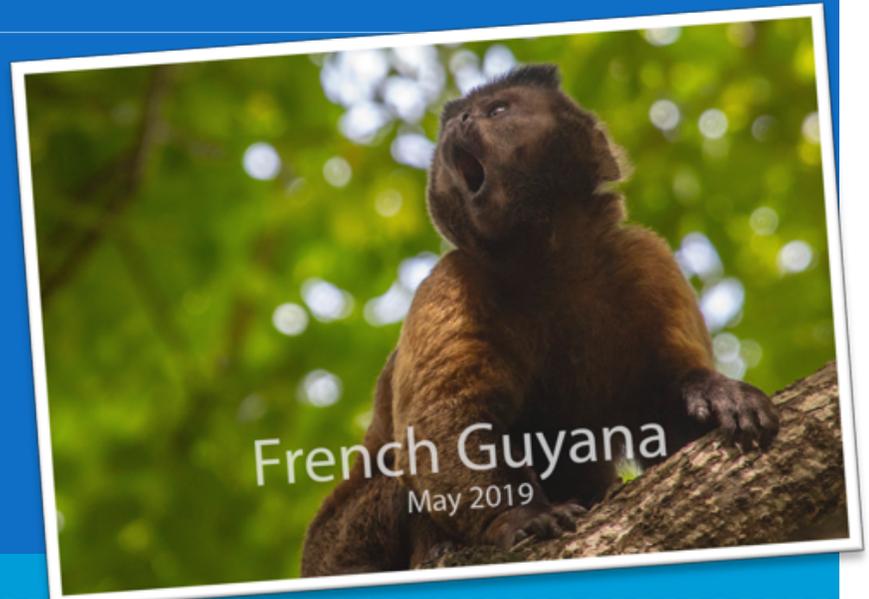


Suriname & French Guyana



Overland from Suriname to French Guyana and back

May 2019



Paramaribo, Suriname

I arrive actually 45 minutes before scheduled arrival time – excellent. The passport control and luggage pick-up were very quick – so I was out in 15-20 minutes. So far so good! Then of course the pre-booked taxi from my hotel did not show up so I had to call and arrange for a different transport into Paramaribo from the airport. It is quite far away and takes over an hour.

The reception of my **hotel the Eco resort inn** was unwilling to accept they had done anything wrong even though I had it all in a confirmed email – hum, not impressed. Hans, my travelling companion had arrived the day before from Georgetown, Guyana, and greeted me with a cold beer. With a 5-hour time difference I decided to call it a night already at 10 PM and went to bed.

We checked out the following morning and took off with the driver prearranged by Hans. We did a short tour around the city centre and also picked up some cash in local money before setting off east towards the French Guyana border. It is a 2-hour drive to the river dividing the two countries. We had to make sure to get stamped out on the Suriname side before leaving. Instead of the regular boat we jumped on a privet pirogue boat. They were asking us for ca: 500 sek, but we managed to get tickets for 120 sek.



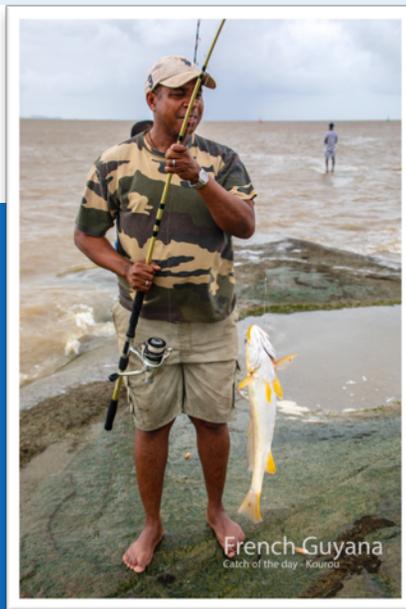
Dreyfuss Signal Tower in Kourou



St. Laurent du Maroni to Kourou

Upon arrival we took a taxi up to the car-rental firm SIXT in the centre of St. Laurent du Maroni. After signing all the necessary documents and inspecting our VW Polo car, we were off towards Kourou some 200 km to the east. A nice drive with vertically no cars on the road. We decided to stop for lunch at the seafont **town of Sinnamary**. We tried the **restaurant Le Pakira** and ate Capivara meat with rice and a cold beer.

Our trip continued and we arrived at **Kourou** and checked in at our **seafont hotel – Hotel des Roches**. It had been raining off and on during our drive, but it had cleared by the time we checked in. We saw the islands Iles du Salut off the shores in the distance.



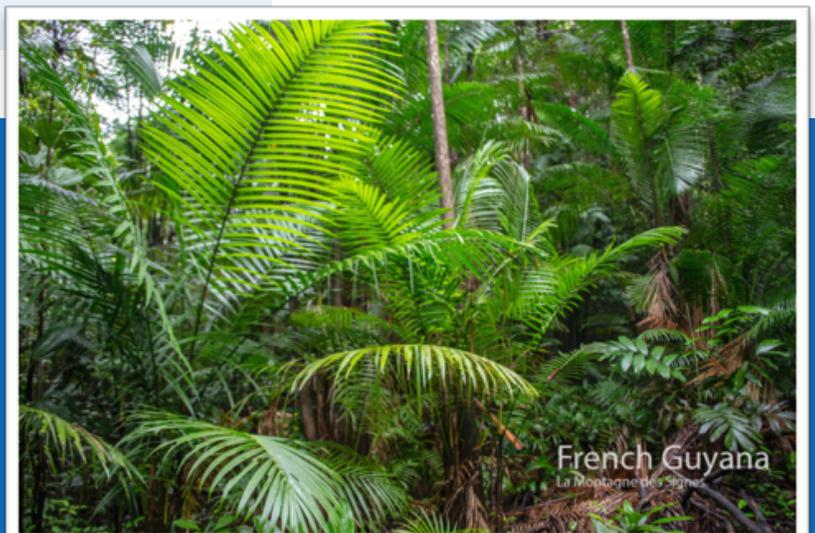
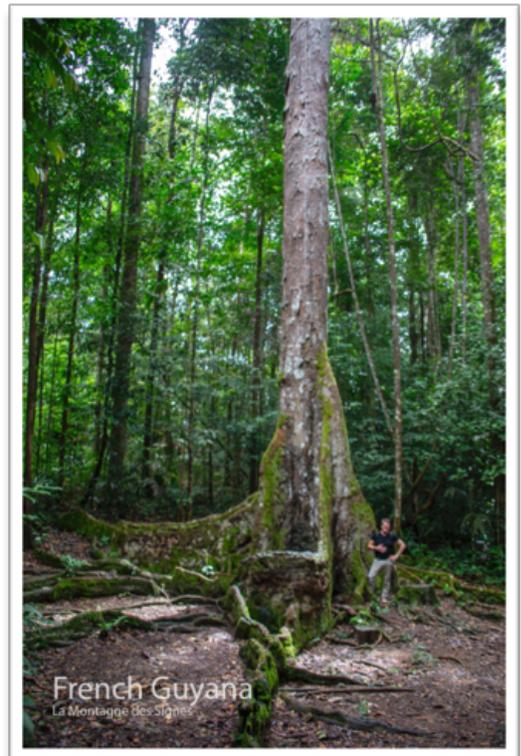


La Montagne des Signes Trek

We checked with alternative operators, but could not find space. We have now finally been able to get on a trip coming Friday. However, we are scheduled to be in Cayenne on this day – so we'll have to drive up the 50 km in the early morning in order to get on this cruise. We rested up a bit and decided to go for dinner. We opted for **Le Grillade** which turned out to be a very good choice. Nothing is cheap here however. I expect it is even more expensive than in mainland France.

The next day – now free for alternative activities – was quickly rearranged. We decided to do a trek up the **La Montagne des Singes**. This was a tougher track than we had anticipated, but well worth it. It took us just under 4 hours through pristine Jungle Forrest. We saw a couple of the beautiful **Morpho butterfly** and the dangerous **Viper snake Le Grage**. Small, but very lethal. The view was well compensated up at the top (500 m height) overlooking the valley and seeing the Space centre to the left, the city of Kourou and all the way to the Ile de Salut.

Lunch was taken at **restaurant Le P'tite Café**. Had an excellent lunch. The dinner at bit later in the evening was taken at **Maison Peruvienne** also a very good choice with great Ceviche.

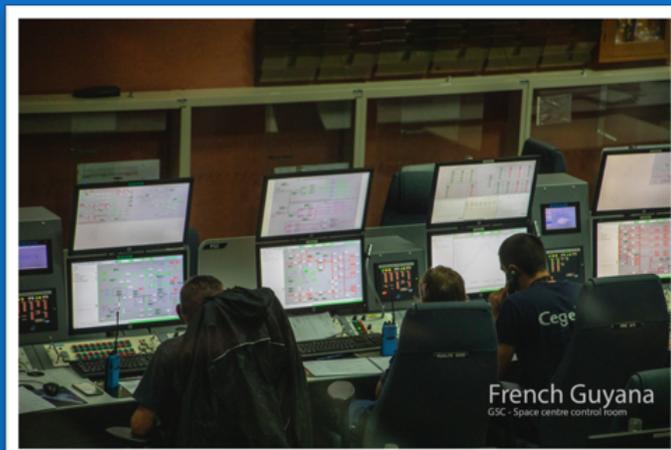




Centre Spatial Guyane (GCS)

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The following day was set for a visit to **Guyane Centre Spatial (GCS)**. We drove to the plant and checked in to the centre with the rain pouring down outside. This was a super professional guided tour of ca: 4 hours. We were a group (all pre-booked which is a must) of 50 people. We got to see the control centre, many of the launching sites and different development sites. They have a close cooperation with Soyuz (Russian), Ariane 5 and 6, Vega (Italian) are all different rockets used for carrying satellites. On average they launch one per month. Some 1500 people are employed directly (mostly expatriates) and 6-times more people as sub-contractors and indirect people.





Ile du Royal (Devils Island and more)

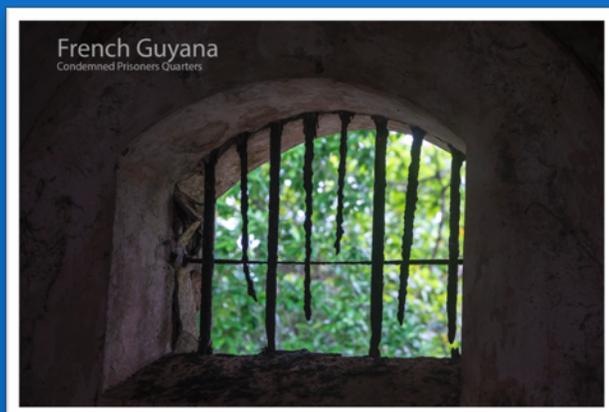
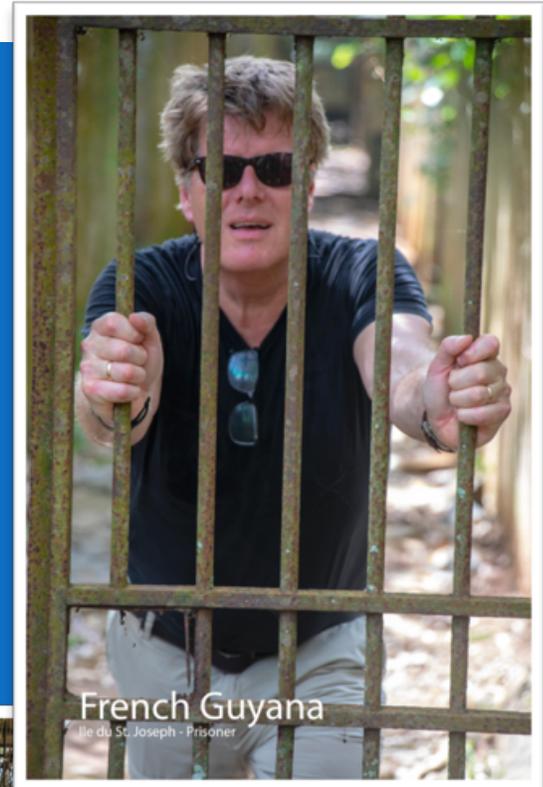
After this visit we drove down to Cayenne and checked into our **hotel Ker Alberte**. The top hotel in Cayenne and recommended by Le Figaro. We had a very good lunch at their **restaurant Le K**. Had a walk around the old city centre, but actually not much to see apart from a few old buildings and the famous **Place Palmiste** including the **hotel Palmiste**.

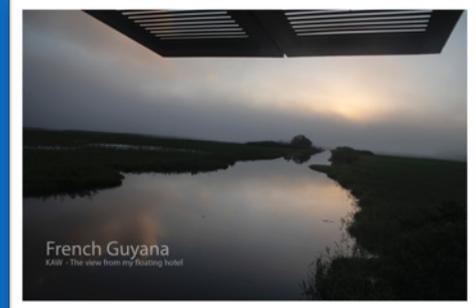
The following day it was up again early to drive back up to Kourou for the tour out to the **Islands of Ile du Salut**. We had booked with **La Hulotte** www.lahulotte-guyanne.fr and their **catamaran**. We were in for a spectacular day with blue skies and not a drop of rain. The tour took off from the harbour pier in Kourou. We were a fully booked ship with some +20 people in total. The override by the catamaran took about over 1 hour. We first circled the Ile du Royale so that we could pass just next to **Ile du Diable**. An island which you are not allowed to land on. **Ile du Diable is the island where Dreyfuss, the French politician, was confined to in isolation** for over five years before he was pardoned (The Dreyfuss affaire). We had some 4 hours on the main island – **Ile du Royale** to wander freely or use a French speaking guide. Truly amazing site with lots of old buildings, ruins of prison blocks and administrative staff buildings. We took lunch at the small guest house on the island. We thereafter continued by a short trip to the third and last island in the group – **Ile du St. Joseph**. Here we had to use a small dingy to land the island or swim for those who preferred this activity. I skipped this as one of the guys was stung badly by a jelly fish. This smaller island also contained a prison camp – asylum for convicts who served harsher penalties. **Papillon was on this island before he managed to escape**. We then headed back to Kourou and the mainland. The costed only 50 € which was money very well spent. Thereafter back down to Cayenne and our hotel Ker Alberte. We took our dinner at Le K. and watched some live Friday jazz in the restaurant.





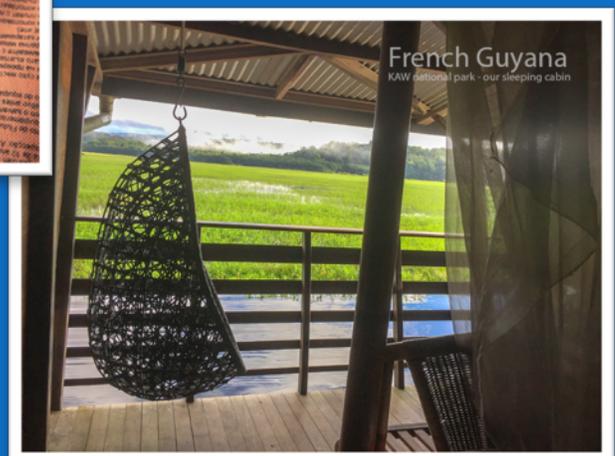
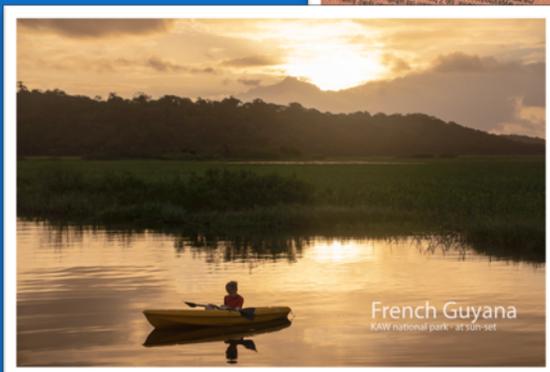
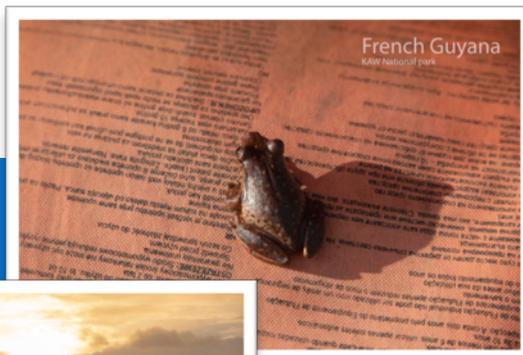
Iles du Salut (Three Islands)





KAW National Park

We left early morning for the drive eastwards to the **KAW national park** and the tour we had signed up for there. The drive took 1h 45m as the roads got really bad after a while. We used our GPS guide www.maps.me which helped to find the location. This was at the end of the road. From there we were collected and picked-up by two pirogues and transported in pouring rain to the boat out in the swamp area some 50 minutes out. The weather did clear, fortunately, at the time of our arrival, but we were all then pretty soaked. We had pre-booked the only two private cabins on the ship (fortunately). The rest had booked hammocks and all slept together under one roof. The rest of the group were either French people living as expatriates in Cayenne or friends visiting from France. They were quite a loud bunch. Lunch and dinner were included in the set-up including a couple of pirogue trips to watch the wildlife. Nice, pristine jungle, marshland but unfortunately, we did not see much wildlife. A couple of birds, a caiman baby and some sloth at a far distance. JAL Voyages was the organizer for this trip. www.jal-voyages.com





Back up to Paramaribo (Suriname)

We stayed overnight and made it back to our parked car by pirogue by 09:00 AM. I drove back to Cayenne and let Hans off as he was flying back from there. I then continued all the way on my own back up to St. Laurent du Maroni on my own and returned the car at SIXT car rental. I crossed the water/border once again between French Guyana and Suriname by Pirogue got my passport stamped and was then picked-up by the same driver who drove us down to the border 1 week earlier. Back up in Paramaribo where I once again checked in to Hotel Eco Resort. I took an early evening after having driven for some 4-5 hours + another 2 hours being driven up to Paramaribo. The last day was spent strolling around the old parts of Paramaribo which has great period Dutch architecture. Enjoyed a couple of hours around the pool and was then transported to the airport which is situated over 1 hours' drive outside of the capitol.

