



BFREE

Belize Foundation *for* Research & Environmental Education

2019 Visitor Activity Guide

We provide opportunities for you to discover, explore, and relax while visiting the BFREE Biological Research Station. Please notify BFREE staff during your reservations if you would like to request any of these activities.

The following activities last approximately 2-3 hours and cost \$50 per group up to 8 people:

Hicatee Conservation and Research Center (HCRC) Tour and Activity

During this half-day experience you will learn about BFREE's current work to prevent the extinction of the Central American River Turtle, one of the top 25 most critically endangered turtles in the world; including BFREE's efforts to establish the "Hicatee" turtle as the National Reptile of Belize. After a tour of the facilities, with the oversight of the managing staff, you will assist in the daily care and maintenance of the adults, captive born hatchlings, and juveniles at the HCRC. Currently over 200 turtles are at the center. Specific activities may include: collecting food and feeding, assisting in health assessments, collecting data on growth, cleaning and maintaining breeding ponds and rearing tanks, as well as other tasks needed at the time.

Cacao Agroforestry Tour and Activity

Tour the 15+ acre organic experimental cacao agroforest, which is just a short 5 minute walk from the main facilities. The farm was planted in 2006 because of an interest in sustainable agriculture and a desire to explore the potential for growing and producing fine-flavor chocolate to be used both as a high-value agricultural commodity and as a conservation tool for conserving and restoring tropical rainforests. Visit the Cacao Discovery Center (CDC) to learn about post-harvest processing that happens on site. After the tour, assist in any one of a variety of tasks taking place in the farm, nursery or CDC, which may include applying organic fertilizer on trees, creating compost piles, working in nursery, planting trees in the farm, harvesting cacao pods, opening pods and preparing beans for fermentation, drying beans, sorting dried beans, and care and maintenance of the post-processing facility.

Jungle Hike with BFREE Rangers

Explore the tropical forests along with BFREE Rangers and local experts of the land on the 1,153 acre private reserve. Take in the flora and fauna, look for wildlife, and learn about about medicinal plants and traditional use of the forests. The BFREE Biological Research Station borders four protected areas: The Bladen Nature Reserve, Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary, Deep River Forest Reserve, and Maya Mountain Forest Reserve. All are part of the larger Maya Mountain Massif which includes 16 protected areas covering almost 2 million acres of continuous tropical forest. Ancient Mayan archeological sites are found at BFREE; including house mounds and a terraced hillside nearby. The biodiversity found at BFREE is exceptional, be sure to pack your camera and or binoculars for this adventure!



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The following activities last approximately 1-2 hours and cost \$25 per group up to 8 people:

Tortilla Making in the BFREE Kitchen

Spend time with BFREE's resident cooking staff while learning to mix, shape, and pat flour or corn tortillas the traditional way before placing them on a hot comal for baking.

Early Morning Bruce Cullerton Memorial Observation Tower Hike

Walk 1/2 mile from the BFREE kitchen along the cacao agroforest trail to the rainforest observation tower. This 112' foot fire tower is a popular spot for breathtaking photography, amazing wildlife observations both among and above the jungle canopy, and incredible stargazing at night. Visitors to BFREE enjoy being at the tower for sunrise when views of the Maya Mountains are most dramatic and when birds and other wildlife are particularly active. Identify some of the 300 bird species recorded at BFREE. The tower is the best spot to see the rare bird, the Great Potoo, and to get clear views of Belize's glorious parrots, toucans and raptors in flight, including birds like Scarlet Macaws.

Night Hike

These guided hikes by experienced BFREE staff lead you along the many trails through the jungle on the over 1000 acres of private property around the field station and allow you to see wildlife that you might never experience during the day. Many creatures of the rainforest are primarily nocturnal, so you are more likely to encounter them during night walks. These include Kinkajous, Jaguars, Margays, Tapirs, Banded geckos, Red-eyed tree frogs, and birds like owls and paraques.

There are many self-guided activities available depending on the time of year of your visit, the weather, and current BFREE projects. These activities will be shared with you upon your arrival.