

Overview of Ghana

Formerly a colony known as the British Gold Coast, Ghana became the first black African nation south of the Sahara to achieve independence in 1957. It is a relatively small country on the west coast of Africa, situated between Togo and Cote d'Ivoire, and remains a somewhat unexplored tropical gem. This untapped destination abounds in history, culture, wildlife and beautiful scenery, and has a wide variety of tourist attractions. Throughout Ghana's 10 regions, visitors will be greeted with the warm-hearted smiles of its welcoming people.

Nature has been extremely generous to Ghana and the country's large national parks and reserves provide a sanctuary for the native flora and fauna. The grasslands of Mole National Park in the north are home to a variety of large animals, while birds and butterflies are particularly numerous in Ghana's forests. Rainforests such as that of Kakum National Park in the southern central region, where attractions include a canopy walkway and wonderful nature trails, provide a haven for eco-tourists. Miles of unspoilt beaches, waterfalls, rolling forested hills, rivers and lakes complete the portrait of a country that is a nature lover's delight.

The diverse ethnic groups of Ghana and the ancient traditions of its people have shaped one of the richest cultural environments in Africa and a holiday in Ghana might well include wonderful traditional festivals, dancing and music, and a wide variety of arts and crafts. The cultural heartland of the country is the Ashanti region, home to the nation's dominant tribe, the Ashanti, who are most famous today for their craftwork and ancient artistry in fabrics, particularly the colourful *kentecloth*.

Ghana's vibrant capital city, Accra, is the gateway to the country for tourists and is located in the smallest, yet most populated region on the Gulf of Guinea. This modern city is becoming increasingly popular with expats and has excellent accommodation, restaurants and nightlife, and colourful markets. It's also a good base from which to explore the Atlantic coast west of Accra, which boasts many fine palm-fringed beaches, resorts, ancient forts, castles, and fascinating fishing villages. The forts and castles along the coastline date back to the 15th century and have an intriguing history of European occupation, fierce battles and slavery. The Cape Coast Castle, Fort St Jago and Elmina Castle are recognised as UNESCO World Heritage Monuments.

Key Facts

Language:

English is the official language, but many other African languages are spoken, including Twi, Fante, Ga, Ewe, Hausa and Dagbani. French is spoken in the north.

Passport/Visa:

All foreign visitors to Ghana must hold a return or onward ticket, as well as the necessary travel documentation for their next destination. The citizens of most countries can obtain visas on arrival, but most nationalities have to apply for pre-approval to gain these visas upon entering the country. Consent must be given by the Ghana Immigration Service, a minimum of 48 hours before arrival in the country; travellers must ensure they print out their visa-on-arrival approval document and that it contains their passport and visa numbers, as well a copy of the bio data and photo page from their passport. Visitors should note that a yellow fever vaccination certificate is required to enter Ghana. It is highly recommended that travellers' passports have at least six months' validity remaining after the intended date of departure from their travel destination. Immigration officials often apply different rules to those stated by travel agents and official sources.

Currency:

The official currency is the cedi (GHS), which is divided into 100 pesewas. Foreign currency can be exchanged at any bureau de change as well as at some commercial banks; banks and foreign exchange facilities are available at the airport and in all major towns. Visitors can easily exchange US dollars and euros. ATMs are common in larger towns and credit cards are accepted at many hotels, guesthouses and some shops. Banks and businesses may not accept credit cards other than Visa; credit card fraud is common. Visitors should take care when using their cards and contact their card issuer to make sure their cards will work.

Electricity:

Electrical current is 230 volts, 50Hz. Both round and flat three-pronged plugs are commonly used.

Travel to Ghana

Overview

Ghana is a beautiful country, often affectionately called 'Africa for Beginners' because of its friendly locals and comparative stability and prosperity. It is the ideal destination for first-time travellers in Africa. However, this does not mean that travel in Ghana is always without complication, particularly as the tourist infrastructure is only well developed in certain popular areas.

Visitors tend to spend their time in the capital city, Accra, the historic royal stronghold of Kumasi (traditional home of the Ashanti people), and in various picturesque coastal villages. One of the best ways to enjoy Ghana is to explore the coastline, which boasts both incredible tropical beaches and a number of historic colonial forts, many of which are UNESCO-listed.

There are two alluring National Parks in the country, where visitors can seek out Ghana's wealth of wildlife. Kakum National Park is a rainforest reserve with some amazing canopy walkways suspended above the forest, while Mole National Park is a massive wildlife reserve, consisting mainly of savanna, and containing more than 90 mammal species.

Visitors should note that in the rainy season, between April and October, many roads in Ghana become so muddy and flooded that they are impossible to traverse, making some attractions, such as the national parks, very difficult to access.

Climate in Ghana

Ghana has a tropical climate, with a dry season in winter and a rainy season in summer. The rainy season runs from May to September in the north, from April to October in the centre and from April to November in the south. The driest areas are the north and the eastern coast, which includes the capital, Accra. Temperatures are constantly high throughout the country and range from a low of 70F (21C) in the coolest month of August to a high of 100F (38C) or more in March. Humidity adds to the discomfort during the rainy season. Travel to Ghana is best during the dry season, when there is slightly less heat and humidity, driving conditions are better and there are fewer mosquitoes.

Health Notes when travelling to Ghana

Visitors to Ghana must have of a current medical vaccination certificate for yellow fever. Medication against malaria is recommended for all regions and travellers should protect against waterborne diseases such as cholera, especially during the rainy season. Visitors are advised to buy bottled drinking water, which is widely available. Vaccinations are recommended for hepatitis A, hepatitis B and typhoid; a meningococcus vaccination is recommended if visitors are there in the dry season (November to June). A rabies vaccination may also be a good idea for those who are going to be spending a lot of time outdoors.

Decent medical facilities can be found in major cities and towns, but those outside main urban areas are poor and emergency services are limited. Comprehensive travel health insurance is advised and should cover medical evacuation. If visitors need certain prescription medication, it is advised that they bring it, along with a signed and dated note from their doctor explaining what it is and why they need it.

Safety Notes when travelling to Ghana

Most visits to Ghana are trouble free but it is wise to be vigilant in public areas. Travellers should be particularly careful in and around Accra, and should avoid walking at night and travelling in taxis alone after dark. Visitors should avoid carrying large sums of cash or valuables on them, and should be vigilant when withdrawing money from ATMs. Theft of luggage and travel documents has occurred at Kotoka International Airport. Visitors should also be vigilant in and around Takoradi and Kumasi, where there has been an increase in crime that includes muggings and attacks on foreigners. There is a potential for outbreaks of violence between rival political factions, fighting between ethnic groups and civil unrest; travellers are advised to stay up to date with daily developments and to avoid protests. Visitors to the Northern Region should be alert to the possibility of renewed outbreaks of inter-ethnic fighting. Coastal waters can be dangerous, as rip tides are common.

Customs in Ghana

Ghanaians are generally a conservative people and visitors should respect local customs, traditional courtesies and dress codes, particularly in the villages. Ghanaians do most things with their right hand, including eating, touching food, taking and receiving things, waving, and shaking hands. The left hand is used for 'dirty things' and it is regarded as rude to use the left hand for the aforementioned things. If in doubt, visitors should use the right hand. Greeting is an important social function and handshakes are common. There is no particular dress code, but women will be expected to cover up in the north of the country. No civilian may wear camouflage clothing, as it is reserved for the military. Visitors to remote villages, shrines or palaces should visit the local elder or priest and take a small gift such as a bottle of local schnapps, gin or money. Travellers should always seek permission before taking photographs of people; it is not permitted to take photographs of military institutions or the airport. Homosexuality is illegal.

Duty Free in Ghana

Travellers to Ghana over 18 years do not have to pay customs duty on 200 cigarettes, 100 cigarillos, 50 cigars, or 250g of tobacco; two litres of wine and one litre of spirits.

Doing Business in Ghana

Though Ghana is a very relaxed and friendly country, a formal dress code is expected in business, and punctuality is essential. The exchange of business cards is common and it is important in all meetings to greet and shake hands with each person. Meeting attendees should be addressed as Mr, Mrs, or Ms, followed by their surnames, unless otherwise specified. Gifts are unnecessary, but greatly appreciated. Business hours are generally 8am to 5pm Monday to Friday, with an hour taken for lunch.

Communication in Ghana

The international dialling code for Ghana is +233. The outgoing code is 00 followed by the relevant country code (e.g. 0027 for South Africa). The telephone system is relatively reliable, but most people use mobile phones. Local prepaid SIM cards can be purchased as a cheaper alternative to using international roaming. Most major hotels also have business centres, which provide secretarial and courier services. Free WiFi is available in many hotels, restaurants, and cafes in tourist areas.

Tipping in Ghana

A service charge is rarely added to restaurant bills and tipping for quality service is only expected in restaurants (usually about 10 percent). Tipping for other services is discretionary, though travellers should note that if someone offers to help them, whether it is with directions or to carry a bag, they usually expect some kind of payment.

Passport/Visa Note

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Entry Requirements

Entry requirements for Americans:

US citizens must have a passport that is valid upon arrival in Ghana. A visa is required, and can be obtained on arrival with prior arrangement.

Entry requirements for Canadians:

Canadian citizens must have a passport that is valid upon arrival in Ghana. A visa is required, and can be obtained on arrival with prior arrangement.

Entry requirements for UK nationals:

British citizens must have a passport that is valid upon arrival in Ghana. A visa is required, and can be obtained on arrival with prior arrangement.

Entry requirements for Australians:

Australian citizens must have a passport that is valid upon arrival in Ghana. A visa is required, and can be obtained on arrival with prior arrangement.

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Entry requirements for Irish nationals:

Irish citizens must have a passport that is valid upon arrival in Ghana. A visa is required, and can be obtained on arrival with prior arrangement.

Entry requirements for New Zealanders:

New Zealand citizens must have a passport that is valid upon arrival in Ghana. A visa is required, and can be obtained on arrival with prior arrangement.

Entry requirements for South Africans:

South African citizens must have a passport that is valid upon arrival in Ghana. A visa can be obtained on arrival for South African citizens.

Tourist Offices

Ghana Tourist Board, Accra: +233 302 682 601 or <http://www.touringghana.com>

Ghana Embassies

In the United States:

Embassy of Ghana, Washington DC, United States: +1 202 686 4520.

In Canada:

Ghana High Commission, Ottawa, Canada: +1 613 236 0871.

In the United Kingdom:

Ghana High Commission, London, United Kingdom (also responsible for Ireland): +44 20 7201 5921.

In Australia:

Ghana High Commission, Canberra, Australia: +61 2 6290 2110.

In South Africa:

Ghana High Commission, Pretoria, South Africa: +27 12 342 5847.

Foreign Embassies in Ghana

American Embassy

United States Embassy, Accra: +233 30 274 1000.

Canadian Embassy

Canadian High Commission, Accra: +233 30 221 1521.

British Embassy

British High Commission, Accra: +233 30 221 3250.

Australian Embassy

Australian High Commission, Accra: +233 30 278 7657.

South African Embassy

South African High Commission, Accra: +233 30 274 0450.

Currency

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Exchange rate for 1 GHS - Ghanaian Cedi

0.00 BMD Bermudan Dollar	0.10 EUR Euro	0.10 USD U.S. Dollar	0.09 GBP U.K. Pound Sterling	14.29 JPY Japanese Yen	0.13 CAD Canadian Dollar
0.10 CHF Swiss Franc	0.15 AUD Australian Dollar	3.65 UAH Ukrainian Hryvnia	47.38 KZT Kazakhstani Tenge	150.20 LBP Lebanese Pound	0.49 LYD Libyan Dinar
0.69 BOB Bolivian Boliviano	12.66 NPR Nepalese Rupee	0.04 OMR Omani Rial	0.37 QAR Qatari Rial	0.14 SGD Singapore Dollar	1.07 SEK Swedish Krona
0.68 TTD Trinidad Tobago Dollar	0.00 VEF Venezuelan Bolivar	5.27 DOP Dominican Peso	0.75 HRK Croatian Kuna	2.00 MXN Mexican Peso	65.35 XOF West African CFA Franc
0.35 PGK Papua New Guinean kina	0.10 BSD Bahamian Dollar	0.22 FJD Fiji Dollar	2.45 HNL Honduran Lempira	14.00 DZD Algerian Dinar	208.93 MMK Myanma Kyat
1.30 BWP Botswana Pula	0.39 PEN Peruvian Nuevo Sol	91.81 CLP Chilean Peso	40.31 AMD Armenia Dram	2.44 CZK Czech Koruna	1.92 MDL Moldova Lei
13.83 ISK Icelandic Krona	1,088.53 UZS Uzbekistan Sum	0.34 ILS Israeli New Sheqel	0.07 JOD Jordanian Dinar	0.03 KWD Kuwaiti Dinar	4.06 UYU Uruguayan Peso
4.49 MUR Mauritian Rupee	3.57 NIO Nicaraguan Córdoba	1.01 NOK Norwegian Krone	0.47 PLN Polish Zloty	0.37 SAR Saudi Riyal	36.27 LKR Sri Lanka Rupee
3.66 THB Thai Baht	0.37 AED U.A.E Dirham	0.52 BRL Brazilian Real	0.49 RON Romanian New Leu	0.78 HKD Hong Kong Dollar	65.47 XAF Central African CFA Franc
2,344.06 VND Vietnamese Dong	14.23 ARS Argentine Peso	0.27 XCD East Caribbean Dollar	0.78 GTQ Guatemalan Quetzal	1.06 MAD Moroccan Dirham	0.04 BHD Bahrain Dinar
0.10 PAB Panamanian Balboa	0.17 AZN Azerbaijan Manat	439.86 COP Colombian Peso	8.05 KGS Kyrgyzstan Som	40.58 HUF Hungarian Forint	1.02 TJS Tajikistan Ruble
1,479.84 IDR Indonesian Rupiah	1.93 EGP Egyptian Pound	139.20 KRW South Korean Won	694.24 PYG Paraguayan Guaraní	0.45 MYR Malaysian Ringgit	63.00 CRC Costa Rican Colón
0.17 NZD New Zealand Dollar	22.26 PKR Pakistani Rupee	6.00 RUB Russian Rouble	1.75 ZAR South African Rand	0.32 TND Tunisian Dinar	0.20 BBD Barbadian Dollar
0.19 BGN Bulgarian Lev	1.82 TRY Turkish Lira	5.71 PHP Philippine Peso	3.10 TWD New Taiwan Dollar	42.65 NGN Nigerian Naira	11.89 XPF CFP Franc
15.16 JMD Jamaican Dollar	0.18 ANG Neth. Antillean Guilder	0.14 BND Brunei Dollar	11.69 RSD Serbian Dinar	0.70 CNY Chinese Yuan	0.74 DKK Danish Krone
0.35 TMT New Turkmenistan Manat	7.94 INR Indian Rupee				

Overview of the Attractions in Ghana

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Public Holidays in Ghana

	2023	2024
New Year's Day	Mon. January 1	Mon. January 1
Independence Day	Wed. March 6	Wed. March 6
Good Friday	Sun. April 7	Fri. March 29
Easter Monday	Wed. April 10	Mon. April 1
May Day	Wed. May 1	Wed. May 1
African Unity Day	Sat. May 25	Sat. May 25
Republic Day	Mon. July 1	Mon. July 1
Eid al-Fitr (end of Ramadan)	Sun. April 21 to Mon. April 22	Tue. April 9 to Wed. April 10
Founder's Day	Sun. August 4	Mon. August 5
Eid al-Adha (Feast of the Sacrifice)	Fri. June 28 to Sat. June 29	Sun. June 16 to Mon. June 17
Farmers' Day	Sun. December 1	Fri. December 6
Christmas Day	Wed. December 25	Wed. December 25
Boxing Day	Thu. December 26	Thu. December 26