

# Ghana



## Where is Ghana?

Ghana is a country in West Africa, located on the Gulf of Guinea, just a few degrees north of the Equator. The country borders Ivory Coast to the west, Burkina Faso to the north, Togo to the east, and the Gulf of Guinea to the south.



## What is the climate like?

There are two main seasons in Ghana, the wet and the dry. Northern Ghana has the rainy season from March to November while in the south, including the capital Accra, it is from April to November.



## Quick Facts

- Population: 23.9 million (UK 2009: 61.8 million)
- Area: 238,500 square km (UK: 242,900 square km)
- Life expectancy (years): 60 (men), 60 (women)
- Major languages: English, African languages including Akan and Ewe.
- Major religions: Local beliefs, Islam, and Christianity.
- In March 1957, Ghana was the first sub-Saharan African country in colonial Africa to become independent of the United Kingdom.
- Lake Volta, the world's largest artificial lake, extends through large portions of eastern Ghana and is the main source of many tributary rivers such as the Oti and Afram rivers.

## Education

With 83 percent of its children in school, Ghana currently has one of the highest school enrolment rates in West Africa. In the UK 98% of children are in schools. However in Ghana, some 500,000 children still remain out of school because there isn't enough money to build schools, provide adequate textbooks and train new teachers.

## People and Culture

Ghana is an ethnically diverse country, thus, Ghanaian culture is a mixture of all its ethnic groups including the Ashanti, Fante, Akyem, Kwahu, Ga, Ewe, Mamprusi and Dagomba. Ethnically, Ghana is divided into small groups, speaking around 75 languages. It is most evident in Ghanaian cuisine, the arts and clothing. The celebration of festivals in Ghana is an essential part of Ghanaian culture and there are many of them. Ghanaian music incorporates several distinct types of musical instruments such as the talking drum ensembles, goje fiddle, koloko lute and court music.



## Poverty

Although things are steadily improving much of Ghana's population is still living in poverty. The international \$1 per day guideline for extreme poverty (2007) is 44.8%, effectively unchanged from the 45.5% (1990). The proportion of underweight children has reduced only to 22% from 27.4%. Poverty drives migration to the south which, together with Ghana's high population growth, creates enormous pressures. Only about one third of the population is covered by the 2004 National Health Insurance Scheme and there is an exodus of health staff leaving for better economic prospects overseas.

## Economy

Gold and cocoa production and individual remittances are major sources of foreign exchange. The domestic economy continues to revolve around agriculture, which accounts for about 35% of GDP and employs about 55% of the work force, mainly small landholders. Currency in Ghana: Cedi, \$1 US = 1.46 Ghanaian Cedi.

## Did you know?

- The national men's football team is known as the Black Stars, with the under-20 team known as the Black Satellites.
- *Kente* is a ceremonial cloth hand-woven on a horizontal treadle loom. Strips measuring about 4 inches wide are sewn together into larger pieces of cloths. Cloths come in various colors, sizes and designs and are worn during very important social and religious occasions.
- Presently, Ghana has 21,530 primary schools, 8,850 junior secondary schools and 900 senior secondary schools



## Self Help Africa in Ghana

Self Help Africa has been working in Ghana since early 2005, when it took over responsibility for a number of established projects in Northern Ghana.

These had been run by the UK charity TRAX, which closed. The current projects aim to help men and women grow enough food and earn an income. Focus is also placed on supporting the development of local groups and improving their ability to work together. Support is provided for group development, provision of community training, and other resources.