



# 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 10 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, and very limited 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).

## Getting There

The trailhead for the San Gerardo Station begins at the parking lot of the Santa Elena Reserve. The first part of the hike is on a muddy, unmaintained road; the last kilometer is on forest trails in the Children's Eternal Rainforest. Plan on mud and unpaved, uneven, and often steep terrain. The total distance is about 3.5 km (2.2 miles); hiking time varies from person to person, but the average is about 1.5 hours. Although strenuous, it is a beautiful walk and is appropriate for anyone in reasonable physical condition. Hikers must wear sturdy footwear and carry water. Transport of your luggage by ATV can be arranged with prior notice for an additional cost.

### To get to the Santa Elena Reserve, there are several options:

- **Taxi** from the town of Santa Elena. Approximate cost: \$15.
- **Drive** (see map at right). If you will be leaving your vehicle in the parking lot of the Santa Elena Reserve, please inform the Santa Elena Reserve staff so that they do not report your vehicle.
- **Bus.** An inexpensive public bus leaves the town of Santa Elena at 6:30am, 8:30am, 10:30am, and 12:30pm. The bus returns from the Santa Elena Reserve at 9:00am, 11:00am, 1:00pm, and 3:00pm.

### Once you reach the Santa Elena Reserve:

- You may use the restroom at the Santa Elena Reserve; if you do, please leave a \$1 donation to support this nonprofit conservation organization!
- Please inform the Santa Elena Reserve staff if you will be leaving your car in their parking lot.
- The trail to the Field Station begins at the edge of the parking lot. There is a dirt road, a gate, and a large sign on the left for the Children's Eternal Rainforest. This is the "**Camino Público**".
- From the sign, walk about 2.5 kilometers (1.6 miles) on the Camino Público. It will take about 45 to 60 minutes. You will see a sign on the left marking the trail to the station (**Estación, Sendero Principal**).
- The Sendero Principal will take you to the Station. It is 1 km (0.6 miles) and takes about 20-30 minutes. You will pass intersections with the Sendero Catarata and Sendero Congo; at both intersections, go right to continue to the Station.



*Boots or closed-toed shoes are required for hiking on all trails*

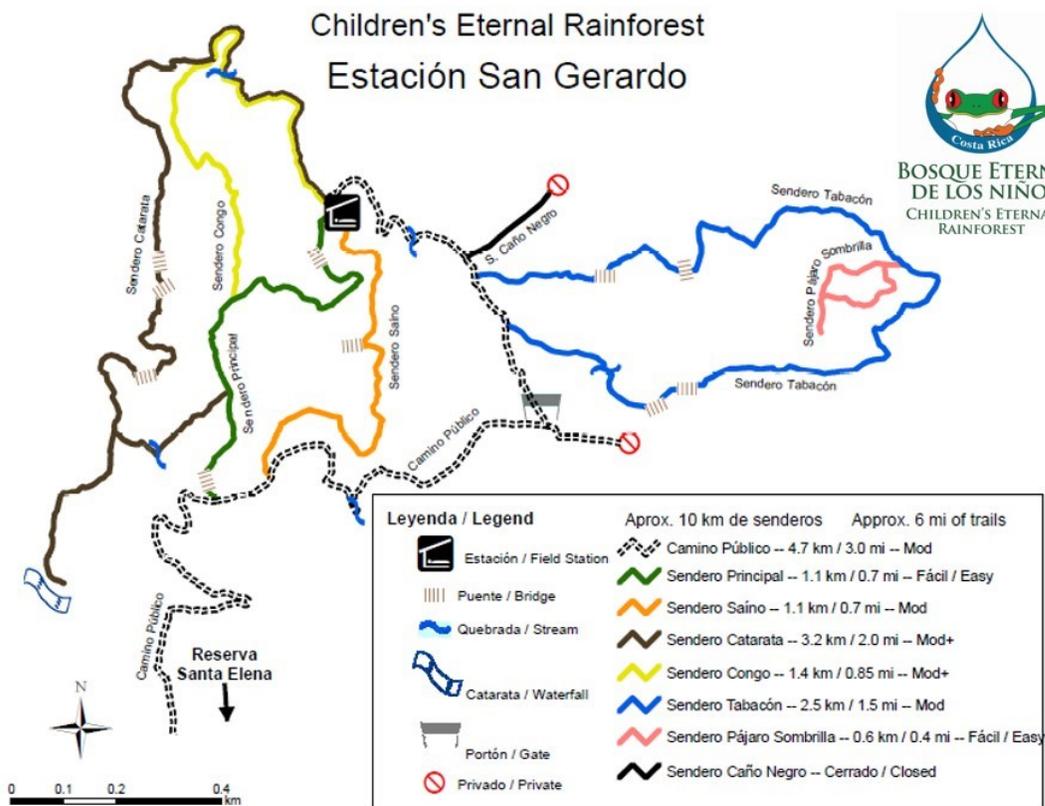
*For your safety, please stay on the trails and do not feed wild animals.*

**Please notify us if you are delayed or have an emergency affecting your stay:**

Main office: 2645-5200

San Gerardo: 2200-0313

Station Manager cell phone: 8324-9649



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