



San Gerardo Station

Welcome to San Gerardo Station, part of the Children's Eternal Rainforest (or "BEN" after its Spanish name, Bosque Eterno de los Niños). The BEN is so named because it was bought and protected thanks to the fundraising efforts of children from around the world. The campaign was sparked by a group of Swedish primary school students in the late 1980's, and quickly gained support from other schools, individuals, and organizations from 44 different countries.

The BEN is the largest private reserve in Costa Rica and, straddling 7 different life zones, is one of the most biologically diverse 23,000 hectares (56,000 acres) on the planet. The BEN is owned and managed by the Monteverde Conservation League, a Costa Rican nonprofit organization whose mission is to conserve, preserve, and rehabilitate tropical ecosystems and their biodiversity.

San Gerardo Station is a simple, rustic lodge located on a hillside deep within the BEN, with views extending across thousands of acres of forest to the Arenal Volcano and Lake Arenal. San Gerardo is located at an altitude of 1,220

meters (4,000 ft.) in the premontane rainforest on the Caribbean slope of Costa Rica's Tilarán mountain range. The temperature is moderate (about 60° to 80°F, or 16° to 27°C), and most days offer a mix of sun, clouds, and rain, with constant high humidity. The forest is dense and rich with epiphytes, and a wide variety of resident and migrant birds, frogs, reptiles, mammals, butterflies, and moths are commonly seen, with species depending on season and time of day.

The station offers accommodation for up to 32 people in 8 rooms, each with two bunk-beds. The 6 rooms on the upper floor have private baths, and the 2 rooms on the lower floor have a shared bath. The upper floor of the station includes a long, open-air balcony with hammocks and offering spectacular views of Arenal Volcano, Lake Arenal, and the surrounding forest. The lower floor has a spacious dining room and meeting room.

Guests have use of about 9 km (6 miles) of trails, which provide access to a range of both primary and succes-

sional forest at different elevations, including close views of a deep-forest waterfall. Day and night tours with a professional natural history guide can be arranged with prior notice (additional costs apply).

Guests are served three hearty, home-cooked meals each day, and tea/coffee are available throughout the day. Special diets can be accommodated with advance notice. There is ample potable water from a mountain spring; there is no hot water. The station has electricity, and bedding and towels are provided. There is no internet or cell phone service (station managers have phone and radio communication in case of emergency). Smoking, drugs, alcohol, and pets are not permitted.



What to Bring / How to Prepare

Be prepared for rain and mud!

- Rubber boots or sturdy hiking boots for hiking into and around the station. (Good rubber boots can be purchased inexpensively in Santa Elena.)
- Sandals or light sneakers for wearing inside the station
- Poncho or raincoat (and rain pants if you plan to spend full days in the field)
- Clothes for hiking into and around the station: lightweight long pants, layers on top, and extra socks
- Change of clothing for wearing inside: lightweight pants and shirt (your field clothes may be damp and muddy)
- Warm shirt or sweater for chilly evenings
- Reliable flashlight and spare batteries
- Toiletries, medications, repellent, and other personal items
- Water bottle

- Walking sticks (optional)
- Binoculars and camera (optional)
- Pack inside plastic bags to protect belongings from rain

Be prepared for moderately strenuous hiking

The trail to the station is approximately 3.5 km (2.2 miles) over unpaved, uneven, steep terrain. Remember, you are hiking into the heart of the rainforest! The hike in is mostly downhill; the hike out is mostly uphill.

We recommend that you carry as light a pack as possible, and carry a water bottle. If you must take heavy luggage into the station, please arrange in advance for us to transport it on an ATV (additional costs apply).