

# THE GHANA GUIDE

*Essential Information for Mission Volunteers*

The Mission Society Team  
Ghana, West Africa



**The Mission Society**



Akwaaba means “welcome.”

We are pleased to know of your plans to join us in Ghana as a mission volunteer or work team. Your experience here is important to us. We pray that the Lord will teach you and stretch you as never before and that you will be His vessel here for the ministry that He has prepared for you. Before your arrival, we want you to be well prepared. It is also important to be aware of local customs and traditions. This guide will help make your experience more pleasant. The following are things to plan for and consider as you prepare to visit Ghana.

# About Ghana

Ghana was the first place in sub-Saharan Africa where Europeans arrived to trade - first in gold, later in slaves. It was also the first black African nation in the region to achieve independence from a colonial power. Ghana enjoys double the per capita output of poorer countries in the region, but the income of its citizens is among the lowest in the world.

## OVERVIEW

Despite being rich in mineral resources, and endowed with a good education system and efficient civil service, Ghana fell victim to corruption and mismanagement soon after independence in 1957.

In 1966, its first president and pan-African hero, Kwame Nkrumah, was deposed in a coup. In 1981, Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings staged his second coup. The country began to move towards economic stability and democracy.

In April 1992 a constitution allowing for a multiparty system was approved in a referendum, ushering in a period of democracy.

A well-administered country by regional standards, Ghana is widely regarded as a model for political and economic reform in Africa. It has a high-profile peacekeeping role; troops from Ghana have been deployed in Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone and DR Congo.

Although Ghana has largely escaped the civil strife that has plagued other West African countries, in 1994-95 land disputes in the north erupted into ethnic violence, resulting in the deaths of 1,000 people and the displacement of a further 150,000.

## FACTS

Population: 21.4 million (UN, 2004)

Capital: Accra

Area: 238,533 sq km (92,098 sq miles)

Major languages: English, African languages including Akan, Ewe

Major religions: Christianity, indigenous beliefs, Islam

Life expectancy: 56 years (men), 59 years (women) (UN)

Monetary unit: Cedi

Main exports: Gold, cocoa, timber, tuna, bauxite, aluminum, manganese ore, diamonds

GNI per capita: US \$320 (World Bank, 2003)

Internet domain: .gh

International dialing code: +233

## LEADERS



President: John Kufuor

John Kufuor's victory in the presidential ballot in December 2000 marked the first peaceful, democratic transfer of power in Ghana since independence. He succeeded the long-time ruler Jerry Rawlings.

President Kufuor is known as the "Gentle Giant"

Known as the "Gentle Giant", Mr Kufuor has made economic growth a priority during his presidency.

He has also taken a leading role in mediating in regional conflicts, including those in

Liberia and Ivory Coast.

Born in 1938, Mr Kufuor is a devout Roman Catholic. A lawyer who studied at Oxford, he held positions as deputy foreign minister and as secretary for local government.



# Culture

## Customs

- Ghanaians have names based on the day of the week one is born. Before you come, **find out what day of the week you were born** because you will be asked. When you arrive you will learn your Ghanaian nickname.
- Your left hand is considered your dirty hand. It should never be used to wave, shake hands, eat, or place your offering in the box at church.
- If you tell Ghanaians that you like something they have or are wearing, they may think you want it. They might then go try to get it for you at whatever cost to themselves, even if it means going into debt.
- One should not cross your legs, especially at the knees, while sitting down, as it can be a sign of disrespect. It might be interpreted as an insult, especially to the elderly and other important persons unknowingly in your midst, and gives the appearance of superiority.

## Gifts

- Many times individuals bring items as gifts for the Ghanaians. Gift giving is an important part of the culture, especially among new friends. This can be a pleasurable or a miserable experience. Be aware that many of these people have very few possessions and believe all Americans to be very wealthy. They will indeed be quite appreciative. However, at times they may appear greedy and jealous if items are distributed in a haphazard fashion, especially when given en masse. Ghanaian people in general will also be quite bold in asking for anything that they think you can provide. They believe it does not hurt to ask, but they also respect a polite response of “No” or “I will have to pray and think about it first”. Please be advised. Above all else, pray first before you make any response. Ask yourself what kind of a message you want your visit and actions to convey? Many people will be watching how you respond to their plea. Please don't hesitate to consult with one of the missionaries for any advice.
- Please do not make any future promises or considerations to a Ghanaian's request that you cannot keep. This may include providing copies of photos, gifts, money, supplies or any other expressed need by a new Ghanaian friend. A promise broken leads to mistrust, and a division in relationship is formed within the community, which lives on with the missionaries after you have left.

## Food:

- We will enjoy Ghanaian food and familiar dishes. Part of the experience is to have cultural exchange. We strongly encourage everyone to try a little of everything.

# Language

## Twi

Though scores of languages are spoken in Ghana, no indigenous language has the widespread use as does Twi. Being a former British colony, English is the official language, but you will soon find out that a little effort opens up many doors for relationship and ministry. We strongly encourage you to try to pick up at least a few phrases. Here are just a few very important ones.

English	Twi (as written)	Twi (phonetically)
Good morning	Maa kye	Ma chee
Good afternoon	Maa ha	Ma ha
Good evening	Maa dwo	Ma jo
Welcome	Akwaaba	À qua ba
Response (to all of the above) <sup>1</sup>	Yaa son <sup>1</sup>	Yaa song <sup>1</sup>
Good night (retiring to bed)	Da yie	Da yee eh
I am from America	Me firi Amerika	Me free America
How are things?	ete sɛn	Eh ti sane
They are good.	ɛyɛ	Eh yeh
Things are peaceful.	bɔkɔɔ	Bo koh
My name is _____	Me din de _____	Meh din day _____
And you?	Wo nsoɛ?	Wone sway?
Good bye	Baa bae	Bye bye
Excuse me/ Please	Mepa wo kyew	Me pow wo che woe
I am sorry	Ka fra	Ka fra
Thank you	meda ase	Me da see
How much does it cost? <sup>2</sup>	Ne boɔ yɛ sɛn? <sup>2</sup>	Ne boa yeh sane? <sup>2</sup>
I am full.	Ma mee.	Ma me
It tasted very good.	Na ɛyɛ dɛ.	Na eh eh deh.
Where is the bathroom? <sup>3</sup>	Tiafi wɔ he? <sup>3</sup>	Tee a fee wo he? <sup>3</sup>
I need to urinate.	Dwonsɔ de me	Jon so de me.
Ghana is beautiful.	Ghana yɛ fɛ	Ghana yeh feh
God bless you.	Nyame nhyira wo	Nyame nshe ra wo

<sup>1</sup>There are many different responses to peers, superiors, or even different families. A general response you will most often be safe with is “yaa son.” The g is not pronounced as is entered in the phonetics. It is like son in song and not son as in a male offspring.

<sup>2</sup>Most people will respond with a price in English.

<sup>3</sup>If you use this, people may try to help you find toilet paper. If you just need to relieve your bladder, use the next phrase.

# Greetings

Greetings are one of the most important things a visitor to Ghana should learn. You should always greet anyone you meet. Use English or Twi if you can. The Ghanaian will often ask about your family, how you are feeling, etc. It is appropriate for you to ask them the same even if you don't know their family! Getting 'right to the point' of a conversation is considered rude in Ghana.

When greeting a group of people, you often will shake hands with everyone. As you face the group, always start shaking hands with the first person on your right side then work around counter-clockwise. They may shake hands with you several times during a welcome procedure. A Ghanaian may also hold your hand for an uncomfortable length of time after shaking it. Relax and enjoy the culture. Men are allowed to hold hands with other men, even walking down the street. There is no sexual meaning, only friendship. The same applies to women with women. Men and women do not hold hands or kiss or show affection in public. This is slowly changing, though, in the modern cities.

When arriving in the country, you will be expected to greet certain leaders at the Methodist Headquarters. You will also greet any other officials with whom you will be working or ministering. This is an important part of Ghanaian culture. We will arrange these meetings before your arrival.

When exiting a vehicle, do not be surprised if someone wants to help you with whatever large or small parcel or load you may be carrying. Please *make sure* they are associated with our group. If they are, they just want to be courteous. They really do want to help. So let them, and thank them in Twi. Say, "Meh dah see".

## Dress

### Men

- Men are allowed great freedom in the clothes they wear.
- For ministry and teaching opportunities, a nice collared shirt or shirt and tie with trousers are appropriate.
- Blue jeans are not appropriate for 'official' work, but may be worn for travel and tourism.
- For work on a construction site, old trousers and shirts are acceptable
- Remember that you are dressing for the tropics.
- Shorts may be worn in your room or on "pure tourist" days.
- If you use the term "pants" here, people will think you are talking about underwear.

### Clergy

To most church goes, ordained clergy are expected to wear a collars, especially in church services, whether or not they are officiating.

### Women

- Being a more conservative society than the US, women must be much more conscious of their appearance: the farther from the big cities, the more modestly one must dress.
- In the villages, long dresses or skirts should be worn at all times outside the house. Long culottes, which look like skirts, are also acceptable. Slacks are only occasionally seen in the villages.
- Shorts should be worn only in the house. In more remote villages a woman's shoulders should also be covered, so please refrain from spaghetti strap type dresses and tops if you will be traveling to minister in a village.
- In church, it is best to wear some type of hat or head covering, like a scarf, (optional, not necessary but accepted). However, this is not as strict for visitors as it used to be.
- In the large cities like Kumasi and Accra, slacks and shorts may be worn for many casual outings.
- Modest swimsuits are appropriate only at hotels with pools and at the beach.

# Packing

## Preparation

- Please pack all your personal items in one small carry-on and one big suitcase.
- Most airlines will allow a checked bag to be up to 70 lbs. Some have recently lowered that to 50lbs. Double check with your airline.
- You may be asked to bring a 2<sup>nd</sup> suitcase for supplies and goods for the team or mission's use. Pack all valuables, like camera equipment and jewelry, in carry-on luggage.
- Baggage is notorious for coming a day or two late.
- Carry all essentials like toiletries, prescription medications, and contact solution in a carry-on bag.
- Pack one change of clothing in your carry-on luggage.
- Pack as lightly as possible.
- You will want to save room for souvenirs on the return trip.
- Carry money, passport and immunization card in an inside pocket or a pouch worn under clothing.
- Have photocopies of the first page of your passport made. Put them in separate places from your passport.
- In general try to pack light so you have two or three outfits you can mix or match and perhaps at the end of your journey you will want to give them as gifts to some new friends.

## *Required*

- Yellow Fever vaccination card
- Passport

## *Must Pack (at least)*

- One nice church outfit (Methodist clergy here wear clerical collars)
- Comfortable clothing for the tropics
- Comfortable clothing
- Bible
- Malaria prophylaxis
- Money for incidentals/souvenirs  
(Cash: clean new \$50 or \$100 bills. Travelers checks are difficult to exchange and draw a poor exchange rate.)

## *Items that may be shared with another person*

- Sunscreen
- Curling iron and blow dryer must be either multi-voltage or bring a travel transformer with adaptor. You may need a plug adaptor and a currency converter. Ghana is 220V and the plugs are the large British 3 prong type.
- Quick snack foods for travel and any other time
- Flashlight with good batteries and an extra set of long life batteries
- Medicines- antibiotic cream, antacids, Pepto Bismol tabs, powder for heat rash, eye drops, cold or sinus tabs, Tylenol, Band Aids, Calamine lotion, vitamins, Dramamine for motion sickness (if needed), Ibuprofen
- Wet wipes (preferable) or antibacterial hand gel
- Alarm clock (travel size)
- Chewing gum or hard candy for take off and landing of the plane
- Insect repellent (6-30% Deet)

### *Optional*

- Individual Kleenex
- Hat/ cap
- Bath sponge or washcloths. (The “puff” type sponges for bath gel are best because they dry quickly)
- Mesh bag or pillowcase for dirty laundry
- Money for exchange--50 and 100 dollar bills get the best rate, travelers checks are more difficult to exchange and when possible exchange at a 10-25% lower rate.
- Camera. Many Ghanaians like to have their picture taken, but be sure to ask permission first!
- Notebook or journal and pens

Lightweight clothing - temperatures average in the 70-80's at night and 90's during the day. In the north, it is not uncommon to experience temperatures well over 100 degrees.

Men should bring a dress shirt and tie with or without sport coat for church, polyester/cotton or khaki trousers, work pants, sport shirts or T-shirts, walking shorts, dress shoes for church, comfortable walking/working shoes, underwear and handkerchiefs.

Women should bring summer dresses or skirts and tops, a church dress, long walking shorts (to be worn only in the house, at the beach or on the plane!), a pair of slacks/jeans, cool sleepwear, a bath robe, T-shirt for swim suit cover up or with jeans, a light-weight sweater, dress shoes for church, comfortable walking/working shoes or sandals, a head scarf for church, underwear and handkerchiefs.

### **Laundry**

- For space in your luggage, you will probably want to pack lightly.
- You will probably need to wear some items multiple times.
- You can either wash some laundry by hand or easily hire someone to help. Clothes that hang outside usually dry quickly if the sun is shining.
- Do not leave clothes outside after the sun starts setting may acquire “mango worm” eggs, which can burrow under your skin.

# Health Matters

## Health and Living Conditions

- Most people find quarters to be reasonably comfortable. This is Africa, however, and some things will not be like your favorite Holiday Inn.
- Most places you will spend nights will have screens on the windows to reduce the threat of mosquitoes, which are a very real threat. Even with proper prophylaxis, malaria can be a problem if you expose yourself to many mosquito bites.
- Washing your hands after shaking hands with many people and before eating, eating only "safe" foods, and drinking only filtered water will reduce the threat of typhoid fever and hepatitis A. Occasional diarrhea can still occur but is usually not a serious health threat.
- There is running water most places you will be. The water is clean, but we do not recommend drinking it. We will help provide filtered water for drinking, but the system is often slow. As you may expect, one needs to drink plenty of water, ideally 3 liters per day, because of the climate.

## Animal Cautions

- A few poisonous snakes and scorpions in our area. We have never been bitten, but we know of people that have.
- No need to worry about large game animals as they are not in this area.

## Vaccinations

Please talk with your health care provider as to what regimes you should take. Everyone has different philosophies about how cautious to be. Also, your medical history could have significant bearing on things as well. The following is for your consideration. Please consult your doctor 3 months in advance.

### *Required by the Government*

- Yellow Fever  
(this is not a problem here, but it is a requirement) Often times, regional health departments or travel clinics have this shot. You must have the yellow international vaccination card upon arrival in Ghana. We have only been asked when we have crossed land border posts, but they could refuse entry if you do not have it.

### *Essential*

- Malaria prophylaxis  
Malaria is a problem here. Some prophylactic medications are weekly pills, others daily. If you do happen to contract malaria, treatments are readily available. It is similar to having a very bad case of the flu. You will want to make the most of your experience here.

### *Encouraged to talk with your health care provider*

Note: we will do all in our power to serve clean water and food.

- Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis B
- Tetanus and polio boosters
- Influenza vaccine
- Typhoid vaccine
- Meningococcal vaccine
- Any other issue

# Money

The currency in Ghana is called the cedi (pronounced like CD). As a floating currency, its value is subject to change. Though you may receive change in coins, most transactions are taken place with the bills. The rate of exchange is around ₵9000 to \$1, making ₵1 million about \$112. The easiest way for a short term to remember is that 10,000 cedis is approximately \$1. The largest bill is the ₵20,000 note—roughly \$2. For a new-comer, it might be helpful to sort out your money in ₵100,000's with one bill folded over the others so that you are not stumbling over things in the market. This way you can think of it being about \$10.



Ghanaian Note	Approximate \$ Value
₵1000	\$0.10
₵2000	\$0.20
₵5000	\$0.50
₵10,000	\$1.00
₵20,000	\$2.00



## Misc

- If you will be here for more than a few weeks, you may want to obtain an International Driver's License from AAA.
- Don't bring any supplies that are military in appearance like olive green or camouflage clothes, Army surplus footlockers or canteens.
- Plumbing is often an issue here. Do not flush toilet paper down the toilet unless the owner has told you that it is OK to do so. Many places have small wastebaskets for that purpose.
- Make sure you use filtered water in brushing your teeth.
- Please be sure to get your shopping and preparation done well in advance of your departure. Last minute preparations can wear you out before you get to Ghana and make you more susceptible to illness.

# Communication

## Phones

You may want to have a team member bring a mobile phone for team use. We can obtain a SIM card that can be placed in a phone while you are here. Make sure you get the unlock code and instructions from your mobile phone company before leaving the US. The phone can be used by members of the team to call the US. Public phones are also available and one may purchase a Ghana Telecom card to be inserted in such pay phones.

From Ghana to call the US, dial 00 1 (555) 555-5555. For note, 1 is the country code for the United States. 233 is the country code for Ghana.

Our phone #'s

<b>Host Missionary Families</b>	<b>From the US</b>	<b>From Ghana</b>
Michael & Claire Mozley	011 233 244 629 357	0244 629 357
Cam & Ann Gongwer	011 233 243 703 319	0243 703 319
Reid & Lola Buchanan	011 233 244 132 545	0244 132 545
Andrew & Juliana Jernigan	011 233 242 108 580	0242 108 580
John & Bess Russell	011 233 242 187 347	0242 187 347
Kirk & Nicole Sims	011 233 243 029 037	0243 029 037

## E-Mail:

The Internet is not as accessible or even a comparable speed as it is in the US. It may be helpful to appoint one person to be the update e-mailer. This person can e-mail the people on your prayer list back home. E-mail will not be available every day.

## Immigration and Visas

A current passport and visa is required for entry into Ghana. Make sure that you plan in advance so that you will have them ready. Your travel agent may be able to assist you with applying for the visa.

When you arrive in the airport terminal you will need to proceed through Immigration. If possible, someone will be waiting to pick you up, but non-passengers, like your missionary hosts, may not always be allowed to come into the baggage area. Please stay together as a team to help each other with the bags. The official porters will help you if you choose, but should be paid only 5,000 Cedis per cart. DO NOT pay them American dollars. They have learned that unwitting visitors will believe them if they request dollars as payment.

If there is nobody to meet you inside the airport, proceed through Customs as a group, explaining to any officials that you are a work team going to help the Methodist Church. If your bags are checked, video cameras can require a 10% of cost deposit fee for bringing it into the country. The Customs officials should refund this when you leave Ghana. It is best to keep such a camera in your carry on and it will probably never be questioned. Any other work related item or personal item should attract no fee whatsoever.

You will be required to fill in an immigration form on the airplane before landing in Accra. This card should be kept with you until you have cleared customs in the airport. Keep it inside your passport.

## **The Work Team Experience**

We believe the work team and mission volunteer experience to be an excellent way of serving the Lord, enriching your own spiritual journey, helping those in need and having an experience you will never forget. To make these things happen does require a willing and flexible attitude and an effort on the part of each mission volunteer, team leader, and host. We will do our best to prepare for your time in Ghana. We will also be open to comments and suggestions. One will need to realize that occasionally problems might arise for various reasons. Together we can work through each one to God's glory. Please remember we are all here to serve and glorify Him, not any one else or any project.

There are different types of work available as part of the short-term team experience. In addition to the various construction projects, there is also a need for Bible study leaders, church leadership trainers, primary school teachers, children's worship leaders, pastors, agriculture workers, nutrition counselors, and literacy promoters. For prospective work teams, the team leader must send to the missionary host a list of team members indicating the available skills of each member at least two months prior to arrival. Skilled people are necessary, but young or older people without experience in any of the aforementioned areas are also welcome. A willingness to work and serve the Lord by others is the most important prerequisite.

For work teams staying with us, we will have meals together as well as some other devotional and sharing times. These will all serve as opportunities for us to relax and enjoy Christian fellowship and spiritual growth. Your team leader will work with us to decide how each member can best contribute and benefit from our time together. Everyone will be called on to help with setting the tables, food preparation and cleanup.

We look forward to the team members visits. It is a wonderful time of refreshing and encouragement for us besides being a vehicle for ministry to the people of Ghana. We see your visit as a part of our ministry and an extended part of our family too!

May God bless you and encourage you as you prepare to come to Ghana for His ministry here!!

Mozley Address:  
PO Box 403  
Accra, Ghana

Gongwer/Buchanan Address:  
c/o Ankaase Methodist Faith Healing Hospital  
Ankaase, Ashanti, Ghana

Sims Address:  
PO Box LG 824  
Legon, Accra, Ghana  
or  
House 3, 4th Link, Ave E,  
North Legon, Accra, Ghana

Methodist Church Ghana HQ  
PO Box 403  
Accra, Ghana  
or  
E/252/2 Liberia Road  
Accra, Ghana

Russell Address:  
c/o Methodist Church  
Wa, UWR, Ghana

Jernigan Address:  
c/o Bosomtwi Clinic  
Amakom, Ashanti, Ghana