1	1137	22	0501	11	2100
2	1230 (new)	23	0543	12	2158
3	1325	24	0624	13	2255
4	1419	25	0706	14	2350
5	1511	26	0751	15	0000 (full)
6	1603	27	0838	16	0041
7	1653	28	0928	17	0129
8	1742	29	1021	18	0214
9	1832	30	1116	19	0256
10	1923			20	0338
11	2016	July DATE	TIME	21	0419
12	2112	1	1211	22	0501
13	2210	2	1305	23	0545
14	2310	3	1358	24	0630
15	0000 (full)	4	1450	25	0719
16	0010	5	1540	26	0810
17	0117	6	1630	27	0903
18	0200	7	1720	28	0958
19	0250	8	1812	29	1053
20	0336	9	1906	30	1148
				31	1241 (new)