



## BELIZE FOUNDATION *for* RESEARCH and ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

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To get to BFREE, you must first reach the Bladen Nature Reserve (BNR) entrance road. You can either charter a private ride, take the bus, or you can call us and possibly coordinate a ride with us during one of our regular trips to Punta Gorda Town or Belize City.

### **BY BUS TO THE BNR ENTRANCE**

- There are two bus lines that traverse the Southern Highway, Novelo's/Southern Transport or James Bus Line.
  - Both Southern Transport and James Bus Line depart from Belize City to Punta Gorda throughout the day, and depart Punta Gorda to Belize City from 4:30am to 12:00pm from the PG's Central Park. Both bus lines make stops in Belmopan, Dangriga, and Independence before reaching their destinations, and will pick you up at any point along their route.
  - Tell the bus conductor that you want to get off at "the Bladen Nature Reserve entrance road, three miles south of Bladen Bridge just north (200m) from Thomas Gomez's sawmill.
- The BNR entrance road is on the west side of the highway (left side from PG, right side from Dangriga) and is marked by a white sign that says "Bladen Nature Reserve."
  - If you are meeting a BFREE vehicle for the ride in, it is best to get dropped directly at the Gomez sawmill. Gomez Mill is a fully operational lumber mill where we park our vehicles. When you get there, walk up the driveway to the steep roofed unpainted wood house, and wait near the parking hanger to the front of it. If there is anyone nearby to greet you, just introduce yourself and tell them you are there to meet the BFREE vehicle. Please be sure to call us (671-1299 in Belize) if you want to hire a ride in or confirm your pickup.

### **ONCE AT THE BNR ENTRANCE ROAD**

- The six-mile hike from the Southern Highway to BFREE is a moderate-level hike across flat terrain in open pine savannah, oak-pine scrub, and moist tropical broadleaf forest. From the Southern Highway junction, you will see the Maya Mountains rise from the savanna in the distance—BFREE is located just against the mountains.
- Pointers for the hike
  - The greatest challenges during this hike can be the intense mid-day tropical sun and the mud. It takes between 2-3 hours to walk the entrance road depending on the season, the condition of the road, and you. The BNR entrance road also doubles as a logging track for a timber concession outside of the nature reserve. The tracks from



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- logging vehicles can be confusing, but they almost always come back together when they split.
- You should always follow the driest, most well-traveled tracks. You may see footprints of other hikers or tracks from our 4×4.
  - The other rule of thumb for the entrance road, besides “always take the road most traveled,” is “always stay to the right.” This will help you avoid getting diverted on the only logging track that cuts away to the left from the main BNR entrance road and dead ends in the middle of the forest.
  - About three-fourths of the way into BFREE you will pass into the Bladen Nature Reserve (BNR) where you may meet the BNR park wardens. These friendly wardens will ask you to sign in to the log book as you pass.
  - As you pass into the BNR, your surroundings will change to broadleaf forest and you will go down a clay slope. The bottom of this slope is the far extent of the Bladen River floodplain.
  - Following the trail another 15 minutes will put you at the edge Bladen River itself. Across the river is BFREE.
    - If there is no canoe on the bank near you and the river looks low, just wade/swim across and retrieve a canoe to transport the rest of your gear and any people along with you.
    - If the river looks high and impassable (fast moving and muddy brown), you should wait patiently and yell across the river until someone comes and gets you.
    - Again, be sure to call ahead (671-1299 in Belize) so we can expect you and help you cross if necessary.
  - Once you cross the river onto the BFREE private reserve, you will see a wooden house on 8-foot high posts and tent platforms. Follow the trail to the right of the wooden house all the way through the garden to the kitchen, where you will be able to find someone to help you get settled in.