EMBASSY UPDATES
A Newsletter for U.S. citizens in El Salvador

Summer 2022

Seashore Park in Rehoboth, Delaware

U.S. Embassy San Salvador
American Citizen Services Unit
Monday—Thursday, 7:30 am—11:30 am
Friday, 7:30 am—12:30 am
Email: ACSSanSal@state.gov
Receive Your Passport by Mail

Previously, American citizens who had to apply for their passport in person had no choice but to make a second trip to the Embassy to pick up their new passport. **Effective June 15, 2022**, there is a way to avoid making that second trip! U.S. citizens who are required to come into the Embassy to apply in person for their U.S. passport can now purchase a **pre-paid shipping label** from any Cargo Expreso to receive their new passport via mail. Please note that you must purchase the label BEFORE your appointment—you cannot purchase it at the time of your appointment.

All you have to do is bring the pre-paid label to your appointment. It is easy - just follow the next steps:

1. Buy a pre-paid shipping label at any Cargo Expreso agency.
2. Submit your pre-paid shipping label to the Embassy staff on the day of your appointment.
3. Pick up your new passport at the Cargo Expreso agency that you chose approximately 3 weeks after your appointment.

Please note that adults who meet certain requirements can still use the option to renew their passports **by mail** which is a great timesaver for those who are eligible.

To learn more about passport services and to schedule an appointment, please visit our website: PASSPORT SERVICES
Entry Requirements to El Salvador and the U.S.

Thinking of coming to El Salvador or returning to the United States for the summer? If you are a U.S. citizen traveling to El Salvador or returning to the U.S., please be aware that there have been several recent changes to entry requirements and that they may further change.

Visit our website for current information on entry and exit requirements for each country, COVID-19 testing in El Salvador, and vaccinations and healthcare resources in El Salvador.

To visit our website click here.

Check before you go to avoid unexpected restrictions or delays when trying to enter either country!

Remember that the U.S. Embassy cannot facilitate the entry of passengers who arrive without the correct test or vaccination documentation.
Renew Your Adult U.S. Passport through Cargo Expreso and Pay for It Online

The Embassy is offering adult passport renewal by mail through a local courier service, Cargo Expreso, to qualified applicants. We encourage all qualified applicants to use this service and avoid long delays in scheduling an appointment and inconvenient travel to the Embassy.

You **MUST** meet the following criteria to qualify for this method:

- Your current U.S. passport book/card is in your possession;
- You were at least 16 years old when your most recent U.S. passport book/card was issued (10-year validity passport);
- If expired, your most recent U.S. passport book/card cannot have expired more than 5 years ago;
- Your current U.S. passport was issued under your current legal name (no name changes are accepted by mail);
- You can wait up to 3 weeks to receive your new passport (you do not have any emergency travel).

If you are using the Cargo Expreso service to renew your U.S. adult passport, remember you can pay for your passport online through [pay.gov](http://pay.gov).

Keep in mind that after successfully paying the fee, you must print out the electronic payment confirmation you receive via email and include it in the package you send us through Cargo Expreso.

To learn more on how to apply through Cargo Expreso, please visit the following link: [HERE](http://HERE) and click on the PDF: [Adult Passport Renewal by Mail Using Cargo Expreso’s Courier Service](http://Adult Passport Renewal by Mail Using Cargo Expreso’s Courier Service).
To Remember

Social Security Administration (SSA)

Direct Deposits

If you are currently living in El Salvador and are receiving Social Security Benefits through a monthly check, you can get your payment in a direct deposit to your bank account. This is faster, safer, and easier. Just follow the process below!

1) Select and print the appropriate SSA-1199 form for El Salvador. Find it here https://www.ssa.gov/forms/ssa-1199.html

2) Fill out section 1 and have your bank complete section 3. Note that most US citizen retirees receive their pension either through Banco Agricola or Banco Cuscatlán.

1) Your bank institution will mail the completed form to the appropriate Federal Benefits Unit indicated on the form.

Once the form is approved you will receive your payment through the El Salvador banking system and it will usually be in your bank account shortly after the regular payment date. With direct deposit, you will have immediate access to your money. This is the safest way to receive your benefits.
To Remember

How to Contact the Social Security Administration?

If you are living abroad and have questions about any Social Security Administration process, please contact the Federal Benefits Unit located at the U.S. Embassy in San Jose, Costa Rica. The U.S. Embassy in San Salvador is not authorized to receive any social security applications.

You may contact the Federal Benefits Unit in the U.S. Embassy in San Jose, Costa Rica at: FBU.CostaRica@ssa.gov

Please keep in mind that every time you send an email you must include the following information:

- Full name
- Social security number
- Two phone numbers (including country code where they can reach you during the day)
- Short description of your inquiry

You should expect an answer in the following 15 working days. Remember that it is usually not necessary for you to travel to Costa Rica; almost every process can be done online. For more information, visit their website: https://cr.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/social-security/

The Social Security Administration is planning a visit to El Salvador in August.

Make sure you are registered in STEP to receive a notification via email about the exact dates of this visit and information about how to make an appointment.
Hurricane & Rainy Season in El Salvador

The rainy season in El Salvador runs from May through November. During this time, heavy rains and winds often cause floods, landslides, and power outages. These can disrupt travel and even threaten life and property. Rural areas are usually the most severely affected, as houses there are often not built to withstand flooding.

Hurricane season in the Atlantic began on June 1 and runs through November 30. While El Salvador is not located on the Atlantic Ocean, in 2020 Hurricanes Eta and Iota showed that Atlantic storms can still have a huge impact here.

How can I monitor a weather event in El Salvador?

The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN) regularly posts information on their Twitter account about weather conditions.

The Office of Civil Protection oversees emergency preparedness and response in El Salvador. During a severe weather event, they issue alerts indicating likelihood of the event and the possible impact of the event.

A guide to alert levels:

- **GREEN ALERT**
  Issued when there is a possibility that a weather event may impact El Salvador

- **YELLOW ALERT**
  Issued when there is a 50% probability that the weather event will impact normal activities.

- **ORANGE ALERT**
  Issued when the impact of the weather event may be severe and there is a 75% probability of causing serious damage, severely disrupting normal activities or damaging life and property

- **RED ALERT**
  Activated when the weather event has already caused severe damage

How U.S. citizens can prepare for severe weather events

- Monitor local media and the Civil Protection and MARN social media accounts.
- Identify secure shelter where you and your family can stay during a severe weather event.
- Prepare an emergency supply kit (ready.gov).
- Have travel documents up to date and easily accessible.
U.S. Elections

Voting from Overseas

The U.S. 2022 General Election is coming soon! If you are an American citizen living overseas, make sure you register to vote and request your absentee ballot with the Federal Post Card Application. Select your state on the dropdown menu to see election dates and deadlines and your state’s voting guidelines.

In Which State do I Vote?

You need a voting residence in the United States to vote with the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA). If you have lived in the United States before, then your voting residence is your address in the state where you last lived permanently, immediately before leaving the United States. It remains your voting address even if you no longer have ties to the property or to the state, or if your intent to return to the state is uncertain. You can learn more about your voting residence here: https://www.fvap.gov/citizen-voter/voting-residence

If you are an American citizen who was born outside the U.S. and have never lived in the United States, you may still be able to vote. In some states, U.S. citizens 18 years or older whose parents resided in the state can vote there. If so, you would use your parents’ last residence in the United States as your voting residence address. You can find a list of those states here: https://www.fvap.gov/citizen-voter/reside
Travel Safety

Protect your U.S. Passport During Summer Travel

From January to June 2022, the U.S. Embassy in El Salvador issued 86 passports as replacements for those that were lost or stolen.

Don’t be next!

In order to save your money, time, and trip, we have provided tips on how to protect your passport while traveling abroad:

- **Keep your passport in a safe place:** Keep your passport in a pouch, safe, or somewhere that is zipped or locked up, out of sight, and hard to steal. The worst place to keep your passport while traveling is in the back pocket of your jeans or an exposed pocket of your backpack.

- **Carry an ID instead of your passport:** Here in El Salvador, you do not have to carry your passport with you all the time! According to Salvadoran authorities, *any* official ID is enough to prove your identity. We recommend you carry an official ID (e.g. state ID, driver’s license, passport card) and present it instead of your passport. This will help you keep your passport safe wherever you store it, and creates fewer opportunities to accidentally leave it somewhere or have it stolen.

- **Dress up your passport:** Stolen U.S. passports fetch high prices on the black market. To make yours less of a target for thieves, use a passport cover. This will also help protect your passport from damage.

If your passport is lost or stolen and you need to apply for a new one, please contact the American Citizens Services Unit at: ACSSanSal@state.gov

Register in STEP and Travel Safely

The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program is an easy way to ensure your safety in an emergency while traveling or residing abroad. When you register in STEP, you will receive travel and health alerts for the country that you are visiting. It is easy to use - just create an account, then add and remove the countries you visit according to your plans.

Don’t worry! We don’t spam. Be smart and step on up to the STEP program by registering at: www.step.state.gov
Upcoming Embassy Closures

August 3 to 5, 2022 (Wed, Thurs and Fri)
Feast of San Salvador

September 5, 2022
Labor Day

September 15, 2022
El Salvador Independence Day

October 10, 2022
Columbus Day