



# Information for Visitors to Ghana

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### 1. Introduction

This document is intended as an informal aid to visitors from outside of Ghana.

### 2. Before Arrival

#### 2.1 Vaccinations, etc.

##### ***Vaccinations***

It is recommended that you start immunizations 6 weeks before your travel date to account for shot series that may be required. We suggest you contact your general practitioner for recommendations on travel medicine providers / travel clinics in your area.

You are required to bring documentation of your immunization record to the travel clinic. The travel clinic staff will discuss all of the immunizations suggested as well as any health risks that may be present in Ghana.

<http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/ghana.aspx> (General health info for Ghana.)

<http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/content/travel-clinics.aspx> (Travel clinics in your area.)

<http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/health/community/immunizations/travel.jsp> (Travel clinics in Washington State).

##### ***Malaria***

Malaria is a threat in Ghana. Ghanaians and long-term residents appear fairly casual about it (they seem to think of it as Westerners think of the flu), but for short-term residents, it makes sense to take a malaria prophylactic. Most require taking pills before, during, and after your time in Ghana. There are several options for strains of malaria common in Ghana:

Name	Doses before	During	Doses after	Comments
Mefloquine	2 weeks	1 a week	4 weeks	Commonly used; moderate side effects
Doxycycline	2 days	1 a day	28 days	Moderate side effects
Malarone	2 days	1 a day	7 days	New drug, almost no side effects; tends to be more expensive

Since malaria is transmitted primarily via mosquito bites, it also makes sense to take insect repellent with you. Those containing DEET are recommended. There is also a product called "Permethrin" in which you can soak mosquito netting or clothing. On drying, this stuff is supposed to be effective insect repellent, even after several washes. You will still need to cover exposed skin with DEET.

If you should contract malaria (general tiredness, nausea, dizziness, chills), you should go see a doctor right away. It is easily curable in its early stages, but untreated, it can lead to death.

##### ***Diarrhea***

You may come down with "traveller's diarrhea", if you drink any contaminated water. The best thing is to take some Immodium with you, together with an antibiotic for this purpose.

### **Sunblock**

Ghana is only a few degrees north of the equator, so the sun is especially strong. Sunblock (a.k.a., sunscreen lotion) is highly recommended for those with light skin (SPF 50 or greater). Sunblock is difficult to find in Ghana. If you are using both sunblock and insect repellent, apply insect repellent second.

### **Water Purifiers**

The tap water in Accra is not considered potable (nor suitable for brushing your teeth) by non-residents, with contamination by biological pathogens being the primary worry. At Ashesi and in Accra, you can get by with bottled water. Where bottled water is not available, you'll want to boil water, use a water filter, or use water purifying tablets (or iodine). Bottled water can easily be purchased at local grocery stores.

## 2.2 Visa, Airline Ticket, Driver's License

Ashesi staff can assist you with visas. A visa application requires your passport (should be valid for at least six 6 months before expiration), two passport photos (taken within three months of submitting the application), your air travel itinerary, and an invitation letter from the University.

The visa application process can take 2 to 4 weeks (3-5 days if you use FedEx/UPS/DHL), during which time *you will not have your passport*. The visa itself comes in the form of a sticker attached to a page in your passport. We recommend that you apply for your visa at minimum two to three weeks before departure. Make a photocopy of your passport before you send it in with your visa application.

The link to visa information at the Ghana Embassy in Washington

DC: <http://www.ghanaembassy.org/index.php?page=visas>

You will not need to drive in Ghana at all for Ashesi-related purposes. But, if you think there is the least chance that you might drive in Ghana, it makes sense to get an International Driver's License. In the U.S. you can get these (with the required passport photos) at AAA offices for about \$15, assuming you already have a driver's license in your home country.

It should be stressed, however, that driving is somewhat more haphazard and hazardous in Ghana than in most industrialized nations. On the other hand, driving styles and road conditions are by no means worst in the world.

## 2.3 What to Pack

This is a minimal list of things to pack:

- Malaria prophylactic
- Contact information for Ashesi staff
- Toiletries (most can be bought cheaply here, so only a traveller's kit's worth; women say that they can't get their preferred soaps/shampoos in Ghana)
- Camera
- Voltage converter, if you have anything that is not ready for 50Hz/240V
- 1 swimsuit
- Sneakers

- Reasonably nice shoes
- Sturdy sandals (Teva's, Birkenstocks, etc.)
- Underwear
- Dress socks
- A few pairs of white socks

For men:

- A few dress shirts
- A few T-shirts
- A few pairs of trousers (very lightweight material; jeans are too warm and not recommended)
- A few pairs of shorts

For women:

- A few pairs of trousers (very lightweight material) and/or mid-calf to knee length skirts or dresses (it is always best to dress more modestly)
- A few pairs of short sleeve shirts (tank tops with spaghetti straps are fine for the beach and traveling, but are considered a bit casual for the city. Most women tend to wear shirts with short sleeves.)

## 2.4 Books on Ghana

The Bradt guide to Ghana by Philip Briggs is by far the best. Search for it at Amazon.com.

## 2.5 Ghanaian Languages

English is the official language of Ghana, and there is no practical need to learn anything else. Everyone in Ghana speaks at least as much English as is required in their occupation; many speak English as effectively as a first language.

If you're interested, however, there are several languages spoken in and around Accra. Nearly half of the country speaks one of the Akan dialects as a first language (and others speak them as a 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> language). Of these, Twi (pronounced "chwee") is probably the most common. Fante is another Akan dialect (spoken by Ashesi founder, Patrick Awuah). Ewe (pronounced "eh veh") is spoken by a few members of the staff. Ga is another language that is common in Accra.

Books/tapes on these languages are difficult to find, but the Internet is a good source.

### ***Twi***

Pimsleur tapes (Simon & Schuster, \$66) – 5 tapes, about 45 minutes each. Very basic, but good for learning greetings and pronunciation.

Dolphyne, Florence Abena. *A Comprehensive Course in Twi (Asante) for the Non-Twi Learner*.

Kotey, Paul. *Hippocrene Concise Dictionary for Twi-English English-Twi*.

### ***Ewe and Ga***

Basically nothing in or out of Ghana. Within Ghana, a few bookstores carry a Ga dictionary.

### 2.6 Money

The currency in Ghana is cedis (pronounced “see-dees”). Currently, the exchange rate is \$1.00 USD = 2.01841 GHS. It is virtually impossible to get Ghanaian cedis outside of Ghana, and there’s no need. You can convert major currencies into cedis at the airport (right near the baggage claim carousel) and at various “forex bureaus” in town. ATM’s are also available throughout Accra at many major banks and usually accept VISA debit and credit cards.

Before traveling, it is very important that you contact your credit card company and/or bank to let them know you will be travelling to Ghana. It is not uncommon for banks to lock accounts when they see transactions happening in Ghana when they have not been warned.

### 2.8 Phones

Check with your telephone service provider about your service coverage in Ghana. For most American plans, service coverage in Ghana is very expensive. If you have an unlocked cell phone, SIM cards and minutes can be purchased cheaply in Accra at a cell service provider store. Hint from previous Ashesi guests: If your phone is locked (most American phones are), you can purchase a simple and inexpensive unlocked phone on craigslist.

## 3. Ashesi University

### 3.1 Contact Information

#### **Addresses**

The mailing address (for letters) at Ashesi is:

Jane Doe  
Ashesi University College  
PMB CT3 Cantonments  
Accra, GHANA

The delivery address (for packages) at Ashesi is:

John Doe  
Ashesi University College  
PMB CT 3, Cantonments  
Accra, Ghana

#### Phone Numbers

+233 (302) 610 330      from within Ghana: (302) 610 330

Fax number:

+233 (302) 610 340      from within Ghana: (302) 610 340

All numbers reach the Ashesi receptionist, who will transfer calls to individual offices. There are multiple numbers, because some PBX phone systems do not “roll over” internally to support multiple lines. You must dial one of the multiple lines to get through.

## 4. Accra / Ghana

This is a short introduction to living and traveling in Ghana, again, intended for those from outside of West Africa, and written from the perspective of someone used to living in industrialized countries. For more details, a travel guide is recommended. Also, a few books about living in Ghana, intended for a foreign audience, are in the Ashesi library.

### 4.1 Personal Safety

Ghana is an amazingly safe place for foreigners. You should, of course, follow all the commonsense practices of tourists and city dwellers (e.g., don't flash large amounts of cash in public, don't walk alone through dark alleys at night, pay attention to your surroundings, keep personal items on your person at all times, etc.). But, unlike some other countries, where tourists are routinely pickpocketed, mugged, or even assaulted, Ghana is very safe.

Having said that, as a foreigner (especially if you aren't as dark-skinned as the Ghanaians), you are immediately identified with wealth; the perception from the point of view of the average Ghanaian is that you are a multimillionaire. Thus, there are a few things you should watch out for.

Street merchants may be aggressive and persistent in their attempt to sell you things. Children may descend on you at tourist attractions, in the hopes of getting some change. In most cases a firm “no” is all that is required; none of these people pose any real danger, although at first their approach can be alarming. There are “legitimate” beggars, also, (many of whom are maimed or deformed) who may approach you. They also pose little danger, and could probably use a little change.

Second, never leave valuable (and even semi-valuable) items unattended or in plain sight in vehicles. Muggings are rare, but thefts do occur. Apply the same standards you would in New York City.

Third, although few people will rob you physically, merchants and taxi drivers will automatically hike prices for foreigners. Often, even this more expensive price is still very reasonable. But, if you're the kind of person who doesn't like to be cheated on principle, it's wise to do some research beforehand and then to bargain hard. Even then, don't expect to be able to pay the Ghanaians' price.

Finally, there are a few places where, for whatever reason, pickpockets and muggers are known to be more common. These include (but are not limited to) the stretch of beach between, but not inside, the La Palm Royal and Labadi Beach Hotels.

### 4.2 Cost of Living

The cost of labor and the cost of essential goods are incredibly low in Ghana, compared with similar items in economically developed countries. Below is a list of the cost of typical goods and services you might need on a daily basis (exchange rate at time of writing was approximately \$1.00 USD = 2.01841 GHS).

Item	Cost in cedis
Bottled water (1 liter)	60p
Water in sealed plastic bags	10p
Coconut juice (in a coconut)	70p
5 Bananas	1GHS
3 Oranges	1GHS
Chocolate bar	1.5GHS
Lunch at the Ashesi canteen	3.5GHS
Mid-range restaurant meal	15GHS
High-end hotel restaurant meal	15-20GHS
Chartered taxi ride within Accra: For short or well-traveled routes, 1.5GHS.	2.0 GHS- 6GHS
Tro-tro ride within Accra	No more than 2GHS
Button-down shirt (non-designer)	10GHS
Handkerchief	50p

Non-essential goods, however, can cost as much or slightly more than what they would cost elsewhere. American or European magazines can cost \$10 (and they'll still be an issue behind). A Walkman-type radio/cassette player can cost around \$100.

### 4.3 Transportation

The easiest way to get around Accra on your own is to go by chartered taxis. Taxis will honk at you, if they think you might be a potential fare. You should determine the price *before* you get in the taxi. The price will depend on things such as the age of the taxi driver (younger drivers will ask for more), the distance traveled, the time of day (rush hour and late night are more expensive), and the degree to which you bargain. At first, the best thing is to ask for advice before taking a ride; eventually, you'll be able to guess a reasonable fare.

The charter service is called "drop," in contrast to the shared taxi system, whereby a taxi runs a set route and picks up and drops off passengers on the way. These are considerably less expensive, but of course, you will not be taken door to door.

Finally, the cheapest alternative is to take the tro-tros. These are usually mini-vans in which 12-15 people squeeze in. Tro-tros take set routes, dropping off and picking up passengers along the way. They are set prices; you are unlikely to be cheated, but you also can't bargain.

### 4.4 Electrical and Appliances

The electrical system in Ghana is less than reliable and there are often power surges and power outages. The Ashesi Apartments are equipped with an external generator that should keep interruptions to a minimum but to keep everything in running order please adhere to the following guidelines.

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- Voltage in Ghana is 220volts if you have electrical appliances from the United States set to take 110volts do not plug them in without a power converter.
- Turn off all lights and electrical devices (fans, TV, toaster) when you leave a room.

To protect against power surges please turn all sockets off when you are not using them (top of the switch should be in).

### 4.5 Miscellaneous

A few things that might be unexpected, living in Accra:

- Power outages are frequent. They occur about once a week on average.
- Tap water shortages are not unheard of, though much rarer than power outages.
- Connectivity of phones (both landlines and mobile phones) are not as reliable as in America.

If you want to travel around Ghana, there are several options. The Ashesi staff can help with these, if you are interested:

- On your own via public transport (STC buses, tro-tros).
- Via Land Tours Limited, or other similar tour companies.
- Rent your own car (and driver!) from Avis.

### 4.6 Links to Helpful Websites

- Ghanaian news site: [www.ghanaweb.com](http://www.ghanaweb.com)
- General facts and figures on Ghana in the CIA's World Factbook:  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gh.html>
- A journalist's tour of Ghana documenting CARE's work there, complete with great photos and daily journal entries: [www.careusa.org/vft/ghana/journal.asp](http://www.careusa.org/vft/ghana/journal.asp)
- Lonely Planet travelers' guide website:  
[www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/africa/ghana/index.htm](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/africa/ghana/index.htm)