

Day trips from the Tropical Field Station La Gamba

The Tropical Field Station La Gamba is located close to the PN Piedras Blancas and the village of La Gamba. We have created some interesting day trips that can be undertaken directly from the field station. Please keep in mind that private properties can only be accessed with the explicit permission of their respective owners and that an entrance fee must be paid to the PN Piedras Blancas.

The field station owns properties in the surroundings of La Gamba and San Miguel (Finca Alexis), which are located in the Biological Corridor La Gamba. These properties can be accessed by visitors of the station upon prior registration.

Always make sure to bring a sufficient amount of liquid, as possibilities to refill your containers are sparse. You should plan your trip so that you leave the forest around 4 p.m. as night falls quickly in the tropics. Having a flashlight with you is a definite advantage.

Hikes and day trips:

Hikes/tours up to 3 h duration:

- A) Sendero Mirador (lookout):** The circular trail leads through secondary forest to the Quebrada Negra and to the ridge forest East of the station. The lookout affords marvelous views of the La Gamba Valley. Advice: The sunrise is spectacular from the lookout (making it necessary to leave at 5:15 a.m.). This hike is located within the confines of the Tropical Field Station La Gamba. Duration: approx. one hour- length 900m, with 45m of difference in altitude (up and downhill).
- B) Sendero Torre (Old Growth Forest):** The circular hiking trail leads uphill along the path towards the Valle Bonito until the marked sign of the Sendero Torre is reached, which is the entry point to the wet and primal ravine forest. After a short uphill hike through the secondary forest, you again reach the main path (take a left). This hike takes place on the premises of the Tropical Field Station La Gamba. Duration: approx. three hours – length 2.700 m, with 160m of difference in altitude (up- and downhill).
- C) Riverbed Trail (Riverbed):** This trail is located in the National Park Piedras Blancas (entry fee!) and begins approx. 100 m after the start of the trail leading to the Valle Bonito. The hike leads you along a small creek that bears water during the rainy season and through a beautiful primary forest. Duration: approx. one to two hours – length 1.400 m, with 60 m of difference in altitude (up and downhill).
- D) Night hikes:** Experience the nocturnal fauna! This night hike takes place directly in the Quebrada Negra (rubber boots – wet feet and shoes) at the field station. Our employee Luis has a well-trained eye and can identify a plethora of animals! Duration: approx. one-and-a-half to two hours: length 500 m. Please register two to three days in advance.
- E) Field trip to the Finca Modelo:** The Finca Modelo is an experimental agricultural operation (permaculture), with emphasis on the production of compost and the cultivation of tropical vegetables. The tree nursery for the Biological Corridor La Gamba (Cobiga) is also located here. Guided tours are

undertaken by employees of the Finca Modelo. This two-hour field trip must be organized in advance.

- F) From the cacao bean to chocolate:** Don Ovidio Cruz and his wife Vita live in the Bolsa Valley near La Gamba. They live from the sale of cacao beans and carved balsawood animals, which can be purchased on site. The tour consists of a visit to the cacao plantation, where Ovidio and Vita convey every step from the cacao bean to the finished chocolate, which can be tasted at the end. Duration: approx. two hours. persons. Ovidio only speaks Spanish, which may necessitate a translator. This field trip must be organized in advance.
- G) Bird Watching:** Employees of the field station present the area's most common bird species during this ornithological field trip (early morning or late afternoon). This trip must be organized two to three days in advance.

Half-day field trips (4-5 h)

- H) Riverbed, Ocelot and Fila Trail:** This circular trail begins in the riverbed (see above) and continues on to the National Park Piedras Blancas via the Ocelot and Fila trails (ridge trail) through primal ravine, slope and ridge forest. Duration approx. three to five hours – length 3.000 m, with a difference in altitude of 250 m (up and downhill).
- I) Quebrada Chorro:** The visit to the waterfall Quebrada Chorro begins in the village of La Gamba. The hike leads through an oil palm plantation to a former house of the United Fruit Company, home of Don Camacho (entry fee) and continues on a path to a beautiful waterfall. Trip duration (including swimming): three to four hours – length 1.000m (there and back) beginning from the road in La Gamba, with a difference in altitude of 20 m (up and downhill).
- J) Río Sardinal:** The river hike to the waterfall at the Río Sardinal begins in the Valley Bonito and partially runs through the creek bed (wet feet and shoes) crossing through secondary and primary forest in the National Park Piedras Blancas (entry fee) and leads to two waterfalls. The same route is taken for the return trip. This hike is only possible with a knowledgeable guide. Duration of the hike: approx. four to five hours – length 9.000 m (there and back), with a difference in altitude of 120 m (up and downhill).
- K) Río Bolsa:** The Río Bolsa hike begins at the end of the road in La Bolsa and leads through the creek bed for the entire trip (wet feet and shoes), passing secondary and primary forest. This hike can only be done with a knowledgeable guide. Duration: approx. four hours – length 6.500 m (there and back), with a difference in altitude of 120 m (up and downhill).
- L) Field trip to the biological corridor at the Finca Amable:** The reforestation project at the Finca Amable began in the year 2014. Since then, an impressive forest of native tree species has taken shape. Guided tours are undertaken by employees of the Finca Modelo. This three-hour field trip must be organized in advance. We recommend combining this tour with a visit to the Finca Modelo.
- M) Hike to Golfito:** This diverse hike features a plethora of interesting natural history and follows the road between La Gamba and Golfito, which runs along

the Reserva Forestal Golfito and the National Park Piedras Blancas. You can hike the same way back to return to the station after a visit to Golfito or take a cab. Duration: approx. three hours from La Gamba to Golfito. Length: 10 km (one-way). Difference in altitude approx. 150 m.

- N) Boat tour to see dolphins and snorkeling in the Golfo Dulce:** This boat tour begins and ends in the Golfito harbor. A boat takes you to a coral reef in the Golfo Dulce (snorkeling). We will already be keeping a look out for dolphins on the way over to the reef. This half-day field trip must be organized two to three days in advance.
- O) Horseback riding in La Gamba:** In La Gamba, it is possible to rent horses and a guide for horseback riding trips in the vicinity. For more information please inquire at our reception.
- P) Snorkeling in the Río Bonito:** Our employee Luis will show you the fascinating underwater world of the Río Bonito. The snorkeling equipment is provided by us. Duration: approx. two to three hours. This half-day field trip must be organized two to three days in advance.

Full-day field trips and visit of the Finca Alexis

- Q) Through-hike of the National Park Piedras Blancas to the Playa San Josecito:** This adventurous full-day hike traverses the National Park Piedras Blancas and leads from the Tropical Field Station La Gamba to the Valle Bonito and on to the ranger station Río Bonito, passes giant rainforest trees (Kapok tree) and continues to the mountain ridge and on to the Playa San Josecito on the Golfo Dulce. This hike offers insight into the various tropical ecosystems such as riverine-, secondary- and primary forests, coastal and beach vegetation. It is possible to visit the botanical garden of the Casa Orquideas (entry fee) on the San Josecito beach. From there, a boat will take you back to Golfito and you can grab a cab back to the station. The hike is quite strenuous and only possible with a knowledgeable guide. For large stretches of the trip you have to hike directly in the Río Bonito river (wet feet and shoes!). The tour has to be organized approx. three days in advance by the Tropical Field Station La Gamba. Duration of the hike: approx. seven to nine hours – length 13.700 m, with a difference in altitude of 600 m (up and downhill).
- R) Hike through the Reserva Golfito to the radio mast (view of Golfito):** From La Gamba, this hike leads through the Reserva Golfito (entry fee must be payed in Golfito) through secondary and primary forest to the radio mast on the mountain ridge near Golfito. A knowledgeable guide is required. This field trip must be organized two to three days in advance.
- S) Boat tour of the Río Coto mangroves and visit of Playa Zancudo:** This boat tour starts and ends in the Golfito harbor. With a boat you will explore the mangrove zone of the Río Coto/Río Colorado. Following this, you can swim at the Playa Zancudo in the Pacific Ocean. You need to sign up 2-3 days in advance for this half -day or full-day trip (depending on the duration of your stay in the mangroves and the beach).
- T) Visit of the Finca Alexis:** The Tropical Field Station has an outpost in the foothills of the so-called Fila Cal at an altitude of 440m asl. This outpost can

be used as a base to undertake field trips into the rain forest, to the waterfall and to the Río Esquinas or the reforestation areas. It is also possible to spend the night there.

- **Waterfall Finca Alexis:** The hike to the waterfall of the Finca Alexis begins directly at the finca and leads through reforested areas and old growth forest on a steep downhill slope to a breathtaking waterfall, one of the sources of the Río Esquinas. The same way must be taken back in order to return! This hike is only possible with a knowledgeable guide. Duration: approx. three hours starting from the Finca Alexis, including time for swimming. Length 2.800 m, with a difference in altitude of 200m (up and downhill).
- **Directions:** with a 4x4 cab approx. one hour, including an adventurous river crossing to San Miguel. Four to five hours by foot from the field station or three to four hours from km 37 (Villa Brizeño). Our recommendation: walk at least one stretch on foot and spend at least one night at the Finca Alexis. This way you will get to know the surrounding cultivated landscape and the simple, but charming Costa Rican country life. Elias and Maria will take care of you on location. Please contact the reception for more information.

Kosten:

1. Hiking without a guide on the premises of the Tropical Field Station is free, but you must sign up first.
2. An entry fee must be payed prior to field trips into the National Park and Quebrada Chorro.
3. Different fees are due when undertaking field trips to Playa San Josecito, Finca Amable, Finca Modelo and for the snorkeling, boat, or horseback riding trips and the hiring of a guide. Please inquire at our reception for prices.
4. Some of the field trips presented here must be organized in advance and some may not be possible throughout the entire year due to weather conditions. Please contact our employees at the reception at least two to three days in advance.