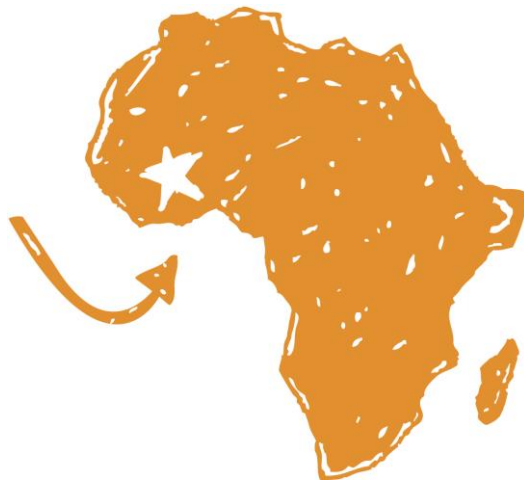


# Global Mamas<sup>®</sup>

## **VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION KIT**



**LOVE** your product. **KNOW** your producer. **CHANGE** her life.

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## GLOBAL MAMAS VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION KIT

Congratulations on making the decision to volunteer your time and expertise in Ghana through the Global Mamas volunteer program. Your work will benefit the Global Mamas community as we work to create prosperity for women in Ghana creating and selling fair trade products: handmade apparel, accessories, home décor, jewelry and skin care of the highest quality.

Get prepared for a life-changing experience! Many people come to Africa thinking they will change it, but instead they leave realizing Africa changed them. You will assimilate to Ghanaian culture by adapting to different standards of living, experience ups and downs that occur in nations as poor as Ghana and gain a whole new perspective. You will be faced with enormous challenges along the way, but if you keep an open mind and an adventuresome spirit, you will grow mentally, physically and culturally.

We are very excited for your arrival in Ghana. The first section—*Preparing for Your Trip*—needs your immediate attention to ensure you have everything in place for your departure. We hope the rest of this document helps convey what to expect as a foreigner and volunteer in Ghana.

### PREPARING FOR YOUR TRIP

#### FLIGHTS

The cost of airfare depends on the time of year you're traveling, with prices in the summer (peak travel season) higher than the rest of the year. Try to buy your plane ticket as early as possible. By planning early, you will be able to get a better ticket price.

Ghana's international airport is in Accra and its airport code is ACC. We've found that the cheapest days to fly are Tuesday and Saturday. You can go directly to the websites of airlines that fly into Ghana, but we recommend starting your search with a travel search engine such as Hipmunk.com or Kayak.com. We've also had many volunteers from around the world find amazing deals on CheapAir.com and Vayama.com. For students coming from cities outside the U.S., check out StudentUniverse.com.

Please check with Global Mamas **before** you book your flight so we can arrange common arrival dates for as many volunteers as possible. This makes transportation between Accra and our volunteer sites much more simple. Let us know the details of your itinerary as soon as you book your flight so we can make arrangements to pick you up at the airport.

#### GHANAIAN VISA

If you do not yet have a passport, start that process yesterday! Once you have a valid passport, it can take a month to process your Ghanaian visa. Detailed instructions on obtaining the visa can be found at: <http://www.ghanaembassy.org/index.php?page=visas>

The visa application form can be downloaded from this page. Please note that some countries other than the U.S. do require an invitation letter from the host organization—there is one included on the last page of this guide. Here are some hints to help you fill out the form:

- *References:* You can use the following two references:
  - Renae Adam: I Abafun Crescent, Labone, Accra +233(0)244-530-467
  - Patience Essibu: Box CC890, Cape Coast +233(0)246-009-317
- *Purpose of Journey/Type of Visa:* Tourism
- *Single vs. Multiple Entry Visa:* If you are staying for a shorter visit, the single entry tourist visa should suffice. However, if you staying a month or more and are considering doing some traveling, you may want to get a multiple entry visa in case you decide to travel to neighboring countries.
  - Single Entry Visa (~U.S. \$60 for U.S. citizens; prices for citizens of other countries vary): Be aware that you must enter Ghana within 3 months of the issue date, so don't apply for your visa too far in advance.
  - Multiple Entry Visa (~U.S. \$100 for U.S. citizens; prices for citizens of other countries vary): This visa will allow you to come and go to/from Ghana an unlimited number of times within a five-year period.

**When you are submitting your visa application, send it via FedEx and don't forget to include:**

1. Original and one copy of your application
2. Your passport (valid for at least six more months)
3. Letter of invitation from host in Ghana (see last page of this guide)
4. You **do not** need to send any proof of financial means
5. Visa fee (money order; no personal checks or cash accepted)
6. Two passport photos (be sure to closely follow the specifications on the application; staple photos to the top right corner of your application)
7. A prepaid, self-addressed, overnight FedEx envelope (the embassy **will not** send back your passport without this envelope and you'll experience significant hassle in obtaining your visa)

Once in Ghana, your authorized length of stay is typically only 60 days, though this can vary. For volunteers staying longer than two months, you will need to obtain a visa extension through Ghana Immigration Service (~ U.S. \$35.00 for each additional month) or leave the country and then re-enter. To apply for a visa extension, email Anna Rose at [annarose@globalmamas.org](mailto:annarose@globalmamas.org) to ask for an extension letter after you arrive in Ghana. Take this along with a copy of your return plane ticket receipt to the nearest Ghana Immigration Service office.

Your volunteer site's office manager can help you figure out how to get to the nearest Ghana Immigration Service office. Volunteers in Accra, Krobo and Ashaiman will need to go to the Accra Immigration office on Independence Avenue, near the Ako Adjei overpass. The office can be reached at 0302685006. Volunteers in Cape Coast is located across the street in a yellow building from Barclays bank as you're walking towards Baobab. The office's phone number is 0332132988.

If you have a couple of extra passport photos, you may want to bring them along as well to expedite the visa renewal process, but you can also have passport photos taken in Ghana. If you forget to extend your visa, airport officials are generally forgiving if you've overstayed your visa by just a few days. Otherwise, you'll pay a penalty.

### VACCINATIONS

Yellow fever is the only immunization required to enter Ghana<sup>1</sup>. In the U.S., you can obtain a yellow fever shot from your local Center for Disease Control (CDC). Although the price varies by state/country, expect to spend around U.S. \$150 for the immunization (shot plus administration fee). You should receive a yellow World Health Organization booklet in which the doctor will write that you had the yellow fever vaccination. If your doctor doesn't give it to you, be sure to ask for it. **Be sure that you have this yellow booklet handy when you land at the airport in Accra, as it is requested upon arrival.**

Your local CDC will also be able to provide details regarding other recommended vaccinations for travelers to West Africa. You should consult with your doctor as to which of these other immunizations are necessary for you. Some additional vaccinations recommended by the CDC for Ghana include typhoid, tetanus, hepatitis A & B and meningitis.

### MEDICAL INSURANCE

You are required to have personal medical insurance that provides **international coverage** in order to participate in Global Mamas' volunteer program. If you currently receive health insurance through your employer or school, verify that it will cover you while traveling in Africa. If you need to purchase short-term medical insurance for your international travels, many of our volunteers have used International Medical Group (IMG). After much research, it seems that IMG has good coverage at a fair price. Although we have never yet had to call upon them for an insurance claim, they have been very organized and efficient with the application process. You can get more information at [IMGGlobal.com](http://IMGGlobal.com).

### MALARIA PREVENTION

Malaria exists throughout Ghana. People catch it and recover from it like our common cold. To prevent malaria, you should consult with your doctor to determine what anti-malarial medication will work best for you. We highly recommend that you take anti-malaria medication during your short stay in Ghana. Malaria can be treated quite quickly if caught in the early stages, but if you weren't taking anti-malarial medication to begin with, you will feel much sicker.

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<sup>1</sup> If you had a yellow fever shot within the last 10 years, you will not need to get another one. But you'll still need to prove that you've been vaccinated upon arrival at the airport in Accra.

### TRAVELER’S RUNNY TUMMY

If possible, we recommend getting a prescription for an antibiotic such as ciprofloxacin to fight bad cases of traveler’s diarrhea. Most doctors are willing to prescribe this antibiotic on a “just in case” basis. In addition, you may want to consider researching whether probiotics could be helpful in maintaining a healthy stomach.

### REGISTERING WITH YOUR COUNTRY’S EMBASSY / HIGH COMMISSION

Some embassies and high commissions encourage you to “register” your trip to Ghana with them. This is not required, but in case of emergency, your embassy/high commission will be aware of your stay in Ghana. This can likely be done online. If you are a U.S. citizen, you can register with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program here: <https://step.state.gov/step/>. Use this address as a reference: I Abafun Crescent, Labone, Accra

### PACKING

Airlines have fairly strict luggage allowances for international flights and you can incur heavy fees if your luggage is overweight (usually, bags weighing more than 50 pounds/23 kilograms). Please check with your airline to find out your specific luggage restrictions.

### WEATHER GUIDE

Ghana has a tropical climate, so be prepared to enter a relatively hot and humid environment. As the weather chart shows below, the temperature usually stays between 75°F/24°C and 88°F/31°C, but the humidity often makes it seem even hotter than that. The heavier rainy season is May/June with light, refreshing rains in October.

Season	Month	MIN Temp °F	MAX Temp °F	MIN Temp °C	MAX Temp °C	Humidity %	Rainfall (mm)
Harmattan	Jan	74	86	23.3	30	61	15
Hottest	Feb	76	88	24.4	31.1	61	33
	March	75	88	23.8	31.1	63	56
	April	75	88	23.8	31.1	65	81
Hot	May	75	88	23.8	31.1	68	142
	June	74	85	23.3	29.4	74	178
	July	73	82	22.8	27.8	76	46
	Aug	72	81	22.2	27.2	77	15
	Sept	73	82	22.8	27.8	72	36
Hotter	Oct	74	85	23.3	29.4	71	64
	Nov	74	88	23.3	31.1	66	36
	Dec	75	88	23.8	31.1	64	23

### WHAT TO BRING

As you can see, it tends to get quite warm during the day. Therefore, you are likely to be most comfortable wearing light, loose clothing and sandals (most men wear sandals in Ghana too). For volunteers staying more than two weeks, consider packing clothing items that are easy to wash by hand and will dry quickly. Nylon or light cotton shorts/pants are great—ones with zipped pockets are even better. The thinner the fabric, the better. Please see the *Dressing in Ghana* section for more details on what types of clothing are appropriate.

You may even consider packing light and having some traditional clothes made while you are here. By doing so, you can support the batikers/seamstresses and the locals love it when visitors dress in traditional Ghanaian outfits. Consider packing clothes that you would feel okay parting with so you can “dash” your new friends when you leave or use as collateral when bartering for souvenirs.

Just about any everyday item you will need is available in Ghana. It is a bit more difficult to find Western brands, but you can find things like shampoo, conditioner, soap, deodorant, toothpaste and toothbrushes if you need to replenish your stock.

In addition to your clothes and toiletries, we recommend bringing the following items:

#### Travel Gear

- Money belt: a great way to hide your money and passport while traveling.
- Small backpack: good for carrying books or shopping around town.
- Light towel and / or washcloth for bathing: towels can also be purchased in Ghana.
- Bandanas: good for wiping sweat, tying hair back and various other things—although you can always buy a bandana from Global Mamas once you get here!
- Mosquito repellent: anything with DEET; it is difficult to find strong bug spray in Ghana.
- Sunscreen, hat, sunglasses: you won't believe how bright the sun is here.
- Water bottle: bring a sturdy refillable bottle (such as a Nalgene) to refill with the filtered drinking water we provide at our offices and volunteer houses.
- Swiss Army knife: this always comes in handy. Be sure to pack this in your checked bag!
- Small book light and / or flashlight: for nighttime reading, power outages and evening walks, since there are few streetlights.
- Ziploc bags: because it is quite humid, you may want to pack things (passport, camera, etc.) in sealable bags to keep them dry.
- Adapters/converters: Ghana has 220v outlets (UK style) with three rectangular prongs. We have some converters/transformers at the volunteer houses and offices, but you can bring your own if you plan to bring 110v devices.

#### Health Items

- Travel first aid kit: it's good to have some Band-Aids, antibiotic ointment, etc., on hand to save you a trip to the pharmacist.
- Medicine/vitamins: if there are any non-prescription drugs that you think you may need in Ghana, you should bring them along (antacids, painkillers, vitamins, etc.)
- Iodine tablets: used to purify raw vegetables before eating.
- Anti-itch cream: necessary for bug bites.
- Pocket packs of Kleenex: nice to have since toilet paper isn't usually available in public restrooms.
- Hand sanitizer: since it is sometimes difficult to stay clean when you are out and about, many volunteers have found hand sanitizer useful.

#### Miscellaneous

- Photocopies of important documents: as an extra precaution, make copies of your passport (page with picture and page with Ghana visa), return plane ticket and pertinent credit card info (800# to call if lost). Keep these separate from your important documents.
- Student ID: if you are a student, you definitely want to bring your student ID. This can get you into national parks/monuments at a reduced fee.
- Flip flops: nice for showering. You can also buy them in Ghana very cheaply and easily.
- Books/e-reader: evenings can be very quiet and reading can provide good entertainment (though we do have a collection in the volunteer houses.)
- Batteries: good quality batteries are not readily available.
- Food: if you like good coffee, you should probably pack your own ground coffee with a small French press or stovetop coffee maker, as instant Nescafé is the only coffee available. Granola bars and instant oatmeal are good to bring since you may not get to the grocery store for a few days. If you enjoy certain spices, you may want to bring those. Additionally, if you enjoy good chocolate, you may want to bring some, because Ghana exports most of its grade A chocolate!
- Laptop: internet access is not reliable, but we generally are connected at the office; internet cafés are also available.
- Thumb drive: these small computer data storage devices fit in your laptop's USB port and have been indispensable for many volunteers.
- Cell phone: check with your wireless provider to find out if your phone will work in Ghana and if there is an international plan you should consider. However, cell phones are inexpensive in Ghana (as low as ~ U.S. \$30). All you need to do is purchase a SIM card in Ghana for about U.S. \$1, activate and then buy pre-paid minutes to make calls.

We understand that tablets, such as iPads, are less bulky for travel, but because of our limited budget, we do not have extra laptops for volunteers to use. If you prefer to bring a tablet instead of a laptop to Ghana, please touch base with us to confirm this won't be a problem.

If you have a little extra room in your bag, we sure would appreciate it if you brought any of the following items:

- A suitcase of supplies: if you think you will only check one suitcase, please let us know as we always have supplies needing to make their way to Ghana. We'll ship the suitcase to your house for you to bring to Ghana!
- Used laptops: we are in great need of laptops with a minimum of Pentium III CPU so we can run Microsoft Office. Donated laptops will be used by Mamas, staff and volunteers. We would be happy to provide a donation receipt if needed for your tax purposes.
- Calculators: Mamas can always use calculators, so if you have an extra, we would love for you to bring it.
- Pens: if your pen drawer is ready to be cleaned out, donate them to our offices (pens are a hot commodity) or dash them to new friends or students.
- Retail catalogs: we especially need kids' and adult clothing catalogs (Lands' End, J.Crew, Anthropologie, etc.). Mamas and our designers love to use catalogs for inspiration.
- Women's magazines: magazines like *O* and *Ms.* will provide years of entertainment to folks here.
- DVDs: you'll enjoy having movies to watch and so will future volunteers!

## MONEY MATTERS

### TAX DEDUCTIBILITY OF EXPENSES

Global Mamas is a tax exempt 501c3 nonprofit organization. Thus, U.S. citizens volunteering with Global Mamas can claim their non-reimbursable program fee and travel expenses as a tax deduction since they have performed volunteer duties throughout their trip. Some EU countries also allow a tax writeoff for volunteer fees. You should seek professional advice to determine whether your own circumstances permit you to claim your program fee and travel expenses as a tax deduction.

Any funds raised by you from other organizations or individuals as a donation to Global Mamas may be tax-deductible by that organization or individual and as such will not qualify as a deduction for you.

### PLANNING YOUR BUDGET

This guide should help you plan how much spending money you will need for your trip to Ghana, in addition to the program fee. Your costs in Ghana will vary tremendously depending on how much comfort and familiarity you are willing to pay for.

Please keep in mind that the following prices are averages and may vary depending on what city you are in, where you do your shopping, and how well you bargain. All estimates of subject to change but generally should not fluctuate much.

PRE-DEPARTURE	USD
Roundtrip airfare from most major U.S. cities	~\$1,800
Cost of required yellow fever vaccination	~\$150
Cost to obtain Ghanaian visa	~\$60
Cost of required anti-malarial drug (one Lariam pill per week)	\$7/pill
<i>please note that there is a large range in prices for various anti-malarial drugs</i>	
FOOD & DRINK IN GHANA	
Lunch out: chicken, rice & a Coke	\$5
Dinner out: lobster, French fries & a beer	\$13
Dining out traditional food: fufu/banku/yams/akple with stew	\$1.80
One week of groceries for cooking in volunteer house kitchen	\$25
Bottle of purified water (1.5 liters)	\$.70
Sachet of purified water (500 milliliters)	\$.07
Bottle of Coke	\$.50
Bottle of Beer (big)	\$1.50

<b>ACCOMMODATIONS<sup>2</sup></b>	
One night hotel in Accra (with A/C)	\$70
One night hotel in Accra (no A/C)	\$25
One night hotel in Kumasi (with A/C)	\$50
One night hotel in Kumasi (no A/C)	\$15
<b>SITSEEING</b>	
Entrance fee at typical tourist site	\$10
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	
One-way travel between Accra and Krobo (public transportation)	\$5
One-way travel between Accra and Cape Coast (public transportation)	\$7
One-way travel between Accra and Cape Coast (charter taxi)	\$70
Cost to share a taxi from the Cape Coast volunteer house to the office	\$.75
Cost to charter a taxi shorter distances within Cape Coast	\$8.00
<b>SHOPPING</b>	
One men's Ghanaian shirt	\$7
One women's Ghanaian dress	\$11
Medium-sized wood carving	\$10

### CHANGING MONEY

It is easy to change money in Ghana—at least Monday through Friday from 8:30AM to 3:00PM. Private foreign exchange bureaus (called forex for short) are easy to find and offer slightly higher rates than the banks, with much shorter lines. Exchanging \$50 and \$100 bills yields a better exchange rate. As it is easy to spot foreigners walking out of a bank or forex, be alert and keep larger amounts of money in your money belt or in a zipped backpack or pocket.

If you are staying in Ghana for an extended period, you may consider bringing travelers cheques, however, we do not recommend them because they are not as easy to exchange as cash. Foreign exchange bureaus will not cash travelers cheques and you generally get a lower rate for them at the banks.

### CREDIT & DEBIT CARDS

Credit card fraud is quite prevalent in Ghana. We suggest that you don't use your credit card at all and you'll find that there are few opportunities to do so. If you must use it, be very careful, even at nice hotels and restaurants. **Never** submit credit card information online at a public internet café. If you need to do banking or other secure transactions online, ask a Global Mamas staff member first so that you can use a trusted computer to do this in the office.

You should feel quite safe using your debit card at an ATM. Be sure to bring a VISA debit card since MasterCard is only accepted at two banks in Accra which are not easily accessible. Before departure, be sure to call your bank to ensure your card will work in Ghana. You should also let the bank know the dates you'll be in Ghana so your account doesn't get frozen or canceled.

You will be charged a fee for ATM withdrawals (around 6% of the total withdrawal). ATMs will cap the amount of cash you can withdraw at one time (normally not based on your daily limit, but based on the amount of cash available in the ATM). If you need to obtain a larger amount from your card, or your debit card is not compatible with the bank's network, you will need to do the transaction within the bank, where you may encounter long lines. Although we haven't heard this firsthand yet, there are rumors that sometimes even banks sell credit card information! So, just plan on not using your debit card except in an ATM.

## ARRIVAL IN GHANA

### AIRPORT SCENE

On the plane, you will receive an immigration form. Fill it out in black or blue ink and be sure to mark that you are a tourist. There will also be a spot to fill in the address and phone number of where you're staying. You can use Global Mamas' address in Accra, even if you will be living in a volunteer site other than Accra:

<sup>2</sup> Your program fee does cover accommodations at the volunteer house and transportation to and from the airport. The price estimates are to help volunteers that may plan side trips around Ghana.



I Ababfun Crescent, Labone, Accra  
Phone: 233-244-530-467  
Mailing address: PMB194CT, Accra

When you land in Ghana, a bus will take you from the plane to the airport building. Try your best to quickly get off the bus and into the immigration line. Being last in line here can cause quite a delay in getting out of the airport, especially if there is more than one flight arriving. Be sure to have your passport and your yellow World Health Organization booklet ready. Once you're through immigration, you will enter the baggage claim area. There is a forex bureau and two ATMs in the baggage claim area; we suggest you take this opportunity to exchange/withdraw some cedis.

Once you pick up your luggage at the baggage claim, you will go through customs. With only a couple of suitcases, they are not likely to stop you and question what is in your bags. From there, you will go down a long ramp and someone may check your baggage tags, so have those handy. Someone may also ask for a tip, which you should politely decline to give. When you are about to exit the airport building, we will be holding up a sign with your name on it. If you want to give Global Mamas a brief description of what you look like, that will help too.

It can be difficult for us to get updated flight info, so we would appreciate any updates on major flight delays or flight cancellations. If possible, please email Renae Adam at [renae@globalmamas.org](mailto:renae@globalmamas.org) and/or Anna Rose Ott at [annarose@globalmamas.org](mailto:annarose@globalmamas.org).

### **THE BACK-UP PLAN**

Being really paranoid, we also have a back-up plan. In the unlikely circumstances that we do not find you at the airport, please take a taxi to the Blue Royal Hotel located in Osu (about a ten minute drive from the airport costing no more than 20 cedis). Book a single room (we'll take care of the payment in the morning). Again, this is only a backup plan so that we can easily find one another in the rare case there is a total communication breakdown.

### **FIRST NIGHT / DAY IN ACCRA**

Depending on the time your flight arrives, we might make arrangements for you to drive the same day to your assigned site or spend the night at our volunteer house in Accra. Either way, we will make sure you get to where you need to go and have a nice place to sleep.

## **LIVING IN GHANA**

### **VOLUNTEER HOUSING**

The volunteer housing in each of Global Mamas' sites is a comfortable place where you can get away and relax. Each house has a kitchen in which you are welcome to cook your meals. Facilities are also provided for you to wash your clothes by hand. You can very easily outsource this task and have someone wash your clothes for a minimal fee, which most volunteers elect to do.

The house has screens in place to keep "nature" outside. However, some mosquitoes may sneak inside as people come in and out of the door. Mosquito nets are provided for each bed as an extra precaution and we highly recommend that you use them. Sheets, pillows and pillowcases are provided for sleeping.

You will most likely be sharing a room with at least one other volunteer. Some of our bedrooms do have bunk beds. We try our best to reserve these for short-term volunteers and only during our busiest times, but occasionally we have to put someone in a bunk room until another room becomes available. If you require a private room and we do not have the space available, we can help make arrangements for you to stay at a guest house, but you would be responsible for covering the additional lodging fee. If you prefer to stay with a Ghanaian family, we can also help arrange that.

Depending on how many volunteers are staying in the volunteer house at any one time, you are likely to be sharing a bathroom with other volunteers. Depending on your project site, there may or may not be regularly running water. If the water is running, you will have a flushing toilet and a shower, although there is no hot water. If the water is not

running (and the backup tank is depleted), you may learn the valuable skill of taking a bucket bath and doing bucket flushes. It's very easy once you get the hang of it! And, don't worry—toilet paper is readily available.

Most countries in West Africa experience severe power shortages. Ghana is no exception and frequent power outages do occur. In the office, we shift focus to tasks not dependent on electricity. It is helpful to have a flashlight handy for evening power outages.

### **DRINKING**

Tap water is not potable in Ghana. Bottled/sachet water is readily available and inexpensive, but we encourage you to drink the filtered water provided at all volunteer houses/offices. Also readily available at many restaurants and bars are sodas (called minerals in Ghana), juices, a variety of beers and other local drinks. Avoid drinking fresh fruit juice unless you are certain that tap water has not been added.

### **EATING**

You have several options for eating: nice restaurants, street food or cooking at home. In some areas, restaurants are available where you can get food that reminds you of home. Of course, you will pay a higher price for these Western luxuries.

You will find that *street chop* (food being sold at the roadside) is easily available. You can find a large variety of foods such as oranges, mangos, bananas, pineapples, peanuts, kabobs, fried fish, chicken, bread, biscuits, popcorn, yam chips, egg sandwiches and candy in addition to local dishes such as fufu, banku and kenke. This is a very inexpensive way to eat. (Please see the section on Planning Your Budget for an idea of what these items would cost). You will need to decide for yourself whether you feel the food is sanitary. We know of foreigners eating the food for years without getting sick, depending on the vendor. Study the scene—a lack of any customers at a chop bar may be an indication that the food is not so good.

Since cooking facilities are available in our volunteer houses (stove but no microwave), cooking at home can be a very inexpensive option. You can buy fresh fruit, vegetable, meats, noodles, rice and bread in the market. Just remember to wash any fruits and vegetables very well before eating. As an added precaution, you may consider soaking fresh produce in iodine water before eating.

In Cape Coast, we have an amazing neighborhood cook a couple doors down from the volunteer house who prepares dinner as well as egg sandwiches for breakfast; we have cooks upon request in other sites. They will adapt cooking to your likes (spicy/not spicy, vegetarian, etc.) Volunteers appreciate this chance to get a wide variety of home-cooked Ghanaian meals as the food at restaurants starts to taste the same after a while.

### **VEGETARIANS/VEGANS**

Most dishes in Ghana are prepared with chicken, fish or goat so finding a variety of vegetarian meals on the street can be a challenge. However, it is easy to get a delicious egg sandwich or rice and beans on the street and some restaurants now offer vegetarian meals for tourists. Vegetarians may also opt to cook at home. Vegans will be pleased to know that cheese is not commonly present in street chop; finding a vegan meal of rice and beans isn't difficult.

### **DRESSING**

Ghanaians are very proud people. Being clean and well-dressed is a top priority (and a sign of respect towards others). Accordingly, Ghanaians can be somewhat insulted by poorly-dressed visitors. For example, Jimmy Carter's son once came to Ghana to present a large grant to a Ghanaian organization. He arrived at the ceremony in shorts. The leaders of the group told him to take his money, get back on the plane and go home. Although this is an exceptional case, it demonstrates the importance of dress in Ghana.

We recommend wearing the following attire in Ghana:

- Women: dresses and skirts are the most appropriate. Skirts at or below the knee are best. Trousers are also fine, but you may find they are hotter than a skirt.
- Men: trousers worn with collared shirts are most appropriate. Nice t-shirts are also acceptable.

Don't worry, the clothes police won't come and arrest you for dressing poorly. Shorts are acceptable to wear since you are a visitor and Ghanaians are used to seeing foreigners wearing shorts. **If you choose to wear shorts,**

**please be conservative and ensure they are within a couple inches of your knee.** Shirts should cover the stomach. If you dress scantily, you will attract negative attention and be called *abuskeleke*. For an entertaining conversation, ask any Ghanaian to translate this term for you.

### **INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS**

International communications from Ghana has improved tremendously over the last few years. Internet cafés have popped up everywhere, making it possible to get online in most towns. However, be prepared for unreliable and slow connections.

Many volunteers have found that buying a cell phone in Ghana is the easiest and most inexpensive way to make calls to home, as a phone can be purchased for as little as U.S. \$30 and prepaid minutes are readily available. It's not as expensive as you might think to make international calls from a Ghanaian cell phone—buying a five cedi (~ U.S. \$2) phone card will get you about a 30-minute call to the U.S.

Ask your family and friends to check with their wireless and/or landline provider to determine if they can sign up for a temporary international calling and/or texting plan, which is often quite affordable. We've found that slow internet connections make Skype a hassle.

### **PUBLIC RESTROOMS**

Maybe this heading should include "...or lack thereof." It is sometimes challenging to find public restrooms; if you do locate one, they are often dirty. You may want to bring a stash of emergency toilet paper with you wherever you go. Large hotels or restaurants normally have simple bathroom facilities, and of course, our offices have bathrooms. As a side note, Ghanaians don't normally use the terms bathroom or restroom. If you need a bathroom, it is best to ask for a toilet or "a place to urinate."

### **BEACHES / SWIMMING**

Although there are many beaches in Ghana, very few Ghanaians go to the beach and swim for pleasure. However, here are a few public beaches in Accra where many foreigners and locals go to relax. The best private beaches are located in the Western Region and you should feel comfortable wearing your swimming suit and hanging out at these designated beaches.

## **TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF IN GHANA**

### **HEALTH PRECAUTIONS IN GHANA**

It is easy to take care of yourself in Ghana by watching what you eat and drink, taking your anti-malarial medicine and using mosquito repellent. Global Mamas' staff will guide you to restaurants and street chop stands known for quality food. Because your diet may change while you are here (a lot of staple foods contain high carbs), you may also want to bring vitamins to ensure you get all of your vitamins and minerals.

### **HOSPITALS**

Although we hope you will never need to visit a hospital, you will be happy to know that all larger towns in Ghana have fairly modern hospitals. Many of the doctors are trained overseas and the staff is competent. Sterile equipment is also readily available. **Tell us immediately if you are not feeling well!** If a trip to the doctor is required, one of our staff members will accompany you to the hospital for testing and treatment.

### **PERSONAL SAFETY**

In general, Ghana is a very safe place to visit. However, when traveling to any foreign country, it's better to be safe than sorry. As a highly visible foreigner, be smart about walking around in congested areas (especially in Accra). Accra is like any other big city, with pick-pockets and the like. It's best to wear a money belt under your clothes if you must carry valuables like money or your passport. Wearing a waist bag or carrying a purse is okay, but don't keep your valuables in there. Carrying a large backpack is also likely to draw attention. It's best to put your money in your pocket and go without a bag.

As any traveler should do, split your money up into several zipped pockets. Keep smaller bills easily accessible for buying small items (e.g., taxi fares, oranges) so that you don't have to pull out a big wad of money to buy something small.

Wearing your camera around your neck is a sure sign of a tourist fresh off the plane! If you are carrying a camera, try to keep it hidden in a backpack or bag. Taking pictures is very much welcomed. In fact, most adults and children love to get their photo taken—just ask first.

Most small crimes happen in the wee hours of the night. If you plan to enjoy yourself out on the town until early morning hours, try to find someone to accompany you—preferably not **at** the bar, but **before** you get there 😊. Also, do not stay at any of the public beaches after the nightlife has died down (e.g., Labadi beach in Accra) since there have been incidents of foreigners being mugged. Although other cities and towns in Ghana (e.g., Kumasi, Takoradi, Cape Coast) do not experience the same level of small crimes as Accra, there have been reported incidents of harassment of foreigners in touristy areas. Just be smart and try not to wear things that may convey that you are in possession of valuable items. Be aware of your surroundings and people walking the same pace as you or behind you, especially at night. Global Mamas highly recommends volunteers to travel in pairs as an added safety precaution. While it is best to keep your guard up, you probably will not feel uncomfortable walking at night.

In general, Ghana is a very safe country, often safer than major Western cities. You will see worse incidents of crime on your local evening news than you will likely ever hear of in Ghana. Within the country, there are no major factions at war and Ghana gets along just fine with its neighbors.

## TRANSPORTATION IN GHANA

### GETTING AROUND TOWN

Depending on how adventuresome you are with using local transportation, getting around town can be as expensive or inexpensive as you wish. Taxis and *tro tros* (larger vans) are extremely easy to find and will take you just about anywhere for a small fee.

In smaller towns, you can hire a *drop taxi* to take you somewhere for ~ U.S. \$1.50. Be sure to agree on a price before you get in the taxi! Otherwise, you may be surprised by your “foreigner” bill at the end of the journey. In Accra, taking taxis is much more expensive. To go around town, you are likely to pay at least 4.00 cedis (~ U.S.\$2.00) for a drop taxi.

You can also join others in a *share taxi* along the designated routes taken by taxis. This is a very cheap way to travel. For example, for the same distance you might pay 8.00 cedis in a drop taxi, but only 1.8 cedis to join a share taxi or *tro tro*. You will have to ask around to learn where to get a share taxi or *tro tro* going to your destination, but they follow specific patterns, so you'll get the hang of it. Taking shared taxis or *tro tros* is also a great way to meet people.

### TOURING AROUND GHANA

Outside of your volunteer activities, there will be plenty of time for you to tour around Ghana. We suggest that you take advantage of it! Ghana has a rich history and many sites to see.

From your volunteer site, it will be easy for you to take weekend trips to other regions of Ghana and use the volunteer house as your home base.

You can be adventuresome and travel to the various destinations on your own, taking local transport and finding accommodations when you get there. If you are strapped for time or want to travel a bit more comfortably, you may choose to hire a tour guide or tour company. We can help point you in either direction once you are in Ghana.

There are not many in-depth guidebooks on Ghana, but we recommend the Bradt Guide to Ghana which has the most extensive travel information. If you plan to travel outside Ghana, Lonely Planet has a West Africa guidebook.

## CULTURE & CUSTOMS

## THE FRIENDLIEST PEOPLE IN THE WORLD

We have often heard Ghanaians described as some of the friendliest people in the world and believe it to be true. Be prepared to be warmly welcomed by people who will welcome you into their homes and share with you anything they have. Everyone from the Global Mamas staff to your taxi driver will want to talk to you and learn more about your culture. They also want to know how you are, where you are going, where you are from, etc. The co-founders of Global Mamas fell in love with the people of Ghana more than ten years ago and we hope you do too.

## BEING A FOREIGNER IN GHANA

Ghanaians generally refer to foreigners as *obruni*. Being called an *obruni* is not an insult, but rather a general way to address you. Ghanaians are very straightforward people. If you're bald, they'll call you bald. If you are fat, they'll call you fat, which is a compliment, since some meat on one's bones is a sign of prosperity.

People can easily recognize you as a visitor from the way you dress, your skin color, your gestures/facial expressions, and even the types of bags you carry your things in. Be prepared to attract attention wherever you go. Some past volunteers have been overwhelmed by being unable to blend in Ghana, since everyone likes to talk to foreigners. Most Ghanaians just want to know more about you and maybe get your address.

As a foreigner, you will often be asked to give money by beggars, children and passers-by. Whether you give money to those asking is up to you. Many volunteers have chosen to “dash” one or two cedis to people who have been helpful (giving directions, helping you haggle, etc.) or to those who are homeless or have disabilities. The nice thing about Ghanaians is they are usually not overly aggressive about begging and have a good sense of humor. Don't feel compelled to give money. Instead of ignoring the situation, you may smile and say something like “next time.” Even the people you get to know well in Ghana may ask you for things. Statements like this are not uncommon: “I like your watch. When you leave Ghana, dash it to me.” Please don't take offense, as none is intended. A perfect response is “sorry, I will need my watch when I get home.”

## THE LEFT HAND

There is no politically correct way to say this and to left-handers, we apologize. In Ghana, the left hand is used mainly for wiping (in the toilet) and is considered dirty—so try very hard not to use it in public! Use your right hand for waving, accepting an item someone is giving you, giving money, shaking hands and especially for eating. If for some reason your right hand is dirty, it is appropriate to offer your right wrist for a handshake or to apologetically extend your left hand with your right arm crossed underneath in support.

It is customary to eat most foods with your right hand, not using utensils. If you are uncomfortable with this (it does take some practice to eat soup with your hand), no one will be offended if you ask for a spoon. Before and after a local meal you are normally offered a bowl of water to wash your right hand.

## BARGAINING

Unless you are shopping in a grocery or retail store, most items for sale are negotiable. In fact, bargaining is considered an enjoyable sport in Ghana and you will likely pay too much if you don't participate. If you are shopping for food or other household types of items in the market, you can usually get a lower overall price if you are buying many items, but you have to ask them to “please reduce” the price (see the *Language* section of this guide to see how to say this in Fante, which usually gets you deeper discounts). Just be aware that you are likely to be given the *obruni* price on many things, especially taxi rides. Try not to be offended by this, because rates are set based on what a seller thinks you can afford. A seller would give that same price to a more affluent Ghanaian and it shows a sign of wealth for the buyer to pay that higher price.

If you are shopping for items in the touristy areas (wood carvings, brass statues, batik, jewelry, etc.) you are likely to be given a very high price at first. You can get as creative as you want in using your clothes, shoes, watch, etc. to barter.

Although it's hard to give guidelines for bargaining on traditional products made by artisans, you may try this approach to receive a better deal:

- Act surprised at the very high price you are initially offered.
- Say something like, “Ay! that's too much.”
- The vendor will likely ask how much you want to pay.

- To start to get a feel for what a fair price would be, give a price lower than what you are willing to pay (try half of the first price.)
- At this point, the vendor will either act insulted (as you did to his first price) or give you his second price.
- That's it. You keep going up to what you might be willing to pay and he will go down to his "last price." Hopefully you will reach an agreeable price.
- Be prepared to walk away if you feel the price is too high. Many times that is when the deal is finally sealed, with the vendor chasing after you to say your price is okay.

### WORKING IN GHANA

Although normal business hours are 8AM to 5PM, most businesses normally get going around 9AM. Of course, this assumes nice weather. If it rains, some shops don't open at all! Be prepared for formal business meetings to begin and end with a prayer and possibly a song. It is also customary for the person calling the meeting to first state the meeting purpose.

### GHANA TIME

Though many Ghanaians are working to change this, be prepared for meetings and appointments to start later than expected. Ghanaians, in general, just tend to be late. If a meeting is supposed to start at 10AM, it may really start around 11AM. Be patient and perhaps take a book along in case you find yourself waiting for a while.

### LANGUAGE

English is the official language of Ghana and Fante is the primary language used in the Cape Coast area, while Dangbe is spoken in the Krobo area. The majority of people in southern Ghana speak English fairly well, so you shouldn't have a problem with basic communication. However, there may be mutual problems encountered with the pronunciation of words. You will likely encounter problems with certain words and slang as Ghanaians speak British English. Until you get a hang of the dialect, use simple vocabulary, speak slowly and articulate your words clearly.

- **Likely to cause looks of confusion:** "Excuse me, fine sir. I am trying to locate the market to buy some delicious tomatoes. Do you know how I can get to the market?"
- **Likely to produce desired results:** "Tomatoes?"

Below are some simple Fante phrases. Fante is very similar to Twi, the language spoken most widely in Accra and throughout Ghana. Learning a few Fante phrases should be helpful if you are volunteering in Cape Coast or Krobo.

### FANTE PRIMER

Phrase	Pronunciation	Meaning
<b>Greetings</b>		
Akwaba	a-quaaa-ba	Welcome
Mema wo akye	may moe watchee	Good morning
Mema wo aha	may moe wa ha	Good afternoon
Mema wo adwe	may moe wadgee	Good evening
<b>Responses to Greetings</b>		
Yaa egya	yah age a	Response to older man
Yaa ena	yah enna	Response to older woman
Yaa nua	yah kneeya	Response to your age or younger
<b>Introductions</b>		
Wofre wo den?	woe froh woe den	What is your name?
Wofre me _____	woe freh me _____	My name is _____
<b>How Are You (a very popular question in Ghana)</b>		
Otse den?	oat – se – den?	How are you?
Bokoo	Bo – Koh	I'm good

## Buying and Selling

Ahen	Ah Hin	How much?
Tso do	tsew dough	Reduce!
Me ne cica	May – nay – sika	I don't have any money

## Other

Me da wo ase	me dah see	Thank you
Pa Paa Pa	pa paaaaa pa	Very much
Me pa wo kyew	may pow woe choe	Please
Owo hen?*	oh woe hane?	Where is?

\*The place or item you are looking for usually comes first. For example, "Where is the toilet?" would be "Toilet owo hen?"

## DAY NAMES

Ghanaians typically have two names, their given name and their day name, which is based on the day of the week one was born. Take the time before you depart for Ghana to find out on which day you were born, because Ghanaians love it when foreigners introduce themselves using their day name. Each tribe has its own day names and there are many variations even within tribal groups. Those listed below are mainly Fante and Krobo.

Day You Were Born	Male Name	Female Name
Sunday: Kwesida	Kwesi / Akwasi	Esi / Awisi
Monday: Adwoda	Kojo / Kwadjo	Adwowa / Ejo
Tuesday: Benada	Kobena / Kwabala	Araba / Abla
Wednesday: Wukuda	Kweku / Kwaku	Ekua / Aku
Thursday: Yawda	Yaw / Kwao	Aba / Awo
Friday: Fida	Kofi / Fifi	Efua / Afi
Saturday: Mememda	Kwame / Kwamena	Ama / Ama

## YOUR VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENT

Prior to your departure, you will receive more information on your specific assignment and your role in the project. In most cases, you will be working in a team on your assigned project(s). The team will consist of Global Mamas staff and possibly other volunteers having expertise complementary to yours. If you need to bounce ideas off staff or need information on local resources, we will be there to help.

Remember that everything is flexible! You will be able to set your own working hours based on the needs of your assigned project(s). You may find that you switch your time between working at the office and the volunteer house. You are also welcome to travel between the various locations of Global Mamas.

**Don't feel as if you aren't adding enough value if things are moving at a slower pace than that which you are accustomed.** Life proceeds slowly in Ghana. Don't underestimate the value of establishing friendships within the business and building trust. You may find you spend as much time "getting to know each other" as you do on the actual assignment. That's okay! A major goal of the volunteer program is for you to learn more about the Ghanaian culture and for Ghanaians to gain a better understanding of your culture.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Before you leave, we recommend that you provide our U.S. and Ghana contact information to a relative / close friend (the person who will be most worried about you and serve as your point of contact). That way, if there are any flight delays, scheduling snafus or family emergencies, we can all be in communication. Be sure to bring these numbers for yourself so that you have them if needed!

<b>GHANA</b> (calling from outside Ghana)	<b>GHANA</b> (calling within Ghana)	<b>U.S.</b> (Minneapolis)
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+233-244-530-467 (Renaë's mobile) +233-540-120-568 (Claire's mobile) +233-544-323-833 (Anna Rose's mobile) <a href="mailto:renae@globalmamas.org">renae@globalmamas.org</a>	0244-530-467 0540-120-568 0544-323-833	800-338-3032 (Global Mamas Office) 612-781-0455 (Global Mamas Office) 612-385-2165 (Global Mamas Emergency) <a href="mailto:kristin@globalmamas.org">kristin@globalmamas.org</a>
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If you are staying for a month or longer, you may also receive letters and packages. Letters normally take up to two weeks to arrive and, worst case scenario, packages have taken more than three months to arrive. If someone loves you enough to send you a package while you're in Ghana, please tell them to put an extremely low value on the package's customs form, as you will be paying a 40% duty based on this value when you pick up your package. Another trick is to have them send you items in a larger padded envelope. Customs may not charge you a duty on a padded envelope. You can use either of these mailing addresses:

**CAPE COAST**

Renaë Adam & **YOUR NAME**  
Global Mamas  
Box CC890  
Cape Coast  
Ghana

**ACCRA**

Renaë Adam & **YOUR NAME**  
Global Mamas  
PMB194CT Cantonments  
Accra  
Ghana

**EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED AND HAVE A GOOD SENSE OF HUMOR**

That about sums it up! If you can expect the unexpected AND simultaneous keep a good sense of humor, you are sure to have a great time in Ghana!



# Global Mamas

**TO:** Ghanaian Embassy  
**FROM:** Global Mamas  
**RE:** Letter of Invitation

Dear Consular Officer,

I am writing to confirm that Global Mamas, an NGO in both Ghana and the USA, will be hosting this applicant as a volunteer in Ghana. We will be responsible for this volunteer while in Ghana, including providing housing and anything else needed to make the visit successful. Should you have any questions regarding the visit, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Renae Adam  
Founder & Executive Director  
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+233(0)244-530-467 Ghana  
[www.GlobalMamas.org](http://www.GlobalMamas.org)

