El Salvador: General Information for Tourists

A brief collection of general information relevant for tourists travelling to El Salvador.

Courtesy of Mediolleno.com.sv
SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Keep a copy of your passport with you and keep the original in a hotel safety deposit.

2. For any type of transaction you must present your original passport.

3. Banking agencies use and accept no intermediaries.

4. When using ATMs, do not accept help from other suspicious people and always make sure to remove your card.

5. If you rent a car, do not forget to read carefully the conditions they are offering.

6. Do not leave your belongings visible in the car, leave windows and doors locked.

7. In case of problems with the car or if you see you’re being followed by another car find a safe place and call the phone: 2298-9984/83/82 or 911.

8. When you need a taxi, ask the hotel staff and / or make sure the taxi plate starts with the letter “A”.

9. If you decide to use public transport, take hand carried coins and avoid carrying valuable possessions.

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

POLITUR – Tourism Police
Phone: 2298-9982, 2298-9984 ó 911

Ministerio de Salud y Asistencia Social
Phone: 2221-1001

FOSALUD:
Phone: 2231-2300

Cruz Roja
Phone: 2222-5755, 2222-5155

Complaints of abuse of suppliers or services
Consumer Protection Agency
Phone: 910

**Complaints about crimes**

POLITUR – Tourism Police

Phone: 2298-9984, 911

**Attorney General’s Office**

Phones: 2523-7000, 2523-7001

Contact with your embassy

**Ministry of External Relationships**

Phone: 2231-1000 monady to friday

---

**PRACTICAL FACTS**

Entry requirements: Valid passport, depending on country of origin, sometimes you need a tourist visa or tourist card at a cost of $10 and are usually valid for 90 days.

Communications: You can use an international direct connection to any part anywhere in the world. The country code is 503. The code for international calls is: 00.

Mobile: currently used GSM 850, 900, 1900 and 1950.

Fax: Faxes are available in all hotels

Internet: It is easy to access the Internet in business centers and all hotels, Internet cafes and Wi-Fi hotspots.

Foreign Exchange: Visitors are advised to only change money at banks.

Credit and debit cards: Most cards circulating worldwide can be used.

Travelers’ checks: Can be exchanged at banks and hotels, on presentation of passport.

Airport tax: U.S. $32.00

Accommodation: The highest concentration of hotels is in the capital city. It is recommended that you book early. There are accommodations of all kinds.

Tipping: 10% is appropriate in most restaurants and bars. Some already include the tip in the bill.

Clothing: light clothes and some for rain on the coast during the wet season. The TIC Americas competition will take place during the wet season. We recommend bringing umbrellas and some extra clothing.
ABOUT EL SALVADOR

General information about the country

Official name: Republic of El Salvador

Capital city: San Salvador

Government: Republican, Democratic and representative

Territorial extension: 20,742 km²


Currency: US Dollar

Language: Spanish, English is spoken almost at all the touristic destinations and

Time: GMT-6

Electricity: 110 volts AC, 60 Hz y 220 volts.

Airport: El Salvador International Airport (Comalapa)

Climate: Warm all over the year, rainy season from May to October.

PLACES TO GO

LA GRAN VIA

The “Gran Vía” shopping center is a semi-open space combining a shopping area and an entertainment area. The latter includes restaurants, bars, cafés and movie theaters. Its beautiful architecture, fountains, lampposts, and benches in the open air, all attract local and foreign visitors. The central plaza, around a grand fountain, is also the setting for live events. A few steps away is Marriot’s Courtyard Hotel. We recommend spending a pleasant afternoon enjoying drinks or coffee at one of the many restaurants there.

MULTIPLAZA

Inaugurated in 2006, this shopping mall is a great attraction for visitors, not only due to its 250 stores, but also its terraces and its variety in restaurants, discotheques and bars, modern movie theaters, department stores and a supermarket. Its terraces are used for live shows, which bring
life to the setting. The terraces of Multiplaza host the best discotheques and bars in the country; we highly recommend the vibrant nightlife of Multiplaza from Wednesday to Saturday.

**GALERIAS**

Since its opening in 1995, Galerias Shopping Center has become one of the most important malls in El Salvador. In this busy site visitors can choose from up to 172 local and international stores located in this upscale four level mall.

Facilities include three level underground parking for up to fifteen hundred cars. (There are expecting mom and handicap parking available)

If you feel like movies: Cinépolis, offers 11 movie theaters, with 3-D technology available. In addition, there is an arcade area, popularly known as “maquinitas” and 2 food courts. “Galerías” has several exclusive cafeterias, with private areas.

In this shopping center you will find a multi level local department store and a “financial center” with all major Salvadoran and some international banks. There is a post office (Correos de El Salvador), and even a religious chapel.

If you feel like relaxing or a getting a haircut there is a spa and several beauty centers. Dry cleaning is also available.

Galerías main attraction is “La Casona”. Considered an architectural gem built in 1950’s, this “White House look-alike” is a place where you can relax with a coffee or enjoy paintings and art displays.

**NATIONAL HANDCRAFTS MARKET**

Founded in 1976, the National Handicraft Market is a must visit if you want to buy local colorful handcrafts created by masterful artisans from around El Salvador.

There are 33 little stores that offer thousands of souvenirs made locally. Hammocks, tablecloths, pictures, paintings on turkey feathers, hats, purses, pottery, clay and wood figurines, there is no limit to what you can find in this place. Even a keychain made with a local seed known as “bull’s eye” or “deer’s eye”. If you want to take home a traditional toy you can buy a “Capirucho” (a bell made of wood, tied to a small wood stick), At the National Handicraft Market you can even find wood yoyos with the national flag painted on them. We recommend you buy one of those “capiruchos” and challenge your abilities by trying to place the bell on top of the stick. You’ll see, it’s very difficult even for Salvadorians.

One of the must have items are indigo-dyed cotton clothing, very traditional from El Salvador. Hand-embroidered clothing with bright colors can be very attractive to some buyers. Jewelry, accessories, belts, shoes and handbags made of leather and other materials will surprise you. However, do not forget to bargain. This is a must in all of El Salvador’s handcrafts markets. You can pay cash or credit cards in this location.
PER DIEM RATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Lodging</th>
<th>Meals &amp; Incidentals</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High budget</td>
<td>$128</td>
<td>$93</td>
<td>$221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium budget</td>
<td>$95</td>
<td>$60</td>
<td>$155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low budget</td>
<td>$60</td>
<td>$45</td>
<td>$105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RUTA LAS FLORES

Pleasant route which crosses one of the most florid areas of El Salvador, crossing the forests of high mountain coffee where the cool weather prevails, visit their places of rich history, which celebrate, cultural events, cuisine and eco tourism.

NAHUIZALCO:

Beautiful city located 70 kms from the capital with a strong presence of indigenous population. A colonial church there was built in the seventeenth century. Its economic patrimony is based on the developed of the artisan industry of natural fibers: wood, wicker, Tule, Henequen. We recommend you visit the Artisan Development Center to learn about the creativity and beauty of these works.

SALCOATITÁN:

This city of artists offers art galleries and permanent exhibitions. Located at 1045 meters above sea level, enjoy typical food in the central square and admire the recently restored colonial-style church.

JUAYÚA:

Its name means River of Purple Orchids. Purchase beautiful plants in their nurseries, enjoy the traditional food fair held every weekend, visit its beautiful waterfalls of pure waters and beautiful ecological environment, and savor the Gourmet Coffee in the benefits of Coffee. If you have to choose from all of the locations of the Ruta Las Flores, we highly recommend this stop.
APANECA:

The city is located at higher altitude: 1477 meters above sea level apx. Home of the best coffees in the world, it is also a very important archaeological site. Apaneca hosts exciting activities of adventure tourism like canopy tours, motorcycle tours, buggies, hiking, and camping. We also highly recommend this stop of the Ruta Las Flores if you were to choose from the many locations.

ATACO:

Ataco is a lovely colonial town that smells like an antique village of cobblestone streets and colonial churches. It is surrounded by coffee plantations and constantly decorated by the mist. Appreciate the development of textiles in their artistic yarn workshop which still works with machines craft. Listen to folk music in its central square in the weekend afternoons you can enjoy sipping the typical drinks and dishes. This is perhaps one of the most renowned touristic destinations in El Salvador for the blend of history and culture that the town boasts. This would be our top recommendation from all the locations in the Ruta Las Flores.

TACUBA:

Tacuba has an archaeological treasure which is the remains of the church that was partially destroyed by the earthquake of Santa Marta in 1773. Walk through the quiet streets, take a walk to Bosque El Imposible, visit their viewpoints, and enjoy the rhythm of life in this city located in Apaneca llamatepeq in the mountains. Excellent roads lead to this small yet beautiful town.

PLAYA EL TUNCO

At just 37 kilometers from San Salvador, Playa El Tunco has become a favorite destination Route for Sun and Sea, especially for those who enjoy nightlife and the best waves for surfing. The characteristic image, an impressive rock formation in front of a river mouth, surrounded by surfers of all parts of the world is becoming increasingly popular. The beach is well known for its parties every weekend with live music from different genres: rock concerts, reggae and salsa. As for its bars and restaurants, La Guitarra (The Guitar) offers a bohemian and relaxed ambient, D’Rocas guarantees a party with music and drinks until dawn, and La Bocana is the favorite place for surfers. Many visitors also choose to turn bonfires on the beach and spend the night under the stars.

Apart from its beauty, El Tunco has also become an important destination for surfers from around the world. For $15 an hour, take your first wave on a surfboard with a local surfer as your instructor. Professionals impress visitors with their skills surfing waves that sometimes reach 6 meters. The best season for surfing is between April and August, when the swell is right. There is no need to carry or have table. At the site there are several options for rent, usually $20 dollars a day. We highly recommend trying this sport, once you ride a wave you’ll realize you’ve never felt anything like it before. Besides, where else will you have such an opportunity?
WHERE TO EAT

El Tunco is full of restaurants, cafes and bars and there is food for all budgets. The best places to eat are Bar Bas, Roca Sunzal, Kayu, La Bocana, Tekuani Kal, Mc Tunco, pizzeria Erika’sy Five Tunco Three. In the site there are many small family businesses that offer seafood and fried fish at low prices. If you’re opting for a more high end meal, we recommend eating at Café Sunzal, just in front of the point break where you surf.

WHERE TO STAY

From camping by the fire to luxury hotels, El Tunco has many lodging options. The most famous ones are Roots, Papaya Surf Lodge, EcoSurf, Casa Miramar, Paradizo Blue, among others.

DIRECTIONS

From Bolivar Park buses or minibuses depart for El Tunco. You can take Route 102, 107 or 177. The Cost is $ 1.50. The trip takes approximately 1 hour and buses leave every twenty minutes from 6 am to 7 pm. By car, from San Salvador, take the road to Puerto de La Libertad to reach the fork in the road. Then take The Coastal Road to El Malecon and follow it to mile 42. There are many signs indicating the way to go.

More Information

Playa El Tunco
http://www.playaeltunco.com

ALL OF US AT MEDIOLLENO.COM.SV ARE AT YOUR SERVICE TO MAKE YOUR STAY HERE IN EL SALVADOR THE MOST PLEASANT ONE POSSIBLE. WE HOPE THIS SMALL BOOKLET HELPS GUIDE YOU IN DECIDING WHICH ACTIVITIES TO DO ONCE YOU ARRIVE. DON’T HESITATE IN CONTACTING US IF ANYTHING ELSE COMES UP. WE HOPE YOU ENJOY YOUR STAY.

Source: American Embassy of El Salvador.