



# French Guiana

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## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Central Market (p736)
- ➔ Les Palmistes (p738)
- ➔ Cacao's Sunday market (p741)
- ➔ Chez Félicia (p745)
- ➔ Auberge des Îles du Salut (p743)

## Best Walks

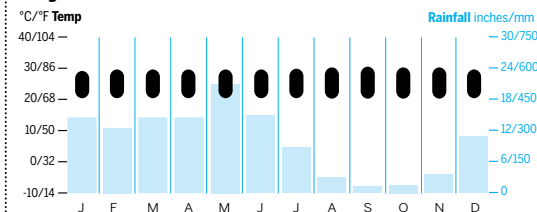
- ➔ Îles du Salut (p742)
- ➔ Downtown Cayenne (p736)
- ➔ Sentier Molokoï de Cacao (p741)
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## Why Go?

French Guiana is a tiny country of cleaned-up colonial architecture, eerie prison-camp history and some of the world's most diverse plant and animal life. It's a strange mix of French law and rainforest humidity where only a few destinations along the coast are easily accessed and travel can be frustratingly difficult as well as expensive. As a department of France, it's one of South America's wealthiest corners, with funds pouring in to ensure a stable base for the satellite launcher. But not even a European superpower can tame this vast, pristine jungle: you'll find potholes in newly paved roads, and ferns sprouting between bricks, while Amerindians, Maroons and Hmong refugees live traditional lifestyles so far from *la vie Metropole* that it's hard to believe they're connected at all.

## When to Go

### Cayenne



**Jan–Jun** Expect soggy during these months, with the heaviest rains in May.

**Late Jan–Mar** Dates vary but you can expect Cayenne to throw a wild and exciting Carnaval.

**Jul–Sep** It rains less during the dry season although it's hot and humid year round.

## AT A GLANCE

- ➔ **Currency** Euro (€)
- ➔ **Languages** French, Creole
- ➔ **Money** ATMs in bigger towns; *cambios* only in Cayenne; credit cards widely accepted
- ➔ **Visas** Not needed for 90 days for most nationalities
- ➔ **Time** GMT minus three hours

## Fast Facts

- ➔ **Area** 91,000 sq km
- ➔ **Population** 250,400
- ➔ **Capital** Cayenne
- ➔ **Emergency** ☎ 17
- ➔ **Country code** ☎ 594

## Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	€0.64
Canada	C\$1	€0.68
New Zealand	NZ\$1	€0.60
UK	UK£1	€1.36
USA	US\$1	€0.88

## Set Your Budget

- ➔ Pho at the Cayenne Central Market €5
- ➔ Hammock space in a *carbet* (open-air hut) €10
- ➔ Daily car rental €45
- ➔ Tour of the Camp de la Transportation €8

## Resources

- ➔ **French Guiana Tourism Committee** ([www.guyane-amazonie.fr](http://www.guyane-amazonie.fr))
- ➔ **Guyane 1ère** (<http://guyane.la1ere.fr>)
- ➔ **Guyane.fr** ([www.guyane.fr](http://www.guyane.fr))

## Connections

French Guiana has a border crossing at St Georges, where the Oyapock River marks the frontier with Brazil, and at St Laurent, where the Maroni River is the border with Suriname. Both border crossings are made by boat, although a bridge, which may open in the lifetime of this book, has been built to Brazil.

## ITINERARIES

### One Week

Start in Cayenne, making sure to visit the market, stroll the streets and to eat out often. Drive to Cacao on a Sunday for the Laotian market. If there's a shuttle launch in Kourou, call or write to the Centre Spatial Guyanais to secure an invitation to see it, then try to work in an overnight visit to the Îles du Salut that won't conflict with the launch (the islands close before and after launches). Spend a final day or two exploring the prison camps in St Laurent du Maroni.

### Two Weeks

Follow the above itinerary, extending your stay to two or more nights on the Îles du Salut. Take an overnight tour of Kaw, where you'll stay on a floating lodge, and look for scarlet ibis, black caiman and a huge array of other bird species. Before heading to St Laurent du Maroni, detour to Mana and Awala-Yalimopo to watch nesting turtles if the season is right or otherwise to enjoy the gorgeous beach.

## Essential Food & Drink

- ➔ **Pho** Vietnamese soup made with beef broth, rice noodles, many fragrant herbs and meat.
- ➔ **Mie/nasi goreng** Javanese-style fried noodles/rice.
- ➔ **Gibier** Bush meat like capybara, wild boar and agouti is legally hunted and found widely on restaurant menus.
- ➔ **Pizza** Find delicious thin-crust, French-style, wood-fired pizzas in most main towns.
- ➔ **Jamais goûté** A delicate freshwater fish that's best steamed in banana leaves.
- ➔ **Croissant** Flaky, French-style pastries as well as simple baguettes are a big part of the French Guianan diet, particularly at breakfast.
- ➔ **Ti'punch** Literally a 'small punch' made with local rum, lime juice and sugarcane syrup – a Caribbean favorite.
- ➔ **Fricassee** Rice, beans and sautéed meat stewed in gravy – unlike French fricassee, the Caribbean style has a brown or red sauce with a kick of cayenne pepper.