

Travel Advisory

El Salvador



Level

3

Reconsider travel

Reissued with obsolete COVID-19 page links removed.

Reconsider travel to El Salvador due to **crime**.

Country Summary: In March 2022, the Government of El Salvador (GOES) declared a “State of Exception” in response to an increase in homicides. The declaration remains in effect. The State of Exception grants authorities power to arrest anyone suspected of gang activity and suspends several constitutional rights, including the normal protections of criminal procedure such as the right to a speedy trial. Prison conditions are harsh. Several U.S. and other foreign citizens have been detained under the State of Exception, some in a reportedly arbitrary manner. Under its Territorial Control Plan, the GOES also may, without prior warning, restrict access via checkpoints to areas suspected of gang activity. U.S. citizens are advised that access to and freedom of movement within these areas may be limited.

Though there has been a significant reduction in gang-related activity, violent crime remains a concern throughout significant portions of the country. Crime rates vary among departamentos (states) and municipios (municipalities), and areas witnessing higher crime rates are often located in close proximity to lower crime areas or must be crossed in moving between lower risk areas. Local authorities may lack the resources to respond effectively to serious criminal incidents, although the concentration of resources in resort areas means these areas tend to be better policed than urban areas.

Read the [country information page](#) for additional information on travel to El Salvador.

If you decide to travel to El Salvador:

- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Do not walk outside after dark. Do not drive to unfamiliar and/or remote locations after dark.
- Do not physically resist any robbery attempt.
- Be extra vigilant when visiting banks or ATMs.
- Do not display signs of wealth, such as wearing expensive watches or jewelry.
- Engage local guides certified by the national or local tourist authority when hiking in back country areas.
- Enroll in the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) to receive Alerts and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.
- Follow the Department of State on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

- Review the [Country Security Report](#) for El Salvador.
- Prepare a contingency plan for emergency situations. Review the [Traveler's Checklist](#).
- Visit the CDC page for the latest [Travel Health Information](#) related to your travel.