

## EL SALVADOR AT A GLANCE

**POPULATION:** 6,172,011 (July 2017 est.)

**LANGUAGE:** Spanish

**PREDOMINANT RELIGIONS:** Christian (Roman Catholic, Protestant)

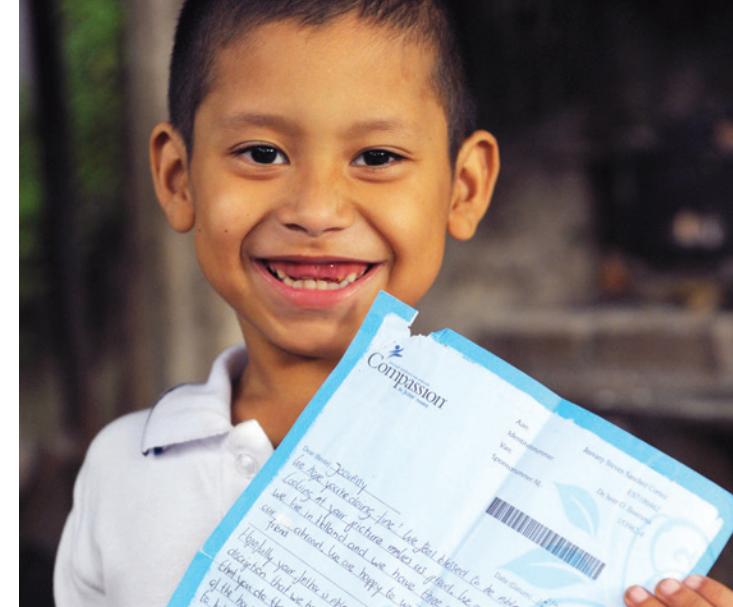
**TIME ZONE:** Two hours behind Eastern Daylight Time (New York City)

**TELEPHONE CODE:** 503, country code

El Salvador is not a country for pessimists. This small land has endured more than its share of war, poverty and natural disasters. However, look a little closer and you'll also see the resilience and optimism such tragedy can inspire. Impoverished communities such as Ilobasco and La Palma have become renowned for their handicrafts and folk art. The National Civilian Police, created in the wake of war, seems to be earnest about improving safety. Though the civil war ended more than two decades ago, El Salvador is not a carefree place to visit. Crime is a problem, and it's sometimes targeted at travelers.

## COMPASSION IN EL SALVADOR

Compassion's work in El Salvador began in 1977. Today, more than 52,250 children participate in more than 200 child development centers. Compassion's church-based child development centers are places of hope for impoverished children in El Salvador. Under the guidance of caring Christian adults, children's pressing needs for nutrition and medical attention are met. Children also receive tutoring to help with their academics. Health and hygiene lessons teach them to care for their own physical well-being, and positive social skills are modeled and encouraged.



WEATHER

Vegetation is green and lush just after the rainy season, around November. From November to April, it may be very dry and dusty. From May to October, rainfall may be heavy but usually comes in short bursts. Daytime temperatures in the lower elevations are typically in the 80s-90s F / 27-37 C, with nights in the 60s F / 16-21 C.

## CURRENCY

El Salvador uses the U.S. dollar as its currency, and major credit cards are widely accepted. Some banks have ATMs that take international credit and debit cards and dispense U.S. dollars. Carry small-denomination bills since \$50 and \$100 bills are not widely accepted. Canadian dollars cannot be exchanged in El Salvador. Avoid money changers on the streets and at international border crossings. ATMs in El Salvador accept only four-digit bank codes.

FOOD

Most hot, freshly cooked food should be safe, but peel fresh fruit and raw vegetables before eating, choose meat that is cooked thoroughly, avoid local dairy products, and assume the water is unsafe (stick with prepackaged or boiled drinks).

## SHOPPING

Salvadoran crafts have become popular in recent years. Some towns specialize in specific handicrafts. Ilobasco (35 miles northeast of San Salvador) is famous for its clay handicrafts. Many of the artists produce *sorpresas* — surprises — which are ceramic dolls inside tiny oval containers. La Palma produces fine wood items, including chests and carvings, as well as paintings, ceramics and leather goods. Panchimalco is home to the Centro de Arte y Cultura Tonatiuh, an arts center that employs local youths to produce weavings, paintings and ceramics. San Sebastian specializes in weaving, including colorful hammocks, carpets and bedspreads created by local women on hand looms. If you can't get to any of these places, try the outdoor markets in San Salvador. In San Salvador, the Zona Rosa in San Benito has good shops. Don't be afraid to bargain.

Do not purchase handicrafts made with tanned animal hides. Anthrax spores are highly resistant to disinfectants and can persist in animal skin even after treatment. For this reason, handcrafted goatskin items are usually confiscated and destroyed if brought to the United States.

## ELECTRICAL OUTLETS

Voltage used in El Salvador is 115V, and electrical outlets accommodate plug types A, G, I, J or L. (For up-to-date plug and outlet information, check [whatplug.info](http://whatplug.info) and click on your



destination country.) You may also wish to take a universal plug adaptor, available in the luggage/travel section of most big-box stores.

## DO'S AND DON'TS

- **Don't** get caught up in a protest. Visitors, by law, are not allowed to participate in political demonstrations.
- **Do** visit local markets on Friday, the market day in most towns.
- **Do** watch two films focusing on the turbulent 1980s in El Salvador before traveling: *Salvador*, by director Oliver Stone (criticizing U.S. policy during the war), and *Romero*, starring Raul Julia (about the 1980 murder of Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero).
- **Do** be aware that many Salvadorans carry firearms. Foreigners are prohibited from carrying guns, however, unless they receive a firearms permit in advance from the Salvadoran government. Arriving with a gun and no permit is bad news.
- **Do** expect shops and restaurants to close for siesta in the early afternoon.
- **Do** introduce yourself as a "U.S. citizen," if that's where you're from. Salvadorans consider themselves to be as "American" as anyone else on the continent.

## DRESS

Pack casual, summer clothing and light outdoor wear and a suitable pair of walking shoes or light hiking boots. Sun hats and sunscreen are recommended. Bring a sweater or jacket, both for evenings and for visits to higher altitudes.

**Women:** Modest, loose-fitting tops (nothing form-fitting) are recommended; sleeveless tops are acceptable, but please cover your shoulders in places of worship; pants, capris, longer skirts and loose-fitting, casual dresses are recommended for women.

**Men:** Button shirts and polo shirts are recommended. T-shirts are allowed in casual settings. Long, non-denim pants are recommended for center visits and church services.

**Both:** Shorts are highly discouraged outside of beachside locations. A light jacket is recommended for cool evenings or rainy days.

**Shoes:** Closed-toe shoes are recommended during the day due to potential unsanitary or uneven terrain.

### **GENERAL SECURITY PRECAUTIONS**

Leave at home all unnecessary credit cards, Social Security card, library cards and similar items you may routinely carry in your wallet. Carry items in front pockets, not back pockets. Do not display large sums of money in public; make visible only the amount of money that approximates your purchase. Never leave items with cash in them (purse, wallet, backpack, etc.) on a bus, car or any other location. Stay alert and be cautious at all times. Don't take safety and security for granted.

### **U.S. EMBASSY INFORMATION**

**Website:** [sv.usembassy.gov](http://sv.usembassy.gov)

**Phone:** (503) 2501-2999

**Address:** Final Boulevard Santa Elena, Antiguo Cuscatlán, La Libertad, San Salvador, El Salvador

**We strongly advise you to contact the CDC ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)) or check with your personal physician for more information about your specific health needs while traveling, including any recommendations for immunizations.**

*All information taken from the World Factbook and  
Compassion International.*

## USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES

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The official language of El Salvador is Spanish. The country's secondary language is English. Some common Salvadoran greetings include:

Hello	<b>¡Hola!</b>
How are you?	<b>¿Cómo está usted?</b>
Pleased to meet you	<b>Mucho gusto</b>
Very well, thank you	<b>Muy bien, gracias</b>
Goodbye	<b>Adiós (or chou in Bolivia)</b>
What is your name?	<b>¿Cómo te llamas?</b>
My name is ...	<b>Me llamo (name)</b>
How old are you?	<b>¿Cuántos años tienes?</b>
Yes	<b>Sí</b>
No	<b>No</b>
Please	<b>Por favor</b>
Thank you	<b>Gracias</b>
You're welcome	<b>De nada</b>
I do not speak Spanish	<b>No hablo español</b>
Do you speak English?	<b>¿Usted habla inglés?</b>
I don't understand	<b>No entiendo</b>
You can do it!	<b>¡Sí, se puede!</b>
I love you	<b>Te amo or te quiero</b>
I am praying for you	<b>Estoy orando por ti</b>

Jesus loves you	<b>Jesús te ama</b>
You are precious to God	<b>Eres precioso(a) para Dios</b>
God bless you	<b>¡Qué Dios te bendiga!</b>
I believe in you	<b>Creo en ti</b>
Tell me about your family	<b>Cuénteme de tu familia</b>
Good/okay	<b>Bueno</b>
I need	<b>Necesito</b>
How much?	<b>¿Cuánto?</b>
Too expensive	<b>Demasiado caro</b>
Cheaper	<b>Más barato</b>
Where is the bathroom?	<b>¿Dónde está el baño?</b>
Where is the church?	<b>¿Dónde está la iglesia?</b>
Where is the bank?	<b>¿Dónde está el banco?</b>
Where is the hotel?	<b>¿Dónde está el hotel?</b>

### SPANISH TIPS

The h is silent in Spanish; therefore, *hola* is pronounced "ola." The ñ is pronounced ny; therefore, *pequeño* is pronounced "pe-kenyo."