

G H A N A



The republic of Ghana derives its name from the ancient Ghana Empire in the Western Sudan, which fell in the 11th century. Ghana is the first black African colony to gain independence and until independence from the British colonial rule on March 6, 1957, Ghana was known as the Gold Coast. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive and others came later. The remnants of around 30 castles can be seen along the coast of Ghana. The castles bear witness to four centuries of the presence of Europeans trading in ivory, gold, and slaves. At the height of the slave trade, there were more than 60 strongholds along the coast, which is a mere 350 miles long. The Dutch, Prussians, French, and British built these castles. Many of them changed hands. The British moved the capital of Ghana from Cape Coast to Accra in 1876.

The first president of Ghana, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, graduated from Lincoln University and returned to Ghana to make it the first African country to gain independence. On 1st July 1960 Ghana became a republic with Kwame Nkrumah as its first President.



John Kuffuor, an Oxford-trained lawyer and businessman and the leader of the opposition New Patriotic Party, was sworn in as president on Sunday January 7, 2001. He defeated John Atta Mills, the incumbent vice president, in an election widely viewed as free and fair.

Government

Ghana's struggle towards democratization has gained a stronger ground with the success of its 1996 multiparty elections. Today Ghana is a welcome African example of legitimate democracy and successful economic reform. In an unusually peaceful transfer of power, a civilian government that grew out of a military regime has accepted an election defeat and surrendered power to the opposition.

People talk about a newly relaxed atmosphere here. The military presence has steadily decreased in the past five years. There's less fear of criticizing the

government. Tourists and their dollars are welcome. Ghanaians are well known for their friendliness.

The quest for transparent and effective elections stirred the efforts of political parties, nongovernmental organizations and donors, all of who had immensely contributed to the electoral process. The road towards democracy in Ghana has not been an easy task, and the struggle continues as the nation furthers its efforts of instituting more political, social and economic reforms.



Ghana is a key U.S. ally in promoting economic and political reform and respect for human rights in West Africa. Ghana plays a constructive role as a stabilizing influence in the region and is committed to helping resolve regional conflicts and promoting regional security. Ghana has taken a lead role in supporting the African Crisis Response Initiative, and is also in the forefront of African countries that have made positive steps toward consolidating democracy. Trade links between Ghana and the United States are expanding: U.S. exports to Ghana grew from \$53 million in 1985 to \$295 million in 1996, boosting Ghana to third place (after South Africa and Nigeria) among African markets for U.S. exports. The United States has a strong commitment to encourage these positive efforts and supports the development of African leadership in promoting economic growth and political stability. [USAID congressional presentation.]

Many donors are involved in promoting democracy and good governance objectives in Ghana. The United Kingdom, Denmark, Germany, and Netherlands as well as the European Union and World Bank have active programs in supporting decentralization of government services to local level district assemblies. Germany also has an active media and journalism support program.

In close cooperation with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, Ghana emerged as a model for free market innovations in Africa, and now spends five times as much on education and health as on its military.

Social Etiquette

For several years now Ghana has been playing host to an ever-increasing number of visitors, especially tourists from all over the world. Ghanaians are a hospitable, respectable and peace-loving people. One could tell from their greeting forms and general behavior. Ghanaians have wide and generous smiles when you greet them. Traditionally, children are taught in their homes to respect their elders. A child who fails to observe social values is considered as untrained and uncultured. Visitors from all over the world are sure to be well received in any Ghanaian community that they happen to visit. In all Ghanaian communities, a visitor is first given a seat, and then water to drink before he is greeted and asked the purpose of his visit. The smile on their face seems to be permanently in place and the world has observed that Ghanaians are very patient as people, kind not only to visitors but to themselves too. Women are highly respected. A woman is given a seat first before a man. However, if water is being offered, it is the man who drinks first. Hardly ever touching or

kissing in public, for instance, Ghanaians may not be particularly demonstrative in love, but their feelings for their partners must not be mistaken. Their love is pure.

Ghanaians are well known for their wisdom, which is expressed in their use of proverbs, especially at the courts of chiefs, and in bedtime stories and anecdotes.

The ancient African political systems were dominated by 'queenmothers.' Contrary to some anthropologists' assertion that the office of the queenmother was a merely ceremonial, female title-holder of the Akan and the other tribes in the Republic of Ghana enjoyed significant political powers. The Akan ohemmaa obtains her title due to seniority in the royal matrilineage.

Family






In traditional communities in Ghana, every child is a treasured element of the society irrespective of how it was conceived. Once it had been born, it is an accepted commodity, and the Ghanaian in his right senses with his feet firmly fixed in his traditions will do all it takes to see that the child grows in happiness.

Being young or old, the Ghanaian belongs to a large family. Family in Ghana goes beyond spouse and children. There are parents, siblings, uncles, cousins, aunts, grandparents and great grand-relations. Behind every Ghanaian, there is the extended family, which is a source of strength and assurance. In times of difficulty, they all share the cost of relief and also share the times of joy together. United we stand.

Geography

Ghana is located in West Africa with the Atlantic Ocean to the south, Togo to the east, Cote d'Ivoire to the west and Burkina Faso to the North.

Ghana lies within the tropics and on the Greenwich Meridian. There are two main seasons, the Rainy season and the Dry season. The dry season starts around late August and ends in February. Minerals such as gold, diamond, bauxite and manganese are also found in Ghana. Ghana's population was estimated to be 17,080,000 in 1994.

-  CAPITAL: Accra
-  NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE DAY: March 6th (1957)
-  REPUBLIC DAY: 1 July
-  CURRENCY: Cedi = 100 pesewas
-  OFFICIAL LANGUAGE: English

Regional divisions and their capitals

Region	Capital	Region	Capital
● Ashanti-	Kumasi	● Central-	Cape Coast
● Greater Accra-	Accra	● Eastern-	Koforidua
● Brong-Ahafo-	Sunyani	● Upper East-	Bolgatanga
● Northern-	Tamale	● Upper West-	Wa
● Western-	Sekondi-Takoradi	● Volta-	Ho

Ghana and Humanism

Ghana is one of the first African countries to have an incipient humanist movement. Like most African nations, Ghana was formerly under European colonial rule, but it was not widely settled by Europeans because of its inhospitable climate. The northern part of the country has long been Muslim, but Christians, who arrived in the 18th century, now outnumber Muslims two to one. Fortunately, Ghana is free of the tribal conflicts, which afflict many other African countries. It is one of the most economically progressive African countries and could be the starting point for the humanist movement in Africa.

Legal System

The country still practice English common law and customary law. Ghana has not accepted compulsory International Court of Justice (ICJ) jurisdiction.

Ghana is a member of:

OUA, UN, IMF, ECA, ECOWAS, FAO, G-24, G-77, GATT, IAEA, IBRD, UNESCO, IDA, IFAD, IFC, ILO, CCC, IMO, INTELSTAT, INTERPOL, IOC, ISO, ITU, LORCS, MINURSO, NAM, ACP, CCC, UNCTAD, ICAO, UNIDO, UNIFIL, UNIKOM, UNPROFOR, UNTAC, UPU, WCL, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO.

Journalism and the Media

Ghana's independent commercial radio are coming to their own after the government's Frequency Registration and Control Board granted the first FM license to a small college radio station. Since the early 1970s, independent radio has been seen as a subversive threat and the awarding of licenses has been continually deferred. Today, there are about fifty stations in the country, out of which twelve are in the capital - Accra. Licenses for independent radio stations are valid for seven years.

Ghana Frequency Registration and Control Board approved and frequencies were assigned for private TV Stations. TV 3 and Metro TV are all private TV Stations. MNET and Fantasia also provide satellite TV. There are about eleven FM Stations

throughout Ghana. They are based in Greater Accra, Bolgatanga in the Upper East Region, Han in the Upper West Region, Kumasi in the Ashanti Region, Sekondi in the Western Region, Cape Coast, Apam and Swedru in the Central Region, Dormaa Ahenkro in the Brong Ahafo Region, Ho in the Volta Region and Tamale in the Northern Region. Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) has three (3) Short wave Radio Transmitters with a radiating power of 50kw, each which is received across the length and breadth of the country and beyond. There are about 13.5 million listeners to GBC radio. It was Thomas Jefferson who once said "the press is the best instrument for enlightening the mind of man, and providing him as a rational, moral and social being." These words are relevant today as they were in the eighteenth century.

Health

Ghana has a reasonably good health service. All regional capitals and most districts have clinics and hospitals, and two teaching hospitals in Accra and Kumasi have facilities for treating special cases. Additionally, a number of religious organizations and private medical practitioners operate hospitals and clinics all over the country. Herbal medicine and psychic healing are also generally practiced, and there is a special government Herbal Medicine Hospital and Research Center at Akwapim-Mampong.

Language

There are about six languages that are used on the national radio and television. These are: English, Akan, Dagbani, Ewe, Ga, and Hausa. Even though English is the official language, it is only used in government and business circles in the cities and urban areas. Akan in its various dialects enjoys a wide usage throughout the country. It is a trade language for most Ghanaians. About nine languages are used in the Ghanaian school system. Most Ghanaians speak one other Ghanaian language or more languages in addition to their own. There are about 60 language groups in Ghana.

Festivals

Most festivals in Ghana are for purification, thanksgiving, dedication and reunion. They are also considered symbolically as maintaining the link between the living and the dead. It is dedicated to the honor of the spirits of the ancestors believed to be a guiding force in all-human activities. Some of the most popular festivals are:

- **Adae and Akwasidae:** Celebrated by the people of Ashanti.
- **Akwambo:** Celebrated by the Fantes of Agona and Gomoa.
- **Odwira:** An Akan festival celebrated by the Ashantis and Akuapim.
- **Homowo:** Celebrated by the Ga people of Accra.
- **Hogbetsotso:** Celebrated by the Ewe people of Anlo.
- **Damba:** Celebrated by the people of the Northern and Upper Regions of Ghana.
- **Bugum:** Celebrated by the Dagombas of the Northern Region.
- **Kwafie:** Celebrated by the Dormaa in the Brong Ahafo Region.

- **Aboakyere:** Effutu people of Winneba.
- **Oguaa Fetu Afahye:** Celebrated by the people of Cape Coast.

Clothing

Dressing in Ghana traditionally reflects the geo-political division of the country into north and south. Kente is the most popular cloth for festive occasions. Men from the south commonly wear cloth and the smock, which is becoming a gown for all occasions, is common among men from the north. Ghana's kente cloth has spread in popularity around the world. The kente identifies where a person is from, and sometimes, their station in life. The first president of Ghana, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah used both the smock and the kente cloth widely to portray Ghana's culture in the area of clothing. The kente cloth and the smock can be purchased at any commercial market in the urban areas where numerous merchants sell them.

Hints on Packing

- Travel with soft luggage. It is inexpensive, light and durable. It will save you space and allow you more mobility while traveling. Backpacks are ideal.
- Mix & match several apparel items - pick one basic color of clothes to work with (black, navy, brown, gray, etc.).
- Do not take anything that would upset you if you lost it.
- Take limited pairs of comfortable shoes - match all or most of your wardrobe with 2 or 3 pairs.
- Stay away from clothes that wrinkle easily or need to be dry-cleaned.
- Don't be surprised to see the same clothes on someone 2 or 3 times in one week. Keep this in mind when packing and realize that you don't need to bring all your clothes.
- Pack your entire luggage at once. Try to carry it around the block. If you can't - start sorting again!

Author: International Studies Abroad

Hints on Packing

Remember this: your backpack is your home while traveling abroad. It may seem funny now, but one week into a two-month excursion, you hope you don't have an urge to toss that zippered piece of junk you bought into the Rhine River. Probably the most important step in choosing a backpack is considering your own needs and interests. Sure, the 'zipporific 5.0' model may have enough room for your hairdryer and collection of Stevenson novels to take, but is that necessary? The given rule is to take half of what you want abroad. Don't believe me? Halfway into your trip as you climb another flight of stairs to that hostel room 'with a view' you will thank me.

Secondly, consider the type of frame for your backpack. The majority of backpackers use internal frames (Eagle Creek, Jansport, Gregory) because they are easier to maneuver, cheaper, and just seem to look better than backpacks with external metal

frames. But because external frames are designed to keep your pack from your back, it is good alternative on long hiking tours to avoid a sweaty back. When choosing a pack, a good salesperson will show those backpacks that transfer most of the weight of the bag from your shoulders to your hips by a belt. Most models have this and some even come with buckles at the chest area. In addition, be sure to see the backpack at its maximum capacity. Imagine having to stuff everything for the length of your trip in that space. Finally, look for technical aspects like storage placement, easy-to-get-to compartments, and extra hooks and such that can be used for carrying extras. Some companies like Eagle Creek and Jansport have backpacks with a smaller backpack that can be detached for day tours.

Author: Eric Tiettmeyer, Editor, Goabroad

Food

You can try out Ghanaian cuisine like Nkatenkwan (Groundnut soup), Emo dokon (Beef with rice flour), kelewele (fried plantain) and fofofo (pounded cassava or yam) at numerous road side stalls and chop bars. Chinese, Thai, Korean, Italian, Indian, French and German food restaurants can be found in Accra.

Author: Tourism

Climate

Ghana has a tropical climate, characterized most of the year by moderate temperatures (generally 21-32 ° C (70-90 ° F)), constant breezes and sunshine. There are two rainy seasons, from March to July and from September to October, separated by a short dry season in August and a relatively long dry season in the south from mid-October to March. Annual rainfall in the south averages 2,030 mm but varies greatly throughout the country, with the heaviest rainfall in the western region and the lowest in the north.

Author: Ghana

When Traveling with a Laptop

Here are a few suggestions on how to keep your laptop safe and secure while traveling:

- Keep thieves at bay by carrying your laptop in a case that doesn't immediately identify it as a computer.
- When entering a metal detector at the airport ask the security guard to conduct a manual search of your laptop rather than putting it on the x-ray conveyer belt.
- Keep your laptop nearby on the airplane. Don't store it in an overhead bin where it may get thrown around during the flight.
- Always travel with extra batteries and, if staying in a hotel call ahead of time to make sure it has modems and data ports.

Author: International Studies Abroad

Telecommunications

All post offices and communication centers provide fax services. Buying phone cards can make international calls and making calls from phone booths. The direct dialing codes for USA and UK are 0191 and 0194 respectively.

Tipping

Tipping is permitted in hotels and restaurants. It is rarely added to the bill. You can tip waiters, taxi drivers, porters and guides at your own discretion.

Electricity

Ghana uses 220 volts AC. Most plugs are 3 - Pin Square.

Culture

The phenomenon of Culture Shock has been experienced to various degrees by almost every traveler who spends an extended period outside his/her own country, including the student studying abroad. Immunity to culture shock does not come from being open-minded and full of good will. These characteristics do help and may aid in adjusting, but they do not provide immunity. Individuals differ greatly in the degree to which culture shock affects them and a few people will be unable to make the necessary adjustments. Other people get by without any or very few difficult adjustments. However, most of us go through a series of stages representing a good, stiff jolt of culture shock, but the good news is, adjusting and adapting is possible.

During the first stage, the student usually feels positively euphoric. The students are staying in nice hotels, where the food is good and they have all the comforts of home. At this point, the group is visiting museums, palaces, and other places of interest, and the English language serves the students' pressing needs. The tourist sights are intriguing; the local people are courteous and helpful; it is clear that a wonderful experience lies ahead. The students are full of enthusiasm and cannot wait to start their lives with their host families and new university.

Then, suddenly, it hits! The tour is over; there are language troubles, classroom troubles, shopping troubles, perhaps housing, or roommate troubles. All the things about everyday living that were taken for granted at home now become insurmountable problems. The student is probably also annoyed because the attention he/she expects from the local people is strangely lacking. This attitude is interpreted as indifference, or perhaps as an indication that these people are not as friendly after all.

During this second stage, the students band together as fellow foreigners to lament and to criticize the host country and its citizens. Their complaints are based on simple stereotypes which offer an easy rationalization of one's troubles: 'these people have no manners', 'they are rude here', 'they ought to be taught how to get things done in a hurry', and so on. The gripe session becomes a convenient crutch,

an easy and uninhibiting atmosphere in which to get a load off the chest. But, it also serves to alienate the students even more from the local people and an understanding of the culture they are there to experience.

The second stage represents the crisis period - if it successfully weathered, the student will be restored to enthusiastic views of the host country, and move into the Third Stage: adaptation. During adaptation the student now begins to understand enough of the language so that his/her isolation is less severe. Little by little the problems of living are worked out, and it becomes apparent that the situation, although difficult, is not absolutely hopeless. He/she begins to look for the reasons behind the behavior he/she sees as different. By doing this he/she has a better understanding of why these people act this way and a better understanding of the culture itself. When the student can begin to joke about his/her plight, he/she is well on the road to adaptation. By now, he/she almost imagines himself/herself to be an authority on the host country, and he/she can bolster his/her ego by explaining aspects of the culture in a knowing fashion.

The fourth stage represents full, or near full, adaptation. By now, if ever, the student will have made a relatively good adjustment to the situation in which he/she finds himself/herself. He/she comes to accept the customs of the country for what they are. From time to time he/she experiences strain in his/her relationships with the locals, but the basic anxiety of not being able to live is gone. He/she realizes that he/she is actually enjoying his/her new experience and that there can be a real exhilaration in an overseas experience. But however perceptive, no one realizes fully the nature of culture shock until they return home to the United States. It is almost embarrassing to realize how many shortcomings the good old USA seems to have and how frustrating and annoying some of our habits can be. Culture shock in reverse is much less serious though, but it's surprising how many students upon returning home wish that they were back in the host country.

The difficulties that lead to culture shock are very real. Everything from the climate change, food (which is always different from that which we're used to), and the water (which sometimes contains bacteria unknown to our immunity systems). Another difference is the Spanish business methods (the corner shopkeeper might not open on time), and their concept of time (things that at home were urgent have suddenly lost their importance). Isolation due to language barriers is also a real problem. But eventually, the student adapts to the environment and has a changed attitude, which helps him/her accept and enjoy this experience.

What can be most frightening about the study abroad experience is that the student's self-esteem and security are threatened. But, with time, most students do adjust and see the experience as the great opportunity it is. It is important that the student realizes that the feelings he/she is experiencing are normal, and will eventually subside. In doing this, he/she will be better able to adjust and come away from this experience with a greater understanding of the culture in which he/she is immersed and, more importantly, of himself/herself.

Please note that students often feel sick while overseas. This is due to the climate change, pollution, etc. This feeling normally does not last more than a few days. Rest assured you will recuperate!

 **U.S. State Department - Country Information for Ghana**

COUNTRY DESCRIPTION: Ghana is a developing country on the West Coast of Africa. Facilities for tourism are available in the population centers of the greater Accra region, Kumasi in the Ashanti region, and in the Cape Coast area of the Central region but are limited in the more remote areas of the country.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS: A passport and visa are required, as is evidence of a yellow fever vaccination. Travelers should obtain the latest information and details from the Embassy of Ghana, 3512 International Drive, NW, Washington, D.C. 20008, telephone (202) 686-4520; or the Ghanaian Consulate General at 19 East 47th Street, New York, N.Y. 10017, telephone (212) 832-1300. Overseas inquiries should be made to the nearest Ghanaian Embassy or Consulate.

SAFETY/SECURITY: U.S. citizens should avoid political rallies and street demonstrations and maintain security awareness at all times.

CRIME INFORMATION: Pick pocketing, purse snatching, and various types of scams are the most common forms of crime confronting visitors. U.S. travelers have reported instances of these types of theft in crowded market areas, beaches and parks, and at tourist attractions. Travelers who limit their display of jewelry and handle their cash discreetly reduce their vulnerability to crime. In recent years, U.S. citizens have reported substantial financial losses from questionable transactions involving gold and other precious metals. The Government of Ghana maintains strict regulations on these natural resources. All agents must be licensed and all transactions must be certified. See Customs Restrictions below. Business fraud stemming from Nigerian scam operations targets foreigners, including Americans, and poses a danger of financial loss and physical harm. Persons contemplating business deals in Ghana with individuals promoting investment in Nigeria, especially the Central Bank of Nigeria or the Nigerian National Petroleum Company, are strongly urged to check with the U.S. Department of Commerce or the U.S. Department of State before providing any information, making financial commitments, or traveling to Ghana.

Single copies of the Department of State's brochure, ***Tips for Business Travelers to Nigeria***, are available at no charge from the Office of American Citizens Services and Crisis Management, Room 4811, Department of State, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818. Please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope. This brochure and an accompanying booklet entitled ***Nigerian Advance Fee Fraud*** are available for review at the Bureau of Consular Affairs home page at <http://travel.state.gov>.

The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to local police and to the consular section of the U.S. Embassy. The pamphlets [A Safe Trip Abroad](#) and [Tips for Travelers to Sub-Saharan Africa](#) provide useful information on protecting personal security while traveling abroad and on travel in the region in general. Both are available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, via the Internet at http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs, or via the Bureau of Consular Affairs home page at <http://travel.state.gov>.



MEDICAL FACILITIES: Medical facilities are limited, particularly outside Accra, the capital. Doctors and hospitals take only cash payment for health care services. Travelers should be aware that evidence of and/or assurances from U.S. insurance companies would not be accepted as settlement of medical expenses in Ghana. The Medicare/Medicaid program does not provide for payment of medical services outside the United States.

Author: State Department