



# have fun help people.

## The Glory of Ghana About your Program



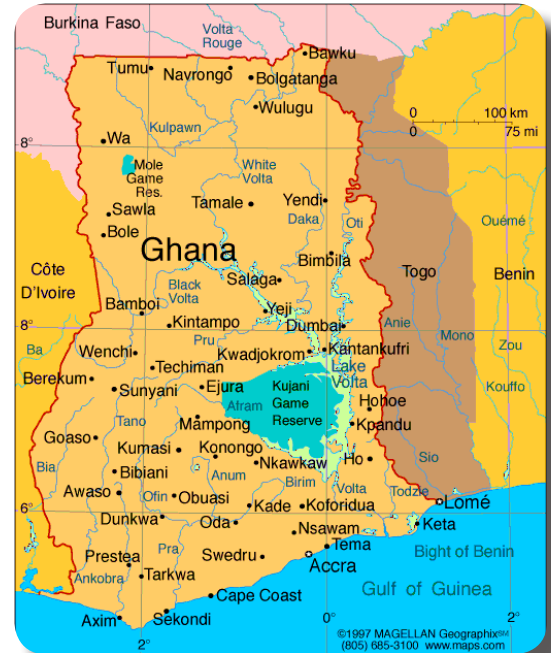
*"The entire village was so welcoming and appreciative of our presence and our aid. We felt so connected with the village and so inspired by the work we were doing, I couldn't have imagined a better experience."*

- Jack Chen, Ghana volunteer

# The Glory of Ghana

## Introduction to Ghana

2007 marked the 50th anniversary of Ghana's independence from England and the establishment of one of the most stable nations in Africa. Ghana is as colorful and varied as its most famous cultural products, the Kente clothe produced by the Ashanti and Ewe peoples. There are five major Ethnic groups. They are the Akan (49%), Moshi-Dagomba (16%), Ewe (13%), Ga (8%), and European and other: (0.2%). Despite this diversity, Ghana has escaped much of the ethnic strife that plagues other nations in Africa. While each group has a distinct culture and history of its own, all contribute to the nature of Ghana as a modern state. The Ashanti Empire dominated the region that modern Ghana occupies. Communication between the different groups is facilitated with English as the lingua franca throughout the country. Although Ghana is rich with natural resources, and is better off than many of its neighbors, the domestic economy revolves around subsistence agriculture, which employs 85% of the workforce. The average Ghanaian has a very low income, and very little access to education beyond primary years.



## Community



The town of Ho is the home base for your Globe Aware program. Ho is the capital of the Volta region, a city close to some of Ghana's most beautiful natural treasures. This is the ancestral home of the Ewe people. Sites you'll explore in your free time and through organized activities include a famous Kente weaving village and open market, the tallest mountain in Ghana, the largest waterfall in West Africa, and more.

Globe Aware works with a local grass roots organization which seeks to help fellow Ghanaians improve conditions of the vulnerable and deprived through education and other integrated rural development programs. Their mission is to assist rural and urban dwellers in times of natural or man-made disasters by positively impacting education, health, environment, empowerment of women, and through cultural diversity programs. Most of your time will be spent in one of the nearby smaller rural communities. There are about 45 different villages in which we work, all within about 40 miles of Ho.

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## Projects and Expectations

Some possible projects you may be working on: laying brick for school buildings and houses, painting or molding the bricks themselves, and will likely spend two days a week working with children. The last day is divided between finishing earlier projects and cultural activities. Most volunteers will work to some degree in our clean water initiative that helps meet the needs of our community as part of the Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) program.



During your program, you will be struck by the passion to improve conditions in the region. West Africa is famous for being open and vibrant, and you'll find that Ghana is no exception. It may take some getting used to, but you'll quickly notice that you could stop anyone on the street, man or woman, and have a very meaningful and enjoyable conversation with them. Coming from the west, you'll likely notice that personal space is entirely different culturally from what you may be accustomed to. People will get close to each other and to you, you'll notice men and boys holding hands, but none of it has any of the meanings typically associated with this level of closeness in the west.

This is a different world, with a beautiful and friendly culture that welcomes visitors with open arms, especially those who are there to help and honestly experience the beauties and challenges they face on a daily basis. Don't be afraid to ask questions, to share your talents, and to enjoy yourself. You will also likely meet their supporters in the local community, local reverends, political officials, chiefs, and other men and women of all status levels throughout the many communities they work in.

We understand your desire to know as much as possible about the project you will be working on. It is important to understand that projects are often not set in place until about two weeks prior, as they are based on factors such as which projects were finished by the last group, what supplies are available, how many volunteers are in your group, weather conditions, the changing priorities of the community, etc, and can even change upon arrival, for example based on the fitness level of the specific volunteer group and changing weather.



Therefore its best to approach the experience with an open attitude, knowing you'll be working approximately 6.5 hours a day during the week days, usually concentrated earlier in the day, and you'll have a couple of hours of unstructured free time every day. Communicate with your coordinator. If you find the work level is too much, or not enough, he or she will do as much as possible to work with you.

Letting go of your preconceptions, opening your mind and yourself to the people of Ghana will ensure that your experience is meaningful.

## Culture

Ghanaian culture is rich, varied, and jovial. It's acceptable to laugh in many situations and contexts. Laughter is often more appropriate than other more threatening emotions like anger, frustration, etc. The people you meet might laugh in situations where you might not think laughter is appropriate, but it's a big part of the cultural experience and they mean no offense.

Also, remember there are many aspects of the community that are a result of deep cultural conditioning. It can be difficult not to judge and want to change or blame. There is still sometimes physical punishment used under the adage "Spare the rod, spoil the child". It is possible you will see the hands of children or their bottoms being spanked. Again when you have the opportunity to interact, your own behavior gives future vision to students and teachers.



Being left alone with kids in a classroom: This should never happen. Our coordinator is armed with set schedules and activities, though the local government often has given very little if any curriculum. However on occasion we have noticed that volunteers who really enjoy game time and social interaction seem to prefer unstructured time. Hence the coordinator may step back and allow, for fear of overstepping any perceived desire to direct your own lessons. It is important to step up and communicate with the coordinator if you feel he is doing this to let him know you need him to give you the structure for the kids activities. This is cultural. Many locals assume that you, coming from a background of probably richer educational resources, will have more to give in your head than anything on a piece of paper or agenda.

Women may be surprised at the extra attention they might receive in Ghana. Any calls or attention are not meant to be threatening. Such incidents are rare in Ghana in comparison to many other nations. As evidence, there are many western women working with NGO's in and around Accra and Ho, mostly from the UK, Holland, and other parts of the European Union. They have reported no major problems in this regard. Just as one would in \*any\* country under such circumstance, your body language and avoided eye contact should suffice to show disinterest. Dressing respectfully and modestly can also temper the situation.



You will be working with a tight knit local organization and community. They want to share their lives, their minds, their smiles, and their world with you. If you encounter locals speaking in their native language, don't hesitate to ask your coordinator to help you participate in the conversation. ALSO we cannot emphasize enough to share your concerns with your host and coordinator EARLY so we can do something about it. We would rather fix, for example, a concern about how your meal was prepared, rather than read a complaint after you leave. Talk to us!



## Leisure Activities

There are usually three to four planned but optional leisure and cultural activities throughout the week. You will have ample opportunity to explore the culture and local sights while you are in Ghana. Some activities might include a visit to the largest waterfall in West Africa, a visit to the Monkey Sanctuary, the Kente cloth village, dancing and drumming lessons, and how to make palm oil.



## Additional Packing Information

Please refer to the general orientation handbook for a general suggested packing list. Ghana is generally warm all year round, so you won't need any heavy clothing. Bring work clothes that you don't mind getting a little dirty. A swimsuit will be a must if you hope to go for a swim at the Vli falls. Bug repellent is also a good idea. The weather can become very humid during the summer months, though by no means unbearable, so pack clothes that will let you work in the heat comfortably; and remember that modesty is important: avoid short shorts and skimpy tops. For the hikes, you might consider bringing hiking boots. Don't worry too much about laundry, you'll only be there for a week and it's entirely secondary to the work project and your interactions with locals.

Remember that however much you pack, there are likely to be many people in Ghana who have never had as much as you've brought in your bag.

### Essential Items:

- **You MUST bring your own towel**
- **Bug Repellent with at least 20% DEET**
- **Flashlight**
- **Hiking boots**
- **Mosquito net (optional and can be purchased upon arrival; any type will work)**
- **Sunscreen**
- **Water bottle**
- **Travel converter**

Globe Aware volunteers are expected to dress respectfully and appropriately for the culture.

Please note that the packing list is meant as a guideline. There is no single item that you can't live without for one week. Pack what you think you will need to be comfortable, but do not get preoccupied about items that you didn't bring, weren't on the list, etc. Everyone has different opinions about essential items!

## Gifts / Donations

At the end of your stay, you might feel inclined to give something to community hosts who have been particularly helpful or courteous. In the past, volunteers have given an empty journal decorated with a child's name, or written them a thank you note, sung them a song, etc. People also enjoy seeing simple tokens from home, such as postcards of your hometown, or photos of your family.

We discourage cash donations and distributing money in all of our communities.

Please be aware that bringing donations can also be awkward. In some instances, receiving donations can effect the recipients' pride negatively. This is not always the case. Do try and consider when donating used clothes, particularly those used during the program, if you feel the local community members would actually want them. It is best to discuss donations with the coordinator for these reasons.

There are cases that donations are more readily accepted, however there are often still local cultural nuances that can make the act of giving complicated. In order to preserve pride, please discuss \*how\* your donations can be presented with the coordinator. Please note you are not expected to bring anything. Should you decide you do want to bring donations, you may consider: toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, soap, linens, kitchen utensils, flashlights with batteries, children's books, clothing - shoes, flip flops for kids, underwear, t-shirts, socks- , school supplies like pencils, pens, erasers, rulers, notepads, and educational toys or toys that do not require batteries - UNO, Connect Four, jump ropes, hackysacks, frisbees, balls - of any kind especially soccer. Many are shocked at how few supplies and materials Ghanaians have. Class sizes are often 50 students per one teacher. You may also want to leave behind the items you used during the week - clothes, towels, linens if you brought them.

**We discourage giving any more money than you are already giving to the program and community via your program fee. Globe Aware funds are spent on program expenses, as opposed to giving cash donations -- this helps ensure that the money is being spent in meaningful ways. We understand the good intentions of our volunteers. Giving cash contradicts the goal of promoting sustainability, promotes expectations that foreigners are 'made of money' and can create an atmosphere that begging may solve a community's challenges.**

## Special Donations



Globe Aware has recently begun a trial project of distributing reading glasses and sunglasses via our volunteers. Reading glasses are extremely helpful and can help people see, read and work again.

Fitting readers is easy to do, no experience is needed. It is fast, efficient and effective. If you are interested in purchasing reading glasses to distribute as donations during your stay in Ghana, please visit [www.restoringvision.org](http://www.restoringvision.org) and purchase a bag. The glasses will be shipped directly to you for you to bring to the program in your bag.

**It is important for you to let us know if you plan on bringing reading glasses so our coordinator may schedule time for distribution.**

**Because of the nature of our frequent contributions to the community, it has come to our attention that occasionally locals, even staff, will solicit personal contact information to solicit donations after your return home. We strongly discourage giving personal contact information/social media for this reason. When given outside the context of**

a US based nonprofit, there is no accountability needed or required on the end of the recipient, nor is there any special tax deduction for your donation. We are eager to keep you abreast of goings on with this project, which we post on our facebook page and in newsletters and are happy to keep in contact with you through our official channels and our home office.

## Accommodations

Volunteers are settled together in home stay facilities in the community in which we are working. Accommodations usually include running water, (showers), flushing toilets, and some access to electricity (enough to recharge digital cameras, but the government has instituted rolling blackouts). Hot water cannot be relied upon but is occasionally available. Some of the needier communities in which we work only have access to scoop showers; if this is an urgent issue for you, please check with us ahead of your program.



In most instances, volunteers will be staying with community members in a domestic home setting (often it's the vacation home of a tribal leader). This is evidence of the community's dedication to the work done by volunteers. These accommodations are best described as a compound. There will be a shared dining room, multiple bedrooms, as well as a communal space convenient for drumming and dancing lessons.

To ensure that your work project is meaningful, smaller groups of 1 or 2 volunteers may be put in more basic accommodations or even homestays. While these may be more spartan, they enable the volunteer to feel more

connected to the host community. It also allows the coordinator to dedicate more time and effort to organizing a project that is both meaningful to the community and considerate of the special needs of the small group or individual in question.

## Electricity

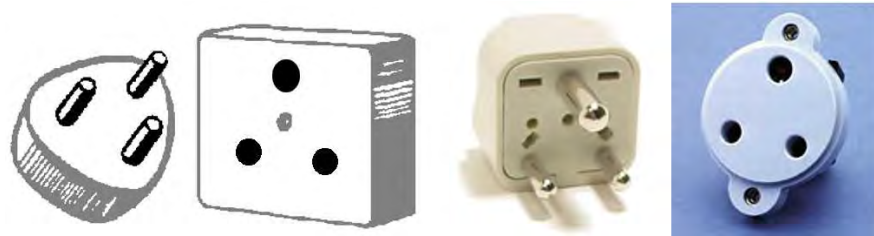
**E**lectricity will be EXTREMELY limited throughout this region of Ghana. Rolling blackouts are very common. Electricity goes off at 6 pm often and does not come back until midnight. Unlike many other developing nations, these blackouts happen according to a schedule released to the public regularly, but the end result is that areas like Jasikan with less vital economic enterprises than Accra or Kumasi are not prioritized when energy is distributed. There is a good chance that you will be able to charge your digital cameras and other devices, but be aware that electricity is very limited and many small communities have none at all. You will likely need to bring a prong adaptor as plugs in Ghana take either:

British-style plug with two flat blades and one flat grounding blade.





Souh African / Indian-style plug with two circular metal pins above a large circular grounding pin.



Electricity is 220-240V 50 Hz. Check to make sure that your device can handle the higher voltage, and remember to purchase a travel voltage converter before you go.

## Food



**T**raditional and delicious Ghanaian meals served to you will include specialties such as Jollof rice (rice, tomatoes, spices, with beef or vegetables) and a variety of other fish, fruit, and vegetables. Ghanaian food is perhaps surprisingly spicy and diverse. There's something delicious for everyone, and for the adventurous the local dishes like Banku and Fufu offer a very unique culinary experience. Bottled or boiled water is provided.

## Weather

**T**he weather in southern Ghana is warm and tropical, and temperatures will have highs in the mid-eighties and lows in the mid seventies year-round. We recommend that you look at the local weather on-line prior to your departure for a good idea of what to expect. Ho is about three hours from Accra so weather there will not be radically different unless you're venturing high up into the mountains, as you might on a visit to Amedzofe or Ghana's tallest mountain. There the temperatures will be cooler year round.

## Money



**T**he Ghanaian currency is the Ghana cedi, pronounced "CD." Barclays bank has ATM's throughout Accra and Ho that will give you a good exchange rate. It's a good idea to have some Ghana cedis in hand before setting off for the program site. However, keep in mind that your accommodations, food, transportation, as well as activities and your donation to the community are all included in your Globe Aware program fee. You'll need cash to purchase souvenirs as well as bargain in the markets. Additionally any internet access, phone calls, alcohol, departure tax, any pre or post program accommodations, or free time expenditures are your responsibility. Most people find the recommended \$250 sufficient to cover such expenses.

**\*\*Also, a note for all program locations—it is a good idea that you call your bank and credit card companies before you depart and notify them of the country you will be traveling to and the dates of your travel so that they will allow charges and/or withdrawals internationally.\*\***



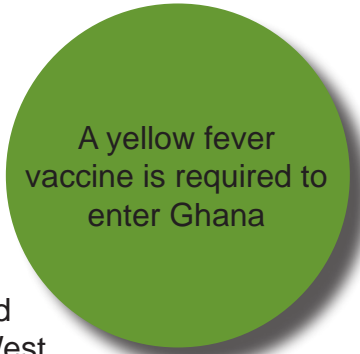
## Phone and Internet

Please do not plan to spend a lot of time on the phone or internet during your short volunteer week. We will have a busy and short week to be immersed in the culture. Should you anticipate needing to make calls from Ghana, cell phone service is impeccable, but there is a likelihood that your US based cell phone may not work in Ghana. Remember to check with your provider before you go to purchase an international calling/data plan and make sure you know what is included or not included in it so you don't get any surprises when you come back. Roaming charges, especially for data use, can be outrageous. You may consider renting a SIM card (for unlocked cell phones only) or a cell phone to use internationally - this should be done from the USA before you leave. Depending on how much you plan to use your phone or data plan, this can save you a lot of money. Buying a SIM card in Ghana is also an option but again, this is for unlocked phones only. Cell phone use is ubiquitous, and international calling rates are very low. Internet access is VERY limited, although there are two internet cafes around Jasikan, but internet is VERY slow. Still, your main objective should be to immerse yourself in the local culture. You'll have free time to call home but try to live and think locally to help you get the most out of your experience.

## Health

A yellow fever vaccination is required to enter Ghana. Rates for these vaccinations are much cheaper at a county or municipal health center than at your family doctor or a specialized travel doctor. Depending on where you go the price will range from \$80 and up. For additional information on travel health tips in Ghana, please refer to the CDC's website: <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/destinationGhana.aspx>

Also, refer to the general orientation packet and video for more information regarding health concerns. About half of our volunteers choose to take malaria prophylaxis. This is not required, although malaria is a risk. Treatment for malaria is easily found and inexpensive. Consult your health professional as there are several options available.



A yellow fever vaccine is required to enter Ghana

**Ebola risk questions?** At Globe Aware, our utmost priority is the safety and security of our volunteers. We have been monitoring the Ebola situation in West Africa (and now the United States) since its inception.

We closely monitor the CDC, U.S., Canadian and British government travel alerts as issued through the State Department and their equivalents. There are parts of the continent that have travel alerts in place, for example the U.S. Department of State warns U.S. citizens against non-essential travel to Sierra Leone and Liberia. If there were a similar alert put out for Ghana, we would suspend the program until the situation changed and refund your payment.

While there are no alerts issued for Ghana and no ebola cases have been reported in the country, if you would like to switch to another program preemptively, we can do so once, at no cost, as long as it is 30 days prior to the program start date.

For the latest information about the disease, how to recognize it, how it is transmitted and more, go to : <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola>

Here is the current US State department report on Ghana: <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country/ghana.html>

We do not work in projects where volunteers are likely to be in contact with the bodily fluids of another person.

We believe its important that each individual take the time to read abot the risk and assess the situation for oneself, if necessary with the advice of your medical professional.

## **Your Fellow Volunteers**

**Y**ou will receive a Fellow Volunteer Report attached to our “Ready, Set, Go!” email about 3 weeks before the program starts. It will include information on your fellow travelers, as well as their email so that you can start to get acquainted with them before you leave.

## **Your Coordinators: Jerry**



Jerry has a long background in Integrated Development Studies and has coordinated several Globe Aware projects in Ghana. He is a good listener and has a great heart for the under privileged in society. His leadership skills and interest in children and youth development takes a unique approach that leverages on opportunities and sustainable development. He believes that investing in people is a good deal to build a viable and vibrant community.

## **Your Coordinators: Richard**



Richard has worked with Globe Aware for many years overseeing larger projects for our volunteers. He is passionate about helping people and showing our volunteers the culture and spirit of Ghana. You will likely see Richard throughout your time in Ho, but Jerry is our day-to-day coordinator on the ground.

## **Arrival and Meet-Up**

We ask that volunteers be ready to depart Accra at 11:00 AM the first Saturday of the program. Our standard pick-up location is at the Pink Hostel but if you prefer to make different hotel arrangements please let us know and we can more than likely accommodate if within a central location in Ghana.

**VERY IMPORTANT NOTE:** If there are any issues which arise during your transit to your destination (last minute flight change, missed meetup, etc.) OR DURING YOUR STAY do not hesitate to call our emergency line. Globe Aware staff members are on call 24 hours a day on weekends to help you resolve any issues or address any concerns you have during or before your program. 214-824-4562.

## Entering and Leaving Ghana

Upon arrival, you'll be asked where you are staying in Ghana. Your answer won't be double-checked, so even if the airport officer is gruff after a long day, just provide them with the name of a hotel you would stay at in case of emergency, arriving early, or missing the pickup. You can also provide them with the address you used on your VISA application. That address is the address of the program site in Jasikan. You'll have received a 90-day VISA. Have your vaccination card and passport ready in case of being checked.

Check the latest information on acquiring a visa. You will need to apply within 60 days for your date of travel

### VISA Application info

Please watch our informational video about the Ghana visa application process at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNlzsdKyHZM>

You are applying for a TOURIST visa, \*not\* a work visa. Work visas are required if you intend on collecting a salary and need to pay payroll taxes.

A great resource when preparing your VISA will be the website of Ghana's embassy: <http://www.ghana-embassy.org/> It is usually best to apply within 60 days of your date of travel as it will only be good for 60 days from the date of issue.

When asked on the VISA for an address or reference while in Ghana, list the following address. This is the address for our program in Ghana.

Ho Old Housing Estate, Hs NB: BE3/100 Ho Volta Region Ghana, Tel +233 55555 2992

You will also need to provide two references, please use:

Jerry John Kotoka  
Projects Coordinator  
GlobeAware  
Ho Volta Region Ghana  
Tel: +233 244230732

Richard Kwashie Yinkah  
ADANU  
SIC Building Second FL  
Ho Volta Region Ghana  
Tel: +233 504380008

You'll need to send your passport to the Ghanaian embassy in your home country to have the VISA stamped in. We recommend you follow to the letter the instructions found here:

[http://www.ghana-embassy.org/corp\\_div\\_details\\_embassy.cfm?EmpID=151&BrandsID=45](http://www.ghana-embassy.org/corp_div_details_embassy.cfm?EmpID=151&BrandsID=45)

It's important to note that you will need to also submit 4 passport size photos, which are available at Walgreens, CVS, Kinko's or similar stores. If you don't have a paper ticket to submit, just submit a copy of your electronic flight itinerary. You will also be fine if you have a flight and ticket number. In the



summer of 2008 the Embassy also said they may ask for a copy of a recent bank statement showing sufficient funds for you to travel to Ghana. You'll receive a 60-day tourist visa after submitting all this along with the application fee. A copy of the visa form for you to print, fill-out, and submit to the embassy will be emailed to you.

## **Safety and Security**

**G**hana is a safe and stable nation. Cast aside all the preconceptions you might have about Africa. Ghana has never fought a war. Incidents of crime are very low outside of Accra and Kumasi, the two major cities. At independence, Ghana had huge currency reserves and, in the eyes of many world economists, a very bright future. However, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first president and independence hero, along with his supporters, spent a lot of the money helping other African nations gain independence. Ghanaians aren't angry but rather proud of that legacy. That spirit is alive and well in Ghana and, especially if you're coming from a large or midsize American city, you're likely to feel as safe as or safer than home while you're having fun and helping people. But, as always, you should exercise caution.

For specific tips on travel safety and warnings for travelers in Ghana we recommend referencing the US Dept. of State's Consular information:

[http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1124.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1124.html)

## **Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)**

**T**he Smart Traveler Enrollment Program is a free service provided by the U.S. government to U.S. citizens who are traveling to a foreign country. STEP allows you to enter information about your upcoming trip abroad so that the Department of State can better assist you in an emergency, keep you up to date with important safety and security announcements, and help your friends and family get in touch with you in case of an emergency. The link to STEP is <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>

## **In Case of Emergency**

US Embassy

No. 24, Fourth Circular Rd, Cantonments, Accra

P.O. Box 194

Accra, Ghana

Telephone: (233) 21-741-000

After Hours Emergency: (233) 21-741-775

Fax: (233) 21-741-389

## **Further Readings**

Lonely Planet's Rough Guide to West Africa and Guide to West Africa: The sections on Ghana are great guides to the country and the region as a whole. This can also be a great way to find hotel recommendations if you're planning to arrive earlier or travel after your time with Globe Aware.