

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 classified as lower middle income. Located in Central America along the Pacific Ocean (southwest of Honduras and southeast of Guatemala), the climate is classified as humid equatorial (long dry season).

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 aged ≥ 1 year coming from countries with risk of YF transmission. This also applies to airport transit stops (no exit through immigration checkpoint) longer than 12 hours in risk countries.

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)

(2019) Very limited 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.

- Drug resistance³: None.
- Malaria species: *P. vivax* 99%, *P. falciparum* < 1%.
- Recommended chemoprophylaxis: None (practice mosquito avoidance).

³ Refers to *P. falciparum* malaria unless otherwise noted.

⁴ Primaquine and tafenoquine can cause hemolytic anemia in people with G6PD deficiency. Patients must be screened for G6PD deficiency before starting primaquine or tafenoquine. See *Tafenoquine Approved for Malaria Prophylaxis and*

Treatment for more information.

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, Zika may pose a risk. Personal protective measures are important.

Other Disease and Health Risks

Additional concerns include air pollution, helminths, leptospirosis, snakebites, 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, gang-related violence, and murder) and high risk of petty crime exist throughout the country, especially in San Salvador (particularly in downtown areas) and other cities (particularly Delgado, Mejicanos, Panchimalco, San Martín, Apopa, Soyapango, San Miguel, Santa Ana, and Ahuachapán); in areas frequented by tourists; on or near public transportation; in airports; on roads outside of major cities after dark; 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, a wide range of financial activities, and false befriending have been reported.

Risk exists of robberies and/or assaults occurring after consuming intentionally drugged food or drink; tourists are frequently targeted.

Civil Unrest

Protests and demonstrations occur throughout the country, especially in San Salvador, and have the potential to turn violent without warning. Bystanders are at risk of harm from violence or from the response by authorities. Disruption to transportation, free movement, or the ability to carry out daily activities may occur.

Unsafe Areas

A dangerous security environment (primarily drug or gang violence) may exist in areas bordering Guatemala and on roads outside San Salvador.

Landmines and other unexploded ordnance may be present in rural areas throughout the country, especially in Chalatenango and Morazán departments.

Water Safety

Hazardous water conditions (including currents, tides, and undertows) may occur along the Pacific coast. Heed posted warnings and avoid beaches that are not patrolled. Do not swim alone or after dark and do not walk on any beach after dark.

Rent water sports equipment from reputable operators. Scuba dive only with personnel certified by PADI or NAUI and use equipment only from PADI- or NAUI-certified dive operators.

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 less than 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.

Public buses do not meet international safety standards (due to unsafe vehicles and poor maintenance).

Due to security concerns, travel on roads in areas bordering Guatemala and between San Salvador and El Salvador International Airport is unsafe. Avoid road travel outside of urban areas after dark.

Many taxis are unsafe. Use taxis from official ranks or dispatched via smart phone app or radio from a reputable company and ascertain the license or identification number of the dispatched vehicle.

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

The rainy season is from June through November, coinciding with the hurricane season. Floods, mudslides, and landslides may occur.

Seismic and volcanic activity frequently occur, including in San Salvador.

Consular Information

Selected Embassies or Consulates in El Salvador

- | United States: [+503] 2501-2999; sv.usembassy.gov
- | Canada: [+503] 2279-4655; www.elsalvador.gc.ca
- | United Kingdom: [+503] 2511-5757; www.gov.uk/world/organisations/british-embassy-san-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

HIV testing may be required to obtain a work or residence visa.

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