



## Service Learning in El Salvador Welcome and Basic Information

Thank you for following your call to join, engage and serve in a service learning opportunity to El Salvador. The following has been put together to help you become aware of and to understand some basic guidelines that we as representatives try to adhere to while serving on these trips. Please remember that while on this service learning experience, you are participating as a member of a larger body/group and that your actions as an individual can and will effect the entire body/group. These guidelines have been set in place to help provide a safe, comfortable travel environment for all who participate in this mission. Please remember you are traveling within a third world country and the safety of the group is and should be everyone's first priority. We must also respect the people we are serving. Please keep in mind our cultural differences.

**Remember that you are here to learn, serve, and to walk with the people of El Salvador.**

***We encourage you to always leave your assumptions behind and enter El Salvador with openness and humility, so that you can truly "walk with the people" instead of simply trying to come in and fix things. Listen, love and grow.***

### INFORMATION PACKET

#### Identification and Medical:

- Passport – Insure it is valid and ready
- Photocopy of the first page of passport (pack separately & leave a copy with someone at home).
- Other photo I.D. (driver's license)
- Carry a card with important medical information (blood type, allergies to medications, etc)
- Make an appointment with your doctor, County Health Department or medical provider.
- We recommend the following vaccinations before departure:
  - Tetanus (if you are not current you **will** need this shot)
  - Hepatitis A & B
  - Ask your health-care provider for a prescription of Cipro (Ciproflaxen or equivalent antibiotic).

#### Packing List:

It is important to pack for the weather conditions during your stay. It will be hot and humid (80-90 degrees) during the day, but the evenings can be cool. Clothes should be clean but not fancy. Tee shirts are common. Shorts are becoming a little more common, but be very conservative (for either gender). **PACK LIGHT!** Try to squeeze all you need in one suitcase. Carry-on luggage: include a change of clothes, toiletries, prescription medicines in original containers

- Light-weight skirts, pants, dresses, shorts, etc.
- Conservative clothing: keep skirt and short hems at knee level, no spaghetti straps or strapless tops please
- Shoes & socks. No backless walking shoes. **DON'T** break in a new pair of shoes on this trip

- Sunglasses, hat/cap, bandana (for dusty truck rides)
- Plastic bag for dirty clothes
- Bathing suit if a trip to the beach is on the agenda ( be very conservative...women, you may want a tank top and shorts
- Long-sleeved shirt or light jacket for the evenings
- There are two different seasons in El Salvador, the dry season (November-April) and the wet season (May-October). During the wet season we recommend a light raincoat and shoes that can endure the rain. Dry feet are most comfortable!

**Note:** There will be access to washer/dryer machines at a cost. However, packing extra socks, undergarments, ect. is recommended.

### **Equipment and toiletries:**

- Aspirin/Tylenol or preferred headache reliever
- Pepto Bismol tablets or Imodium
- Sun screen and lip balm
- Mosquito repellent and a cortisone cream for bites
- Empty water bottle
- Travel alarm clock or watch
- First Aid Kit
- Small flashlight
- Camera and batteries if needed
- Notebook and journal, pens and pencils
- Earplugs if you are bothered by roosters crowing at 4 in the morning!
- Kleenex, allergy medicine
- Comfy backpack or fanny pack

### **Safety tips:**

- Obtain recommended vaccinations and prescriptions prior to departure
- Avoid ingesting ANY local water. Use bottled water.
- Brush your teeth with pure water
- Don't bite your nails or rub your eyes after washing in pila water

- Drink lots of pure water to avoid dehydration. We ask that you avoid sodas that will not keep you hydrated.
- Avoid local foods unless prepared or approved by your group leader / Alvaro
- Avoid ice unless you are SURE it is made from pure water
- Avoid flashy jewelry and watches
- Carry minimal valuables and just be aware of your surroundings and belongings
- Carry minimal money and only a copy of your passport in a money belt. Leave your original passport at the hotel or hostel.
- Keep prescription medicines in original bottles with your name on it
- Don't over pack. You can purchase basic items in El Salvador
- When you go out, travel in pairs. Tell Alvaro and your group leader where you are going and when you expect to be back so they won't worry.
- The use of illegal drugs will not be tolerated.
- Alcohol/tobacco use is prohibited for those under the legal age of their country of origin.
- Avoid all contact with local animals, domestic and agricultural.

### **Tips to make your stay more enjoyable:**

- Learn some very basic Spanish (please, thank you, where's the bathroom, etc)
- Even if you don't speak Spanish... TRY! Pantomime/gesture/laugh and learn as you go. You will find people are VERY patient and understanding and won't belittle you for not knowing! They will love you for trying.
- Try to avoid wasting food – if you don't like beans... ask for a plate with “no frijoles, por favor” ... or give them to a table mate who likes them!
- Play with the children. They give unconditional love! You will be amazed at how getting down on their level and giving a big, warm smile brightens their day.
- We are not there to impose our beliefs. Listen with your ears and your heart at every opportunity. You will learn and understand so much more this way.
- Electricity in El Salvador is the same as in the U.S., so your camera chargers and other electrical appliances will work fine in El Salvador without any kind of converter. If you take down a laptop be sure to bring an adapter if the plug has three prongs.

### **When you are there...do as the locals do!**

- Put toilet paper in the waste can next to the toilet. Do NOT put it in the toilet as the sewers tend to plug up! (Don't worry, you'll get used to this habit).
- People like to have their photos taken but it is polite to ask first. Just say "por favor" and point to your camera and then to them and smile a lot.
- If someone on the street starts to talk to you and you do not understand... just say "no hablo español" and they will understand that you do not understand but they will talk to you anyway! Pantomime and smile!

### **As a Delegate:**

- Be respectful of the local culture
- Travel in spirit of humility and with a genuine desire to meet and talk with local people
- Be aware of the feelings of the local people; prevent what might be offensive behavior
- Cultivate the habit of listening and observing rather than merely hearing and seeing or knowing all the answers
- Realize that other people may have concepts of time and have thought patterns that are different from yours – not inferior.
- Remember that you are only one among many visitors; do not expect special privileges.
- When shopping through bargaining, remember that the poorest merchant will give up a profit rather than give up his or her personal dignity.
- **DO NOT** make promises to local people or to new friends that you cannot keep.
- **DO NOT** hand out money or trinkets to individual persons. You do not know their circumstances and while you want to help you can be creating more of a problem.
- We understand that you may want to donate. If you desire to do so you must first ask the ESNA team before any transaction is made.
- You will meet many people while in country. Community members, cooks, drivers, helpers, they all are very interested in you and your visit. Get to know them. If they are serving you make sure to thank them, when you leave remember to say goodbye. This is a part of building relationships!
- Spend time each day reflecting on your experiences in order to deepen your understanding.
- Delegations need to put importance on the direction given by the ESNA team. You are there to learn and open yourself to this exciting experience. With that said our team is there to guide and facilitate your experience. Their advice for you comes from their own personal knowledge of the country.
- This is a service learning experience and because of that we must remember we are not on vacation. We ask that the **entire** delegation partake in the preparing and clean-up of all meals.
- In addition, as a delegate we ask that you do not engage in any cross-cultural romantic relationships during the duration of your time in country. ESNA has established strong relationships with communities and do not want to jeopardize the objectives and credibility of the organization. Such activity is cause for an immediate return trip home at your expense.

## **Worksite Expectations:**

- Always wear appropriate footwear. Closed toed, sneakers or boots.
- You may be handling very sharp or dangerous equipment. Be sure to wear work gloves at all times.
- No smoking and/or alcohol consumption on the job site.
- No excessive cursing or foul language.
- The heat will catch up to you. **ALWAYS** have a water bottle on site and take breaks every 15-30min to prevent dehydration.
- There are engineers and contractors on site at all times. They will determine what work we do for the day. The weather can be very unpredictable and rain is unavoidable. Be flexible to changes in the work.
- At the heart of all our projects there is the community. Many of our projects work closely with schools and because of that your main audiences are children. We must always set a professional and comfortable environment as we work together with all ages, and gender.
- When taking tours of local families homes a group leader (from the delegation) needs to accompany the delegation at all times.

## **Money Advice:**

### **- Entry visa at airport**

There is a \$10 entry fee to enter the country that you will pay when you land in El Salvador. The entry fee (exact change) needs to be in everyone's individual hands for the immigration desk when you arrive in San Salvador airport.

### **- How much money to bring**

All of your base in country expenses are covered by the fee you pay to ESNA for your trip. Upgrades that you select for accommodations ( ie: private rooms) or meals (ie: restaurants not selected by ESNA, or comfort food the group wants to acquire) will be at your expense. Therefore visits to grocery stores, artisan shops, etc. you should bring money for those acquisitions. You can buy lots of inexpensive trinkets (between \$1-\$10) but there are costly items as well. You will need to bring and use smaller bills because it is often difficult for small artisans to make change. ATM's are available but we ask that you do not rely solely on ATM machines. A common amount that travels bring might be in the \$100 to \$150 range. The amount mostly depends on the quantity of gifts they may want to purchase.

## EDUCATION ON EL SALVADOR

### - **Basic**

Population: 6,071,774 million (most densely populated in Central America)

Time: GMT-6 (same as Central time zone; no daylight savings time)

Borders: Guatemala, Honduras

Religion: Roman Catholic (57%), Protestant (21%)

Language: Spanish, Indigenous language (Nahuatl)

Currency: United States Dollar (since 2001)

Measurement: Metric system

Area: 21,040 square kilometers (8,124 square miles)

### - **Climate**

Highest average temperature: 95 degrees; Lowest average: 60 degrees

Dry season (Verano): November - April; Wet season (Invierno): May - October

The rainy season brings the annual average rainfall for most of the country. Dry and very dusty conditions prevail during the dry season. Temperatures vary with elevation and show little seasonal change.

However, the climate varies between regions.

### - **Main exports**

Coffee, shrimp, sugar, textiles

### - **Crops**

Corn, beans, rice, cotton, coffee, sugar, livestock, poultry, sorghum

### - **Political parties**

ARENA: Nationalist Republican Alliance

CN: Concertation Party

FMLN: Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front

CD: Democratic Convergence

PDC: Christian Democratic Party

GAN: Great Alliance for National Unity

### - **Major infectious diseases:**

Food or waterborne diseases: bacterial **diarrhea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever**

Vectorborne diseases: **dengue fever**

Water contact disease: **leptospirosis (2009)**

### - **Statistics**

- 2 percent of the population controls almost 60 percent of the land.

- 93.3% of the rural population has 12 acres of land or less

- A 2009 statistic showed that 37.1% of all Salvadorans lived under the poverty line

- 58% of Salvadorans live on less than \$2 per day, while 31% live on less than \$1 per day.

- Life expectancy at birth over the past 30 years has increased from roughly 58 years in 1970 to 72 years in 2008.

- The adult literacy rate as of 2007 stood at 81.1% for all persons over 15 years of age.
- 13% of the population lacks sustainable access to an improved water source. 87% of the population has sustainable access to improved sanitation, an improvement from 51% in 1990.
- 11% of the population is undernourished.
- It is estimated that anywhere from 817,000 to 2.7 million Salvadorans live outside the country. While Salvadorans can be found in almost any part of the world an overwhelming number migrate to the United States.
- Remittances (money sent home by migrants) to El Salvador totaled \$3.32 billion in 2006, representing 16.2% of GDP. Nearly one fifth of all households in El Salvador are recipients of remittances.

## Local food

**Pupusas:** These are corn tortillas stuffed with one or more of the following: refried beans, cheese (a soft Salvadoran cheese), chicharrón (cooked pork meat), or squash (usually guisquil/chayote). Pupusas can be bought nearly everywhere. There are even restaurants dedicated to this hearty treat, aptly named pupuserías. Pupusas are served with a pickled cabbage salad (curtido) and fresh tomato sauce.

**Tortillas:** These are like circular flatbreads made from corn originally made by Mesoamerican peoples. The tortillas in El Salvador are thick and made from corn. Tortillas are usually consumed during lunch and dinner.

**Beans (frijoles):** Beans, typically red beans, are cooked in many different ways. They may be whole, mashed, or pureed and served hot or cold. They are often eaten for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

**Casamiento:** In Spanish “casamiento” means marriage. In El Salvador, casamiento is a mixture of rice and beans.

**Tamales:** Pockets of corn dough (like a corn dumpling) stuffed with meat or sweet corn and cooked in banana leaves or corn husks. They can be served hot or cold.

**Plantains (plátanos):** Though similar to bananas, plantains are usually fried or boiled. They are often served with a variety of accompaniments such as beans, cream, cheese, or eggs.

**Seafood (mariscos):** Fish, shrimp, oysters, lobster, and calamari can all be found in El Salvador. Fish and shrimp are the more common types of seafood served at the Pastoral House.

**Ceviche:** Raw fish cured in lime juice often mixed with cilantro, green peppers, salt, and onions.

**Guisquil/Chayote:** This vegetable is a member of the gourd family and can be eaten in many forms-boiled, mashed, fried, baked, or raw.

**Yucca:** A white, starchy vegetable (root) originally from South America. Yucca can be served boiled,

fried, and are sometimes fried up like potato chips.

**Pan dulce:** Spanish for sweet bread, these bread and sometimes pastry-like treats come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and flavors.

## **Drinks:**

**Horchata:** A drink made from a mix of spices, rice, and morro seeds.

**Jamaica:** A drink made from the Jamaica flower mixed with water and sugar.

**Chuco:** A thick hot drink made from black maize and alguaishte with whole beans at the bottom.

**Atole:** Atole is a thick, masa based drink. It's made of corn flour, water, and unrefined sugar. A Salvadoran variety of atole is called atole chuco, which means "dirty" atole because of its darker color.

**Tamarind:** A unique drink with a tangy, earthy flavor made from tamarind fruit and pulp found inside the pods.

## **BASIC SPANISH PHRASES**

No hablo español	<i>I don't speak Spanish</i>
Buenos Dias	<i>Good Day, hello (before noon)</i>
Buenas Tardes	<i>Good afternoon</i>
Buenas Noches	<i>Good evening</i>
Como Está?	<i>How are you</i>
Muy bien, gracias	<i>I'm fine, thank you</i>
Gracias	<i>Thank you</i>
De nada	<i>You're welcome (literally: it's nothing)</i>
Lo siento	<i>I'm sorry</i>
Donde esta?	<i>Where is?</i>
El baño	<i>The bathroom</i>
La cocina	<i>The kitchen</i>
El mercado	<i>The market</i>
Como se dice en español?	<i>How do you say it in Spanish?</i>
Ayudame, por favor.	<i>Help me please.</i>
Despacio, por favor.	<i>Slowly, please</i>
Mucho gusto	<i>Pleased to meet you</i>
Me gusta mucho	<i>I like a lot</i>
La comida es deliciosa	<i>The food is delicious</i>
Puedo ayudar?	<i>Can I help?</i>
Necesito una toalla por favor	<i>I need a towel please</i>
Necesito una sabana por favor	<i>I need a blanket please</i>
Enséñeme por favor	<i>Teach me please</i>

## **Pronunciation**

A- The Spanish "a" is pronounced like the "a" in the word "father."

E- The Spanish "e" is most often pronounced like the "a" in the word "date."

I- The Spanish "i" is pronounced like the "ee" in the word "see."

O- The Spanish "o" is pronounced like the "o" in the word "no."

U- The Spanish "u" is pronounced like the "ue" in the word "due."

LL- The Spanish "ll" is pronounced like the "y" in the word "yes."

# OPTIONS FOR RESEARCH READING AND VIDEOS BEFORE YOU TRAVEL

## Books

- Fire Against Fire -- Christian Ministry Face-To-Face With Persecution -- Medardo Gomez -- Bishop Gomez writes about the role of the Gospel
- And the Word Became History: Messages Forged in the Fires of Central American Conflict -- Bishop Medardo Gomez describes the message of the Gospel and its role in the modern history of El Salvador
- The Violence of Love -- Oscar Romero
- A Shepherd's Diary -- Archbishop Oscar Romero
- Memoirs in Mosaic – Oscar Romero
- *Through the Year with Oscar Romero* – translated by Irene Hodgson

## Books on the Salvadoran Civil War

- The Massacre at El Mozote -- A Parable of the Cold War -- Mark Danner
- Salvador -- Joan Didion
- El Salvador
- *Rebel Radio: The Story of El Salvador's Radio Venceremos* by José Ignacio López Vigil
- *Feminism and the legacy of Revolution : Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chiapas* by Karen Kampwirth

## Post Civil War El Salvador

- Peace Without Justice: Obstacles to Building the Rule of Law in El Salvador
- From Grandmother to Granddaughter: Salvadoran Women's Stories *Culture and customs of El Salvador* by Roy C. Boland

## Fiction

- Bitter Grounds* – Sandra Benítez
- The Weight of All Things* – Sandra Benítez

## Movies and Video

- Romero by Raul Julia (1989)
- Innocent Voices (2004)
- Salvador (1986)
- Enemies of War
- "I am Not Afraid" Testimony of Rufina Amaya
- Scars of the Memory, 1932
- "Ten Years Taking the Sky By Storm" the History of Radio Venceremos

## Salvadoran Newspapers

- La Prensa Gráfica
- El Diario de Hoy
- Diario Co Latino
- Diario El Mundo
- El Faro (digital newspaper)

## Links

- Committee In Solidarity with the People of El Salvador -- [www.cisspec.org](http://www.cisspec.org)
- Wikipedia -- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El\\_Salvador](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Salvador)
- US Government Website -- <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2033.htm>
- United States Institute of Peace --<http://www.usip.org/resources/el-salvador>
- Tim's El Salvador Blog – Current news –<http://luterano.blogspot.com/>
- PBS – Enemies of War -- <http://www.pbs.org/itvs/enemiesofwar/>