



TRAVEL TO EL SALVADOR

INFORMATION TO HELP YOU WITH YOUR EXPERIENCE AT ASAPROSAR

Keep in mind that when you visit El Salvador, as when you visit many other countries, you will not find a familiar way of life awaiting you. Try to be flexible as you encounter new sights, sounds, people and cultures. Learn a few words of Spanish if you don't speak it. Expect to have many new and different experiences. Although the ASAPROSAR office is located in Santa Ana, the second largest city, most of its programs take place in the nearby countryside. References to "the country" refer to visits to these programs.

1. What is ASAPROSAR?

The Salvadoran Association for Rural Health (ASAPROSAR) is a multi-service non-governmental community service organization based in Santa Ana, El Salvador. It was initiated in the mid-1970s by Dr. Vicky Guzman, a Salvadoran doctor, and officially founded in 1986. ASAPROSAR is staffed by Salvadoran physicians, social workers, health promoters, teachers, and other professional outreach workers.

2. What is the goal of a trip to ASAPROSAR?

It is important to be aware that Salvadorans, like many Spanish speaking peoples, value interpersonal relationships above all else. While you may help with tasks such as constructing housing or conducting a class, Salvadorans most value the relationships you establish with them. Conversation (with and without words) and appreciating the efforts of those participating in ASAPROSAR' projects) may be your most important contributions.

Such programs are the micro-credit program, health program, the environmental program, the Barefoot Angels (6-18 years) or Sprouts of Hope (0-6 years).

3. What is the ASAPROSAR Barefoot Angels Program?

The Barefoot Angels Program seeks to eradicate high-risk child labor primarily and develop youth leaders in Santa Ana's bus terminal marketplace and municipal city dump. Many boys and girls between the ages of six and eighteen who are forced to work in these areas become victims of gang associations, prostitution, and related violence. ASAPROSAR offers these youth a program of physical and psychological health and quality educational training. It is the only alternative for youth living and working in the streets and on the margins of western Salvadoran society.

4. What is the ASAPROSAR Development Fund (ADF)?

ADF is a North Shore-based 501(c)(3) non-profit foundation that raises funds and friends for ASAPROSAR. Open meetings are held periodically. For further information about ADF, you may speak with Palmer Corson (palmercorson@asaprosar.org).

5. What inoculations or immunizations will I need BEFORE the trip?

You should check with your health care provider as soon as possible to learn about what you will need, at what time, and where to go. Some hospitals have a "Traveler's Clinic" where you can get the necessary inoculations. The CDC also has pertinent information on the internet. Before leaving, everyone will need to have had:

- **Hepatitis A & B** (one injection required before you leave and another 6 months later)
- **Typhoid**
- **Polio booster**



- **Malaria (check with your health care provider... some do not take this medication)**
- **Tetanus/Diphtheria**

****Advise ASAPROSAR of any dietary restrictions, medical conditions or physical limitations BEFORE you make the trip****

6. What are the visa/airport fees?

- a) US citizens receive a visitor visa at the airport in El Salvador.
- b) An airport fee may have been included with the purchase price of your ticket.

7. What type of clothing should I take?

It is hot, with average temperature 88-90 degrees. **Think light.** Pack 1 or 2 pairs of light slacks, blue jeans or skirts, and 1 or 2 short-sleeved and long-sleeved shirts or blouses. In general, shorts are not worn in the country, but are okay at the ASAPROSAR office area.

You will need to wear an ASAPROSAR tee-shirt when visiting any ASAPROSAR program. These may be purchased at the office for about \$10. You may wish to buy more than one. It is a bright yellow tee-shirt with the ASAPROSAR logo.

Pack or wear sneakers and/or sturdy walking shoes—terrain is uneven.

Leave your jewelry at home. Any sparkling stones—real or not—are viewed as ostentatious in the rural communities and are temptations for pickpockets in crowds.

Pack less clothing rather than more. An ASAPROSAR employee is available to do a SMALL amount of laundry by hand. Tipping for this service is appropriate. Your group leader will check with the volunteer coordinator about the amount for tipping.

8. What toiletries or other necessities are recommended?

- Flash light with batteries (electricity may be discontinued without notice)
- Sunscreen and hat or visor
- Small packages of tissues (handy to carry instead of a roll of toilet paper)
- Handiwipes
- Personal medications
- Something for minor infections
- Something for constipation
- Something for diarrhea—lomotil or immodium a-d
- Insect repellent – it is best to use something which contains DEET. Some areas have had cases of malaria or dengue fever which are both carried by mosquitoes. When in the country it is best to wear long pants and use repellent.
- Backpack and lumbar (fanny) pack

9. What currency is used in El Salvador?

El Salvador uses U.S. dollars as they have converted from Colones. You can cash small amounts of traveler's checks at ASAPROSAR and larger amounts at banks. There are ATM's in Santa Ana. You should not carry large amounts of any currency on trips to the country.

10. What are the financial arrangements for the trip?

It is easiest for ASAPROSAR if visitors pay the anticipated cost for room and board upon arrival, and make any necessary adjustments at the end of the week prior to departure. When paying the bill at ASAPROSAR, it is best to use traveler's checks, bank checks, or cash (U.S. currency). Although

personal checks are accepted, the bank does not release the money to ASAPROSAR until the check has cleared, which can take several weeks.



11. What are the hotel arrangements in San Salvador?

Usually the group spends one night in San Salvador, either at the beginning or end of the visit. Hotels in San Salvador cost approximately \$80-\$90 per double room. Meals and beverages cost about \$40 per night per person. Reservations should be made through ASAPROSAR.

12. What are the sleeping/living arrangements at ASAPROSAR?

There are separate dormitory-type rooms for men and women. Each “dorm” has a bathroom. The daily rate for room and board is \$40 per person U.S. currency. **This is a set rate regardless of the number of meals you decide to eat at ASAPROSAR.** Water and/or electricity may be discontinued without notice for specific or undetermined lengths of time due to rationing. As good stewards of the environment, please be mindful of the need to conserve water and electricity.

13. What are the eating arrangements at ASAPROSAR?

Meals are prepared for guests at ASAPROSAR and bottled water is provided for day trips. ASAPROSAR is a non-profit organization and does not have a “hospitality budget”, therefore if/when Vicky, Lucy, your driver, or another staff member join you for an evening of papusas (a favorite local dish made with corn tortillas) at a restaurant, it is appropriate that you invite them to be your guests for the meal and cover their costs.

14. What are the transportation arrangements at ASAPROSAR?

In almost all cases, you will be driven to any visits to ASAPROSAR programs. ASAPROSAR will provide transportation to and from the airport, and the cost (\$20) is included in your total trip bill. It is appropriate to tip the driver if he has been with you for an extended period of time. (Ask the volunteer coordinator about the amount.) For overnight trips away from ASAPROSAR, the group is expected to pay for the driver’s room and meals, as well as any other ASAPROSAR staff who may accompany the group.

15. How can people get in touch with me while I’m at ASAPROSAR?

The best way to be reached while at ASAPROSAR is via the telephone/fax number that has an English recording.

1. Telephone/fax: 011-503-2441-0646.
2. ASAPROSAR office: 011-503-2445-7800.
3. E-mail: asaprosartrips@yahoo.com

If you wish to make an international call, you will need a telephone card and **MUST** know your international access number. This number varies with telephone carriers and companies.

16. What is the relationship between visitors and ASAPROSAR staff?

Staff members are employees of ASAPROSAR and are not expected to be servants for guests. It is appropriate to tip employees for services provided such as doing your personal laundry or driving for special sight-seeing trips. Check with volunteer coordinator regarding tipping.

Most ASAPROSAR employees speak little English, so smiles and hand gestures may be the primary means of communication if you do not speak Spanish (study before you come!) Generally, people are able to understand what is being said long before being proficient enough to participate in a conversation. Lucy Luna, Vicky’s daughter, will periodically provide insights into the Salvadoran culture as opportunities to do so arise.

17. What other facts should I know about traveling in El Salvador?



While at the airport, you may notice guards or policemen carrying rifles and other forms of firearms. This is a normal sight throughout El Salvador. Armed guards may be posted outside shops, hotels, and residences as security. Guards are also on duty at ASAPROSAR. This does not imply danger rather is the system used for security.

Much of the plumbing in El Salvador is old and subject to break down. You will notice there are waste paper baskets next to most toilets. It is normal practice to put any paper you use in the basket rather than flushing it down the toilet. When you travel to sites in the country, there is often no running water and use of latrines is the norm. This is a good time to have both handwipes and tissues in your pocket. Try to avoid buying food from vendors with the exception of bottled soft drinks or fruit that can be peeled. In general when in the country, eat cooked food or check with the health care provider. ASAPROSAR will provide packed lunches and bottled water for you when you are out in the country. Carry a copy of your passport with you when you go to the country to visit ASAPROSAR programs. It is also helpful to leave a copy of your passport with someone in the U.S. in the unlikely event that you lose your documents while traveling and need a back-up.

18. Can I bring items to be donated to the ASAPROSAR programs?

All donations (toys, clothing, money, etc.) must be brought to the attention of your group leader and the ASAPROSAR office to allow a proper inventory of the gifts. Donations become a valuable part of the overall program and work of ASAPROSAR. In general, toys are not randomly distributed to individual children, rather are used as part of the larger program of early intervention and development. Books become part of the libraries. Clothing is distributed in those areas identified as the neediest, used as incentives, and are available for special occasions such as Christmas and holiday celebrations. You may even be present during some of the distribution events. Remember each gift received becomes part of the program of ASAPROSAR. It is very important that financial donations be handled directly by Dr. Guzman. They will then be applied to the areas indicated. Lucy will be glad to assist you if you have questions about donations.

Small goodies such as soap bubbles, candy, beads, Frisbees, balls, and puppets help you communicate with the children. It is okay to have these smaller items with you for individual distribution or participation. Usually the teacher/promoter will invite you to be part of the days' activities where you will have an opportunity to use these "special tools" you may have. Your participation is a gift to ASAPROSAR, and the personal rewards of your gift will be heartwarming memories.

19. Where can I obtain background information about ASAPROSAR, El Salvador or the Barefoot Angels?

Recommended reading:

El Salvador, A Country Guide by Tom Barry

Salvador by Joan Didion

On Your Own in El Salvador. Jeff Brauer, Julian Smith and Veronica Wile.

El Salvador, A Spring Whose Waters Never Run Dry. Ed. Scott Wright, Minor Sinclair, et. al.

El Salvador: The Face of Revolution by Robert Armstrong and Janet Shenk.

One Day of Life by Manlio Argueta.

Robbed of Humanity by Nancy Leigh Tierney

Films:

Romero Highly recommended!

You Tube for info about ASAPROSAR

CHECK OUT: www.asaprosar.org