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# Travel Guide Accra

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## Quick view

### Accra – a brief overview

Ghana's coastal capital is in many ways a microcosm of West Africa, with its pulsating street life, its tropical heat, its fiercely held identity and its swish new developments. The city itself isn't the most beautiful in the world, but when you linger here awhile you're likely to be won over by its various colours and curiosities.

Ghana was the first black African nation to gain independence, and Accra is a great place to learn more about the region's dramatic past. Given the relatively manageable size of the country as a whole, it's also a good setting-off point for visiting heritage-rich towns such as Elmina and Cape Coast.



## Ghana

### General Information

#### Country overview

Studded with sandy palm-shaded beaches and jungle-fringed aquamarine lagoons, Ghana's tropical coastline, is arguably its biggest draw card for independent travellers.

#### Geography

Ghana is situated in West Africa between latitudes of 4°N and 12°N, and longitudes of 4°W and 2°E. It is a rectangular-shaped country bordered to the north by Burkina Faso, the east by Togo, the south by the Atlantic Ocean and the west by Côte d'Ivoire. It is bisected by the Prime Meridian (0° longitude), which runs through the port city of Tema, 25km (16 miles) east of the capital Accra, and Cape Three Points, the most southerly peninsula in Ghana, is also the closest land fall to the oceanic intersection of the Prime Meridian and the Equator.

Ghana's coastline is dotted with sandy palm-fringed beaches and lagoons. A narrow grassy plain stretches inland from this, widening in the east, while the south and west are covered by dense rainforest.

To the north are forested hills, beyond which is dry savannah and open woodland. In the far north is a plateau averaging 500m (1,600ft) in height. In the east, the Akuapim Togo hills run inland from the coast along the Togo border. The country falls almost entirely within the Volta Basin, with the Red, Black and White Volta rivers all flowing into its northern borders from Burkina Faso. Following the 1960s construction of Akosombo Dam, about 60km (37 miles) inland of the Volta Mouth, much of the river is now submerged by Lake Volta, the world's most expansive artificial water body.

#### General knowledge

##### Key facts

Population: 25.199.609

Population Density (per sq km): 106

Capital: Accra.

##### Language

The official language is English. Local Ghanaian languages are widely spoken, including Akan, Moshi-Dagomba, Ewe and Ga.

**Currency**

Ghana Cedi (GHS; symbol ₵) = 100 Ghana pesewas. Notes are in denominations of ₵50, 20, 10, 5 and 1. Coins are in denominations of ₵1 and 50, 20, 10, 5 and 1 pesewas.

**Electricity**

220 volts AC, 50Hz; usually British-style plugs with three square pins.

**General business opening hours**

Mon-Fri 0800-1200 and 1300-1700.

**Public holidays**

Listed below are the public holidays for the period January 2020 to December 2021.

**Note**

Muslim festivals are timed according to local sightings of various phases of the moon and the dates given below are approximations. During the lunar month of Ramadan that precedes Eid al-Fitr, Muslims fast during the day and feast at night and normal business patterns may be interrupted. Some disruption may continue into Eid al-Fitr itself. Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha may last up to several days, depending on the region.

**2020**

New Year's Day: 1 January 2020  
Independence Day: 6 March 2020  
Good Friday: 10 April 2020  
Easter Sunday and Monday: 12 and 13 April 2020  
Labour Day: 1 May 2020  
Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan): 24 May 2020  
Africa Day: 25 May 2020  
Republic Day: 1 July 2020  
Eid al-Adha (Feast of Sacrifice): 31 July 2020  
National Farmers' Day: 4 December 2020  
Christmas: 25 – 28 December 2020

**2021**

New Year's Day: 1 January 2021  
Independence Day: 6 March 2021  
Good Friday: 2 April 2021  
Easter Sunday and Monday: 4 and 5 April 2021  
Labour Day: 1 May 2021  
Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan): 13 May 2021  
Africa Day: 25 May 2021  
Republic Day: 1 July 2021  
Eid al-Adha (Feast of Sacrifice): 20 July 2021  
National Farmers' Day: 4 December 2021  
Christmas: 25 – 27 December 2021

All information subject to change.



## Travel etiquette

### How to fit in

#### Social Conventions

Ghanaians should always be addressed by their formal titles unless they specifically request otherwise. Handshaking is the usual form of greeting. It is customary in much of West Africa not to use the left hand for touching food.

#### Photography

Permission should be sought before photographing military installations, government buildings or airports.

Elsewhere, there are few restrictions on photography, but it is polite to ask before photographing a street or market scene. Many official tourist sites charge additional fees for photography and/or use of a video camera.



## Health

### Health

#### Food & Drink

According to the Ghanaian High Commission in London, tap water in cities is safe to drink. Other water sources should be regarded as being potentially contaminated, and water used for drinking, brushing teeth or making ice should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilised. Inexpensive sachets and bottles of purified water are readily available throughout the country. Milk is unpasteurised and should be boiled. Powdered or tinned milk is available and is advised. Avoid dairy products which are likely to have been made from unboiled milk. Only eat well-cooked meat and fish. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled.

#### Other Risks

The most serious and widespread health risk is malaria, which might be contracted anywhere in the country at any time of year, but is most prevalent in the rainy season, close to the wetlands where the mosquitoes that carry it breed. All visitors should take some sort of malaria prophylactic, which greatly reduces the risk of catching this potentially fatal disease (but doesn't eliminate it entirely), and those spending a long time in the country might also think about carrying a cure. Covering up at dusk and spraying exposed skin with insect repellent also reduces the bite rate.

Other risks include cholera, outbreaks of which occasionally occur both in cities and in rural areas. Diarrhoeal diseases, including giardiasis, are common. Bilharzia (schistosomiasis) is present; avoid swimming and paddling in fresh water. Hepatitis E is widespread. Hepatitis B is endemic. Hepatitis C occurs, as do dengue fever and tuberculosis. Epidemics of meningitis and meningococcal disease may occur throughout tropical Africa, particularly in the savannah areas and during the dry season. Those visiting beaches should be aware that swimming can be dangerous due to riptides.



## Phone calls & Internet

### Phone calls & Internet

#### Telephone/Mobile Telephone

Dialing code: +233

### Telephone

Ghana Telecom was privatised in 2008, and Vodafone Ghana is now the main service provider for land lines. Land lines are reasonably efficient (Ghana is one of the easiest African countries to get through to from overseas), but the ubiquity and relative efficiency and portability of mobile phones has caused many hotels and other organisations to discontinue their landlines.

### Mobile Telephone

Roaming agreements exist with numerous companies, but if you are spending any time in the country, it is usually cheaper and more efficient to buy a local SIM card. The major networks are MTN, Tigo and Vodafone, all of which offer good network coverage in and around main towns and patchier coverage in more out-of-the-way places. Mobile phone numbers, like land lines, are ten digits long but always start with '02' or '05'.

### Internet

Internet popularity is rapidly growing and service is improving to keep up with demand. Internet facilities can be found in most towns. The connection used to be very slow, but it is greatly improved in recent years. Several mobile phone operators offer affordable and efficient data services and modems, allowing you to access the internet and to send emails through your phone, tablet or laptop.



## Top 10 sights Top 10 sights in Accra

### Osu Castle

This was until recently the seat of government, and while the country's politicians have now moved elsewhere, the building remains an imposing reminder of a bygone era. Dating back to the mid-1600s, it can only be viewed from the outside.

Castle Drive  
Osu  
Accra  
Ghana

### Kakum National Park

Located around 170km west of the capital, this is Ghana's most visited national park and has become particularly well known for its treetop walkways. If you're lucky, you might see monkeys or elephants.

Dunkwa Road  
Ghana  
Tel: +233 33 213 0265

Opening times:  
Mon-Sat 0800-sunset

[www.kakumnationalpark.info](http://www.kakumnationalpark.info)

### Accra Arts Centre

Otherwise known as the Centre for National Culture, this is a magnet for visitors in search of handmade artworks and keepsakes. It covers a large area – expect to haggle if something catches your eye.

High Street/28th February Road  
Accra

Opening times:  
Mon-Fri 0830-1700

Ghana Sat-Sun 0900-1500  
Tel: +233 30 266 2581

### Ussher Fort Museum

Originally built by the Dutch in the 1600s, this fort was once used to hold slaves. It was opened in 2007 as a museum highlighting the realities of that dark era, and exhibits include wall paintings, shackles and a model of a slave vessel.

High Street Opening times:  
Accra Mon-Sat 0900-1630  
Ghana  
Tel: +233 30 266 4268 [www.ghanamuseums.org](http://www.ghanamuseums.org)

### WEB Du Bois Memorial Centre

Activist William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was known as the 'Father of Pan-Africanism'. This centre houses his mausoleum, his personal library and a small museum with some interesting related exhibits.

Off Second Circular Road Opening times:  
Cantonments Mon-Fri 0900-1630  
Accra Sat 1000-1600  
Ghana  
Tel: +233 30 277 6502

### National Museum

Slightly dated it might be, but Ghana's National Museum does a solid job of leading visitors through the country's past, with a focus on everything from the slave era to tribal divisions.

2 Barnes Road, Adabraka Opening times:  
Accra Daily 0900-1630  
Ghana  
Tel: +233 30 222 1633 [www.ghanamuseums.org](http://www.ghanamuseums.org)

### Labadi Beach

The city's most popular beach comes alive at weekends, when you can expect to encounter all manner of fish fry-ups, sound systems and spontaneous football games. The surf tends to be too strong for a lengthy swim, but it's an enjoyable place to relax.

Beach Road  
Accra  
Ghana

### Makola Market

The city's main daily market is a rainbow whirl of activity that very much warrants a spot on any sightseeing list. If you want a taste of everyday West African life, it's an eye-opening place to browse.

Kojo Thompson Road Opening times:

Accra  
Ghana

Daily 0600-1900

## Independence Square

A vast ceremonial plaza used on special occasions, Independence Square sits next to a large arch, surrounded by a busy roundabout and topped by the 'Black Star of Africa' symbol. An eternal flame still flickers underneath.

Marine Drive  
Accra  
Ghana

## Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park and Mausoleum

A park dedicated to the memory of the man often known as Osagyefo ('The Redeemer'). Nkrumah was Ghana's first president and one of the founding fathers of its independence – his mausoleum is situated here.

High Street  
Accra  
Ghana

Opening times:  
Daily 1000-1800



## Shopping in Accra

### Shopping in Accra

#### Key Areas

If you're in search of colourful West African souvenirs, the Accra Arts Centre (High Street/28th February Road) has a huge range of kente cloth, wooden crafts, artworks and more. For more standard shops and services, the streets on and around Cantonments Road hold various boutiques. The fair-trade goods at Global Mamas (behind Koala in Osu) come highly recommended.

#### Markets

Makola Market (Kojo Thompson Road) is the biggest outdoor market in the capital, and its range of goods stretches from the eye-popping (edible land snails) to the rainbow-hued (high piles of peppers, socks, jewellery or anything else you might imagine). Its souk-like passageways and adjoining buildings hold plenty of colour.

#### Shopping Centres

Accra Mall (Tettah Quashie and Spintex Road) is a classy complex with clothing boutiques, international sports brands and top-end homeware outlets. Another option is Marina Mall (Airport Road), with more than 45 outlets, a large supermarket and a food court.



## Restaurants

### Restaurants in Accra

Make no mistake – you can eat very well in Accra. Ghanaian cuisine itself offers a range of spicy, lip-tingling specialities. The city as a whole also covers Italian, French, Asian and Middle Eastern food with aplomb. Seafood is plentiful.

## La Tante DC-10

Set inside a restored DC-10 plane, La Tante gives a unique take on classic West African dishes.

Airport City  
Accra  
Ghana

Price: Expensive

## Bread & Wine

A popular eatery serving great French food and home-baked pastries – there's a good wine cellar too.

13th Lane, Osu  
Accra  
Ghana

Price: Expensive

## Yasmina

A quality Lebanese restaurant set in a striking circular room – the flavours are authentic.

Marina Mall  
Airport Road  
Accra  
Ghana

Price: Moderate

## Country Kitchen

A good place to head for Ghanaian staples such as fufu, banku and jollof rice.

2nd Ringway  
Accra  
Ghana

Price: Moderate

## Frankie's

Cheap eats from early until late, on main drag Cantonments Road (known by most as Oxford Street).

Cantonments Road  
Accra  
Ghana

Price: Cheap



## Nightlife Nightlife in Accra

Accra knows how to party, and while the city offers much in the way of smart hotel bars, its real nightlife lies in the local hangouts, which range from roadside beer terraces to speaker-shaking nightclubs.

## Rockstone's Office

Founded by local musical celebrity Reggie Rockstone, this venue attracts a trendy good-time crowd.

Osu Avenue Extension  
Accra  
Ghana

### **Cuzzy Bro's**

An enjoyable and atmospheric family venue occupying a former Irish pub, with a garden bar and good food.

Ogbame St  
Accra  
Ghana

### **Firefly Lounge Bar**

A friendly bar with a long drinks list and music from afrobeat to hip hop.

11th Lane, Embassy Road  
Accra  
Ghana

### **Alliance Française**

A cultural centre hosting film screenings, live music, theatre and dance.

S liberation Link  
Accra  
Ghana

### **The Republic Bar & Grill**

A lively little bar with DJs, funky décor and some tasty Ghanaian dishes.

3rd Lane Kuku Hill  
Accra C484  
Ghana



## **Calendar of events**

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#### **Live in Accra Jazz Festival**

Hosted by the Alliance Française, Live in Accra aims to bring jazz back to the city, which was something of an African jazz hub in the 1960s. As well as a terrific programme of jazz performances, visitors can enjoy workshops, film screenings, art exhibitions and poetry readings.

**April - May 2019**

Venues: Various venues

#### **Aboakyir (Deer Hunt) Festival**

Two bands of warriors battle it out to catch a live antelope in this traditional celebration (the aim originally was to capture a leopard barehanded, but that's now

considered too perilous). The winners present the creature to be sacrificed, and the festival continues with a durbar, procession of chiefs, music and dancing.

#### 4 May 2019

Venue: Winneba, around 60km west of Accra

### Homowo Festival

Translating as 'hooting the hunger', Homowo is celebrated by the traditional Ga people and dates back to a time when a big famine was followed by a bumper crop. Ga chiefs parade through their neighbourhoods with drummers and singers, sprinkling *kpokpoi*, ground corn steamed and blended with palm oil.

#### August 2019

Venue: Throughout Greater Accra

### Asafotufiami Festival

Historic re-enactments see costumed warriors staging mock battles in a celebration of tribal war victories and in remembrance of those who have fallen on the battlefield. The summer festival also includes special harvest ceremonies and a durbar featuring a procession of chiefs and traditional military drumming groups.

#### 25 July - 3 August 2019

Venue: Ada, Greater Accra

### Chale Wote Street Art Festival

Historic Jamestown may be rundown, but the district is vibrant and bursting with creativity. Since 2011, locals have hit the streets for a festival of art exhibitions, murals, graffiti, street performance, dance, bike and rollerblade stunts, spoken word and digital media.

#### August 2019

[accradotalradio.com/chale-wote-street-art-fe...](http://accradotalradio.com/chale-wote-street-art-fe...)

Venue: Streets of Jamestown

### Accra International Marathon

Runners looking to race an African marathon might enjoy the challenge of Accra's coastal marathon course. If that sounds a step too far, there are also half-marathon, 10km and 5km races. Competitors and spectators are treated to a 'Taste of Ghana' cultural and food event at the finish line.

#### October 2019

[www.aimghana.com](http://www.aimghana.com)

Venue: Central University, Prampram to Labadi Beach Hotel, Accra



### Hotels Hotels in Accra

First-time visitors are often surprised by the number of smart corporate hotels in the Ghanaian capital – if you've got money to spend then you won't lack for comfort. Probably of more interest to leisure tourists, however, is the fact there are also some great properties, at various budgets, on the oceanfront.

### Labadi Beach Hotel

A stylish resort on Labadi Beach, with a good pool area and quality dining.

Labadi Beach  
Accra  
Ghana

Category: Expensive

### Villa Monticello

A smaller, chic alternative to some of the larger upmarket properties.

1A Mankata Avenue Link  
Accra  
Ghana

Category: Expensive

### La Palm Royal Beach Hotel

Modern rooms, five restaurants, an outdoor pool and a terrific beachfront location make La Palm Royal a good bet.

Labadi Road  
Accra  
Ghana

Category: Moderate

### Novotel Accra City Centre

Accra's Novotel boasts crisp, spacious rooms, tennis courts and a great central location.

Barnes Road  
Accra  
Ghana

Category: Moderate

### Georgia

This good-value and family-friendly 3-star hotel has smart, clean rooms and was completely renovated in 2013.

11 Patrice Lumumba Road  
Accra  
Ghana

Category: Cheap