Suriname

Suriname Population
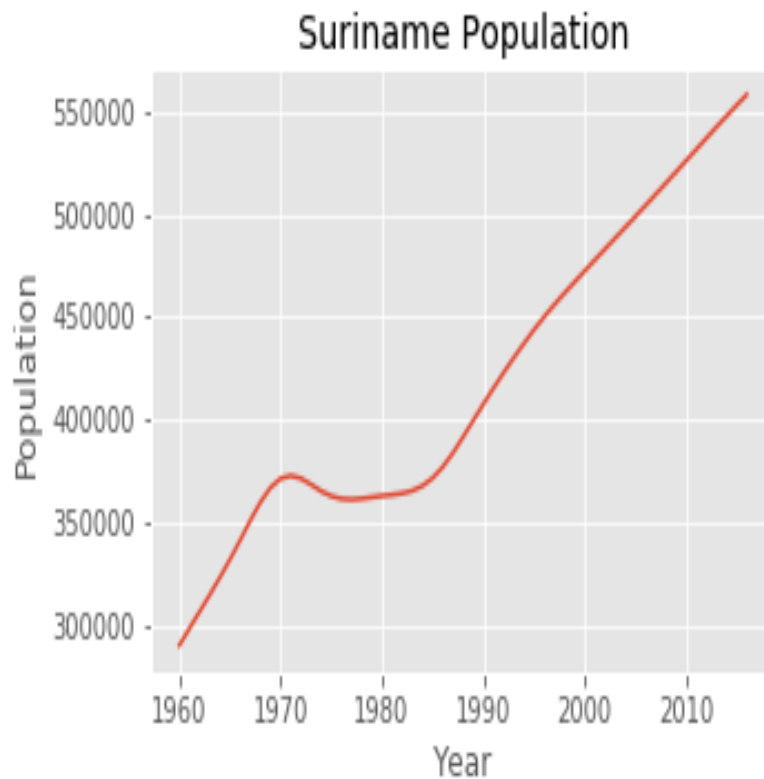

Suriname (, or , also spelled Surinam), officially known as the Republic of Suriname (Dutch: Republiek Suriname [■re■py■blik ■sy■ri■na■m■]), is a sovereign state on the northeastern Atlantic coast of South America. It is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the north, France (through French Guiana) to the east, Guyana to the west and Brazil to the south. At just under 165,000 square kilometers (64,000 square miles), it is the smallest country in South America. Suriname has a population of approximately 558,368, most of whom live on the country's north coast, in and around the capital and largest city, Paramaribo. Suriname was long inhabited by various indigenous people before being explored and contested by European powers from the 16th century, eventually coming under Dutch rule in the late 17th century. During the Dutch colonial period, it was primarily a plantation economy dependent on African slaves and, following the abolition of slavery, indentured servants from Asia. In 1954, Suriname became one of the constituent countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. On 25 November 1975, the country of Suriname left the Kingdom of the Netherlands to become an independent state, nonetheless maintaining close economic, diplomatic, and cultural ties to its former colonizer. Suriname is considered to be a culturally Caribbean country, and is a member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). While Dutch is the official language of government, business, media, and education, Sranan, an English-based creole language, is a widely used lingua franca. Suriname is the only sovereign nation outside Europe where Dutch is spoken by a majority of the population. As a legacy of colonization, the people of Suriname are among the most diverse in the world, spanning a multitude of ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups. == Etymology == This area was occupied by various cultures of indigenous peoples long before European contact, remnants of which can be found in petroglyph sites at Werehpai and other places in Suriname. The name Suriname may derive from a Taino (Arawak-speaking) indigenous people called Surinen, who inhabited the area at the time of European contact. British settlers, who founded the first European colony at Marshall's Creek along the Suriname River, spelled the name as "Surinam". When the territory was taken over by the Dutch, it became part of a group of colonies known as Dutch Guiana. The official spelling of the country's English name was changed from

"Surinam" to "Suriname" in January 1978, but "Surinam" can still be found in English. A notable example is Suriname's national airline, Surinam Airways. The older English name is reflected in the English pronunciation, or . In Dutch, the official language of Suriname, the pronunciation is [■syri■na■m■], with the main stress on the third syllable and a schwa terminal vowel. == History == Indigenous settlement of Suriname dates back to 3,000 BC. The largest tribes were the Arawak, a nomadic coastal tribe that lived from hunting and fishing. They were the first inhabitants in the area. The Carib also settled in the area and conquered the Arawak by using their superior sailing ships. They settled in Galibi (Kupali Yumï, meaning "tree of the forefathers") at the mouth of the Marowijne River. While the larger Arawak and Carib tribes lived along the coast and savanna, smaller groups of indigenous peoples lived in the inland rainforest, such as the Akurio, Trió, Warrau, and Wayana. === Colonial period === Beginning in the 16th century, French, Spanish and English explorers visited the area. A century later, Dutch and English settlers established plantation colonies along the many rivers in the fertile Guiana plains. The earliest documented colony in Guiana was an English settlement named Marshall's Creek along the Suriname River. Disputes arose between the Dutch and the English for control of this territory. In 1667, during negotiations leading to the Treaty of Breda, the Dutch decided to keep the nascent plantation colony of Suriname they had gained from the English. The English were able to keep New Amsterdam, the main city of the former colony of New Netherland in North America on the mid-Atlantic coast. Already a cultural and economic hub in those days, they renamed it after the Duke of York: New York. In 1683, the Society of Suriname was founded by the city of Amsterdam, the Van Aerssen van Sommelsdijck family, and the Dutch West India Company. The society was chartered to manage and defend the colony. The planters of the colony relied heavily on African slaves to cultivate, harvest and process the commodity crops of coffee, cocoa, sugar cane and cotton plantations along the rivers. Planters' treatment of the slaves was notoriously bad—historian C.R. Boxer wrote that "man's inhumanity to man just about reached its limits in Surinam"—and many slaves escaped the plantations. With the help of the native South Americans living in the adjoining rain forests, these runaway slaves established a new and unique culture in the interior that was highly successful in its own right. They were known collectively in English as Maroons, in French as Nèg'Marrons (literally meaning "brown negroes", that is "pale-skinned negroes"), and in Dutch as Marrons. The Maroons gradually developed several independent tribes through a process of ethnogenesis, as they were made up of slaves from different African ethnicities. These tribes include the Saramaka, Paramaka, Ndyuka or Aukan, Kwinti, Aluku or Boni, and Matawai. The Maroons often raided plantations to recruit new members from the slaves and capture women, as well as to acquire weapons, food and supplies. They sometimes killed planters and their families in the raids; colonists built defenses, which were so important they were shown on 18th-century maps, but these were not sufficient. The colonists also mounted armed campaigns against the Maroons, who generally escaped through the rain forest, which they knew much better than did the colonists. To end hostilities, in the 18th century the European colonial authorities signed several peace treaties with different tribes. They granted the Maroons sovereign status and trade rights in their inland territories, giving them autonomy. === Abolition of slavery === In 1861-63, with the American Civil War underway and slaves escaping to Union lines in the South, President Abraham Lincoln of the United States and his administration looked abroad for places to relocate freed slaves who wanted to leave the United States. It opened negotiations with the Dutch government regarding African-American emigration to and colonization of the Dutch colony of Suriname in South America. Nothing came of the idea, and after 1864 the idea was dropped. The Netherlands abolished slavery in Suriname in 1863, under a gradual process that required slaves to work on plantations for 10 transition years for minimal pay, which was considered as partial compensation for their masters. After 1873, most freedmen largely abandoned the plantations where they had worked for several generations in favor of the capital city, Paramaribo. As a plantation colony, Suriname had an economy dependent on labor-intensive commodity crops. To make up for a shortage of labor, the Dutch recruited and transported contract or indentured laborers from the Dutch East Indies (modern Indonesia) and India (the latter through an arrangement with the British, who then ruled the area). In addition, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, small numbers of laborers, mostly men, were recruited from China and the Middle East. Although Suriname's population remains relatively small, because of this complex colonization and exploitation, it is one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse countries in the world. === Decolonization === During World War II, on 23 November 1941, under an agreement with the Netherlands government-in-exile, the United States occupied Suriname to protect the bauxite mines to support the Allies' war effort. In 1942, the Dutch government-in-exile began to review the relations between the Netherlands and its colonies in terms of

the post-war period. In 1954, Suriname became one of the constituent countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, along with the Netherlands Antilles and the Netherlands. In this construction, the Netherlands retained control of its defense and foreign affairs. In 1974, the local government, led by the National Party of Suriname (NPS) (whose membership was largely Creole, meaning ethnically African or mixed African-European) started negotiations with the Dutch government leading towards full independence, which was granted on 25 November 1975. A large part of Suriname's economy for the first decade following independence was fueled by foreign aid provided by the Dutch government. === Independence === The first President of the country was Johan Ferrier, the former governor, with Henck Arron (the then leader of the NPS) as Prime Minister. In the years leading up to independence, nearly one-third of the population of Suriname emigrated to the Netherlands, amidst concern that the new country would fare worse under independence than it had as a constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Indeed, Surinamese politics soon degenerated into ethnic polarization and corruption, with the NPS using Dutch aid money for partisan purposes. Its leaders were accused of fraud in the 1977 elections, in which Arron won a further term, and the discontent was such that a large chunk of the population fled to the Netherlands, joining the already significant Surinamese community there. === 1980 military coup === On 25 February 1980, a military coup overthrew Arron's government. It was initiated by a group of sixteen sergeants, led by Dési Bouterse. Opponents of the military regime attempted counter-coups in April 1980, August 1980, 15 March 1981, and again on 12 March 1982. The first counter attempt was led by Fred Ormskerk, the second by Marxist-Leninists, the third by Wilfred Hawker, and the fourth by Surendre Rambocus. Hawker escaped from prison during the fourth counter-coup attempt, but he was captured and summarily executed. Between 2 am and 5 am on 7 December 1982, the military, under the leadership of Dési Bouterse, rounded up 13 prominent citizens who had criticized the military dictatorship and held them at Fort Zeelandia in Paramaribo. The dictatorship had all these men executed over the next three days, along with Rambocus and Jiwansingh Sheombar (who was also involved in the fourth counter-coup attempt). === 1987 elections and constitution === National elections were held in 1987. The National Assembly adopted a new constitution that allowed Bouterse to remain in charge of the army. Dissatisfied with the government, Bouterse summarily dismissed the ministers in 1990, by telephone. This event became popularly known as the "Telephone Coup". His power began to wane after the 1991 elections. The brutal civil war between the Suriname army and Maroons loyal to rebel leader Ronnie Brunswijk, begun in 1986, continued and its effects further weakened Bouterse's position during the 1990s. In 1999, the Netherlands tried Bouterse in absentia on drug smuggling charges. He was convicted and sentenced to prison but remained in Suriname. === 21st century === On 19 July 2010, the former dictator Dési Bouterse returned to power when he was elected as the new President of Suriname. He was reelected on 14 July 2015. Before his election in 2010, he, along with 24 others, had been charged with the murders of 15 prominent dissidents in the December murders. However, in 2012, two months before the verdict in the trial, the National Assembly extended its amnesty law and provided Bouterse and the others with amnesty of these charges. == Politics == The Republic of Suriname is a parliamentary representative democratic republic, based on the Constitution of 1987. The legislative branch of government consists of a 51-member unicameral National Assembly, simultaneously and popularly elected for a five-year term. In the most recent elections, held on Tuesday, 25 May 2010, the Megacombinatie won 23 of the National Assembly seats followed by Nationale Front with 20 seats. A much smaller number, important for coalition-building, went to the "A■combinatie" and to the Volksalliantie. The parties held negotiations to form coalitions. The President of Suriname is elected for a five-year term by a two-thirds majority of the National Assembly. If at least two-thirds of the National Assembly cannot agree to vote for one presidential candidate, a People's Assembly is formed from all National Assembly delegates and regional and municipal representatives who were elected by popular vote in the most recent national election. The president may be elected by a majority of the People's Assembly called for the special election. As head of government, the president appoints a sixteen-minister cabinet. A vice president, is normally elected for a five-year term at the same time as the president, by a simple majority in the National Assembly or People's Assembly. There is no constitutional provision for removal or replacement of the president, except in the case of resignation. The judiciary is headed by the High Court of Justice of Suriname (Supreme Court). This court supervises the magistrate courts. Members are appointed for life by the president in consultation with the National Assembly, the State Advisory Council, and the National Order of Private Attorneys. In April 2005, the regional Caribbean Court of Justice, based in Trinidad, was inaugurated. As the final court of appeal, it was intended to replace the London-based Privy Council. === Foreign relations ===

President Dési Bouterse was convicted and sentenced in the Netherlands to 11 years of imprisonment for drug trafficking. He is the main suspect in the court case concerning the 'December murders,' the 1982 assassination of opponents of military rule in Fort Zeelandia, Paramaribo. These two cases still strain relations between the Netherlands and Suriname. Due to Suriname's Dutch colonial history, Suriname had a long-standing special relationship with the Netherlands. The Dutch government has stated that it will only maintain limited contact with the president. Bouterse was elected as president of Suriname in 2010. The Netherlands in July 2014 dropped Suriname as a member of its development program. Since 1991, the United States has maintained positive relations with Suriname. The two countries work together through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI) and the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). Suriname also receives military funding from the U.S. Department of Defense. European Union relations and cooperation with Suriname are carried out both on a bilateral and a regional basis. There are ongoing EU-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and EU-CARIFORUM dialogues. Suriname is party to the Cotonou Agreement, the partnership agreement among the members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States and the European Union. On 17 February 2005, the leaders of Barbados and Suriname signed the "Agreement for the deepening of bilateral cooperation between the Government of Barbados and the Government of the Republic of Suriname." On 23–24 April 2009, both nations formed a Joint Commission in Paramaribo, Suriname, to improve relations and to expand into various areas of cooperation. They held a second meeting toward this goal on 3–4 March 2011, in Dover, Barbados. Their representatives reviewed issues of agriculture, trade, investment, as well as international transport. In the late 2000s, Suriname intensified development cooperation with other developing countries. China's South-South cooperation with Suriname has included a number of large-scale infrastructure projects, including port rehabilitation and road construction. Brazil signed agreements to cooperate with Suriname in education, health, agriculture, and energy production. == Military == The Armed Forces of Suriname have three branches: the Army, the Air Force, and the Navy. The President of the Republic, Dési Bouterse, is the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces (Opperbevelhebber van de Strijdkrachten). The President is assisted by the Minister of Defence. Beneath the President and Minister of Defence is the Commander of the Armed Forces (Bevelhebber van de Strijdkrachten). The Military Branches and regional Military Commands report to the Commander. After the creation of the Statute of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Royal Netherlands Army was entrusted with the defence of Suriname, while the defence of the Netherlands Antilles was the responsibility of the Royal Netherlands Navy. The army set up a separate Troepenmacht in Suriname (Forces in Suriname, TRIS). Upon independence in 1975, this force was turned into the Surinaamse Krijgsmacht (SKM):, Surinamese Armed Forces. On 25 February 1980, a group of 15 non-commissioned officers and one junior SKM officer, under the leadership of sergeant major Dési Bouterse, overthrew the Government. Subsequently, the SKM was rebranded as Nationaal Leger (NL), National Army. == Administrative divisions == The country is divided into ten administrative districts, each headed by a district commissioner appointed by the president, who also has the power of dismissal. Suriname is further subdivided into 62 resorts (ressorten). == Geography == Suriname is the smallest independent country in South America. Situated on the Guiana Shield, it lies mostly between latitudes 1° and 6°N, and longitudes 54° and 58°W. The country can be divided into two main geographic regions. The northern, lowland coastal area (roughly above the line Albina-Paranam-Wageningen) has been cultivated, and most of the population lives here. The southern part consists of tropical rainforest and sparsely inhabited savanna along the border with Brazil, covering about 80% of Suriname's land surface. The two main mountain ranges are the Bakhuys Mountains and the Van Asch Van Wijck Mountains. Julianatop is the highest mountain in the country at 1,286 metres (4,219 ft) above sea level. Other mountains include Tafelberg at 1,026 metres (3,366 ft), Mount Kasikasima at 718 metres (2,356 ft), Goliathberg at 358 metres (1,175 ft) and Voltzberg at 240 metres (790 ft). === Borders === Suriname is situated between French Guiana to the east and Guyana to the west. The southern border is shared with Brazil and the northern border is the Atlantic coast. The southernmost borders with French Guiana and Guyana are disputed by these countries along the Marowijne and Corantijn rivers, respectively, while a part of the disputed maritime boundary with Guyana was arbitrated by a tribunal convened under the rules set out in Annex VII of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on 20 September 2007. === Climate === Lying 2 to 5 degrees north of the equator, Suriname has a very hot and wet tropical climate, and temperatures do not vary much throughout the year. Average relative humidity is between 80% and 90%. Its average temperature ranges from 29 to 34 degrees Celsius (84 to 93 degrees Fahrenheit). Due to the high

humidity, actual temperatures are distorted and may therefore feel up to 6 degrees Celsius (11 degrees Fahrenheit) hotter than the recorded temperature. The year has two wet seasons, from April to August and from November to February. It also has two dry seasons, from August to November and February to April. === Nature reserves === Located in the upper Coppename River watershed, the Central Suriname Nature Reserve has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its unspoiled forests and biodiversity. There are many national parks in the country including Galibi National Reserve along the coast; Brownsberg Nature Park and Eilerts de Haan Nature Park in central Suriname; and the Sipaliwani Nature Reserve on the Brazilian border. In all, 16% of the country's land area is national parks and lakes, according to the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre. == Economy == Suriname's democracy gained some strength after the turbulent 1990s, and its economy became more diversified and less dependent on Dutch financial assistance. Bauxite (aluminium ore) mining continues to be a strong revenue source, and the discovery and exploitation of oil and gold has added substantially to Suriname's economic independence. Agriculture, especially rice and bananas, remains a strong component of the economy, and ecotourism is providing new economic opportunities. More than 80% of Suriname's land-mass consists of unspoiled rain forest; with the establishment of the Central Suriname Nature Reserve in 1998, Suriname signalled its commitment to conservation of this precious resource. The Central Suriname Nature Reserve became a World Heritage Site in 2000. The economy of Suriname is dominated by the bauxite industry, which accounts for more than 15% of GDP and 70% of export earnings. Other main export products include rice, bananas and shrimp. Suriname has recently started exploiting some of its sizeable oil and gold reserves. About a quarter of the people work in the agricultural sector. The Surinamese economy is very dependent on commerce, its main trade partners being the Netherlands, the United States, Canada, and Caribbean countries, mainly Trinidad and Tobago and the islands of the former Netherlands Antilles. After assuming power in the fall of 1996, the Wijdenbosch government ended the structural adjustment program of the previous government, claiming it was unfair to the poorer elements of society. Tax revenues fell as old taxes lapsed and the government failed to implement new tax alternatives. By the end of 1997, the allocation of new Dutch development funds was frozen as Surinamese Government relations with the Netherlands deteriorated. Economic growth slowed in 1998, with decline in the mining, construction, and utility sectors. Rampant government expenditures, poor tax collection, a bloated civil service, and reduced foreign aid in 1999 contributed to the fiscal deficit, estimated at 11% of GDP. The government sought to cover this deficit through monetary expansion, which led to a dramatic increase in inflation. It takes longer on average to register a new business in Suriname than virtually any other country in the world (694 days or about 99 weeks). GDP (2010 est.): U.S. $4.794 billion. Annual growth rate real GDP (2010 est.): 3.5%. Per capita GDP (2010 est.): U.S. $9,900. Inflation (2007): 6.4%. Natural resources: Bauxite, gold, oil, iron ore, other minerals; forests; hydroelectric potential; fish and shrimp. Agriculture: Products—rice, bananas, timber, palm kernels, coconuts, peanuts, citrus fruits, and forest products. Industry: Types—alumina, oil, gold, fish, shrimp, lumber. Trade: Exports (2012): $2.563 billion: alumina, gold, crude oil, lumber, shrimp and fish, rice, bananas. Major consumers: US 26.1%, Belgium 17.6%, UAE 12.1%, Canada 10.4%, Guyana 6.5%, France 5.6%, Barbados 4.7%. Imports (2012): $1.782 billion: capital equipment, petroleum, foodstuffs, cotton, consumer goods. Major suppliers: US 25.8%, Netherlands 15.8%, China 9.8%, UAE 7.9%, Antigua and Barbuda 7.3%, Netherlands Antilles 5.4%, Japan 4.2%. == Demographics == According to the 2012 census, Suriname had a population of 541,638 inhabitants. The Surinamese populace is characterized by its high level of diversity, wherein no particular demographic group constitutes a majority. This is a legacy of centuries of Dutch rule, which entailed successive periods of forced, contracted, or voluntary migration by various nationalities and ethnic groups from around the world. The largest ethnic group are the East Indians, who form 27% of the population. They are descendants of 19th-century contract workers from India, hailing mostly from the modern Indian states of Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh along the Nepali border. Surinamese Maroons, whose ancestors are mostly runaway slaves that fled to the interior, comprise the next largest group at 21.7%; they are divided into five main groups: Ndyuka (Aucans), Kwinti, Matawai, Saramaccans and Paramaccans. Surinamese Creoles, mixed people descending from African slaves and mostly Dutch Europeans, form 15.7% of the population. Javanese make up 14% of the population, and like the East Indians, descend largely from workers contracted from the island of Java in the former Dutch East Indies (modern Indonesia). 13.4% of the population identifies as being of mixed ethnic heritage. Other sizeable groups include the Chinese, originating from 19th-century contract workers and some recent migration, who number over 40,000 as of 2011; Lebanese, primarily Maronites; Jews of Sephardic and Ashkenazi origin, whose center of population was the community of Jodensavanne;

and Brazilians, many of them laborers mining for gold. A small but influential number of Europeans remain in the country, comprising about 1 percent of the population. They are descended mostly from Dutch 19th-century immigrant farmers, known as "Boeroes" (derived from boer, the Dutch word for "farmer"), and to a lesser degree other European groups, such as Portuguese from Madeira. Many Boeroes left after independence in 1975. Various indigenous peoples make up 3.7% of the population, with the main groups being the Akurio, Arawak, Kalina (Caribs), Tiriyó and Wayana. They live mainly in the districts of Paramaribo, Wanica, Para, Marowijne and Sipaliwini. The vast majority of Suriname's inhabitants (about 90%) live in Paramaribo or on the coast. The choice of becoming Surinamese or Dutch citizens in the years leading up to Suriname's independence in 1975 led to a mass migration to the Netherlands. This migration continued in the period immediately after independence and during military rule in the 1980s and for largely economic reasons extended throughout the 1990s. The Surinamese community in the Netherlands numbered 350,300 as of 2013; this is compared to approximately 566,000 Surinamese in Suriname itself. === Religion === Suriname's religious makeup is heterogenous and reflective of the country's multicultural character. According to the 2012 census, 48.4% were Christians, among whom 26.7% were Protestants (including 11.18% Pentecostal, 11.16% Moravian, and 4.4% of various other Protestant denominations) and 21.6% were Roman Catholics. Hindus formed the second-largest religious group in Suriname, comprising 22.3% of the population, the third largest proportion of any country in the Western Hemisphere after Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago. Almost all practitioners of Hinduism are found among the Indo-Surinamese population. Muslims constitute 13.9% of the population, which is proportionally the largest in the Americas, and are found mostly among those of Javanese and to a lesser degree those of Indian descent. Other religious groups include Winti (1.8%), an Afro-American religion practiced mostly by those of Maroon ancestry; Javanism (0.8%), a syncretic faith found among some Javanese Surinamese; and various indigenous folk traditions that are often incorporated into one of the larger religions (usually Christianity). In the 2012 census, 7.5% of the population declared they had "no religion", while a further 3.2% left the question unanswered. === Languages === Dutch is the sole official language, and is the language of education, government, business, and the media. Over 60% of the population speaks Dutch as a mother tongue, and most of the rest of the population speaks it as a second language. In 2004 Suriname became an associate member of the Dutch Language Union. It is the only Dutch-speaking country in South America as well as the only independent nation in the Americas where Dutch is spoken by a majority of the population, and one of the two non-Romance-speaking countries in South America, the other being English-speaking Guyana. In Paramaribo, Dutch is the main home language in two-thirds of households. The recognition of "Surinaams-Nederlands" ("Surinamese Dutch") as a national dialect equal to "Nederlands-Nederlands" ("Dutch Dutch") and "Vlaams-Nederlands" ("Flemish Dutch") was expressed in 2009 by the publication of the Woordenboek Surinaams Nederlands (Surinamese–Dutch Dictionary). Only in the interior of Suriname is Dutch seldom spoken. Sranan, a local creole language originally spoken by the creole population group, is the most widely used language in the streets and is often used interchangeably with Dutch depending on the formality of the setting. Surinamese Hindi or Sarnami, a dialect of Bhojpuri, is the third-most used language, spoken by the descendants of South Asian contract workers from then British India. Javanese is used by the descendants of Javanese contract workers. The Maroon languages, somewhat intelligible with Sranan, include Saramaka, Paramakan, Ndyuka (also called Aukan), Kwinti and Matawai. Amerindian languages, spoken by Amerindians, include Carib and Arawak. Hakka and Cantonese are spoken by the descendants of the Chinese contract workers. Mandarin is spoken by some few recent Chinese immigrants. English and Portuguese are also used. The public discourse about Suriname's languages is a part of an ongoing debate about the country's national identity. The use of the popular Sranan became associated with nationalist politics after its public use by former dictator Dési Bouterse in the 1980s, and groups descended from escaped slaves might resent it. Some propose to change the national language to English, so as to improve links to the Caribbean and North America, or to Spanish, as a nod to Suriname's location in South America, although it has no Spanish-speaking neighbours. === Largest cities === The national capital, Paramaribo, is by far the dominant urban area, accounting for nearly half of Suriname's population and most of its urban residents; indeed, its population is greater than the next nine largest cities combined. Most municipalities are located within the capital's metropolitan area, or along the densely populated coastline. == Culture == Owing to the country's multicultural heritage, Suriname celebrates a variety of distinct ethnic and religious festivals. === National holidays === 1 January – New Year's Day 6 January – Three Kings Day January – World Religion Day February – Chinese New Year 25 February – Day of the Revolution March (varies) – Holi

March/April – Good Friday March/April – Easter 1 May – Labour Day May/June – Ascension day 5 June – Indian Arrival Day 1 July – Keti Koti (Emancipation Day - end of slavery) 8 August – Javanese Arrival Day 9 August – Indigenous People's Day 10 October - Day of the Maroons 20 October – Chinese Arrival day October/November – Diwali 25 November – Independence Day 25 December – Christmas 26 December – Boxing Day There are several Hindu and Islamic national holidays like Diwali (deepavali), Phagwa and Eid ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-adha. These holidays do not have specific dates on the Gregorian calendar, as they are based on the Hindu and Islamic calendars, respectively. There are several holidays which are unique to Suriname. These include the Indian, Javanese and Chinese arrival days. They celebrate the arrival of the first ships with their respective immigrants. ==== New Year's Eve ==== New Year's Eve in Suriname is called Oud jaar, or "old year". It is during this period that the Surinamese population goes to the city's commercial district to watch "demonstrational fireworks". The bigger stores invest in these firecrackers and display them out in the streets. Every year the length of them is compared, and high praises are given for the company that has imported the largest ribbon. These celebrations start at 10 in the morning and finish the next day. The day is usually filled with laughter, dance, music, and drinking. When the night starts, the big street parties are already at full capacity. The most popular fiesta is the one that is held at café 't Vat in the main tourist district. The parties there stop between 10 and 11 at night, after which people go home to light their pagaras (red-firecracker-ribbons) at midnight. After 12, the parties continue and the streets fill again until daybreak. === Sports === The Suriname Olympic Committee is the national governing body for sports in Suriname. The SOC was established in 1959 and now has 17 members: Athletics, Badminton, Basketball, Boxing, Chess, Cycling, Football, Judo, Karate, Shooting, Swimming, Table Tennis, Taekwondo, Tennis, Triathlon, Volleyball, and Wrestling. One of the major sports in Suriname is football. Many Suriname-born players and Dutch-born players of Surinamese descent, like Gerald Vanenburg, Ruud Gullit, Frank Rijkaard, Edgar Davids, Clarence Seedorf, Patrick Kluivert, Ryan Babel, Aron Winter, Georginio Wijnaldum, Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink and Jeremain Lens have turned out to play for Oranje. In 1999, Humphrey Mijnals, who played for both Suriname and the Netherlands, was elected Surinamese footballer of the century. Another famous player is André Kamperveen, who captained Suriname in the 1940s and was the first Surinamese to play professionally in the Netherlands. The most famous international track & field athlete from Suriname is Letitia Vriesde, who won a silver medal at the 1995 World Championships behind Ana Quirot in the 800 metres, the first medal won by a South American female athlete in World Championship competition. In addition, she also won a bronze medal at the 2001 World Championships and won several medals in the 800 and 1500 metres at the Pan-American Games and Central American and Caribbean Games. Tommy Asinga also received acclaim for winning a bronze medal in the 800 metres at the 1991 Pan American Games. Swimmer Anthony Nesty is the only Olympic medalist for Suriname. He won gold in the 100-meter butterfly at the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul and he won bronze in the same discipline at the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona. Originally from Trinidad and Tobago, he now lives in Gainesville, Florida, and is the coach of the University of Florida, mainly coaching distance swimmers. Cricket is popular in Suriname to some extent, influenced by its popularity in the Netherlands and in neighbouring Guyana. The Surinaamse Cricket Bond is an associate member of the International Cricket Council (ICC). Suriname and Argentina are the only ICC associates in South America, although Guyana is represented on the West Indies Cricket Board, a full member. The national cricket team was ranked 47th in the world and sixth in the ICC Americas region as of June 2014, and competes in the World Cricket League (WCL) and ICC Americas Championship. Iris Jharap, born in Paramaribo, played women's One Day International matches for the Dutch national side, the only Surinamer to do so. In the sport of badminton the local heroes are Virgil Soeroredjo & Mitchel Wongsodikromo and also Crystal Leefmans. All winning medals for Suriname at the Carebaco Caribbean Championships, the Central American and Caribbean Games (CACSO Games) and also at the South American Games, better known as the ODESUR Games. Virgil Soeroredjo also participated for Suriname at the 2012 London Summer Olympics, only the second badminton player, after Oscar Brandon, for Suriname to achieve this. Multiple K-1 champion and legend, Ernesto Hoost, is of Surinamese descent. MMA and kickboxing champions Melvin Manhoef and Gilbert Yvel were born in Suriname or are of Surinamese descent. Rayen Simson, another legendary multiple world-champion kickboxer; Remy Bonjasky also a multiple K-1 champion; as well as retired female kickboxer, Ilonka Elmont; notable up-and-comer kickboxer and K-1 fighter, Tyrone Spong; and former Muay Thai champion, Andy Ristie, were born in Suriname. Involving the sport of tennis, historic national champions include Gerard van der Schroeff (men's single national champion for 10 consecutive years between the years 1931–41, plus champion of multiple

future titles). Herman Tjin-A-Djie (men's national champion 1941 and 1945, plus men's national double champion for 10 consecutive years with his brother Leo). Leo Tjin-A-Djie (between 1948–57 he was eight-time national champion and men's national double champion for 10 consecutive years with his brother Herman). From Leo spawned the Opa Leo Tjin-A-Djie Tennis tournament. Randolf Tjin-A-Djie was national champion for 1960. == Transportation == Suriname and neighboring Guyana are the only two countries on the mainland South American continent that drive on the left. In Guyana, this practice is inherited from United Kingdom colonial authorities. Various reasons are given to explain why Suriname drives on the left. It is thought that it is because the first cars imported were from England, but this is yet undocumented. In addition, this view does not say anything about traffic before the automobile era. Another explanation is that the Netherlands, at the time of its colonization of Suriname, used the left-hand side of the road for traffic, and yet another is that Suriname was first colonized by the English. Although the Netherlands converted to driving to the right at the end of the 18th century, Suriname did not. Writers Peter Kincaid and Ian Watson suggest that in territories such as Suriname where there are no connecting roads to neighbouring countries, there is no external pressure to change the status quo. === Air === Airlines with departures from Suriname: Blue Wing Airlines Caribbean Commuter Airways (Caricom Airways) (Surinam Airways Commuter) Gum Air Surinam Airways (SLM) Airlines with arrivals in Suriname: Caribbean Airlines (Trinidad & Tobago) Dutch Antilles Express (DAE) (Curaçao) Insel Air (Curaçao) Insel Air Aruba (Aruba) KLM (Netherlands) Gol Transportes Aéreos (Brazil) Tui (Netherlands) Surinam Airways (SLM) (Aruba, Brazil (Belem), Curaçao, Guyana (Georgetown), Netherlands (Amsterdam), Trinidad & Tobago (Port of Spain), & USA (Miami).) Other national companies with an air operator certification: == Health == The fertility rate was at 2.6 births per woman in 2009. Public expenditure was at 3.6% of the GDP in 2004, whereas private expenditure was at 4.2%. There were 45 physicians per 100,000 in the early 2000s. Infant mortality was at 30 per 1,000 live births. Male life expectancy at birth was at 66.4 years, whereas female life expectancy at birth was at 73 years. == Education == Education in Suriname is compulsory until the age of 12, and the nation had a net primary enrollment rate of 94% in 2004. Literacy is very common, particularly among males. The main university in the country is the Anton de Kom University of Suriname. From elementary school to high school there are 13 grades. The elementary school has six grades, middle school four grades and high school three grades. Students take a test in the end of elementary school to determine whether they will go to the MULO (secondary modern school) or a middle school of lower standards like LBGO. Students from the elementary school wear a green shirt with jeans, while middle school students wear a blue shirt with jeans. Students going from the second grade of middle school to the third grade have to choose between the business or science courses. This will determine what their major subjects will be. In order to go on to study math and physics, the student must have a total of 13 points. If the student has fewer points, he/she will go into the business courses or fail the grade. == Biodiversity == Due to the variety in habitats and temperatures, biodiversity in Suriname is considered high. In October 2013, 16 international scientists researching the ecosystems during a three-week expedition in Suriname's Upper Palumeu River Watershed catalogued 1,378 species and found 60—including six frogs, one snake, and 11 fish—that may be previously unknown species. According to the environmental non-profit Conservation International, which funded the expedition, Suriname's ample supply of fresh water is vital to the biodiversity and healthy ecosystems of the region. Snakewood (Brosimum guianense), a shrub-like tree, is native to this tropical region of the Americas. Customs in Suriname report that snakewood often illegally exported to French Guiana, thought to be for the crafts industry. === Environmental preservation === On 21 March 2013, Suriname's REDD+ Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP 2013) was approved by the member countries of the Participants Committee of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF). As in other parts of Central and South America, indigenous communities have increased their activism to protect their lands and preserve habitat. In March 2015, the "Trio and Wayana communities presented a declaration of cooperation to the National Assembly of Suriname that announces an indigenous conservation corridor spanning 72,000 square kilometers (27,799 square miles) of southern Suriname. The declaration, led by these indigenous communities and with the support of Conservation International (CI) and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Guianas, comprises almost half of the total area of Suriname." This area includes large forests and is considered "essential for the country's climate resilience, freshwater security, and green development strategy." == Media == Traditionally, De Ware Tijd was the major newspaper of the country, but since the '90s Times of Suriname, De West and Dagblad Suriname have also been well-read newspapers; all publish primarily in Dutch. Suriname has twenty-four radio stations, two broadcast through the Internet (Apintie and Radio10). There are twelve television sources: TV2(Ch.2),

ABC(Ch.4), RBN(Ch.5), STVS(Ch.8), Apintie(Ch.10), ATV(Ch.12), Radika(Ch.14), SCCN(Ch.17), Trishul(Ch. 20), Garuda(Ch.23), Sangeetmala(Ch.26), PL(Ch.28), Ch.30, Ch.32, Ch.38, SCTV(Ch.45), Ch.47, Mustika(Ch.50) And Ch.52. Also listened to is mArt, a broadcaster from Amsterdam founded by people from Suriname. Kondreman is one of the popular cartoons in Suriname. In 2012, Suriname was ranked joint 22nd with Japan in the worldwide Press Freedom Index by the organization Reporters Without Borders. This was ahead of the US (47th), the UK (28th), and France (38th). == Tourism == The hotel industry is important to Suriname's economy. The rental of apartments, or the rent-a-house phenomenon, is also popular in Suriname. Most tourists visit Suriname for the biodiversity of the Amazonian rain forests in the south of the country, which are noted for their flora and fauna. The Central Suriname Nature Reserve is the biggest and one of the most popular reserves, along with the Brownsberg Nature Park which overlooks the Brokopondo Reservoir, the latter being one of the largest man-made lakes in the world. Tonka Island in the reservoir is home to a rustic eco-tourism project run by the Saramaccaner Maroons. Pangi wraps and bowls made of calabashes are the two main products manufactured for tourists. The Maroons have learned that colorful and ornate pangis are popular with tourists. Other popular decorative souvenirs are hand-carved purple-hardwood made into bowls, plates, canes, wooden boxes, and wall decors. There are also many waterfalls throughout the country. Raleighvallen, or Raleigh Falls, is a 56,000-hectare (140,000-acre) nature reserve on the Coppename River, rich in bird life. Also are the Blanche Marie Falls on the Nickerie River and the Wonotobo Falls. Tafelberg Mountain in the centre of the country is surrounded by its own reserve – the Tafelberg Nature Reserve – around the source of the Saramacca River, as is the Voltzberg Nature Reserve further north on the Coppename River at Raleighvallen. In the interior are many Maroon and Amerindian villages, many of which have their own reserves that are generally open to visitors. Suriname is one of the few countries in the world where at least one of each biome that the state possesses has been declared a wildlife reserve. Around 30% of the total land area of Suriname is protected by law as reserves. Other attractions include plantations such as Laarwijk, which is situated along the Suriname River. This plantation can be reached only by boat via Domburg, in the north central Wanica District of Suriname. === Landmarks === The Jules Wijdenbosch Bridge is a bridge over the river Suriname between Paramaribo and Meerzorg in the Commewijne district. The bridge was built during the tenure of President Jules Albert Wijdenbosch (1996–2000) and was completed in 2000. The bridge is 52 metres (171 ft) high, and 1,504 metres (4,934 ft) long. It connects Paramaribo with Commewijne, a connection which previously could only be made by ferry. The purpose of the bridge was to facilitate and promote the development of the eastern part of Suriname. The bridge consists of two lanes (one lane each way) and is not accessible to pedestrians. The construction of the Sts. Peter and Paul Cathedral started on 13 January 1883. Before it became a cathedral it was a theatre. The theatre was built in 1809 and burned down in 1820. Suriname is one of the few countries in the world where a synagogue is located next to a mosque. The two buildings are located next to each other in the centre of Paramaribo and have been known to share a parking facility during their respective religious rites, should they happen to coincide with one another. A relatively new landmark is the Hindu Arya Dewaker temple in the Johan Adolf Pengelstraat in Wanica, Paramaribo, which was inaugurated in 2001. A special characteristic of the temple is that it does not have images of the Hindu divinities, as they are forbidden in the Arya Samaj, the Hindu movement to which the people who built the temple belong. Instead, the building is covered by many texts derived from the Vedas and other Hindu scriptures. The beautiful architecture makes the temple a tourist attraction. == Gallery == == See also == Index of Suriname-related articles Outline of Suriname == Notes == == References == == Further reading == == External links == Websites of the government, President and National Assembly (in Dutch) Website of the President of the Republic of Suriname (in Dutch) Website of the Government of the Republic of Suriname (in Dutch) Website of the National Assembly of the Republic of Suriname