

Geography

Location: Middle America, bordering the North Pacific Ocean, between Guatemala and Honduras

Map references: Central America and the Caribbean

Area:

total area: 21,040 sq km

land area: 20,720 sq km

comparative area: slightly smaller than Massachusetts

Land boundaries: total 545 km, Guatemala 203 km, Honduras 342 km

Coastline: 307 km

Maritime claims:

territorial sea: 200 nm

International disputes: land boundary dispute with Honduras mostly resolved by 11 September 1992 International Court of Justice (ICJ) decision; with respect to the maritime boundary in the Golfo de Fonseca, ICJ referred to an earlier agreement in this century and advised that some tripartite resolution among El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua likely would be required

Climate: tropical; rainy season (May to October); dry season (November to April)

Terrain: mostly mountains with narrow coastal belt and central plateau

Natural resources: hydropower, geothermal power, petroleum

Land use:

arable land: 27%

permanent crops: 8%

meadows and pastures: 29%

forest and woodland: 6%

other: 30%

Irrigated land: 1,200 sq km (1989)

Environment:

current issues: deforestation; soil erosion; water pollution; contamination of soils from disposal of toxic wastes

natural hazards: known as the Land of Volcanoes; frequent and sometimes very destructive earthquakes and volcanic activity

international agreements: party to - Biodiversity, Endangered Species, Hazardous Wastes, Nuclear Test Ban, Ozone Layer Protection; signed, but not ratified - Climate Change, Law of the Sea

Note: smallest Central American country and only one without a coastline on Caribbean Sea