



# El Salvador

503 / POP 6.4 MILLION

## Includes ➔

|                                   |     |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| San Salvador.....                 | 290 |
| La Libertad .....                 | 305 |
| La Costa del Bálsamo .....        | 306 |
| Santa Ana .....                   | 311 |
| Ruta de Las Flores.....           | 316 |
| Parque Nacional El Imposible..... | 323 |
| San Miguel.....                   | 327 |
| La Unión.....                     | 330 |
| Morazán.....                      | 332 |
| Suchitoto.....                    | 334 |
| Chalatenango .....                | 336 |
| La Palma .....                    | 338 |

## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Beto's, Zona Rosa (p300)
- ➔ R&R (p321)
- ➔ Balompie Sports Bar & Cafe (p315)
- ➔ Sharky's (p308)

## Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ La Tortuga Verde (p331)
- ➔ Hostal Cumbres del Volcan (p294)
- ➔ Hotel Mopelia (p307)
- ➔ Los Almendros de San Lorenzo (p336)
- ➔ Hotel Anáhuac (p321)

## Why Go?

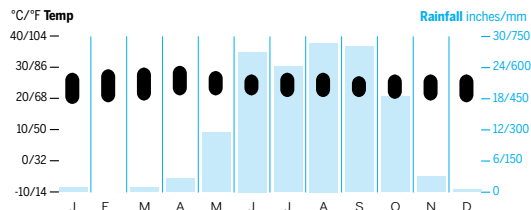
Wanted: public relations expert to rebrand Central America's most underrated country. Criteria: passion for adventure and dispelling travel myths. Salary: the honor of righting a travel wrong.

El Salvador suffers horribly from bad press. While gang violence still dominates international headlines – and keeps so many adventurous travelers at bay – the vast majority of this beautiful country remains untouched by 'the troubles.'

Those visitors who do make the effort are invariably impressed by just how much this tiny country has to offer: world-class surfing on empty, dark-sand beaches; coffee plantations clinging to the sides of volcanoes; colorful Spanish colonial towns; and sublime national parks. There are few crowds outside the capital, San Salvador, which itself boasts more swagger than its Central American counterparts. There is only so much encouragement we can give; it's now up to you. Please inquire within.

## When to Go

### San Salvador



**Dec–Jan** The landscape is lush and green after the rainy season and the weather is perfect.

**May–Aug** The surf gets heavy, early August brings a week-long celebration of El Salvador's patron saint.

**Jul–Nov** It's turtle-nesting season right along the 300km Pacific Ocean coastline.

## Connections

From Guatemala, enter through Anguiatú, San Cristóbal or La Hachadura. From Honduras, El Poy or El Amatillo are your two official options. Many operators are now offering boat transfers from La Unión, El Salvador, to Potosí, Nicaragua. The best of these are La Tortuga Verde (p331) in El Cuco and Suchitoto Adventure Outfitters (p335) in Suchitoto. This is a both a time- and cost-effective way to continue your travels through Central America. For more detailed information, see Survival Guide p349.

## ITINERARIES

### One Week

El Salvador is small; this itinerary can you get across the whole country in a week. Let's assume you enter from Guatemala. Head straight along the Costa del Bálsamo, sleeping in either Playa El Tunco or Playa El Zonte, depending how much rest you need. Head north to Ruta de las Flores to sample coffee and culture in small artisanal towns. Sleep in Juayúa. Spend a day hiking nearby Cerro Verde or visit the Maya pyramids at Tazumal. Sleep in San Salvador, then explore the capital's galleries and museums.

### Two Weeks

Now you have a choice (if you didn't already). Head to the mountains and visit La Palma and Suchitoto then return to San Salvador. If you are bound for Nicaragua, scoot east along the highway. Alternatively, Playa El Cuco is a relaxing base for exploring the islands in Golfo de Fonseca, the volcanoes around San Miguel and even further north to the ex-guerrilla stronghold of Morozán. Exit the country via La Unión.

## Essential Food & Drink

- A typical breakfast includes eggs, beans or *casamiento* (rice and beans mixed together), fried plantains, cheese, tortillas and coffee or juice. *Panaderías* (bakeries) usually offer a selection of morning cakes and coffee.
- El Salvador's most famous food by far is the *pupusa*, round cornmeal dough stuffed with a combination of cheese, refried beans, wild vegetables such as *ayote* and *mora*, *chicharrón* (pork rinds), or *revuelta* (mixed filling), then grilled. *Curtido*, a mixture of pickled cabbage and vegetables, provides the final topping.
- *Licuaños* (fruit drinks made with water or milk) are perfectly suited to El Salvador's climate. Note that *refresco*, which means soft drink in many countries, means lemonade here. *Horchata* (rice milk and cinnamon) and *chilate* (roasted corn drink with other natural ingredients) are popular alternatives found at street stalls and most restaurants. A *refresco de ensalada* is not coleslaw puree, but a mixed fruit juice served with a spoon for the fruit salad floating on top, sangria style.

## AT A GLANCE

**Currency** US dollar (US\$)

**Language** Spanish, Nahuat

**Money** ATMs are plentiful, and credit cards widely accepted

**Visas** Tourist cards for citizens of most countries cost US\$10 and are valid for up to 90 days

**Time** Central Standard Time (GMT/UTC minus six hours)

**Area** 21,040 sq km

**Capital** San Salvador

**Emergency** 911

## Exchange Rates

|             |       |          |
|-------------|-------|----------|
| Australia   | A\$1  | US\$0.74 |
| Canada      | C\$1  | US\$0.78 |
| Euro zone   | €1    | US\$1.13 |
| Japan       | ¥100  | US\$0.94 |
| New Zealand | NZ\$1 | US\$0.70 |
| UK          | UK£1  | US\$1.42 |

## Set Your Budget

- **Dorm bed** US\$7–10
- **Bottle of beer** US\$1.50
- **Three-hour bus ride** US\$1.50
- **Bean-and-cheese pupusa** US\$0.25
- **Surfboard rental** US\$10

## Resources

- **Ministry of Tourism** ([www.elsalvador.travel](http://www.elsalvador.travel))
- **SalvaNATURA** ([www.salvanatura.org](http://www.salvanatura.org))
- **Search Beat** ([www.search-beat.com/elsalvador.htm](http://www.search-beat.com/elsalvador.htm))
- **Lonely Planet** ([lonelyplanet.com/el-salvador](http://lonelyplanet.com/el-salvador))