



El Salvador: where saviors are small and smiles are big

11/30/2011



'The smallest nation in Central America ... but the one with the biggest heart', is how Benjamin, our local Salvadoran guide, likes to describe his country. And as you drive into downtown San Salvador, past its bustling street markets – brimming with waving locals – or through the country's remote villages – full of more waving locals – it is easy to see why. Yes, El Salvador ('The Savior') may be tiny, but a warmer, more welcoming population, you would be hard pressed to find.

Given its diminutive status, one could be forgiven for overlooking El Salvador on a map. Bordered by Guatemala to the west, Honduras to the north, and the Pacific Ocean to the south, El Salvador occupies just 21,000 square kilometers of land. But, it is prime real estate. And for its one million annual international visitors, it is its size, which works in the country's favor, with the nation's best attractions all within an hour's drive of the capital.

On one day, we are driven from modern San Salvador to historic Chalatenango (where we are greeted by the mayor and his family), through lush forest to San Luis del Carmen on the northern banks of Lake Suchitlan, and finally to the left-leaning, artsy town of Suchitoto.

Then, on the same day as exploring Quetzaltepec (aka San Salvador Volcano), the 'Pompeii' of Central America (Joya de Ceren), and the Mayan ruins of San Andres, we are taken to the beautiful Royal Decameron Resort at Los Cobanos for an evening beachside banquet.



'We are a very happy country because everything is under an hour away – the beach, the mountains and hot springs,' our guide tells us.

'And when you arrive again in San Salvador, you have the colonial churches, the art galleries, the big malls, and the great bars and restaurants.

'Then of course you have the world famous Salvadoran coffee!'

With arguably the best roads in Central America, classic excursions such as the Ruta de Las Flores (Flower Route), Ruta de Las Mil Cumbres (Thousand Summit Route) and Ruta Sol y Playa (Sun and Beach Route) are just short, easy drives away.

Active volcanoes, tranquil lakes, ancient relics, a contemporary capital: these are just some of the parts that make up El Salvador. But, for all of its attractions, it is still the people that make this place most special.

Thirty-five years ago, El Salvador's tourism tagline was 'A Country With A Smile'. How little things have changed.

Benjamin was right.

TACA, American Airlines, Continental Airlines and Delta Air Lines connect San Salvador with ten major U.S. airports.

For more information on travel to El Salvador, visit www.elsalvador.travel.



URL : <http://www.etravelblackboard.us/article/99913/el-salvador-where-saviors-are-small-and-smiles-are-big>

Copyright © Agents Support Systems Pty Ltd 2001-2011 Powered by [AGENTS SUPPORT SYSTEMS](#)