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# Welcome

Awareness trip travelers describe the experience as rewarding, eye-opening, energizing, impactful and humbling. They say they've grown in awareness and that their perception of poverty has changed.

Whether it's to meet sponsored friends or simply experience the beauty of another culture, awareness trips offer an adventure like no other. During a trip we want to reach across borders, learn from one another and have fun. Travelers will see how contributions are used to support and empower families, and for most the highlight will be getting to meet their sponsored friends.

Trips are open to sponsors and non-sponsors. Some people travel solo, while others bring friends and family members to share the experience. Our travelers range in age from 6 to 70-plus. Families with children (6 and older), whether sponsors or not, are welcome. The minimum age for the November trip is 10.

## Trip Dates

**November 11-17, 2023\***

**November 16-22, 2024\***

**\*Note:** The November trips include strenuous, hands-on activities. These trips will provide the unique opportunity to learn from Unbound families and staff as they share their skills, talents, and traditions. Activities may include harvesting coffee and vegetables on local farms, planting trees or grinding corn to make tortillas. Together we hope to change society's perception of poverty one experience at a time by working together with families and learning from their expertise. Read the Health & Mobility section for requirements.

**Space is limited!** Apply as soon as possible. Check our website or call us regarding availability. We are reserving some spaces for first-time travelers so they can experience Unbound firsthand.

# Sample Itinerary

On your trip, you'll be welcomed by the local staff who will be your hosts for the week. You'll visit the homes and communities of sponsored friends and learn about their joys and challenges while experiencing the beauty of the people.

A detailed schedule will be sent two weeks prior to departure. Unbound will make every effort to offer the opportunity to attend Mass on Saturday night or Sunday.

**Day 1:** Arrive in San Salvador, the capital city of Central America's smallest country. Local Unbound staff will welcome you at the airport and take you to our office headquarters in Santa Ana, where you will be lodging.

**Day 2:** Visit the Unbound families in a rural community and enjoy a day filled with traditions, culture and celebration.

**Day 3:** Travel to Ataco to learn about ways that mothers in this community contribute to their family's self-sufficiency through group saving and using loans to start or expand small businesses.

**Days 4-5:** Learn about coffee farming from Salvadoran families. Spend time together picking coffee in the fields and learn about the production of the final product. Appreciate the skills and expertise of Salvadoran families as they share about their livelihood. Spend the day with your sponsored friends at a local water park and enjoy sliding down water slides and playing games with them.

**Day 6:** Learn about El Salvador's history. Visit San Salvador, including the chapel where Saint Óscar Romero was martyred. After, go to a hotel on the beach for your last night in El Salvador.

**Day 7:** Local Unbound staff shuttles travelers to the airport for their flight home from San Salvador.

**Note:** This trip will require an additional form, as it is more strenuous than other awareness trips.

# Costs You'll Need To Cover

Fees other than those set by Unbound are subject to change.

- Unbound Trip Fee: **\$1,200**
- Roundtrip airfare between your home airport and San Salvador, El Salvador (SAL): **prices fluctuate**
  - Make your airline arrangements only after your registration is confirmed and you receive the trip coordinator's written instructions for scheduling your flight. You can research airfares online or through a travel agent.
- Passport book (must be valid for at least six months beyond the end of your intended stay, with a minimum of one blank (unstamped) passport page)
- Entry fee: **\$12 paid** in U.S. dollars at the airport
- Immunizations as recommended by physician: **costs vary**
- Travel health insurance: **costs vary**
- Person expenses related to ending my trip following a COVID-19 diagnosis during the trip. For example: medical, lodging, food and flight change expenses.

# What We Provide

- The opportunity to meet your sponsored friend
- Lodging and transportation costs for your sponsored friend, chaperone and local staff
- Planned group activities
- In-country ground transportation
- Lodging. While in El Salvador, you will stay in simple accommodations, at our facility in Santa Ana or in a nearby hotel, with the last night spent at a hotel near the airport. Couples and families will be assigned private rooms. Other travelers will be assigned between one and six adult roommates of the same sex. The larger dormitory rooms at our facility include multiple, private bathroom and shower stalls. While running water for showers is available, it might not be heated.
- Meals and bottled water. Since tap water is unsafe for drinking, we will provide ample bottled water throughout the trip. Alcoholic beverages are not included in the trip fee, but there may be occasions when you will have the opportunity to purchase them. Meals are eaten with the group and will be simple fare from the local cuisine.
- Interpreters. Unbound will provide interpreters throughout the trip.
- Memories that last a lifetime

# Health & Mobility

The ability to walk on uneven terrain, walk up and down hills and climb flights of stairs is necessary. In general, groups sometimes walk up to half of a mile at any one time. Unbound trips may take routes along winding, mountainous roads, which can cause motion sickness. Please contact a trip coordinator with any concerns.

**Additional requirements for the fall trip:** Travelers joining the fall trip must also be capable of the following activities. Please contact a trip coordinator with any concerns.

- ✓ Participants must be able to walk at least one mile on uneven terrain including up and down steep, narrow dirt paths, while carrying tools.
- ✓ Worksites will likely be on steep hillsides where good balance is necessary.
- ✓ Participants may do agricultural work that will require squatting and bending over repeatedly, lifting, and carrying things such as tools, bags and buckets.
- ✓ Travelers will be on their feet working in the sun at elevations over 4,000 feet above sea level.
- ✓ Minimum age is ten years old instead of six.

# Immunizations

- Proof of a primary series of a COVID-19 vaccination is not required by Unbound for trips to El Salvador, beginning with the November 16-22, 2024 trip.
- Consult your doctor or local health department for immunization recommendations based on your health history. Staff members of Unbound are not qualified to offer advice on immunizations. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel) has country-specific recommendations. You can also contact them by phone at (800) CDC-INFO (800-232-4636). We recommend speaking with a medical professional as soon as possible, as some immunizations are time sensitive.
- CDC recommendations may reference a specific area of a country or vary depending on the style of travel. An Unbound trip coordinator can answer questions about the areas of the country that might be visited, lodging and other factors that you and a medical professional may need to know. Following are a few helpful points.

# Weather and Climate

El Salvador has a hot and humid climate, with high temperatures in the 90s and lows in the mid 60s. El Salvador's rainy season runs from May through October when temperatures will be slightly cooler. The rainstorms are brief, but heavy, so you'll want to bring a light raincoat.

# Safety While Traveling

Unbound cares about your safety, and the safety of your sponsored friends and our staff. Local Unbound staff members are your hosts during the awareness trip and accompany the group. Our local staff is from the destination country and lives there. Our social workers visit the neighborhoods, towns and countryside regularly and are aware of safety concerns. Because of their unique qualifications and background, our local staff is responsible for putting together the schedule of activities for your trip and choosing the locations you will visit. The members of the communities are excited to welcome sponsors.

Nobody can guarantee safety. International travel carries inherent risks, and we understand the realities in the countries where we work. We monitor current events, weather conditions, political situations, guidance offered by the U.S. State Department and other available resources. We're in regular communication with our local staff members and stay current on security matters. We've cancelled trips when we've deemed it prudent based on local conditions.

All Unbound travelers are expected to adhere to the Code of Conduct and other rules outlined in the Travel Agreement found in the registration materials.

Unbound is proud of our history of safe and enjoyable trips and we look forward to having you join us!



# El Salvador Traveler Comments

"Beautiful time...an eye opener, however, to the profound poverty. Lasting effect is my time spent with my sponsored friend, and the connection that was immediately evident. The letters and photos are a lifeline, and I've recognized the importance of communicating with her often. Was dramatically impressed with the Unbound staff, their commitment to the mission and their love of the families. I am forever changed by the trip...the people, their culture, the food/faith/resilience of El Salvador. Thank you for a life changing experience."  
-Carolyn, sponsor for 8 years

"To experience another culture like that is so valuable. We got to really experience the place and people, which wouldn't be the case if we went on our own. The kindness of the El Salvadorans, the dedication of the staff, and the amount of good that Unbound does so impressed us. Seeing that we can make a difference in someone's life was really heartwarming. And we will never forget the strength, warmth and resiliency of the people we met. It was an unforgettable week. Thank you so much."  
-Laura, sponsor for 12 years

"Absolutely go. It will change your life. You will realize the amazing power of love. It will also help you appreciate all that we have. As with our last trip 8 years ago, this trip was amazing. Unbound's work is changing the world. I am just glad we have some small part in their success. I would recommend these trips to everyone I know. I hope to bring our children in a year or two. Thanks so much to all the staff that make these happen."  
-David, sponsor for 18 years

"I would suggest an awareness trip to anyone who enjoys learning about other peoples and cultures or who is interested in Unbound and curious about its mission and on-the-ground work. It is necessary to keep an open mind and a mentality of learning and exploration. It is eye-opening."  
-Rita, sponsor for less than one year

# How Do I Sign Up For A Trip?

All travelers are required to submit a registration packet. There are two registration packets, one for travelers 18+ years old and one for those who are 17 and younger at the time of the trip. You can download a registration packet from our website at [www.unbound.org/trips](http://www.unbound.org/trips), call our (800) 875-6564 number or send an e-mail to [trips@unbound.org](mailto:trips@unbound.org) to request that one be e-mailed or mailed to your home address.

Complete, step-by-step instructions on how to register are included in the registration packet.

**Space is limited!** Apply as soon as possible. Check our website or call us regarding availability. We are reserving some spaces for first-time travelers so they can experience Unbound firsthand.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q. What do you do on an awareness trip?**

A. Our local staff meet travelers at the airport and host our group for the length of the trip. Sponsored members and their families welcome travelers into their communities and homes, and activities and celebrations demonstrate the impact of our program to families living in poverty. Travelers will see how contributions are used to support and empower families, but for most the highlight will be getting to meet their sponsored friends.

Whether it's to meet sponsored friends or simply experience the beauty of another culture, awareness trips offer an adventure like no other. Awareness trip travelers describe the experience as rewarding, eye-opening, energizing, impactful and humbling. They say they've grown in awareness and that their perception of poverty has changed.

**Q. Will I meet my sponsored friend, and how much time will we spend together?**

A. This is one of the primary reasons we offer trips, and we will do everything possible to make this happen! If you are a sponsor, you will spend a day during the trip with your sponsored friend, a member of their family and a staff member. Your sponsored friend will travel from their area to meet you, and your time is often spent at a park or recreation area. In extremely rare circumstances, the ability to travel, health or other unexpected situations prevent a visit from happening. For this reason we cannot make guarantees.

**Q. Who can go on an Unbound awareness trip?**

A. Trips are open to both sponsors and non-sponsors, and our travelers range in age from 6 to 90-plus. Some people travel solo, while others bring friends and family members to share the experience. Families with children (6 and older), whether sponsors or not, are welcome.

**Q. Is airfare included?**

A. Airfare is not included.

**Q. Should I bring my friend a gift?**

A. Sponsored friends and their families greatly anticipate these visits, and your presence is, in itself, a special gift. Exchanging gifts is common in many cultures. If you wish, you may bring simple gifts for your friend and for the family. Check the trip preparation guide included with your confirmation packet for gift ideas.

**Q. I don't speak the language, is that an issue?**

A. Don't worry, Unbound provides interpreters throughout the trip.

**Q. How strenuous are the trips?**

A. The days begin early and are filled with activities. The trip can be rigorous, as rest time is limited. You may travel long distances in a bus or van and may be gone all day visiting communities, sometimes in very warm weather. Participants should be able to climb stairs and walk on uneven terrain such as dirt paths or cobblestone. The amount of walking varies by trip. A trip coordinator would be happy to talk to you about any concerns you have about your ability to participate.

**Q. What happens if a traveler tests positive for COVID-19 during the trip?**

A. Travelers that test positive for COVID-19 during the awareness trip will not be allowed to continue to join trip activities and must end their participation in the trip. The traveler will be responsible for all additional expenses, which may include meals, additional transportation, medical expenses and lodging. Unbound strongly urges travelers to purchase trip cancellation insurance. Travelers should also budget for or purchase trip interruption insurance to help cover the costs resulting from early departure from a trip.

Note: Travelers cannot lodge at Unbound dormitories after testing positive for COVID-19. This is relevant to trips to Guatemala, El Salvador, and Costa Rica. Unbound will transport the individual to a hotel near the airport, which accepts COVID-19 diagnosed guests.

**Q. Will my health insurance cover me in another country?**

A. Consult with your medical insurance company prior to traveling to confirm whether your policy applies in a foreign country. If your policy does not cover emergency expenses including a medical evacuation, we urge you to consider the purchase of temporary travel insurance. Many insurance plans, including Medicare, do not cover treatment outside of the U.S. You can obtain further information on travel insurance from a travel agent or through research on the Internet.

Unbound strongly urges travelers to have trip cancellation and trip interruption insurance to help cover the costs associated with isolation due to a COVID-19 diagnosis.

**Q. Where can I get more information?**

A. You may email your questions to [trips@unbound.org](mailto:trips@unbound.org) or call a trip coordinator during business hours at (800) 875-6564.