

What is the Christmas Bram?

Christmas Bram is a Creole (Kriol) festivity celebrated annually on 25th and 26th December. The celebration features music, dance, and feasting as residents and visitors parade from house to house. It is a time when African Creole heritage is affirmed through family reunions and communal recreation.



History of the Christmas Bram

Bram was once widely celebrated in Belize City, along the Belize River Valley, and other Creole villages. Today, this cultural tradition has survived in Gales Point Manatee, Belize District, locally called *Malanti*. It is traced to the early 1700's, when enslaved Africans spent long periods extracting logwood, mahogany and other timber from Belize's forests. This work kept men away from their families for most of the year. Therefore, Christmas season was an opportune time for recreation.

Music and Dance



Bram begins on Christmas Day when residents and visitors gather at the village's northern point for drumming, singing and dancing, as they head towards the southern end. **Brokdong**, the prominent musical genre played during Bram, is accompanied by the **sambai** drum which is native to Gales Point Manatee. Recent adoptions such as the **gombay**, **djimbe**, **dundun**, and **kinkini** drums are also played. Household items such as the grater-and-fork and pint-bottles are also used as musical instruments.

Food and Drink

Host families offer local foods and beverages to the merrymakers as they **fete** from house to house: children receive cakes, soft drinks, and other sweets, while adults enjoy homemade wines. By the end of the day, almost the entire village is **bramming** behind the musicians as they make their way throughout the village.



Sambai

In the evening, the revellers *jump Sambai*. This is a traditional fertility dance of West-African origins that was once performed mainly on full moon nights. Musicians and dancers form a circle around a fire as they take turns dancing sambai.



On Boxing Day, Bram resumes on Freedom Street at the south end of the village. The celebratory dancing, singing, and feasting continues well into the night.