Ghana Guidebook







Meet Matthew, our Managing Director

Contents

3	Country Information
4 - 5	What to Expect in Ghana
6 - 7	Grocery Shopping in Ghana
8	Language Phrases
9 - 10	Dress Code
11	Travel to Ghana
12	What to Expect Upon Arrival
13	Need to Know
14	For Medical Professionals
15	Thank You

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.

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

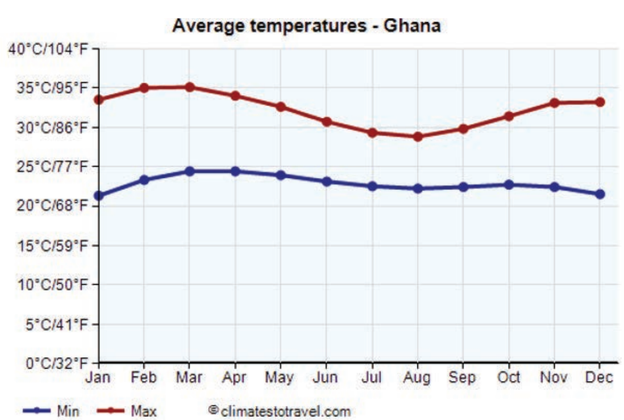
What to Expect in Ghana

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.



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.

Port of Tema Restrictions

The Port of Tema is the main shipping port supporting the economy of Ghana and several nearby countries. Because of the critical nature of this infrastructure, there are strict restrictions all Mercy Ships crew must follow for their safety and the protection of the port.

When traveling through the port, to and from the GLM and the port gate (on foot and in vehicles)
The restrictions are:

- Wear a HI-VIS vest
- Wear closed toe shoes (toes completely covered with a heel strap)
- Mercy Ships ID badge visibly worn
- Stay on the designated pathways
- No bicycles
- No smoking
- No headphones or earbuds
- No running (including for exercise)

Additionally, there is **NO PHOTOGRAPHY or VIDEO of the Port of Tema.** Use of cameras, cell phones and other recording devices by Mercy Ships personnel, patients and guests in the port (including the outside deck areas on the ship) is prohibited.

What to Expect in Ghana

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
Sneda 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 – On Ship

Activity/Type	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-casual 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. 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. • *Flip Flops or sandals without a back strap are not allowed on the gangway or on wet decks. Caution is needed when worn in areas aboard the ship outside of their functional use as shower shoes.
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	*Flip Flops or sandals without a back strap are not allowed on the gangway or on wet decks. Caution is needed when worn in areas aboard the ship outside of their functional use as shower shoes.
Casual wear	• Jeans • T-shirts • Flip-flops* and trainers/sneakers • Shorts should be loose-fitting and knee-length or longer • Leggings when worn with a tunic-style top to mid-thigh or lower	• Very tight or high-cut shorts (‘running’ shorts) • Spaghetti-strap tops	*Flip Flops or sandals without a back strap are not allowed on the gangway or on wet decks. Caution is needed when worn in areas aboard the ship outside of their functional use as shower shoes.
Exercising in the onboard 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.
Swimming in the on-board pool	Women: • One-piece costume • ‘Tankini’-style two-piece costume Men: • Boxer or shorts-style swim trunks	Women: • Costumes with high-cut legs • Two-piece ‘bikini’ costumes Men: • Tight-fitting high-cut trunks (Speedos)	• Swimwear should only be showing at the pool. Please cover up when walking to and from the pool.

Dress Code – Off Ship

Activity/Type	Appropriate to Wear	Inappropriate to Wear	• More Information
Official meetings and functions Church attendance Mercy Ministries	• Smart trousers, skirts, and dresses with sleeves • Smart blouses and shirts with sleeves • Suit jackets • Smart-casual shoes. Smart sandals are appropriate for women.	• Shorts (of any length) • Flip-flops • Jeans • Casual T-shirts • Trainers/sneakers	• Men should wear a shirt and necktie if the meeting is formal. Lean towards smart dressing. • Shoulders should be covered for women–can be a cap sleeve.
Casual wear while ashore	• Loose-fitting trousers or jeans • T-shirts • Flip-flops** and trainers/sneakers • Shorts for men should be knee-length • Capris are ok for women • Leggings when worn with a tunic-style top to mid-thigh or lower	• Clothes that look 'military' • Very tight or high-cut shorts ('running' shorts) • Spaghetti-strap tops • Women should not wear shorts off ship unless they are below the knees	• Trousers for men should be full-length and loose-fitting. Knee-length shorts can be worn in the city but should never be worn up-country. • Military-style clothing can cause problems with the authorities and should be avoided • Tank tops with wide straps are okay for the beach, but not for walking around town. **Flip Flops or sandals without a back strap are not allowed on the gangway. If worn off-ship, they must be replaced with appropriate footwear for climbing up or down the gangway.
Exercising ashore	• Exercise shirts • Basketball jersey-style tops • Loose-fitting shorts worn to just above the knee or longer	• Compression wear worn without any covering • Sports bras worn without any covering • Lycra/Spandex leggings and tops worn without any covering • Short 'running' shorts (except with leggings underneath)	
Swimwear/beachwear while ashore	Women: • One-piece costume • 'Tankini'-style two-piece costume • Shorts Men: • Loose-fitting swim trunks	Women: • Costumes with high-cut legs or plunging necklines • 'Bikini'-style two-piece costume Men: • Tight-fitting high-cut trunks (Speedos)	Swimwear or shorts should only be worn/showing at the pool or beach. Please cover up with attire consistent with the "casual" dress code when walking to and from the pool.

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.



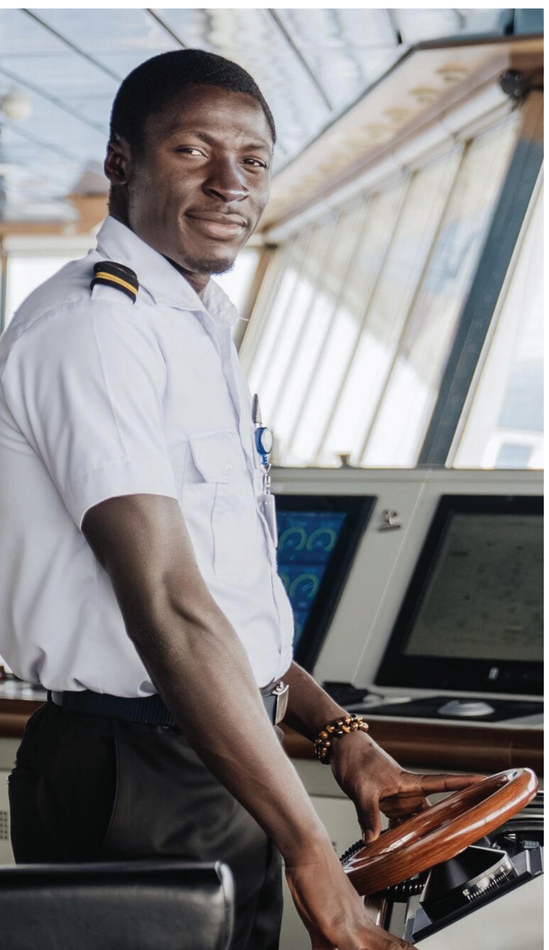
Arrival by Plane

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!).

IMPORTANT The Yellow Fever vaccination is required for entry into Ghana. There will be no exemptions. When you arrive at immigration in Ghana, you will be required to show proof of vaccination.

For inspection purposes, only the following documents will be accepted:

- ✓ The original International Certificate of Vaccination (Yellow Fever booklet); or A **printed hard copy** of an official Yellow Fever Vaccination Record.

YOU WILL BE DENIED ENTRY WITHOUT THIS.

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 lower level booth, 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.

Need to Know

Personal Travel

Mercy Ships is working in Ghana at the invitation of the Ghanaian Government under a special agreement between Mercy Ships and the Republic of Ghana. Crew members traveling for Mercy Ships will be issued a free Visa on Arrival (VOA) document which differs from the standard visa procedures for tourists and other travelers. These visas are permitted for Mercy Ships service only.

For this reason, personal travel within Ghana is not permitted at this time. It is uncertain if switching visa types while in-country will be possible. Until further guidance is issued, please do not plan any personal travel in Ghana.

Thank you for helping us respect, protect, and honor our protocol agreements with our host nations.

Prescription Medication

Crew bringing a personal supply of prescription-controlled medication must apply for an import permit with the Ghana FDA. A maximum of a 90-day supply is permitted. This should be done at least 4 weeks prior to your arrival date. Please contact volunteer.meds@mercyships.org for instructions on this process.

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.

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.*

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

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 (overeat/snack).
- 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.

For Medical Professionals



Every country where we serve has its own requirements and regulations. In some cases, these processes differ from Mercy Ships' internal requirements. We are committed to working closely with our host countries and respecting their regulatory processes.

In Ghana, the government has additional requirements for medical professionals serving in our hospital that are more extensive than Mercy Ships' own credentialing process.

Specifically, every medical professional practicing in Ghana must be credentialed through one of the country's five regulatory bodies.

Agencies:

- Allied Health Professional Council
- Nursing and Midwifery Council
- Medical and Dental Council
- Psychology Council
- Pharmacy Council

Each agency has its own application process, documentation requirements, timelines, and review steps. We understand this will take extra time and effort, but your Onboarding Specialist will work with our in-house Medical Registration Professional to help you with these requirements.

While this may involve more documentation than expected, we are confident that God has called us to serve in Ghana, and we remain focused on the patients who are waiting for their transforming surgery.

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