

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

GUYANA



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS

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GUYANA MAP



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A WELCOME LETTER

Dear Peace Corps/Guyana Invitee:

It is a pleasure to welcome you to Peace Corps/Guyana. We wish to congratulate you on your decision to commit the next 27 months to assisting the Guyanese people to pursue their development aspirations. You are to be commended for having successfully completed the rigorous Peace Corps selection process through which you will become a member of the 27th training class to serve in Guyana.

The information contained in this welcome book represents a general outline of life as a Volunteer in Guyana. However, the nature of development work is such that the living conditions and work environment can change often. Every effort is made to keep this book as a current and accurate representation of the reality in Guyana, but changes may occur before you arrive. Guyana offers a unique opportunity for a challenging and rewarding tour of service as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Peace Corps/Guyana's priority is to support underserved people through projects in education, community health and the environment that reflect Guyana's development goals. Some of you may live in towns and villages in Guyana with relatively good access to Internet and phone service. Some of you may live in small remote communities in which these and other conveniences are not available, but you will be surrounded by some of the most pristine and beautiful areas found on Earth. You will be challenged physically and emotionally, but we assure you the experience will be memorable! You will contribute meaningfully to the positive development of people in a community while gaining experience, knowledge, and a broadened understanding and perspective that will enrich your life through Peace Corps service.

As a Volunteer, you can be an agent of positive and enduring change; however, it requires being open-minded and having a sincere interest in working with and helping others to succeed. You will need to learn much about Guyanese culture to be effective in your work and social environments. This, in turn, will enable mutual trust and respect and will encourage Guyanese to work with you in a cooperative partnership.

You will be a part of those assisting Guyanese at the community level to achieve their development aspirations through your energy, motivation, creativity, and genuine desire to make a contribution. You will be assigned to a specific project and work under the supervision of a local counterpart or supervisor, which will require you to adapt to new and different modes of interpersonal relations. In a developmental context, attitudinal and organizational change can be challenging, but in the end, the fulfillment and satisfaction of having contributed to improved opportunities for those with whom you will live and work will be a worthy reward.

Twelve weeks of pre-service training will provide you with a comprehensive orientation to your future work assignment, approaches, tools, and strategies to effectively serve in Guyana. You will, likewise, receive crucial information about staying healthy and safe. Living in a Guyanese household and working together with Guyanese will be integral parts of your pre-service training.

As a result of this experience, you will grow in knowledge, self-confidence, and cultural appreciation. We expect that this journey upon which you have begun will be life-changing and always have a special place in your memories. We look forward to your arrival!

Linda Arbogast, Country Director
Peace Corps/Guyana

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CORE EXPECTATIONS FOR PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS

In working toward fulfilling the Peace Corps mission of promoting world peace and friendship, as a trainee and Volunteer, you are expected to do the following:

1. Prepare your personal and professional life to make a commitment to serve abroad for a full term of 27 months
2. Commit to improving the quality of life of the people with whom you live and work and, in doing so, share your skills, adapt them, and learn new skills as needed
3. Serve where the Peace Corps asks you to go, under conditions of hardship if necessary, and with the flexibility needed for effective service
4. Recognize that your successful and sustainable development work is based on the local trust and confidence you build by living in, and respectfully integrating yourself into, your host community and culture
5. Recognize that you are responsible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for your personal conduct and professional performance
6. Engage with host country partners in a spirit of cooperation, mutual learning, and respect
7. Work within the rules and regulations of the Peace Corps and the local and national laws of the country where you serve
8. Exercise judgment and personal responsibility to protect your health, safety, and well-being and that of others
9. Recognize that you will be perceived in your host country and community as a representative of the people, cultures, values, and traditions of the United States of America
10. Represent responsibly the people, cultures, values, and traditions of your host country and community to people in the United States both during and following your service

PEACE CORPS/GUYANA HISTORY AND PROGRAMS

History of the Peace Corps in Guyana

The Peace Corps first received a formal invitation from Guyana in 1966, the year of the country's independence. From 1966–71, 138 Volunteers served in Guyana with the Peace Corps. At that time, Education Volunteers broadened the school curricula to include technical and vocational subjects, including home economics, crafts, and manual arts. Technicians, architects, and engineers also assisted in developing and carrying out plans for Guyana's Ministry of Works and Hydraulics.

In 1993, the Guyanese government, led by President Cheddi Jagan, approached the Peace Corps about prospects for the agency to reopen its program in Guyana. In March 1995, the Peace Corps officially reopened a joint Peace Corps office for Suriname and Guyana. The first Volunteers arrived that same year, serving in the sectors of Health and Education in seven of the 10 administrative regions. In 1997, Peace Corps/Guyana and Peace Corps/Suriname split to form two separate programs. In total, more than 575 Volunteers have served in Guyana.

Volunteers serve at sites ranging from the capital city of Georgetown, with a population of 300,000, to small, remote villages with populations of 300. They are affiliated with a variety of schools, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and government health facilities.

Peace Corps/Guyana ----Vision Statement

- We train and support respectful, professional, and productive Volunteers.
- Volunteers and staff enjoy mutual trust, encouragement, and respect.
- Volunteers and staff are part of the same team with the same purpose.
- Individual contributions to a unified team will achieve shared goals.

Peace Corps Programming in Guyana

In each project, the development of human capacity is the central goal. Each Volunteer has the chance to enhance the capabilities and self-reliance of his/her Guyanese counterparts and host communities while learning how to perceive the world more broadly and to operate with credibility and success in a foreign environment.

Education Project

In Guyana, education is a national priority. There is considerable agreement in society that the road to national development and advancement can be achieved only through effective educational systems implemented from the nursery to tertiary levels. In order to improve human capital, Guyanese citizens require the opportunity to reach to their fullest potential through educational opportunities. This will pave the way to greater productivity and economic development.

The Guyana Ministry of Education (MOE) has established fundamental objectives for the nation's educational system, some of which are highlighted below:

1. Provision of full coverage for early childhood education
2. Continue its efforts to offer a unified literacy program with a sustained and systematic program of remediation to correct the deficiencies that have been identified
3. Improve numeracy at the primary level by expanding and effectively implementing the Interactive Radio Instruction program

4. Improving school and classroom environment through
 - a. Improvement of physical facilities/infrastructure
 - b. Implementation of child-friendly methods in schools
 - c. Better use of instructional time through the improvement of attendance at school
 - d. Implementation of initiatives to improve computer technology
5. Improving the cross-cutting strategies for effectively using information and communication technologies

Given these objectives, Peace Corps/Guyana works closely with the MOE to implement various community education initiatives and has developed a project plan outlining the overall purpose, goals, objectives, and activities to be achieved during a five-year time frame.

Annually, there are approximately 36 Peace Corps Volunteers assigned to the Education Project working in primary schools and some at the Ministry of Education level. With an acute shortage of trained teachers in the school system, there is strong demand for Volunteers' skills and training to support the MOE's first national strategic priority of providing quality education.

Typical Education Volunteer interventions include training teachers and role modeling teaching techniques to improve literacy instruction while ensuring a student-focused approach, assisting teachers in developing appropriate learning resources, working with primary-school students via in class instruction and remedial pullout and tutoring sessions, developing and maintaining school libraries, providing computer training for teachers and students to complement literacy achievements, and organizing extracurricular activities and summer camps that reinforce literacy interventions. The GLIFE project (below) also focuses on promoting community involvement to strengthen and improve the school environment and parental and family engagement in student success.

Guyana: Literacy Improvement for Everyone (GLIFE)

Project Purpose:

Students and teachers will gain access to personal, professional, and academic development opportunities through literacy.

There are three fundamental goals of the project:

- Goal 1: Improve Teaching
Primary school teachers will implement more effective and responsive literacy instructional techniques.
- Goal 2: Increase Student Success
Primary school students will improve literacy skills, raise academic success, and develop leadership skills through classroom and extracurricular activities.
- Goal 3: Improve School, Family and Community Partnerships

Health Project

According to the National Health Sector Strategy (NHSS) 2008–12, the Ministry of Health (MOH) recognizes that in order to provide equitable access to high-quality and “consumer-friendly” health services the strategy must cover all health-care providers, inclusive of services provided voluntarily. The NHSS priority areas are as follows:

1. Family health (formerly maternal and child health)
2. Chronic non-communicable diseases
3. Accidents, injuries and disabilities
4. Communicable diseases: HIV, STIs, tuberculosis and malaria
5. Other communicable diseases
6. Mental health
7. Health promotion and risk reduction

Peace Corps/Guyana works closely with the MOH and other local and international partners to implement various community health initiatives and has developed a project plan outlining the overall purpose, goals, objectives, and activities to be achieved during a five-year time frame.

Approximately 34 Peace Corps Volunteers are assigned annually to the Health Project to work with health centers, local health NGOs, and schools in hinterland and coastal areas. The Health Project focuses on promoting preventive health practices that contribute to increased overall positive health outcomes. The health assignment focuses on maternal, infant, child health, and life skills for healthy behaviors. Typical Volunteer interventions include working with a diverse set of individuals within the community. Volunteers will be involved in health activities that target populations such as mothers and other caregivers, children, youth, and health-service providers.

Health Volunteers will address a range of health education topics in the health center and school settings, which could include topics such as maternal and neonatal care, infant nutrition, prevention of childhood illnesses, service provider capacity building, non-communicable disease prevention and mitigation, life skills development, youth sexual and reproductive health, and substance abuse prevention. All Volunteers are strongly encouraged to incorporate HIV and AIDS education activities into their work.

Peace Corps/Guyana EH!PICC Project name seeks to bring to mind the “EPIC” nature of what we do as a post while incorporating a common local Creolese term. “Eh!” is a typical response that Guyanese use in many social situations. Including it in the Health Project title merges the mandate with the everyday life and language of the audience Volunteers serve.

The EH!PICC Project Purpose:

Guyanese will lead healthier lives. The two fundamental goals of the project are the following:

- Goal 1: Maternal, Infant, and Child Health Promotion
Community members will adopt behaviors and practices that contribute to improved maternal, neonatal, and child health outcomes.
- Goal 2: Life Skills for Healthy Behaviors
Community members will adopt positive lifestyle-related behaviors and practices that lengthen and/or improve their overall quality of life.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW: GUYANA AT A GLANCE

Guyana is a tropical country on the northeastern shoulder of South America. Its area is about 215,000 square kilometers (83,000 square miles)—the combined size of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York. Guyana is bordered by Venezuela, Brazil, Suriname, and the Atlantic Ocean. It has a population of approximately 747,800 (2012 estimate), largely situated along a narrow coastal strip. Also located on the coastal strip is the nation’s capital, Georgetown, which lies at the mouth of the Demerara River, and many of the towns, such as New Amsterdam, Rosehall, and Corriverton. The bauxite mining town of Linden is located 60 miles upriver from the capital.

History

Guyana was named by its first people, the indigenous locally known Amerindians—semi-nomadic tribes who lived by hunting and fishing. To them, this was a rich land with plenty of water for farming and fishing. They called it Guiana, meaning “land of many waters.” Sir Walter Raleigh was the first European to explore the “wild coast” of Guyana. The country itself changed hands several times between the French, Dutch, and British before the British finally held it until independence in 1966.

The early European colonists were planters. At first they relied on Amerindians for their labor force, but over time they replaced them with African slaves, who also worked to construct the coastal drainage system and the city of Georgetown. Following a period of slave uprisings and a campaign to end the slave-labor system, slavery was abolished in 1834. With the end of slavery, indenturing became the new mode of accessing labor. Workers were brought in from the island of Madeira (Portugal) and from China and India (whose people are known in Guyana as East Indians) to work on the estates.

By the early 1900s, a slow transfer of power was underway from the colonial administration to the Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese political groups. Limited self-government was granted in the 1950s, but political conflict and occasional violence between these groups delayed independence. By 1964, though, support began to grow for independence, which was achieved on May 26, 1966. Guyana joined the United Nations later that year, and the country became a charter member of the Caribbean Free Trade Association in 1968. On February 23, 1970, Guyana was proclaimed a republic. Guyana is a member of the British Commonwealth and of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM). CARICOM’s headquarters is in Georgetown.

Government

Guyana is now governed under the republican constitution of 1980, which is a blend of parliamentary and presidential principles. There are three main political parties: the A Party for National Unity (APNU) perceived to represent the Afro-Guyanese population; the People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) perceived to represent the Indo-Guyanese population; and Alliance for Change (AFC) a relatively young political party that is perceived to cross racial divides. Elections were held in May 2015. For this election, the APNU and AFC formed a coalition party. There are also smaller parties that often form coalitions or sprout up to contest the elections. David Granger, of APNU, was elected president in May 2015. Prime Minister Moses Nagamootoo also took office in May 2015.

Guyana’s autocratic culture and economic problems have led to social polarization, racial distrust, political turmoil, and the suppression of truly representative civil society institutions, such as NGOs, community groups, etc. As such, elections in Guyana are usually disputed. After the contested elections of 1997, members of CARICOM helped arrange an agreement between the two major political parties to end violence and civil strife in Guyana.

Economy

Guyana is making a difficult transition from a state-directed to a more open, free-market economy. An economic turnaround in 1986–87 that included trade liberalization and an open investment climate contributed to a growth rate above regional and world averages. Recently, legislation was introduced to revise the investment codes and provide small business and microenterprise assistance. However, the combined impact of negative population growth during the past 15 years (“brain drain”), a reduced demand for Guyana’s major exports, and a heavy foreign debt burden present serious challenges to Guyana’s economic development.

The traditional pillars of Guyana’s economy have been sugar, rice, gold, and bauxite. Sugar, its byproducts, and rice account for the majority of agricultural exports, which constitute 35 percent of the gross domestic product and employ 30 percent of the labor force. Adding to the country’s agricultural exports, tropical fruits and vegetables that have traditionally been grown for domestic consumption are now being exported. Fishing is also important, with shrimp being an especially valuable product.

While Guyana is a major world producer of bauxite, other natural resources in Guyana have yet to be extracted on a large scale. Other extractable resources include petroleum, gold, and gemstones. The country’s petroleum potential is yet to be proven, while gold production has surged with the opening of the Omai mine. All of these economic sectors require major investments in production and infrastructure. Guyana is also diversifying and encouraging its ecotourism potential.

People and Culture

For a South American country, Guyana presents a unique profile. The country is the only Anglophone nation on the continent, and it is known for sugar, rice, and cricket playing. Similarly, the mixture of British and Dutch legal and other internal systems is a legacy of past colonization, which previously made Guyana economically, historically, and culturally oriented more toward the Caribbean.

Guyana’s culture and people have been influenced by the country’s history, which includes occupation, slavery, and indenture. Today, a large variety of racial and ethnic groups coexist in Guyana. People of East Indian descent comprise 49.5 percent of the population, people of African descent comprise 35.5 percent, and people of Portuguese, Chinese, Amerindian, and mixed descent make up the remaining 15 percent. While numerous tribes of Amerindians were the first people of Guyana, today there are only nine: Akawaio, Arawaks, Arecunas, Caribs, Macusi, Patamonas, Wai Wais, Wapishianas, and Warraus.

Guyana’s multifaceted culture is well-represented, as each group has brought its own cultural mores and norms, traditions, and festivals. The country’s main religions are Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam. Festivals and holidays surround religious observances and national commemorations.

Environment

Guyana’s three major river systems, the Berbice, Demerara, and Essequibo, together with innumerable smaller rivers and creeks, drain this “Land of Many Waters” and link Guyana’s vast forested and savannah interior to the coast. Guyana has a wealth of natural resources and high levels of biological diversity. Fortunately, many regions of the country remain virtually pristine and unexplored simply because of national underdevelopment.

Key current environmental issues in Guyana include water pollution stemming from mining operations; agricultural and industrial chemicals and sewage; solid-waste disposal in populated areas; deforestation; and flooding, which occurs during the rainy season and exceptionally high tides. The people of Guyana are becoming more aware of the fragility of their natural environment, which is being sharpened, in part, by coastal flooding.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Following is a list of websites for additional information about the Peace Corps and Guyana and to connect you to returned Volunteers and other invitees. Please keep in mind that although the Peace Corps tries to make sure all these links are active and current, the Peace Corps cannot guarantee it. If you do not have access to the Internet, visit your local library. Libraries offer free Internet usage and often let you print information to take home.

A note of caution: As you surf the Internet, be aware that you may find bulletin boards and chat rooms in which people are free to express opinions about the Peace Corps based on their own experiences, including comments by those who were unhappy with their choice to serve in the Peace Corps. These opinions are not those of the Peace Corps or the U.S. government, and please keep in mind that no two people experience their service in the same way.

General Information About Guyana

State.gov

The Department of State's website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find Guyana and learn more about its social and political history. You can also go to the site's international travel section to check on conditions that may affect your safety.

Gpo.gov/libraries/public/

The U.S. Government Publishing Office publishes country studies intermittently.

lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html

The Library of Congress provides historical and sociological data on numerous countries.

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/pocketbook/World_Statistics_Pocketbook_2013_edition.pdf

United Nations resource book with 2013 statistical country data

Data.un.org

United Nations site with links to data from U.N. member countries

Wikipedia.org

Search for Guyana to find encyclopedia-type information. Note: As Wikipedia content is user-generated, information may be biased and/or not verified.

Worldbank.org

The World Bank Group's mission is to fight poverty and improve the living standards of people in the developing world. It is a development bank that provides loans, policy advice, technical assistance, and knowledge-sharing services to developing countries to reduce poverty. This site contains a lot of information and resources regarding development.

Data.worldbank.org/country

Provides information on development indicators on countries, including population, gender, financial, and education, and climate change statistics.

Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees

[RPCV.org](http://www.rpcv.org)

This is the site of the National Peace Corps Association, made up of returned Volunteers. On this site you can find links to all the Web pages of the “Friends of” groups for most countries of service, comprised of former Volunteers who served in those countries. There are also regional groups that frequently get together for social events and local volunteer activities. Or go straight to the Friends of Guyana site:

<http://www.guyfrog.org/>

[PeaceCorpsWorldwide.org](http://www.peacecorpsworldwide.org)

This site, hosted by a group of returned Volunteer writers, is a monthly online publication of essays and Volunteer accounts of their Peace Corps service.

Online Articles/Current News Sites About Guyana

[UN.org/News/](http://www.un.org/news/)

The United Nations news service provides coverage of its member states and information about the international peacekeeping organization’s actions and positions.

[VOAnews.com](http://www.voanews.com)

Voice of America, the U.S. government’s multimedia broadcaster, features coverage of news around the world.

www.stabroeknews.com

The site of the Stabroek News, an independent Guyanese newspaper

www.kaieteurnews.com

The site of the Kaieteur News, an independent Guyanese newspaper

Recommended Books

Books About the History of the Peace Corps

1. Hoffman, Elizabeth Cobbs. "All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s." Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.
2. Rice, Gerald T. "The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps." Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
3. Stossel, Scott. "Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver." Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.
4. Meisler, Stanley. "When the World Calls: The Inside Story of the Peace Corps and its First 50 Years." Boston: Beacon Press, 2011.

Books on the Volunteer Experience

1. Dirlam, Sharon. "Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place." Santa Barbara, CA: McSeas Books, 2004.
2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. "Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience." Gig Harbor, WA: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Erdman, Sarah. "Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village." New York City: Picador, 2003.
4. Hessler, Peter. "River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze." New York City: Perennial, 2001.
5. Kennedy, Geraldine ed. "From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps." Santa Monica, CA: Clover Park Press, 1991.
6. Thomsen, Moritz. "Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle." Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).

Books About Guyana

1. Abrams, Ovid. "Metegee: The History and Culture of Guyana." N.Y.: Eldorado Publications, 1998.
2. Mangru, Basdeo. "The Elusive Eldorado: Essays on the Indian Experience in Guyana." Lanham, Md: University Press of America, 2005.
3. Kempadoo, Peter Lauchmonen. "Guyana Boy." Yorkshire, UK: Peepal Tree Press, 2nd edition, 2002.
4. Watson, Dennis, and Christine Craig (eds.). "Guyana at the Crossroads." New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1992.
5. Fenty, Allan. "A Plate-a Guyana: Cook-Up."
6. Ishmeal, Odeen. "The Guyana Story: From Earliest Times to Independence." 2013.

LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE

Communications

Mail service between the United States and Guyana is fairly reliable. Airmail letters from home usually take two weeks to arrive in Guyana and four to five weeks to arrive in the United States from Guyana. Surface mail may take months. The further Volunteers' sites are from a large city, the less dependable and frequent the mail service.

During training, your address in Guyana will be
"Your Name," PCT
Peace Corps
PO Box 101192
Georgetown, Guyana
South America

Once you move to your site, you are responsible for sending your new address to family and friends. Post staff recommends you establish a regular writing pattern with friends and relatives in the United States, since they may become concerned if they do not hear from you over an extended period of time. Some Volunteers and their families sequentially number their letters to keep track of how many were sent and received. This is one way of knowing whether someone is just too busy to write or if letters are not arriving. After trainees have been sworn in and move to their sites, writing habits change as they become more involved in projects and the newness of the lifestyle wears off. A delay in the mail may also be the result of being in a more isolated site.

As for packages, Volunteers are responsible for paying import duties on items mailed to them from outside the country. The customs process for obtaining sent items is often lengthy, although the duty on items is generally minimal. Customs will notify you directly if you have been sent a package. Peace Corps/Guyana cannot help get these packages released from customs. Small padded envelopes are recommended over boxes.

One alternative to shipping packages through regular mail is to send items through a service, such as DHL International or FedEx. Both companies have offices in Georgetown, but their services are expensive. You can have items sent through these companies to the Peace Corps office in Georgetown, but you must provide the street address and phone number. (The street address for the Peace Corps is 33A Barrack Street, Kingston, Georgetown, Guyana. The phone number is 592.225.5073.) Another alternative is a local company, Laparkan, which offers relatively inexpensive air freight service to Guyana from New York, Toronto, and Miami. Surface mail for packages takes four to six weeks.

We do not recommend that family or friends send money, airline tickets, or other valuables through the mail. Airline tickets can be paid for in the United States and picked up in Guyana by using a reference number. There are also several travel agents in Georgetown to facilitate the purchase of airline tickets.

Telephone

International phone service to and from Guyana is relatively good. Volunteers can call the United States collect by placing the call via a Guyanese operator (002) or directly by placing it with a U.S. operator (151 or 165). Do not bring prepaid phone cards, as they cannot be used without incurring a second charge for the same call. Likewise, calling cards and credit cards do not work from Guyana. Collect calls are expensive, costing about \$7 for the first minute and \$1.40 for each subsequent minute. The rate for direct calls to the United States from Guyana, about \$1.20 per minute, is often cheaper than the rate from the United States to Guyana. Local phone booths and Internet cafes also offer calls to the U.S. Volunteers are

not allowed to place international direct calls or send international faxes from the Peace Corps office. For these services, you must use local facilities in Georgetown.

Some Volunteers will have their own landline telephones or easy access to a neighbor's phone. Other Volunteers will be issued a Peace Corps satellite phone based upon certain site conditions. It is possible to purchase your own cellphone in Guyana. However, be aware that many cellphones purchased in the United States will not work on Guyana's cellular phone system. It is possible to buy and activate cellphones in Guyana, ranging from \$50–\$600.

Volunteers in remote sites may be able to use cellphones in certain areas of their communities, usually on top of one high hill in the community or standing in the middle of a village. Oftentimes a community will have a community public phone as well. However, in some Volunteers' communities the only means of outside communication is a shortwave radio, at the community health center or police post.

Many Peace Corps/Guyana Volunteers have said they have had to adjust their expectations and lifestyle when it comes to communications, regardless of their site. Volunteers may not always have instant communication access with family or friends at home. It will be important for you to set schedules with your families for phone calls or emails. You may find that writing letters through regular mail is also a very good way to keep in touch with family and friends. Encourage your family and friends to research local phone companies or look on the Internet to find special deals and offers on international calling.

Computer, Email, and Internet Access

There are computers with Internet access and printers for Volunteer use at the Peace Corps office in Georgetown. Volunteers must provide their own paper (which can be purchased in-country).

There are Internet cafes in all the major towns and many villages that offer services at a reasonable cost. You can use these services to access the Internet or prepare documents. Approximately 70 percent of Volunteers have regular Internet access either through an Internet cafe, their worksites, or from home via a landline service.

Upon arriving at site, Volunteers will identify neighbors, co-workers, and leaders in the community who have transportation and communication capabilities since they are unlikely to have their own direct access. This process of identification is an integral part of the community entry process.

Other local means of communication include police radios, hospital/health post radios, and privately owned radios. All are considered an important linkage in Volunteer communication support.

If telephone/radio communication of host families and/or neighbors is not available and if telephone/radio communication (including a public phone) is not within 50 meters of the Volunteer's residence, then the Peace Corps will work with the Volunteer to put a communication solution in place.

Housing and Site Location

During pre-service training you will live with a Guyanese host family, and the living conditions are dependent on the site. Many homes have electricity and indoor plumbing, and many have televisions and telephones in the coastal areas. In the remote training site, the amenities within these homes are more minimal and will vary.

Living with a host family allows for your integration into the community and helps ensure that you live safely and securely in the community. For the first six months of service, all Volunteers are required to live with host families that have been identified by the Peace Corps. It should be noted, that each site is unique and the living options are primarily dependent on two main factors: what is available at site and

what meets Peace Corps/Guyana's safety minimum standards. The three homestay options are described below.

1: Family Compound

This is the preferred option for the six months of homestay for Volunteers. Separate room/house on the same lot/yard of the family. A family relationship must be established asking them to take care of the Volunteer, treat them like family (take to events, etc.), and take on the responsibility of safety and security. Duplex situation: Volunteer has separate apartment upstairs/downstairs from a host family, which has all the amenities to live alone. There can be multiple buildings on the family lot but there must be a common access/entrance to the compound (whether there is a fence or not). The entrance is not exclusive to a particular house.

2: Traditional

Volunteer is living inside the house with the host family. This is the option in communities where a family compound is not available. Living inside the house with the host family necessitates establishing a strong family relationship in which the host family treats the Volunteer like a family member, but the Volunteer has a separate and private room within the house.

3: Separate House

This option is selected only in the event that family compounds or shared housing are not available in the community. In this situation, a Volunteer lives in an independent apartment, top or bottom flat, or a freestanding structure. However a host family is still identified to act as a cultural touchstone and facilitators for the Volunteer. The Volunteer will spend time with the host family for meals, community events, and family activities.

After the first six months of service, Volunteers will have two options: continue to live with a Guyanese family or live in independent housing in the community. Volunteers who live with a host family generally have the most secure living environment, enjoy better nutrition, assimilate more quickly and thoroughly in their communities, and build lifelong bonds with their host families. In order to encourage integration into the Guyanese culture, fellow Volunteers will not share the same house except in unusual circumstances. Exceptions to this arrangement must be approved by the country director. All Volunteer housing is evaluated for suitability by the Peace Corps' program managers, medical officers, and safety and security officer and approved by the country director.

Houses in Guyana typically are constructed from wood or cement block and have two to three rooms. Most towns have running water and intermittent electricity. Rivers serve as a main water supply source in many villages.

Living Allowance and Money Management

Volunteers receive a monthly allowance in Guyana dollars that is sufficient to live at the level of the local people. The allowance covers food, housing, household supplies, clothing, transportation to and from work, utilities, recreation and entertainment, and incidental expenses. Peace Corps Volunteers are expected to live at a level that is comparable with that of their host country counterparts. The Peace Corps discourages Volunteers from supplementing their living allowance with funds from home.

During pre-service training, each trainee is given a walk-around allowance of GY\$600 (about US\$2.46) per day, which is disbursed every two weeks. This allowance is mainly to cover transportation. Trainees' daily meals are provided by host families. Nonetheless, you may wish to bring some walk-around cash for training. Former trainees report that US\$150 is adequate.

As a newly assigned Volunteer, in order to assist you with this transition, you will receive a settling-in allowance to buy basic items such as dishes, bedding, and other necessities, including supplemental funds for a bicycle or boat should you choose to have one. In addition, you will be provided funds for basic furniture and cooking needs. In most situations you will be placed at a location with a host family that already has all the required items. In this situation, Volunteers are highly encouraged to reserve those funds in case they choose to move out sometime during service ; Volunteers will not be issued any additional settling-in funds if they move mid-service.

Married couples and housemates will not receive two settling-in allowances. They will receive one and a half of the settling in allowance.

Please note: The settling-in allowance is not designed to buy refrigerators, stereos, surge protectors, or other “luxury” items. All of your purchases should be consistent with the modest living standards of the people in the community where you will live. You are highly encouraged to incorporate assistance from your host families and counterpart(s) in finding the best places to shop and buy items at your site. Starting with a couple of items and taking your time will help stretch your Guyanese dollars in all situations. Program staff are also great resources in giving suggestions on how to communicate needs and how to navigate in your community.

The monthly living allowance will allow you to live modestly by the standards of the people in your community, yet not in a manner that would endanger your health or safety. The living allowance is not a salary. It is meant to cover food, utilities, household supplies, local transportation, recreation and entertainment, incidental expenses, occasional replacement of clothes, and toiletries. The current monthly living allowance is GY\$43,567 (about US\$215), which will be deposited monthly in a local bank account that you will open when you arrive. Many of Guyana’s banks have opened branches throughout the country; thus, you will likely have a bank either at your site or in a nearby community. For Volunteers placed at sites without a local bank, Peace Corps/Guyana will work with them to arrange an alternative means of accessing their living allowance. The living allowance is based on an annual Volunteer survey and an independent price survey, conducted by Peace Corps staff. The allowance does not change with fluctuations in the exchange rate.

You may wish to bring additional money for travel to other countries. Credit cards or traveler’s checks are recommended for this. If you do bring credit cards, make sure you have a reliable system for making payments on charges incurred while you are away from the United States.

The Guyanese dollar floats against the U.S. dollar, and the exchange rate varies.

Food and Diet

Pre-service training will provide you with an introduction to the Guyanese diet. During training, meals with your host family will mainly be Guyanese dishes and will represent an important aspect of your cross-cultural experience. Guyanese food varies greatly depending upon locale, religious leaning, and ethnic background.

Guyana has been accurately described as the food basket of the Caribbean. A wide variety of tropical fruits and a smaller variety of vegetables are available. In addition, American standards like peanut butter, pasta, and tuna, while more expensive than local fare, are readily available in coastal sites.

While many Guyanese consume a variety of meat, ranging from the ordinary to the extraordinary (e.g., *labba* and other “wild meat”), there are also many vegetarians in Guyana because of its diverse cultures and religions. Vegetarian Volunteers fare well in Guyana with beans, legumes, and eggs as the primary sources of protein.

Overall, Volunteers have not reported any major dietary problems but their remarks reflect that there is a much greater variety and availability of foods on the coast than in inland areas. Many fruits and vegetables are seasonal, and you have to adapt to their availability and your access to markets. A recipe book created by previous Volunteers will be made available to you and will help guide your food choices.

Transportation

The main means of transportation for most Guyanese is the minibus. Trainees and Volunteers also use this mode of transportation. The price for traveling around central Georgetown by minibus is GY\$100 (about 50 cents), and special taxi service for the same area costs GY\$400 (about \$2). The cost for traveling longer distances and along the coastland varies according to the distance and the location.

Many communities are accessible only by river. Corials (paddleboats), speedboats, and jet boats are widely used for this purpose. It is mandatory for trainees and Volunteers who live and work in the riverine areas to use life jackets, which Peace Corps/Guyana provides. Travel among counties is also highly dependent upon the rivers. While the Demerara Harbour Bridge links West Demerara to Demerara and Georgetown, ferry service exists for crossing the Essequibo, Demerara, and Berbice rivers and for transport to Bartica and other river communities.

Traveling by air is the major form of transportation to areas in the interior of Guyana and to the rest of the world. Approximately six international passenger flights arrive and leave daily. The major airlines that frequent Guyana are Caribbean Airlines, Suriname Airways, Insel Air, Copa Airline, and Liat. There are also about four daily cargo flights.

Geography and Climate

Guyana is located approximately 5 degrees north of the equator and is on the northern coast of the South American continent. While Guyana is not an island, it is part of the Caribbean community and is often described as a West Indian nation. The coastal areas share Caribbean characteristics, while the interior savannahs, black water rivers, and dense rainforests are very much part of the Amazonian Basin.

Guyana's 214,970 square kilometers (approximately 83,000 square miles) are divided into four ecological zones: the coastal plain (25 kilometers wide); the sand belt (about 150 to 250 kilometers wide); the highland, which consists of the four major mountain ranges of Acarai, Imataka, Kanuku, and Pakaraima; and the interior savanna, making up about 11,655 square kilometers.

Guyana is known for its high temperatures, heavy rainfall, small climatic differences, and humidity. The daily daytime temperature in Georgetown fluctuates between 80 and 90 degrees Fahrenheit, but it varies elsewhere depending on the part of the country. For example, the constant heat and high humidity are mitigated near the coast by the northeast trade winds. Rainfall is heaviest on the plateau and the coast, where the long wet season is from April to August and the short wet season is from December to early February. Dry seasons fall between the rainy seasons. In the savanna, however, there is one long dry season from the end of April to the end of September, and the rainy season runs for the remainder of the year.

Social Activities

Social activities in Guyana vary from place to place. A variety of activities, including dramatic productions, concerts, and beauty pageants, are held at the National Cultural Centre, city and town halls, and community centers in villages. Popular social activities include going to the cinema, bars, weddings, religious festivals and celebrations, folk festivals, and heritage-week activities representing the ethnic groups in Guyana. Fairs and barbecues are also popular events.

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

Guyanese take pride in their appearance and the image they project. Your appearance is important to establishing yourself as a professional in your workplace and community. Starting at your staging event, Peace Corps/Guyana will expect you to represent yourself as a professional development worker.

Guyanese, especially in rural areas, dress more conservatively than North Americans and take great pride in dressing well in public and at social affairs. “Dressing down” as a personal statement has not occurred to most people, since many are struggling to better their lives. It may be confusing or insulting to them that a “rich” North American would not wear his or her best shoes or shirt when appropriate. It is important to realize that personal appearance delivers a message, intended or unintended. Cultivating a more refined look, consistent with the look of Guyanese professionals, is advised. Inappropriate dress, like inappropriate behavior, is something that can set a Volunteer unnecessarily apart from his or her community. Please refer to the Packing List later in this welcome book.

Professional Settings

Men typically wear short-sleeve shirts and trousers on regular business days, sometimes adding a jacket and/or tie for more formal business events. Women typically wear lightweight short-sleeve suit jackets or knee-length skirts with blouses or dresses, and only occasionally wear slacks.

Along with all government buildings, both schools and health centers have strict dress codes for their staff and visitors, typically posted at the entrance. Anyone can be denied entry if they are inappropriately dressed. Among the stipulations, short and T-shirts are not permitted and closed-toe shoes must be worn; sandals and slippers are not permitted.

For females, spaghetti-strap, sleeveless, or halter/tube tops and dresses are not appropriate in the health and education work settings. Three-quarter length capris are acceptable in some professional settings but typically not at the school or health center. Please note that long leggings or opaque tights should not be worn as a form of pants.

Casual Settings

For women, spaghetti-strap, sleeveless, or halter/tube tops and dresses are OK in casual settings but they should be covered with a lightweight cardigan or shrug, especially if you are in a small village setting. For women, loose-fitting skirts are the most practical for getting around and walking.

It is inappropriate for trainees or Volunteers to wear military surplus clothing or military-like prints, such as pants, boots, jackets, and backpacks. The Peace Corps and its Volunteers need to be distinguished from the U.S. and Guyana militaries and has tried to keep its image as detached as possible.

Visible body piercings (other than earrings and small nose piercings for women) and tattoos for both men and women are not generally accepted in professional settings. Please be prepared to cover tattoos whenever possible. Wearing facial piercings may make it more difficult to integrate into your community.

For Volunteers or trainees with dreadlocks, please note that some Guyanese associate people with dreadlocks with Rastafarian culture or marijuana use. Public perception of drug use by Volunteers can jeopardize the Peace Corps program in Guyana, as well as the effectiveness of the Volunteer or trainee.

Personal Safety

More detailed information about the Peace Corps’ approach to safety is contained in the Safety and Security section, but it is an important issue and cannot be overemphasized. As stated in the Volunteer Handbook, becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer entails certain safety risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment (oftentimes alone), having a limited understanding of local language and culture,

and being perceived as well-off are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Many Volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. Petty thefts and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although most Guyana Volunteers complete their two years of service without incident. The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies designed to help reduce the risks and enhance your safety and security. These procedures and policies, in addition to safety training, will be provided once you arrive in Guyana. Using these tools, one can be empowered to take responsibility for his or her safety and well-being. During training, there will be set policies that all trainees will need to comply with. Each trainee will work with safety and security staff to develop a personal safety plan that will guide the Volunteer throughout service.

Each staff member at the Peace Corps is committed to providing Volunteers with the support they need to successfully meet the challenges they will face to have a safe, healthy, and productive service. Volunteers and families are encouraged to look at safety and security information on the Peace Corps website at peacecorps.gov/safety.

Information on these pages gives messages on Volunteer health and safety. There is a section titled Safety and Security in Depth. Among topics addressed are the risks of serving as a Volunteer, posts' safety support systems, and emergency planning and communications.

Rewards and Frustrations

Rewards and frustrations are a reality of life. However, there are some specific frustrations that you are likely to experience while living and working in Guyana. For instance, you may feel that your Guyanese colleagues do not carry out their duties in a manner that reflects an appropriate level of "commitment" to the job. Additionally, there may be long time lapses before decisions on important issues are made. There may also be an absence or shortage of resources that you consider basic to the successful completion of your work. Thus, you may need to slow down your pace and reconsider your expectations for the way business is done in Guyana, a developing country where systems may be weak and/or resources (both human and material) are not often available.

On the other hand, you will have an opportunity to be innovative and work with your counterparts to find alternatives to traditional ways of doing things. You will find the Guyanese to be friendly. People will help you at their own personal sacrifice. You will experience the change you make in people's lives by the simple things you say and do. You will experience satisfaction from working in the interest of others.

Your main gratification will be derived from helping local people achieve their development aspirations, while learning about a new culture and about yourself in the process. You will encounter unusual social and cultural situations that require flexibility and understanding on your part. As you communicate honestly and demonstrate your interest in Guyana, you will be able to enjoy your community, its customs and people, and your role as a Volunteer. Just as in any community, your village will have a variety of personalities, some helpful and welcoming, others disinterested or unsure of why you are there.

PEACE CORPS TRAINING

Overview of Pre-Service Training

The Peace Corps uses a competency-based training approach throughout the continuum of learning, supporting you from arrival in Guyana to your departure. Pre-service training (PST) is the first event within this continuum of learning and ensures that you are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to effectively perform your job. Pre-service training is conducted in Guyana by Peace Corps staff, most of whom are locally hired trainers. Peace Corps staff measure achievement of learning and determine if you have successfully achieved competencies, including language standards, for swearing-in as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

Peace Corps training incorporates widely accepted principles of adult learning and is structured around the experiential learning cycle. Successful training results in competence in various technical, linguistic, cross-cultural, health, and safety and security areas.

Integrating into the community is one of the core competencies you will strive to achieve both in PST and during the first several months of service. Successful sustainable development work is based on the relationships you build by respectfully integrating into the host country community and culture.

You will be prepared for this through a homestay experience, which often requires trainees to live with host families during PST. Integration into the community fosters language and cross-cultural learning and ensures your health, safety, and security.

PST will last for twelve weeks and trainees will have the opportunity to travel throughout various regions in Guyana. During PST, trainees will also have the opportunity to visit their future site for one week before returning to complete training.

Training Assessment Portfolio

The TAP is the formal and informal evaluation of trainee performance in fulfilling the sector and core competencies. The assessment results will be the basis for qualification as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Peace Corps/Guyana's TAP incorporates both Peace Corps Global Learning Standard requirements and post-specific training assessment criteria and methods.

Sector and Core Competencies for Training

The Peace Corps training model utilizes a competency-based approach. The Peace Corps defines a competency as a cluster of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable a person to perform interrelated tasks in service of a major job function. Competencies help the learner and the trainer know how the training content fits together and how the learner will apply the learning. The Peace Corps classifies competencies into two categories: core and sector. Core competencies apply to all Volunteers and trainees regardless of sector or project. Sector competencies apply to only Volunteers in a specific project.

- **Peace Corps/Guyana's Core Competencies**

By the end of PST, the Volunteer will be able to

- Integrate into the community
- Facilitate participatory community development
- Exemplify professional Peace Corps service

- **Peace Corps/Guyana's Sector Competencies**

- Education Competencies**

By the end of PST, the Education Volunteer will be able to

- Build teaching learning capacities in childhood literacy
- Engage in practice teaching, observation, and feedback
- Establish effective classroom management routines and practices
- Administer and analyze effective assessment instruments
- Facilitate improved curriculum, lesson, and materials design
- Develop and maintain school community relations

Health Competencies

By the end of PST, the Health Volunteer will be able to

- Foster improved maternal, neonatal, and child health
- Promote healthy living
- Support healthy lifestyles and prepare youth for family life
- Support community capacities to apply lifesaving interventions in addressing global health issues

The training assessment process involves staff assessment of the trainee's progress in achieving the terminal learning objectives for each competency. Terminal learning objective describes a larger and more complex knowledge, skill, or ability the learner will possess or be able to perform as a result of a series of training sessions. A terminal learning objective includes all related session objectives. The accomplishment of all learning objectives indicates the learner's progress toward reaching the competencies.

Trainee Responsibilities

It is essential that each trainee take responsibility for achieving the competencies. Each trainee will take charge of his/her own learning, identify areas for improvement, and develop a personal learning plan for meeting his/her goals. It is expected that each trainee will communicate regularly with all Peace Corps staff to ensure that the appropriate support and guidance is being provided, and communicate any issues or challenges.

Peace Corps Staff Responsibilities

Peace Corps staff will provide all trainees with feedback and support on an ongoing basis. Training staff will interact with trainees, observe their work, and have regular conversations to check in. This will occur through informal day-to-day interactions, practicum observations, submission of assignments, and through formal interviews. The training staff work with trainees in the training sites on a daily basis and facilitate the sessions and activities through which trainees learn the knowledge, skills, and abilities to be a successful trainee/Volunteer. Along with giving positive feedback as trainees complete the tasks required, staff also have an important responsibility to support trainees when they may not be achieving their potential and to provide constructive feedback for improvement.

Trainee assessment is a transparent process and the trainee and training staff have specific responsibilities to ensure the successful completion of the process. Throughout the training cycle, trainees will be assessed via the following methods:

Technical Training

Technical training will prepare you to work in Guyana by building on the skills you already have and helping you develop new skills in a manner appropriate to the needs of the country. The Peace Corps staff, Guyana experts, and current Volunteers will conduct the training program. Training places great emphasis on learning how to transfer the skills you have to the community in which you will serve as a Volunteer.

Technical training will include sessions on the general economic and political environment in Guyana and strategies for working within such a framework. You will review your project's goals and objectives and will meet with the Guyana agencies and organizations that invited the Peace Corps to assist them. You will be supported and evaluated throughout training to build the confidence and skills you need to undertake your project activities, report your progress, and serve as a productive member of your community.

During PST, trainees will be given the opportunity to practice their skills in schools and health centers similar to those where they will eventually work.

Language Training

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that language skills are key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills are critical to your job performance, help you integrate into your community, and can ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. Therefore, language training is at the heart of the training program. You must successfully meet minimum language requirements to complete training and become a Volunteer. Guyana language instructors usually teach formal language classes five days a week in small groups.

Your language training will incorporate a community-based approach. In addition to classroom time, you will be given assignments to work on outside of the classroom and with your host family. The goal is to get you to a point of basic social communication skills so you can practice and develop language skills further once you are at your site. Prior to being sworn in as a Volunteer, you will develop strategies to continue studying language during your service.

Cross-Cultural Training

Cross-cultural training will provide opportunities for you to reflect on your own cultural values and how they influence your behavior in Guyana. You will also discuss the questions you have about the behaviors and practices you observe in Guyana, exploring the underlying reasons for these behaviors and practices.

Cross-cultural and community development training will help you improve your communication skills and understand your role as a facilitator of development. Training will cover topics such as the concept of time, power and hierarchy, gender roles, communication styles, and the concept of self and relationships. Because adjusting to a new culture can be very challenging, you will participate in resiliency training which provides a framework and tools to help with adjustment issues.

The host family experience provides a unique context for cross-cultural learning, and is designed to ease your transition to life at your site. Families go through an orientation conducted by Peace Corps staff to explain the purpose of PST and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in Guyana. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their host families.

Health Training

During pre-service training, you will be trained in health prevention, basic first aid, and basic treatment of medical illnesses found in Guyana. You will be expected to practice preventive health and to take responsibility for your own health by adhering to all medical policies. Trainees are required to attend all medical sessions. Health education topics will cover nutrition, food and water preparation, emotional health, alcohol awareness, prevention of HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), common illnesses, domestic and intimate partner violence, emergencies, and medical policies in Guyana.

Safety and Security Training

During the safety and security training sessions, you will learn how to adopt a lifestyle that reduces your risks at home, at work, and during your travels. You will also learn appropriate, effective strategies for coping with unwanted attention, how to identify safety risks in-country and about Peace Corps' emergency response and support systems.

Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service

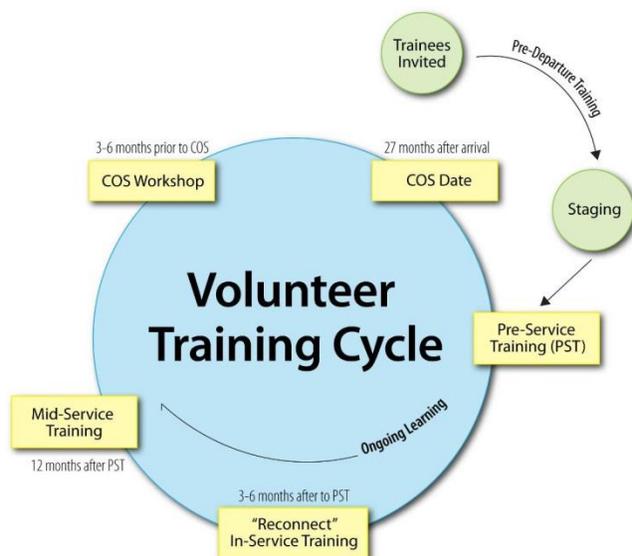
The Peace Corps' training system provides Volunteers with continual opportunities to examine their commitment to Peace Corps service while increasing their technical and cross-cultural skills. During service, there are usually three training events. The titles and objectives for those trainings are as follows:

In-service training: Provides an opportunity for Volunteers to upgrade their technical, language, and project development skills while sharing their experiences and reaffirming their commitment after having served for three to six months.

Mid-service training (done in conjunction with technical sector in-service): Assists Volunteers in reviewing their first year, reassessing their personal and project objectives, and planning for their second year of service.

Close-of-service conference: Prepares Volunteers for their future after Peace Corps service and reviews their respective projects and personal experiences.

The number, length, and design of these trainings are adapted to country-specific needs and conditions. The key to the training system is that training events are integrated and interrelated, from the pre-departure orientation through the end of your service, and are planned, implemented, and evaluated cooperatively by the training staff, Peace Corps staff, and Volunteers.



YOUR HEALTH CARE IN GUYANA

The Peace Corps' highest priority is maintaining the good health and safety of every Volunteer. Peace Corps medical programs emphasize the preventive, rather than the curative, approach to disease. The Peace Corps in Guyana maintains a clinic with a full-time medical officer who takes care of Volunteers' primary health-care needs, including evaluation and treatment of most medical conditions. Additional medical services are also available in Guyana at local hospitals. If you become seriously ill and cannot receive the care you need in Guyana, you will be transported to a Peace Corps-approved regional medical facility. If the Office of Health Services (OHS) determines that the care is not optimal for your condition at the regional facility, you will be transported to the United States.

Health Issues in Guyana

Guyana is a tropical country with a dense population along its coastline and smaller, scattered groups in the more remote interior. Similar to other tropical countries many of the health problems are the result of its geography and its relationship with human habitation and lifestyles. Basic health services in the interior are primitive to non-existent, and some procedures are not available at all. Most of the population is crowded in the low-lying coastal plain, where cycles of flooding and drought have historically made sanitation difficult. The coastal plain is a hospitable environment for mosquitoes carrying diseases, and crowded housing and poor waste disposal facilitates the spread of diseases. In the rural/remote communities, sewage treatment remains inadequate, especially in the villages. Among the endemic illnesses in Guyana are malaria, filariasis, tuberculosis, and diarrheal diseases such as typhoid. The leading causes of death are circulatory, respiratory, infectious, and parasitic diseases.

Insect-borne diseases: All mosquito-borne parasitic and viral infections exist in Guyana, including malaria, filariasis, and dengue fever. The interior regions of the country have the highest incidence of malaria, with sporadic cases reported on the coast. Filariasis and dengue fever are increasingly affecting communities on both the coast and interior regions and these health problems occur mainly during rainy seasons.

Leishmania, a fly-borne disease, can be found primarily in the interior and on the Brazilian border of Guyana. Volunteers in Guyana are required to take malaria prophylaxis throughout their Peace Corps service and are encouraged to protect themselves by using insect repellents, sleeping under treated nets (which Peace Corps/Guyana provides), and wearing appropriate clothing. Mosquitoes in Guyana are chloroquine-resistant; Volunteers are required to take a suitable antimalarial as prescribed (mefloquine, doxycycline, or atovaquone/proguanil). More information on malaria and malaria prevention will be discussed at pre-service training. The use of insect repellent can help reduce the risk for insect-borne disease exposures.

Food- and water-borne diseases: On the coast, access to safe water is a challenge due to floods and poor maintenance of purification facilities. There is a high risk for dysenteries, bacterial and viral diarrhea, typhoid fever, helminthic infestations, and other diarrheal diseases. Volunteers are provided with training on water purification methods and are encouraged to boil/treat all drinking water. Volunteers are administered typhoid vaccines; this provides 70 percent protection and reduces becoming critically ill.

Animal bites, snake bites, and scorpion stings: The Guyana Ministry of Health reported no cases of rabies among dogs. However, because Volunteers may travel to neighboring countries with risk for rabies exposure, they are administered three doses of rabies pre-exposure vaccines. Volunteers are discouraged from keeping monkeys and snakes as pets for health reasons. Snake bites and scorpion stings are common, though there is a low risk for exposure; you always have to be aware that you can be bitten. Bites and stings happen among people who live in poor rural/remote communities where medical

resources are often sparse and the creatures' habitat is interrupted. Being prepared is the key; more information will be provided during PST.

HIV/AIDS: Guyana has the second highest rate of HIV/AIDS infection in South America, and other sexually transmitted illnesses (STIs) are also prevalent. You will receive more information from the Peace Corps medical officer about this important issue. The Peace Corps medical unit stocks condoms.

Substance abuse: There has been an increase in illegal drug use in Guyana. The Peace Corps prohibits the use of all illegal drugs, including marijuana, by Volunteers and trainees. Invitees who use illegal substances should not accept an invitation to serve in the Peace Corps. Invitees should disclose prior use of illegal drugs/substances for medical clearance. Although Guyanese social occasions often include alcohol consumption, Volunteers are expected to avoid excessive use of alcohol. You will need to exercise your good judgment under sometimes difficult circumstances, including social pressure to drink in excess. Excessive alcohol use can diminish your ability to be seen as a professional development worker in your community and, by extension, reflects negatively upon the reputation and stature of your Peace Corps colleagues. Peace Corps/Guyana's alcohol policy provides further guidance to Volunteers.

Helping You Stay Healthy

The Peace Corps will provide you with all the necessary inoculations, medications, and information to stay healthy. Upon your arrival in Guyana, you will receive a country-specific medical handbook. By the end of training, you will receive a medical kit with supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first aid needs. The contents of the kit are listed later in this section.

During pre-service training, you will have access to basic medical supplies through the medical officer. However, during this time, you will be responsible for your own supply of prescription drugs and any other specific medical supplies you require, as the Peace Corps will not order these items during training. Please bring a three-month supply of any prescription drugs you use, since they may not be available here and it may take several months for shipments to arrive.

You will have physicals at midservice and at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the medical officer in Guyana will consult with the Office of Health Services in Washington, D.C., or a regional medical officer. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in Guyana, you may be sent out of the country for further evaluation and care.

Maintaining Your Health

As a Volunteer, you must accept considerable responsibility for your own health. Proper precautions will significantly reduce your risk of serious illness or injury. The adage "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" becomes extremely important in areas where diagnostic and treatment facilities are not up to the standards of the United States. The most important of your responsibilities in Guyana is to take the following preventive measures:

Many illnesses that afflict Volunteers worldwide are preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. These illnesses include food poisoning, parasitic infections, hepatitis A, dysentery, Guinea worms, tapeworms, and typhoid fever. Your medical officer will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation in Guyana during pre-service training.

Abstinence is the most effective way to prevent infection with HIV and other STIs. You are taking risks if you choose to be sexually active. To lessen risk, use a condom every time you have sex. Whether your partner is a host country citizen, a fellow Volunteer, or anyone else, do not assume this person is free of HIV/AIDS or other STIs. You will receive more information from the medical officer about this important issue.

Volunteers are expected to adhere to an effective means of birth control to prevent an unplanned pregnancy. Your medical officer can help you decide on the most appropriate method to suit your individual needs. Contraceptive methods are available without charge from the medical officer.

It is critical to your health that you promptly report to the medical office or other designated facility for scheduled immunizations, and that you let the medical officer know immediately of significant illnesses and injuries.

Women's Health Information

If feminine hygiene products are not available for you to purchase on the local market, the Peace Corps medical officer in Guyana will provide them. If you require a specific product, please bring a three-month supply with you. Many female Volunteers take menstrual cups (The Diva Cup, The Keeper, The Moon Cup, etc.) to avoid potential problems with availability or disposal of feminine hygiene products.

Pregnancy is treated in the same manner as other Volunteer health conditions that require medical attention. The Peace Corps is responsible for determining the medical risk and the availability of appropriate medical care if the Volunteer chooses to remain in-country. Given the circumstances under which Volunteers live and work in Peace Corps countries, it is rare that the Peace Corps' medical standards for continued service during pregnancy can be met.

The Peace Corps follows the 2012 U.S. Preventive Services Task Force guidelines for screening PAP smears, which recommend women aged 21–29 receive screening PAPs every three years and women aged 30–65 receive screening PAPs every five years. As such, most Volunteers will not receive a PAP during their service, but can use Peace Corps supplied health insurance after service to have an exam.

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

The Peace Corps medical officer will provide you with a kit containing basic items to prevent and treat illnesses that may occur during service. Kit items can be periodically restocked at the medical office.

Medical Kit Contents

First Aid Handbook	Decongestant
Ace bandages	Dental floss
Acetaminophen (Tylenol)	Gloves
Adhesive tape	Hydrocortisone cream
Antacid tablets	Ibuprofen
Anti-diarrheal (Imodium)	Insect repellent
Antibiotic ointment	Iodine tablets (for water purification)
Antifungal cream	Lip balm
Antihistamine	Oral rehydration salts
Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner	Scissors
Band-Aids	Sore throat lozenges
Bismuth Subsalicylate (Pepto-Bismol)	Sterile eye drops
Butterfly closures	Sterile gauze pads
Calagel anti-itch gel	Sunscreen
Condoms	Thermometer (Temp-a-dots)
Cough lozenges	Tweezers

Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

If there has been any change in your health—physical, mental, or dental—since you submitted your examination reports to the Peace Corps, you must immediately notify the Office of Health Services (OHS). Failure to disclose new illnesses, injuries, allergies, or pregnancy can endanger your health and may jeopardize your eligibility to serve.

If your dentist or Peace Corps dental consultant has recommended that you undergo dental treatment or repair, you must complete that work and make sure your dentist sends requested confirmation reports or X-rays to the Office of Health Services.

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, bring a copy of your immunization record to your pre-departure orientation. If you purchase any immunizations prior to Peace Corps service that are not listed as requirement in your Medical Applicant Portal, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment. Volunteers must be willing to get all required vaccinations unless there is a documented medical contraindication. Failure to accept required vaccination is grounds for administrative separation from the Peace Corps. You do not need to begin taking malaria medication prior to departure.

Bring a three-month supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication you use on a regular basis, including birth control pills. Although the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for this three-month supply, it will order refills during your service. While awaiting shipment—which can take several months—you will be dependent on your own medication supply. The Peace Corps will not pay for herbal or non-prescribed medications, such as St. John's wort, glucosamine, selenium, or antioxidant supplements. Medications supplied may be generic or equivalent to your current medications.

You are encouraged to bring copies of medical prescriptions signed by your physician. This is not a requirement, but they might come in handy if you are questioned in transit about carrying a three-month supply of prescription drugs.

If you wear eyeglasses, bring two pairs (of the current prescription) with you. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace them, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. The Peace Corps Office of Health Services strongly discourages Volunteers from wearing contact lenses while overseas unless there is a true medical indication documented by your ophthalmologist. Contact lenses, particularly extended use soft contacts, are associated with a variety of eye infections and other inflammatory problems. One of the most serious of these problems is infectious keratitis which can lead to severe cornea damage which could result in permanent blindness requiring corneal transplantation. These risks of permanent eye damage are exacerbated in the Peace Corps environment where the Volunteer's ability to properly clean the lenses is compromised due to limited access to sterile water as well as decreased effectiveness of cleaning solutions due to prolonged storage in unsatisfactory conditions. In addition, when bacterial eye infections occur, assessment and treatment within hours by a competent ophthalmologist is indicated. This is virtually impossible in the Peace Corps setting. If you feel you simply must be able to use your contacts occasionally, please consider using single-use, daily disposable lenses that do not require cleaning.

If you are eligible for Medicare, are over 50 years of age, or have a health condition that may restrict your future participation in health-care plans, you may wish to consult an insurance specialist about unique coverage needs before your departure. The Peace Corps will provide all necessary health care from the time you leave for your pre-departure orientation until you complete your service. When you finish, you will be entitled to the post-service health-care benefits described in the Peace Corps Volunteer Handbook. You may wish to consider keeping an existing health plan in effect during your service if you think age or pre-existing conditions might prevent you from re-enrolling in your current plan when you return home.

SAFETY AND SECURITY IN DEPTH

Ensuring the safety and security of Volunteers is Peace Corps' highest priority. Serving as a Volunteer overseas entails certain safety and security risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, a limited understanding of the local language and culture, and the perception of being a wealthy American are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Property theft and burglaries are not uncommon. Incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although most Volunteers complete their two years of service without a serious safety and security incident. Together, the Peace Corps and Volunteers can reduce risk, but cannot truly eliminate all risk.

Beyond knowing that the Peace Corps approaches safety and security as a partnership with you, it might be helpful to see how this partnership works. The Peace Corps has policies, procedures, and training in place to promote your safety. The Peace Corps depends on you to follow those policies and to put into practice what you have learned. An example of how this works in practice—in this case to help manage the risk and impact of burglary—follows:

- The Peace Corps assesses the security environment where you will live and work.
- The Peace Corps inspects the house where you will live according to established security criteria.
- The Peace Corps identifies and evaluates your host families for PST and the first six months of your service according to established criteria.
- The Peace Corps identifies a host country counterpart or other community leaders in your new community.
- The Peace Corps responds to security concerns that you raise.
- You identify a safety counterpart in your community.
- You identify a community counterpart in your community.
- You lock your doors and windows.
- You adopt a lifestyle appropriate to the community where you live.
- You get to know your neighbors.
- You decide if purchasing personal articles insurance is appropriate for you.
- You don't change residences before being authorized by the Peace Corps.
- You communicate your concerns to Peace Corps staff.

This welcome book contains sections on Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle, Peace Corps Training, Your Health Care, and Safety and Security, all of which include important safety and security information to help you understand this partnership. The Peace Corps makes every effort to give Volunteers the training and tools they need to function in the safest way possible and prepare for the unexpected, teaching you to identify, reduce, and manage the risks you may encounter.

Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk

There are several factors that can heighten a Volunteer's risk, many of which are within the Volunteer's control. By far the most common crime that Volunteers experience is theft. Thefts often occur when Volunteers are away from their sites, in crowded locations (such as markets or on public transportation), and when leaving items unattended.

Before you depart for Guyana there are several measures you can take to reduce your risk:

- Leave valuable objects in the United States, particularly those that are irreplaceable or have sentimental value
- Leave copies of important documents and account numbers with someone you trust in the States
- Purchase a hidden money pouch or "dummy" wallet as a decoy

- Purchase personal articles insurance

After you arrive in Guyana, you will receive more detailed information about common crimes, factors that contribute to Volunteer risk, and local strategies to reduce that risk. For example, Volunteers in Guyana learn to do the following:

- Choose safe routes and times for travel, and travel with someone trusted by the community whenever possible
- Make sure one's personal appearance is respectful of local customs
- Avoid high-crime areas
- Know the local language to get help in an emergency
- Make friends with local people who are respected in the community
- Be careful and conscientious about using electronics (phones, cameras, laptops, iPods, etc.) in public or leaving them unattended
- Limit alcohol consumption

As you can see from this list, you must be willing to work hard and adapt your lifestyle to minimize the potential for being a target for crime. As with anywhere in the world, crime occurs in Guyana. You can reduce the risks by avoiding situations that place you at risk and by taking precautions. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in the large cities; people know each other and generally are less likely to steal from their neighbors. Tourist attractions in large towns are favorite worksites for pickpockets.

The following are other security concerns in Guyana of which you should be aware:

- Guyana is considered a low-risk country for terrorist activity, but a high-risk one for petty crimes and aggravated assaults, including the use of weapons. As in the United States, you cannot be too careful. Walking alone at night or simply being alone in an isolated area can put a person at risk of being robbed, harassed, or even physically and sexually assaulted.
- Traveling around Guyana requires a lot of water travel. Trainees are encouraged to learn how to swim before arrival and are provided with information during pre-service training on water travel. Volunteers are provided with life jackets and are expected to wear them when traveling by boat.
- While whistles and verbal harassment based on race or gender may be fairly common on the street, this behavior may be reduced if you abide by local cultural norms, dress conservatively, and respond according to the training you will receive.

Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

Because many Volunteer sites are in rural, isolated settings, you must be prepared to take on a large degree of responsibility for your own safety. To reduce the likelihood that you will become a victim of crime, you can take steps to make yourself less of a target such as ensuring your home is secure and developing relationships in your community. While the factors that contribute to your risk in Guyana may be different, in many ways you can do what you would do if you moved to a new city anywhere: Be cautious, check things out, ask questions, learn about your neighborhood, know where the more risky locations are, use common sense, and be aware. You can reduce your vulnerability to crime by integrating into your community, learning the local language, acting responsibly, and abiding by Peace Corps policies and procedures. Serving safely and effectively in Guyana will require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle.

Support from Staff

If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety and security incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure

the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff response may include reassessing the Volunteer's worksite and housing arrangements and making any adjustments, as needed. In some cases, the nature of the incident may necessitate a site or housing transfer. Peace Corps staff will also support and assist Volunteers who choose to make a formal complaint with local law enforcement. It is very important that a Volunteer reports an incident when it occurs. The reasons for this include obtaining medical care and emotional support, enabling Peace Corps staff to assess the situation to determine if there is an ongoing safety and security concern, protecting peer Volunteers and preserving the right to file a complaint. Should a Volunteer decide later in the process to file a complaint with law enforcement, this option may be compromised if evidence was not preserved at the time of the incident.

Office of Victim Advocacy

The Office of Victim Advocacy (OVA) is a resource to Volunteers who are victims of crime, including sexual assault and stalking. Victim advocates are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to help Volunteers understand their emotional, medical, and legal options so they may make informed decisions to meet their specific needs. The OVA provides a compassionate, coordinated, and supportive response to Volunteers who wish to access Peace Corps support services.

Contact information for the Office of Victim Advocacy

Direct phone number: 202.692.1753

Toll-free: 855.855.1961 ext. 1753

Duty phone: 202.409.2704 (available 24/7, call or text)

Email: victimadvocate@peacecorps.gov

Crime Data for Guyana

Crime data and statistics for Guyana, which are updated yearly, are available at the following link:

<http://www.peacecorps.gov/countrydata/guyana>

Please take the time to review this important information.

Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of serious crimes. Crimes that do occur abroad are investigated and prosecuted by local jurisdictional authorities. If you are the victim of a crime, you will decide if you wish to file a complaint with law enforcement, who will then determine whether to prosecute. If you decide to file a complaint, the Peace Corps will help through the process. The Peace Corps staff will ensure you are fully informed of your options and understand how the local legal process works. Further, the Peace Corps will help you exercise your rights to the fullest extent possible under the laws of your host country.

The Peace Corps will train you on how to respond if you are the victim of a serious crime, including how to get to a safe location quickly and contact your Peace Corps office. It's important that you notify the Peace Corps as soon as you can so Peace Corps staff can provide assistance.

Volunteer Safety Support in Guyana

The Peace Corps' approach to safety is a five-pronged plan to help you stay safe during your service. The plan includes information sharing, Volunteer training, site selection criteria, a detailed emergency action plan, and protocols for addressing safety and security incidents. Guyana's in-country safety program is outlined below.

The Peace Corps/Guyana office will keep you informed of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety through **information sharing**. Regular updates will be provided in Volunteer newsletters and in memorandums from the country director. In the event of a critical situation or emergency, you will be

contacted through the emergency communication network. An important component of the capacity of Peace Corps to keep you informed is your buy-in to the partnership concept with the Peace Corps staff. It is expected that you will do your part to ensure that Peace Corps staff members are kept apprised of your movement in-country so they are able to inform you.

Volunteer training will include sessions on specific safety and security issues in Guyana. This training will prepare you to adopt a culturally appropriate lifestyle and exercise judgment that promotes safety and reduces risk in your home, at work, and while traveling. Safety training is offered throughout service and is integrated into the language, cross-cultural aspects, health, and other components of training. You will be expected to successfully complete all training competencies in a variety of areas, including safety and security, as a condition of service.

Certain **site selection criteria** are used to determine safe housing for Volunteers before their arrival. The Peace Corps staff works closely with host communities and counterpart agencies to help prepare them for a Volunteer's arrival and to establish expectations of their respective roles in supporting the Volunteer. Each site is inspected before the Volunteer's arrival to ensure placement in appropriate, safe, and secure housing and worksites. Site selection is based, in part, on any relevant site history; access to medical, banking, postal, and other essential services; availability of communications, transportation, and markets; different housing options and living arrangements; and other Volunteer support needs.

You will also learn about Peace Corps/Guyana's **detailed emergency action plan**, which is implemented in the event of civil or political unrest or a natural disaster. When you arrive at your site, you will complete and submit a site locator form with your address, contact information, and a map to your house. If there is a security threat, you will gather with other Volunteers in Guyana at predetermined locations until the situation is resolved or the Peace Corps decides to evacuate.

Finally, in order for the Peace Corps to be fully responsive to the needs of Volunteers, it is imperative that Volunteers immediately report any safety and security incidents to the Peace Corps office. The Peace Corps has established **protocols for addressing safety and security incidents** in a timely and appropriate manner, and it collects and evaluates safety and security data to track trends and develop strategies to minimize risks to current and future Volunteers.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION OVERVIEW

The Peace Corps mission is to promote world peace and friendship and to improve people’s lives in the communities where Volunteers serve. Instituting policies and practices to support a diverse and inclusive work and Volunteer environment is essential to achieving this mission.

Through inclusive recruitment and retention of staff and Volunteers, the Peace Corps seeks to reflect the rich diversity of the United States and bring diverse perspectives and solutions to development issues. Additionally, ensuring diversity among staff and Volunteers enriches interpersonal relations and communications for the staff work environment, the Volunteer experience, and the communities in which Volunteers serve.

The Peace Corps defines diversity as a “collection of individual attributes that together help agencies pursue organizational objectives efficiently and effectively. These include, but are not limited to, characteristics such as national origin, language, race, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, veteran status, and family structures. Diversity also encompasses differences among people concerning where they are from and where they have lived and their differences of thought and life experiences.”

We define inclusion as a “culture that connects each [staff member and Volunteer] to the organization; encourages collaboration, flexibility, and fairness; and leverages diversity throughout the organization so that all individuals are able to participate and contribute to their full potential.” The Peace Corps promotes inclusion throughout the lifecycle of Volunteers and staff. When staff and Volunteers are able to share their rich diversity in an inclusive work environment, the Peace Corps mission is better fulfilled. More information about diversity and inclusion can be found in the Volunteer Handbook.

An inclusive agency is one that seeks input from everyone in an effort to find the best ideas and strategies possible to execute its objectives. When input is solicited, heard, and considered from a rich multitude of individuals the best course of action usually emerges. The Peace Corps seeks to improve its operations and effectiveness by ensuring that all voices and ideas are heard and that all Volunteers and staff feel welcome and appreciated. When each person’s voice is heard, the agency is stronger and the impact of Volunteers is strengthened.

Diversity and Inclusion at Your Site

Once Volunteers arrive at their sites, diversity and inclusion principles remain the same but take on a different shape, in which your host community may share a common culture and you—the Volunteer—are the outsider. You may be in the minority, if not the sole American like you, at your site. You will begin to notice diversity in perspectives, ethnicity, age, depth of conversation, and degree of support you may receive. For example, elders, youth, and middle-aged individuals all have unique points of views on topics you may discuss, from perspectives on work, new projects, and social engagements to the way community issues are addressed.

Peace Corps staff in your host country recognizes the additional adjustment issues that come with living and working in new environments and will provide support and guidance to Volunteers. During pre-service training, a session will be held to discuss diversity and inclusion and how you can serve as an ally for your peers, honoring diversity, seeking inclusion, challenging prejudice and exclusion, exploring your own biases, and learning mechanisms to cope with these adjustment issues. The Peace Corps looks forward to having Volunteers from varied backgrounds that include a variety of races, ethnic groups, ages, religions, sexual orientations and gender identities. The agency expects you to work collaboratively to create an inclusive environment that transcends differences and finds common ground.

All of Peace Corps/Guyana staff have been trained in diversity awareness and are committed to supporting and providing a safe place for all trainees/Volunteers regardless of color, gender, age, or sexual orientation.

Cross-Cultural Considerations

Outside of Guyana's capital, residents of rural communities might have had little direct exposure to other cultures, races, religions, and lifestyles. What people view as typical U.S. behavior or norms may be a misconception, such as the belief that all Americans are rich and have blond hair and blue eyes. The people of Guyana are known for their generous hospitality to foreigners; however, members of the community where you will live may display a range of reactions to cultural differences that you present.

As a Volunteer and representative of the United States, you are responsible not only for sharing the diversity of U.S. culture (to include your individual culture and the culture of other Americans) with your host country national counterparts, but also for learning from the diversity of your host country. An important aspect of this cultural exchange will be to demonstrate inclusiveness within your community in a sensitive manner. Additionally, you will share the responsibility of learning about the diversity of your fellow Peace Corps Volunteers and exploring how best to respect differences while serving as supportive allies as you go through this challenging new experience.

To ease the transition and adapt to life in your host country, you may need to make some temporary, yet fundamental, compromises in how you present yourself as an American and as an individual. For example, female trainees and Volunteers may not be able to exercise the independence they have in the United States; male Volunteers may be expected to not perform chores or other tasks ascribed to women; political discussions need to be handled with great care; and some of your personal beliefs may best remain undisclosed. You will need to develop techniques and personal strategies for coping with these and other limitations. The Peace Corps staff will lead a diversity, inclusion, and sensitivity discussion during pre-service training and will be on call to provide support. This training covers how to adapt personal choices and behavior to be respectful of the host country culture, which can have a direct impact on how Volunteers are viewed and treated by their new communities. The Peace Corps emphasizes professional behavior and cross-cultural sensitivity among volunteers and within their communities to help integrate and be successful during service.

An ideal way to view the pursuit of cross-cultural adaptation and/or cultural integration is to recognize that everything done in your host country has both a specific reason for why it is done and an expected outcome. Trust that your host country counterparts are acting with positive intentions and work to mutually seek understanding and commonality. Language differences may add a communication barrier and lead to misunderstandings. Listen more than you speak and seek clarity. Remember that having the ability to laugh at yourself and at life's little surprises goes a long way—laughter is universal.

What Might a Volunteer Face?

Possible Gender Role Issues

Gender is a set of socially constructed roles, responsibilities, behaviors, and opportunities. Gender differs from sex, which refers specifically to biological and physiological characteristics of males and females. Gender roles and expectations are learned, change over time, and vary within and among cultures. Volunteers are trained in gender awareness as they approach their work in the host country. Gender roles in the United States may differ greatly from those in your country of service. It is important to absorb and to attempt to understand the cultural nuances of gender where you are. For example, in many cultures males are held in higher regard than females and females may manage the households. In some places, females are encouraged to attend school, while in other countries females are discouraged from engaging in such activities and instead work inside or outside of the home.

During the pre-service training, trainees receive an introduction to gender awareness in their country of service, and examine their own thinking about gender roles and how this thinking has impacted them. They then learn how to analyze development projects using a gender lens to better understand gender roles in their host country and to understand how these gender roles can benefit or limit what females and males may or may not do. During their 27 months of service, Volunteers will further engage in gender trainings to understand better how their gender identity impacts who they are as females or males in the host country and how this perception influences their work and relationships.

Gender roles in Guyana are markedly different from those in the United States, and you will need to understand these roles to be effective in your project and satisfied personally. Guyanese women have traditional roles, especially in rural areas, where they run the household, prepare meals, clean, and raise children. In addition, some work in the fields, run small businesses, and care for farm animals. Young single women generally do not live by themselves. Those who do are often perceived as women who lack morals. Men also have specific roles and “manliness” is very important. Men are expected to be dominant in almost all aspects of society: They are expected to smoke, drink, pursue women, be strong, and discipline their wives and children.

In Guyana, it is common for women, including Volunteers, to be verbally harassed by men on the streets. Although it is unusual for a man to try to touch a woman, he might whistle, make comments on a woman’s looks, or ask for a date or sex. North American women are targets because they are so visible and have a reputation of being liberal (sometimes interpreted in the local context as being promiscuous) in male-female relationships. Female Volunteers must learn to handle these situations and may have to accept certain constraints male Volunteers do not have to accept.

Male Volunteers also encounter harassment, but much less frequently. If you do not drink, smoke, or like to pursue women openly, you may be kidded or chided for not being manly enough. Male Volunteers who cook, wash clothes or dishes, and clean the house often seem strange to their neighbors. Pre-service training will orient you to these local customs and gender roles.

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

Volunteers of color sometimes, but not always, have a different Peace Corps experience than white Volunteers. Because of limited exposure, some foreign nationals will expect to see U.S. citizens who are white. Cultures of the world do not typically envision the States as a place of rich diversity with various culturally acceptable perspectives, personalities, and characteristics. Thus, a Volunteer of color may be questioned about their U.S. citizenship.

In places where American stereotypes and/or caste system dynamics influence perception, Volunteers of color should be mindful of the reasons for these views without creating contentious environments. All too often, host country nationals are simply unaware of the diversity of the United States and require additional information and dialogue. Direct interactions with someone new or something different can take time to get used to, but those who take the time tend to be better off. Although host country nationals may assert that the United States is made up of predominately one race, we know that is not true. If a member of your community knows of compatriots living in the United States or of notable U.S. citizens of color, you can build on this knowledge as a point of reference for discussing diversity within the States.

For Volunteers of color, the range of responses to their skin color may vary from the extremely kind to the very insensitive. In African and Latin American countries, host country nationals may say “welcome home” to African Americans or Hispanic Americans. Sometimes Volunteers expect to be “welcomed home” but are disappointed when they are not. More commonly, if a Volunteer is mistaken for a host-country national citizen, he or she is expected to behave as a male or female in that culture behaves, and

to speak the local language fluently. Host country nationals are sometimes frustrated when the Volunteer does not speak the local language with ease. Conversely, some in the same country may call you a “sell out” because they feel the United States has not done enough to help with social issues. These instances can be turned into teachable moments for the Volunteer and the host country national, in which the Volunteer can ask questions surrounding perception and collaborate with respect to issues and projects at hand, while engaging in cross-cultural exchanges. All Volunteers, to include white Volunteers and those of color, should be mindful of the issues of race that are embedded in U.S. culture and within the culture in your country of service. These issues may significantly affect how Volunteers interact with fellow Volunteers and host country nationals. Being open and inclusive to everyone will improve your experience in interacting with fellow Volunteers and members of your host community.

Volunteers of color in Guyana may face specific challenges. In Afro-Guyanese communities, for example, African-American Volunteers may be treated according to local social norms because it is assumed they are Afro-Guyanese. This can have both positive and negative outcomes. Within the Volunteer corps, you may be the only minority trainee or Volunteer in a particular project.

Once you move to your site, you may work and live with individuals who have a limited or stereotypical understanding of the United States and its citizens. A Volunteer of color may not be perceived as being North American. A Volunteer with a Hispanic surname may be considered a citizen of a Latin American country rather than the United States. Likewise, a Volunteer of Asian descent is not likely to be perceived as being North American and may be called by ethnic names common in Guyana, such as “Chinese girl.”

Out of ignorance or stereotyping, some people in your community may view you as less professionally competent than a white Volunteer. In any community where you are not known, you need to be prepared for staring, pointing, comments, and prejudice. Finally, you should be prepared to hear derogatory terms and racial epithets that would be completely inappropriate in the United States. In some cases, the terms may indeed be used in a derogatory manner, while in other cases the terms may be locally appropriate words that are not intended to hurt anyone’s feelings.

Suggestions for how to respond to these issues will be provided during pre-service training. Both the Peace Corps staff and a peer support network of trained Volunteer counselors are available to provide support.

Volunteer Comment

“Linden is predominantly Afro- Guyanese town and, as an African-American Peace Corps Volunteer, I blend in. This also has advantages and disadvantages. The advantages are I can go anywhere without attracting unnecessary attention, people are less likely to antagonize me in public and they look out for me. Every so often, I am mistaken for someone else’s family member in the community. Some of the disadvantages are locals forget or don’t know that I’m not Guyanese and they treat me according to Guyanese social norms, and when I don’t act according to those social norms, it [is] perceived as rebellious. This could cause people in your community to lose respect for you and isolate you without your knowledge. So make sure you are conscious of the social norms in your community.”

Possible Issues for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer, Ally (LGBTQA) Volunteers

For LGBTQ Volunteers: Given Guyana’s traditional values, sexual orientation and non-conforming gender identities might not be discussed openly. In some cases, the LGBTQ community may be stigmatized. Mindful of the cultural norms and country-specific laws, the decision to serve openly is left to each individual Peace Corps Volunteer. Many LGBTQ Volunteers have chosen to be discreet about

their sexual orientation and/or gender identity within their host communities. Some LGBTQ Volunteers have chosen to come out to community members, with a result of positive and negative reactions, while some have come out only to select Peace Corps staff and Volunteers. Dealing with questions about boyfriends, girlfriends, marriage, and children may, at times, be stressful for LGBTQ Volunteers. You may find that Guyana is a less open and inclusive environment than you have previously experienced. Please know, however, that Peace Corps is supportive of you and Peace Corps staff welcomes dialogue about how to ensure your success as an LGBTQ Volunteer. More information about serving as an LGBTQ Volunteer is available at the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Peace Corps Alumni website at lgbpcv.org. Additionally, the Peace Corps' LGBTQ employee resource group, Spectrum, can be reached at spectrum@peacecorps.gov.

For Ally Volunteers: Peace Corps staff intends to create open, inclusive, and accepting environments. As an agency, the Peace Corps encourages Volunteers to serve as allies to their LGBTQ colleagues in order to create a safe environment.

Many LGBTQ Volunteers have served successfully in Guyana and have very fond memories of their community and service. LGBTQ support groups may be available in your country of service, providing a network to support the needs of the Peace Corps LGBTQ community. Peace Corps staff will work with Volunteers to provide them with locally informed perspectives.

In Guyana, sexual orientation is a closeted issue. The topic is rarely discussed by Guyanese, and some consider homosexuality to be immoral. Certain sex acts, for both men and women, are criminalized. In some instances, basic civil liberties may be ignored, and gays may be hassled in bars or in the streets. LGBT Guyanese are more likely to live in cities, away from their home communities. There are also local organizations that advocate for the LGBTQ community.

One of the challenges for both lesbians and gay men is dealing with harassment by people of the opposite sex. Lesbians have to deal with questions about boyfriends, marriage, and sex (as do all women). Gay men must deal with machismo, talk of conquests, girl watching, and dirty jokes. Also, it is important to note that AIDS is a critical issue in Guyana, and gay Americans are sometimes blamed for supposedly bringing the disease into South America.

Gay, lesbian, and bisexual Volunteers should be aware that they will not encounter the level of openness and acceptance that they may be accustomed to in the United States. They will need to be circumspect with Guyanese colleagues and community members about their sexual orientation. Volunteers who decide to reveal their sexual orientation often confide in the medical officer who has been a source of support for Volunteers. Peer support plays a critical role to Volunteers of diverse sexual orientations.

Possible Issues for Volunteers with Disabilities

As part of the medical clearance process, the Peace Corps Office of Health Services determined you were physically and emotionally capable, with or without additional medical support, to perform a full tour of Volunteer service in Guyana without a significant risk of harm to yourself or interruption of service. The Peace Corps/Guyana staff will work with disabled Volunteers to support them in training, housing, jobsites, or other areas to enable them to serve safely and effectively.

That being said, Guyana is not an easy post for Volunteers with disabilities. Wheelchair ramps at building entrances and handrails along walkways, for example, are almost nonexistent. Elevators are few, and many do not work because of disrepair or lack of reliable electricity. Blind people have few resources upon which to rely.

Possible Issues for Volunteer Couples

Before committing to Peace Corps service, couples should consider how different degrees of enthusiasm about Peace Corps service, adaptation to the physical and cultural environment, and homesickness will affect their lives. It can be helpful to recognize that your reactions to these issues will change throughout your service, and you may not always feel the same as your partner. You and your partner will have different jobs, different schedules, and difference societal pressures. One partner may learn the language faster than the other or have a more satisfying assignment. This can create competition and put different kinds of stress on each person. Anticipating how these pressures will affect you and your partner differently throughout your service can help you remain a source of support for each other. Making friends with other Volunteers is a critical part of fitting into the larger volunteer culture and can also be a good way to expand your support network.

While couples will live together during their service, they may live in separate towns during their pre-service training. This is a stressful time for most Volunteers, and it can be helpful to discuss in advance how you will deal with this potential separation. Your partner can be an important source of stability but can also add stress to your training experience. You may feel torn between traveling to visit your partner and focusing on your training, your host family, and friends you have made at your training site.

Couples often face pressure from host country nationals to change their roles to conform better with traditional Guyana relationships. Guyana men and women alike will often not understand American relationship dynamics and may be outwardly critical of relationships that do not adhere to traditional gender roles. It is also helpful to think about how pressures to conform to Guyana culture can be challenging to men and women in very different ways. Considering how your partner is being affected and discussing what, if any, aspects of your relationship should be changed can help reduce stress for you both.

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

The three major religions in Guyana are Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity. Christian Volunteers may find it difficult to accept and work within the boundaries placed on personal behavior by non-Christian religions. For instance, a Hindu or Muslim woman's tendency to be submissive or her unwillingness to be away from home for long periods can be hard to accept by Westerners. This situation may also pose challenges for Volunteers who want to organize women's groups.

Volunteer Comment

“Coming from a background without much exposure to organized religion, the prominent and public role of religion in Guyana was a little daunting at first. However, people are generally friendly and will be eager and happy to have you learn about their religious practices, whether it's simply as an observer or, as you get more comfortable, a participant. You will find the Muslims, Hindus, and Christians in Guyana very welcoming no matter what your personal views are as long as you are respectful.”

Possible Issues for 50+ Volunteers

Older Volunteers may find their age an asset in Guyana. They will often have access to individuals and insights that are not available to younger Volunteers. On the other hand, they will be in a distinct minority within the Volunteer population and could find themselves feeling isolated, looked up to, or ignored.

Older Volunteers are often accustomed to a greater degree of independence and freedom of movement than the Peace Corps' program focus and safety and security practices allow. Pre-service training can be particularly stressful for older trainees, whose lifelong learning styles and habits may or may not lend themselves to the techniques used. A 50+ individual may be the only older person in a group of Volunteers and initially may not feel part of the group. Younger Volunteers may look to an older

Volunteer for advice and support; some find this to be an enjoyable experience, while others choose not to fill this role. Some 50+ Volunteers may find it difficult to adapt to a lack of structure and clarity in their role after having worked for many years in a very structured and demanding job.

More than younger Volunteers, older Volunteers may have challenges in maintaining lifelong friendships and dealing with financial matters from afar. They may want to consider assigning power of attorney to someone in the States.

Volunteer Comments

“As a third-year Volunteer serving in Guyana, I have found few disadvantages to be an older adult here. That being said, I did have a more difficult time during training when I was the only person in my group whose age exceeded 30 years. This difficulty mainly resulted from the tendency of the younger trainees to not quite know how to deal with me socially. As I am similar in age to most of their parents, it seemed uncomfortable for many of them at first to interact socially with me. I think it’s important for the older Volunteer to make clear from the outset that you are not here to be their surrogate parent. How one goes about doing that depends on each individual and each individual circumstance. Once that’s accomplished, the result is quite positive. I have developed solid friendships with many younger Volunteers during my time here.

“As to the advantages, Guyana is a country whose culture has an inborn respect for older adults. As a ‘big person,’ you are afforded certain courtesies and privileges that a younger Volunteer may not get. As an education Volunteer, I found that teaching in the schools was probably easier for me, being older. The fellow teachers and students tended to look to me for guidance, and treated me with deference. I don’t mean to imply that younger Volunteers are not treated well, just that being an older Volunteer, I believe, affords greater latitude. However, this extra deference carries an additional responsibility to live up to the community’s expectations.”

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Guyana?

Most airlines have baggage size and weight limits and assess charges for transport of baggage that exceeds those limits. The Peace Corps has its own size and weight limits and will not pay the cost of transport for baggage that exceeds these limits. The Peace Corps' allowance is two checked pieces of luggage with combined dimensions of both pieces not to exceed 107 inches (length + width + height) and a carry-on bag with dimensions of no more than 45 inches. Checked baggage should not exceed 100 pounds total with a maximum weight of 50 pounds per bag.

Peace Corps Volunteers are not allowed to take pets, weapons, explosives, radio transmitters (shortwave radios are permitted), automobiles, or motorcycles to their overseas assignments. Do not pack flammable materials or liquids such as lighter fluid, cleaning solvents, hair spray, or aerosol containers. This is an important safety precaution.

What is the electric current in Guyana?

The electric current is 110 volts in most urban areas and 220 volts with some 220-volt outlets in rural areas. The 110-volt outlets use the same type of prongs as in the United States, but the 220-volt outlets have three prongs in the British style. Three-prong adapters are available in Guyana.

How much money should I bring?

Volunteers are expected to live at the same level as the people in their community. You will be given a settling-in allowance and a monthly living allowance, which should cover your expenses. Volunteers often wish to bring additional money for vacation travel to other countries. Credit cards and traveler's checks are preferable to cash. If you choose to bring extra money, bring the amount that will suit your own travel plans and needs.

When can I take vacation and have people visit me?

Each Volunteer accrues two vacation days per month of service (excluding training). Leave may not be taken during training, the first three months of service, or the last three months of service, except in conjunction with an authorized emergency leave. Family and friends are welcome to visit you after pre-service training and the first three months of service as long as their stay does not interfere with your work. Extended stays at your site are not encouraged and may require permission from your country director. The Peace Corps is not able to provide your visitors with visa, medical, or travel assistance.

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?

The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects; Volunteers are ultimately responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. However, you can purchase personal property insurance before you leave (contact your insurance company for more information). Volunteers should not ship or take valuable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, electronics, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage, and, in many places, satisfactory maintenance and repair services are not available.

Do I need an international driver's license?

Volunteers in Guyana do not need an international driver's license because they are prohibited from operating privately owned motorized vehicles. Most urban travel is by bus or taxi. This document however maybe needed to open a local bank account. Rural travel ranges from buses and minibuses to trucks, bicycles, and lots of walking. On very rare occasions, a Volunteer may be asked to drive a sponsor's vehicle, but this can occur only with prior written permission from the country director. Should

this occur, the Volunteer may obtain a local driver's license. A U.S. driver's license will facilitate the process, so bring it with you just in case.

What should I bring as gifts for Guyana friends and my host family?

This is not a requirement. A token of friendship is sufficient. Some gift suggestions include knickknacks for the house; pictures, books, or calendars of American scenes; souvenirs from your area; hard candies; or photos to give away.

Where will my site assignment be when I finish training and how isolated will I be?

Peace Corps trainees are not assigned to individual sites until after they have completed pre-service training. This gives Peace Corps staff the opportunity to assess each trainee's technical and language skills prior to assigning sites, in addition to finalizing site selections with their ministry counterparts. If feasible, you may have the opportunity to provide input on your site preferences, including geographical location, distance from other Volunteers, and living conditions. However, keep in mind that many factors influence the site selection process and that the Peace Corps cannot guarantee placement where you would ideally like to be. Most Volunteers live in small towns or in rural villages and are frequently within one hour from another Volunteer. Some sites require a day's travel to reach the Peace Corps/Guyana post. Other sites are only accessible by boat or plane. Very few Volunteers live in the capital city.

How can my family contact me in an emergency?

The Peace Corps Counseling and Outreach Unit provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, instruct your family to notify the Counseling and Outreach Unit immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. The Counseling and Outreach Unit can be reached at 855.855.1961, select option 1, ext. 1470. After business hours, on weekends, and on holidays, the COU duty officer can be reached at the same number. For non-emergency questions, your family can contact your country desk staff through the main Peace Corps number: 855.855.1961.

How easy is it to call home from Guyana?

Telephone service from Guyana to the United States is generally quite good. Most communities have a telephone office where you can call the United States collect or pay for the call on the spot. Very few Volunteers have landline phones in their homes, but many have neighbors with phones. (Note that it is not a good idea to use a neighbor's phone with the promise to pay for the call later. Rather you should pay at the time you make the call.)

Those Volunteers living in sites without cellphone coverage may have access to a community phone, which they can use to call the U.S., have their family call them. In sites where only a shortwave radio is available, calls home to the U.S. may be more difficult. However, many Volunteers in sites such as this find other means to communicate with family back home, via regular mail or Internet one or two times a month, etc.

Should I bring a cellphone with me?

It is not necessary for you to bring a phone with you. Most Volunteers buy a local cellphone (most U.S. cellphones are not compatible with the Guyanese system) and purchase prepaid cards for service. You can purchase a cellphone for US\$50 or less. Keep in mind that cellphones are very much in demand and Volunteers are advised to be extremely cautious about purchasing expensive cellphones.

Will there be email and Internet access? Should I bring my computer?

The major cities in Guyana are well supplied with Internet cafes. In fact, there are so many of them in Georgetown that prices are quite low as a result of the intense competition. In addition to email services,

most Internet cafes offer phone call alternatives. Many Volunteers do not have Internet access in their sites and must travel to the nearest regional capital to access Internet services.

Peace Corps/Guyana encourages bringing a computer, but it should be made clear that computers can be easily stolen, so it's a good idea to purchase personal property insurance if you decide to bring one. Volunteers often find them useful for project work and personal use. Electricity can often be sporadic and may damage appliances, including computers. However, voltage stabilizers are also available and helpful if you want to prevent damage to your computer due to power instability.

WELCOME LETTERS FROM GUYANA VOLUNTEERS

Nwam budday! (What is going on friend!),

Congratulations on your invitation to Peace Corps/Guyana and welcome to the family. I am sure a lot of you are dying to know what being a Peace Corps Volunteer in Guyana is like. So, I am going to share my experience as Peace Corps Health Volunteer in Linden, Guyana.

During PST, I lived in Soesdyke and I was placed with a host family who introduced me to Guyanese culture. My first morning with my host family, I woke up to a clapping sound coming from the kitchen. I quickly ran out of my room, only to see my host mother throwing what seem like a piece of fat round cooked dough in the air and clapping it before touching the ground. I stood in the corner confused, trying to understand what she was doing and that was my first experience with “clap roti.” Another experience I would never forget was the first time I went to Georgetown with my host mother to shop. As soon as we walked past the bus park, we were ambushed by hordes of bus conductors, competing with each other to convince us to enter their mini bus. I held on to my host mother for dear life, afraid I would lose her in the crowd and be pulled into the wrong mini bus. These are just a few of many memories I have of my training days. The knowledge I gained during training is what helps me get through my day to day at my permanent site.

My permanent site is in the town of Linden. Linden is the second-largest town in Guyana after Georgetown. Most people in my community are nurses, miners, cab drivers, or teachers. The culture here is predominantly Afro-Guyanese; however there are East Indian and Amerindian influences in the food and music. Some of the advantages of living in Linden are reliable electricity, Internet cafes, accessible transportation, and you can find some of the groceries you see in American stores here in Linden. Challenges in Linden are a lack of community; here, people go about their business and Volunteers have to make an extra effort to get to know people. But that’s OK because when I am out in my community, I make sure to say good morning to everyone and engage them in a small conversation. Every now and then I stop at different shops in my community to buy something, just so I can have the opportunity to *gaff* (talk) with the vendors, and allow them to get to know me.

So you probably want to know what my daily schedule looks like. I am attached to the local health center; I work Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. On Mondays, I work with the nurses and midwives on antenatal clinic, give health talks, check blood pressure, weigh the mothers, and check urine for traces of glucose or protein. When I am done working with the nurses and midwives in the antenatal clinic, I go to the doctor’s office to work with him/her. At the doctor’s office, I check patient’s vital signs (blood pressure, pulse, respiration, temp and blood sugar if necessary), I counsel patients before they see the doctor. On Tuesdays, I weigh babies, measuring height and head circumference before they are seen by the nurses to receive their vaccines. On Wednesdays the schedule varies, first and third Wednesdays are family planning, second and fifth Wednesdays are home visit/outreach. Fourth Wednesdays are elderly club. I also facilitate health clubs at the local secondary schools every Wednesday and Thursday. On Saturday, I complete most of my chores in the house, *lime* (hang out) with my neighbors or the other Peace Corps Volunteers near my site. Sundays, I go to church, relax and plan for the following week.

That’s it, invitees! As you can see, I try to *dey pon mi heights* (stay on top of things). Enjoy the next few months with your families and friends and continue to remind them you are going to Guyana in South America, not Ghana in Africa. Once again congratulations and all the best.

Chiedum Okei-Nwabuokei
Guy 26 HE PCV

Welcome Guy 27!

You've finally made it through the painful application, nail-biting wait, medical papers on medical papers, and overwhelming anxiety to make it here. You've been invited to serve Peace Corps in Guyana, South America. You're a rock star for coming this far. Are you excited? I'm excited for you! So excited.

Before I came here, I had never heard of Guyana. I was actually saying it wrong in the months up until I came here, pronouncing it Gi-ana rather than Guy-ana. (Still different from Ghana, thanks 10 millionth person to ask if I'm *sure* I'm not going to Africa.)

Words fail me in describing Guyana. You know how people say America is a melting pot of culture, people and diversity? Yup, that's Guyana. Every time I think I've got it figured out, it surprises me. My home is a large Amerindian community off of the Pomeroon River in Region 2. (Guyana has 10 regions, similar to states in the U.S.). My "village" is comprised of 42 islands, which means everyone gets around via canoe or speedboat. I live with a family in a compound. My "house" is a room with a little deck which is just big enough to hang a hammock and, really, what more do I need? Living with a family means I get all the perks: super-tasty food I didn't have to cook for myself, someone to talk to, privacy most days, and occasionally someone to do my laundry for me. Of course, it is different than living on my own. I am a grown woman, and sometimes I'm not really interested in having an hour-long conversation with my granny while dripping in my towel after a bucket bath. But I know it comes from a good place. It took a lot of adjusting to, but I'm comfortable now, in part because I've taken some leaps and made some mistakes, and have learned to laugh at myself.

An average day for me starts around 5 or 5:30 a.m., before it gets too hot. Then I jump on a school boat. And yeah, it is just as cool as it sounds. I'm an Education Volunteer so my days are spent goofing around with children. From 8:30 to 2:30 I'm typically at the school on one of the other islands. That much is predictable. What I do in the school, that's an entirely different story. Going into school felt like a battle zone the first couple months. Every day I walked inside, there would be some new challenge regardless of what I had prepared for.

"Miss, grades 1 and 3 don't have a teacher today. Can you teach grade 1 and keep an eye on grade 3, who happens to love getting into fights?" "You bet I can!"

"Miss, these struggling readers in grades 5 and 6 aren't learning anything. With no knowledge of what they already know and 5 minutes to prepare, could you teach them for the day?" "Psh, of course."

"Miss, the nursery teacher will be gone for a week. You don't mind teaching nursery even though you've never taught children so small and they look like they're about to pee themselves, right?" "I'd love to!"

In Peace Corps, there's a lot of push on being adaptable, for obvious reasons. At the end of every challenge, I'm proud of what I've accomplished. What's more exciting: "Today went exactly as planned." Or, "Today I got locked in the library with my grade 3 group and had to call another teacher to save me." I'll let you decide if that one is true. I've had my moments, in school and out. Definitely not my finest teaching, or best attitudes on many occasions, but the children and I laugh, smile, and encourage each other. Expecting the unexpected has become my niche. I'm a lot better at working with any group of students in the school with a couple minutes to prepare. Not that it isn't hard, because it is, but knowing what to expect of myself and of the people around me has helped immensely.

My job has been of my own making; as an Education Volunteer I am associated with a school, but what I do within that school is up to my teachers and me. I live in a hinterland site with few teachers and very low literacy rates. If teachers are gone, I teach their classes. On a typical day, however, I do intensive 20-30 minute literacy pullouts with low-achieving students from grades 2 to 6. I sometimes work with mid-

and high-achieving students to mix it up. I've also taken to helping out in nursery and have re-started a school library that had fallen out of use, and continue to maintain it with the assistance of three library assistants in grade 5.

Now, don't let me trick you into thinking this is sunshine and rainbows all the time. You'll be frustrated. A lot. If you're anything like me, you'll accidentally slap yourself in the face from batting away so many bugs. You'll ask yourself why you possibly thought this was a good idea. You'll miss home. Some days it's easier than others. Sometimes the heat and frustration almost outweigh the smiles of community members, the pride of being here. Almost. You'll do things you always thought people were crazy for trying. You'll be overwhelmed and underprepared. You'll sweat through your clothing and have a worship-like love for fans. You'll find yourself discovering what is essential and what you can live without. You'll fall in love with cassava balls and sour, with roti and pumpkin, with the attitude and the atmosphere, and especially the people.

As my host dad says: "Don't make your feelings fool you." There are going to be times you want to take stuff personally. Don't. As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you're going to get a lot of attention, wanted or not. It's up to you how you deal with it. You make this experience yours by how you respond to your crazy situations, and believe me, there will be some wild ones. But, hey, that's what you're looking for, right? If nothing else, let yourself have the experience, regardless of what it is. Let go of expectations—of Guyana and of yourself. Welcome to Guyana, wishing you all the best!

Beth Archer
Guy 26, ED PCV

Dear Future GUY 27s,

Congratulations on being invited to Guyana! First, some useful tips. These are just a few of the more crucial things I wish I had known before leaving. But don't worry, I haven't spoiled everything:

1. Bring an external hard drive. Load it up with movies, TV shows, games, music whatever you think you'll need to make it through 27 months. While Peace Corps life is exciting, you'll also have a lot more down time than you expect.
2. You're going to need a computer.
3. Ex Officio, dry fit, anything that dries fast is a plus. You'll be doing your laundry by hand at least once, more likely once a week and clothes that dry fast are a real bonus.
4. Practice making some basic meals before you leave so there's something in your repertoire that you can show off to your host family.
5. Don't count on having Internet 24/7. Once a month is pretty likely but I can't vouch for the quality.

Life out here isn't too hard if you're willing to adjust. The Peace Corps maintains that there are two types of sites: coastal and hinterland. Coastal encompasses more built up and urban areas while hinterland is more rural and with fewer amenities. But even inside those categories there's a lot of variation. Some coastal sites don't have running water while some hinterland sites do, the same goes for constant electricity and access. My coastal site is three hours from Georgetown, on a good day, and another Volunteer's hinterland site is 45 minutes from Georgetown. If I'm lucky, I have running water three to four days a week while another Volunteer who lives two hours up the river has running water all the time. Guyana is bit of a developmental hodgepodge as you'll soon find out. One sliver of advice I'd give is this: During training be very vocal and specific about what you'd like in your site so staff can place you appropriately (as best they can).

An average day for me doesn't exist. After school tutoring, HIV/AIDS education, painting world maps, boys' clubs, every week is different. There's no shortage of things that can and need to be done here. You're only limited by your imagination for project ideas. That being said, a large percentage of ideas never make it off the ground. Some of them just explode on the launch pad. But the ones that you stick with and make your own are the ones that end up flourishing. Out here, you can't be afraid to try new things otherwise you'll never do anything.

A friend of mine asked me a question once. "What happens when you go outside your comfort zone?" The answer? "It gets bigger." This is the ideal that you need to carry into the Peace Corps. Setting an example of pushing boundaries to attain what was once impossible is the legacy you'll leave behind regardless of whether you think you're successful or not. Your success won't be defined in numbers, or behaviors changed. Your success will come from positive interactions with one person at a time. Inspiring just one person to do one thing differently, taking their education more seriously, not throwing trash on the ground, or just being more compassionate is where success lies.

While Peace Corps staff does a good job of helping PCVs acclimatize, I still wished that someone had told me some of the following. This isn't meant to scare you, or discourage you from coming. It's only meant to inform and help you prepare yourself for the Peace Corps experience.

1. Almost nothing will be the way you think it will be. Flexibility and going with the flow will be the only thing that saves you at times. If you can already do that, you're in good shape.
2. Get comfortable with being uncomfortable. You'll see that Guyana, in the broad strokes, isn't that far a departure from the U.S. There's still the same kind of people doing the same kinds of things. But what you will notice is a lot of little differences and they add up over time. Inconsistent power and water, exciting encounters with livestock, new types of giant bugs, these are all things that you'll see here. Separately, these types of small differences are not that impactful because you can handle them one at a time. Together, they can make you feel very far from home.
 - a. (sub-point): Yeah, these differences can make you feel far from home. But what if I told you that 30 odd of your friends will live in-country with you during your service and the furthest away one of them could be is only an hour? The rest of your group will become like your family. They'll be the ones you talk to, the ones you spend holidays with, and the ones who will look out for you. They will legitimately become like your family.
3. The Peace Corps is hard. It epitomizes the phrase, "If it was easy, everyone would do it." You're going to have some bad days, days where the only thing you want to do is go home. But for every day like that, you'll have a day that's the exact opposite. A day where everything goes right and you feel like a real PCV making a measurable difference in some person's life. Those days are pretty great. Realistically though, the majority of your days will fall somewhere between those poles. That's what the external hard drive is for.

Every journey of 1,000 miles starts with a single step. Your commitment to the application process and your invitation acceptance has already proven your intent to improve the world. So now's the time to get excited about coming to South America. Get excited about meeting new people and seeing new places. And get excited about having a once-in-a-lifetime experience. There truly is nothing like it.

See you soon,

Tim
Guy 26 HE PCV

As a community education promoter in Guyana, your primary project is to work with the school you are partnered with. With the focus being on literacy development, specific areas to focus on can be literacy pullouts with students, one-on-one literacy tutoring, literacy classes, and library development. In my village, I started off by doing literacy pullouts with students who had similar reading skills. I clumped them in groups of four to six children, allowing me to give them more attention than teaching a classroom full of 12–20 children. During my pullouts, I created many literacy aids and games that the children utilized during their lessons. Each day, I would review what we previously learned to ensure each student understood the content. Parent-teacher conferences and staff developments were a lot of fun to facilitate in the sense you are able to share your expertise and voices more openly and freely when describing your own experiences. The last term of the school year, I chose to teach Form 1 and focus on the academic development of the younger children.

My village is a remote Amerindian village located at the top of Region 9. It is four miles off the Lethem-Georgetown road and its neighboring village is roughly 10 miles away. It is savannah surrounded by the most magical and lively forest. The people there are beautiful, both inside and out, and truly care about one another. The challenges living there, at first, were feeling isolated from other Volunteers and not having contact with my family. The village had no cell service when I first got there and in the middle of my service a “phone booth”—an open spot in the village where you can get spotty service—was found. The local Ecolodge has Internet during the day that can be used. Honestly, you get used to not having constant contact with the outside world and that in itself is a gift. I also struggled a lot feeling wanted by the community. Culture there is a little different. Villagers did not come to visit me in the beginning and it was not until I started visiting people, going to their farms and doing cassava work with them was when I felt at home. It is more than OK to go to villagers’ homes uninvited: They have an “always” welcome policy.

Advantages of living at my site was everything. You learn fast to live without and appreciate everything else. I loved farming and doing cassava work. I loved going to people’s houses and just talking with them. It is amazing how much you can adapt and how much you end up surprising yourself and conquering things you never thought you could.

My host family was respectful, honest, and loved me. The main setback, I felt, was that living with a host family held back other people from visiting me.

The only advice I can give someone is to go in it with no expectations; dive into the culture and the way of life! The Macushi culture is unexplainably sacred.

Bridget Cincotta
Guy 25 RPCV

Guyana: The Land of Many Waters (and, come rainy season, you will believe it)

You are beginning a great adventure with your Peace Corps service in Guyana. The main thing to remember (with apologies to Dorothy) is that “You are no longer in Kansas, Toto.” This true in many ways. Guyana will “fool” you in that signs are in English, styles and music are primarily American, the land and climate along the coast are very much like Florida, and almost everyone has a relative in the U.S.

However, it is not “America Lite.” It has a completely different culture. Since it was a former British colony, Guyana considers itself Caribbean, not South American. As with many former British colonies,

you will find yourself celebrating Indian Arrival Day and Diwali with the Indo-Guyanese, Emancipation Day with the Afro-Guyanese, Heritage Month with the Amerindians, and Mashramani, Christmas, Eid al Fitr, and Phagwah with all of them. As a whole, the Guyanese are very warm and welcoming. You will quickly find yourself “a member of the family.”

Here are a few tips you should keep in mind while serving in Guyana:

Be flexible. Guyanese do things differently. You will quickly learn “just now” means between now and the end of the world, “good night” means “hello,” every older person is “auntie” or “uncle.” Time has very little meaning to them in the sense that nothing starts on time.

Be observant. You are much less likely to commit a faux pas if you observe first before you act or say something.

Be polite. “Please,” “thank you,” “yes, sir,” “no, ma’am” will go a long way in helping you integrate into your community, make friends, and have a pleasant and safe stay in Guyana.

Be aware. Guyana is like every country in the world: There are good people, there are bad people, there are people who will help you, there are people who will harm you. That does not mean you should be suspicious of everyone around you, just be careful.

Be discreet. As an American, you are presumed to be rich, to know all the answers, to know nothing. Watch what you say and do. You are “on display” 24/7. You will be observed.

Be realistic. You aren’t going to change the world, the country, or the system. But you may help change one person who will change the world, the country, and/or the system. That’s called “legacy” and that’s what the Peace Corps is all about.

Be honest. With yourself, your community, and the Peace Corps. Yes, you are going to have ups and downs, but know what your “deal-breaker” is and be upfront about it.

The last tip is especially important while you are in pre-service training. If having reliable electricity or having running water or being near another Peace Corps Volunteer is important for you, let Peace Corps staff know. If you require a structured environment, let Peace Corps staff know. They will do what they can to meet those needs, but if they do not know, they may end up assigning you to a site that neither you, your host family, or your site counterpart are happy with.

Although it is a cliché, you will get out of your service what you put in. The needs of Guyana are great. But remember that you are here to meet the needs of the Guyanese, they are not here to meet your needs (unless your needs correspond to theirs). They are appreciative of anything and everything you do. You will impact their lives more than you will ever know.

Doug Hall
Guy 25 Ed Volunteer

Hey Budday!

First of all, let me start by saying “Congratulations!” on your invitation to Peace Corps/Guyana! Don’t worry if you had to look the country up on a map; I did too! There are few people in the world who would even attempt the journey you’re about to go through. It will be both challenging and rewarding, but you

will grow as a person from every single experience you go through, making this journey completely **worth it.**

My home is in New Amsterdam (Region 6), one of the largest towns in Guyana. The culture in my area is a mixture of Indo-Guyanese and Afro-Guyanese, providing a great variety of music, religion, and food. There is never a dull moment in New Amsterdam! I live in the bottom flat below a host family. To me, this is ideal. I have my privacy, but I also have the love and support from my Guyanese mom and dad upstairs. More importantly though, I wanted to share with you what a typical day, as well as week, looks like for me. I am an Education Volunteer and was placed at a school that is a 15-minute walk from my house. Every single person I walk past—neighbor, student, parent, stranger—greet me with a huge smile on their face and a warm “Mawnin, Miss!” When I am right outside the school, students will sprint to me or yell across the school just to say “hi.” Talk about starting the day off right! During the school hours, I pull three separate groups of six second graders into my classroom to help with literacy skills. Depending on their level, we work on letter recognition, letter sounds, phonic skills, and some of them are even starting to read. That alone has already convinced me that my time here has been **worth it**, but I cannot wait to see even more progress the students make over the next year and a half while I am still here. When I am not pulling kids for small group, I am either going from classroom to classroom to discuss upcoming schoolwide events, helping with the student government, or working with students one-on-one that may need a little extra attention or guidance. Seeing a child who never used to smile and would always hit another student, transform into a child who lights up whenever he sees you and can’t wait to share with you how well he is doing in class is one of the best feelings in the world. It’s **worth it.**

Mondays and Wednesdays I go straight from school to teach swim lessons. I am currently working with five five-year olds. Thursdays, another Volunteer and I lead a fitness class. We have anywhere from 10–20 females show up to break a sweat while having fun. Tuesday nights I play football (soccer) with a group of male teachers. The best thing about this is that they don’t really think girls know how to play sports. I love proving them wrong and changing the fixed gender roles. It’s **worth it.**

That leaves the weekends. Depending on the time, I try to do and see as many cultural experiences as possible. I have danced at Hindu weddings; lit fireworks during Diwali; eaten seven curry, roti, and cook up; cheered at a Guyana cricket match; played with a monkey; gazed over the Kaieteur Falls; swam in the creek (possibly with a few anacondas); held a macaw bird; chopped and drank straight from a coconut with a machete; and the list goes on and on. Typically, however, I spend Saturday mornings doing laundry, cleaning, and going to the market. Once all my chores are done, I get to relax in my hammock. This is the time I get to reflect on all the little things I used to take for granted, like running water, blowing breeze, washing machines, public transportation, Wi-Fi, fans, bug spray, coffee, Target, sweatshirts, boots and scarves, Taco Bell, and American candy. Getting those care packages from home is like Christmas morning every single time and, trust me, it’s **worth it.**

Adjusting to life as a Peace Corps Volunteer takes some time. It may not happen during pre-service training, it may not happen six months in, heck, it may not even happen until you have only two months of service left. But it will happen and it will all be **worth it.** Using your support systems such as fellow Volunteers, host families, community members, and friends/family back home will help you get through the two years. The most important piece of advice I can give you is to not take life too seriously. You will encounter people here who may disagree with your beliefs, you will encounter people who have unrealistic expectations of you, you will encounter what it feels like to be a foreigner, but it is so important that you do not stress about the things you cannot control because tomorrow is a brand-new day. I am beyond excited for you and your upcoming journey and hope you will get out of it what I have already gotten out of it in just a short eight months. I know I have become a much more appreciative, patient, flexible, understanding, and open-minded person and it has all been **worth it.**

Lindsey Daugherty
Guy 26

Congratulations on your invitation to serve in Guyana. I am happy to welcome you to the country!

One of the things that I found particularly helpful before I arrived was the welcome book, so I thought I would contribute to it this year so you might also benefit.

I want to start by telling you about myself and my background before I go into my life in Guyana. I am an Education Volunteer from Colorado. I got a degree in political science and a minor in Spanish. Although I do not have a degree in education, I have previous experience teaching ESL and Spanish classes, so imagine my surprise when I was invited to serve in the only English-speaking country in South America. Hopefully Guyana being an English-speaking country was a big draw for you. It most certainly has its perks. The main benefit I have experienced is the ability to directly connect and communicate with my counterpart and my community at large. Without the severe language barrier, I have also been more effective in the short time I am here (I know two years seems long, it is, but not it regards to large projects, it's actually a short time!).

I am a coastal Volunteer located on the Essequibo Coast. I'm in one of the slightly larger villages on the coast, but that doesn't mean much. Guyana is a small country with a small population. There are only about 750,000 people in the entire country. Coastal can mean a lot of different things so don't take my description as the only type of coastal, Essequibo coastal is completely different from Berbice, East Bank, and Region 3 coastal.

Essequibo is quiet. It is a long stretch of coast that starts at the Essequibo River and ends at the Pomeroon River. The whole coast shuts down at 6 p.m. You will get stuck paying for a private car to get you home if you stay out past about 5:30 p.m. Not that you would want to, there is nothing open so you really have nowhere to go. The coast during the day is a very different matter, it is a busy thoroughfare from the Pomeroon.

Essequibo has one main road up the coast and it runs through all the main villages. The villages are really close together and are more like a long line of suburbs without the big city as the focal point. Most of the time you will not be able to tell when one village ends and the next one starts, unless of course there is a village name sign, and only about half of the villages do.

You will, or already have been, asked where you want to be located: coastal town or hinterland. I can only try to help you understand some of the benefits and disadvantages for coastal and touch upon the hinterland. Coastal means you have access to more things. You have easier access to banks, grocery stores, and potentially Internet, if you don't get a Blackberry or some other smartphone where you can get an Internet plan. You also have more access to materials for projects, it was very easy for me to order and receive sand, stone, blocks, wood, etc., for my library. This can be more difficult in the hinterland. Also, by living on the coast, you have access to more people for fundraising. I found it easy to fundraise for the library because I could ask businesses and people from up and down the coast rather than just from my community. In the hinterland you are more likely to have a set community and outside funds are more limited, which can be difficult, but also has its blessings. Being hinterland and in a small closed-off, or close-knit community means that they are usually more invested in a project, because the community recognizes that the burden is on them to improve their own community. On the coast it is easier to fundraise, but harder to get people to come out and support a project by spending their time volunteering.

Hinterland will feel more like a true community, people usually live and work in the same place, or live there and work in the “bush” working in mines, or logging. Coastal will feel more like a suburb, a large amount of people will live in one village but work in another.

Now on to a typical day for me.

As I said, I am an Education Volunteer at a primary school. My school has just over 400 kids and 16 teachers. I have a larger school than some Volunteers so don't think they are all as large as mine; some Volunteers only have about 60 kids and 4 teachers. It varies.

I go to school every morning at about 7:30. I take a car from my house, which is actually about five villages down the coast, but is only a five-minute drive. I get to school early and open the “library.” I rent books out with my grade 6 helpers until school calls. Then I work on small projects like fixing books, helping teachers, and working on fundraising and donation requests for the library that we are building. I taught computer lessons last year but the computer lab is currently not functioning so I have a bit of free time this semester to do smaller projects with the kids. I am working on a letter-writing campaign to different publishers to get donated books. I also do some pullouts and work in small groups.

I also work two afternoons a week at Hope For All, an NGO focused on HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention. I work at their afterschool program tutoring and teaching life skills. Then on Saturdays I am constructing a physical building at the school to hold their library and an additional classroom. The big market day in my area is Sunday, so I usually take a car (like a communal taxi) to the village where my primary school is again on Sunday to do my shopping for the week.

All in all, I am a very busy Volunteer. I am fortunate enough to have a large number of activities which are needed in my community and which I am capable of doing or assisting others in. This is not always the case. I am lucky in the sense that my site had a project (building a library) they wanted and was already part of their future plans. Most Volunteers don't have such a concrete project laid out for them. More often than not it is more of a vague, drawn-out process that really can take the first few months at site to figure out. Those first few months can be hard; be prepared to feel like you aren't doing anything productive. As Americans it is part of our nature to feel like we should be busy all the time, and we crave the satisfaction of seeing the results of our actions.

In reality, your whole job the first few months is to get to know your community. Ask a bunch of questions about absolutely everything (OK, maybe not too much on politics and religion, as anywhere, those discussions get tricky). Get to know your neighbors, chances are it will be their cousin, or sister, or father who will be the one you need to know to get your project done. Learn to cook, accept invitations to weddings, you don't have to know anyone at the wedding, you will never want to turn down an offer of free food.

I hope you are excited and impatient to get here, but don't forget to enjoy your last few weeks/months in America. Eat your favorite foods, try to pack what you think you need. Bring something that reminds you of home, and if you have that one luxury item you don't want to live without, pack it. (I brought my nice feather pillow and I am thankful every night!)

Iris Nott

Guy 25 ED Volunteer

Hello and welcome to Peace Corps/Guyana!

Congratulations on accepting your 27-month journey toward serving the diverse communities of Guyana! Be prepared to share your health knowledge and literacy skills with your community, while keeping an open mind to soak up all the knowledge you will gain.

As a GUY 25 Peace Corps Volunteer, I have had my ups and downs while serving in Guyana. The Peace Corps really does live up to its motto: The toughest job you'll ever love. While I have loved my experiences in Guyana, I have also had to cope with the difficulties of being a diverse Volunteer. As a Filipino American queer woman, I have learned to face and overcome a multitude of challenging situations.

As a woman, I get catcalled constantly, no matter how I present myself. I have experienced living in the "fishbowl," where my every move has been scrutinized by my community. On a daily basis, I have had community members make comments on my body image. I specifically remember one experience where a teacher in my community told me I was "bursting with fat." How many people like being called fat? Not many, but it is considered a compliment here! So...thanks?

Guyana is a very religious country, which practices Hinduism, Islam, and various denominations of Christianity. As my community is very Christian, I have not "come out" to anyone in my community. While this can be stressful at times, I find comfort in speaking with other diverse Volunteers and have noticed that they face similar issues.

While there is diversity within Guyana, most Asian and Pacific Islander PCVs are identified as "Chinee" (Chinese) by most Guyanese. As a proud Filipino American, it was especially hard for me to cope with the loss of that part of my identity. However, I have had the opportunity to educate my community on my culture. I saw a great opportunity in showcasing my Filipino heritage by making Filipino food for my host family and they made more of an effort to call me Filipino, instead of "Chinee."

While in Guyana, my positive experiences definitely outweigh the bad ones. I have had tough times, experienced frustrations, and have failed. However, I have experienced positive personal growth, made lifelong friendships with other PCVs and community members, and have done my best to serve my community. Without a doubt, the friends I have made in my village and within the Peace Corps have enhanced my 27-month journey and created unforgettable memories. Even though you may face some tough experiences, you will also discover the most rewarding ones. You will meet people who will change your life; you will immerse yourself into Guyana's vibrant culture; you will forge lifelong friendships. Once again, welcome to Peace Corps/Guyana!

Jackie Marzan
Guy 25, 2013–15

PACKING LIST

This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Guyana and is based on their experience. Use it as an informal guide in making your own list, bearing in mind that each experience is individual. There is no perfect list! You obviously cannot bring everything on the list, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally. You can always have things sent to you later. As you decide what to bring, keep in mind that you have a 100-pound weight limit on baggage. And remember, you can get almost everything you need in Guyana.

Many Volunteers put a lot of effort into packing for their Peace Corps service because it is hard to predict what and how much you will need. Keep in mind that most Volunteers bring too much, especially clothing. If you can't live without something, bring it, but remember that you are traveling to a developing country and less is more in many ways. The cultural considerations on the list below are provided to give you an idea of what you need, but vary for different parts of Guyana. It is a diverse country, with both urban and rural settings. The best thing to do is to prepare for any situation. Here are some suggestions directly from current Volunteers in Guyana:

“Pretend you live in Florida, southern California, or Texas. Think about what you would wear to work and the things you would use in a month and pack those things.”

“Things that are expensive in Guyana but cheaper in America: razors and blades, your laptop, unlocked cellphone with nifty features, MP3 player, and workout stuff (stretch bands, jump rope, Pilates DVD/workout DVD or books), and digital camera.”

“Pack your small things (socks, undies, toiletries) in excellent seal tight plastic containers and/or zip-close bags. In training and at site, these containers will come in handy.”

“Remember, you are moving to another country for two years, not going camping. Bring the things you like wearing/are comfortable in because two years of heat and sweat is a long time to live without it.”

“A note on getting stuff from home: To get that stuff you just have to have from the States, you can either ask someone who is coming to Guyana to bring it or get it mailed to you. Sometimes Volunteers who are going home can be persuaded to bring back items you need (like laptops, cameras etc.). Sometimes visiting family can bring you things too. Getting things in the mail is awesome! Care packages really brighten your day. It takes about a month or more to get a package. It costs your family/friends anywhere from \$25 to \$50 and up, depending on the weight of the items. If I were a trainee, I would make myself a care package with goodies I like (candy, magazines, etc.) and leave it with a friend to send the minute I know my address in Guyana so I can get a package during training. If your friends and family can afford it or even pool money, you can communicate with them what items you need. So don't stress on bringing too much.”

General Clothing

- Durable belt (in case you lose weight)
- Wide-brim hat or baseball cap (for rain/sun)
- 4–5 good quality bandanas (useful for wiping sweat from your face)
- Poncho or raincoat (for walking with a backpack on)
- Good quality umbrella (inexpensive ones available here)
- 1–2 weeks' worth of underwear (comfortable and durable). No need to get any fancy backpacker undies.

- 3-4 pair of quick-dry socks; more if you run
- 2 pairs of jeans
- Sweatshirt or fleece/light jacket, sweatpants/warm pants (for mountainous sites or for when visiting remote Volunteers)

Men's Clothing

- 4 pairs lightweight, casual pants for work. Khakis/slacks work for urban or coastal sites; pants that convert to shorts work for remote communities. Bring both, since you won't know your site location.
- 4 short-sleeved button-down shirts or polos
- 4-5 T-shirts to wear around the house and on weekends
- 4-5 undershirts
- 2 pairs of durable, quick-dry, board shorts (double as a swimsuit)
- 1 pair of cargo shorts
- 2 pairs of gym or cotton shorts
- Shirt/tie and nice pants for semi-formal occasions, such as swearing in

Women's Clothing

- 4-5 cap-sleeved, polo, or button-down shirts
- 4-5 T-shirts and tank tops, to wear at home or on weekends (no thin-strap or strapless allowed in any workplace)
- 2-3 pairs of shorts (around or below the knee) to wear at home, under dresses/skirts, or to go out
- 2-3 bike and/or gym shorts (more if you work out)
- 3-5 lightweight pants, capris, or skirts (loose, knee or calf-length, durable, no see-through) Note: leggings are not acceptable as pants
- 1-2 casual, loose-fitting, knee-length dresses (if you wear them); 3 summer dresses for going out or for local social events. Note: Dresses with spaghetti straps, sleeveless, or halter/tube tops are worn with shrugs or a lightweight cardigan to cover the shoulders at more formal occasions, like church. Dresses with spaghetti straps or halter/tube tops are not appropriate for work settings.
- 1 swimsuit; note: it is not culturally appropriate to wear a swimsuit in some communities, so Volunteers wear shorts and T-shirts/tank tops over their swimsuits. Volunteers can wear a swimsuit/bikini with board shorts when traveling or on vacation.
- 1 slip or spandex shorts to wear under dresses/skirts (also available locally)
- 3-5 sport or camisole-style bras (for hot weather)
- 2-3 bras (difficult to find here). Bring neutral-colored underwear garments.
- 1 dressy outfit for semi-formal occasions, such as swearing in

Shoes

- Dress shoes for work (closed-toe required for schools, health centers, and hospitals); women may also want to bring strappy sandals, flats, or heels
- Flip-flops for off-hours and informal situations
- Running or trail shoes (if you run)
- Hiking sandals (for remote sites)
- Hiking boots (if you are an avid hiker)
- Rain boots

Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items

- Feminine protection: If you use tampons, bring what you need for three months or more. Tampons are hard to find in Guyana and are very expensive. Applicator-less tampons take up less space in your luggage and produce less trash (there aren't always trash bins in the bathrooms).
- Good tweezers, hair-trimming scissors, nail clippers, and nail file

- Three-month supply of all prescription medicines you require. The Peace Corps will provide refills (sometimes generic brand)
- Start-up supply of soap, shampoo, conditioner, deodorant, toothbrushes, etc. Economy-sized bottles will last through training and into your first months at site. If you need something specific, bring it, especially face lotions, sunscreens, etc. Blade cartridges for your razor are available, but are quite expensive. It is a good idea to bring a good supply.
- 1–2 lightweight, quick-dry towels
- Makeup, perfume, and nail polish if you generally wear it. Note: Makeup tends to melt off your face in the heat so waterproof items are good.

Electronics

- Laptop computer (to write reports and journal entries, store photos, and watch movies). Be mindful of the hot and humid conditions, battery life, and size of laptop, as well as the risk of theft and damage. Many Volunteers have purchased cooling pads in Georgetown at a reasonable price. Also, PCs are more compatible with Peace Corps documents/reporting programs than Macs. The Peace Corps accepts no responsibility for the safety, security, maintenance, and repair of your laptop. Consider purchasing personal articles insurance before you leave the U.S.
- Small digital camera (if you have one). If you buy a new one, think about waterproof and shockproof cameras. Bring an extra battery. A few Volunteers have SLR cameras and love the quality photos, but have to be wary about weather and theft.
- LED headlamp and a flashlight
- CD or MP3 player (a spare is handy in case your first one breaks, or to sell to another PCV if you don't need it)
- Small external amplified speakers
- Plug adaptors for Caribbean and European country outlets. Sometimes wall sockets will fit U.S. or European plugs.
- Silica gel, otter boxes, and dry bags to protect laptops, digital cameras, GPS locators, etc. Silica gel can be found free at most retailers that sell shoes.
- 1–2 USB flash drives to transfer documents between offices and storing digital photos. The larger the memory, the better.
- External hard drive for storing movies, music, photos, and memories!
- Travel alarm (with batteries or solar energy; watches with alarms can suffice).
- Durable, inexpensive, waterproof/resistant watch

Kitchen

- Most spices are available but expensive. Bring your favorites.
- Water bottles with measurements on the side work well for measuring cups.
- Consider a travel French press or camping percolator for coffee drinkers
- Good can opener
- Peeler and paring knife
- Variety of zip-close bags are very helpful in storing goods

Miscellaneous

- Baggies and plastic containers (multiple sizes; to keep things dry, i.e., books, papers, pens, clothing, electronics)
- Books to read and/or share. Teachers may want a grammar book. Children's books can be useful for interacting with the children in your village. You can get these sent from home if you discover you need them.
- Sunglasses (good-quality ones are very useful here, but may be ruined, so use your discretion). Cheap ones are available. Bring two pairs of prescription eyeglasses (if applicable).

- Inexpensive thank-you gifts for counterparts and training family members; suggested gifts include inexpensive watches, playing cards, soccer balls (with needle), T-shirts with culturally appropriate, U.S. decor/advertisement lettering and logos
- Laminated world and/or U.S. maps (for schools, to show people, or to decorate your home). Many Volunteers also make their home cozier with photos and images from home.
- Photos of your family, friends, house, street, city, etc. Think about these as conversation starters, especially when you first get to your site, and to remind you of home. Laminated photos/images can also decorate your home. (Bring copies that you do not mind leaving behind or that might be damaged)
- Multi-tool pocketknife (Leatherman or Swiss Army knife)
- 1–2 sets of lightweight fitted sheets for a double bed. Plain bed sheets are available in Guyana but are of poor quality and are not fitted.
- 1 comfortable pillow (\$10 pillows that come in pre-rolled packaging are better than the ones you can buy here and are cheap and easy to pack)
- Sturdy backpack or duffel bag for three- to four-day trips
- Day pack. Most women, especially in urban sites, carry purses or tote bags (available here, but if you want a good quality bag from home, bring it).
- Quality bound journals, notepads, and art supplies, if you will use them.
- Strong glue and/or duct tape
- If you like to get crafty, crayons, markers, art paper, etc. (or have them sent to you)
- Hard plastic water bottle (Nalgene or Camelbak)
- 1–2 carabiner clips (to keep water bottles on hand)

What Not To Bring

- Batteries (available here). If you are looking at solar power, wait until you get to Guyana to see if you need it. Most Volunteers find ways to charge their electronics in the village. If you decide later to buy solar, high-quality systems are available at a reasonable price or you can have something brought/sent from home.
- Pots or pans, dishes, or silverware. You can purchase pots and pans in Georgetown and many other cities in Guyana.

PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST

The following list consists of suggestions for you to consider as you prepare to live outside the United States for two years. Not all items are relevant to everyone, and the list is not comprehensive.

Family

- Notify family that they can call the Counseling and Outreach Unit at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (24-hour phone number: 855.855.1961 ext. 1470).
- Give family and friends the Peace Corps [On the Home Front](#) handbook.

Passport/Travel

- Forward to the Peace Corps travel office all paperwork for the Peace Corps passport and visas.
- Verify that your luggage meets the size and weight limits for international travel.
- Obtain a personal passport if you plan to travel after your service ends. (Your Peace Corps passport will expire three months after you finish service; if you plan to travel longer, you will need a regular passport.)

Medical/Health

- Complete any needed dental and medical work.
- If you wear glasses, bring two pairs.
- Arrange to bring a three-month supply of all medications (including birth control pills) you are currently taking.

Insurance

- Make arrangements to maintain life insurance coverage.
- Arrange to maintain supplemental health coverage while you are away. (Even though the Peace Corps is responsible for your health care during Peace Corps service abroad, it is advisable for people who have pre-existing conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage. If there is a lapse in coverage, it is often difficult and expensive to be reinstated.)
- Arrange to continue Medicare coverage if applicable.

Personal Papers

- Bring a copy of your certificate of marriage or divorce.

Voting

- Register to vote in the state of your home of record. (Many state universities consider voting and payment of state taxes as evidence of residence in that state.)
- Obtain a voter registration card and take it with you overseas.
- Arrange to have an absentee ballot forwarded to you overseas.

Personal Effects

- Purchase personal property insurance to extend from the time you leave your home for service overseas until the time you complete your service and return to the United States.

Financial Management

- Keep a bank account in your name in the United States.
- Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service. Information about loan deferment is at peacecorps.gov/loans.
- Execute a power of attorney for the management of your property and business.

- Arrange for deductions from your readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, and other debts through the Office of Volunteer Financial Operations at 855.855.1961 ext. 1770.
- Place all important papers—mortgages, deeds, stocks, and bonds—in a safe deposit box or with an attorney or other caretaker.
- Trainees will be asked to open a local bank account; to facilitate this, please bring the following:
 - Passport size photo
 - Two forms of ID (passport and state ID or driver’s license)
 - Proof of address: driver’s license (issued within the last eight months), utility bill in the trainee’s name with a visible postmark/stamp on the envelope within the last eight months, an official document that has a visible postmark/stamp on the envelope within the last eight months (e.g., insurance), banker’s reference, or SSN (IRS forms will be filled in the bank that requires this)

CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS

This list of numbers will help connect you with the appropriate office at Peace Corps headquarters to answer various questions. You can use the toll-free number and extension or dial directly using the local numbers provided. Be sure to leave the toll-free number and extensions with your family so they can contact you in the event of an emergency.

Peace Corps headquarters toll-free number: 855.855.1961, press 1, then extension number (see below)

Peace Corps mailing address: Peace Corps
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters
1111 20th Street NW
Washington, DC 20526

For Questions About	Staff	Toll-free extension	Direct/Local
Responding to an invitation	Office of Placement	ext. 1840	202.692.1840
Country information	Marcela Guachamin Trask Desk Officer	ext. 2515 guyana@peacecorps.gov	202.692.2515
Plane tickets, passports, visas, or other travel matters	CWT SATO Travel	ext. 1170	202.692.1170
Legal clearance:	Office of Placement	ext. 1840	202.692.1840
Medical clearance and forms processing (includes dental)	Screening Nurse	ext. 1500	202.692.1500
Medical reimbursements (handled by a subcontractor)			800.544.1802
Loan deferments, taxes, financial operations		ext. 1770	202.692.1770
Readjustment allowance withdrawals, power of attorney, staging (pre-departure orientation), and reporting instructions	Office of Staging	ext. 1865	202.692.1865
<i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks prior to departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>			
Family emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas) 24 hours	Counseling and Outreach Unit	ext. 1470	202.692.1470
Office of Victim Advocacy		ext. 1753 24 hours (call or text)	202.692.1753 202.409.2704