



PRESS RELEASE

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Preeminent Tourism Industry Professionals Visiting Guyana

GEORGETOWN, GUYANA – Another outstanding group of birding and natural history tour operators, researchers, conservationists, journalists, and media professionals from Europe, North America, and South America are in Guyana to experience the country's nature and cultural tourism activities. The group is part of the latest tourism product familiarization trip organized by the Guyana Sustainable Tourism Initiative (GSTI), a joint project of the Guyana Tourism Authority (GTA) and the United States Agency for International Development / Guyana Trade and Investment Support (USAID/GTIS) project.

The activities on this familiarization trip, which runs from October 1-12, provide participants with a choice between birdwatching, nature and cultural activities. The international travel trade and media representatives will visit Georgetown, Kaieteur Falls, Karanambu Ranch, Caiman House at Yupukari Village, Rock View Lodge, Aranaputa Village, Surama Village and Eco-Lodge, Fair View Village, Iwokrama River Lodge, Atta Rainforest Lodge and Iwokrama Canopy Walkway, and Baganara Island Resort.

As part of its marketing strategy, the GSTI has facilitated numerous familiarization trips that have provided an incredible boost to Guyana's level of recognition within the international tourism industry. As a result of providing participants with a first-hand experience of Guyana's tourism products, more than 40 international tour operators are currently selling, designing and bringing birdwatching and natural history trips to Guyana. Several of these tour operators have brought groups to Guyana in 2009, and more have trips planned for 2010. Thanks to the journalists and media personnel that were also on the trips, Guyana has been featured in numerous international magazines and newspapers (see: www.guyanabirds.com/trellis/External_News).

Among those on this trip are four serious birdwatchers, including one who is already well known to Guyana. Mike Braun has made many trips to Guyana and traveled in some of the country's most remote regions for the ornithology stream of the Smithsonian Institution's biological diversity of the Guiana Shield, which has been ongoing for more than a quarter of a century. He was on the team that discovered the endangered Red Siskin in southern Guyana, and is a co-author of the Smithsonian Institution's bird checklist for Guyana. Mike is now getting requests to lead birding groups to Guyana and this trip will allow him to become familiar with the lodges, guides, and new developments to facilitate trips.

Gregory Butcher is the Director of Bird Conservation for the National Audubon Society; he will be writing an online feature for Audubon magazine and a blog about his trip. The National Audubon Society, which has more than 300,000 members, was founded in 1905 with a mission to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats. Gregory will also be providing advice on linking conservation and tourism programs.

Gerard Gorman owns and guides for his European company Probirder. Gerard is also the author of six books, including the handbook to European woodpecker species and is excited to visit Guyana as it is a renowned place for viewing woodpeckers. Probirder offers birding and wildlife watching tours in Central and Eastern Europe but is interested in adding long-haul destinations to its portfolio; Guyana is among the first destinations they are exploring.

Based in Venezuela, Chris Sharpe is the co-founder and Director of the tour operator Birding Venezuela, and is a staff leader at Arizona-based Borderland Tours and UK's Naturetrek. As a birding guide and conservation biologist specializing in ornithology, Chris also helped launch the UK's Neotropical Bird Club. Chris regularly leads birding trips

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in Venezuela and other locations around the globe and would like to bring clients to Guyana. Chris has also worked on projects linking conservation and tourism in Venezuela and will be sharing his expertise with Guyana.

Cindy Roder is the sales and product manager specializing in Central and South America for Nature Team, a division of the Swiss tour operator Team Reisen AG. Since 1989, Nature Team has specialized in offering active holidays to destinations throughout the world and they are looking to add a Guyana trip to their roster of offerings. Market studies have shown that the Swiss and German markets are good matches for Guyana's tourism products, and Nature Team will help introduce Guyana to that market.

As in the past, this familiarization trip will also have some top media in the group. Laurie Gough, described by Time magazine as "one of the new generation of intrepid travel writers" has written a number of award-winning books and has published stories in numerous magazines and literary travel anthologies, including The L.A. Times, salon.com, Canadian Geographic, and The National Post. Laurie is planning on writing several travel articles about Guyana.

Photographer and videographer John Canning has provided travel coverage in 55 countries for on-line, broadcast, and print media outlets including MSNBC, Slate, Expedia Radio, Disney, Yahoo, Microsoft TV and the Green Living Project. John runs MediaSherpa Consulting and Productions and will be preparing photographic stories about Guyana for Away.com and Orbitz.

Theresa Storm is a freelance journalist and photographer specializing in adventure, ecotourism, and sustainable tourism. Theresa has written for travel book series such as DK Eyewitness Caribbean and a wide range of newspapers and magazines, and will be writing a feature article on Guyana and a blog about her trip for the Calgary Herald, one of Canada's largest newspapers.

Cari Gray comes to Guyana as both a tour operator and travel writer. Cari built her travel industry knowledge by working with the luxury travel market leader Butterfield & Robinson for more than 15 years. Cari now owns her own company, Gray&Co., through which she organizes and designs high-end, individually crafted trips. Cari also plans on writing articles about tourism in Guyana, including one for Departures magazine, which is a publication of American Airlines.

The GSTI familiarization tours would not be possible if local tourism suppliers were not pledging their full support. For this program, GTA-USAID/GTIS is grateful for the generous contributions from Wilderness Explorers, Trans Guyana Airways, Cara Lodge, Grand Coastal Inn, Guyana Pegasus, Baganara Island Resort, Surama Eco-Lodge, Iwokrama International Centre, Atta Rainforest Lodge, Rock View Lodge, Karanambu Ranch, Community and Tourism Services (CATS), Caiman House at Yupukari village, and Fair View and Aranaputa villages.

The Guyana Sustainable Tourism Initiative (GSTI) is receiving support from Guyana Trade and Investment Support (GTIS), a joint project of the Government of Guyana and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). More information on the GSTI and tourism in Guyana can be found at www.guyanabirding.com.

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