



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 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
- You will need a tetanus shot if you are not current
- Hepatitis A is suggested
- Ask your health-care provider for a prescription of Cipro (Ciproflaxen or equivalent antibiotic)

Clothing:

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
- 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
- For rainy season only (June-November): rain gear if desired

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
- 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!
- 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 or Gator-aid to avoid dehydration
- 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!
- Listen with your ears and your heart at every opportunity. You will learn and understand so much more.

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!

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.
- Spend time each day reflecting on your experiences in order to deepen your understanding.

BASIC SPANISH PHRASES

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

OPTIONS FOR RESEARCH READING AND VIDEOS BEFORE YOU TRAVEL

Books

By Bishops to the poor

[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

[Archbishop Oscar Romero -- A Shepherd's Diary](#) -- Oscar Romero

Memoirs in Mosaic --

Through the Year with Oscar Romero -- translated by Irene Hodgson

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 \(1989\)](#)

[Innocent Voices \(2004\)](#)

[Salvador \(1986\)](#)

[Enemies of War](#)

Salvadoran Newspapers

[La Prensa Gráfica](#)

[El Diario de Hoy](#)

[Diario Co Latino](#)

[Diario El Mundo](#)

Links

[Foundation for Self-Sufficiency in Central America](#)

[El Salvador Sister Cities](#)

[Committee In Solidarity with the People of El Salvador](#)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Salvador

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2033.htm>

<http://www.usip.org/resources/el-salvador>

<http://www.pbs.org/itvs/enemiesofwar/>

<http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/hemisphereinitiatives/warpeace.pdf>