



El Salvador

CAPITAL

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OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

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CURRENCY

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Disclaimer

This Country Guide reflects information believed to be correct at the time of publication. Regulations, procedures and charges are subject to change. IAM does not accept liability for errors, omissions, inaccuracies or misinterpretations in this guide. The information provided should not be considered as having been provided or sanctioned by the customs authorities of the country or territory concerned.

Overview

Duty-Free Eligibility

Duty-free conditions: Household goods and personal effects are duty-free provided they have been owned and used by the shipper for at least 6 months.

Documents

Required Documents

- **Passport**
- **Residence permit / work permit**
- **Visa**
- **Número de Identificación Tributaria (NIT) from the Ministry of Finance**
- **Certificate of migratory movement from the Immigration General Office**
- **Temporary import permit**

- **Bank guarantee, if applicable**
- **Original bill of lading (OBL) / air waybill (AWB)**
- **Detailed inventory in Spanish**
- **Packing list (must include the value of each item and the make, model, and serial number of electrical appliances)**
- **Letter of employment**
- **Certificate of change of residence**
- **Certificate of residence abroad (returning citizens, obtained from the Salvadoran consulate, verifying location and time spent abroad)**
- **Diplomatic franchise (diplomats)**

Household Goods — Specific Information

Shipment timing: The shipment must arrive within 90 days of the shipper's arrival.

Customs clearance: Approximately 2-3 business days. All shipments are subject to inspection. The shipper must be present for customs clearance.

Alienation restriction: Items cannot be sold, loaned, or disposed of during the shipper's stay in El Salvador.

Returning residents: Must have lived abroad for at least 3 years for duty-free import and provide proof of residency abroad. Citizens must not have returned to El Salvador for more than 30 consecutive days during the 3-year period of official residency abroad. Contact the destination agent for specific eligibility requirements.

Foreigners with bank guarantee: Foreigners may qualify for a 6-month delay of duty payment by providing a bank guarantee equal to the customs valuation of the shipment. The payment is required upon expiration of the guarantee.

Diplomats and international organizations: Granted duty-free entry. Documents must be received by the destination agent 15 days prior to the shipper's arrival.

Inventory requirements: Must be in Spanish and include the value of each item. Electrical appliances must list make, model, and serial number.

Bitcoin legal tender (2021 update): El Salvador adopted Bitcoin as legal tender in September 2021 alongside the U.S. dollar. Customs duties and taxes may be payable in USD or Bitcoin. Confirm payment methods with the destination agent.

Currency: United States dollar (USD) is the primary currency. Bitcoin is also legal tender.

Prohibited / Restricted Items

Prohibited Items

- Illegal drugs — strictly prohibited
- Pornographic and subversive materials — prohibited
- Military clothing and equipment — prohibited
- Cleaning chemicals and supplies — prohibited

Restricted / Dutiable Items

Traveler Allowances

Per VisaHQ and IAM guide:

- 200 cigarettes and 50 cigars
- Alcohol (import permit required)
- Perfume for personal use

Restricted Items

- **Firearms and ammunition** — permit from local police required `PERMIT REQUIRED`
- **Live plants** — original invoice, phytosanitary certificate, and permit from the Ministry of Agriculture required; subject to duties `PERMIT REQUIRED`
- **Medications** — permit from the local drug administration required `PERMIT REQUIRED`
- **Alcohol** — import permit required `PERMIT REQUIRED`
- **Wine** — permit from local health department required `PERMIT REQUIRED`
- **Food items** — phytosanitary certificate required if not canned; certificate confirming the item is approved for human consumption also required
- **Appliances, machines, and spare parts** — original invoice required; subject to duties (duty-free for diplomats)
- **Gifts and souvenirs** — original invoice required; subject to duties
- **Antiques and works of art** — original invoice required; subject to duties
- **Precious metal objects (jewelry, coins)** — original invoice required; subject to duties
- **Household and electrical items** — serial number, make, and model must be on inventory; subject to duties
- **Carpets** — subject to duties

Vehicles

Vehicle Documents

- **Passport**
- **Driver's license**
- **Certificate of title / registration**
- **Purchase / commercial invoice**
- **Original bill of lading (OBL)**
- **Diplomatic franchise (diplomats)**
- **Certificate of compliance (new vehicles, issued by the manufacturer, authenticated by the Salvadoran embassy or consulate at origin)**
- **Certificate of emissions (used vehicles, authorized by a mechanic, authenticated by the Salvadoran embassy or consulate at origin)**

Specific Information

Duty-free but subject to taxes: Vehicles (motorized and non-motorized) can be imported duty-free but are subject to taxes. Diplomats can import vehicles duty- and tax-free.

Vehicle age limit (8 years): New and used vehicles must be less than 8 years old from the date of manufacture for import. Vehicles older than 8 years will not be admitted.

Certificate authentication: Both the certificate of compliance (new vehicles) and certificate of emissions (used vehicles) must be authenticated by the Salvadoran embassy or consulate at origin.

CAFTA-DR considerations: El Salvador is a party to the Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) with the United States, which may affect duty rates on certain goods and vehicles. Confirm applicable rates with the destination agent.

Driving: Driving is on the RIGHT-hand side of the road.

Pets

Requirements

- **Import permit issued by the General Direction of Plant and Animal Health (Dirección General de Sanidad Vegetal y Animal), Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG). The permit can be obtained either prior to travel or upon arrival at the port of entry.**

Per USDA APHIS, PetTravel.com, and BringFido:

- **Quarantine permit obtained at the port of entry upon arrival**

Per USDA APHIS, PetTravel.com, and BringFido:

- **Health certificate issued by a licensed veterinarian (in duplicate). Per BringFido, the examination should be conducted within 30 days of departure. Per the IAM guide, within 15 days of arrival. USDA APHIS does not require USDA endorsement.**

Per USDA APHIS, PetTravel.com, and BringFido:

- **Rabies vaccination certificate for animals over 2 months old**

Per USDA APHIS, PetTravel.com, and BringFido:

- **The health certificate does NOT need to be signed by a notary public, nor does it need to be stamped by the El Salvador consular office (per USDA APHIS)**

Per USDA APHIS, PetTravel.com, and BringFido:

Specific Information

No quarantine if requirements are met: Pets are not quarantined if all documentation requirements are satisfied. However, a "quarantine permit" (administrative document) must be obtained at the port of entry.

USDA endorsement not required: This is an unusual and helpful simplification. The health certificate must be issued by a licensed veterinarian but does not require USDA endorsement for personal pet dogs and cats. This reduces processing time and cost.

Advance notification: Importers should inform veterinary officials in advance of their pet's arrival so inspectors are available.

Microchip: Not mandatory but recommended for identification purposes.

CDC high-risk rabies country: El Salvador IS on the U.S. CDC's list of high-risk countries for dog rabies. This is critically important for anyone returning to the United States with a dog from El Salvador. U.S.-vaccinated dogs must have a Certification of U.S.-Issued Rabies Vaccination form completed before departing the U.S. (cannot be issued retroactively). Source: [CDC High-Risk Countries List](#) — verified 200.

Common mistakes: Not obtaining the quarantine permit at the port of entry (administrative requirement even though there is no actual quarantine). Assuming USDA endorsement is required (it is not for personal pets). Not having the health certificate in duplicate. Not getting the Certification of U.S.-Issued Rabies Vaccination form before leaving the U.S. (required for return).

Consignment Instructions

Contact the destination agent to ensure all requirements have been met prior to import, especially for differences regarding air/sea shipments.

Shipper must be present: The shipper must attend customs clearance in person.

Inventory in Spanish: The detailed inventory must be in Spanish with values for each item and full specifications for electrical appliances (make, model, serial number).

90-day shipment window: The shipment must arrive within 90 days of the shipper's arrival. Shipments arriving outside this window may lose duty-free eligibility.

Returning resident 3-year rule: The 3-year residency abroad requirement is strict, and the shipper must not have returned to El Salvador for more than 30 consecutive days during that period. The certificate of residence from the Salvadoran consulate must verify these facts.

Documents 15 days in advance (diplomats): Diplomatic documents must reach the destination agent 15 days before the shipper's arrival.

NIT number required: The shipper needs a Número de Identificación Tributaria from the Ministry of Finance. The destination agent can advise on obtaining this.

Central American customs union: El Salvador is part of the Central American Integration System (SICA) and has harmonized some customs procedures with Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. Goods transiting through neighboring countries may benefit from simplified procedures.

Cultural & Other Information

- [OpenFactBook — El Salvador \(replaces CIA World Factbook\)](#) — verified 200
- [Wikipedia — El Salvador](#) — verified 403 to bots, works in browser
- [Dirección General de Aduanas \(El Salvador Customs Authority\)](#) — verified 200
- [USDA APHIS — Pet Travel to El Salvador](#) — verified 200
- [PetTravel.com — El Salvador Pet Import Requirements](#) — verified 200

- [Trade.gov — El Salvador Import Tariffs](#) — verified 200
- [VisaHQ — El Salvador Customs](#) — verified 200

Language: Spanish is the official language. All customs documentation must be in Spanish.

Currency: United States dollar (USD) is the primary currency. Bitcoin became legal tender in September 2021. Most transactions are conducted in USD.

Security: El Salvador has undergone significant security improvements since 2022 under the state of exception. However, travelers should still research current conditions and exercise appropriate caution.

Quick Links & Resources

- [Find Movers in El Salvador \(IAMX Directory\)](#)
<https://iamovers.mobilityex.com/index.html#/search?loc=El%20Salvador&lat=13.7942&lng=-88.8965&range=50&assocs=800&fvw=c&ctry=El%20Salvador>
- [Foreign Embassies in El Salvador](#)
<https://www.embassypages.com/elsalvador>
- [OpenFactBook — El Salvador \(replaces CIA World Factbook\)](#)
<https://www.openfactbook.org/countries/el-salvador/>
- [Wikipedia — El Salvador](#)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Salvador
- [Dirección General de Aduanas \(El Salvador Customs Authority\)](#)
<https://sitio.aduana.gob.sv/>