El Salvador

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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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Temp</th>
<th>Rainfall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>18/64</td>
<td>6/150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb</td>
<td>20/68</td>
<td>8/200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar</td>
<td>24/75</td>
<td>12/300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr</td>
<td>26/79</td>
<td>16/400</td>
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<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>28/82</td>
<td>20/500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jun</td>
<td>30/86</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jul</td>
<td>32/90</td>
<td>28/700</td>
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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.

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

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Australia</td>
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<td>Canada</td>
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<td>UK</td>
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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

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.
- Licuados (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.

Resources

- Ministry of Tourism (www.elsalvador.travel)
- SalvaNATURA (www.salvanatura.org)
- Search Beat (www.searchbeat.com/elsalvador.htm)
- Lonely Planet (lonelyplanet.com/el-salvador)