

EXPLORE!

Book with confidence



Highlights of El Salvador

EL SALVADOR - TRIP CODE HES

DISCOVERY

Why book this trip?

Often overshadowed by its neighbours, El Salvador is a little hidden gem. With turtle nesting on the miles of coastline, volcanoes concealing deep crater lakes and delicious food being prepared in beautiful colonial villages, this country is not to be missed.

- **Jiquilisco Bay** - Take part in a turtle-monitoring project with a local biologist
- **Santa Ana Volcano** - Hike up El Salvador's highest volcano and get outstanding views of the surrounding valley
- **Suchitoto** - Learn to make traditional pupusas in this charming village



INCLUDED MEALS
Breakfast: 10
Lunch: 1
Dinner: 2



TRIP STAFF
Explore Tour
Leader
Activity Guide(s)
Driver(s)
Naturalist(s)



TRANSPORT
Bus
Boat



ACCOMMODATION
1 nights
comfortable
camping
7 nights
comfortable hotel
2 nights premium
hotel



TRIP PACE:
Moderate



GROUP SIZE:
12 - 18

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join trip in San Salvador

The trip starts today in San Salvador, El Salvador's capital. After some major regeneration works, the leafy plazas and pedestrianized central zones of El Salvador's main city have never been safer and more pleasant to explore. Encircled as it is by volcanoes, San Salvador is a good-looking capital, quite rare by Central American standards.

Due to the number of evening flights into El Salvador, your Leader plans to do the welcome meeting on the morning of day two, and will leave a poster in reception with details on timings and everything else that you'll need for the day. If there are no evening pick-ups, the Leader will suggest meeting for dinner, for those who wish.

There are no activities planned today, so you can arrive in El Salvador at any time. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you'll need to arrive into El Salvador International Airport (SAL), which is around a 40 minute drive from the hotel.



ACCOMMODATION:
Eco Hotel Arbol de Fuego (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 2 - Discover San Salvador on foot; drive to Jiquilisco Bay

We will take a walking tour of the city this morning, visiting the city's main attractions including the Iglesia El Rosario. This enormous concrete church looks nondescript from the outside, but the architects have cleverly designed a spectacular arched roof, covered completely in fanned-out windows of coloured stained glass that cast a rainbow of natural light through to the tiled floor. This unusual and abstract piece of art contrasts sharply with the colonial and classical architecture that we'll see elsewhere in the city, for example at the grand National Palace.

Later, we take the two-hour drive to Jiquilisco Bay, a biosphere reserve and large network of canals and mangrove-lined inlets that are largely undeveloped, hosting over 200 species of bird and playing an important role in turtle conservation efforts within the country. We'll have the rest of the afternoon free to relax at our lodge - perhaps bird watching from the grounds, or heading down to the marina to watch the fishermen.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Puerto Barillas (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 3 - Boat trip with a local biologist to monitor hawksbill turtles

We have the morning free to discover more of our surroundings. One activity on offer is a kayak trip through the mangroves, searching for crocodiles and marine birds. Alternatively, take a leisurely bike ride through banana plantations towards a local cacao farm, where you can see how chocolate is produced.

In the afternoon, we take a boat trip through the mangrove canals, with the aim of monitoring the population of hawksbill marine turtle. This project, run by the Eastern Pacific Hawksbill Initiative (known in Spanish as ICAPO), has many facets and our task today will be to help measure, weigh and tag the turtles in order to monitor their healthy growth. We'll be accompanied by a biologist from the project who will explain more about what they do to protect this endangered species. During the course of the trip, we'll also be passing through some small communities, giving us a more in-depth view on rural El

Salvador. The excursion lasts for approximately 3 hours, when we'll return to our hotel for the evening.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Puerto Barillas (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 4 - Drive to Suchitoto via the Laguna de Alegria; evening pupusa-making class

The drive from our coastal location to the colonial town of Suchitoto is only three hours, giving us plenty of time to explore El Salvador's countryside en route. We'll drive through Berlin, a rural village with a prime location near the top of a volcano, which gives out excellent views across the rest of the country and to the coast. Here we set off for the Laguna de Alegria (Happiness Lagoon), located within the crater of the dormant volcano Tecapa. The lagoon glows a brilliant green colour due to the sulphur and other minerals within, and it is favourite spot for local Salvadorans. We'll stay to soak up the views before continuing to the coffee farm at Los Pireneos. This local farm has been in the same family for more than 120 years, and their stunning location beneath the volcano Tecapa makes it a relaxing place to stop for a drink.

Arriving into the peaceful lakeside town of Suchitoto this evening, we set out for a dinner with a twist. During your last four days in El Salvador, you may have noticed a distinct clapping sound in the street - the sound of ladies patting down big circles of corn dough, stuffed with mixtures of black beans, vegetables, cheese and meats before being cooked on a hot plate and served up to hungry locals. These delicious snacks are called pupusas, and are El Salvador's national dish. This evening we'll learn to make them before sitting down together for a well-deserved meal.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel El Tejado (or similar)



Grade: Premium Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

DAY 5 - Visit the ex-guerrilla community of La Cinquera; free afternoon in Suchitoto

Just a short ride out of Suchitoto is the rainforest community of La Cinquera, a former FMLN stronghold (the FMLN were the main left-wing guerrilla faction during El Salvador's civil war, and is now one of the country's major political parties). This small village has emerged from the brutality of the civil war, which raged throughout the 1980s, and has established a grassroots tourism project that serves as a living museum of the wartime era, with the ex-guerrillas and their families acting as guides. The community's aim is not only to educate people about this important part of El Salvador's history, but also to protect the forest from illegal logging - the trees are a haven for birdlife, and there are numerous swimming holes and waterfalls hidden within. The tour takes us through the forest, and the roughly two-hour walk is steep and hilly in parts.

On our return to Suchitoto, we have the afternoon free. The village seems timeless, with cobbled streets, whitewashed buildings and an impressive colonial church in a leafy plaza. It was once at the heart of the country's indigo trade, and we have the opportunity to take part in an indigo workshop in the afternoon. Alternatively, you may take a boat trip out onto Lake Suchitlan, where over 200 bird species have been recorded including hawks and falcons.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel El Tejado (or similar)

Grade: Premium Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 6 - Visit the Joya de Ceren, El Salvador's Pompeii; drive to Cerro Verde via Lake Coatepeque

We drive west this morning, skirting around the north edge of San Salvador before hitting the Joya de Cerén, a UNESCO-listed archaeological site that can be likened to Pompeii. This Maya farming community was covered by an eruption of the Loma caldera in the 7th century, and while we now know that an earthquake just prior to the eruption caused the villagers to flee, their possessions were immaculately preserved by ash, from pottery to garden tools. It wasn't found again until the 1970s and is one of the best and most complete records of pre-hispanic life in Central America.

Following our visit, we drive to the volcano-laden Los Volcanoes National Park, via the immense and beautiful crater lake of Coatepeque. The shores of this lake are dotted with houses of the rich and famous (well, in Salvadoran terms!), while there are small restaurants with views over the lake. Time permitting, we aim to have lunch here before driving on to Cerro Verde in anticipation of our volcano hike tomorrow. This evening we will be glamping in the national park - our campsite is made up of large fixed tents, each on a wooden base, and with two full single beds inside. Sheets, duvets, pillows and towels are provided, and there is even a nightstand with an electric lamp. Bathrooms are shared, with showers available.



ACCOMMODATION:
Tres Volcanes Glamping (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Camping



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

DAY 7 - Hike the Santa Ana volcano to the impressive Llamatepec crater lake; drive to Ataco

The Santa Ana volcano is El Salvador's highest, at approximately 2300m high. Our campsite is already at 1800m, and the ascent is only a moderate grade as we start our hike through forest, slowly ascending for 45 minutes. The landscape begins to change as the overgrowth becomes more barren, and a rocky, volcanic terrain takes over with red-black rocks cracking underfoot. It's about a one-hour hike up to the summit and to our big pay off - the Llamatepec crater lake, its milky-green colour contrasting starkly against the black rock that encloses it. Looking out into the distance, the volcano Izalco sticks out of the valley, with the enormous Coatepeque lake spreading out to the east and small villages dotted around the impressive landscape.

Our descent is quicker than the climb, and in total the trip should take around 3-4 hours. After our return we drive to the small colonial town of Ataco, on El Salvador's Ruta de las Flores (Flower Route).



ACCOMMODATION:

Fleur De Lis (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & LUNCH

DAY 8 - Explore the small villages on the Ruta de las Flores

El Salvador's Ruta de las Flores is a beautiful, meandering set of small villages, each with an array of different colonial-era buildings. It is designed to be visited slowly, savouring the food and the ambiance. Ataco, where we are staying, is one of the main villages - particularly well known for the bright and colourful street art that adorns most of the buildings in town. Juayua, another of the main towns on the route, is famous for its weekend food festival - luckily our trip happens to pass by at this time! The festival is made up of countless street food stalls, with typical foods including barbecued meats or huge prawns, even fried frog skewers and guinea pigs being sold at some stalls. The desserts are also worth a look - piles of ice creams or sweet buns with a cup of locally produced coffee.

As part of the day, we'll also visit the Chorros de Calera waterfall, where we can take a swim. We return to our hotel in Ataco this evening.



ACCOMMODATION:
Fleur De Lis (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 9 - Drive to the Los Cobanos protected marine area; continue to La Libertad

Los Cobanos is a protected marine area just 90km away from the capital, well known in El Salvador for its coral reef and the sandy beach that locals regularly frequent on the weekends. We'll take a walk along the beach today, spotting marine life such as heron and crab, and watching the fishermen in action. We'll also have the opportunity to swim off the beach.

Later this afternoon, we drive down the coast to La Libertad, widely regarded as one of the best surfing spots in the Americas. Our hotel is set on a cliff overlooking the ocean, with outdoor swimming pools and access to one of the areas striking black sand beaches.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Atami (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 10 - Free day on the coast in Sunzal

Our final full day in El Salvador is free to spend as we choose. The beaches on this coastline are rugged, with great surf, and one of our options today is a surfing lesson to make the most of this. You can also visit nearby community turtle breeding farms. If you'd prefer to stay close to the hotel, there are coastal walks to be had.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Atami (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 11 - Trip ends at La Libertad

The trip ends after breakfast this morning in La Libertad.

There are no activities planned today, so you are free to depart from La Libertad at any time. If you would

like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you need to depart from El Salvador International Airport (SAL), which is approximately a one-hour drive from our hotel.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

Trip information

Country information

El Salvador

Climate

Has a tropical climate with wet and dry seasons. The Pacific lowlands are hot; the central plateau and mountain areas are more moderate. The rainy season extends from May to October. Rainfall during this season generally comes from low pressure over the Pacific and usually falls in heavy afternoon thunderstorms. From November through April, El Salvador is dry and hot.

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion	Language
-6	2 Pin Flat	Roman Catholic	Castilian

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Jiquilisco - Bike ride to Cacao plantation US\$ 25; Kayak through Mangroves US \$12

Suchitoto - Boat trip on Lake Suchitoto US\$25 (based on 4 people); Indigo workshop US\$ 25

El Tunco - Surf lessons US\$ 60; Local community turtle farm visit US \$10

Clothing

Bring lightweight, informal clothing. We recommend a waterproof jacket at all times of year, as well as walking clothes and boots for your volcano hike. A swimming costume and sun hat are essential.

Footwear

Sturdy walking boots are advisable for the volcano climb and your hike at La Cinquera. Otherwise, comfortable footwear and sandals for the beach are recommended.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of luggage and a day bag. We recommend a small rucksack for your hike, which you can carry water, an extra layer and snacks in. Remember, you are expected to carry your own luggage - don't overload yourself. Sleeping bags are not required.

Equipment

Sunblock, insect repellent, sunglasses, sun hat and swim gear are all essential. Remember to bring a reusable water bottle and cotton bag for shopping. You may also wish to bring snorkelling equipment. We advise taking a water bottle for day to day use.

Tipping

Explore leader

Tipping isn't compulsory, and we work hard to ensure that our leaders all receive a fair wage. However, you might want to recognise a leader that's done a great job or really added to your trip by giving them a tip. We're often asked about the recommended amount. It's a tricky one, and down to personal preference, but we'd recommend between £15 to £20 per person per week as a guideline

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, your leader may organise a group's tips kitty for included activities and meals and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Accordingly, you should allow US\$30 for group tipping.

For all non-included services and meals on your trip please tip independently at your discretion.

El Salvador

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£8	£12	£1.2	£1.7

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

US Dollar (USD)

Recommended Currency For Exchange

You can choose to either change your money in advance or on arrival at the airport. Here you will find both ATMs and Bureau de Change. The exchange rate with the USD is approximately USD 1.25 to the British Pound. Please check on line for up to date information

Where To Exchange

Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival. There are exchanges at the border.

ATM Availability

ATMs can be found in the major towns and cities for cash withdrawals in USD. Always have some cash back up as they are not always reliable

Credit Card Acceptance

Credit card are widely accepted in many shops and restaurants but some may be subject to a service charge

Travellers Cheques

We do not recommend Travellers Cheques

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Boat

Accommodation notes

The majority of our trip is spent in comfortable accommodation, all on a twin-share basis with en suite facilities. We spend one night glamping at the Tres Volcanes campsite, so named for its impressive location between the Izalco, Santa Ana and Cerro Verde volcanoes. The large tents are all walk-in style, set atop a wooden base with two deck chairs outside, and two proper beds inside. All bedding is provided, including a towel. Electricity for the lamp and the communal dining area is all solar powered, and the campsite provides filtered water stations where you can fill up a water bottle.

There are two toilet blocks, one for men and one for women, and two showers each. The campsite also provides a locker for each person so that you can stow your valuables.

Essential Information

Government Travel Safety Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information

and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice click [here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click [here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa and Passport Information

El Salvador: Citizens of the UK and most EU citizens do not require a visa. Nationals of Canada, Greece, Portugal and USA must buy a tourist card (current cost 10USD) on arrival, this is valid for 30 day from entry.

Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related issues with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

USA (If flights transit): you will need to apply for an ESTA if you are transiting the USA as you will have to disembark and clear immigration before re-boarding for the onward flight. Citizens of the UK, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and passport holders from several EU countries can enter the United States without a visa under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) - where you apply for an ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorisation), which applies if you enter the country by sea or by air. This must be done online - <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> no later than 72 hours prior to travel. Travellers who have not registered before their trip are likely to be refused boarding. When completing an application for transit you should enter the words 'In Transit' with your final destination location in the address line. You must have an electronic passport with a digital chip containing biometric information about the passport owner. UK passports which are biometric feature a small gold symbol (camera) at the bottom of the front cover. If you have visited Libya, Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, Syria or Yemen since March 2011 or are dual nationals of these countries, you cannot travel with an ESTA. If you are a citizen of a country not included in the VWP you cannot apply for an ESTA. In both cases, you will instead need to apply for a visa from the nearest US Embassy or Consulate. If you are unable to provide a valid visa before boarding flights to the US, or entering via another method, you may not be permitted to travel. For further information please check out the US embassy website. Visa applications - <http://london.usembassy.gov/niv/apply.html>

Canada (in transit): An electronic travel authorisation (ETA) is required by British citizens transiting via Canada. For more information see the official Canadian government website: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/eta.asp>

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may be able to apply through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

Transfers

Find out more about [Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions](#) before you book.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers. If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper

altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them here.

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

El Salvador

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against typhoid, infectious hepatitis and polio.

Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. Please take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - these include mosquito repellent as well as long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary. Please note many countries in Central America, South America and the Caribbean require a yellow fever vaccination certificates if travelling from infected areas. A detailed list of these countries can be found on the NaTHNaC website -

<http://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>. Also on the NaTHNaC site there is a list of Countries (and specific areas within a country) which are at risk of infection and a vaccination is therefore recommended. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

Additional Information



Why book this trip

El Salvador is a compact country (for comparison, it is approximately the same size as Wales), which makes it easier than any other Central American country to pack a lot into a short space of time. 5% of the country is covered with primary rainforest, while volcanoes pepper the central zone and the Pacific beaches are a prime spot for surfing, swimming and turtle watching. This trip is perfect for someone who wants a blend of history, food and wildlife, while avoiding similar but tourist-heavy destinations, like Cuba, Mexico and Costa Rica.

Reviews



AWARD WINNING
EXPLORE LEADERS



PRICE GUARANTEE
PROMISE



AIRPORT
TRANSFERS