El Salvador

Medical Summary

The health risk information presented here is summarized from Shoreland Travax®, a decision-support tool used by health care providers to perform a detailed health risk analysis based on specific locations, individual travel styles, and traveler risk behaviors. Travax provides practitioners current, independently researched malaria risk and prevention recommendations in a map-based format that goes beyond the annual WHO and CDC statements included here. Not included here are current reports from Travax of disease outbreaks or environmental events that may pose elevated risks to travelers’ health and safety. The Providers section of this site offers a directory of health care providers who utilize Shoreland Travax for travel health counseling. Learn more about the detailed reports and maps available from these practitioners (includes links to samples).

General Information

El Salvador is a developing nation in the lower half of the world's economies. Located along the Pacific Ocean in Central America, its climate is tropical, although somewhat temperate in highland areas. Coastal areas are generally hot and humid.

Immunizations

Yellow Fever

Although yellow fever does not occur in El Salvador, an official yellow fever vaccination certificate may be required depending on your itinerary.

*Requirement:* A vaccination certificate is required for travelers 1 year of age and older coming from countries with risk of YF transmission.

Other Vaccines

Depending on your itinerary, your personal risk factors, and the length of your visit, your health care provider may offer you vaccination against hepatitis A, hepatitis B, influenza, measles, mumps, rubella, rabies, or typhoid fever. Routine immunizations, such as those that prevent tetanus/diphtheria or "childhood" diseases, should be reviewed and updated as needed.

Malaria

The following is current information as reported by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

**WHO—International Travel and Health (current online update, Country List)**

(2016) Very low malaria risk due almost exclusively to *P. vivax* exists in rural areas prone to migration from Central American countries. Sporadic *P. vivax* malaria cases are reported from specific parts of the country.

- **Recommended prevention in risk areas:** A - Very limited risk of malaria transmission. Mosquito bite prevention only.

**WHO Country List footnote:** When available, the date of the most recent update or confirmation is indicated in parentheses in the country list. If no date is indicated, the most recent update or confirmation was provided before 2013.

**CDC—Health Information for International Travel (current online edition)**

Areas with malaria: Rare cases along Guatemalan border.

- Estimated relative risk of malaria for US travelers: Very low
- **Drug resistance**: None
- **Malaria species:** *P. vivax* 99%, *P. falciparum* < 1%
- **Recommended chemoprophylaxis:** Mosquito avoidance only.

4 Refers to *P. falciparum* malaria unless otherwise noted.
Other Concerns

Travelers' Diarrhea
High risk exists throughout the country, including in deluxe accommodations. Food and beverage precautions may reduce the likelihood of illness.

Travelers should carry loperamide for self-treatment of diarrhea and, if risk is moderate to high, an antibiotic to add if diarrhea is severe. Consult a knowledgeable health care provider regarding which antibiotic is appropriate for you and most effective for your destination.

Insect- and Arthropod-Borne Diseases
Chagas’ disease (American trypanosomiasis), chikungunya, dengue, leishmaniasis, West Nile virus and Zika may pose a risk. Personal protective measures are important.

Other Disease and Health Risks
Additional concerns include air pollution, leptospirosis and tuberculosis.

Consular Advice

The material below includes information from the U.S. Department of State (DOS), U.K. Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), and Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), as well as from additional open-source material. Standard safety precautions that apply to all international travel can be found in the Library article Safety and Security.

Terrorism Risk
No intrinsic risk of attack by terrorist groups exists, but unforeseen attacks are possible.

Crime
High risk of violent crime (armed robbery, home invasion, sexual assault, carjacking, and murder) and petty crime exists throughout the country, especially in San Salvador (particularly in downtown areas) and other cities and in national parks.

Kidnappings by criminal groups occur throughout the country, especially in San Salvador.

Express kidnappings to force cash withdrawals at ATMs may occur throughout the country.

Scams involving ATMs, credit cards, and a wide range of financial activities have been reported.

Civil Unrest
Demonstrations, sit-ins, or protests may occur at any time or place, especially in the capital city, on its main access roads, and in particular, around the Salvador del Mundo monument.

Unsafe Areas
In the regions bordering Guatemala, crimes and murders linked to drug turf wars affect security. The use of firearms has been reported.

Other Safety Threats
Mine-removal efforts ceased several years ago, but land mines and unexploded ordnance in backcountry regions still pose a threat to off-road tourists, backpackers, and campers. Use a local guide certified by the national or local tourist authority when hiking in backcountry areas, even when within national parks.

Transportation Safety
High risk of traffic-related injury or death exists. The road-traffic death rate is 12 to 24 per 100,000 population. The rate is < 10 in most high-income countries. Speed laws are poorly enforced. Driving at night is not advised. Seek local advice before traveling on roads outside urban areas after dark.

Traffic flows on the right-hand side of the road. Travelers (including drivers and pedestrians) accustomed to traffic moving on the opposite side should be vigilant when navigating traffic.
Airline Safety
U.S. Federal Aviation Administration has determined that the civil aviation authority of this country oversees its air carriers in accordance with minimum international safety standards.

Natural Disasters
El Salvador is located in a highly active seismic zone. Tremors occur on a regular basis, with major earthquakes occurring more intermittently.

The rainy season (including the occasional hurricane) extends from May to November, often resulting in flash floods and landslides.

Consular Information
Selected Embassies or Consulates in El Salvador
- United States: [+503] 2501-2999; sansalvador.usembassy.gov
- Canada: [+503] 2279-4655; www.canadainternational.gc.ca/el_salvador-salvador
- United Kingdom: [+503] 2511-5757; www.gov.uk/government/world/el-salvador
- Australia: [+503] 2298-9447

El Salvador's Embassies or Consulates in Selected Countries
- In the U.S.: www.elsalvador.org
- In Canada: [+1] 613-238-2939
- In the U.K.: [+44] 020-7224-9800
- In Australia: [+61] 02-6232-7222

Visa/HIV Testing
Visa applicants may need to meet specific requirements. Review the application and contact the appropriate embassy or consulate with questions. The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any specific HIV/AIDS entry restrictions or regulations for visitors or for foreign residents of El Salvador. HIV-infected people are not expelled, and being HIV-positive has no effect on residency status. However, even though Salvadoran immigration law does not specifically refer to HIV/AIDS, persons wishing to apply for residency must undergo a medical exam and be certified free of communicable diseases, which may include testing for HIV/AIDS.

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