What to expect in terms of food, housing, safety, weather and what to bring to El Salvador

In the capital city of San Salvador, you can find to buy most everything that exists in the US and Canada. You could buy anything you forgot to bring, however, travel goods and name brand clothes likely be more expensive than the prices you are used to. It is a modern city with all the amenities. You will be there a few days at the first of the program.

Living in one of the two rural communities where you will do field work

El Salvador is a small country geographically. It is possible to cross the entire country by car in one day. However, it has the largest population of any country in Central America. This means there are many crowded urbanized areas. We plan to take the two groups of students to more rural areas to do their field work. Please find more information on Suchitoto and Chalatenango in other places on our website.

Food and beverages

Please check a websites like http://flavorverse.com/traditional-salvadoran-foods/ and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salvadoran_cuisine. Vegetarians and vegans will not have a difficult time finding food, but may find their eating options limited, as many entrees are meat-centered. Some of the national dishes listed on the two websites above are vegetarian.

Your program fee will pay for your basic 3 meals a day. Please bring funds for personal food items you may want to buy in a grocery store or local market and any personal beverages you may want to buy.

You should plan to bring money to buy bottled water just to be doubly sure if the municipal water systems are not fully purified.

Housing

You will be living in small hotels or hostels. They are clean and safe but do not have all the amenities of a full size hotel. You should bring what you need or plan to buy toiletries, etc. in the local stores.

Your program fee pays for these basic accommodations. We encourage students to stay with other locations in the housing carefully chosen for your safety and comfort by the program.

Weather

The days are hot, the sun is intense, and the nights are usually pleasant and cooler. Bring rain gear. The rainy season starts around the end of May or early June and goes through September. This site provides information on the weather in July for San Salvador http://www.san-salvador.climatemps.com/july.php Weather in the communities will be somewhat cooler but equally rainy.

What to bring

Bring clothes appropriate for heat as well as cooler weather: short sleeve and some long sleeve shirts, skirts, and long pants, and bathing suit. You will find many people wearing newer jeans. Make sure
clothing breathes well like cotton, as it can get very hot. But be aware that some of our trips may be to
cooler mountain areas. Many students in the past have enjoyed hiking, so bring shoes you can
comfortably hike in, shoes you can wear every day in hot and rainy weather, and sneakers for those who
like to exercise. We will not be in a lot of formal meetings so just one change of more formal clothes is
fine.

Please note that men and women do not generally wear shorts, except inside of the house. You can
wear shorts if you want, but note that mainly foreigners do. On the other hand, don't worry about
wearing tank tops--your general sense of what's appropriate will work fine here. Clothes for going-out
are generally the same as one would wear to a club in the United States – remember those dancing
shoes!

Looking clean is an important part of the Salvadoran culture, but the washing process (rubbing your
clothes against concrete ridges) is rough on clothes. Depending on your style and field work, include
nicer clothes for work and play, but don't bring anything too delicate or special. There are also lots of
used and new clothing stores, with great deals for patient shoppers, so there is no need to over pack.

Here are other suggestions of what to pack: http://www.eaglecreek.com/blog/what-pack-el-salvador-5-
step-solution;

**Health Information and packing list from the CDC**

The only immunizations that the CDC says that you should consider mandatory for tourists are the
tetanus and the hepatitis A. See the first website below. They have other recommendations if you were
going to do other things.

https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/el-salvador This one lists routine
vaccinations as well.


The main advice is to try not to be bitten by mosquitos that carry multiple diseases. It is best to buy before
you come an insect repellent that has DEET.

**Safety**

Once in El Salvador, part of the first day's orientation will be on staying safe during your stay. As in all
countries of the world, one needs to take precautions against being pick-pocketed or robbed. Since El
Salvador is located in-between Colombia where drugs are produced and the US that is a huge consumer
country, there is drug trafficking through the country. Around this have developed gangs which control
certain areas of the country. You will be told by the program coordinator which areas to avoid and what
times of the evening to discontinue walking in certain areas. The program will be providing all
transportation needed for students throughout their time in El Salvador to better endure the safety and
security of all participants. With precaution and careful attention to the advice of locals, our experience
is that students can enjoy a safe and productive time in El Salvador.
For those who choose to extend their stay and travel independently, further travel advising will be provided to guide students towards safe destinations of interest, as well as recommendations for safe, low cost accommodations in those areas that students wish to visit. Please note that some of the beaches frequented by surfers have strong rip tides so caution is strongly advised. You will have time during the weeks of the program to seek the advice of interesting places to travel and the advice of local how to have a safe, relaxing and happy time.