



By defining a clear vision for the future with appropriate objectives for the economy, education and its people, the nation has become a modern and mature democracy building an integrated society and business hub

# El Salvador

## THE DOOR TO CENTRAL AMERICA TRADES ON STABILITY

More than 15 years have passed since El Salvador saw the end of its bloody civil war and began to construct the foundations of its democracy. During this time, the country has fought to consolidate its democracy and to reconstruct the country. Today, it is well on its way to greater development, and political stability has long been the norm. Due to many years of careful fiscal management, El Salvador now also boasts one of the most stable and open economies in Latin America. Moreover, it has the most well established banking system in Central America and the best infrastructure in the region.

Now the country is ready to reap the rewards for its hard work. An increased emphasis on diversifying the economy through new sectors such as value-added exports and tourism, strategic free trade agreements and greater foreign investment levels are the routes to these rewards that President Antonio Saca chose when he was elected in 2004. While continuing with the economic push of former governments, however, President Saca has also put an increased emphasis on social development, especially education.

"When I think about what this government's most important achievements have been to date, I think of its social achievements," comments Vice-President of the Republic

**'AN IMPORTANT ACHIEVEMENT HAS BEEN THE SUCCESS IN OPENING NEW MARKETS'**



El Salvador has consolidated its democracy to develop the best infrastructure in the region for foreign investors.

Ana Vilma de Escobar. "We are a country that has worked for 15 years to achieve political stability and the consolidation of our democracy. We are also stable macro-economically, but this political and macroeconomic stability can only be sustained through social stability, which is why social programs are at the heart of President Saca's agenda."

President Saca's government has devised a comprehensive state strategy for education, Plan 2021. This aims to provide complete secondary education throughout the nation within the next fifteen years. The plan also includes initiatives to increase literacy, emphasizes math and sciences, allows for increased English language tuition at high-school level, and involves increasing the number of technical colleges in the country.

The colleges will offer courses aimed at providing the logistics skills for staffing the country's ports as well as computer and tourism programs.

"Another important achievement of this government has been the success in opening new markets," adds Mrs. Vilma. "El Salvador was the first country in Central America to ratify the agreement the Central American Free Trade Agreement (Cafta) with the U.S., in December of 2004, and it was the first country to manage to implement it, in March of 2006. I believe that this will open doors and also promote the progress of the region."

Cafta will also serve to increase El Salvador's value-added exports, according to Silvia Cuéllar, Director of the

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nation's export agency, Coexport. While the country has been pursuing an export-led growth strategy since 1989, signing various free trade agreements and opening up 17 free trade zones in the country, President Saca's government has pinpointed the need to increase non-traditional exports. Efforts are paying off – non-traditional exports grew by more than 20 percent in the first half of 2006.

"One of the main things we are trying to accomplish is to move towards more value-added products, a more sophisticated product that has a more exclusive niche market. This means changing mentalities, as well as fulfilling certain prerequisites such as labeling, packaging, or the prerequisites required by the FDA," says Ms. Cuéllar. ■

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### SUMMIT COMMUNICATIONS TEAM IN EL SALVADOR

Project Management: Nathalie Martin-Bea, Manuel Baselga and

For further information contact:  
**SUMMIT COMMUNICATIONS**  
 1040 First Avenue, Suite 395, New York, NY  
 10022-2902  
 Tel: 1 (212) 286-0034,  
 Fax: 1 (212) 286-8376,  
 E-mail: info@summitreports.com  
 An online version is available at  
[www.summitreports.com/elsalvador](http://www.summitreports.com/elsalvador)

## OPENING DOORS TO FOREIGN INVESTMENT WITH TRADE AGREEMENTS AND DIVERSITY

El Salvador has a great deal to offer investors, including a stable economy, strong monetary policy, a pro-business environment and excellent private-public relations, as well as a wide range of financial incentives

Today El Salvador is a changed country. "It is one of the most competitive countries in Latin America. It's a country that has a great deal of fiscal discipline and a great deal of foreign investment. It is also a country that has managed to double its GDP in the last 15 years and halve its poverty rates," states Vice-President of the Republic, Ana Vilma de Escobar. "In ten more years, we will be a transformed society with a widely diversified economy; no longer an emerging agricultural economy but one where business and services represent 60 percent of the GDP."

El Salvador's commitment to democracy and strong macroeconomic policies over the past 15 years has resulted in a very interesting proposition for investors today. The country has the lowest inflation and interest rates in the Central American region, and no devaluation risk since the legal tender is the U.S. dollar. Ranked as the second most open economy in Latin America after Chile by Moody's and the Wall Street Journal, El Salvador has also made great strides in its privatization efforts in telecommunications, energy and finance.

Since 2004, President Saca's administration has pushed ahead with these open door policies by encouraging further foreign investment and signing

strategic free trade agreements, such as the Central America Free Trade Agreement (Cafta) with the U.S. – the first Central American country to do so. This agreement, along with four trade agreements that the country signed in 2000 with Mexico, Dominican Republic, Chile and Panama, are helping to establish El Salvador as a premier destination for



An array of new opportunities has been gained from foreign investment, according to Vice-President Ana Vilma de Escobar.

business and exports. Consequently, the national investment promotion agency, Proesa, of which Mrs. Vilma is also president, has attracted more than \$242 million in investment in the past two years.

She comments, "We are seeing that one of the main benefits of this foreign investment for the country is in the diversification of the national sectors. New opportunities in call

centers, regional distribution centers and auto parts have arisen, and I think that Cafta will continue to contribute to this diversification and to generate more value-added sectors, which is what we are looking for."

The nation's vice-president says that apart from its stable economy, strong monetary policy, pro-business environment and excellent private-public sector relations, El Salvador also offers investors the best infrastructure in the region as well as the strongest banking system. The nation's investment laws offer a wide range of incentives, such as tax exemption, no foreign ownership restrictions, and customs exemptions. There are also 17 free zone areas located throughout the country with full services and infrastructure for the development of both light and heavy industries.

In addition, El Salvador is ideally located in the heart of Central America. As such, the government has begun to market the country as the gateway to the region. Mrs. Vilma comments, "Why should El Salvador be the gateway to Central America? I would say because it is a leader in the region and it knows exactly where it wants to go. And also because of the fact that we have had political continuity which has allowed us to give continuity to our economic policies and to advance towards what we have planned." ■

### THE FOUNDATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

The Salvadoran Foundation for Economic and Social Development (Fusades) is a private, non-profit, non-political organization created in 1983 by various Salvadoran businessmen as a center for study and research, and as a facilitator of economic and social development.

Organized around two main centers, Fusades aims to promote the economic and social progress of Salvadorans through sustainable development.

The Center for Economic and Social Thought is an internationally renowned political and economic think tank dedicated to the study of sustainable development. The Center for Economic and Social Development offers practical help in the formation of small businesses,



ANTONIO CABRALES  
 President of Fusades

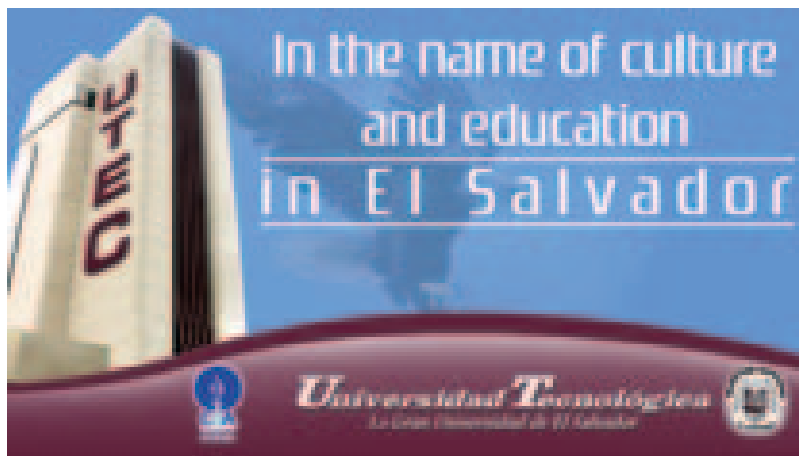
investment promotion, social strengthening and agricultural diversification as well as boasting a quality assurance laboratory.

Its department for small business offers financial services, administrative aid and business development, and its quality control laboratory is used to support the agricultural and processed food and

drink sectors in the country.

Pridex, the department for the promotion of foreign investment, is involved in a variety of initiatives, including the development of free zones in the country.

Fortas is the organization's social department, and works to improve the quality of life in rural communities. Its projects aim at easing poverty by the empowerment of marginal communities.



## INVESTMENTS THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND GROWTH SECTOR

El Salvador's natural agricultural advantages have seen a marked jump in growth percentages, backed by a temperate investment climate

**A**griculture is integral to the history of this country – coffee, grain, livestock and sugar all form part of our history. Today, we are encouraging the diversification of value-added crops such as vegetables, fruits, wood and other new crops," states El Salvador Minister of Culture and Livestock, Mario Ernesto Salaverria. "We have the conditions here to establish a thriving agricultural sector. We have the climate, the land and well-qualified labor. We also have a six-month winter with more than 109 inches of precipitation per year, and we believe we really can take advantage of this resource." Consequently, government efforts to expand the agriculture sector and subsequent investments have jump-



**MARIO ERNESTO SALAVERRIA**  
Minister of Agriculture and Livestock

started the sector's growth to 3.2 percent – nearly double the national average. While Hurricane Stan put a damper on growth in 2005, which was expected to reach 7 percent, the sector still managed a healthy 5.8 percent showing, while the economy grew at 2.8 percent. For 2006, growth in the agricultural sector was estimated at 6 percent, representing an accumulated growth of nearly 15 percent over the last three years, during which more than 60,000 new jobs have been generated. "These trends have been achieved through new agricultural and agro-industrial policies that we designed when this government came in," says Minister Salaverria. "It is especially thanks to the support of the president, who has believed in the sector since the beginning." ■

## MUTUAL BENEFIT BINDS EL SALVADOR'S LARGEST SECTOR

The Asociación Azucarera is a non-profit body charged with sweetening the collective returns of a \$186 billion sector

**R**epresenting 28 percent of the country's agricultural output, sugarcane cultivation is one of El Salvador's most important economic sectors. The country is the largest sugar exporter in Central America, generating roughly \$186 million per year, while directly or indirectly employing more than 220,000 people. As a major source of employment for the country's rural population, the sugar industry is also an important factor in El Salvador's sustainable development. More than 80 percent of the nation's sugarcane farmers cultivate less than 25 hectares of land. The Asociación Azucarera (the Sugar Association) is a non-profit body which oversees the industry's



**ARMANDO ARIAS**  
President of Asociación Azucarera

activities and acts as an organizing body for the sector's many participants. With the aim of promoting and strengthening the sugar sector, the Asociación Azucarera works to increase the efficiency and productivity of the industry by drawing up sector policies, liaising with the government and managing international trade. It also supports rural development through its foundation, Fundazucar. "We have realized that the only way to become strong and survive the ups and downs of the international market is through unity and coordination between cane growers and the mills producing sugar and cane

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**Investment can be a tough nut to crack.  
In El Salvador it's a breeze.**

 **PROESA**  
PROMOTING INVESTMENT IN EL SALVADOR

[www.elsalvadorworks.com](http://www.elsalvadorworks.com)

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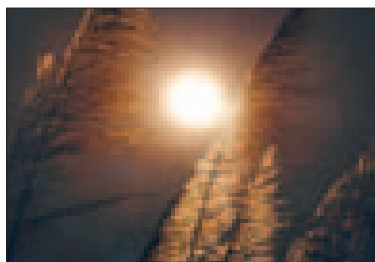
syrup," says the association's president Armando Arias. "The association is important in presenting a united vision and coordinated objectives. All the country's sugar mills, as well as the cane cutters and farmers, are members. They share the industry's future as well as the income resulting from the domestic and foreign sale of sugar products."

Apart from domestic consumption, which accounts for almost 50 percent of the country's sugar production, the nation's second largest market is the U.S., which recently doubled El Salvador's yearly quota for the United States through the Central America Free Trade Agreement. Boosting exports to

nearly \$100 million for 2006 – some \$30 million more than 2005 – this positive trend for the sector has been complemented by a general upward trend in world sugar prices and an increase in global demand for ethanol.

El Salvador is keen to expand its ethanol production and new legislation is imminent. The country already has various sugar mills ready to produce ethanol and has been consulting advisors from Brazil, where ethanol production has been in full force since the 1980s. Although domestic consumption is the initial target in El Salvador, the Asociación Azucarera is also eyeing the U.S.

"Initially we foresee a 10 percent fuel mix: 90 percent would still be oil and 10 percent ethanol. This is now on the verge of becoming a reality, and supposing our oil costs are \$1 billion, if 10 percent of that remains here, it will mean a very important injection into the country's economy," states Mr. Arias. "As far as the U.S. is concerned, there is such an unsatisfied demand for ethanol that I believe we could produce as much as possible and still not be able to cover it. Central America could export 7 percent of the demand for the United States, but at the moment we do not even reach 2 percent, so the opportunity for growth is spectacular." ■



The sugar sector is an economic driver branching out into ethanol production.



The Royal Decameron Salinitas is a leader in the business and leisure resorts sector.

## TOURISM TARGETS TWO MILLION VISITORS ANNUALLY BY 2014

A land of volcanoes and lush rainforests, El Salvador is a natural tourism destination whose hidden treasures are ready to reveal themselves

When President Tony Sacca came to power in 2004, he found a country ready to be developed for tourism. While previous governments had been occupied with the reconstruction of the country after the civil war, which ended in 1992, President Sacca arrived to preside over a country where electricity had been restored to nearly 90 percent of the territory, where private sector telecommunications companies were delivering the latest technology and communications systems, and which boasted the largest and most modern airport in Central America.

Consequently, the president decided it was time to pick up the reigns of El Salvador's tourism vision that had been dropped in the late 1970s when the country had been marketed as the "land of the smile." His government immediately established a Ministry of Tourism, began to draw up a new tourism law with incentives for investors, and developed a national sector strategy that targets two million annual visitors by 2014 and 7 percent of the nation's GDP.

"We are finally betting on the tourism sector," says Minister of Tourism Rubén Rochi, adding that the 2007 budget has targeted tourism as a priority sector. "It is such a large bet that the president has declared it state policy as well as one of the four most dynamic engines of the national economy, along with agriculture, construction and industry."

The new tourism law, which establishes resources for the national tourism body, Corsatur, to promote the country abroad, was passed last year. Also, the National Tourism Plan, which markets El Salvador as the meeting place for both business and leisure, was launched in early 2006. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), the plan is ambitious and already successful. Basing its findings on first quarter visitor arrivals for 2006, WTO found that El Salvador's tourism sector was growing by 23 percent, converting the nation's sector into one of Latin America's fastest growing markets.

This jump in growth was in addition to a 19 percent growth in 2005, and Minister Rochi says that these figures are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to El Salvador's tourism potential. "We are still an unexplored and unexploited destination, and we are still in the beginning of the growth curve. Consequently, the growth potential that the tourism sector offers is much greater than any other sector in the country," he comments. "In 2005, tourism generated \$644 million without the resources to launch an aggressive exterior campaign. One has to ask what can be achieved once we are able to dedicate sufficient resources to the sector. This is the potential that President Sacca saw when he arrived in government." ■



RUBÉN ROCHI  
Minister of Tourism



El Salvador 10<sup>th</sup> ANIVERSARIO DEL TURISMO MINISTERIO DE TURISMO

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## A WORLD-CLASS AIRLINE WITH LATIN AMERICAN WARMTH

TACA led the way in promoting an integrated Latin America and has now become a key element in continent-wide air travel

Founded in 1931 by a New Zealander by the name of Lowell Yerex, Transportes Aereos del Continente Americano (TACA) has grown into a leading airline in Latin America. Mr. Yerex may have started out with a single motor Stinson airplane 75 years ago, but today TACA is a world-class airline with a fleet of 31 aircraft, 6,000 employees, and flies to 34 cities in 19 countries, with hub operations in El Salvador, Costa Rica and Peru.

With a 75-year history, the airline has actively contributed to the promotion of the tourism industry and commercial airline transportation in Latin America. With 135 daily flights, TACA integrates Central America with the United States, Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and South America. It is estimated that in 2006 the airline will serve 3.5 million passengers.

Roberto Kriete, TACA's Chairman and CEO says, "We invest in provisions, in education, in training, and insist on being at the vanguard of commercial air travel. We have a competitive advantage because we have the best systems, the best aircraft and the best maintenance in the world. In other words, nothing is second class."

TACA operates one of the youngest fleets in the Americas, with 31 new-generation Airbus aircraft, and is recognized worldwide by its technological innovations, efficiency and comfort. The fleet comprises six A319, twenty-one A320 and four A321. The latter are the most recent additions and the first of their kind to fly in Latin America.

TACA's flight safety has been internationally recognized and certified: IOSA Certification (IATA Operational Safety Audit), the LOSA (Line Operations Safety Audit) Project, the FOQA (Flight Operational Quality Assurance) operational quality assurance program, and flight crew voluntary

reports are tools the airline uses in proactively seeking to provide the highest safety standards.

A young fleet and highly qualified maintenance services keep TACA at the forefront in airline safety. Aeroman (Aeromantenimiento, S.A.), ACTS-TACA's maintenance repairs and overhaul facility (MRO), is among the 11 leading maintenance facilities in the world to have launched the "Airbus MRO Network". The network was designed as an initiative to ensure the availability of high quality competitive maintenance services and solutions for Airbus aircraft around the world.

This MRO is certified by the United States' FAA, Europe's JAA, and civil aviation authorities in 13 countries – mostly Latin American. Aeroman was the first in the Americas to obtain certification of the new European Aviation Security Agency, EASA, and is also an ISO 9001-2000 certified company.

TACA's fleet, along with aircraft from two of the most successful low-cost North American airlines, undergoes maintenance at Aeroman. The airline's most emphasized and permanent project is to continually improve customer service and to

provide its passengers with the best travel experience, characterized by a warm and caring attitude that is true to its Latin roots.

New services or upgraded products are launched to improve the overall passenger experience when flying with TACA. This year, TACA has implemented a code-share agreement with United Airlines that enables passengers to benefit from the airlines' complementary networks. Other ongoing passenger-focused initiatives include an online check-in system, city ticketing offices called TACA Centers, TACA.COM and TACA Call Centers. These help develop a closer relationship with passengers and provide them with an easier and more direct way to get to a larger range of services. ■

**More information on TACA and its services can be found at [www.taca.com](http://www.taca.com) and news releases can be accessed through [news.taca.com](http://news.taca.com).**



**ROBERTO KRIETE**  
President  
and CEO of TACA

**TACA currently flies to New York non-stop twice daily and to seven other major cities in the U.S.**



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**TACA**  
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This megaproject not only includes the construction of townhouses, villas and apartments but will also feature shopping centers, restaurants and, in the future, hospitals.

## URBAN DEVELOPMENT GROUP LAUNCHES LARGEST ECOLOGICAL REAL ESTATE PROJECT IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Emerald Ecozone is a \$100 million investment by the Lomas de Santa Elena Group which will combine luxurious living spaces within a spectacular ecological environment blending modernity with nature

In July of 2003 a group of engineers, architects and business experts met with the objective of creating a company to develop land in El Salvador and Central America. Their goal was to create unique, high-quality housing in an environment where people live in harmony with nature. The group selected a plot of 150 blocks located in the municipality of Cuscatlán in southern El Salvador which boasted great potential for urban growth. Thus the company, Lomas de Santa Elena, and the project, Emerald Ecozone, were born.

Emerald Ecozone is the largest ecological housing development in Central America. It is organized into 17 stages,

the first ten of which have planned sales of \$200 million with housing starting at \$199,000. Construction began in August of 2005 and is expected to be finished in 2008. The project is a series of ventures with the same goal: to inspire human interaction with nature and maintain a balanced ecosystem. The initial idea was to build a housing complex for Salvadorians of which 70 percent was a green zone where people could enjoy the country's incredible natural beauty.

Specialists are trying to recreate the nation's national park, El Imposible, in the middle of the complex, and according to the soil type and distance above sea level, they replanted the country's native flora. Oscar Zaldaña Paredes, President of Lomas de Santa Elena, says "We are looking to surpass the expectations of Salvadorians and promote a high standard of living by developing projects which are respectful of nature and follow the concept of 'eco-architecture.'" Emerald Ecozone's principal market is Salvadorians who left the country 20 or 30 years ago to live in the U.S. and are looking to retire. Additionally, Salvadorians living in the U.S. have the option of financing up to 90 percent of their home in Emerald Ecozone. Realtors in New York, Los Angeles and Washington are at the disposal of prospective tenants.

One of the projects in Emerald Ecozone, Emerald Florida, is set on the highway to Nueva Cuscatlán and consists of 300 lots for homes, two commercial areas, nine apartment towers and Emerald Hills, which is made up of 72 three-storey townhouses. The second venture, Emerald Lomas de Santa Elena, consists of lots for 335 houses, while Emerald Florencia, which covers almost 120.77 hectares (300 acres), will

be comprised of medical and business centers and single-family homes. To date these developments have been extremely successful as initial goals for the first two years of sales were achieved in just three months.

To realize plans for construction, Lomas de Santa Elena increased outside participation by forming partnerships with other leading urbanization companies in El Salvador such as Bais, S.A. and TP, S.A. Infrastructure and drinkable water were outsourced, allowing a wide range

of companies to participate in and contribute to the successful construction of Emerald Ecozone. Lomas de Santa Elena worked with a consortium of English and Italian companies to install solar power paneling and encourage recycling. Meanwhile, design aspects were taken care of by the renowned American company Spillis Candela DMJM, best known for its work on architectural projects in the United Arab Emirates and on Trump Tower.

Juan Rogriguez Vela, head partner at Spillis Candela, says, "Living in the Emerald Ecozone allows residents to enjoy the fresh air, the beauty of the Pacific Ocean, and feel like they're at a luxury hotel or a beach club."

Lomas de Santa Elena has other projects in the pipeline such as plans to build a world-class medical center consisting of seven hospitals, each with a different specialty. Mr. Zaldaña is in talks with top hospitals around the world to form partnerships, such as the Baptist Hospital in Miami, the Jackson Memorial Hospital and the Cleveland Clinic Children's Hospital in Ohio.

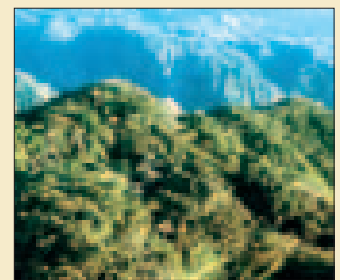
These projects have not only created over 1,000 jobs, but they are helping to pique international interest in El Salvador, making it a more attractive investment option, and many foreign investors are already financing Lomas de Santa Elena's projects. The company has developed partnerships with Banco Salvadoreño, Banco BAC, Westrust Bank, CitiBank, TotalBank, Scotiabank and Ocean Bank, among others. ■

**For more information visit [www.lomasdesantaelena.com](http://www.lomasdesantaelena.com) or call toll free 1-800-944-7518 in the U.S. and (503) 2278-0111 in El Salvador.**

## AN UNCOMMON PAIR: COMBINING PROPERTY WITH ECOLOGY

The most important aspect of Lomas de Santa Elena's projects is the role nature plays, and the real estate firm hired a team of environmental consultants to decide which types of plants and trees would best survive and enrich the environment. The land on which Emerald Ecozone is being developed is rich in coffee plants and mahogany, inga, laurel, amate and pine trees, among other native species.

The team, headed up by Dr. Francisco Serrano, worked to recreate the country's most important national park, El Imposible, within Emerald Ecozone. Huge efforts to recover El Salvador's original species got underway in an attempt to recreate the country just as it was when Christopher Columbus discovered it in 1492. Dr. Serrano refers to the park within Lomas de Santa Elena's development as unprecedented. It will be slightly bigger than Cuscatlán Park and the trees will be similar to those found in the mountain range on the country's western coastal strip.



The size and biodiversity of Bosque El Imposible National Park makes it the country's most important natural area.

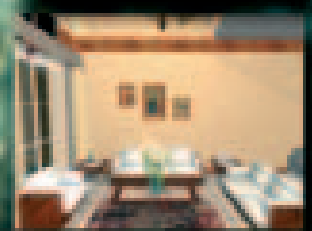


# *Emerald EcoZone*

JUST AS

COLUMBUS SAW IT

The Emerald Ecozone in the heart of San Salvador is a one-of-a-kind development that blends good taste, luxury and the raw beauty of the natural world into one. Apartments, lofts, duplexes and townhouses are set in a spectacular natural environment to make the Emerald Ecozone a truly unique and refreshing lifestyle choice.

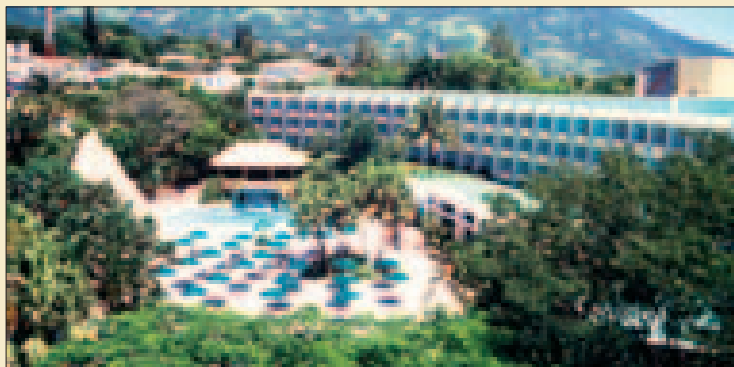


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EcoZone

## SHERATON HOTELS & RESORTS



The Sheraton Presidente San Salvador offers a new and exotic destination to do business.

After a 15-year absence, the international hotel chain Sheraton returned to El Salvador in 2005 with the acquisition of San Salvador's Hotel San Salvador Presidente. Renovated to the tune of \$300,000, the new Sheraton Presidente San Salvador has become one of the finest hotels in the region, distinguished by its luxurious facilities, ample gardens, pools, waterfalls, outdoor restaurant and first-class service.

Located in San Salvador's upscale San Benito neighborhood, the hotel offers both residential charm and city bustle. The numerous restaurants, bars, and specialized stores of the Zona Rosa are nearby, and the Art Museum and Presidente Theatre are within a five-minute walk. The hotel boasts 225 luxurious guest rooms with views, jacuzzis, in-room movies, 24-hour room service and Sheraton's trademark Sweet Sleeper beds. Guests have access to voicemail, dual-line phones, and high-

speed internet access, in addition to the hotel's fitness and spa facilities. Finally, with its 14 meeting rooms, the Sheraton Presidente San Salvador is also the city's premier conference location.

The hotel is managed by Salvadoran George Saade, who has been running Sheraton and Westin properties around the globe for more than twenty years. Under his management, occupancy rates have risen from 45 percent to 85 percent, and he says that El Salvador is on the right track as a new and exotic destination both for business and tourism.



**GEORGE SAADE**  
General Manager  
Sheraton Presidente  
San Salvador

"Lately our occupancy rate has risen notably, mainly due to business travelers and congresses. The number of weekend tourists from Central America, Europe and the U.S. is growing too," he says. "Cafta is a very important factor, but El Salvador started improving before that, thanks to the government's open policies boosting development and attracting investment and tourism."

## EXPANDING EDUCATION ACCESS AND QUALITY WITH PLAN 2021

Focusing the nation's education system on the needs of its society and economy with a comprehensive strategy will cultivate global benefits

Improving El Salvador's educational system, which to date has only included six years of compulsory education, is a priority focus for President Saca's government. "I believe that it is definitely possible with this administration to achieve a good balance between economic and social development. One learns quickly that if a country has better economic growth, better advantage can be taken of the income generated in the social arena," states Minister of Education Darlyn Meza.



Mauricio Rodriguez Loucel, Rector of the Technological University of El Salvador, intends new courses to lead to increased SMEs.

Consequently, over the past two years, the government has designed a state educational policy entitled Plan 2021 that aims above all to increase the public educational system's offer to 11 compulsory years.

"This country has a priority: to expand the access and quality of secondary education. Until we have a rate of 75 to 80 percent in secondary, there is no way that we can be competitive," says Mr. Meza. Plan 2021, which was launched last year, also contains various other initiatives to increase the country's university offer and improve the access to education for marginal communities.

The plan's solidarity network program is a combined effort to provide education, health care, and basic services to the 100 poorest communities in the country, and its power program is aimed at teenagers living in conflictive urban areas. Power, which has a network of 180 urban schools, organizes extracurricular activities

to help cultivate positive attitudes and responsible decision-making. The Compite initiative, which also forms part of Plan 2021, aims to develop English language skills among high-school students, and Megatec is an initiative to establish a network of technical colleges throughout the country.

Mauricio Rodriguez Loucel, Rector of the Technological University of El Salvador, which celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2006, says that the university is now offering distance education in business administration for El Salvadorans both home and abroad in a bid to support the country's development. He explains, "We are focusing the degree on the creation of small and medium enterprises. As a result of this project we would like to see the Salvadoran who has gone to the U.S. and managed to save dollars to come home and start a business here." ■

## Excellency at your service

As the premier lodging and conference facility in San Salvador, the Sheraton Presidente is conveniently located in the residential area of San Benito close to the financial and commercial districts. With luxurious facilities, beautiful gardens and world-class services, once you stay at the Sheraton Presidente, you'll definitely come back.

