



Cruisers Rally to El Salvador Guide



Elsalvadorrally.com





Welcome to El Salvador

The west coast of Central America is often bypassed, as southbound recreational boaters tend to take a direct route to the marquee destinations of Costa Rica or Panama. In the past relatively few of these boats have stopped in El Salvador, and those that did spent only a short time because they: 1) are not aware of the recreational possibilities available in El Salvador, 2) think that El Salvador is a dangerous country, 3) think that it is an unsafe place during hurricane season.

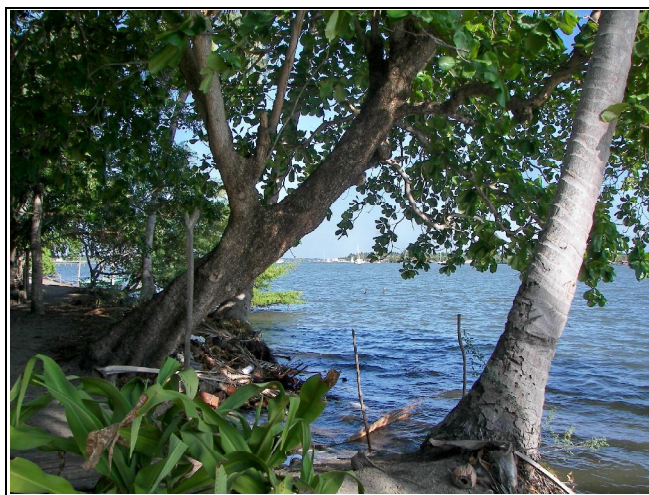


Boats in the anchorage

Now, adventuresome cruisers have discovered that El Salvador is a spectacular destination that offers a relaxing atmosphere with a 'cruisers vacation' feel. They found this is a place where you can safely leave your boat for as long as you wish to hang out, travel, and enjoy Central America.



Salvadorian style sailing



The destination of Bahia del Sol is located inside Estero Jaltepeque on the Costa del Sol peninsula where the sun is king. It is the optimum location for cruisers because it has important services for cruisers such as marinas, moorings, safe anchorage, restaurants, and easy access to transportation and shopping. A plus for the area is that you can interact with the friendly locals and experience the Salvadorian life style at various levels.



Full moon in the estuary

This guide will show you how easy it is to travel to El Salvador to discover an unspoiled and uncomplicated country where you will instantly feel welcomed.



Traveling to El Salvador

Many cruisers begin their travels in earnest from La Cruz, Mexico. This is a good location to get those last minute boat chores done and provision. Most of the passages are at least overnight but with careful planning you can do some long day sails. The longest passage for most boats is two nights which may be important to dog owners. There are at least 12 stops you can make along the Mexican gold coast.

The Cruisers Rally to El Salvador is about expanding your horizons to discover something new so if you are starting your voyage from La Cruz we suggest leaving soon after the winter holidays. The longer you wait the less time you will have to spend in all those new places along the way. In fact we boldly recommend to not plan on spending too much time in the "over-cruised" ports north of Acapulco because from Acapulco on is where you begin to see a different side of Mexico.



Huatulco

Huatulco is located in the state of Oaxaca which is known for its' black pottery, coffee, and chocolate. The area has ten bays where you can anchor and snorkel in warm clear waters. One anchorage, Santa Cruz, is right near the town of La Crucecita where there are many nice restaurants, shopping, hardware stores, and one large grocery store,

named Super Che. You can safely leave your boat in Marina Chahue while you tour and different places inland such as the colonial city of Oaxaca. A natural rally fleet will form here because many are waiting for the same Tehuantepec weather window to cross over to Chiapas.

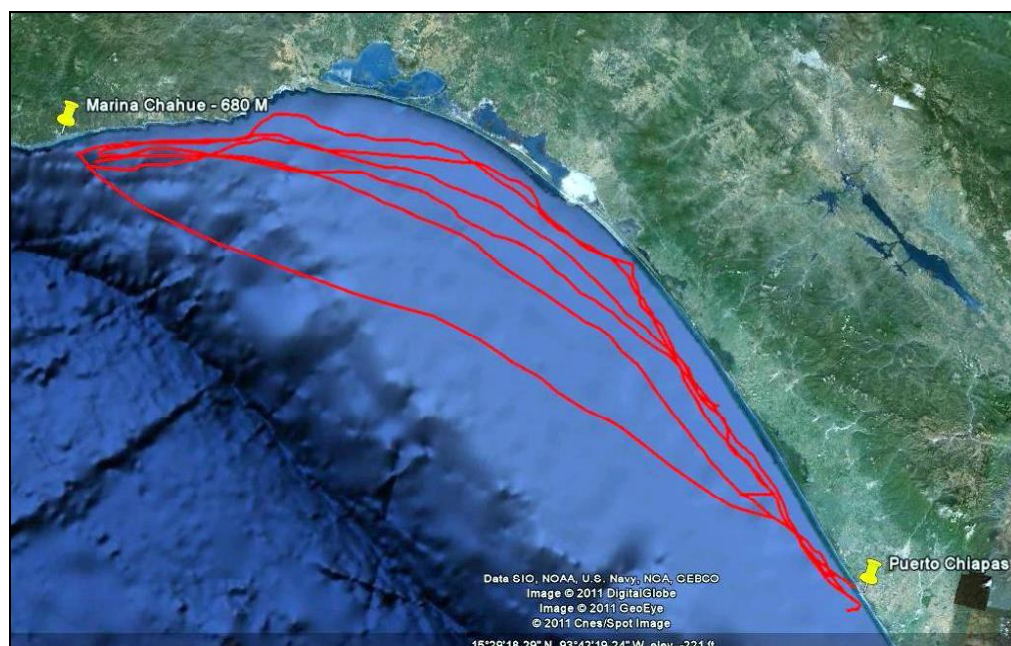


Chiapas

Puerto Chiapas is located in the state of Chiapas which is known for its' natural beauty, coffee and traditions. It is also the birthplace of the Mayan culture and you will notice the people are much different from the rest of Mexico.

The new Marina Chiapas with 40 slips opened here in 2012 and is host to the rally. They have a 70-ton travel lift and dry storage facilities.. The nearby city of Tapachula has a Walmart/Sams Club, Mega, and similar stores for provisioning. We recommend you stock up here so you don't have to spend your first days in Bahia shopping.

You do not want to miss touring Chiapas and the Guatemalan border towns. Chiapas has many gorgeous coffee fincas, mountain touring, and is the gateway to amber country.



Courses of eight boats crossing during the same weather window.

The Gulf of Tehuantepec

The Gulf has a well deserved reputation for its' ferocious winds and high seas but every year on a good weather window many boats make the 238 or so mile passage from Huatulco to Puerto Chiapas with the only complaint being that the weather is hot and the nightly shrimp boats working along the shore. With today's reliable weather forecasting it is easy to pick a safe crossing window.

The gulf has opposing near-shore currents that run around 1.5-knots, more during and after a big blow. On the Huatulco side it gives you a lift up to Salina Cruz. After Salina Cruz you meet the opposing current which slowly diminishes as you approach Puerto Chiapas.

"Despite all the fretting and all the anticipation and anxiety, our 260 mile crossing of the Gulf of Tehuantepec was delightfully uneventful" Susan & Michael – S/V Calypso

Weather Forecasting

We're not going to pretend to be expert Tehuantepec weather forecasters. You can use any number of weather forecasting sites like Magic Seaweed, Buoy Weather, and Passage Weather. Usually the group of boats waiting in Huatulco develops a consensus about the best time to depart.

Making the Crossing

The best place to wait for a window is in Huatulco. Most people wait for a three-day or longer window before heading across. The safest approach is the one-foot-on-the-beach method. The difference between going straight across

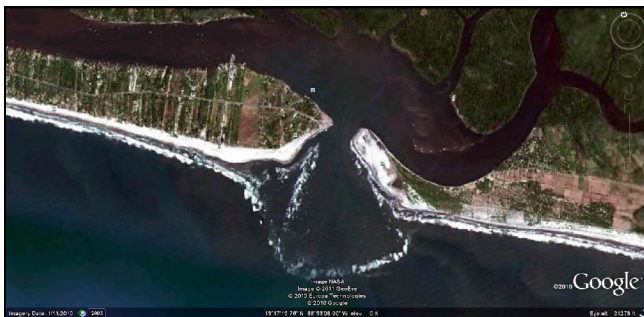
and following the beach is 25 miles. If you head north out of Huatulco in the early morning you should arrive in Salina Cruz 10 hours later. You can stay 1 ½ to 2 miles off the beach until you are near or reach Salina Cruz.

Then depending on the weather, you can decide whether to cut straight across at 16 north or continue to follow the shoreline. Your distance from shore will depend on the wind strength. For reference we have traveled from the opposite direction from Chiapas to Huatulco in a 40-knot gale keeping in 30 feet of water, which translates to less than a quarter mile from the beach. The shore gradient is consistent so you can maintain this distance all the way around. If necessary you can anchor along the shore in 30 feet almost anywhere and we have done so three times.

The Tehuantepec winds seldom blow as far as Puerto Chiapas so after you make the turn near Salina Cruz the wind (if there is any) and current will diminish the closer you get to Puerto Chiapas. About 40 miles past Puerto Chiapas you often pick up an east setting current.

If you check the Internet you will be hard pressed to find an account of a bad Gulf crossing by anyone with a good weather window. Boaters that get in trouble usually are attempting to beat or second guess a weather window.

"In the end, our 240 mile sail across was quite uneventful and we had to motor almost half the time due to lack of wind." Ben & Molly – S/V Knee Deep



ENTERING THE ESTUARY

A sand bar that has a 12-foot deep channel guards the outer entrance into Bahia del Sol. The channel moves during the year so you must have a pilot to make a safe entrance. Hotel Bahia del Sol runs the pilot service and will guide you safely through the entrance. The pilot fee is \$25 which includes your exit. If you stay in the hotel marina for one week the fee is waived.

First, it is of utmost importance to email the hotel and the rally committee of your planned arrival time and date to ensure the pilot is available. Check the rally website for the addresses.

You should adjust your passage to arrive at the entrance an hour or more before high slack tide during daylight hours. If you do not have a tide program, you can download a free tide prediction program from WxTide. The link is on the "Crossing the bar" page on the website. Use La Libertad as the base station. Please note that El Salvador is always on Central Standard Time. If you arrive too late you will have to anchor and wait for the next high tide. In addition, the pilot will not bring you in if the bar is too dangerous.

If you are required to anchor, do so in 40-45 feet west of the entrance and be sure you are out of the surf zone. At times the anchorage can be pretty uncomfortable so it is best to arrive on time.

About one hour before you arrive you can contact the hotel on VHF channel 16 by calling "Bahia del Sol" and tell them

"We arrived at the entrance with 3 other boats. We were greeted at 9am by the bar pilot bring all four of us over the bar. The waves looked a little daunting but - no problem, all four of us crossed safely with no issues" – John, SV Red Sky

you need the pilot. The radio is monitored from 8 am to around 6 pm. The entrance meeting area is located at 13d 16m North – 88d 53m West

Preparation & Planning

Before crossing the bar, we recommend the following:

- 1) Run your engine at high speed for 5 minutes to make sure it does not overheat. If you are having overheating problems then it is better to run the engine at a lower speed when entering rather than risk engine failure in the entrance. Inform the pilot if you are having engine problems so he can adjust his decisions.
- 2) Check the steering, throttle controls, and make sure that everything on the deck is secured.
- 3) Ensure all loose items are stowed especially in the cockpit where their movement could distract you.
- 4) Close all port lights, companion ways, and hatches.
- 5) The pilot will give you directions via VHF radio.



The pilot boat

"The crossing is over before you know it...but was the best E-Ticket ride we have had in a while!!" – John & Rosie, MV Serena Ray

"The waves and crossing the bar are all timed and a pilot escorts you in on a jet ski When we arrived at the river mouth, we were timing the waves and it was no big deal... Zeppelin had a great ride in!" – Ellie, SV Zeppelin.

Entering

The pilot will meet your boat and ask you to follow him slowly towards the entrance. Only one boat at a time can enter but while one boat is going in the others can stage in one area. Be aware that bar conditions change rapidly during the change of tide so one boat may cross in just a few minutes while others have to wait for quite a while to enter.



Wave approaching stern of boat



Wave picking up stern of boat



Surfing on the wave

Once you are headed in ***do not turn your boat around*** unless clearly directed to do so by the pilot. During this time, the pilot will be judging the wave periods looking for a lull. He will want you to move as close as possible to the bar so when the lull occurs you can quickly pass through. He may have you start and stop periodically to accomplish this. When the lull happens he will ask you to apply full throttle and follow in his direction over the bar.

The large powerboats that go through the entrance everyday have enough power to easily get over the bar before the next wave set comes in. However, slow boats do not so the next wave set will usually catch up. Have someone watch behind and inform the helmsman of the progress of the waves. When the wave picks up the boat, you will surf until the wave passes under the boat.

At this time it is important to **ALWAYS** do your best to keep your boat perpendicular to the incoming waves rather than trying to follow the pilot. Depending on the force of the wave, it is not unusual to use quite a bit of rudder to accomplish this. Normally, two quick and exciting surfs and you are over the bar. Ignore your depth meter because sometimes suspended sand will give you a false reading. Welcome to El Salvador!

All the above instruction may seem a bit unnerving but crossing the bar is normally safe, quick, and easy. Weather and swell conditions during the rally season are usually calm and bar is seldom rough. Hundreds of boats have traveled in and out of the entrance without a problem. That all being said, there is always a risk of a mishap. No matter how calm the conditions bar crossings should never be taken lightly.

After crossing

The entrance to the estuary is about ½ mile from the bar crossing area. After crossing, you can slow your engine and steer up the middle into the boca (mouth) of the estuary. After passing through the boca you will turn left into smooth water. Get out your dock lines and fenders. Be sure that your fenders are dragging well in the water because the docks are very low. The hotel staff will direct you to a slip where you will meet the immigration and port officials to complete your check-in.

..."waves began breaking on both sides of us, with maximum speed we caught one of the waves and rode it most of the way in. Torben and I looked at each other and said, "That's it?" We had a more exciting time coming in from the double-handed lightship race last year!- Judy & Torben, SV Tivoli

Exiting

Preparation and planning for going out is the same for coming in. Near high slack tide the pilot will guide you out to the bar where he will get you as close as possible and wait for a lull. It is easy to watch and judge the waves as you go out.

If a wave set arrives, go slow over the crest unless otherwise directed. If it looks like the wave is going to break slow down and let it break in front of you then maintain enough power to keep the broken water from pushing you backwards. Maintain your position until all the waves have broken in front of you. At the pilots direction when there is a lull you will speed ahead quickly. Once you have passed the major wave sets motor at full speed straight out until you are in 45 – 50 feet of water. More than one boat has been surprised by a big wave when they thought they were through the wave sets



Zeppelin pops over a wave on the way out

but still in relatively shallow water. Just like in entering, the pilot will not guide you out if the bar is too dangerous.

An excerpt from Passage Maker magazine April 2009:

The West Coast of the United States is dotted with notoriously dangerous bars, including what is widely considered one of the most perilous in the world: the infamous Columbia River bar, nicknamed “The Graveyard of the Pacific.” Since 1792, approximately 2,000 ships have sunk on or near the Columbia Bar. However, potentially dangerous bars can be found all over the world.. crossing a bar in a small, seaworthy vessel is not an insurmountable task. While having local knowledge is always a significant advantage, safe bar crossings are not out of the reach of any prudent, well-prepared mariner armed with good information. There are a few simple guidelines you can follow that—when applied with appropriate judgment and good seamanship—can make a bar crossing safe, and even enjoyable.

“The waves looked huge from our vantage and the boat was ready, everything was out of the cockpit and stowed below, all hatches were closed and everyone was in the cockpit, not hanging off the rails. We were excited as you can imagine, it was a little like standing in line anticipating a big roller coaster. At the precise moment, the pilot has been watching the wave sets and gives us the directive to ‘turn left and floor it’- Vicky, SV Rocinante .

Local Spanish Words Associated with Entering and Exiting

Entrance (the) – Entrada, Bocana

Exit – Salida

Slow – Despacio, Suave

Wave – Ola

Big wave – Olas grande

Reverse - Reverso

Stop/wait – Espera

Turn around – Volver/Volverse

Full speed – Maximo

Straight ahead – Derecho

Left – Izquierda

Right – Derecha

Holy Crap! – Caramba!

Move ahead – Mas adelante

Move Back – Mas atras

Listo - Ready

IMMIGRATION AND PORT AUTHORITY

Hotel Bahia del Sol has free on-site port authority and immigration service. To enter the country they will ask for a copy of your passport, boat documentation, the original exit Zarpe and crewlist from your last foreign port and ten US dollars for each 90-day visa. No need to fly the Q-flag. It is all very low-key and friendly.



Visas obtained in El Salvador are good for four Central American countries, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Honduras but only for those traveling by land. If you take your boat to one of the other countries, you will have to get a new visa and a Zarpe.



Border crossing into Guatemala

"The Port Captain took our lines then we went to his air conditioned office. Now, we're talking. VIP baby! The officials were incredibly polite and efficient. Every person we have met has been genuinely friendly. They will offer to help you without expecting anything in return. Nice change from Mexico." _Judy & Torben, SV Tivoli

Visitors may travel freely across land borders from one of the countries to any of the others without completing entry and exit formalities at immigration checkpoints. However, it is important that you insist on an entrance and exit stamp when traveling Guatemala to avoid any "fines".

Tourists who wish to remain in the four-country region beyond their initial 90-day visa can obtain a one-time in-country (not required to leave) 90-day extension by applying at Migration in San Salvador and paying \$25. You will be required to show reason why you cannot leave the country (hurricane season, illnesses. etc) and have a resident or company sign an affidavit to "sponsor" you. The hotel will happily supply an affidavit. All the forms you need are on-line and the forms, affidavit and two photos are submitted to Migration. It normally takes two days to process everything so it is a good time to take the opportunity to spend a night in the city. When that visa expires, you are required to leave the four-country area, the nearest being Mexico, Belize, or Costa Rica. Many cruisers schedule their inland travel to include travel briefly outside the four-country region to renew their visas just prior to the expiration date.

New rules were implemented in 2010 requiring the port authority (AMP) to charge each boat \$1 per day to use Salvadorian waters. The fee is payable in 30-day increments up to 90 days. After 90 days you must renew your permit. The permit has unlimited renewals and can be renewed at the AMP offices located in the hotel. If you leave your boat unattended for over 90 days you can pay for your permit(s) when you return.

AUTORIDAD MARITIMA PORTUARIA REPUBLICA DE EL SALVADOR, AMERICA CENTRAL DELEGACION COSTA DEL SOL RECIBO DE INGRESO		Nº 0056	
LUGAR: <i>Bahia del Sol</i>	DIA: <i>24</i>	MES: <i>FEB</i>	AÑO: <i>11</i>
NOMBRE DEL ENTERANTE: <i>JEAN STRAIN</i>			
CANTIDAD ENTERADA EN LETRAS: <i>NOVENTA</i>		Por \$ <i>90.00</i>	
ESPECIFICOS DE INGRESOS			
12299 Derechos Diversos	15399 Multas e Intereses Diversos		
14199 Venta de Bienes Diversos	15799 Ingresos Diversos		
14205 Servicios Portuarios			
CONCEPTO			
<i>PERMISO TEMPORAL POR NOVENTA DIAS</i>			
<i>CON BANCACION MITA KULUU</i>			
ORIGINAL - ENTERANTE			

90 day permit

Zarpe

If you are traveling by boat to another country you will need an International Zarpe. If you are traveling to a port in El Salvador you need an *Internal* Zarpe. Either Zarpe costs \$40 and is issued on the day of your departure.

"We were met at the dock by the Bahia del Sol dock crew and the port officials. Really friendly and efficient check in. \$30 for 30 days in the country plus \$10 a person for visas. Fast and easy" – Paul & Chris, SV Jeorgia

THE COUNTRY



“There’s something thrilling about standing on the rim of an active volcano, looking down into the crater and imagining the sheer force required to blast such an impressive hole in the Earth. It’s even more exhilarating when the volcano you’re peering into erupted suddenly just 7 years ago”. Aaron & Nichole, S/V Bella Star.

El Salvador is situated east/west between 13 degrees north and 13 degrees 43 minutes north, lies 1,100 miles almost directly south of New Orleans and is in the Central Time Zone. It is home to 5.7million people. At the time of the Spanish conquest, El Salvador was known as Cuzcatlan, which means “land of precious things” in the Pipil language. The Spaniards mistakenly thought that the meaning referred to gold but the real meaning was about the fertile land and lush jungles.



El Salvador converted to the American dollar in 2001. Unlike other countries that converted to the dollar El Salvador uses American coins. Many Salvadorians have relatives working in the United States who send money back to Salvador. In 2004 over 2.5 billion dollars was sent into the country. Some foreigners think that it is still dangerous in Salvador but forget that the civil war has been over for 20 years.

“El Salvador is indeed a study in contrasts as traditional methods mingle easily with the modern world. The lush countryside with volcanoes in the distance was a wonderful backdrop to our time in El Salvador” – Cindy & Dick, SV Mentor

Crime should not prevent people from traveling Central America any more than it does from traveling San Diego or San Francisco. Crimes involving tourists are rare but, as most cruisers know, you need to take commonsense precautions wherever you travel.

Travel in El Salvador and throughout Central America is inexpensive and easy. El Salvador has many things to offer such as national parks, twenty-three volcanoes to explore, colonial towns, lakes, and artisan villages. Because of its’ small size travel time between attractions is short. They like to say, “You are always 20 minutes away from something in El Salvador.”

Reprint from the Lonely Planet Guide:

El Salvador sneaks up on you: in lefty lounge bars in San Salvador, at sobering museums and war memorials, and along lush cloud-forest trails; it’s a place of remarkable warmth and intelligence, made all the more appealing for being so unexpected. Travelers tend to skip El Salvador, wooed by marquee destinations such as Guatemala and Costa Rica, and unnerved by stories of civil war and gang violence. But the war ended almost 20 years ago, and crime, while serious, is almost exclusively played out between rival gangs; tourists are virtually never involved. And though El Salvador has fewer protected areas than its neighbors, you get them practically to yourself – including pristine forests, active volcanoes and sparkling lakes. The only place you might find a crowd is on Punta Roca, El Salvador’s most famous surfing spot – it happens to be one of the best right point breaks in the world, yet is a ghost town compared to lesser swells in Costa Rica and elsewhere. And when it comes to cities, none in Central America is smarter or cooler than San Salvador, with first-rate universities, museums and galleries, a vibrant bar and live-music scene, and an array of progressive NGOs, both local and international.



CENTRAL AMERICA








The first facts about Central America's geography are the imposing chain of volcanoes and a variety of tropical forests standing out against the sea. It is a land of contrasts; the most remarkable is that between the mountainous highlands of the central region whose slopes descend in gentle steps towards the Pacific, and the sharply divided plains on the Atlantic side that is exuberantly tropical. The Pacific region's moderate climate evenly divided between a rainy and a dry season contrasts with the Atlantic side's treacherous paradise of red soils, drenching hurricanes and incredible abundance of microbial life

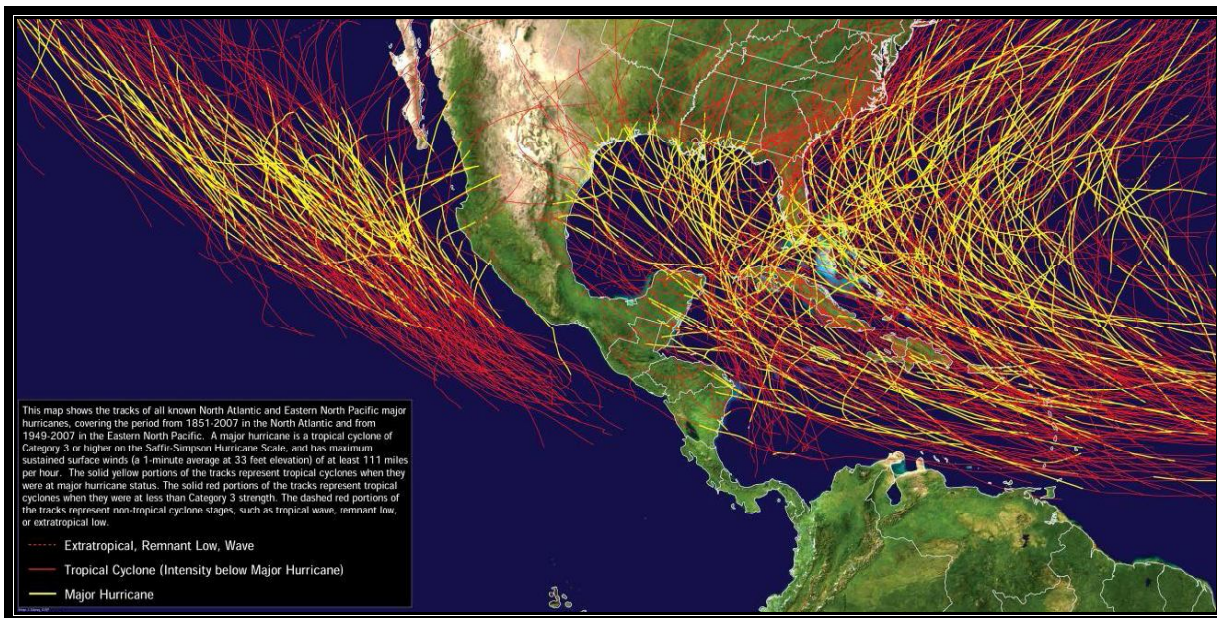


Young Maya street dancer.

The people are as contrasting at the geography. For example Guatemalans are colorfully dressed, many speak Quiche' and they cling to their old traditions while Salvadorians enjoy blue jeans and listen to pop music. In Belize the national language is English and the people are a diverse mixture of Germans, Garifunas, and blacks amongst others.

The short distances make it easy to experience other cultures in just a few hours. You can safely travel by executive bus, private van or rental car, or book a tour.

Name of territory, with flag	Area (km ²) ^[1]	Population (July 2009 est.)	Population density (per km ²)	Capital	Official language
 Belize	22,966	307,000	13	Belmopan	English
 Costa Rica	51,100	4,579,000	90	San José	Spanish
 El Salvador	21,040	6,163,000	292	San Salvador	Spanish
 Guatemala	108,890	14,027,000	129	Guatemala City	Spanish
 Honduras	112,090	7,466,000	67	Tegucigalpa	Spanish
 Nicaragua	130,373	5,743,000	44	Managua	Spanish
 Panama	78,200	3,454,000	44	Panama City	Spanish
Total	523,780	41,739,000	80		



Hurricane distribution for the last 150 years.

WEATHER

El Salvador has a tropical climate with pronounced wet and dry seasons. The Pacific lowlands are uniformly hot; the central plateau and mountain areas are more moderate. The winter rainy season extends from May to October. Almost all the annual rainfall occurs during this time, and yearly totals, particularly on Southern-facing mountain slopes, can be as high as 78 inches.

There are no hurricanes on record for El Salvador. Pacific hurricanes that form far off the coast move away towards the north and only effect El Salvador with unsettled weather. Late in the summer a strong Atlantic hurricane may migrate over bringing significant rains but no winds. All this makes El Salvador a safe location during the summer. El Salvador is not immune from tropical storms but they are infrequent.

November through April, the Central American summer, the northeast trade winds control weather patterns. During these months, air flowing

from the Caribbean has had most of the precipitation wrung out of it passing over the mountains in Honduras. By the time this air reaches El Salvador, it is dry, hot, and hazy.

Temperatures vary little with season; elevation is the primary determinant. The Pacific lowlands are the hottest regions, with annual averages ranging from 77°F to 85°F. Mountain areas are the coolest, with annual averages from 54°F to 74°F.

Bahia del Sol has a unique microclimate with much less inclement weather compared to the surrounding areas.

The rally starts well before the rainy season. When the season does start, it rains almost every night, usually after sunset for about an hour or so giving you an opportunity to replenish your water tanks. If you do not have a water catching system now is the time to think about it.



Catching rain water

San Salvador Average Temperature and Rainfall

Month	Temp	Rainfall
Jan	64/82	.25
Feb	64/84	.25
Mar	68/86	.50
April	70/86	2.0
May	70/82	7.0
Jun	70/80	12.4
July	68/82	12.4
Aug	68/82	12.0
Sept	68/81	12.0
Oct	68/81	9.0
Nov	64/82	1.5
Dec	64/82	.50

"...Saturday the thunder boomers came in at midnight. This is our first rain in 6 months! We were not completely prepared. Our new awning protects us from sun but will require modifications for rain and unfortunately the side ports must be completely dogged or they leak." Jim & Connie, SV Sound Effect



Hotel Resort and Marina

YOUR RALLY HOST – HOTEL BAHIA DEL SOL

Puerto Bahia del Sol is the official name of the rally destination and is named after Hotel Bahia del Sol Resort that is inside Estero Jaltepeque. The estuary is accessed from the Pacific by entering through Boca Cordoncillo. The hotel is located less than ½ mile from the entrance. Built in 1997 the large, hotel spans the Costa del Sol peninsula and has 7-miles of beach, restaurants, swimming pools, and bars on the ocean and estuary sides.



Marina

The hotel also has a well equipped marina with a capacity of 40 yachts on floating docks, and a sports fishing concession.

“...early morning Spanish class, swimming in the pool to do a few laps, showers on demand and Happy Hour complete with drink and appy specials! Pretty fancy living and all very reasonable” - Lue, SV White Shell II

Here in the hotel you will have a chance to meet middle class Salvadorians who come for all-inclusive day use. Nearby, the Vice President of the country has a beach



home and sometimes the president visits the hotel.

The hotel management and staff will be your hosts for as long as you stay in Bahia del Sol. They are low-key, friendly, and make every effort to accommodate your needs. Many of the rally events such as wine tasting, happy hours, etc are held on the hotel grounds.

Upon your arrival you will be greeted at the docks with a welcome drink for you and your crew then escorted to the on-site immigration

“We enjoyed ourselves and made many new friends. We recommend it for any cruisers continuing south from Mexico” – Mitch, SV Varuna

and port authority offices to complete the check-in process . Afterwards the hotel will ask you to register your credit card, which allows you to sign for everything. If you arrive without dollars, don't worry, someone will make you a loan.

Bahia Cruiser Club.

Join the Club for only \$14 per week and receive the following benefits:

- * 30% off bar & restaurant bill
- * Dinghy dock
- * Wireless Internet
- * \$1 national beer
- * Use of all facilities including both pools
- * Showers
- * Special slip rates (exceptions apply)
- * Garbage collection
- * Special room rates

“The hotel staff did all they could to make us feel welcome. We have yet to find a place so willing to cater to cruisers” – Connie, SV Kokomo

“I liked the easy no pressure feeling I got when it came to events. Do what you want pass on the rest. dinners, pool parties and tours of El Salvador all good” – Lauren, SV SOMF



Boats moored in the estuary

ABOUT THE ESTUARY

Estero Jaltepeque is a tidal estuary made up of over a dozen islands and has many miles of twisting, turning waterways ready for exploring. Flood and ebb currents average three knots at maximum ebb and ranges from 5 to 7 feet. You can anchor in good holding almost anywhere along the estuary but most boats anchor near the hotel. You can also rent an inexpensive mooring nearby.

To the east, the estuary joins the Rio Lempa, El Salvador's longest river. To the west a quick four-mile dinghy ride takes you to the quaint and unspoiled El Salvadorian town of La Herradura. It has an open market, restaurants, and many small tiendas.

Along the main part of the estuary, you will find numerous boat-up restaurants featuring seafood specialties like delicious deep fried fish. A 10-minute walk from Bahia takes you to the small beach village of La Puntilla that has a spectacular view of the entrance. You can observe boats transiting the bar while you enjoy a meal or refreshments in one of the restaurants. Directly across the estuary is Isla Cordoncillo where the families of local fishermen live.

"...we settled down for a cold beer under the thatch roof, with a much stronger cooling breeze flowing through. We were 15 feet off the sand, on a wooden deck, sitting on plastic tables, there are also hammocks hanging for an afternoon rest" – Tim & Traci, SV Gijima

The island is completely without any services, electricity, water, sewage etc. The people are quite poor but happy to interact with the cruisers. During the summer months, they sometimes come by your boat to sell shrimp.



Estuary shrimp

There is a small school on the island where Canadian ex sailor Jan Turner teaches English to the local island children. She invites cruisers to help teach two days a week. Everyone who does so says it is a very fulfilling experience and Jan says teaching English is a good way to learn Spanish. Every Wednesday evening Jan sponsors a benefit chicken dinner for the school.

El Salvador flora and fauna is characteristic of a tropical region. It is significantly diverse in spite of its small area of 20,746 sqm. It has over 800 species of trees and more than 400 varieties of orchids as well as over 1,000 species of butterflies and 800 species of sea fish.

El Salvador has mangrove forests, fresh water lagoons, swamp forests, tropical deciduous forests, alpine forests and cloud forests. In the forests of El Salvador grows mahogany, cedar, teak, walnut, rubber, and tropical fruit trees. Medicinal plants and orchids add to the flora wealth of El Salvador



Cruisers on the Mayan Triangle

TRAVEL AND TRANSPORTATION

Local Transportation

Local buses to San Salvador and Zacatecoluca can be boarded at the front of the hotel. All the buses go to a location named “Arcos” where you get off, walk up the hill to the right and catch the next bus to your destination. Salvadorians are very protective of tourists and someone will make sure you get off at the right spot. On all the local buses you do not pay upon boarding. A helper will come around and collect your money. The local joke about buses:

Q: “How many people can you get on a Salvadorian bus?”

A: “One more!”



Room for one more.

Rental Cars, etc

There are many auto rental agencies in San Salvador. You can easily book a car through the hotel. For a small fee some agencies will deliver and pick up at Bahia. Be sure to ask to see the Tarjeta de Circulacion which is the cars’ registration card. If you are pulled over they will want to see that and your rental agreement.. There are additional charges if you are taking the car out of the country and those permissions are inspected at each border crossing. On certain days you can share a 10-passenger van from Bahia for a day of shopping in the city. For more personal service you can also hire a taxi for part or all of the day for a reasonable price.

Airport

The international airport, named Comalapa (airport code SAL) is 30 minutes away by taxi so it is very easy to have family and friends join you here. The airport has one of the highest security ratings in Latin America. It has the normal red light-green light process for arriving travelers. Each person is allowed to bring \$500 worth of “personal” items not counting clothing, a camera, computer, and other such normal tourist items plus 2 liters of alcohol. You can catch any taxi at the airport for around \$30 and tell them you want to go to Bahia del Sol

Local bus is the cheapest way to travel to San Salvador and Zacatecoluca. In Zacate you can simply walk around and do your shopping. In San Salvador the bus stops at the southern station (terminal Sur) and from there you can take a taxi, a city bus or colectivo. However it is normal for 12 passenger colectivos to carry 18 to 24 occupants. Besides being extremely dangerous due to the weight of the passengers they are obviously very uncomfortable with others laying over your lap or traveling with someone’s butt in your face. We think it is best to take a taxi from the station and back. The average price is about \$5. Many cruisers opt to hire a taxi for the whole day to be chauffeured around the city then returned to Bahia.

If you are coming to El Salvador on a one-way ticket or second part of a round trip you may need your boat papers and a letter from the hotel stating that you have a boat here. Some people have been required at the airport to buy a return ticket to prove they have a way out of the country. Ask your airlines policy before you return or buy a one-way ticket. Before you leave Bahia the hotel will gladly provide you with a letter and, it is always good to have your boat papers with you. If you have crew coming on a one-way ticket it would be a good idea to email them a letter stating that they are crew as well as sending them a copy of your boat papers or crew list with their name on it.



Long Distance Traveling

It is safe and inexpensive to leave your boat in Bahia while you travel around Central America. You can fly to your destination but most people take the comfortable and affordable long distance buses. Traveling from San Salvador to Guatemala takes only five or six hours and almost all destinations within El Salvador are just a couple of hours. You can plan your own itinerary, make travel arrangements through a number of travel agents or you can employ the services of a tour guide. On long distance bus lines you can choose from a variety of comfort levels. Some buses have deep and roomy reclining seats (cama and semi-cama) while others have normal, but comfortable seats. All the bus lines are security conscious.

“We are here to tell you there is plenty of cruising south and we plan to take it all in. El Salvador is working hard to make this a great place to stop and take in the sites” –Jim & Connie, SV Sound Effect

“Guatemala is still very Mayan. Chris and I feel like giants there, as the people are classically short. [Native] dancers wear masks that represent Europeans with colonial-era dress. The Mayans, despite hundreds of years of colonization, continue to practice much of their ancient traditions including multi-deity worship, fitting it neatly into the corner of their Catholic churches.” – Paul & Chris, SV Jeorgia

Why take a guided tour?

Touring a country with a guide isn't a question of knowing how to use a map, or be able to choose a good restaurant or hotel room yourself.

Touring a country with a guide is a question of wanting to know more about the place, the history, the people, and the lore. Is to see what's behind the façade other people are just looking at. Is feeling like you are immersed in the local culture.

Besides, a guide can help you choose the most interesting and, if you want, off-the-beaten-track places to visit and the best itinerary for you, adapting all this to your budget, time and interests.

Tours with a knowledgeable native guide can be an experience to remember for a lifetime.

Tourist Routes

El Salvador has a number of developed “tourist routes”. Names such as Ruta de las Flores, Ruta de Paz, Ruta de Volcan all describe the various areas and attractions in the country. Mention one of these names to a local and they will understand where you are talking about.

Security precautions while traveling are the same in El Salvador as they are in other countries. Keep your luggage in site, don't wear jewelry, protect your cash and be aware of your surroundings. In some rural hiking areas you may need to hire an escort or guide to accompany you.



Check Trip Advisor to get an idea about touring El Salvador

“We took a week-long 3 country tour with a small group of other cruisers we've gotten to know here... van rides to Honduras, Guatemala and through eastern El Salvador to see the Mayan ruins.”
– Paul & Chris, SV Jeorgia

“No matter which direction you travel there are exciting new experiences and very real wondrous sights and people” –
David & Maureen, SV Andiamo

SAN SALVADOR – THE CAPITAL CITY



Galerías Mall in San Salvador

LA CIUDAD

The capital city has 1.6 million inhabitants and is home to one-half of El Salvador's wealth. It is a one-hour automobile ride to the capital city or an hour-and-a-half by local bus. The city has five European style malls, many hotels and restaurants in all price ranges, museums, numerous "Safeway-like" stores, doctors and dentists and at least ten well-equipped hospitals. It's pretty much everything you can find in any urban city.

In the industrial district you can find large hardware stores, machine and welding shops, auto parts, hydraulic parts, etc

You can find almost anything you need in the city especially with a knowledgeable driver. But on your own it can be a daunting task to navigate yourself around the city because of all the one way streets, dead ends, and cryptic business addresses. To add to the confusion are streets that change names at Colonia borders or the names are missing altogether.

But all that aside most people love San Salvador because it is fun, exciting, and a real city with great friendly and helpful people.

A few city things to do with your time

Spending a few days in the city is easy, enjoyable, and inexpensive. One of the many fun things to do is hire your favorite taxi driver for the day and explore places like the downtown central market, the Military and Guzman museums or take a quick and interesting ride up to Puerta Diablo or visit San Salvador volcano. Another diversion is to stay at one of the nice but inexpensive hotels and spend the day discovering San Salvador's seemingly endless supply of department and specialty stores. Or treat yourself to a mini day spa (yes, girls and guys) followed by lunch at one of the many fine and affordable restaurants. Finish off your day by treating yourself to an upscale restaurant like Las Pampas de Argentina. To be safe in the evening have your hotel call a taxi for you and get his card. When you are ready to return have the restaurant call the same taxi company for you.



Puerta Del Diablo is a peak located on the outskirts of San Salvador. Being of great significance to the Mayan *Pipil* people, it was a sacred site used for sacrifice rituals. It was named "The Devil's Door" by the Spanish Catholics. Any taxi can take you from the capitol in about 20 minutes for only a few dollars. A hike to the top is completely worth the view, especially if you go late in the evening near dusk. The sunset to the west, Lake Ilopango to the east, the Pacific Ocean to the south and El Volcan de San Salvador to the north make the view absolutely exquisite! Stop by the little *Pupuseria* which is tucked into volcanic caves at the bottom of the mountain for dinner after your outing. For something different you can take a short zipline or rappel for only \$2. You will not find many foreign tourists here. It is best during the rainy season when the air is clear. Rated 4.5 on Trip Advisor.



Local vendor with those crabs

ZACATECOLUCA

Around 62,000 people live in and around this busy town. Its' narrow streets makes for a crowded central market where it is easy to get caught up in the excitement. Zacate is the capital of the department (state) of La Paz. It is about one and one half hours from Bahia by bus and has an open market and a few large, well-stocked grocery and hardware stores. Normally, this is also the location of the nearest ATM. If you want to make a quick and relatively easy provisioning run this is the place to go. Zacate also has the nearest post office where you can receive mail and packages via USPS (United States Postal Service).

How do you say that?

"Zacate! Zacate! is what you will hear the bus drivers shouting to let you know that their bus goes to Zacatecoluca. Some busses are direct and some let you off at Arcos. Taking the direct bus sounds like it might be quicker but not so. The direct bus does indeed go "directly" to Zacate but it stops in every little pueblo in between. It's always quicker to get off at Arcos and transfer to another bus.

In Zacate you get off the bus at the fast food restaurant "Biggest" which is right in front of the Don Juan grocery store. One other large grocery store named Super Selectos is about four blocks away. Ask anyone and they will direct you. To return walk over to the bus station to get the bus. There will be "hawkers" shouting all sorts of destinations and the one you want is "Costa, Costa, Costa." They will make sure you get on the correct bus

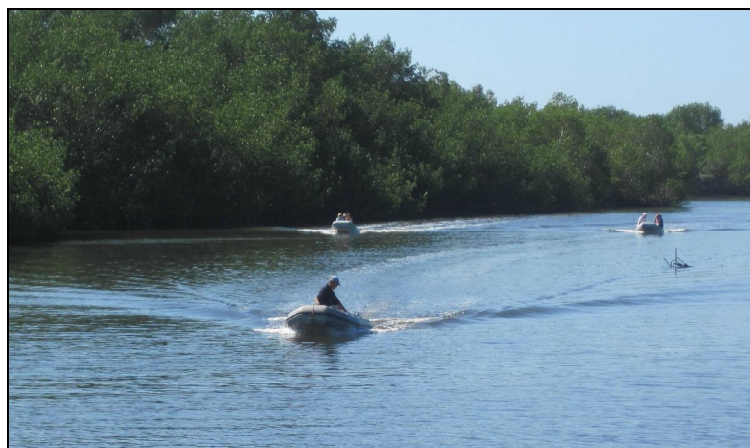
"We did travel up to the bigger town Zacatecoluca to access the bank and do a little provisioning. We had a great ride up with six others in a van for \$10.00 each. The driver took us on bit of a tour on the way back so we could get a sense of the countryside"- Lue, SV White Shell II

"The sidewalks are jammed with vendors so you generally share the street with bicycles, motorcycles, a few cars and, yes, the buses' - Kathy, SV Ahwahnee.

You can order parts or receive mail at the post office in Zacatecoluca. The average time is 3 weeks but it can take up to 6 weeks. Having parts shipped via US Postal Service is easier than using DHL or UPS. We have not tried to order large expensive items like transmissions, radars, etc but we have received things like pressure water pumps, DVD's, LED lights, mail without a problem. When you pick up your package at the post office you will need your passport and may have to pay a small fee. Address your packages to:

Recipient name as it appears on passport
Boat Name
C/O Hotel Bahia del Sol
Boulevard Costa del Sol, Kilometro 78
San Luis La Herradura, La Paz
El Salvador, Central America

You can have someone at the hotel call the post office to check if you have a package.



The trip up the estuary

LA HERRADURA

At sometime during your stay you will take your dinghy the four or so miles up the estuary to the authentic and unspoiled town of La Herradura. When you arrive you hand your dinghy painter to the local attendant and he will guard it until you return. Pay him \$1 when you are ready to leave and maybe a little more if he does a lot of work for you. There is a number of restaurants right at the municipal wharf, which is really just a seawall, with the coldest beer in El Salvador.

Small tiendas and pharmacies line the street along with a few hardware stores. It's a short but hot walk up to the fairly well-stocked supermarket Despensa Familiar (credit cards accepted). A little farther up the road is the towns' open market where you can buy many, but not all, things.

After making your purchases you can catch a 3-wheeled Tuc-Tuc back to the wharf for 25 cents each (pay at the end of the ride). Then you can enjoy a cold drink and an inexpensive lunch at one of the restaurants.

"The people here are quite outgoing and friendly, many times I am not the first to initiate a wave a smile or a 'bueno' – Vicky, SV Rocinante

"Our first Saturday... a group of us newcomers set off in our dinghies up the estuary to the local village for the Saturday market. Strolling the streets we were welcomed with big smiles and children loving to have their pictures taken. We spent the week hanging around Bahia, visiting nearby palapa's for cold beers and grilled prawns the size of your hand and taking the dinghy around the river estuary." – Ellie, SV Zeppelin



Curious girls at the open market

Rural Spanish is different than "city" Spanish. It is common to leave off the front or back of a word e.g. "comer" (to eat) becomes 'mer or "buenos dia" becomes "buenos" and words are often mumbled. Even with your best Spanish it can sometimes be difficult to communicate. In rural Herradura we went searching for white vinegar but all we could find was the locally made pineapple vinegar. We kept asking around and someone finally said : "you want vinagre de casa, you can get it at the pharmacy". We asked at the pharmacy and sure enough they had it. The clerk went to the backroom and returned with a corked wine bottle full of white vinegar. After returning home imagine our surprise when we opened the bottle and discovered it contained ammonia!

SECURITY TIPS

Salvadorians are very security conscious and guards are everywhere. This is the normal way of life here and everyone is quite relaxed about it. We always feel very safe when we are standing next to a nice gentleman who is holding an AK 47!

Dinghy Security

Bahia is not known for dinghy thefts and very few have been stolen over the years. Every one of those that went missing was left unlocked floating in the water. Theft is mostly a crime of opportunity so please don't provide one. We recommend you lock your engine to your dinghy and lift it out of the water at night. If you want extra precaution chain the dinghy to the boat. We highly recommend that you do not leave your dinghy in the water but if you must then remove the engine every night. If you can't remove the engine then chain it and the dinghy to the boat with 5/16" or larger chain and don't leave any thing that can be quickly grabbed like the fuel tank or hand pump. You do not need to lock your dinghy at the marina dinghy docks. The same is true for the local dinghy up restaurants. They all have assigned security.



Dinghy security

Boat Security

We know of only two boats that have been broken in to and both instances were in 2005. If you are anchoring be sure to anchor near others. Even though some of us like to anchor away from the pack it also makes you vulnerable. Just like everywhere else, lock your companion- way hatch when you leave. If you are going to be away after sunset we highly recommend leaving a bright light burning in the cockpit and one down below. With today's LED and solar technology it is economical to leave a number of lights on all night. Many place a number of solar lights around the boat. Keep your Honda generator locked to the boat at all times or better yet, out of sight.

Personal Security

Crimes against tourists are almost non-existent in El Salvador. Most tourist areas have a private security or tourist police presence. But don't push your luck.

-Leave the jewelry and nice watches on the boat.

-Carry your camera and cell phone in your backpack not in that handy hip-holder.

-Keep your bags close to you and always be aware of your surroundings.

-Don't walk down the street counting your money.

-If something feels wrong walk into the nearest business and ask for help or find a tourist policeman.

"We forgot to turn on the night light before leaving, and thought it would be hard to find Neos, [in the dark] but I had put out one of our new "garden walk solar lights". It was doing a great job of lighting up the back of the boat. I was so excited that I put out four more of these little guys, so now we have little lights all around the boat."- Rog & Sue, SV Neos

Please be there to help someone.

Unlike Mexico, there is very little traffic on the VHF. The only local traffic is in the morning when the navy calls their posts on other islands to check in. Other than that it is boats entering or exiting the bocana or other cruisers hailing each other. The local hailing and emergency channel in Bahia is 16. The hotel, navy and port authority all monitor the channel. You should leave your radio tuned to VHF 16 at **all times** so you can quickly call for help or respond to someone else's emergency.

Late one night a boater called on VHF 16 complaining of severe abdominal pains. Two cruisers responded and arranged for an emergency trip to the local hospital where he was diagnosed with severe appendicitis. He was only hours away from dying. His ability to contact someone saved his life.

THE BEACH AND SURFING

El Salvador's coastline is divided into two distinct surf zones: the West Coast and the East Coast, both areas offer world-class right hand point breaks. The West Coast encompasses about a dozen different high quality breaks beginning at the coastal town of La Libertad . It contains El Salvador's most popular surfing spots such as Punta Roca with its powerful and hollow waves. The East Coast is more rustic and less frequented than the West Coast. Located three hours southeastward down the coast, it offers some of the most hardcore breaks and is a welcome change from the typical crowded beach and is perfect for those looking for a more uncommon surfing experience. You can find more than 25 surfing locations within easy reach.



LAS FLORES AND EAST COAST, EL SALVADOR



LA LIBERTAD, EL SALVADOR

La Paz. La Paz is the inside section of Punta Roca, La Libertad's big, rocky right point. While farther up The Point the wave is more critical and prone to shallow spots and barrel sections, La Paz is the easier, softer side of the wave and tends to draw surfers not quite ready for the more serious waves a couple hundred yards north. Though it's subdued, it's still an excellent wave and a great place to surf if you aren't into a long march or a road trip.



La Libertad encompasses about a dozen different high quality breaks beginning at the coastal town of La Libertad. It contains El Salvador's most popular surfing spots such as Punta Roca with its powerful and hollow waves.

Punta Roca. One of the gems of El Salvador, Punta Roca (aka "La Punta," or, to traveling Americans, "The Point") is a world-class wave that draws comparisons to J-Bay, Noosa, and other standout right-hand, rock-bottom pointbreaks. The wave runs for more than a quarter-mile at an even pace with several barrel sections on offer.

Conchalio. Playa Conchalio is a mile-long stretch of beach breaks just west of Punta Roca that hosts a speedy, thumping, barreling wave that shines during the dry season, when offshore winds really open the barrels up and give you hope of emerging unscathed. Conchalio is often surfed when it's flat everywhere else, because even at two feet or less it's still completely surfable.



"The other break Punta Mango is accessible only by boat, so at 5.00am we along with 3 other guys in our panga and 4 other pangas with about 6 guys in each one made our way through the surf and down the coast to the spot. This is a serious wave and has a fierce reputation for "taking no prisoners" surfers or their boards" – John, SV Red Sky

Surfing from an ex-pats point of view.

David and Maureen aboard *SV Andiamo* arrived in Bahia in 2010 and fell in love with El Salvador. David is an avid surfer and lends us his knowledge about surfing in El Salvador.

El Tunco is just a short distance west of La Libertad's world class surf break of Punta Roca and is an international gathering spot for traveling surfers. For the budget minded surfer you can find lodging from \$10/night, board rentals from \$10/day, meals from \$5.50, etc. Obviously, surf shops abound. It is a clean and lively get away for inexpensive fun and is only one of several similar communities that dot the beaches west of La Libertad.

Best of all is the access to a pristine coastline with plenty of surf breaks. Within an hours drive there are many uncrowded surf breaks to accommodate all levels of surfers.

Another Cruiser discovers El Salvador surfing

John & Leanne – *SV Red Sky*

Last week we rented a car and drove about 1 hour up the coast to the La Libertad area where there is a number of point breaks. We met Tyler from California who for the past 5 years has spent 6 months of the year surfing in various locations around the world such as Indonesia and Central America and the other 6 months back in Los Angeles where he owns a small surf shop. Tyler offered to show us some of the more off the beaten track surf spots as well as the communities along this stretch of coast. We visited El Tunco where he and probably another 100 or so people like him stay for the season at a beachfront property known as La Guitarra.

Available are about 20 small quite basic bungalows with 2 beds, a toilet and shower, and a front veranda complete with hammock. The room rate per night for 1 person is \$12.00, that's right twelve dollars! We met lots of surfers, guys and girls from all over the world, Finland, Israel, Brazil, Germany, it is a little like a United Nations summit. There are several other similar establishments around El Tunco. We spent 4 nights based in El Tunco. We spent the days surfing at one of the 5 breaks that are all within 15 minutes drive. Leanne took a couple of surf lessons, managed to stand up a couple of times, and is having fun learning. The town has many little eateries. Dinner for the 3 of us including a couple of beers cost \$20.00.

"Sean rode many waves and just kept surfing - he loved it! It was a great afternoon to be the only people on this beach, clear water in the 80's` with the waves rolling in on the outer reefs, (there are some great surf spots here), what a place for Sean to learn to surf, I hope he remembers" – Tim & Traci, *SV Gijma*



Our favorite hang out is at Kayu bar and grill, which overlooks Sunzal. We have met a few of the locals here and enjoyed their company. Just as if at home the beach is a very popular holiday location, so by Wednesday the crowds of locals began to arrive for the Easter Holidays. -J.H.



La Libertad has a large fresh seafood market on the long pier. Here you can purchase pretty much anything from lobsters to calamari. Be sure to take your cooler and a bag of ice. At the end of the pier you can observe fishing pangas being launched and retrieved via crane. At the foot of the pier are a number of specialty restaurants.

EL SALVADOR FOODS

The Pupusa



Mexico has its' tacos, Chicago has its' hotdogs and El Salvador has its' pupusas. The pupusa is the national food dish of El Salvador. They are thick hand-made tortillas of corn or rice flour stuffed with cheese, beans, or chicharron (shredded meat, not pork rinds). A combination of the three is referred to as revuelta. Other combinations abound. Pupuserias in Salvador are as common as taco stands in Mexico. Expect to pay anywhere from 25 to 60 cents each for these tasty, steaming hot treats. Three usually make a nice meal. Pupusas are usually served with a condiment made from fermented cabbage, jalapenos and shredded carrots known as curtido.

"Our tour started with a taste of El Salvador. The cuisine in this region is different than Mexico. Less hot spice, more pickled vegetables, much thicker tortillas" – John & Rosie, Serena Ray

Fried Fish



It is hard to resist one of these beautiful deep fried whole fish. They are usually accompanied with rice, salad, and one of those thick tortillas. The fish are priced by size.



In most restaurants they bring the fish for you to inspect and choose. You can have a nice afternoon by boating over to one of the seafood palapas located right in the middle of the estuary where your meal is prepared and served in a leisurely manner. Don't be in a hurry. Buy a cold beer and relax in one of their hammocks to enjoy the cool breeze and atmosphere.

Other Seafood

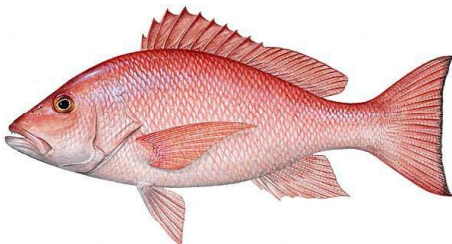


Coastal El Salvador is well known for its' availability of fresh seafood. Ceviche, cocktails of all kinds and soups are served almost everywhere.



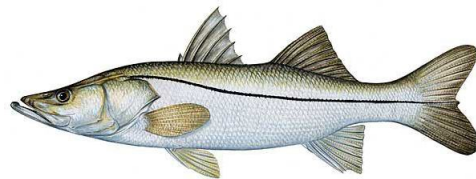
Estuary clams called Conchs are available in most outlying areas. They are harvested from the estuary. They're an acquired taste so if you want to try them buy a small dish and share them.

One thing you won't find in El Salvador is spicy foods or salsas.



Two common fish

Boca Colorado



Robalo

ANCHORING AND MOORING

Anchoring

The sand/mud bottom of the estuary makes for great holding. When locating your perfect spot keep in mind the spring tides can be 7.5 feet. “Soak” your anchor for a couple of days and you will be well attached to the bottom. There is an implied fairway pretty much down the middle of the estuary. If you anchor or drift too much into the fairway the Port Authority may ask you to move. Most people anchor near the hotel on the south side of the estuary. There is plenty of room but, for security reasons, it is best to anchor in a group. Please do not anchor among the moored boats. It is a good idea to raise your anchor a few days before you leave because they can become quite buried.

Set your anchor for the outgoing tide because it has the strongest current. Then attach a double bridle to keep you from sailing too much in the current. Anchor lights are required but not always enforced but, for your own safety please use one (or more)



Boats anchored on the south side of the estuary

A little about your dinghy and motor

After you leave Mexico you will have little use for your dinghy wheels. Almost everywhere has a dock or pier. In Bahia a lot of activities revolve around traveling fair distances in your dinghy such as exploring the mangroves, visiting estuary restaurants, going to Herradura for provisioning, etc. A small dinghy and engine will take you between the boat and the dock but it can be limiting for enjoying other activities. If you're thinking about trading in your oversized engine for one smaller you might want to reconsider.



Bahia anchorage

Moorings

There are three mooring concessions in the estuary.



Approximately 4,000 pounds of mooring

Prices vary depending on services.

“We are very fortunate to have stumbled onto a place [like] Bahia del Sol where it is safe to leave your boat for an extended time and we did” – Vicky, Rocinante

FINDING THINGS IN AND AROUND SAN SALVADOR

The city can be somewhat confusing for the first-timer. The city has a few main streets that are easy to recognize on a map and the city is laid out in zones and colonias like Zona Rosa, Escalon, and San Benito. Some zones are up scale and some are not. After a few visits you will become familiar with the easily identified landmarks in the popular zones.

Supermarkets

The most predominant grocery store in San Salvador is Super Selectos.



Super Selectos first opened their doors in 1950 and now have stores in every department in the country and there are many all over San Salvador. Every

Tuesday they offer deeply discounted prices on all their produce. Like any national grocery store they have special offers and close-outs all the time.



La Despensa de Don Juan is another local grocery store that was bought out by Wal Mart a few years back. It offers products similar to Super Selectos but they also

have "Wal-Mart brand" items. There are not nearly as many Don Juan's as there are Selectos but they are worth a look.

Everyone just loves Price Smart. It is a membership bulk product store



similar to Costco or Sam's Club. They are in 6 Central American countries. Two are located in San Salvador. A membership costs \$35 for two cards. Most folks share one membership with a friend. Some of our taxi drivers have their own card and, unlike your Costco experience, the store will let you purchase with someone else's card as long as the card holder is present. Price Mart also

has a small line of deep-cycle batteries.

Popular Malls in San Salvador

Metro Centro & Metro Sur – The largest mall in Central America

Galerias, Escalon – Siman department store

Las Cascadas – Wal Mart

Multiplaza - Sears

La Gran Via – The newest mall in San Salvador

El Paseo – Super Selectos

Honda generators

Don't get your hopes up on buying a new Honda generator in El Salvador. You can find a Honda 1000 but it runs \$1,600.

Honda 2000's are not available.

However, you can get your broken Honda generator repaired in San Salvador at Sagrisa. A diagnostic costs \$30. A complete rebuild of an eu2000i runs about \$350.



Sagrisa

Bulevar del Ejercito Nacional Km 3

Apartado Postal no. 394

San Salvador.

Tel: 2205-2700



Sagrisa is located near the Eastern bus terminal and you can recognize the area by the large grassy hill with the colorful buildings on top.



Do you miss a good German Delicatessen? Well you're in luck. Sausages, New York Cheddar cheeses, salami, pate, whole slabs of bacon, and all other sorts of decadent items are available at Kreef located in the upscale Maquilishuat area (yeah., pronounce that!). They even make their own sauerkraut, sausages and dry chorizo. Kreef is a great place to have lunch

before continuing your shopping day. Their killer sandwiches run from \$7 to \$10 and are worth every penny and made even better with a glass of German beer like Bitburger or Kostritzer. One of their half liters of German beer runs like \$3.75! We guarantee this will become one of your favorite places.



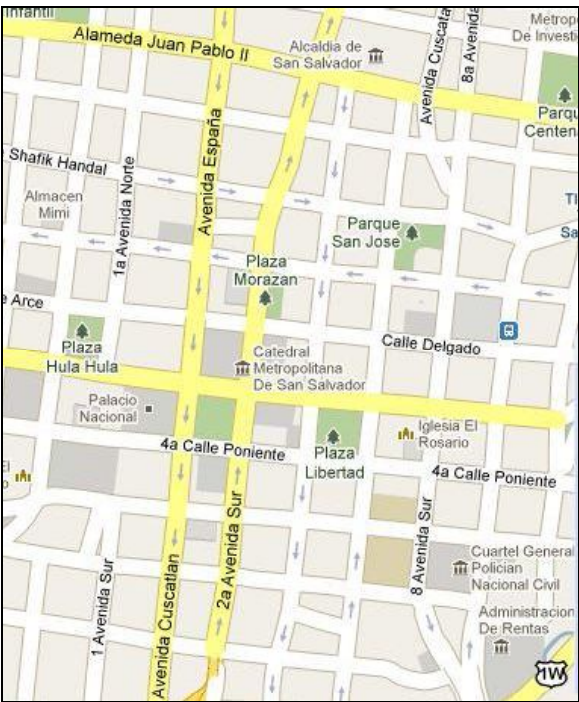
The Central Market

Go here if you want to see a decidedly unfiltered and urban El Salvadoran market. This isn't a tourist-centric, hammock-filled pedestrian plaza. The Central Market is a sprawling, seemingly chaotic mercado of blaring horns,



shouting vendors, and old women chopping vegetables in the street and wrangling live chickens. The main attraction at this multiblock indoor and outdoor market is that it is not designed for tourists: It's just *the* place locals go to buy everything from their dinner to electronic gadgets. If you can see the blue-topped cathedral then you are in the right

place. One drawback to the market is that you have to carry everything you buy around with you which can get quite tiring. We usually hire a knowledgeable taxi driver for the day to accompany us and he takes care of our packages and helps find the right place to purchase things. The market is full of tourist police but, if you are unsure of your safety just ask any stall clerk if it is OK to walk the area.



Map of the central area of San Salvador

Fabrics

You can purchase fabric at reasonable prices at a number of places in and around the city. Acrylic fabric is available in a wide range of colors and widths for around \$9/yard. Sunbrella is also available but at a much higher price. And you can get vinyl fabric in weights up to 22 ounces for around \$6/yard.

CoPlasa

Branches in San Salvador & Santa Tecla

Coplasa has a wide variety of fabrics, plastics, zippers, foam etc. They also sell sheet plastic, glues, and reflective material. You can pretty much walk out of the store with everything you need for a project.

Deposito de Telas

Branches in San Salvador & Santa Tecla

Deposito de Telas is solely dedicated to fabrics and carries the largest variety of Sunbrella. They do not carry accessories.





Re-cover two chairs, a sofa and six pillows.

10 Zipper pulls	\$.19
12 yds Upholstery material	\$48.00
12 yds Batting	\$22.00
2 sheets Foam material	\$54.00
5 yds Zipper	\$1.00
Total project	\$125.19

A Sampling of Businesses

Medical/Dental/Vet

Narcies Frias - Veterinarian

Dra. Delia Aguilar
75 Ave. Nte, Reparto Sta. Leonor
No. 3, San Salvador
Tel: 2274-8950

Dra Aguilar speaks English. She can help you obtain animal international health certificates and other necessary paperwork for taking your pet on an airline.

Dr. Alexys Benitez, Veterinarian

Calle El Mirador #5123
San Salvador
Tel: 2263-2010

Dr. Benitez speaks English. The office is located near the Plaza Futuro (formerly World Trade Center)

Dr. Edmundo Lazano Jr. - Chiropractor

Av Los Andes No 2992 Col. Miramonte
Tel: 2260-3335 Cel: 7769-3990

Located behind Don Juan near Metro Centro. There is no sign on the business so you have to know where you are going



Dr. Erick Sayes – Dentist (rally sponsor)

Calle Las Rosas, #6
Antiguo Cuscatlan,
Colonia La Sultana, San Salvador
Tel: 7885-6031

Dr. Sayes speaks English and offers a variety of services and he can recommend a specialist if necessary. He has a special price package for the rally members.



Dra. Brenda Portillo del Herrera-Cosmetic Dentistry

75 Ave Norte Edificia Escalon 1
San Salvador
Tel: 2262-3903

Dra. Brenda is a gentle cosmetic dentist. She takes great care with her work and speaks English.

Computer

Valdes - Toshiba Computer Repair

65 Av Sur # 3415A
Tel: 2209-2200 Ext. 2217

Machine Shops

There are many quality machine and engine rebuilding shops located in the industrial district and you can get pretty much anything made or repaired at reasonable prices. Take for example **Tallers Moldtrok** who specializes in gears and pulleys. They have 10 lathes, 5 milling machines, and surface grinders - all the things you would expect to find in a well equipped machine shop. They also



perform heat-treating and MIG and TIG welding. The owner, Jose Lanfeliu, tells us he's been in business for over 45 years and does a lot of work for the airport.



They can manufacture any kind of gear with the correct materials and heat treating. Also, they are not limited to just gears. You can get parts made from

silicon bronze or any other variety of specialized materials including all grades of stainless steel. They will give you an estimate on the spot and normally require 50% down payment.

Tallers Moldtrok

25 Avenida Sur No. 416
Tel: 2222-0359

The rally organizers will take your old batteries and recycle them by giving them to a local island family in need of a little electricity to operate their lights or a radio.

Automotive, lubrication and bearings

In the same area of 25 Avenida Sur are located many automotive parts stores like Napa as well as stores specializing in lubricants. You can't drive around the block without seeing at least one automotive store.

One good bearing and seal outlet is **Abarsa de CV**. They have an extensive line of bearing, seals, drive chains, drive belts hydraulic hoses, etc. We have always found what we wanted.

Abarsa de C.V.

Blvd Venezuela, entre 17 y 19 Av. Sur Njo. 925
San Salvador

For specialty oils you can check out **Acavisa de C.V.** which is right across the street from a Napa parts store. If you spend over \$100 here you will have to have your taxi driver who has a DUI card, sign the bill. Diesel lubricant is widely available.

Acavisa de C.V.

25 Av Sur No. 763
Tel: 2231-4200

Batteries

There are quite a few battery stores in the city with marine deep cycle batteries, wet and AGM types. For the best price see the Battery Center. They give us the distributor price regardless of how many batteries you buy. Free delivery is available on quantities.

Battery Center (rally sponsor)

Av Jerusalem , Col Escalon
Tel: 2263-8800
Email: Escalon@baterias.com.sv
Yesenia Barahona

Diesel Engine Related

There are two diesel laboratories that repair injectors and injection pumps:

Laboratorio Diesel Salguero

18a Calle Pte No 1229
Barrio Santa Anita
Tel: 2222-2790

Laboratorio Diesel Ortiz

22 Calle Pte No 926
Colonia Sta Anita
Tel: 2281-2110

"Using Jose as our personal taxi driver made provisioning and doctor's appointments easy. He is to be commended for friendly and professional service. Will use him over again" – Veronica, MV Sea Quest.

Taxis

Taxis are located in almost every town and city. Like in other Latin American countries, you confirm the fare before you get in. A typical fare from the bus station in San Salvador to Metro Centro is \$5 - \$6, about a 10 minute drive. We've never paid less than \$4 for any ride. Prices are higher at night

Hiring a taxi for the day in the city is inexpensive given the convenience, safety, and time saved. You can expect to pay around \$50 to take a taxi from the bus terminal, shop at every place you want and return to Bahia. Another option is getting an early morning pick up at Bahia, driven around town and return for about \$80 which works out to about \$9/hour and you don't do anything but say where you want to go.

If you have a taxi for the entire day it is best not to include him in your lunch group. Ask him to leave you at the restaurant and pick you up later. If we stop briefly for coffee we offer to buy him a bottle of water. If you want to reward your driver the best way is to give him a tip

Melvin Valle

Tel: 7279-0542

Melvin does not speak a lot of English but, he knows what cruisers like and where they want to go. Melvin has a quick smile and is very respectful to his clients. He has 24 years of knowledge about San Salvador.

Alejandro

Tel: 2516-7919 or 7164-8884

Alejandro speaks excellent English and knows his way around town.

Jose Osorio

Tel: 7424-8883

Jose speaks English and has intimate knowledge of all the in's and out's of San Salvador. Jose is very attentive and loves learning more English and teaching some Spanish. Jose has been providing service to cruisers for 10 years.

You can also make arrangements with the head chef at the hotel (Martin) who has a 10-passenger van.

Vaquerano Car Rental

2262-0799

We've been using this agency for 5 years. They have a nice range of cars, vans and SUV's plus great prices. Their minimum rental is seven days

Hardware Stores

The most popular hardware store is Vidri which is also an Ace hardware store. The two most visited Vidri's are:

Vidri Sucursal (branch) Escalon

Paseo General Escalon
85 Av Sur

This branch is laid out just like any Ace hardware store complete with Rubbermaid products, coolers, etc

Vidri (Sucursal Venezuela)

21 Av Sur
entre 12 y 14 Calle Poniente

This branch is more industrial with pumps, generators, sheet metal, etc.

Also located along Paseo General Escalon within 2 blocks of Vidri is **Freund** hardware.

Alumicentro

Final 25 Ave Norte y Blvd de los Heroes
Tel: 2520-2800

Alumicentro a glass and aluminum window manufacturer and supplier. They have a huge selection of aluminum extrusion, bar stock, and sheet as well as laminated glass for your boat windows. Great prices and selections.

Aceros Inoxidables de Centroamerica

Primera Av Nte #530,
entre Alameda Juan Pablo II, y 9 Calle Poniente
San Salvador
Tel: 2222-2382

You can find sorts of stainless items from tubing and plate to screen in various meshes. They fabricate, weld, polish and repair all stainless steel items. For example, 6 feet of one-inch stainless tubing for \$18

Castella Sagarra – General Hardware

Alameda Manuel Araujo y Pje Carbonell, Col. Roma
Tel: 2250-7331

ATM

ATM's are located all over the capital city of San Salvador. The nearest to Bahia is located about 20 minutes by bus inside "Super Mercado" in San Marcelino. There is also one in Herradura but it does not accept all cards.. The next nearest is Zacatecoluca about one hour away by bus.

Electronic components

There are many electronics stores around the city. Four of them are located in Metro Centro. One well-stocked store is **Rivas**. They have an unbelievable amount of economically priced items such as 12 volt LED's for 70-cents, 14 gage, 2 conductor electronics wire for 35-cents/yard, and cigarette style plugs for 95-cents.

Casa Rivas

Metro Sur shopping mall & near Vidri Venezuela.

Chroming

Cromatodo – Chrome & Nickel Plating

Colonia Luz
Tel: 2273-0363

All sorts of electro-plating services. Winch drums from \$40 each. You have to know where it is to find it.

Outboards

Marinsa

Located in Bahia del Sol and San Salvador.
Mercury & Tohatsu outboards

Global Motors, Yamaha Outboards

Colonia Avila Calle El Progreso 3139

If anyone asked us we would say buy your new outboard south of the border because the parts are different from the USA outboards. Global has parts for the Latin Yamaha engines. They have great prices on new also e.g. 15 HP short shafts, 2 cycle – 2014 price \$2,650 cash.



Bahia del Sol Estuary

Long Distance Buses

Normally you purchase your ticket at least a day before you want to travel in order to guarantee a seat. You will need your passport and the passport of every person for whom you are purchasing a ticket. Some of the bus stations have an onsite hotel which makes it convenient if you have an early morning departure.

- * **King Quality**
- * **Comfort Line**
- * **Tica Bus**
- * **Pullmantur**

Each bus line has similar and differing destinations and comfort quality.

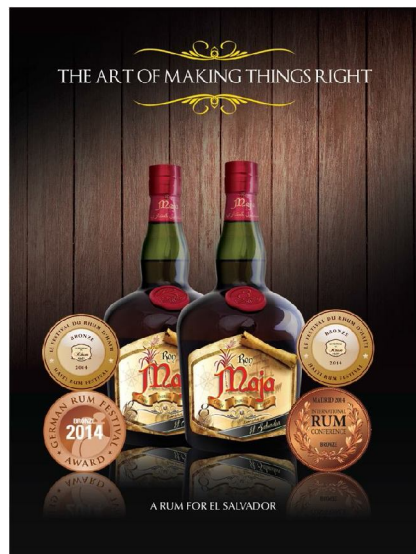
Cell Phones

We have yet to find an area that does not have cell coverage. Cell phones are inexpensive and available from a number of providers in the city like **Claro**, **Tigo**, and **Movistar**. If you have an unlocked phone you can simply purchase a chip. Rates to call the US average 10-cents-a-minute. Sometimes you can buy a phone with only your passport and sometimes you have to have a local (like your taxi driver) sign for it

You can add minutes almost anywhere, stores, pharmacies, etc. Many cruisers buy cell phones for the convenience of calling their favorite taxi, another cruiser, or for emergencies. The rally organizers can supply you with helpful numbers of locals who speak English and may be able help get you out of trouble or help you find something.

Internet 3g access

Month-to-month post-pay & pre-pay 3g sticks are available in the city and no contract is required. Normally have to go to an office (as opposed to a kiosk) to purchase them using your passport. If you need to download or send large files it is better to take your computer to the hotel wireless. The average price of sticks run around \$30/month and you can reload them just like cell phones.



Ron Maja, where poetry becomes rum.

Ron Maja was born from a family recipe, and is distilled for those who want to venture into the world of beverages at a higher level. Ron Maja has placed El Salvador in the fray alongside the most famous rums in the world, in the opinion of tasters from around the world.

Awards

- * Ron Maja 8 years reserve was awarded the Bronze Metal against 294 other rums at the 2014 Third International Congress of Rum Competition in Madrid, in the category of 6-10 year rum.
- * At the IV International Rum Festival in Berlin, Ron Maja Reserva 12 year was awarded the Bronze medal in the category 11-14 year rum.
- * At the International Festival of Ron Prince, Best Rum, both reserves (8 and 12-year) won the Bronze Medal.

Majayín Comandari D. and Claudia Urrutia are the founders of Ron Maja

Ron Maha is the official rum of the cruisers rally and they sponsor the welcome beverages.



TourIn El Salvador is a main sponsor of the rally and a favorite among cruisers. They offer a variety of packaged tours that can be customized according to your budget or desired itinerary. For example, you can put an additional day to your tour or change/include other locations.

Some of the tours offered are:

Volcanoes: There are 25 different volcanoes in El Salvador. Obviously you can't visit them all but those that you can are spectacular.

Mayan Triangle: Visit Mayan ruins in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala on this popular three day tour.

Ruta de Flores: Visit coffee fincas and some of the volcano-side towns to see some local artisans at work. The overnight tour is the best choice.

This is just a small sample of the tours available through TourIn. Check out comments on tours on Trip Advisor.

"We stayed in a small Posada, newly remodeled, and welcomed with friendly staff (\$30/night). Soon, it was time to search for a restaurant for dinner. As many of you travelers know, this can be a scale of delicious foods...to well, not so great. I must say, we found a little café with great live music, tastefully decorated, and with a Filet Minion that was delicious as any we've ever had, served with rice, veggies, bread, and a wonderful pastry desert. Oh, and the price...an easy \$9.00" Nancy & Sam –S/V Windfall

Casa L & L, Bahia del Sol



Casa L&L is operated by a couple of expats who know how to entertain. It's a convenient and relaxing place to spend the night before or after your early morning or late night flight at the airport. This is also a good choice if you have family or friends coming down who are looking to avoid the resort atmosphere. The villa is about 4 miles from the main anchorage but easily accessible by water or road. The villa has three pools and gorgeous grounds with mountain and estuary views. Housekeeping units and some private rooms are available. They can arrange for private airport pickup and delivery. Contact: Plyamarysol@yahoo.com



Cruisers enjoying a typical Salvadorian afternoon



Locals racing dug-out canoes

SOME LOCAL SERVICES

Services for cruisers are in the beginning stages of development in El Salvador so do not expect to be able to get on the VHF to find a refrigeration tech at the drop of a hat. Here you will have to work a little to locate some the services you need. That being said, some services are available in and around Bahia and with a little time and determination you can pretty much locate whatever you might need..



Marinsa, operated by Gabriel Alvarado, is a marine parts store located in San Salvador and they have an outlet near Bahia. Because so few sailboats come to El Salvador Marinsa does not have a big selection of sailboat specific parts on hand such as rigging components, sheaves and pulleys, etc but they can order pretty much any part for you. Marinsa represents Mercury inflatable boats and sells Mercury and Tohatsu outboards.

Marinsa also trouble shoots, repairs and installs all sorts of **electronics** and electrical equipment. Their technician, Miguel Hernandez is an electronics and biomedical engineer and a ham radio operator.

Gabriel reminds us that there is no such thing as overnight delivery in Central America. If you want parts in a hurry you're going to pay a hefty price for the shipping.

All that being said, boaters here have been able to get almost everything they need.

"The solar panel we bought in San Salvador is working great" – Jerry, SOMF

"San Salvador is THE place to re-canvas and re-cushion your boat. woodworking projects are a bit more challenging and the local teak is much lighter than what is common the US, but also more available than in Mexico- However, "where there is a will, there is a way" is very true down here and we've been able to do everything we wanted in terms of boat projects here" – Shannon, SV Sweetie

"it's all there, somewhere" – Robin, Katydid

Reymundo's Boat Services

Reymundo provides a variety of services like, but not limited to, bottom cleaning (with a hookah), teak preparation and varnishing, stainless polishing, painting etc. He is very reliable and comes highly recommended by many cruisers. He also has access to carpenters.

Deni Moz Boat Services

Deni provides bottom cleaning, stainless polishing, hull cleaning/polishing and dinghy cleaning. He also delivers fresh water

Blanca's Boat Cleaning

Blanca lives on the island and has almost 10 years' experience in interior boat cleaning. She can bring her own cleaning supplies if you desire. Average price for one person is \$15/day or \$8 for half day.

Paradise Fishing Lodge

John Carey runs a small sport fishing marina and his specialty is diesel engine repairs. If you doubt his qualifications you can check the website for his state-side business Careysdiesel.com.

Costuras Celestes

Isabel Arce has a small sewing business on the island. She repairs and makes new:

- Interior/exterior cushions
- Hatch covers
- Fuel can cover
- Sail covers
- Winch covers
- Sail bags
- Lee cloths

Secondary services

- Custom clothing & repair
- Canvas carryall bags & purses
- Insulated tote bags

SIGHTS IN AND AROUND SAN SALVADOR



Tin Marín has so many interesting hands-on features, your kids may need a return trip. Roughly divided into four sections - health, environment, technology and culture - exhibits include a miniature supermarket (to learn about food groups), a huge artificial volcano (complete with smoke and red lights for lava) and a papermaking area (to learn about recycling).

There's a cockpit and fuselage of a real Boeing 727 airplane, and a real VW Beetle that kids can handpaint to their heart's delight - part of an exhibit on color and senses, it looks like an Andy Warhol piece. Another-favorite is the Casa de Gravedad (Gravity House) - a small house built at a 23-degree angle to demonstrate balance and perspective. Add to this a butterfly cage, a puppet theatre, a mini TV studio, a huge brushable and flossable mouth, a computer area - all in all, it's a fun place to spend an afternoon. Everything's in Spanish, but that probably won't inhibit English-only youngsters. The rules are: no kids without an adult, no adults without a kid. There's a small cafeteria on-site, and shady Parque Cuscatlán - with its excellent sights - is right in front



The Military History Museum is surprisingly interesting albeit troubling. In a series of interconnected, barrack-like rooms, President Maximiliano Martínez is praised for the 'resolve and patriotism' with which he suppressed Communist insurgents in 1932 - some 30,000 indigenous men, women and children were killed in the process - and Colonel Domingo Monterrosa, alleged mastermind of the massacre at El Mozote, is described as having 'written pages of glory for the history of the armed forces.'

On the walls and in floor-mounted displays is an incredible array of rifles, machine guns, grenade launchers, mortars, flame throwers, radio and night-vision equipment - almost all made in the USA - as well as original copies of the 1992 peace accords. A number of military tanks, trucks, helicopters, and even the Pope Mobile used when the pontiff visited El Salvador, are also on display. But the most interesting part of the museum is a huge relief map of El Salvador. The map highlights the country's rugged topography with more than a dozen volcanoes, and well-marked rivers, and cities nestled in between. It's well worth a visit. A free guide service is offered.



Absolutely one of the best museums in the country, the Museo Nacional de Antropología David J. Guzmán is worth a solid morning's visit. It may not look like much on the outside, but once you walk through the front door, you'll find it hard to leave. Inside are two expansive floors of thoughtfully and beautifully presented exhibits on the Maya, the development of the people and land of El Salvador, the arts, religion and economy of the country...even prehistoric rock carvings and an artifact garden. The only downside of the museum is that signage is in Spanish only. It's worth bringing your dictionary.

"...after coffee Jerry, myself, Tom and Carolyn went on the canopy zip lines, while the rest went and toured a small village. There were 14 different zips, some of which were short and some of which were very long. I have to say that it was one of the funnest things I have ever done." – Lauren, SOMF

On your way to San Salvador: you will pass Olocuilta which is famous for its' pupusas. Some of the pupuserias are open 24 hours and each offers their own version which includes pumpkin, spinach, seafood, etc. **Near** the airport is an area of the highway reserved for coconut stands where they chop the tops off and serve them with a straw. **Another** area is reserved for honey stands. The honey is decanted into used liquor bottles but be sure to check that the tops are screwed on tight.



Suchitoto

Suchitoto is a cheap bus ride from San Salvador and it takes a little over an hour to get there. The town is one of the top ten tourist attractions in the country and is located above Lake Suchitlan.

In a setting of whitewashed colonials whose facades have been preserved, and cobblestone streets, it's gossipy, leftist-leaning and beaming with civic pride. A cultural capital during the indigo trade's heyday, it now has a burgeoning arts scene. A February arts-and-culture festival brings in world-class performers and concerts, and performances or art exhibits are held almost weekly.

Suchitoto is the place to go if you want to have a pleasant and tranquil respite. Take a casual morning breakfast followed by a stroll around town. Then catch the local bus down to the lake and take a panga tour to the bird islands. After a relaxing lunch visit one of the many art studios or shop for a few souvenirs. Suchitoto doesn't have much of a nightlife so plan on an early dinner.



"Our next excursion was more of a gourmet experience. We joined a group of cruisers from 7 other boats on a tour to the central part of El Salvador and an overnight in the Colonial city of Suchitoto. [Our guide] Jorge of Tourin is an excellent guide with a deep passion for his country and outstanding knowledge of its history. We stayed in an old Colonial house converted into a boutique hotel, Los Almendros, just a stones throw from the central plaza. The owner of the hotel, Pascal did a fantastic job with the hotel that has an awesome pool and one of the top restaurants in El Salvador complete with a Cordon Bleu trained chef! This cruising lifestyle is starting to get pretty decadent!" – Judy & Torben, SV Tivoli



Los Almendros – the jewel of Suchitoto is located two blocks off the central square. The hotel and restaurant is one of the best in town and, it is the only one air-conditioned. The hotel, built around a 200-year-old house resembles an art museum and every detail is well thought out.



The hotel welcomes cruisers and offers discounted rooms. The food in the restaurant is prepared by a Cordon Bleu-trained chef and has an extensive wine list. Each year the owner, Pascal, puts together an exclusive event especially for the Cruisers Rally.

The 2012 Exclusive Event in Suchitoto – Cruisers Rally to El Salvador

The three day two night event began at Bahia del Sol where we were picked up by Tourin Tours. We were taken to the clay artesian town of Ilobasco where we toured for an hour and a half. We ate a light brunch aboard the bus while we traveled to



Suchitoto. In Suchitoto we checked into our rooms and had the early afternoon to ourselves to enjoy a dip in the pool or stroll around town. Promptly at 5 pm the hotel held a two-hour wine and appetizer reception around the pool with music. The owner Pascal and his partner, former El Salvadorian ambassador to France, Joaquin joined us and told us about the history of Suchitoto. At 7 pm we retired to the dining room for an exquisite dinner. After breakfast the next morning Joaquin provided a walking tour of the town

followed by an indigo dyeing demonstration. Then lunch again at the hotel followed by a free afternoon to take a panga tour of the lake or what ever you wanted. The evening again began with a fine dinner after which some retired to the hotel bar while others went out to discover the nightlife. The following day on the way back to Bahia we stopped in San Salvador for grocery shopping. Three days, two nights, all meals, tours, demonstrations, wine reception, rooms and transportation – around \$170 per person.



RESTAURANTS

Local

Mar y Sol



This local style restaurant is located on the estuary 2 minutes away from the hotel. It is full of locals almost every weekend. They offer low priced simple breakfast, lunch and dinner and serve pupusas after 4 pm. They are well known for their seafood specialties. They also have laundry services, sell cubed ice and sodas and beer.

Acajutla (rally sponsor)



Acajutla is about a mile up the estuary and besides a restaurant they also have a pool with a swim up bar. The restaurant holds two happy hours during the cruisers rally. Acajutla serves seafood specialties and are well known for their rich seafood soups.

The seafood is delicious, the scenery is beautiful, and the service is excellent. Among the best is the mixed grilled lobster and crab with butter and garlic sauce. The *sopa de marisco*, or fish soup, is quite hearty, and most of **Acajutla's** entrees are huge by El Salvador standards. Each entree also begins with a tasty appetizer of tortilla chips in a spicy dip sprinkled with cheese. – *Frommer's*

Estuary Palapa Restaurants



There are quite a few of these very local and rustic restaurants located right in the middle of the estuary. They pretty much serve deep fried fresh fish. Plan on a two hour lunch because the expectation is that you came to the restaurant to relax and enjoy the day.

Bahia del Sol (rally sponsor)



The hotel has a varied menu from hamburgers and fries to lobster. During the "cruising" season they have happy hours, special buffets, etc

Pupusa on the street



Across the street from the entrance to Mar y Sol is a pupusas restaurant. They serve the basic style pupusas, fish, and cold beer or soda. It's an easy walk from the hotel.

San Salvador



87 Ave Nte, Plaza Futura, San Salvador

Wow, a Ruth's Chris right in San Salvador with steaks seared to perfection at 1800 degrees! The meals and service is top notch and of course, USDA prime. Guaranteed to be the best meal you have ever eaten.

La Pampa de Argentina



Final Paseo General Escalon

Looking for steak? **La Pampa** will not disappoint. Their finest Filet Mignon, cooked exactly as ordered runs only \$13.99. They have four locations but we think the Escalon location is the best because of the view of the city.

Trip Advisor Review, July 211

I go to El Salvador about once per year and always make sure I eat at **La Pampa** at least once. I'd put it on par with some of the best steakhouses in the US with a price comparable to Chile's. The food is great, the service is great too.

La Hacienda Real



On the Pan-American Highway across from the Gran Via Mall.

Another fine steak restaurant with a charming interior and great service. We've never had a mediocre meal here. One interesting note: in the men's room they have free mouth wash dispensers and free packets of toothpaste with a toothbrush.

Kreef



Maquilishuat, 87 Av Sur

Already mentioned in the guide we can't say enough about this place. After visiting Kreef you say to yourself "I can't believe they have places like this here."

Hunan



Av. Masferrer Nte y 3a Calle Poniente #128, Col. Escalon

The restaurant has two levels, on one you can order off the menu and the other is for the buffet. The menu portions are very large and two plates will feed four. Next door is the Yong Fong Asian market.

Le Croissant



1a Calle Pte 3883, Escalon

Yes, a great French bakery & restaurant. Great breads and of course, croissants. The address above is for the bakery but they have 2 restaurants around San Salvador.

Café Miranda



The restaurant and coffee finca is located half way up San Salvador volcano. Have a relaxing meal or glass of wine and enjoy a great view of the country side. You can see all the way to Suchitoto and see 4 other volcanoes. Nice, moderately-priced menu.

Tony Roma's



Metro Sur and other locations in the city.

Don't turn your nose up at Tony's just because it comes from the USA. Their food is familiar and good plus their beer is really cold. If you miss American style food and atmosphere this is the place to get your fix.

Faisca do Brasil



Intercontinental Hotel

El Salvador's first Brazilian inspired "steak house."; and ranked #1 of 60 restaurants in El Salvador. Enjoy a wide selection of garnishes, salad bar, 16 US imported meat cuts, as well as pastas, cocktails and ceviches. The meat is served on swords, in the traditional Brazilian style.

Trip Advisor Review, 2010 - Hacienda Real near Gran Via [has] a huge grill right near the entrance. The décor is interesting and probably Argentinean inspired, the steaks thick and juicy, and the selection of side dishes quite numerous... Guests are immediately served consommé in mugs, which is extremely flavorful. The prices are quite reasonable and comparable to the mid-priced steakhouses in the United States. Knowing that we did not speak Spanish, our waiter sent a bilingual waiter over to help us with the menu. Overall, it was a good dining experience and one of the musts in a city not renowned for landmark restaurants.

HOTELS

There are many hotels in the city in all price and quality ranges. With just a little experience you can choose one that is convenient with your purpose for staying in the city be it to make doctor visits, shopping, site seeing or simply relaxing and getting away. Some of the real bargain hotels and hostels are located in or near undesirable locations and we suggest you stay away from those. To check in you'll need your passport. At most hotels you can have food, for example pizza, delivered and most include breakfast with your room rate however, some breakfasts are not much more than toast and coffee so be sure to check if that is important to you. Rooms are sencillo (single) or doble (double). This refers to the number of beds in the room not the number of people. Stipulate if you want one bed for two persons. Be sure to look at your room before committing. You can always choose another room or hotel. Most places do not allow pets.

Hotel Villa Serena (*rally sponsor*)

3 locations, Escalon, San Benito, and Flor



Room prices run from \$40 to \$60 per night depending on which hotel your at. All rooms have internet, AC, cable TV and a small refrigerator. A nice breakfast is included with your

room. The hotel offers discounted rooms to all the rally entrants plus she provides a couple of free rooms to give away at our cruisers party.

Hostel Lonigo (*rally sponsor*)

Calle El Mirador #4837
Colonia Escalon, San Salvador
Tel: 2264-4197



Hotel manager Andrea Arevalo will welcome you to her pet-friendly hotel. The hotel has a small pool and quiet garden area and like all nice Salvadorian hotels a full breakfast is included. The upscale Escalon area is close to restaurants and malls and the hotel is pet friendly.

Courtyard Marriott

Esquina Calle 2 y calle 3,
Centro de Estilo de Vida La Gran Via



Conveniently located in La Gran Via Mall, surrounded by fine restaurants and bars, with plenty of entertainment and shopping in a secure and exclusive area of the city. The Marriott

has an outdoor pool to refresh yourself after a day in the city and to entertain your kids. They have a weekend special for \$69/night

Bahia del Sol (*rally sponsor*)

Costa del Sol



Bahia gives cruisers a huge discount on rooms. Normally \$120 you can get them for \$60 and sometimes less. This is the most convenient place to have your family stay when they fly

down to visit. You can maintain your privacy on the boat and won't have to listen to your family complain about no air conditioning or privacy. Plus, they can be on their own schedule.

Touring

One of the most popular things to do in El Salvador is touring. Everything, beaches, volcanoes, cloud forests, etc is close and so diverse. If you include the neighboring countries you could tour all summer and not see it all.

Ruta de Paz

This tourist route takes you into the eastern part of the country near the Honduran border where the brunt of the 12-year war took place. You'll travel all the way to the mountain town of Perquin in the department of Morazan which was the guerilla stronghold during the war years. Small battlefields and war museums are worth the visit. You will visit with ex guerillas and hear their stories of the conflict.



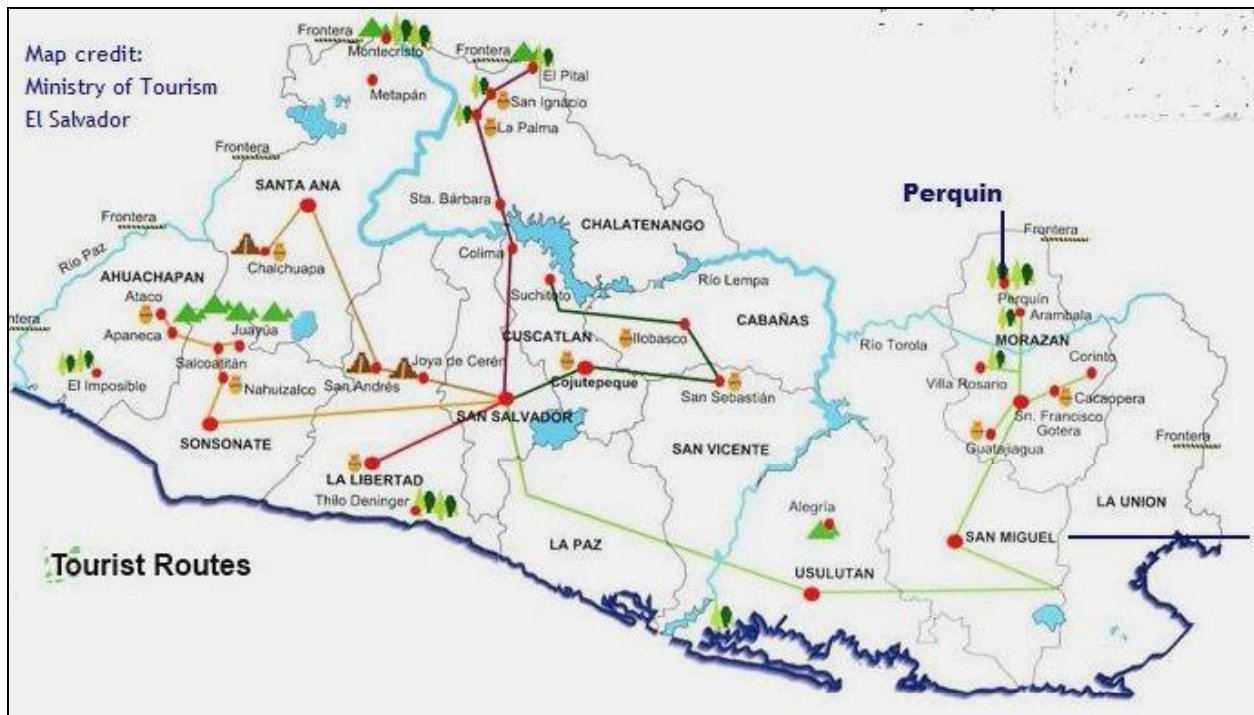
When you go to the town of El Mozote be prepared for a moving and unnerving experience. This is the place where the entire town of almost 1,000 people was massacred. One person survived to tell the story and the local women's coop carries on the verbal history..

Surprisingly, no one holds any animosity towards Americans even though we supported the corrupt government troops.

Also in the area are other sights such as The Sapo River Natural Protected Area, caves with petroglyphs over 10,000 years old, cascading waterfalls, and numerous hiking trails.

Ruta de Paz with Tourin

Starting early in Bahia you take a van into the department of Morazan stopping for breakfast along the way. You will spend the night in a mountain cabin at Hotel Perkin Lenca. Tours include El Mozote, two war museums, and a battle area. On your second day you will be able to lunch and swim in the Sapo river in an area where guerillas once camped. Also on the second day you will be accompanied for an entire afternoon by an ex guerilla woman who will tell you how she was recruited into the FMLN. The reasonably priced tour includes transportation, overnight accommodations for 2, all park & museum fees, guides, two breakfasts and a box lunch. On the trip back to Bahia we stop in San Salvador for food shopping.



"One of the many tours offered is called "Three Countries in Three Days". Sounds right up our alley, short but intense, so we booked our spot." – Tom & Lori, S/V Camelot

The Maya World

The Maya culture covers southern Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. You can see Maya influence all over the northern region of Central America but especially in Guatemala and Honduras.



There is a number of unique Mayan around El Salvador as well.

Archeological sites near San Salvador

Here are some sites that are very close to the city. A leisurely tour of all three should take 6 hours

Joya de Cerén is located just 30 minutes from the city of San Salvador. This is a Mayan settlement that was covered by ash from the volcano Lomas Caldera. It was discovered accidentally in 1976 and has been declared a World Heritage Site.

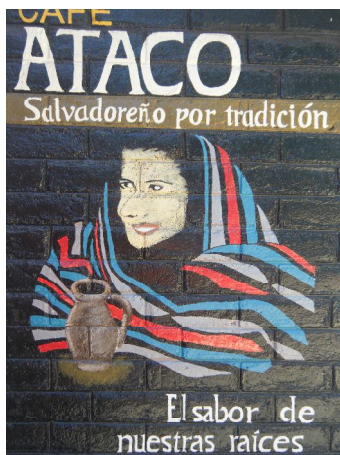
San Andrés, a ceremonial center. The pyramids of San Andres are clear evidence of its importance as a regional center, which in its day must have counted 200 structures, built between 900 and 600 BC.

The ruins of **Tazumal** are located near the city of Chalchuapa. This town was built around 500 AD, and remained occupied until the Spanish arrived.

Casa Blanca, a recently discovered archaeological site where there is an Indigo workshop. It is one of the oldest structures in the country.

Ruta de las Flores

Do you savor the aroma and taste of a good cup of coffee? If so, the highlands are the place to visit! The 3000' altitude makes for the perfect conditions for gourmet coffee. The treasured coffee farms of Ataco and Apaneca are the producers of the best quality coffee beans.



The Ruta de las Flores also offers volcanic nurseries where they produce exotic flowers for export. Be sure to visit Nahuizalco, an indigenous town where you can see the "Mimbre" handicraft shops to observe the process and the skills of these very creative artisans.

The best time to take this tour is on the weekend when the town of Juayua holds a weekly food festival. If you love eating you will love Juayua. Here you can taste an endless variety of local foods.

Exchange Rates – 2012 American Dollar to:

Honduras – Lempira	19.0	Belize – Belize Dollar	1.98
Guatemala – Quetzal	8.0	Costa Rica – Colon-	511
Nicaragua – Cordoba	24.0		

"Touring Central America has truly surpassed my expectations. The geography in most regions is spectacular, and there are a great variety of things to see and do. A group of cruisers booked an extended guided tour of the Mayan Triangle visiting Honduras, Guatemala (North and South) as well as El Salvador. In addition to the fascinating history, we roasted marshmallows in a steam vent on the top of a volcano (yup!), explored quaint villages with amazing handcrafted textiles...great food and music. More importantly, I always evaluate a place by their people and culture. The people I have met in Central America are exceptionally friendly, caring, happy, interesting...It is such a comfortable place to enjoy and explore, and the people are terrific. This is my second season in this region and I love it. There's so much more to cover - I will likely be here for a while. Tourism is in its infancy stages so these countries are still undeveloped, pristine, and inexpensive. It is a wonderful jewel between Panama and Mexico - not to be missed" - Pamela, SV Precious Metal

"We spent a couple of days on a road trip through the Ruta de Flores which follows the black sand beaches of El Salvador up through the coffee growing country along the slopes of the country's many volcanoes. Along the way it became clear that El Salvadorans don't just sit around but are out and about" – Dick & Cindy, SV Mentor

Touring Neighboring Countries

Guatemala



Guatemala is probably one of the most colorful countries in Central America and it is only 50 miles from San Salvador to the Guatemalan border. Guatemala's Maya heritage is

everywhere. About 40% of the population is indigenous. Outside the big cities you will encounter many Guatemalan women dressed in traditional clothing. Some of the older men dress traditionally but the style is fading. Among the indigenous 21 different Maya languages are spoken however, Spanish is the first language of most Guatemalans.



One of the most popular places to visit is the town of Antigua. This town was once the capital of Guatemala but now is a popular tourist destination with tourists from all over the world. Antigua has many hotels and restaurants in all price ranges. Some people make Antigua their "home" base to tour the rest of the country. Most other destinations in the country are easily reached by tourist van or private car. We do not recommend the local chicken busses, except for very near by travel (and only for that one-time experience). You will quickly discover that these smoking, crowded buses are not meant for tourists.

Guatemala is well-known for their immersion Spanish Schools. Antigua, San Pedro, and Xela are just some of the towns that have these type schools. For couples we recommend each have separate teachers. You can opt for home stay where you live and eat with a local family.

Visit the fascinating town of Chichicastenango where they adhere to pre-Hispanic beliefs and rituals. Also in "Chi Chi" is one of the largest handicraft markets found anywhere. Santa Lucía Cotzumalguapa, provides a glimpse into the mysterious Pipil culture, with some interesting carved stone heads and relief scenes found in fields and *fincas* (plantations) around town



Farther to the north east are the popular Maya ruins of Tikal. It is a long trip from Guatemala City to the tourist friendly town of Flores located near the ruins. Flying there is an option worth

considering if you are on a schedule or not up to a long bus trip. There are many more places to visit and things to do in Guatemala. Check out Lonely Planet on the web and you will find a wealth of information.

"We [had] a great time in Antigua. The weather is perfect ... the people are friendly and helpful and the city is charming. We spend 4 hours each morning in class, and then lunch at our host family's home then usually an afternoon activity, a walk around town, a visit to a coffee plantation, or today a visit to a Macadamia nut farm. We have been very fortunate because our host family are actually Spanish teachers themselves and we get additional instruction at the dining table without even knowing it." Jim & Connie, SV Sound Effect

[Tikal]... "And out of the jungle comes the temples. It must have been amazing when the early Spaniards cruised by and saw jungle covered mounds that just didn't seem all natural." – Paul & Chris, SV Jeorgia

"We [stayed] in beautiful Antigua and [had] a wonderful time! We planned to stay 2 weeks learning Spanish and live with a Guatemalan family to become "immersed" in the culture and language. As it turns out, we are living with my Spanish teachers family. We are having such a great time we have extended our Spanish classes for a 3rd week! I know, I can't believe it either, even I am learning Spanish! Wow!" – Sam & Nancy, SV Windfall

"In the evening [we went] to a restaurant that besides having great food has all the staff wore traditional Maya clothing. ... We watched a dance performance at the end of which we had a photo op with the dancers. By 9:30, we are worn out from our adventures and retired to our comfortable hotel for the evening." – John & Leanne, SV Red Sky

Honduras

Almost everyone who travels to Honduras does so to visit the ruins of Copan. Here are some of the best preserved Maya ruins in Central America. Get used to hearing Maya words like K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' and K'inich Popol Hol because they are some of the rulers of the Maya civilization. Copan is best known for its numerous carved stone monuments.



Travel time from San Salvador to the Honduran border is around 5 hours so plan on spending at least one night in a hotel. If you like a good cigar Hondurans produce some of the best.



If you are in to diving you can travel to the Caribbean coast of Honduras to Roatan and Utila for some spectacular diving. The easiest way to

reach Roatan is by air. There are plenty of places to stay and dive excursion shops.

"We squeezed into our chariots which rattled and bumped their way over the cobblestone streets as we headed for the ancient ruins of Copan ... [we] find this to be a truly enchanting place." – John & Leanne, SV Red Sky

"We departed the next morning at 8am for a tour of Mayan ruins in El Salvador and Copan in Honduras and the colonial town of Antigua in Guatemala. The tour was one of the highlights of our entire [cruising] trip so far" – Eric & Valerie, SV Pacific Mystic

"There had to be a dive shop every 50 yards in the main village [Utila]. It is the cheapest and one of the most popular locations for diving. As we walked around it became obvious that we were by far the oldest people in town" – Dennis, SV Dolce Vita

Nicaragua

We think the best way to describe Nicaragua is to pass on the experience of Dennis aboard *Dolce Vita*

Two friends and I just returned from a week in Nicaragua. This is the fourth country in Central America that I have visited. As in the other three countries, Nicaragua has a beautifully bright green landscape as far as you can see, broken up only occasionally by cultivated land and exotic flowers. Nicaragua has the largest lake of all of the Central American countries, Lake Nicaragua, and has the only fresh water sharks in the world in its' waters.



Hotel room in Managua

We had an 11 hour bus ride from San Salvador to Managua, the capitol of Nicaragua. The bus was comfortable, movies to watch if you wished and an attendant to serve you drinks and food. None of this would be found if you rode in a bus in the good old USA unless it was a chartered very expensive bus. The round trip cost was \$100.

We stayed in Managua the first evening. Managua is much like many large cities, noisy, smelly, and some dangerous neighborhoods. This describes the area where we were staying so we stayed close to our rooms that evening. The next day we had a short tour of the historical areas of the capital.



Nicaragua had a very long civil war that ended in 2001. They are celebrating the 10th anniversary in 2011. Many signs around town, memorials, statues, post cards, and flags celebrate the victory over the dictatorship that controlled people's lives for many generations. Next stop is Granada, Nicaragua. This is another colonial town with many old churches some of which are still in service and others that stand as a reminder of the city history. Colorful buildings and people make this a wonderful location to visit and it is an easy city to simply walk around to view what the city has to offer its visitors from around the world.

After two days in Granada, we headed off by ferry to a large island on the lake. If I remember correctly, 20,000 people live and work on this island. We had about an hours cab ride to the ferry that would take us to the island. We found a hotel and the following day we decided to rent motorcycles to travel around the island to visit some of the sights.



We traveled about 40 miles and I had only one incident. After picking the wrong path through the water I sank knee deep into the mud and had to get off the bike to start it. I was in mud up to my knees. I ended up being good entertainment for the workers along the road. We moved to a

hotel at another location on the island before we started our trip back to El Salvador..

"For six days we toured 3 countries, El-Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala and visited the ruins of the Ancient Olmecas , Mayan , & Pipiles Civilizations that date back to as early as 800BC.

Our tour guide has been recommended by the both the rally organizers and other cruisers we have met whose path we will be following is Jorge Martinez owner/operator of TourIn El Salvador. [Our tour guide] has allowed us to design our own adventure that will include the opportunity to surf some of what are reported to be deserted beaches, which are home to some world-renowned breaks along the coast of Guatemala and El Salvador." – John & Leanne, SV Red Sky

Property ownership in El Salvador

El Salvador is hoping to become the next new tourism destination and North Americans are beginning to purchase retirement and investment property. Although, to retire here you have to be the adventuresome type because there are no English-speaking communities here like Mexico, Costa Rica, and Panama. But there are many positives to owning and investing because El Salvador has:

- A government with a top priority on tourism;
- Tourism laws with attractive incentives;
- Local currency is the US dollar (no devaluation risk, low interest rates);
- Land can be purchased and owned completely by foreigners without the need of title insurance;
- Competitive land and construction costs;
- Year round agreeable climate;
- Hard working extremely positive and quick learning work force;
- The best road system in Central America.

What about after the rally?

Soon after the rally some folks leave for Costa Rica, Panama, or South America while others recognize that if you need to leave your boat unattended during the hurricane season El Salvador is the perfect location because it is safe from hurricanes, the summer weather is milder compared to farther south, moorage costs are the lowest in Central America, and the international airport is conveniently located nearby. Also, there are no imposing or expensive governmental formalities to deal with and your boat is under the watchful eyes of many such as the navy, port authority, locals, and other cruisers.



Summer in the Bahia

El Salvador is also a great place to spend the summer aboard your boat. Once the rainy season starts the temperatures moderate, the air is clean and clear, the shrimp arrive in the estuary, and the tropical forests blaze into bloom with flowers and exotic fruits. Now is when you begin to fall into the rhythms of the easy Salvadoran days

Summer is the also the time for touring because the vistas from the tops of volcanoes are far reaching and the waterfalls are tumbling with water. This is also when the river rafting season begins, and the already uncrowded tourist destinations are even less crowded because it is the low season, perfect for cruisers.

If you want to work on your boat there is access to services to help you improve, maintain, or repair you boat. You can have your teak decks recaulked, get new upholstery, make canvas covers, have new parts machined, or employ some carpentry services. And you can do all this while still enjoying the “cruisers vacation” atmosphere.

After summer the Central American weather is at its’ best. The rains diminish or stop altogether and (with the exception of the Papagayo winds) the ocean is again peaceful. Many feel this is the best time to sail the remainder of the Central American coast.

If you have the urge to move on after the rally you can easily reach Nicaragua in one long over night sail. Costa Rica is only four days and Panama is eight. And there are sufficient anchorages and marinas to make it easy.

If Ecuador is in your future you can get there in 10 days by sailing due south from Bahia. After Ecuador you can always sail back up the coast and visit Panama and Costa Rica in the winter and avoid the worst of the Papagayos. And hey, why not come back to El Salvador as well?.



Rain clouds obscuring Cocos Island

What ever you decide the people of El Salvador are happy that you made the effort to visit their forgotten country and will always welcome you with open arms and hearts.



Website: Elsalvadorrally.com
Forum: Cruisers.Elsalvadorrally.com

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