

## ***GENERAL GUIDELINES***

### **TRAVEL**

#### **Airport**

When you arrive in San Salvador, you will have to pay a \$10.00 entrance visa fee, pick up your non-carry on luggage, and go through customs. Porters will carry your bags if you want them to. At customs, they will ask you to push a button. If it results in a green light you go right through, but if red, they do a brief search of your bags. Everyone is friendly. The lobby will be crowded. Chartered buses and our guides will be waiting for us. While loading, people will ask us if we need a cab, whether we will buy lottery tickets, sodas, crafts, and needy looking people may just ask for money. They all accept a clear and smiling, "No gracias." If someone pursues more, "No hablo espanol" works. Selling lottery tickets is a source of income for poor people (proceeds of lottery go to education), and you may choose to buy one or something else that is being offered. If you do, you may be surrounded by others asking you to buy something from them, but "No" works.

#### **Taxi**

Transportation will always be provided and delegates are expected to use the transportation provided by International Partners. You are prohibited from traveling independently without the express permission of International Partners. However, if you ever need to use a taxi, negotiate the price before you let the driver store your luggage or before you enter the cab. If possible, ask someone the likely fare before you approach a taxi. Be prepared at the airport to be approached by taxi drivers. Just say, "No gracias."

### **CULTURAL AWARENESS**

#### **Cultural Issues**

Working within another culture requires a great deal of sensitivity, awareness, and diplomacy. Be aware of what goes on around you. Learn by observing how local people interact. El Salvadorans are friendly people quick to laugh and joke. Always greet everyone with a "Buenos," or "Hola," a smile, and shaking hands is always respectful. As a "gringo," you are always in public, and therefore, be polite and never loud or obnoxious. El Salvadorans will remain aloof out of respect for you while awaiting your greeting to signal friendliness.

#### **Customs/Gender**

Teens will gain respect by speaking respectfully to adult hosts. Adding "Senor" or "Senora" before a first name is a customary expression of respect. Words in Spanish are divided by gender and so are customs. Most obvious is that women, not men, carry things on their heads, and women wear dresses not pants or shorts. Women often defer to men especially in public (and children defer to adults). Tasks are usually divided by gender. You might want to notice and follow the lead of your hosts, but as a gringo, you have some latitude. They may laugh or tell you "that's a women/men thing," but this is a cultural exchange after all. Sometimes you may respectfully and sensitively do what feels right to you.

Civil code requires men to protect wives, and women to be obedient to their husbands. In practice, abuse of women is a major problem and laws to protect women are most often not enforced. As many as a third of all women are pregnant by age 14. Historically, their role has been to work only in and around the house caring for children, cooking, gathering firewood and water, and keeping a family garden. Now many women are creating jobs for themselves and represent the most dynamic untapped resource in the country. Educated women now fill over a third of all professional roles.

#### **Language**

Participants are encouraged to speak Spanish as much as possible. It is impolite to speak English in front of Spanish speakers without interpreting. When a non-English speaker is in your group, speak Spanish unless someone is interpreting. If you speak directly to another English speaker, use Spanish out of respect for those in the group.

who would not understand so they will not fear you are talking about them. Also be aware that Spanish speakers are often too modest to admit the English they know but may understand you're English.

Most participants will speak Spanish, and you will have an interpreter with you. However, learning some Spanish will make your trip more fun.

Tips for learning basic Spanish: The more you practice the easier it gets. Daily practice works best. Concentrate on the "Essential Spanish" included at the end of this document. Label common household items. There are excellent tapes you can get at the library. Purchase a phrase book. Take lessons from a school or tutor.

## **VILLAGE LIFE**

Climate	Tropical weather means hot temperatures averaging between 75 at night and 95 degrees during the day in July. The sun is hot and penetrating. Afternoons are hot and humid, but evenings are pleasantly warm. There is no air conditioning; some homes have fans. June through September, known as their invierno (winter), is the rainy season. Drenching rains come at night or in the late afternoon. This means the dirt roads are muddy and the foliage is richly green.
Participation	Join in games and activities. You may feel embarrassed doing something you've never done before, but your hosts feel embarrassed by how little they know compared to you, and by how you see their simple lifestyle. They are opening themselves to you, and it is reasonable for you to be the foolish one in their culture. Allowing yourself to be laughed at (they are too polite to do it, but you may fear it), will allow you to experience how they work and play. Make yourself at home in their crowded houses. When there is an activity, Just Do It. You will be glad you did for the rest of your life.
Gifts	Small tokens might be given to your host family as memento. Something you bring from home is best such as a souvenir t-shirt, mug, postcard, or photo. Children appreciate pens and notebooks, which are needed for school and hard for them to afford.
Friendliness	El Salvadorans are friendly people. However, they will take their lead from you because you are an American guest. If you are outwardly engaging, smile, shake hands, hug, talk to people, they will immediately respond with friendliness and appreciate it. Most El Salvadorans still have their habits from centuries of living in a class system, which required poor people to show deference to people with position and money, and to foreigners and guests. If you are reserved, they will think you want to maintain your distance, and they will follow your lead. They are looking to you for cues, and your friendliness will put them at ease.
Appreciation	It is polite to refrain from speaking in English in the company of a person who speaks only Spanish unless there is a translation given. El Salvadorans are very gracious. It is appropriate to say "gracias" at every exchange and to generously compliment. Do NOT criticize their way of doing things. You would find it difficult to live the local lifestyle so it is appropriate that you express admiration for how they do it. Usually it is the most effective given their resources.
Electronics	DO NOT bring any electronics including music, game and hair related items. Using them separates you from your hosts both because you deny them the focus of your attention, avoid their lifestyle, and because it flaunts your affluence. Electronics are greatly prized, and their fascination for your electronics is likely to become a divisive factor among your hosts. If a village has electricity, a family will buy a TV as soon as possible. A television is desired because it is a wonderful diversion, a status symbol, a connection to the world, and an educational tool.

Sleeping	You will share a house with another trip participant or two and a family. You may be offered a hammock, a pallet on the floor or a bed (and you may have to share a bed with another participant.) If you need to sleep on something in particular like a cot or a therma-rest mattress – bring it. A sheet and/or a light blanket will be sufficient. Sleeping bags are too warm. Flashlights are necessary for night latrine visits.
Toilet Paper	Buy it there, but keep your own supply with you, or you will go without it.
Bathing	Bathing is a more public activity because the sources of water are limited to a spigot. You fill a basin with water to dump over your self, soap, and then you fill a basin again and pour over your self to rinse. People therefore are more casual about nakedness. However, bathing in underwear is customary, and you should be prepared to do it.
Photos	Bring pictures of your family, home, neighborhood. They will love seeing your life. You may take their pictures, but it is polite to ask permission. People almost always say yes, and like it, but it shows respect to ask. Kids and adults are all fascinated to see themselves in digital camera displays. A Polaroid camera is ideal because the pictures are wonderful gifts.
Environment	It is important to demonstrate respect for the environment because it is a crucial issue in El Salvador. You will see people throwing trash from car windows and streets strewn with trash due to a lack of waste disposal services and awareness. The natural beauty and resources of El Salvador has been under attack for centuries and was devastated in the 1980's by the civil war. The UN estimates that 90% of its natural forest has been lost which is the second highest loss among all nations. Wood must be imported. The wild cats and monkeys are now virtually extinct. Due to an absence of environmental laws foreign countries send toxic wastes to El Salvador, city air is filled with auto exhaust, and pesticides run into the rivers. Ninety percent of the rivers are polluted. A crisis in drinking water is predicted within 10-15 years.

## **HEALTH & SAFETY**

Communication	All youth must notify parents of their safe arrival. Access to phones and email is VERY LIMITED. After your initial contact, you will call home only in the case of an emergency.
Health Habits	Wash your hands with soap and water often and before eating. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You can bathe but do not brush teeth with local water.</li> <li>• Drink only bottled water.</li> <li>• Always carry a water bottle and drink plenty of water. Dehydration is a very real health risk.</li> <li>• Only eat food that is specifically prepared for the group.</li> <li>• Always: boil, cook, peel, or forget it.</li> <li>• Use insect repellent.</li> <li>• At night wear long pants and shirts with sleeves.</li> <li>• During the day, use sun block and wear a hat.</li> <li>• Never go barefoot – ALWAYS wear work boots at construction worksites.</li> <li>• Keep your feet clean and dry.</li> <li>• Check shoes, clothes, bedding for bugs before using.</li> </ul>
Safety	The odds are in your favor that you will have a safe and incident free trip. However, even in the US, there is crime. Here is what you can do to improve your safety. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't wear, or bring, expense looking jewelry or appear affluent.</li> <li>• Dress modestly and comfortably so as not to attract attention.</li> <li>• Don't be loud or rude or attract attention to yourself.</li> </ul>

- Don't bring anything you would hate to lose such as irreplaceable
- Family objects, unnecessary credit cards, Social Security card, library card, things you carry in your wallet and purse that are not necessary to your trip.
- Carry \$10 at all times broken into ones or fives.
- Don't display your cash.
- Always be with an IP buddy. Never travel alone.
- Always keep your bags with you when traveling.
- Don't take shortcuts into alleys.
- Don't give money to children or adults who approach you.
- Be aware of pickpockets when in a crowded place.
- Avoid public demonstrations.
- Memorize or carry important emergency phone numbers
- Carry a water bottle and drink plenty of water.
- Do not give away money or items except when approved.
- Do not argue with any official.
- In El Salvador you are not protected by the US Constitution. Obey laws.
- If confronted by a thief, give him what he wants. This is about poverty; thieves don't want to hurt you, but give them something.

Buddy System	All participants are required to be always in the presence of another trip participant. With special approval of the trip leader, a trusted person who is not a trip participant may be approved as a buddy.
Health Insurance	You will have an insurance card that covers costs of health care as needed. Carry it with you at all times.
Immunization	Routine immunizations should be up to date. None are required for trips to El Salvador. However, check with your doctor and do whatever is suggested. Some get malaria pills from their doctor, which are taken 1 per week starting 2 weeks prior to your trip and continuing 4 weeks after you return. A shot of gamma globulin (GG) is suggested to prevent hepatitis A (infectious hepatitis). A vaccination for typhoid is a recommended precaution.
Liability	Each participant takes full responsibility for safety. By agreeing to go on this trip, each participant waives any liability to WES, IP, or Trip Leaders.
Medical	<p>Communicate to other participants and the Team Leader any discomforts, illnesses, or accidents. There will be no hospital or clinic nearby so we will have contacts with a doctor who is aware of us and will respond if needed. The Team Leader will have a first aid kit. You will have special insurance to cover medical treatment.</p> <p>Many people get diarrhea during their visit, but it will be gone in only a couple of days. If it persists, ask for medical attention. If you need medical attention, keep the receipts because you might be able to get reimbursed when you return home. If teens need medical care, parents will be informed. Always carry a water bottle.</p>
Earthquakes	It is highly unlikely there will be an earthquake while you are visiting. There has been an average of one per decade over the last 5 centuries. In January and February 2001, there were three earthquakes. In an earthquake or tremor everything vibrates for a few seconds or a minute. El Salvadorans are very afraid of them, but the personal injuries were mostly from one hillside where houses were swept away by landslides. The most common danger is clay roofs collapsing so going outdoors or standing under a doorframe is safest.
Crime	As in all poor places, you must protect yourself from street crime. We will minimize your risk by traveling in groups during the daytime, staying in safer areas where we are known by local people, and traveling with two local guides.

Money US currency is used in El Salvador. Conceal your money in your luggage so that it won't be easily noticed or found. Divide it in two places. Keep backup money and return-money (\$25) very hidden. Then have a more reachable hidden stash. Finally keep \$5 with you at ALL times plus another \$5 for spending. One of the safest places for money is a money belt kept under your clothes as long as you can work comfortably while wearing it. Putting a bill in your shoe also works. You might want to bring up to \$20 per week for snack-type spending plus enough for whatever special purchases you wish to make. Prepare so you present only the approximate amount of cash that is needed for a transaction.

## **PURPOSE**

Purpose The purpose of this trip is to support the leadership of a small, rural village to implement a community project that will serve the development of their children. In addition, it is an opportunity for people in the remote countryside of El Salvador to meet Americans and for you to experience the lifestyle of nearly half of all humanity. Your personal relationship with people you meet will likely transform their lives, and perhaps they will transform yours.

Leadership The mission of IP is to support local leaders who organize their community so that they succeed. This means encouraging those who dream and assisting those who seek to implement their dreams.

Projects Participants desiring to initiate special projects must receive prior approval from the Trip Leader. IP reserves the right to accept or decline any project or association with any potential partner.