



**Volunteer Handbook Supplement
for
Kpando, Ghana**

Kpando (the "K" is silent) is a small town in eastern Ghana, about three hours from Accra. It is rarely visited by tourists, and is home to rolling hills and lush farmlands. The town is part of the Volta Region which is bordered to the west by Lake Volta and by neighboring country Togo in the east.

Kpando is a welcome change from the bustle and traffic of large urban centers like Accra and Kumasi. The pace of life is slow, the locals are extremely friendly, and you'll have the opportunity to truly become part of the local community.

If you are like most of my volunteers, you'll be making plans to return to Ghana even before you return home!

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott D. Burke".

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Culture Shock

The first 24-48 hours in Kpando (and Ghana overall) are critical in your cultural adjustment, so please try not to make any negative judgments about the place during this period. You are likely to feel tired, hot and sweaty, and perhaps overwhelmed by the new sights, sounds and etiquette.

*** Expect the unexpected at all times ***

The best way to handle any culture shock is to have an open mind and relaxed attitude.

A common pattern for volunteers is as follows:

- First couple of days: They do not like Ghana at all and cannot wait to go home.
- By end of first week: They find the country tolerable, maybe even pleasant.
- Rest of stay: They fall in love with the country's culture and people.
- End of stay: They wish they could stay longer and often shed tears upon leaving.

All of this can drive foreigners crazy, especially when they first arrive. Hopefully, you will eventually find, as myself and hundreds of other volunteers have, that Kpando (and Ghana overall) is one of the friendliest, safest places to travel anywhere in the world, where you can make some lifelong friendships while helping out Ghanaians through your volunteer work.

Major things to keep in mind

- Always carry your passport on your person during air travel (not your bags)
- Never drink tap water (at airports and of course while in Kpando)
- PREPARE TO BE UNPREPARED!

The last phrase was told to me in Delhi by a 19 yr old volunteer in April 2011. Before she left her parents' home in the UK a month ago for India, she felt she had consumed as much info as possible in preparation for her trip abroad. Then she arrived in India – and it was like she hadn't prepared at all! But after a week or so in Delhi, she truly started to feel like an insider who could actually give tours of the place -- and she was right. So please try not to be too concerned about perhaps not knowing enough about Ghana. That's why you're going there, to volunteer or work in Ghana and learn about the country – as a volunteer and an insider!

Packing List

In terms of what to bring from home, there are three things that I would highly recommend:

- A laptop (to backup photos, keep a journal, sometimes get WIFI)
- Bug spray with DEET
- Small lock(s) - so you can lock valuable in your suitcase during the day

Suggested packing list:

Carry-On Bag

- Passport
- Ghana Visa
- Plane Ticket
- Contact information of Ghana Coordinator, Scott Burke, Family/friends
- Travel Insurance Policy
- Credit card(s)
- Travelers Checks (if you have them)
- Copies of all of the above (as a backup – either hard copy or in your email)
- Cash (at least \$100 USD or equivalent)
- Any prescription medicine
- Any electronic equipment (laptops, mobile phone, camera, mp3 player)
- Toiletries (Toothbrush/paste, contact lens solution/case)
- Reading materials
- Paper journal / pens

Checked Baggage

- 4-6 pair of long pants (a pair of jeans is OK but can be hot)
- 1-2 pairs shorts
- 7-10 short-sleeved tops/t-shirts
- 1-2 long-sleeve shirts
- 4-6 pair of socks
- Closed-toe sneakers / shoes
- Sandals / flip-flops
- Sleepwear: long-sleeved shirt(s) and long bottoms (avoid mosquitoes)
- Sun screen
- Bug spray with DEET (I use Jungle Juice)
- Hat (for sun)
- Eye re-wetting drops (whether you wear contacts or not) because Ghana is very dusty.
- Hand sanitizer
- Over-the-counter medications for pain relief, fever, diarrhea
- Toiletries (soap, shampoo etc)
- Lightweight, quick-dry towel for bathing

Other Packing Tips

- > There is no need to bring bedding, pillows etc.
- > Theft can be a problem on flights to destinations like Ghana, so do not pack anything valuable in your checked luggage. Pack valuables in a carry-on bag such as a laptop, camera, cash, jewelry, gifts etc.
- > Do not over-pack. Except for some prescription medicine, you can buy anything in Ghana that you forget or leave home on purpose, including toiletries, clothes, electronics, etc.
- > Luggage seems to get really roughed up on these international trips (ripped, wheels missing etc). Instead of new, nice luggage, I suggest buying a cheap suitcase at a thrift store, especially a hard-shell suitcase that will protect your stuff. Duffel bags are too soft and things tend to get broken inside. I am not a fan of huge backpacks in lieu of a larger suitcase, as they seem very hard on one's back. For a carry-on, a small backpack is a good idea (for laptop, any electronics, a few toiletries).
- > What NOT to bring:
 - 1) Plug adapter for electrical appliances. But them in Ghana, as they cost only \$1 USD there and will definitely work. Most host families even have extra.
 - 2) Things like items for donation or sports equipment etc: you can buy them cheaply in Kpando

Passport

- When flying, always carry your passport on your person and not your bags. Cargo pants with deep/secure pockets are a good place to hold the passport.
- I also put my own passport in a Ziploc baggie at all times, to protect it from sweat, dirt, humidity, and spilled drinks – both when flying and when in Ghana.
- You do not need to carry your passport to your volunteer job each day.
- If you travel outside Kpando, carry your passport with you (on your person). There sometimes police checkpoints between towns and they might ask you for a passport.
- Almost all hotels in Ghana require you to surrender your passport to them at check-in; you get it back when you check-out.
- Lock your passport, cash, camera and other valuables inside your luggage when you are out during the day from your host family or hotel. It is usually best to bring small locks from home.

Traveling to Ghana

Getaway Day

- **Before you leave home, make sure you have your passport!**
- Make sure to bring any prescription medicines.
- Everything else can be replaced easily: clothes, toiletries, etc.

Check-in at airport

- Arrive at the airport at least 3 hours before your flight.
- Assume the airline will be strict with luggage weight rules.

Keep Away Germs on the Flight(s)

The air circulating on airplanes is actually very clean and sanitary (despite public perception). But you still must take steps to avoid germs that might lead to cold or flu. The reasons? The dry air plus the germs from fellow passengers. This is what I do on all of my flights:

- Drink lots of water (nasal membranes need to be moist to work well)
- Use saline nasal spray (ditto)
- Use hand sanitizer
- Wipe down trays and seat handles (with hand sanitizer or anti-bacterial wipe)
- Increase the ventilation at your seat (to avoid saliva droplets from sneezing, coughing and conversation from passengers).

Passing Time on the Flight

- The obvious: sleeping, reading, movies, music, writing, drawing.
- Stay awake and sleep according to the time zone in your destination, in order to adjust more quickly to the time zone there.
- Walk around and exercise your calf muscles every hour in order to prevent [Deep Vein Thrombosis](#).
- Talk to fellow passengers. Perhaps you'll make a new friend, and maybe learn about your destination – especially if they are a local returning home.
- Look out the window! You are 30,000 feet above the earth! Isn't it amazing to see the clouds, stars, the moon, even other planes from this perspective? You're traveling perhaps half-way around the world in less than 24 hours. These things were unfathomable to humans not even a century ago. Consider yourself very fortunate.
- Take photos – some of you, some out the window, maybe even a new friend. You might not realize it now, but in 5, 10, 20+ years these photos will become part of your memories of this special trip.

Afraid of Flying?

I was deathly afraid of flying until 2005. My two fears? I thought turbulence would cause a crash AND I thought the wings flexing meant they might crack from stress. I got “cured” when I educated myself. I read [articles about turbulence](#) – it (almost) never causes jetliners to crash. I also found videos of wing stress tests ([like this one](#)) that show just how strong they are. My favorite author on air-travel is Patrick Smith, who writes a popular [blog on Salon.com](#), published a book, and has his own [website](#).

Flight Arrival Process in Accra

- > The planes in Ghana let passengers onto the tarmac, so you'll leave the plane by walking down a set of stairs then onto a shuttle bus that takes passengers to the terminal.
- > From the tarmac, you will walk inside the terminal right to the immigration counters, where you will get your passport stamped by Immigration (have your Yellow Fever card available). If there are any issues with Immigration, please call our Coordinator right away, as we personally know several of Ghana's Immigration officers/staff at the airport.
- > After passing through Immigration, you will then go to baggage claim. While waiting for you bags to arrive on the carousel, I recommend that you exchange at least \$100 USD (or equivalent) for Ghana Cedis at the currency exchange counter (located in the same room as baggage claim). Ask the clerk for small denominations of bills. The exchange rate is approximately 1 USD = 1.5 Ghana Cedis.
- > After you collect your bags and walk through Customs (go through the "green" line), you will walk toward the airport's exit doors on your way to the arrivals hall. There is only one exit door at the airport and the airport itself is very small, so it will be very easy to find your way.
- > Our Coordinator will be waiting for you either in the arrivals hall itself or right outside the exit doors. She will be holding a sign with "Cosmic Volunteers" and our logo.
- > The scene outside the airport's exit doors can look like absolute mayhem, with 100's of people waiting for passengers. Even before you reach our Coordinator, you will likely be approached by airport staff asking if you need a taxi or hotel. Simply smile and tell them a friend is already meeting you at the airport, and they won't bother you further.
- > Our Coordinator should remind you at the airport that we want you to call back home to let a family member/friend know you arrived safely and met up with our Coordinator. She will gladly let you use her cell phone for the call.
- > If your flight arrives before noon, our Coordinator will travel with you right away to Kpando. If your flight arrives after noon, our Coordinator will book a hotel room for you in Accra for the night (at our expense), then travel with you to Kpando the next day.
- > I strongly prefer daytime ground travel in Ghana. Driving at night in Ghana is dangerous – due to bad roads, lack of lighting and sleepy bus drivers. As a bonus, the daytime travel will give you the chance to see more of Ghana's countryside along the way to Kpando. Also, by staying in Accra the first night, you may be able to see some sights in Accra with our Coordinator.
- > Emergency Plan: If you do not meet our Coordinator at the airport (for whatever reason), please call her mobile number 24 hours. If you cannot reach her, call my mobile 24 hours. I will call either one of my assistant coordinators to come immediately to the airport to pick you up. (Note: this has never happened, but we need to have a backup plan anyway.)

Jet Lag

Flying across multiple time zones disrupts your body's circadian rhythm, leading to sleep problems and other symptoms which fall under the condition known as "jet lag."

Symptoms often include insomnia, waking early, excessive sleepiness, headaches, irritability, digestive problems like constipation or diarrhea, muscle aches, and difficulty concentrating. Younger travelers and female travelers are more susceptible to jet lag, while some travelers are not affected much.

As a general guideline, the recovery rate from jet lag is one day per time zone traveled. So if you live in New York (approx 4 hours behind Ghana), it will take you about four days to recover from the jet lag.

To recover from jet lag:

- Drink plenty of water before, during and after your flight
- Try to sleep on the plane if it's nighttime in Ghana
- Adjust to the local day/night schedule immediately
- Try not to sleep until nighttime in Ghana, no matter how tired you are
- Exercise daily (during daylight hours, especially early morning)
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol

Big Things to Keep in Mind now that You Are in Ghana

- Only drink water that is bottled or boiled
- Do not go swimming under any circumstances
- Wash your hands frequently (bring hand sanitizer)
- Don't be flashy with cash, cameras, jewelry etc.

Travel from Accra to Kpando

Our Coordinator will accompany you from Accra to Kpando. You will travel in a small public 12-seat mini-van called a "tro-tro."

The buses never leave until they have a full house, so you might sit there 1-3 hours waiting. **As with everything in Ghana, forget about time and schedules and just go with the flow. The bus leaves when it leaves – and arrives when it arrives. Grin and bear it!**

- The ride takes 2-4 hours, depending on traffic.
- There are usually no seat-belts on any vehicles in Ghana (taxis too).
- I strongly advise against sitting in the front seat or last row – in case of a collision.
- The rides are very bumpy, hot, and cramped.
- Have small change handy to buy snacks – through the window from vendors
- The drivers usually blast music the entire trip.

You will drive through rural farmlands, see forested hills, and cross a large river at Akosombo. It is a beautiful ride, so try not to sleep, keep your camera handy, ask our Coordinator questions, and be fortunate that you are experiencing something that most people never will – **riding through rural Africa!**

Keep in mind that the ride can be tough on those prone to motion sickness. You might want to consider taking Dramamine or ginger extract pills. Looking out the window and getting fresh air seems to help too.

The bus usually (but not always) stops for a bathroom break – but sometimes just on the side of the road in the weeds. Bring a small roll of toilet paper from home just in case. Some drivers like to drive with no stops – but if you need to go to the bathroom, tell the Coordinator who will tell the driver to pull over.

There are regular police checkpoints throughout Ghana, including from Accra to Kpando. **Make sure you have your passport handy**, in case the police ask to see it. These checkpoints are ostensibly just a way for police to collect bribes from drivers and passengers (especially foreigners) in the name of “public safety.” If the police decide to talk to you, make sure our Coordinator is with you the entire time, so they can negotiate a lower bribe.

Upon arrival in Kpando, our Coordinator will take you to your host family then take you around Kpando to see the town. If time permits the same day, our Coordinator will take you to your volunteer placement for introductions.

Money Matters

I recommend bringing at least \$100 USD (or equivalent) in cash in your pocket onto the plane, then exchanging all of it at the airport in Accra for Ghana Cedis. Ghana is a cash-based society, so expect to pay cash for everything. Credit cards are seldom accepted, except at higher-end hotels and travel companies. Even where credit / debit cards are accepted, I still recommend cash because of the security risk. There are ATM's available in Kpando at local Ghanaian banks, although not all of them work with foreign cards. If your cards do not work at the ATM's in Kpando, you can take a 15 minute taxi to the nearby town of Hohoe where they have foreign banks Standard Chartered Bank and Barclay's Bank. I've never heard of any foreigner having a problem using these two banks' ATM's.

Health

The biggest health tips I can give you:

- Do not drink tap water (only bottled water and other bottles drinks)
- Avoid mosquito bites (due to malaria)
- Wash your hands as much as possible (soap/water and/or sanitizer)

If you feel ill during your trip, please seek immediate treatment at the nearest medical clinic. When you are able, please immediately inform your coordinator, who will in turn call me. Symptoms which you should NOT ignore include fever, stuffy nose, cough, chills, persistent headache, muscle aches, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea (especially if symptoms last more than two days).

If you visit a hospital or clinic: **Insist on having blood tests done** to determine what illness(es) you might have. It is fairly common medical practice in Ghana for doctors to simply give medicines(s) to outpatients without doing any blood work or any other tests. You will probably meet resistance from staff, because doctors in Ghana are often placed on a pedestal and rarely questioned by patients. **Patients in Ghana are required to pay for their treatment up-front AND in cash**, then you would collect the paperwork and get reimbursed by your insurance company back home.

The most common illness reported by travelers to Ghana is travelers diarrhea, caused by bacteria-laden fecal matter that makes its way into food and water (Typhoid and cholera are also dangers).

Do Not Swim in Ghana

Drowning and road accidents are the leading causes of injury and death for travelers abroad, although the western media tends to focus on terrorism, political strife, and infectious diseases as the most likely dangers for travelers abroad. As tempting as it might be, the ocean currents in Ghana are too strong, unpredictable and dangerous. In addition, the lakes (like Volta Lake) are filled with bacteria, snakes as well as garbage. (In 2010 we had a medical volunteer almost lose her left eye due to a bacterial infection acquired from swimming in a lagoon in Ghana.)

Malaria / Mosquitoes

Malaria is a common and very serious illness in Ghana. Malaria is transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected female Anopheles mosquito. The first symptoms of malaria are normally fever, chills, sweats, headaches, muscle pains, nausea and vomiting.

The peak biting period for malaria is dusk and dawn.

- Mosquitoes bite mostly from sunset until dawn.
- Protect yourself when the sun is down by:
 - 1) covering up with long sleeves and pants/pajamas.
 - 2) using bug spray with DEET.
 - 3) sleeping inside a mosquito net (\$5-\$10 in Ghana)
 - 4) spray Listerine in the air and furniture around you
 - 5) burn local charcoal coils whose smoke repels bugs
 - 6) buy "Medisoft" body lotion in Ghana (smells nice, repels mosquitoes)
- Consider malaria pills such as Malarone (malaria pills do NOT prevent malaria 100%)
- DEET has been a controversial chemical over the years, however I feel that it is better to have DEET on your skin during your short trip to Ghana than to get malaria.
- For a less messy experience, try first spraying bug spray and lotions onto your hands, then applying it manually to the rest of your body.
- Itchy bite tips: apply these directly onto the bites: clear fingernail polish, Vicks Vaporub, Bengay, toothpaste, banana peel, oatmeal...etc

Cell phones

I strongly encourage you to have a mobile phone in Ghana. Either bring a phone from home or buy one in Ghana (I recommend the latter).

Phone from home

If your phone from home is "locked," you can take the phone to shops in Ghana who will "unlock" the phone for a small fee. With an unlocked phone, you just need to buy a SIM card in Ghana (approx \$5 USD). The SIM card will have a local Ghana telephone number.

Phone bought in Ghana

New phones in Ghana start at \$25 USD. Mobile phone usage in Ghana is mostly pay-as-you-go. You buy "talk time" credits from phone shops or street vendors. Incoming calls and texts are free – including international ones. The phone infrastructure in Ghana is spotty and unreliable, with regular dropped calls or no connectivity. **Do not rely on text messages as a means of communicating, whether local or international, because they often do not go through.** Voice calls are the most reliable way to communicate by phone both in Ghana and back home.

The best ways for people back home to call your cell phone are 1) calling from their phone using a phone card like at www.nobelcom.com, or 2) calling from Skype to your phone (they need to buy credit on Skype).

Internet & Laptops

- Most volunteers give up on Internet access early during their trip, because the Internet connections in the country are **very** slow (often dial-up speed-level).
- There are Internet cafes all around Kpando. The cost is about \$.50/hour.
- If you bring your laptop, you can buy a USB modem in Ghana to connect to the Internet. The prices varies considerably (as high as \$100), so ask our coordinator where to buy. After you have the modem, you would buy pay-as-you-go minutes (“scratch cards”) from shops to get online.
- Even if you don't use the laptop for Internet, it's a great idea to bring one so you can backup your photos and videos as well as keep a journal of your trip.

Adapters

For plug adapters for your cell phones / laptops / cameras etc: We strongly recommend that you wait until you get to Ghana to buy them. They cost around \$1 USD and you're assured that it will work with US / European / Australian plugs.

Dress Code for Non-Medical Volunteers

- At Orphanages: shorts, t-shirts / tanks, and flip flops are fine.
- At Schools: long skirts or khaki pants (men), nice top, closed-toe shoes.
- At Companies: long skirts or khaki pants (men/women), nice top, closed-toe shoes.
- Women: no cleavage, short-shorts, or form-fitting clothes (disrespectful to locals).
- You will see tourists, locals and perhaps even fellow volunteers breaking these rules, but you are a volunteer / ”insider” so the rules are different for you (if you want to be respectful, which of course you!).
- It's highly unlikely anyone would say something to you about inappropriate dress.
- Note that in some communities, especially in the north of the country, there are Muslim populations so you will see some females covered up considerably.

Dress Code for Medical Volunteers

- Long pants (scrubs/khakis), scrub tops, and closed-toes shoes (sneakers, Danskos)
- Bring your own scrubs, stethoscope, and mask(s)
- We buy gloves and other items regularly for the medical facilities, but feel free to bring such items if you wish.

Photos, Video, and Electronics

- Always ask before taking a photo or video of someone.
- Be very careful when wielding your cameras in public because of theft. The worst place for a camera abroad is usually around your neck, as it's visible and easy to snatch from you.

- When flying or on a bus: always pack electronic equipment in your carry-on bag (laptop, cameras, mp3 player etc) so they are always in-sight. A volunteer in March 2010 had her camera was stolen from her checked luggage on the flight home.
- Always-Always back-up your photos and videos regularly – even on a daily basis if possible! Transfer them to a laptop, smart phone, pen drive – anything so that you have backups in case your camera is lost/stolen/damaged.
- A volunteer in April 2011 let a kid at the orphanage play with her camera, only to have the kid accidentally delete hundreds of photos. So please be careful with with your camera – and backup the photos regularly.

Toilets at Host Families

- Toilets are western design
- The flush handle does not work usually.
- To flush, fill a bucket from the bathroom and dump it into the toilet.
- Use toilet tissue sparingly, as it clogs the pipes.
- When you travel around Ghana, carry a small roll of toilet tissue with you, as many places don't have it.

Personal Bathing

(At most host families and orphanage accommodations):

- There is usually no hot water
- There are usually no shower heads
- Water comes into the bathroom either:
 - 1) from pipes then out of spigots near the floor, or
 - 2) manually carried from outside water tanks
- In either case above, the water is stored in large trashcans in the bathroom.
- You wash/rinse by scooping water from the trashcan with a small bowl
- If you truly cannot do without hot water, ask to heat water on the stove.
- Bring a compact mirror from home, as many bathrooms have no mirrors.

Getting Around Kpando

Walking is the most common form of transport around Kpando. However after sunset please take a taxi (usually about \$1 per ride). Consider borrowing/buying a bicycle to use.

Life at the Host Family

- Your family provides breakfast and dinner.
- Most volunteers don't eat lunch with host family; they go to local shops.
- Most families eat meat, but they accommodate vegetarians (rice, beans etc)
- Most food is spicy - although they will tone it down for you upon request.
- They will have clean, filtered water for you.
- Beds are usually hard as a rock.
- There is rarely air-conditioning.
- When not in your room, lock valuables in closet or suitcase (passport, cash, laptop).
- Mosquitoes are a problem! They start biting at sundown, so use bug spray.
- Wash your own laundry (it's usually done by hand).
- Absolutely no overnight guests without approval by host family.
- Most families get all of their non-drinking water from pipes then store it in huge tanks.
- The host family will show you how to get water to bathe.

You will never be anonymous in Ghana

There is very little sense of privacy or solitude in Ghana. Most places you go, especially in non-tourist places like Kpando, people will notice you and often stare at you, even call out to you – especially if you are female. Please keep in mind that most people are merely being curious about you; they are not sizing you up for a scam or anything bad. The attention can get tiresome after a while, as many volunteers report. However, try to have some fun with it – this might be your only chance in life to feel what it's like to be Brad and Angelina and have your every move in public watched!

Safety

Kpando, like other cities in Ghana (Accra, Cape Coast, Kumasi, Cape Coast etc) are like most others around the world, in that they are safe if you follow normal safety precautions:

- Do not walk alone at night.
- Watch for pickpockets and camera- and bag-snatchers on crowded streets, markets, bus stations, and tourist venues.
- **Never admit to strangers to being alone; tell them your friend / significant other / parents will join you in a few minutes.**

Greetings

Greetings in Ghana are **formal and extremely important**. The most common greeting is “You're Welcome” and handshake. Usually a “thank you” and handshake is the best reply. There is a special way to **shake hands** in Ghana, involving snapping fingers together (ask your coordinator).

"Abroni" and "Yevu"

- Many kids will call out to you with either of these words which both mean "white man". (Yevu is the Ewe tribe's word)
- They are simply being friendly and curious about you -- these are not derogatory terms
- It doesn't matter what your ethnicity is, they'll use these words because you are a "foreigner."
- It's best to smile and wave and say hello.
- This "Abroni" interaction is pretty amusing at first but can get very tiresome.

Day trips near Kpando

- Lake Volta (10 min by taxi): No swimming! Just for viewing. (Must See!)
- Pottery workshop / retail in town of Fesi (10 min by taxi)
- Outdoor Catholic Grotto (15 min by taxi)
- Wii Waterfalls (1 hr by mini-bus) (Must See!)
- Tafi Monkey Sanctuary (90 min by mini-bus)
- Kente cloth weaving workshop / retail (in Kpando and nearby towns)

Sightseeing Overnight trips from Kpando

- Cape Coast (Slave Castle, Canopy walk)
- Kumasi (Outdoor market, Ashanti museum, overall Ashanti culture)
- Volta Region (Lake Volta, Pottery in Fesi, Outdoor Catholic Grotto, Wii Waterfalls, Tafi Monkey Sanctuary, Kente cloth weaving workshop / retail)

Sports

- Soccer/Football: Local clubs train/play daily, feel to watch or even play (but only if you're a very good player; soccer's very serious here).
- Jogging: it's safe; best to follow the main road in Kpando out of town. Also try to go before 7am – to avoid heat and curious locals staring at you!
- Biking: think about buying a cheap bike (\$30+) to get around, and even ride into Kpando proper.
- Basketball: Not much going on in Kpando, but in Accra we work with a local org that holds camps/tourneys, if you want to visit them on a weekend.
- Golf: The closest is a Pebble-Beach like course in Takoradi (1 hour away)

Miscellaneous

- Most volunteers take lunch at their work place or at a shop near the workplace, rather than returning to their host family. However if you will be coming home for lunch, please let your family know so they can prepare it.
- You should do your own laundry. It's usually done by hand in Ghana. The family will show you how to do it.
- Kpando does not have things like night-clubs, shopping malls or other thing to do in your free time.
- After sundown (about 6pm), most volunteers go to their host families for the night. They read books, watch movies, and spend quality time with the family.
- Some Ghanaians socialize in the evenings at sweltering road-side “chop bars” on plastic chairs, sipping coke or beer (it's great for people watching!).
- The weather is typically 80-90+ F and humid/cloudy in daytime; 65-70 F and breezy at night.
- On Friday nights / Sat mornings, you will usually hear the music and singing of funerals throughout the streets.
- Ghana is a very dusty environment with a lot of vehicle exhaust pollution. Especially for contact lens wearers, it is a very good idea to bring re-wetting drops from home to use here.
- Buy a small flashlight (aka “torch” locally) when you arrive in Ghana, for walking at night. It should cost no more than \$1-2 USD.
- There are post offices in Kpando where you can buy/send postcards home.
- Do not smell your food -- it's considered impolite here, as they will think you are checking to see if the food is spoiled.
- Even in a big city like Kpando, there are goats, sheep, chickens, cattle roaming throughout many neighborhoods.
- The sheep often make loud screeching noises which sound disturbingly like a child's screams. Roosters will likely wake you up, very early each morning.
- If alone after dark, please take taxis back to your host family for safety reasons.
- If you want to change your accommodations after arriving in Ghana AND you're under 18, we will not move you until we get your parents' approval (phone/email).
- Drinking age is 18 in Ghana.
- Lock your passport, cash, camera and other valuables inside your luggage when you are not in your room. It is usually best to bring small locks from home.
- Beggars and touts are only a problem at tourist monuments and backpacker areas.
- Be careful about street dogs at night! They are territorial and might follow you - don't run though, just stop.
- Do not walk alone at night - say after 9pm (hire a vehicle).
- Watch for pickpockets on crowded streets, markets, bus stations, and tourist venues.
- Never admit to strangers to being alone; tell them your friend / parents will join you in a few minutes.

Overall Impression of Ghana

I encourage you to read the history sections about Ghana, in whatever guide book you have (like Lonely Planet, Moon Handbook etc).

Knowing some of the major events, themes and personalities in any country's history will help you begin to gain an understanding about their culture, people and worldview.

For example, for a foreigner coming to America, I would tell them to have some familiarity with the following: America began as a colony of England, Puritanism, Transatlantic slave trade, Abraham Lincoln, the Civil War, the Depression, both World Wars, the Civil Rights movement, technological advancements, “American Optimism” etc.

For Ghana, some of the major things to become familiar with before arriving:

- Ghana was a British colony until 1957.
- Most Ghanaians still make their living from agriculture in some way.
- **Ghana is slow-moving! Time means nothing here.**
- Ghana is considered one of Africa's true success stories.
- The politics are stable and street crime is virtually non-existent.
- Religion (Christianity) dominates most peoples' lives.
- Ancestors are revered and play a huge role in all peoples' lives.
- Ghana is the second largest producer of cocoa in the world.
- Lake Volta is the largest artificial lake in the world (by surface area).
- Ghana has one of the fastest growing economies in the world.
- Soccer (football) is easily the most popular sport.
- English is the country's official language and widely spoken.
- Child labor is prevalent, especially kids selling things on the street.
- Homosexuality is illegal in Ghana.
- Many locals consider HIV/AIDS it a curse from the Devil (infection rates are low)