THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA

COUNTRY OVERVIEW
GHANA FACTS

CAPITAL: Accra
CURRENCY: Ghana Cedi
PRESIDENT: John Dramani Mahama
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE: English
GOVERNMENT: Presidential System, Unitary State
POPULATION: 24.2 million (2012)

Ghana is a representative democratic republic in western Africa, bordered by Burkina Faso on the north, Togo on the east, Ivory Coast on the west, and the Atlantic Ocean to the south.

LAND AND CLIMATE

SIZE: 92,098 square miles, roughly the size of Wyoming.

GEOGRAPHY: Ghana’s geography changes from coastal lands to low hills and plains with large forests extending to the north. In the coastal region, shrub lands and forests are dominate with tropical plants and trees. The inland area has a tropical rainforest belt that is broken up by heavily forested hills. Rivers and streams run throughout the countryside with several large waterfalls in the hilly regions. Lake Volta, one of the world’s largest man-made lakes, lies in the eastern part of the country. It provides electricity from Akosombo Dam in the southeastern part of Ghana.

CLIMATE: Ghana is only a few degrees north of the equator, which provides for a tropical climate year round. Most of the country experiences two rainy seasons with the peak months being June and October. The average annual rainfall is 33 inches annually with the coastal areas experiencing more precipitation. In the northern regions of Ghana, hot, dry, winds known as harmattan, blow in sands from the Sahara Desert between November and March.
HISTORY

Ghana, officially known as the Republic of Ghana, is a country in West Africa on the Gulf of Guinea. It is divided into 10 administrative regions, with Brong-Ahafo in the central part of the country. Prior to the onset of colonialism, the region of Ghana, then known as the Kingdom of Ashanti, was one of the most influential states in sub-Saharan Africa. The Kingdom of Ashanti held a military influence over the neighboring regions.

European merchants from Germany, Sweden, Portugal, England and Denmark exported gold, which lead to Ghana becoming known as “The Gold Coast.” These countries built castles and forts that can still be seen along the coastal region. Britain later established the region as a colony, leading to a century long war.

In 1957, Ghana became the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to gain its independence. Throughout the next four decades, a series of military depots were intermittent with experiments of democratic rule. In 1993, the Fourth Republic of Ghana began with the inauguration of a democratically elected president. Since then, there has been a somewhat stable state of democracy within the country.

GOVERNMENT

The government of Ghana is a unitary republic divided three branches: legislative, judicial and executive. In 1992, a constitution was developed which divided power among the president, cabinet, council of state, and an independent judicial system. All people 18 years and older have the right to vote. Ghana is an active member of the United Nations and African Nation.

The President, who is head of state, is elected every four years. In 2012, John Dramani Mahama was elected president of Ghana. His term as president expires in January, 2017. The Parliament of Ghana has 275 members, elected for a four-year term as well. Parliamentary elections are won by a simple majority. The elections are generally held around December 7th, with officials taking their positions in January of the following year.
**ECONOMY**

Ghana has a fast growing economy due to the relative political stability of the country. It has an economic plan known as “Ghana 2020” that hopes to see Ghana a developed nation by the year 2020. Ghana is a nation with valuable natural resources, including vast reserves of petroleum, natural gas, diamonds and gold. This has lead to significant investment from developed nations including China and the US.

Over 40% of the population is employed in agriculture. The warm, wet climate creates fertile agricultural land for cocoa production and lumber. Ghana is the second largest producer of both diamonds and cocoa. The economic outlook for Ghana is positive.

**CURRENCY**

The official currency of Ghana is the Cedi (GHC), which is divided into 100 pesewas. Foreign currency can be exchanged at banks and foreign exchange facilities. There are ATMs outside of most banks, although only limited amounts of cash can be withdrawn at a time. The best currencies to bring for exchange are US dollars, British Pounds and Euros; other currencies will have a less favorable rate. Cedi notes come in denominations of 50, 20, 10, 5 and 1. Coins are in denominations of 1 cedi, 50 pesewas, 20 pesewas, 10 pesewas, 5 pesewas and 1 peseswa.

**CULTURE**

There are over 100 different ethnic groups living in Ghana. The largest are the Akan, Moshi-Dagbani, Ewe and Ga. The Ashanti tribe of the Akan is the largest tribe and is well known for their craftwork in furniture and cloth.
The family is the primary source of identity, responsibility and loyalty in Ghana. Social standing and recognition is achieved through the extended family. It is important for people to maintain dignity, honor and a good reputation. The entire family shares in any loss of honor or embarrassment. Obligation to family takes precedence over everything else in this culture, including business and jobs.

People in Ghana are respected because of their age, experience and wealth. Older people are granted respect within a group and are given preferential treatment. Often the responsibility of making decisions is given to the eldest person in a group.

**Cuisine:** Food is central to life in Ghana. Staple foods consumed in Ghana include sweet potatoes, beans, rice, corn and plantain. Near the coast, fish (in particular tilapia) is eaten as the primary source of protein. Bread is an essential part of almost every meal. Most dishes are prepared with liberal amounts of spices and peppers.

**Religion:** Ghana is a largely Christian nation, with 70% of the population describing themselves as such. About 16% of the population are Muslim, while 9% practice traditional indigenous religions.

**Etiquette:** When meeting foreigners, most Ghanaians will use a traditional handshake and smile. Maintain eye contact during the greeting and wait until a woman extends her hand before shaking it. Among the various ethnic groups, traditional or native greetings may be used by most. **It is important to take the time to enquire about the family, health and jobs of the people you are meeting. It is considered extremely rude and disrespectful to rush into business before making these inquiries.** Always use the right hand when receiving or presenting gifts, business cards and other items. Never use the left hand by itself, it is considered extremely rude. Titles are very important and should be used at all times until you are invited to use first names.

As a sign of respect, males over the age of 30 may be addressed as “pah-pah” while women of the same age are addressed as “mah-mah”. People over the age of 50 may be addressed as “nah-nah”.

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COMMON WORDS AND PHRASES

Although the official language of Ghana is English, there are 11 government sponsored languages and over 70 different tribal groups, each with its own distinct language. Often, languages within the same ethnic group are mutually intelligible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENGLISH PHRASE</th>
<th>NATIVE LANGUAGE TRANSLATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hello</td>
<td>Ete sen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are you?</td>
<td>Eti sen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m fine</td>
<td>Eh ya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your name?</td>
<td>Ye fro wo sen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good morning</td>
<td>Maa chi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good afternoon</td>
<td>Maa ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good evening</td>
<td>Maa jo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorry</td>
<td>Koo se</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank you</td>
<td>Me daa si</td>
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You will hear the expression for foreigner “Oburoni” frequently. In Ghana it is used in a friendly manner as a way to say hello and to get to know you better. Don’t take the use of it offensively.

PRINCIPAL CITIES

ACCRA

Accra is the capital city of Ghana, and houses the government’s administrative, legislative and judicial functions, as well as serves as the main economic hub for the country. It was originally built around a port during British rule.

AREA: 67 sq miles (173 km²)

WEATHER: Annual average temperature: 79 °F

POINTS OF INTEREST: Du Bois Center, Ussher Fort, Osu Castle, Black Star Square, Labadi Beach
HEALTH STATISTICS

In Ghana, 51% of the population is female and 49% is male. The growth rate of the population is 1.25%, with 31.7 births/1000 and 7.53 deaths/1000. The largest segment of the population is under 25 years. Life expectancy is 65 for females and 62 for males.

Common diseases include malaria, cholera, tetanus, pulmonary tuberculosis, measles, chicken pox, yellow fever, infectious hepatitis, pneumonia. Diseases related to malnutrition and infections are also common to the people of Ghana. HIV/AIDS is present in Ghana, with an estimated 230,000 infected with the virus. In 2012, the prevalence was 1.3%. In response to the epidemic, the government established the Ghana AIDS Commission, which coordinates efforts for treatment and education.

Healthcare in Ghana is provided by the government and administered by the Ministry of Health and Ghana Health Services. The government spent 6.2% of its GDP on healthcare for the entire country in 2012. This is equivalent to about $30 US dollars per person. The level of care is dependent on location. Urban areas are well served and have most of the country’s 200 hospitals, clinics and pharmacies. The rural areas, however, have almost no modern healthcare facilities, doctors, nurses or medicine. Patients in these remote areas either rely on traditional African medicine or travel great distances for their care.