



COUNTRY OVERVIEW

& PACKING GUIDELINES

SIT Study Abroad Ghana: Globalization, Cultural
Legacies & the Afro-chic

Fall 2021



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COUNTRY OVERVIEW

GENERAL INFORMATION

Ghana, about the size of Great Britain and twice the size of New York state, is located on the western coast of Africa. The country is bordered by Cote D'Ivoire in the east, Togo in the west, Burkina Faso in the north and the Gulf of Guinea in the south. It is known for the friendliness of its 27 million people, vibrant culture, delicious food, and unique fusion of the modern and the traditional. The first African country south of the Sahara to gain independence from European colonialism, Ghana recently celebrated its 60th independence anniversary and practices a democratic political system that is a combination of the British parliamentary and American presidential systems. There are 60-80



languages spoken in Ghana, which include Twi, Hausa, Dagbanli, Ewe, Nzema, and Ga. Although English is the official language, Asante Twi, which you will be learning, is widely spoken by most Ghanaians.

Having had a vibrant multiparty democracy since 1992, Ghana is known for its political and economic stability. The economy is largely agricultural and its exports include cocoa, timber, palm oil, and non-traditional exports such as pineapples and cashews. A country formerly known as the Gold Coast, another of Ghana's major exports is gold.

Ghanaians are a very religious people and signs of their adherence to various faiths are seen on buildings and on vehicles in cities and villages. Churches and mosques are found on most street corners and the signs on shops and public transportation are often a testament to the owner's faith. This may be surprising to non-religious visitors but they generally come to quickly understand that

religion is an integral part of the Ghanaian's daily life. Although sometimes more complex than it suggests, official figures indicate that 69% of Ghanaians are Christian and 15% Muslim, with followers of African traditional and other religions making up the rest. Ghanaians are respectful of other religions and a person without any religious beliefs is more likely to raise eyebrows than one who is of a less mainstream faith.

CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY

Ghana has three main climatic regions: a humid coastal region due to the cooler offshore waters and the west-southwest to east-northeast prevailing winds; the inland hill plateau country where the rainfall increases; and the drier harmattan of the north. Accra and Cape Coast are representative of the drier coastal strip and are quite sunny. Kumasi and Sunyani, further inland, have greater amounts of rainfall, while Tamale, Wa, and Bolgatanga experience harmattan weather.

ACCRA, GHANA AVERAGE HIGH/LOW TEMPERATURES (°F)

FEB	MAR	APR	MAY
88/75	88/76	88/76	87/75
SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
81/73	85/74	87/75	88/75

LOCAL CUSTOMS

Greetings are important and expressions such as "I am sorry" (i.e. American "excuse me") and the use of honorifics and appropriate salutations— especially with older persons—are a normal part of everyday protocol and etiquette. You will usually not call your elders by the first names but will typically use titles (Mr., Mrs., Dr., Prof.) or "Auntie", "Sister", "Brother", or "Uncle" even if they are no relation to you.

The use of the left hand is strongly discouraged and highly undesirable in most contexts, especially in interpersonal transactions such as greetings, giving and receiving, and even raising up hands in a

classroom. Young people often preface their statements and responses to older persons with the word) “Please” (mepa wo kyɛw), a sign of respect.

DIET

SIT Study Abroad provides experiential learning opportunities where students become embedded in their host community. As such, we strive to accommodate serious food allergies where possible but simply cannot ensure that all dietary restrictions or non-medically mandated diets can be accommodated.

Students are encouraged to participate in the local food culture as a central aspect of daily life. By trying to replicate your diet at home you may miss out on an important part of your host culture. Due to the unique living and learning community central to all SIT programs, we cannot separate food and eating communally from the program experience. Your admissions counselor is a great resource in better understanding the local diet.

Most Ghanaians begin and end the day early and so you will have to make some adjustments when it comes to mealtimes. You should expect to eat breakfast around 7am, lunch at 12pm, and dinner around 6:30pm with a little variation as may be needed during excursions. Rice, beans, spinach, plantain, yam, and fufu are the staple foods of Ghana. These are usually served with a spicy peanut soup or tomato-based sauce that often includes fish, meat, or eggs.

Vegetarian meals are not as common as in the United States. Nevertheless, even though it will be difficult to remain strictly vegetarian, there are places that satisfy vegetarian concerns, especially in urban centers such as Accra.

SAFETY, SECURITY, AND HEALTH

Maintaining good health is critical to having a successful semester. To help you do that, we have provided [Health Guidelines and Requirements](#) for your program.

It is very important that you read the Health Guidelines and Requirements document as early as possible and examine it with your medical provider. The guidelines include recommended immunizations; a suggested calendar for

immunizations and other prophylaxes; and valuable information on how to avoid exposure to common carriers of disease.

The Health Guidelines and Requirements will also provide recommendations related to preventing the contraction and spread of COVID-19. Students will be provided with COVID-19 related information and requirements prior to your travel to provide you with the most up-to-date information. General information about SIT’s response to COVID-19 can be found on our webpage here:

<https://studyabroad.sit.edu/health-safety-and-well-being/risk-management/sit-health-and-safety-update-in-response-to-covid-19/>

SIT will require COVID-19 vaccination for all U.S. students. Recognizing that not all international students will have access to vaccines by Fall 2021, SIT asks that international students who wish to travel in and who do not have access to a vaccine apply for an accommodation by emailing your admissions counselor.

The Health Guidelines and Requirements will also provide recommendations related to preventing the contraction and spread of COVID-19. Students will be provided with COVID-19 related information and requirements prior to your travel in order to provide you with the most up-to-date information. General information about SIT’s response to COVID-19 can be found on our webpage here: <https://studyabroad.sit.edu/health-safety-and-well-being/risk-management/sit-health-and-safety-update-in-response-to-covid-19/>

Students are thoroughly briefed on safety considerations during in-country orientation and are updated throughout the semester if and when circumstances change. For information regarding safety and security, emergency communications, SIT policies, accident and illness insurance, and general program tips, please read the [Safety, Security, and Health](#) document and [Student Handbook](#).

ACCOMMODATIONS

Due to COVID-19, we have cancelled homestays on all but a few SIT programs. Therefore you will be housed at the Great Ebenezer, which is a small hotel located near the program center. You will each have your own bedroom and bathroom, while your

meals will be catered at either the hotel or at the program center.

TRANSPORTATION

Most people use local taxis, ubers and mini-buses called Tro-tros for daily transportation in Accra, Kumasi and most towns. During excursions and long trips, we will use tour buses.

COMMUNICATION

While you may want to be in regular communication with friends and family from home during the term abroad, please bear in mind that different time zones, unreliable phone lines and intermittent internet connect (especially during rural stay and long trips), and changing program activities can complicate communication.

It's important to be clear with family and friends about your availability during the term. Many former students recommend making fixed appointments to call home or to receive a call. You should also consider the potentially negative impact of constant communication with friends and family in the United States on your cultural immersion.

PHONES AND E-MAIL

As part of SIT's commitment to student safety and security, all students are required to have a working smart phone capable of making and receiving both local and international calls throughout the duration of the program. For that purpose students are required to either (a) bring an open, unlocked smart phone from the U.S. to the program that is able to accept a local SIM card, and is compatible with and usable at the program location, (b) work with the academic director within the first week upon arrival in country to purchase a smart phone locally, (c) bring a dual SIM smart phone, or (d) bring a smart phone with an international plan. During orientation, with assistance from SIT Study Abroad staff, students will learn how to use their cellphone, how to purchase and use an appropriate local SIM card, and how to acquire minutes for calls and texting. SIT Study Abroad requires that each student have a local number for communication with the program staff. Communication apps such as WhatsApp, Viber, and Telegram are convenient and cheap



ways of staying in touch with family and friends abroad.

Such alternative communication methods however do not always satisfy our need for regular communication with the local program staff and partners, nor do they always meet our emergency communication needs. Therefore, local cellular capacity on each student's phone is required for the duration of the program. Students are required to maintain a minimum amount of phone credits at all times for emergency calls. Full compliance with this policy is expected.

MAILINGS

Unlike receiving a package here in the US, receiving a package at your program site is usually **expensive and problematic**. Customs agents must inspect all packages and you, as the recipient, are responsible for duty and storage fees. In addition, there are cases of items being lost in the mail or taking so long to reach the recipient that the recipient is nearly back in the US by the time the items are received. For these reasons, sending packages should be done only for emergency situations. Additionally, mailing valuables is highly discouraged.

For this program, **DHL, FedEx, UPS services are available in country**. Despite cheaper prices, reliance on the US Postal Service is not advised due to delays and unreliability. When given the option, it's always a good idea to send packages certified and with a tracking number that allows the sender to track the package.

If it is necessary for someone to send you mail, they may reach you at the following address:

c/o Dr Kwabena Opoku-Agyemang,

Department of English,
University of Ghana, Legon
Accra
Ghana

MONEY

In addition to tuition, SIT Study Abroad program fees cover room and board throughout the program. When room and/or board are not taken with the group, students will be given a stipend to cover related expenses. SIT will cover daily commuting costs, if any, and excursions that are part of the normal program itinerary. During the ISP/internship period, students will receive a stipend for basic room and board only, based on the cost of living at the program base. **Any domestic travel, interpretation services, or supplies necessary for the ISP/internship are the students' responsibility.** Please plan accordingly.

Everyone will have the chance to change dollars into the local currency during orientation. Ghana's currency is known as the Ghana Cedi (GH¢). Cash is used for most daily transactions and the use of checks and traveler's checks for *direct purchases* is rare. Credit and debit cards on the other hand are mainly restricted to restaurants, bars, clubs, and hotels.

Cash can be exchanged at the bank or Foreign Exchange Bureaus (Forex Bureaus). Larger denominations such as US\$50 or US\$100 bills attract a higher exchange rate than US\$20, US\$10, US\$5, or US\$1 bills.

Although debit and credit cards (VISA preferred) are not in common use as direct forms of payment, they can be used to withdraw cash at ATMs depending on the issuing bank. It may also be possible to get a cash advance on your VISA or MasterCard credit card by going into a bank such as Barclays in Accra (again, VISA preferred). You will need to take your passport with you for this kind of transaction. For security reasons, using credit cards to make direct payments is not recommended. ATMs are mostly available in major cities and are harder to find in the smaller towns.

Check current exchange rates:
<http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>

If using a debit and/or credit card, you should contact your bank and/or credit card companies

regarding your travel plans. If you don't inform these companies that you will be away, they will often assume the card has been lost or stolen and will put an immediate hold on the card. You should also check on costs of withdrawal, as these costs vary and can sometimes be very expensive. Renewing and receiving reissued credit and debit cards while on the program will be an expensive and highly inconvenient process. Before you leave for your program, please check the expiration dates on your cards to ensure that they will not expire while you are abroad. It is also very important that you make photocopies of all your debit/credit card information and leave them with someone you trust in case your card(s) is/are lost or stolen.

Following are suggestions for spending money during the program, including estimates for textbooks, ISP-related expenses, medical expenses, personal spending, and gifts. Figures are based on recent student evaluations, though individual spending habits vary widely and **these costs are averages.**

To determine where you might fall in this range, please examine your spending habits during a typical semester at your home school and consider any exceptional expenditures you may have on the program, including travel costs for your planned ISP or a specific personal expense.

Please budget approximately:

Personal spending (from past student suggestions):	\$500- \$1000
Books, printing, supplies:	\$100- \$200
COVID-19 Tests (pre-arrival and arrival)	\$150- 200
Up-front medical costs:	\$200
Potential ISP/internship travel expenses:	\$100- \$300
Bottled Water	\$50- \$100
Typical Internet/Phone usage:	\$100- \$200
Estimated total:	\$1300- \$2200

VISITORS AND FREE TIME

SIT strongly discourages and will not provide support for any visitors to students during the term, due to the rigorous nature of the program and the disruption that such visits cause in program flow and group dynamics. Students should be sure that relatives and friends are aware of this policy and that visits are scheduled for dates after the formal conclusion of the program. Students will not be excused from program components to attend to visitors. See the Attendance and Participation section of the [Student Handbook](#).

Please note that any visitors during the course of the program must plan their own independent accommodations.

During the program, students follow an intense schedule of classes and field-based learning assignments, even during the ISP/internship period. Free time for pursuing an independent interest or hobby during the program will be limited. Your admissions counselor can advise you about particular interests you may have. For example, if you must keep in shape for your next athletic season, or if you play a musical instrument and want



to know whether to bring it, we can help you to understand your schedule and any concerns or limitations that may exist. Please note that you will not have a long break during the program, such as Thanksgiving or Spring Break, both of which we do not observe in Ghana.

Due to COVID-19 all independent travel is prohibited this semester. Requests to travel independently for academic purposes will be considered on a case by case basis by the academic director. Further details regarding the independent travel policy can be found in the [Student Handbook](#).

PACKING GUIDELINES

LUGGAGE

Please pack lightly and include only necessary items. You should be able to carry all your luggage significant distances on your own. Try to minimize both the number of bags and weight of your bag(s) since you will likely be acquiring more belongings while abroad.

If carrying prescription medications, you should carry a letter from your doctor to prevent any concerns at customs or in transit. (Please see the “General Health Tips” section in the [Safety, Security, and Health](#) pre-departure document.)

Please check the current requirements of the Transportation Security Administration (<http://www.tsa.gov>) as well as those of the airline on which you are flying for domestic and international baggage restrictions.

CLOTHING GUIDELINES

Ghanaians tend to dress both more modestly and more formally than Americans. Plan on a combination of casual and somewhat dressy (one or two items). Ghanaians are also very fastidious in personal hygiene; you will offend people by wearing dirty clothes and by not taking regular showers. The clothes that you bring should all be washable and breathable, preferably drip-dry cotton and cotton-blends. Do not bring sloppy clothes or clothes with immodest pictures or writing on them. Revealing clothing or very informal clothing, are frowned upon in formal contexts. All clothing should be modest: tops should cover shoulders and waists (no bikinis), skirts should not be too short, clothing should not be see-through, and plunging necklines are socially unapproved.

Key words to keep in mind when selecting clothing are: clean, neat, in good condition, presentable, comfortable and largely conservative.

Urban Ghanaians are very fashionable, and cotton materials, particularly wax cotton prints, are plentiful. You can have one of the many tailors, seamstresses, and fashion designers create something for you. Plan to buy new clothes once you arrive and settle in Ghana.

EQUIPMENT

You will have a mosquito net provided for you at the various accommodation locations where necessary. Please see the detailed packing list below for more information.

COMPUTERS AND OTHER ELECTRONICS

It is recommended, though not required, that you bring a laptop computer. If you bring a laptop, the computer will be your personal property and responsibility. It is recommended that you insure your computer or other valuables for full coverage in the event of loss or theft. SIT is not responsible for any duty tax you may have to pay when you enter the country, theft, or loss.



Computers are available for use in most Internet cafes for a small fee and may be used for assignments. Many students find access to computers during their Independent Study Projects through their advisors, local universities, or Internet cafes.

SIT is not responsible for duty tax when you enter the country, theft, or loss. Before you leave, it is up to you to research the necessary adaptors, plugs, and wattage variations. You will be responsible for making arrangements to store your laptop in a secure place while on excursion.

Electric power supply can be a major problem. It is most unlikely that there will be power at all times while on the program. Usually, the interruptions are planned, so residents know when to expect blackouts. Students are advised to have a flashlight handy at all times.

Please see the following website for information about electricity, voltage and electrical adapters. <https://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/> . The standard voltage in Ghana is 220-240 volts AC.

WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT OBTAIN IN COUNTRY

One can generally obtain most toiletries, school supplies, and personal items in the larger cities, though usually at a higher price due to import duties. Additionally, you will not always be in the places where you can get these items, and specific brands may not be available. Please bring hand-washable clothes. Clothes can be easily made in country at affordable prices.

ALUMNI CONTACTS

If you have further questions, please contact your admissions counselor and/or ask an alumni contact: <http://studyabroad.sit.edu/admitted-students/contact-a-former-student/>.

Don't miss the Packing List on the next page!

These packing guidelines are based on suggestions from past students and your academic director.

PACKING LIST

GENERAL

- 1 sweater, sweatshirt, or windbreaker for cool nights
- 1 'workout' outfit (could include T-shirt/CONSERVATIVE shorts for jogging/sports/dance class)
- Underwear (1 - 2 weeks' supply)
- Lightweight hiking boots or sneakers for hiking (if they're new, break them in before you leave)
- Supportive tennis shoes or comfortable walking sandals (not flip-flops)
- 1 pair nice shoes
- Flip-flops or other casual indoor shoes
- Light rain coat (one that folds up small but covers as much as possible)
- 3 - 5 pants, skirts (preferably mid-calf length) and/or dresses
- 1 pair of lightweight pants
- 3 - 5 light shirts/blouses/short-sleeved shirts
- Bathing suit (one piece)
- 1-2 shorts
- 1 nice outfit

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

- Passport
- Yellow WHO Card (see the [Safety, Security, and Health](#) document for more information)
- 2 photocopies of your passport stored separately from your actual passport
- Photocopy of visa (*if applicable*)

HEALTH/TOILETRIES

- Hypoallergenic items if you are sensitive, such as sensitive skin soap, deodorant
- Prescription medications used regularly
- Over the counter medications as approved by your doctor:
 - Pain reliever/fever reducer
 - Cold medication/decongestant
 - Laxative
 - Anti-diarrhea medication such as Imodium
 - Travel sickness medication
- Good quality thermometer (for taking your temperature)
- Sunscreen/Solarcaine spray



- Band-Aids/antiseptic/antibacterial cream
- Mosquito repellent with 20-30% DEET for use on skin and up to 100% DEET (permethrin) for use on clothing
- Water disinfectant tablets, iodine, or SteriPEN
- Vitamin supplements (if you take them)
- Malaria Prophylaxis - Bring enough for the entire semester. Please consult your physician for the number of pills needed and the type of malaria prophylaxis that is best for you.
- Towel
- Handi-wipes and/or antibacterial hand wash
- Tampons or sanitary napkins (consider enough for 3 1/2 months, they are available, but not in all sizes/types)
- Shampoo and conditioner
- Hair ties
- Cliff bars or other small snacks

OTHER IMPORTANT ITEMS

- Good quality, small locks (for luggage)
- Daypack or book/shoulder bag
- Sleep sheet in place of sleeping bag
- Canteen or water bottle
- Handkerchief
- Notebooks/writing material (can be purchased locally)
- Pocket sewing kit
- Extra pair of glasses/contacts if you wear them
- Pocket mirror
- Sunglasses if you use them
- Ziploc bags (a few)
- Army knife with bottle opener
- Camera
- Flashlight (small with extra bulb)
- Extra batteries for all electronic items
- USB flash drive

To prevent the contraction and spread of COVID-19 students should come prepared with:

- At least 3 reusable masks and gloves for personal protection (disposable masks will also be available)
- Hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol for use when soap and water is not readily available
- Anti-bacterial wipes or solution to wipe down high-touch surfaces, especially while traveling from the US