

# SECRETS OF EL SALVADOR

An in-depth exploration of El Salvador's history,  
culture & incredible natural wonders

14<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> November 2022

NOBLE CALEDONIA

Suchitlan Lake



Due to the popularity of our cruises in Central America, and in particular the calls in its smallest country of El Salvador, we have introduced this escorted tour of this beautiful yet little-explored country to our portfolio.

Nestled between Guatemala and Honduras, and with a history of Civil War between the years of 1980 to 1992, El Salvador remains well off Central America's usual tourist trail. Yet the appeal of this country that has emerged from its turbulent past is difficult to define in words. If you appreciate beautiful volcanic scenery, glorious national parks, landscapes carpeted with coffee plantations and dotted with highland villages, delightful colonial towns and pre-Hispanic treasures, then this tour has much to offer.

Historic highlights of our exploration will include the fascinating Unesco World Heritage Site of Joya de Ceren, known as the 'Pompeii of the Americas' and a visit to the well-preserved Mayan ruins of Tazumal in Chalchuapa. We will also explore the pretty colonial town of Suchitoto, the mountain towns of Nahuizalco and Juayua along the 'Ruta de las Flores' and the capital city of San Salvador and its surrounds. For nature lovers we will enjoy a full day in the Jiquilisco Bay Biosphere Reserve which hosts a wide diversity of birds and sea turtles, including the endangered Hawksbill turtle, and we will learn of the flora and fauna and of the area's turtle conservation.

Travelling overland allows us to truly absorb the spectacular landscapes and the gentle rhythm of the country and, being approximately the size of Wales, there are no long distances to travel or uncomfortable journeys to endure. We have selected the best available accommodation and over the course of our eleven night tour we will stay in three delightful properties, enjoy some fantastic cuisine and meet some of the friendliest people in Central America. Join us and discover the many unsung wonders of this truly remarkable country.





Joya de Ceren



San Salvador Cathedral

## THE ITINERARY

**Day 1 London to San Salvador, El Salvador.** Fly by scheduled indirect flight. On arrival, transfer from the airport to the Sheraton Presidente hotel for an overnight stay.

**Day 2 San Salvador & Suchitoto.** After a leisurely breakfast we will drive into the interior of the country, arriving into the town of Suchitoto. A light lunch will be served at the hotel Casa 1800 before checking into your room for a four night stay. Spend a relaxing afternoon at leisure before meeting for a welcome dinner at the hotel this evening. (B, L, D)

**Day 3 Colonial Suchitoto & Suchitlan Lake.** This morning we explore the wonderful surroundings on a walking tour. Meaning 'place of flower birds' in the local indigenous Nahuatl language, Suchitoto is a charming colonial-era town and apart from being known as the cultural capital of the country is a major centre for bird migration. Explore the town's beautiful cobbled streets, art galleries and the historic Santa Lucia Church. After a local lunch and a short transfer to Puerto San Juan we join a local boatman for a tour of the lake, created in 1976 by the damming of the Lempa River for electricity production. Now home to a huge variety of flora and fauna, we hope to see hawks, cormorants, herons and many other

species. Dinner is provided at the hotel this evening, though you may like to take the opportunity to explore the town's many restaurants independently. (B, L, D)

**Day 4 Hacienda Los Nacimientos.** El Salvador is home to the production of indigo, the world's oldest dye, which has been made locally since pre-Hispanic times and which became so valuable that the Spanish referred to it as 'azul oro' (blue gold). The 1980 to 1992 Civil War almost resulted in the complete loss of the ancient production methods, but the impressive Hacienda Los Nacimientos has been instrumental in preserving the traditional techniques. In addition to the indigo production, the Hacienda also farms over a dozen organic crops, including cashew nuts, hibiscus and turmeric. Enjoy a tour of the facility and learn about the production and use of indigo, and maybe take the chance to dye a garment in the on-site craft workshop. Return to Suchitoto for an evening at leisure. (B, L, D)

**Day 5 Suchitoto & Cinquera.** Pupusas are the most popular local dish of El Salvador, the tradition apparently dating back to pre-Hispanic times. They are thick corn tortillas that are typically stuffed with smashed beans, cheese or pork. This morning we will organise a workshop for those interested

in trying their hand at making them before we set off for the neighbouring town of Cinquera to learn about the history of the Civil War and its effect on the local population. The town has become a model for locally-led, sustainable development with a focus on historical memory, youth initiatives and the environment. We will visit the town's Civil War Museum and take a walk on a forest trail in the nearby ecological reserve. (B, L, D)

**Day 6 Joya de Ceren & Juayua.** Check out of the hotel this morning and head west to the fascinating UNESCO World Heritage site of Joya de Ceren, the 'Pompeii of the Americas'. A pre-Columbian Maya farming village, the site was buried under an eruption of the Laguna Caldera volcano in approximately AD 600. The exceptional conditions of the remains provide an incredible insight into the daily lives of the populations who worked the land at that time. Continue to the picturesque mountainous town of Juayua, surrounded by the green of coffee plantations. Our visit coincides with the town's weekly gastronomic market, where a variety of local dishes can be tasted. From here travel to Concepcion de Ataco, where we will arrive in the late

afternoon. Check in to Casa 1800, Concepcion de Ataco for a four night stay. (B, L, D)

**Day 7 Cerro Verde National Park & Nahuizalco.** After breakfast transfer to the beautiful Cerro Verde National Park, located over a dormant volcano at an altitude of 2035 metres above sea level. This natural wonderland lies between three volcanoes blanketed with lush cloud forest. The youngest volcano is Izalco, which began erupting in the late 18th century and continued to do so for 150 years and was known as 'The Lighthouse of the Pacific' as the flowing lava could easily be seen from the sea. Continue to the slopes of the Apaneca mountain range, in particular the towns of Nahuizalco, one of the last places in El Salvador where we can still experience people speaking Nahuatl, descendants of the few remaining indigenous communities that survived the peasant revolt of 1932. We will visit a local handicrafts centre to see the basketry and furniture for which the town is famous, before spending some time at the local market. Return to Concepcion de Ataco in the late afternoon. (B, L, D)

**Day 8 Concepcion de Ataco.** Enjoy a day at leisure in Ataco, a quaint, colonial town that is known for its natural beauty, as well as its brightly painted homes,



cobblestone streets, colourful murals and unique arts and crafts. In the Mayan language Nahuatl, Ataco means "Place of the Elevated Springs". Perhaps take a stroll through Central Park and explore the church, city hall and the nearby antique shops, or simply wander through the town admiring the famous murals that adorn so many of the buildings. (B, L, D)

**Day 9 Tazumal, Santa Ana & Santa Teresa Hot Springs.** This morning we visit the Mayan ruins of Tazumal in Chalchuapa, considered the most important and best-preserved in El Salvador. The ruins on display comprise only a fraction of a site that covers four square miles, much of which still lies buried beneath the adjacent modern town. Archaeologists believe that the first settlements in this area date from around 5000 BC and the excavated structures date from a period spanning more than 1,000 years. Continue on to Santa Ana, the second city of El Salvador and home to a rich historical centre that we visit on an orientation tour. We will see the impressive cathedral and the National Theatre before taking lunch at a local restaurant. This afternoon sees a change of pace as we spend a relaxing few hours at the Santa Teresa geothermic park, home of the largest hot springs in Central America. Take the opportunity to bathe in the thermal water pools

before enjoying an informal dinner in the on-site restaurant. (B, L, D)

**Day 10 Cacao Farm.** After breakfast, check out from the hotel and transfer via Nahuizalco to the eastern Sonsonate region, where an exclusive visit to a cacao plantation has been arranged to learn about the cultivation and history of this important endemic crop. In El Salvador, the variety of cacao that is produced is called criollo, considered one of the best varieties in the world in terms of quality, and which comprises only 5% of total cacao production. An evergreen crop that can live as long as 70 years, cacao represents a long-term asset for producers, and a reason for the local population to remain in their communities instead of migrating in pursuit of work. Afterwards, transfer to San Salvador for lunch before checking in to the Sheraton Presidente San Salvador for a three night stay. (B, L, D)

**Day 11 Jiquilisco Bay.** Today, enjoy a full day's excursion to visit the Jiquilisco Bay Biosphere Reserve which is El Salvador's most important marine ecosystem with the coastal area being made up of remote islands, mangrove canals and desolate beaches whilst inland we find beautiful forests and cacao plantations. It is an important base for migratory birds as well as a nesting site for four

sea turtle species including one of only two sites in the Pacific for the endangered Hawksbill turtle. We explore the different areas of the reserve spending time with the environmentalists and scientists who will teach us about the conservation of the turtles. (B, L, D)

**Day 12 San Salvador.** Following breakfast transfer to El Boqueron National Park, located on top of the San Salvador volcano and offering spectacular views of the volcano itself and the country's capital city. The park offers many walking trails through the lush pine forest and is a popular venue for locals and tourists alike. The five-kilometre-wide crater is home to a huge variety of flora and fauna,

including armadillos, racoons, hydrangeas and begonias. Transfer into the city for lunch and a tour of the historical centre passing the National Palace and Theatre, the Metropolitan Cathedral and the Chapel of Divine Providence, site of the murder of Monsenor Romero during the Civil War in 1980. (B, L, D)

**Day 13 San Salvador to London.** This morning will be at leisure to relax or explore San Salvador independently. A late check out has been arranged. Transfer in the early evening to the airport for our return scheduled indirect flight to London. (B, L)

### PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

Room	Price
Twin	£4295
Single	£5295

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • 12 nights hotel accommodation as described • Meals as indicated (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner) • Wine, beer or soft drinks with lunch & dinner • Guided excursions including entrance fees • English speaking local guide • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Gratuities • Transfers.

**Not Included:** Travel insurance.

**Group Size:** For your maximum enjoyment we are restricting the group size to just 18 participants.

**NB:** Some excursions will involve extended periods of walking, steps and uneven terrain. We therefore do not recommend this tour for those with walking difficulties.

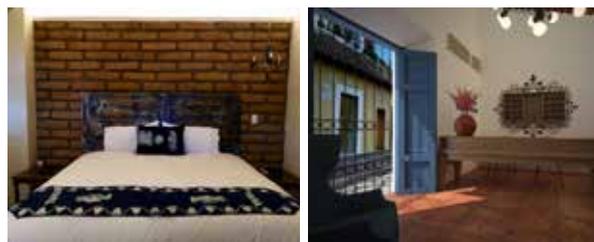
# YOUR ACCOMMODATION

For our escorted tour of El Salvador, we will be staying at the following properties:



## CASA 1800, SUCHITOTO – FOUR NIGHTS

Located in the heart of Suchitoto, this boutique hotel is within a 10 minute walk of Santa Lucia Church and the Art Centre for Peace. Built in 1824, the hotel features beautiful colonial architecture and has a restaurant, a bar and lounge, along with a terrace offering beautiful views. There are just 13 rooms, all individually decorated and equipped with air-conditioning, a flat-screen TV and complimentary Wi-Fi in the public areas.



## CASA 1800, CONCEPCION DE ATACO – FOUR NIGHTS

Situated on the outskirts of Concepcion de Ataco, this hotel is within a five minute walk of Fray Rafael Fernandez Park and Ataco Church and offers beautiful views of the surrounding mountains and coffee plantations. The landscaped gardens and terrace provide the perfect opportunity to while away the hours when not exploring. All rooms are air-conditioned and feature complimentary Wi-Fi and a flat-screen TV.

Please note that the hotel is undergoing a major refurbishment and that images will be available to view online once it has been completed.



## SHERATON PRESIDENTE, SAN SALVADOR – FOUR NIGHTS

Located in the upscale San Benito district, this contemporary property is one of the leading hotels in the capital located directly adjacent to the city's Art Museum and a 15 minute drive from the historic city centre. It offers impressive mountain views and features a wide range of on-site amenities including an impressive spa, gymnasium and pool area. All rooms are air-conditioned and feature complimentary Wi-Fi, flat-screen TV, hairdryer, safe and a coffee maker.





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