



Ghana Guidebook





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Welcome to Mercy Ships! We are grateful you will be serving alongside us, joining our mission to bring hope and healing to those who need it most. We are thrilled to return to Ghana for the 5th time!

This guidebook is your addendum to the primary [Volunteer Guidebook](#), with Ghana specific details. Within this guidebook, you will find all the details you need to prepare for your time with us in Ghana. We are so excited for you to join us in this transformational work.

Meet Matthew, our
Managing Director

Ghana Country Information

Ghana, officially known as the Republic of Ghana, is a West African country situated on the Gulf of Guinea. Ghana shares borders with Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, and Togo. Ghana's history is rich and complex, spanning ancient empires, colonial rule, and a significant role in modern African politics, making it a key player in West Africa's development.

Ghana covers 239,567 km² with diverse ecologies, from coastal savannas to tropical rainforests. Ghana is the 13th most populous country in West Africa.

Key Details

Capital City:	Accra
Currency:	Ghanaian cedi
Population:	over 35 million
Population under age 25:	42.4%
Primary religions:	71.3% Christian 1/5 Muslim 1/10 practice traditional faiths or no religion
Primary languages:	English (official)
Physicians per 1,000 people:	0.27



Field Service Plans

Mercy Ships plans to be in Ghana until June 2027.

Planned Programmatic Specialties:

- Maxillofacial & Ear Nose and Throat
- Pediatrics
- Pediatric Orthopedics
- Reconstructive Plastics
- Women's Health
- Ophthalmology
- Selected General Surgery
- Dental

What to Expect in Ghana

Cultural Awareness

- Ghanaians like to talk about their first president building Tema.
- Strong Christian culture: it isn't uncommon to have a prayer at a government meeting and have Christian music playing in the hotel lobby, supermarket, or restaurant.
- Melcom Supermarket stores have most necessities with pricing vs. informal markets, where any sign of wealth may increase the price.

Security

The port is guarded by security, and we have our security team on board. When ashore, it is important to practice safe habits – travel in groups of two or more, obey the curfew, and utilize common sense in terms of where and with whom you go.

Shore Leave

Our crew are welcomed (and encouraged!) to explore our host country. Shore leave may be restricted at times during the field service, depending on local epidemiology or safety concerns. This is always a dynamic situation, so any restrictions or changes will be communicated to the crew by the Captain.

Crew Clinic

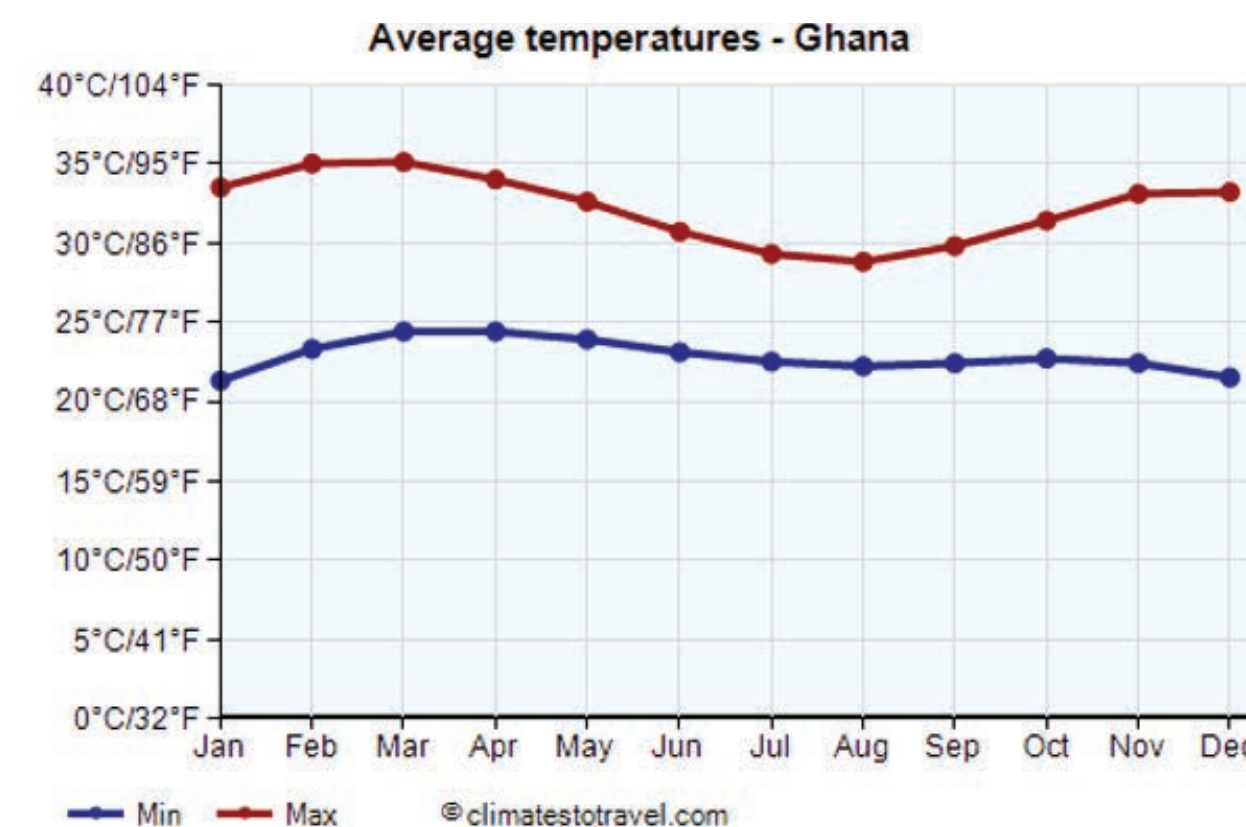
The Crew Clinic provides primary healthcare and urgent healthcare for all Crew on board. The Crew Clinic is staffed by a doctor and nurse that are available to support crew who are feeling poorly. The Crew Clinic functions similarly to a general practitioner or family practice.

Weather

Despite regional variations, Ghana experiences high temperatures and significant rainfall throughout the year, with an average annual temperature of 26.6°C (79.9°F). The country is characterized by two main seasons: the wet and the dry season.

However, rainfall patterns vary considerably from the coast to the north. The south typically has two rainy seasons, from April to June and from September to November, while the north has one, usually from April to October.

Weather in Ghana is fairly warm year-round, however, we advise you to bring a sweater or light jacket to wear on board as the air conditioning can get chilly.



Personal Goods

There will be no shipment of personal goods to Ghana. A personal good is any item intended primarily for an individual's personal use. Examples include:

- Electronics and accessories
- Toiletries and hygiene products, including diapers, etc.
- Clothing and personal supplies
- Gifts
- Food, snacks, and supplements
- Household or recreational items

According to Ghana's import requirements and regulations, taxes on personal goods can be significant and can increase the chance of additional delays or be denied clearance. As guests in Ghana, Mercy Ships is committed to respecting and complying with all local laws, customs requirements, and government regulations.

Shipment of personal goods included in containers could delay or prevent the clearance of essential supplies needed to support our surgical programs, hospital operations and ship services. Because of this, no personal goods can be shipped in containers or crew mail (letters, paper and documents can be mailed).

Please plan to bring your personal goods with you in checked luggage or hand carried (abiding by airline regulations). You will be able to purchase most essentials in the markets in Ghana and the Ship Shop will be carrying additional toiletries that may be needed. **Please tell family and friends NOT to send any personal packages to you.*

On the next page you will find a comprehensive list of all the shopping options in Ghana to find items you may need.

Grocery Shopping in Ghana

Here you'll find some of the most popular and useful grocery shops and supermarkets for expats and international residents in Accra and Tema, with a wide range of local and imported products, depending on the shop. Looking for international or imported products? Fairway, Palace, Koala, Marina and Sneda are good places to start in Accra. Everyday essentials such as toiletries and personal care products are also easy to find in Accra, with many well-known international brands available at reasonable prices. In Tema, MaxMart and Sneda are particularly practical options, while Rabboni Oriental Store is worth checking for Korean and Japanese products.

Accra

Grocery / supermarket	Why it may be useful	Website / link
Fairway Supermarket	Very broad range of imported products, including products from Europe, the UK, the Middle East and Asia. Also offers fresh meat, seafood, imported cheese, pastries and yoghurt.	Visit website
Palace Hypermarket	Large hypermarket with a broad grocery, fresh food, household and international product selection.	Visit website
Koala Supermarket	Long-established supermarket with a broad international range and a strong focus on Ghanaian and international customers.	No clear official website found
MaxMart 37	Popular option for groceries, fresh products, bakery and household essentials.	Shop online
Marina Supermarket	Useful for imported and international brands, as well as groceries, deli, dairy, frozen food, butchery and bakery products.	Visit website
Melcom – Spintex Branch	Large Ghanaian retail chain offering groceries and household products.	Visit website
Sneda Shopping Center	Particularly interesting for Indian and Asian products, with a broad range of international flavours and products.	Visit website
American Groceries Ghana	Worth checking for American products and imported groceries.	No clear official website found
MIG Mart	Smaller, more curated supermarket often mentioned by expats and international residents.	No clear official website found
Shoprite	General supermarket offering a wide range of groceries, food, beverages, personal care and toiletries, cleaning and laundry products, and everyday household essentials.	
Saagar Supermarket & Impex	A specialised grocery option in Accra that is particularly useful for Indian and South Asian products.	
Great Wall Supermarket	Another specialised grocery option, this one provides Asian and East Asian products.	

Grocery Shopping in Ghana

For most everyday items, shopping in Accra is straightforward. Well-known international brands of toiletries and personal care products - such as Dove, sanitary pads, shampoo, toothpaste, deodorant, and other household essentials - are widely available at many of the larger supermarkets and shopping centers, often at reasonable prices. If you are looking for clothing, sportswear or outdoor equipment, Decathlon is located at Accra Mall, offering a broad range of affordable sporting goods, clothing and accessories. Accra Mall also has several other retail stores.

Tema

Grocery / supermarket	Why it may be useful	Website / link
MaxMart Shopping Centre	One of the best-known supermarket options in Tema for international residents, with a broad grocery range.	Shop online
Snedo Shopping Center	Strong option for Indian and Asian groceries and a broad international product range.	Visit website
Rabboni Oriental Store	Particularly interesting for Korean and Japanese groceries.	No clear official website found
A&E Supermarket	Local supermarket option in Community 25.	No clear official website found
Melcom Plus	Broad one-stop shopping option for groceries and household products.	Visit website
China Mall (at Motorway and Ashaiman Road)	Limited food items, but an abundance of non-food items that you buy at a supermarket.	
Rabboni Oriental Store	A specialised grocery option in Tema that provides Korean and Japanese groceries.	
Asiana	Provides Korean products and is listed as a specialist grocery option in Community 5.	

Enjoy exploring Ghana and happy grocery shopping!

Language Phrases

Ghana is a multilingual nation with about 80 native languages spoken! English is the official language. However, Akan (Twi) is the local language spoken.

Here are some Twi phrases to learn.



Welcome (hello) Akwaaba

Thank you Meda wo ase; medaase

How are you? Ete sen?

I am well Me ho ye

Please Mepa wo kyew; mepaakyew

Sorry Kose;kafra

Farewell Nante yie

Yes Aane

No dabi

Where is the toilet? Agyananbea no wo he?



Dress Code

	Appropriate to Wear	Inappropriate to Wear	More Information
Business/office wear (for non-uniform, internal-facing roles)	- Smart-casual trousers, skirts, and dresses - Smart-casual blouses and shirts, including polo shirts - Suit jackets - Smart-causal shoes. Smart sandals are appropriate for women. Smart trainers/sneakers can be worn during normal office work. - Jeans - Flip-flops	- Shorts - Casual T-shirts	- Knees should be covered when standing and sitting for both men and women. Dresses and skirts should be mid-thigh or longer. Skirts that fall between mid-thigh and knee should be worn with leggings or opaque tights/hose underneath. - Sleeveless tops with wide straps are fine. - Men are not required to wear business suits and/or neckties but they can be worn if preferred.
Official meetings and functions	- Smart trousers, skirts, and dresses - Smart blouses and shirts - Suit jackets - Smart shoes. - Smart sandals are appropriate for women.	- Shorts - Flip-flops - Jeans - Casual T-shirts - Trainers/sneakers	- Men should wear a shirt and necktie if the meeting is formal. - Women should generally wear dresses or skirts, rather than trousers. - If African fabrics/styles are worn, they must be suitable for a business environment. Get advice from a local crew member if unsure.
In the Hospital, in Reception, and during patient interactions	- Smart-casual trousers, skirts, and dresses - Smart-casual blouses and shirts, including polo shirts - T-shirts - Flip-flops	- Shorts (of any length) - Leggings - Sportswear	
Casual wear	- Jeans - T-shirts - Flip-flops and trainers/sneakers - Shorts should be loose-fitting and knee-length or longer - Leggings where worn with a tunic-style top to mid-thigh or lower	- Very tight or high-cut shorts ('running' shorts) - Spaghetti-strap tops	
Exercising in the on board gym and on crew-only decks	- Lycra/Spandex leggings and tops - Exercise shirts - Basketball jersey-style tops - Short 'running' shorts	- Compression wear worn without any covering - Sports bras worn without any covering	Tight-fitting exercise gear should be covered up when walking through the ship.

Travel to Ghana

Arranging your travel

Once your Onboarding Specialist has given you clearance to do so, use the service dates in your offer letter as your date of arrival and departure for your transport. We recommend flights take place on Fridays, Saturdays, or Sundays.

No Monday/Tuesday arrival/departure flights for first time crew.

When booking flights, please note that transportation services provided by the Purser's office are available after 0900.

*Do not book flights arriving between 2130-0800

*Do not book flights departing between 0001-1130

If you book flights within the time frames above, you will have an extended wait time at the airport or will have to fund your own 45-60 minute transport or stay at a local hotel.

Ticket refund policy

Flexibility is key! Please do not book an arrival or departure flight on a date other than what is stated in your offer letter without first receiving approval from your Onboarding Specialist. Because the ships' schedules can change, we strongly recommend that all crew purchase changeable and/or refundable tickets.

Mercy Ships cannot offer refunds or financial assistance with extra costs incurred for changing or cancelling airline tickets when caused by a change in the ships' schedules or from unexpected travel restrictions - unless conditions pre-defined by our funded Crew Travel Policy are met. Contact your Onboarding Specialist for details.



Arrival by Plane

All flights will arrive in and depart from Accra International Airport (ACC). Then you will be driven to the port in Tema.

Questions?

We know arranging travel can be stressful, but it doesn't have to be - our travel team is here to help. Reach out to our team at travel@mercyships.org.

What to Expect Upon Arrival



Arriving at Accra International Airport

Upon arrival at Accra International Airport (ACC), depending on your airline, you will either walk or take a bus to the terminal where you will go through immigration. Be sure to have any immigration documents provided to you by Mercy Ships, along with your passport, ready for presentation to the immigration officer. Your passport will be stamped (check for correct dates!).

The Yellow Fever vaccination is required for entry into Ghana. There will be no exemptions. You must present your Yellow Fever vaccination card at immigration when you arrive in Ghana. You will be denied entry without it.

After Immigration, you'll head to the baggage area. Collect your bags from the belt and proceed to Customs and place your bags through the scanner. Following the scanner, an official may ask you questions they have the right to inspect your luggage if they wish.

- After leaving the aircraft, follow signs for Customs/Immigration
- At the first booth on the lower level, you may be asked for your Yellow Fever immunization booklet (Yellow Fever immunization is required to enter Ghana)
- The next booth is for immigration – look for “Other Nationalities,” “ECOWAS,” and “Ghanaian,” whichever applies to you.
- Then follow signs to baggage claim. *Free luggage carts are available if needed that you can take out to the parking lot

- Once you have your baggage, proceed to Customs
 - RED if you have something to declare
 - GREEN if you have nothing to declare
 - You may be asked questions and the officials have the right to inspect your luggage if they wish. Be polite and answer their inquiries. You will not have to confirm your luggage claim checks with your actual luggage.

Transportation

- Then proceed out the big doors – this outside area is covered from the sun and rain.
- A Mercy Ships representative will be there to meet you in the arrivals area and transport you to the ship. They will be holding a sign with the Mercy Ships logo, so you won't miss them!

Useful tips:

- Free WiFi is available in Terminal 3 “KIA FREE WIFI,” which may require watching a short advertisement. WiFi coverage outside the terminal might not be available.
- Before departing, purchase a SIM or similar communication plan. You can exchange currency in the airport.

Travel Resources

Registering with Foreign Affairs

Many countries allow travelers to register with the foreign affairs office (or national equivalent) and include the following types of benefits: Receive the latest safety and security information for your destination country, helping you make informed decisions regarding your travel plans. Allows your nation's embassy to contact you in an emergency situation - be it a natural disaster, civil unrest, pandemic, or family emergency.

We encourage all volunteers to take this step for additional protection and peace of mind while away.

Tips to Avoid Jet-lag

Here are some tricks to reduce the effect it might have on you:

- Prepare at home before your departure - set your watch to match your new time zone and customize your sleep-wake rhythm. Ghana is on GMT.
- Don't eat a lot of food (overeatsnack).
- Do drink a lot of water and avoid other beverages.
- Go out in the sun or move around if you get sleepy during the day.

- Make your room as dark as possible if you have trouble sleeping at night (and remove other distractions - phones, television, etc.).
- Try taking a melatonin tablet before bed during your first week after travel, as it will help induce natural sleep as you adjust to the new time zone.

Emergency Contacts

Save these phone numbers in case you need to contact the ship while you're traveling:

+1 430 235 4535 - Primary WhatsApp number for Global Mercy. Crew and travelers are encouraged to use this as the go-to number

+1 954 932 9800 - satellite, answered 24/7

Required Documentation for Travel

Crew must travel with the following documentation in order get on most flights to Ghana and to enter the country:

- Individual Invitation Letter* (issued by Mercy Ships)
- WHO Yellow Fever vaccination booklet
- Printed offer letter/acceptance letter from Mercy Ships (recommended)

**Will be sent to you by your Coordinator prior to travel.*





Thank you!

We can't wait to continue Mercy Ships legacy, bringing hope and healing to people just like Houleye! Years of blessing, sacrifice, smiles, hard work, and hope are ahead of us. Thank you for your part!

Looking for more info?

The following information can be found in the General Volunteer Guidebook. To view, click the button below.

- Code of Conduct
- Community Life and Expectations
- Staying in Touch
- Dress Code
- Uniform Guidelines
- Crew Bank
- Packing Lists

[CLICK HERE](#)



meet Houleye