

Suriname

Status: Republic in northeastern South America
Area: 63,251 sq. miles
Population: 539,633 (2015 estimate)
Currency: 1 Suriname Dollar = 14 U.S. cents



Issued August 11, 1892, this was Suriname's first locally produced stamp, Scott 22.



The high-denomination stamp in an eight-stamp birds set of 1966, Scott 330.



The middle stamp of the 1968 three-stamp Joden Savanna Synagogue set with text from the Hebrew book of Isaiah, Scott 360. It honors the first synagogue established in the Western Hemisphere in 1685.

Columbus sailed along the coast of Suriname (sometimes shortened to Surinam) on his historic third voyage, but it was more than a century before Spanish ships explored the area, which they named after one of the indigenous ethnic groups who lived at the mouth of the Suriname River. In the early part of the 17th century, Europeans began to settle the area. The first substantial settlement came in 1830 when Sephardic Jews established Torarica. A more enduring European presence came in 1651 when Governor Willoughby of Barbados established an English settlement that he called Willoughbyland at the site of the present-day capital, Paramaribo. Within a decade the colony encompassed 50 sugar plantations and 1,000 settlers. Willoughbyland welcomed Sephardic Jews fleeing persecution in Spain and, in 1685, the first synagogue in the Western Hemisphere was formed in Joden Savanne.

Suriname was swept up in the 17th century Anglo-Dutch Wars and in 1667, the Dutch seized Fort Willoughby and renamed it Fort Zeelandia. By the Treaty of Westminster in 1674, the British ceded its rights to Suriname in return for which the Netherlands gave up its rights to New Amsterdam (New York). Under Dutch control, Suriname's agricultural economy prospered. The British once again occupied the area during the Napoleonic Wars, though it was returned to the Netherlands in 1816. Abolition of slavery in 1863 added further strains to the plantation economy. In 1866, the Netherlands granted Suriname a parliament. After the abolition of slavery, indentured laborers from Asia worked on the plantations. But the discovery of gold at the end of the 19th century contributed to a growing mining sector, and in 1920, Alcoa opened its first aluminum mine in Suriname.

In 1866, the Netherlands granted Suriname its own parliament. In 1922, Suriname was declared an integral part of the Netherlands. But the hardships of the Depression fueled anti-colonial resistance. During World War II, the Surinamese refused to recognize the German occupation government in the Netherlands. The United States sent troops to Suriname to protect its bauxite supplies. In 1954, Suriname became a Dutch Overseas Territory and was granted self-government. On November 25, 1975, Suriname became fully independent. The "Sargent's Coup" in 1980 ousted the government and Desi Bouterse established a seven-year military dictatorship. Although a democratic constitution was restored in 1987, Bouterse has continued to dominate Suriname's politics. Today, Suriname is a secure, stable and economically viable country.

Since the 17th century, Suriname has had mail service to Europe. Initially, mail was transported on ships of the Chartered West India Company (GWIC). That was replaced by British packets. After Dutch control was restored the mail generally traveled to Curaçao where it connected with the Royal Dutch Packets. When use of British packets resumed in 1834, mail between the Netherlands and Suriname usually travelled via Southampton. In 1865, a French packet agent was stationed in Paramaribo, which shifted the mail route via St. Nazaire. In 1873, the Netherlands issued seven stamps depicting King William III, typographed by the venerable security printer Joh Enschede and Sons in Haarlem. A shortage of 2½ cent stamps led to the local printing of a stamp (Scott 22) by H.B. Heidje in Paramaribo. Apart from the World War II era when stamps were produced in England and the United States, most Suriname stamps were produced by Enschede and Sons.



A half-cent Van Walbeeck's Ship, Scott 142.



Coat of Arms stamp from 1976, Scott 446.



One of the eight-stamp birds set of 2008, Scott 1373g.



A 20-cent airmail from 1961 features the U.S. Mercury spaceship and Cmdr. Alan B. Shepard, the first American in space, Scott C29.