



What to Expect: El Salvador Mission Trips

So you're going on a Mission Trip to El Salvador and want to know what to expect? Here are some details of what your trip will look like!



Region and Purpose: Agua Viva El Salvador (AVES) is currently working in the Sonsonate region of El Salvador in and around Acajutla. Each year the AVES team partners with many mission groups from North America to make generational change through the gift of clean water and through the grace of the Living Water that is Jesus. Team members will use a DR 100, LS300 or PRD drill rig (depending on the ground formation) with our in-country drillers and work alongside our health and hygiene team to teach proper sanitation techniques. They will make meaningful relationships, experience a slower pace of life, and play witness to the faithfulness of God, returning home transformed.

Weather: Like most equatorial nations, El Salvador is hot. There are two distinct seasons: a dry season from November to April with light rainfall and a wet season from May to November when heavy rainfall occurs. Villages at higher altitudes experience colder temperatures making them ideal for coffee plantations. LWI works in the coastal regions and team members should expect highs in the 90s and lows in the 80s. Plan to drink lots of water and take time to rest in the shade to avoid heat exhaustion. Be sure to bring a variety of clothing as the temperature can swing from hot to cool.

Lodging: Teams will stay at the LWI Team House, located near the city of Acajutla, in the community of Playa Salinitas. The home also serves as our El Salvador headquarters with offices, housing, and a workshop for our staff. Team members will be split into one of four air-conditioned bedrooms. Each bedroom has a full bathroom. Sheets and pillows are provided, but bring your own towels. There is a pool (and the Pacific Ocean) on site, so feel free to pack a swimsuit.



View of our backyard at the team house in El Salvador



Food: If you're expecting to lose a few pounds on your mission trip – don't! Our wonderful cooks won't allow it. Team members will have a mixture of typical Salvadoran meals and everyday American fare. Expect to eat plenty of black beans, rice, tortillas, chicken, plantains, and eggs. One incredible blessing for team members is the opportunity to share a home cooked meal each work day prepared by the women of the community. These generous women work hard from morning until mealtime to lovingly and sacrificially prepare our lunch! The smile on their faces as we eat is a memory to last a lifetime. These lunches are meal prepared with clean water provided by LWI.

Tentative Itinerary (Subject to change)

Sunday:

- **Arrive in San Salvador**

Carlos, our in-field director will pick your team up at the airport in San Salvador. He will drive you to a restaurant for lunch and then to the team house. There will be more opportunities for tourist activities at the end of the week.

Monday:

- **Community walk (see existing water source, meet villagers)**
- **Begin drilling and take soil samples**
- **Hygiene lessons, VBS, crafts, games**

The team will arrive at the village, meet its residents, be greeted by the mayor, pastor, or teachers, and walk to see the existing water source(s). *This is vitally important relationship-building time.* Shake hands with everyone and smile; even if you do not speak Spanish this shows you care. After introductions, our in-field staff will pray and the drilling and hygiene teams will start their projects. The drilling team will begin drilling and taking soil samples to



determine the best water aquifer. The team may use mud-rotary, compressed air, or a combination of both drilling methods. The hygiene team and hygiene lead will meet with the women of the village. As you will often visit their dwellings, finding ways to positively comment on them and their homes is a great way to build relationships. These women are often shy that a fancy American would come to their home. You have the opportunity to encourage and communicate worth even if you don't speak Spanish. You can be warm and welcoming with body language and our staff is happy to communicate for you.

Tuesday:

- **Drill, case, flush, gravel pack**
- **Hygiene lessons, VBS, crafts, games**

Today, the drillers will drill the hole wider, insert PVC casing, flush the well, put in gravel pack, and may start developing/cleaning the well. The hygiene team will meet with the women and children, deliver hygiene and VBS lessons and deepen relationships.



Wednesday:

- **Develop well, clean and pack equipment**
- **Hygiene lessons, VBS, crafts, games**

On this day, drillers will have more time to play with kids. In the morning the drill team will work on developing the well, and in the afternoon will clean the equipment and tools. Wells occasionally take longer than planned; be patient, flexible, and cover everything in prayer. When in doubt, remember: our in-field staff are the expert drillers. Never take action without their permission and always follow their lead. With God's blessing, you will see a successful well. In the unlikely event that you are unable to bring water, rest assured that our in-field staff will return to the community to attempt another well. We will not simply leave without trying to assist the community in every way possible.

Thursday:

- Complete pump installation
- Dedication ceremony

You will arrive at the site, put the final touches on the well, and then there will be a dedication service. This is a time for the community to thank God for the well and thank you for your part in bringing water and loving them. This is a life-changing day for the village and it can be emotional to say good-bye to people who have become very dear to you. Please do not leave behind any gifts or make promises. While this feels instinctual, it can be damaging and the relationship should not be just about what you can give them. Please do not provide your contact information except email, and only do so if you are willing to write bilingually. Also, be aware that this may initiate requests for money or travel to the states, which is something LWI does not support. Remember to journal while the feelings, thoughts and images of your trip are still vivid.



A well dedication ceremony

Friday:

- Tourist day
- Pack

Various activities will be offered and it is nice after a hard week to relax and enjoy some down time. Remember, you can continue to pray for the village and trust that they are in God's hands.

Saturday:

- Leave for home

Culture

Central Americans as whole are overwhelmingly kind and giving and Salvadorans are no different. They are both proud of their heritage and meek in their approach to visitors. There might be a sense of shyness at first, but that will pass soon after greetings are shared. When visiting with rural Salvadoran families expect to be treated like royalty.

Special Cultural Issues to Note:

- Latin American culture is generally very proper, so be polite and use good manners. Do not be abrasive, aggressive, and demanding. Seek to communicate grace and be peaceful in your words and actions. Body language communicates so much more than you will ever realize – you can communicate what is in your heart with your face and your body.
- Latin America is a male-dominated culture. Whether we agree with it or not, as we are coming into their country, we must respect that. Women, you will need to dress extra modestly. Do not hold extended eye contact with men, and do not allow your body orientation to become too close as you may communicate something you do not intend to. Men, you can set a great example through your interactions with female team members and the local women. Your actions will be watched and you can effect positive change with your interactions.
- Morality is very important to Nicaraguans and they have very high standards for Christians. Your Christian witness could easily be hurt by something that might not be considered offensive to North American Christians. For this reason, it is very important that there is **no consumption/use of alcohol, drugs, or tobacco; no use of profanity or innuendos, or inappropriate displays of affection.**

El Salvador Staff



Sarah Krauss is the LWI staff member coordinating trips to El Salvador. She works in the LWI headquarters and is your primary contact for the mission trip. She is blessed by the opportunity to connect US mission trip teams with the ministry in El Salvador. Sarah studied Finance and Spanish at Texas A&M and loves to travel and run.

Carlos has been serving as the field director for AVES since 2006. Carlos, a trained pastor, has a deep love for all of God's people. He is the proud husband to Norma and they are the parents of three beautiful girls.

Norma is head of the Hygiene Education Program; everyone loves her gentle smile and kind ways. Norma has a passion to help the women of El Salvador learn how to better care for their families. She has a lot of training, even more experience, and is a great aid to women wanting to facilitate hygiene on our mission trips. Jennifer, our assistant hygiene lead, has a cheerful heart and loves working with mission teams and kids.



L to R: Nelson, Stanley, Stu, Carlos, Norma

Stu has been a member of the AVES team since 2004. A former pro soccer player, Stu fell in love with clean water after working as a translator on early projects. He's currently serving as team host. Stu loves to play and sing U2 songs...ask for a performance! Jeremiah serves as an assistant driller and team host with Stu. He loves to interact with teams, surf, and support FC Barcelona.

Kike is our most tenured staffer. Since 2002, he has been a part of more than 150 well projects. Kike is a remarkable driller and an even better pursuer of God. Challenge Kike to cards or ping pong! Stanley is a hard-working driller who began serving with AVES in 2004. Stanley is a real character and prankster at heart! He loves working in rural communities and is able to make immediate connections with the villagers. It's a beautiful thing to witness.

Also serving in El Salvador: Pedro carefully oversees our housing site. Delores and Mirna are our amazing cooks. Dora and Nelson work with our spiritual formation, evangelism, and maintenance programs. They both have a love for the Lord and people that is evident in all they do.



L to R: Stanley, Nelson, Dora, Norma, Kike



Paul and Harry

LWI History: Paul Darilek moved to El Salvador in 1996 because he felt compelled to live in the poorest place he'd ever seen. Paul worked in solidarity with victims of the civil war, planting corn, visiting widows, and waiting in line for dirty drinking water. And like most of his neighbors, Paul got sick from the water. In 1998, he signed up for an LWI Shallow Well Drill Training course where he met one of LWI's founders, Harry Westmoreland. Shortly after, Harry and Paul traveled back to El Salvador to drill wells. AVES was born and to date over 350 communities have benefited from AVES wells. Paul still works with LWI, raising awareness and cultivating relationships.