

# Study Abroad at UNIVERSITY OF GHANA GUIDE



*Please use this booklet in conjunction with the DU Study Abroad Handbook*

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## Introduction

This guide will provide you with a general overview to help you prepare for your upcoming study abroad at the University of Ghana. Most of the information in this handbook comes from the International Student Exchange Program (ISEP) Ghana Student Handbook. We thank them for this information, as well as the University of Ghana and the US State Department for additional resources. Please use this guide in conjunction with the DU Study Abroad Handbook.

We hope this information will assist you and your family in preparing for your time abroad. It is important that you review all this information, as well as the information sent by the University of Ghana and ISEP, before you leave the US.

Studying abroad is an exciting opportunity. Nothing during your college years will likely change you more. You will learn about another country and another culture. You will also learn to look at your own country from a different perspective and most important, you will learn more about yourself. So, the OIE encourages you to invest yourself fully into this experience.

How much you gain from this opportunity will depend on your preparedness, flexibility and responsibility. Review the general pre-departure information the OIE has provided to you. Complete the administrative and academic matters that need to be taken care of before you leave. Research the country and city you will be going to. Review some of the suggested readings in the DU Study Abroad Handbook about what it means to go abroad. Be respectful of other cultures; things are not better, they are not worse; they are just different – learn to accept, not expect. Remember, you are there to complete an academic program successfully, just as if you were at DU. Good time management and goal setting are keys to handling a challenging academic program and becoming familiar with life outside the classroom.

Most of all, we want you to have a great experience and to make the most out of this opportunity. And when you return, be ready to share your stories with others. Your personal experience will be the best source of inspiration for others.

Safe Travels,  
DUSA

## Checklist

### Before you leave home

- ☐ Make sure to cover everything on the DU general checklist, found in the DU Study Abroad Handbook
- ☐ Check if you need a Visa or Residence Permit, if yes, apply as soon as possible
- ☐ Get a Yellow Fever vaccination and certificate (required for entry into Ghana)
- ☐ Have a comprehensive doctor's check-up and letter indicating good health (required for entry into Ghana)
- ☐ Make sure to research which courses you plan to take at the University of Ghana. If you have questions about the courses, check in with your onsite ISEP Resident Director
- ☐ Apply for housing as necessary and by the ISEP deadline
- ☐ Learn to cook a few different meals before leaving
- ☐ Get prescriptions, if needed
- ☐ Contact your US bank to avoid any banking problems while in Ghana or traveling
- ☐ Book tickets so you arrive in Ghana in time for the official arrival day

### Don't forget to pack:

- ☐ Your ISEP and University of Ghana Letters of Acceptance
- ☐ Passport, Yellow Fever Certificate, and doctor's letter
- ☐ Ghanaian currency for immediate use (for taxi etc.)
- ☐ Suit or nice dress for formal events
- ☐ Clothing for warm, humid climate; nicer clothes for class
- ☐ Your laptop (if you choose to bring it)
- ☐ Adapter and converter for your electrical appliances, if necessary
- ☐ See [ISEP's Student Handbook](#) for an in-depth packing guide

## Preparing For Your Program

### Passport

You must have a valid passport for traveling to Ghana and to obtain a Visa. If you do not already have a passport, apply for one immediately at your local Post Office. New passport processing can take many weeks. If your passport will expire while you are abroad, renew your passport right away. Your passport must be valid for the duration of your time abroad and up to six (6) months after your program ends. Make photocopies of your passport before going abroad. In case you lost your passport, a copy can help to replace it:

- Leave one with your parents.
- Keep one copy with you in a separate place from your original passport.

Local Passport Office (for emergency passports **only**):

(877)487-2778 to schedule an appointment

3151 S. Vaughn Way, Suite 600

Aurora, CO 80014



### Immigration Matters

Most students studying in Ghana will need a visa, a yellow fever certificate, and will need to register with immigration when they arrive in country. ISEP and the Ghanaian Embassy are your best and most up-to-date resources in this process. Below you will find helpful information from ISEP to determine how to apply. However, be aware that visa processes can change at any time and can vary by Consulate. This information is intended as a general guide, but you should verify current visa processing with the appropriate Ghanaian consulate before beginning the application. Receiving a visa is ultimately the student's personal responsibility.

See the [ISEP Ghana Student Handbook](#) for contact information for the Ghanaian Embassy and Consulates in the US.

### Visa

A visa is required and you will need to obtain it before you travel to Ghana; they are not issued at the border. Contact the Ghanaian Embassy for information and visa application forms. Be sure to fill out a multiple-entry visa application form, *at least* one month before departure, though you should be in touch with ISEP for other recommendations. Also be aware that there is generally a \$100 fee for visa processing (CGS students can submit their receipt to the OIE for reimbursement). The application can be downloaded from the embassy website or can be requested in writing; call the embassy if you have any trouble accessing the visa application form.

Important documentation needed for your visa application include:

- **Proof of Financial Support**
  - Use a copy of your ISEP Letter of Certification (part of the Participant Placement Acceptance Packet) as this proof.
- **Letter of Invitation from Principals in Ghana**
  - The University of Ghana admissions letter should be used to meet this requirement.
- **Two references in Ghana**
  - These will be required on your application form. Use the names and contact

information for the ISEP Resident Director and the Dean of International Programs. ISEP provides this information on the University of Ghana Institutional Information Sheet (IIS).

### **Yellow Fever Certificate of Immunization**

In accordance with International Sanitary Regulations all persons entering Ghana are requested to have a valid certificate of immunization against yellow fever. Do not submit your certificate together with visa application form. Keep it and present it at the port of entry in Ghana. **All students are required to have a comprehensive medical check-up before their departure for Ghana and to bring a letter from their doctor stating that they are in good health.** For more information, please visit the Additional Health Information section of the [ISEP Health and Safety Handbook](#).

### **Registering with Immigration**

The length of stay granted on your visa may extend to years; however when you go through Immigration, an officer will stamp a number of days that your visa will actually be valid before it needs to be extended. This will entail gaining an additional visa extension once you are in country. The ISEP Resident Director and staff will help you register with Ghana Immigration once you arrive. The process is begun during orientation and will take about three weeks altogether for processing. As of January 2011, the cost for this is the equivalent of approximately \$27 per month. If you plan to be in Ghana for one academic year you will have to register with authorities and obtain a residence permit (approx. \$138) when you are in the country. Speak with your OIE advisor about extending your stay before committing to this cost.

**While in Ghana, you should carry your University of Ghana student ID with you at all times. Police will occasionally ask foreigners to show their student papers.** While students should carry a copy of their passport, original passports and air tickets should be left with the ISEP Resident Director

### **Travel Arrangements and Getting to Ghana**

Students should arrive in Ghana through Accra. All students are responsible for understanding the start and end dates of their program for booking their flight.

ISEP does offer a group flight to Accra for all students. Although it is not required that you take this flight, it is recommended as the ticket is reasonable, flexible and you will be met at the airport by the ISEP Resident Director. The flight is arranged through STA Travel (the same agency used for CGS students). ISEP will provide you with the details of booking this flight once your placement is confirmed. You can make arrangements to fly out of different US cities to meet with the group and choose your own return date so long as you remain in Ghana through the end of the semester (including exams) and are back on DU campus for the start of the following Quarter. The University of Ghana will not make exceptions for students leaving campus early.

Both Cherrington Global Scholars and NCGS students are recommended to book the ISEP group flight. **However, please note STA is not able to bill DU directly for the ISEP group flight.** CGS students should be prepared to pay for the flight directly and submit their receipts for reimbursement. CGS students who prefer to have DU billed directly for their flight will be unable to book the ISEP group flight. CGS students should refer to the DU Travel Arrangements email sent to you to understand flight reimbursement procedures. NCGS students will pay for their flight on their own.

Students should contact the ISEP Resident Director with flight arrival information at least one month prior to their departure for Ghana. Clarify with the Director if it is possible to arrive on a different date if you have a conflict—note that it may not be possible and you may not have access to housing before the official start date.

**From Kotoka International Airport (Accra)**

Students will be greeted at the airport by the ISEP Resident Director or her representative, holding an ISEP sign, and transported to the university. The arrival experience may seem overwhelming for those used to the more rigid order of US or European airports, especially after a long flight. Advice from former students is: don't panic, take your time to look for the Resident Director.

Do not get into a taxi and leave unless you stayed at the airport for at least 30 minutes to be sure the Resident Director is not there. If, after that time, you decide to take a taxi to the university, you should expect to pay \$8-10. This fee should be settled with the driver beforehand and cannot be reimbursed through CGS.



## **When You Arrive**

### **Orientation and Excursions**

Make sure that you are reading and reviewing all ISEP arrival information and that you participate in the mandatory ISEP orientation. This orientation deals with social, cultural, travel, safety, etiquette and lifestyle issues. There will be visits to places of interest including an Accra City Tour, Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum, W.E.B. DuBois Center, shopping areas in Accra and in surrounding areas near the campus. Immigration and university-wide orientation includes information on education, registration, university life, historical and cultural information on Ghana, and the medical exam required by Ghana Immigration. Students will also visit other regions in Ghana during the semester through organized excursions.

Some additional information is highlighted below that can help prepare you for arrival in Ghana and for adjusting to your new surroundings.

### **Cultural Adjustment**

Foreigners are generally treated with great friendliness and tolerance in Ghana. However, there are a few culturally important things to note when it comes to your experience as an international student in Ghana. Past exchange students highly recommend breaking through cultural barriers early and make an effort not to spend all of your time with the other exchange students. Getting to know Ghanaian students early will also help mitigate cultural misunderstandings that have happened in the past when students have been unable to establish connections with local students. Some of the more commonly reported misunderstandings have been listed below to help you think through potential areas of culture shock or adjustment before arriving.

### **Gender Roles and Interactions**

Ghanaians are generally a very friendly people, and both female friends and male friends may hold hands when together. American women especially must work to understand appropriate gender interactions, as they may find themselves sought after for relationships by Ghanaian men. If you do not desire a relationship, a firm, yet polite refusal should suffice.

Greeting others and taking time to get to know one another is very important. It is considered rude to walk past an adult (especially one older than you) without greeting him or her, or to get to business right away without taking the time for an initial greeting. Due to the special emphasis placed on greetings, a handshake is essential. Men and women usually do not shake hands unless the hand is extended first by the woman. Western women, though, will usually have their hands shaken by African men.

Gender issues can be very tricky to negotiate cross-culturally, especially when it comes to personal relationships. Keep in mind that this is one of the most common areas of misunderstanding when crossing cultures; proceed with caution until you know more about the culture. What you view as completely normal behavior may be interpreted in a totally unexpected way by the people around you.

Students should be aware that Ghanaian culture is quite conservative when it comes to dating and sexual relationships. Largely due to the media, many Ghanaians do hold a stereotype of Americans, particularly American women, as being more sexually uninhibited than Ghanaians. You should be aware that many Ghanaians may consider that a female student who invites a male student to her room, or who accompanies a male student to his room, is interested in a sexual relationship; some



may consider that she has given consent to such a relationship merely by offering or accepting such an invitation.

Students who identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual should be aware that **homosexuality is illegal in Ghana**. Due to this, there is very little tolerance for homosexual behavior and little to no support network for homosexual persons either on the campus, or in Accra.

**Language, Communication and Race:**

Ghanaians may continue speaking in a local language when an exchange student joins the group. This can be uncomfortable, but it is likewise less comfortable for them to change to English, which they are often not as proficient in but feel forced to use because it was the language of their colonizers and therefore now an official language in Ghana.

Students have at times reported the feeling that Ghanaian students are talking about them in a local language and appear to be making fun of them. Although it may indeed be true that they are making fun of that student's differences, it is generally not intended to be malicious and students may genuinely be unaware of how this might make the American student feel. Americans can be stereotypically viewed as having everything, so understanding that American students may have the same sensitivities and insecurities may not occur to some local students. Many local students have also not had the opportunity to interact with many people from outside their local cultural groups and communities, and so may not have had the chance to think about effective cross-cultural communication. One strategy for this kind of situation is to learn to laugh at yourself - you are bound to do some things oddly, and becoming comfortable with that fact is key for an enjoyable stay. Remember also that Ghanaian culture is generally a very friendly one. Learn to ask questions about the situations you see and try to understand people's motivations in interacting with you as they do. Once able to do this, most students find Ghanaians to generally be curious, hospitable, accepting and eager to know new people.

Some students have also reported experiencing poor public service or being served last in a public place (restaurant, student office, etc.), regardless of when they arrived. Especially among Caucasian students, this has at times been interpreted in the past as racial discrimination. However, we would urge students instead to consider the cultural undertones that preference in service may have: is there an elder or respected community member present (professor, student class officer etc)? Is there an acquaintance or friend of the server present? Ghanaian culture generally values relationships and community status highly, so your presence as a new, unknown student may have more to do with you receiving service last than any question of race.

Some African-American students have also reported reflections on race in Ghana. Students in the past have reported being surprised that many Ghanaians do not consider them to be much different from Caucasian-American students. The perception is often that African-Americans are culturally closer to the US than to Africa.

All students are encouraged to have open conversations with locals and view this as an opportunity not only to learn about Ghana but to also share a bit about your own culture, background, and identity.

## Studying at the University of Ghana

With 20,000 students, the University of Ghana is the largest university in Ghana and has traditionally received most of the resources allocated to higher education. Located on the outskirts of the capital city, the university overlooks Accra from what is probably the highest spot around the city. The university has an international reputation and supplies most of the nation's trained labor force.

The University of Ghana was first named the University College of the Gold Coast on its founding in 1948. Its degrees were granted by the University of London until 1951, when it became the University of Ghana and began granting its own degrees.

The University of Ghana is a state institution, with about 90 percent of its resources coming from the government and about 10 percent from student fees. It also provides part time courses for adult students pursuing their education.

There are currently over 200 exchange students from the US through several exchange programs including ISEP. There are also roughly 500 non-American international students at the university, mainly from other African countries. This mix of students allows US students the opportunity to truly engage with their local counterparts and experience life within a prestigious African university.

### Ghanaian Academic System

The education system in Ghana is in transition; moving away from the traditional British model toward a system similar to that in the United States. This means you may find some aspects of the education system familiar, while others may feel very different.

The Ghanaian undergraduate degree can typically be completed in 3 to 4 years. In some cases, a student can choose to pursue an "honors" degree, which may require an additional year of study and specific "honors" coursework. Some fields, such as medicine, require a preparatory year before entering the university. Professional qualifications are marked by the award of certificates or diplomas after one or two years' study.

Classes are taught in English and the academic year is divided into two semesters.

### Teaching Styles and Academic Culture

The teaching and examination styles in Ghana follow the British model consisting primarily of faculty-led lectures with occasional class discussion. Lecture classes may have up to 400-500 students, especially at the lower levels. Many of these also have regular, required seminar periods divided into smaller groups.

This model requires students to take ownership of their own education and ***much emphasis is put on out-of-class study in preparation for the final exam, which is 100% of the grade.*** There will be little continual evaluation throughout the class; however students should take care not to assume a course is easy—take the time to meet with your professors or classmates to understand what is likely to be covered in the exam and what outside research you should be doing. Take note that there is more emphasis placed on memorization in preparation for the final exam.

Because university salaries are low, professors often take additional work, which affects their ability to hold classes regularly at the scheduled time. Be prepared for some classes to start weeks after the official starting date. Students should note that relationships between students and lecturers are formal. Open debate and/or questions that may be perceived as "challenging the professor's knowledge" should be restricted to after class, one-on-one discussions with the lecturer. During one-

on-one sessions, students may discuss other academic topics as well as bring along supplementary materials they may have (i.e. text books brought from home). This is also a good opportunity to ensure you understand what you are expected to know at the end of the semester.

Bear in mind as well that opportunities for Ghanaians to attend university tend to be limited to the very best students. They tend to take their studies seriously, and you will find them spending a lot of time reading in the library. These students can often give you the best advice for preparing for your exams, so don't be afraid to reach out early on and seek their input.

### **Coursework**

Students are able to access class lists through the ISEP website: <http://www.isep.org> as well as through the University of Ghana directly: [www.ug.edu.gh](http://www.ug.edu.gh).

If you need a more detailed description, you may contact the office of the ISEP Resident Director in Ghana with the course description needed and she will do her best to provide one for you. Of the courses listed on the university's Web site, not all are offered every semester. Odd-numbered courses are offered in the fall and even numbered courses are offered in the spring.

ISEP recommends that you select courses at the 300 and 400 level, which may be closer to 2000 level courses at DU. Former ISEP students recommend taking one course each in a variety of disciplines and taking a lot of courses as electives. Be aware that if you need several courses in one field, you may not get as much content per class as you would expect at DU.

Keep in mind that it is not uncommon for classes to be cancelled or changed right before the start of the semester. Because of this, the OIE recommends that you select a number of back-up classes and get these approved by the relevant departments so that you can more easily change your schedule if need be. With this in mind, ISEP and the OIE also recommend that you not plan on taking a course that is absolutely mandatory for your degree. Because ISEP cannot guarantee that specific courses will actually be offered, it is a better idea to plan on classes that can easily be switched.

### **African Language Classes**

ISEP has arranged for all students to be given a beginner-level Twi language course during their semester. This course, suggested by the Resident Director in Ghana as well as past ISEP students, will appear on your transcript from the University of Ghana. Students may also elect to take beginning level classes in any of the major languages of Ghana: Twi (which includes Ashante Twi and Fante Twi), Ga, Ewe and Dagbani. Twi is by far the most popular and widely spoken language in Ghana. Ga is the local language of Accra. Learning either of the two languages probably would be useful, but knowledge is not necessary for survival.

### **Experiential Learning Opportunities**

The University of Ghana is now considered an ISEP Global Engagement Program (GEP), enabling students to extend their experience beyond the classroom through organized community engagement opportunities. These opportunities include but are not limited to: volunteer work, service learning, independent study, internships, research projects etc.

Participation in community service and volunteer work is included in the price of the semester. Example opportunities may be seen here:

[http://www.isep.org/Downloads/Ghana\\_Community\\_Engagement.pdf](http://www.isep.org/Downloads/Ghana_Community_Engagement.pdf)

Independent study, research, or internships may be organized but for an additional US\$300 fee paid directly by the student. That fee goes toward organizing the experience, paying the professor, etc. The University of Ghana would help the student organize the internship or independent study, though academic credit would need to be organized directly through DU.

Other benefits of studying at a GEP site include:

- On-site Resident Director
- ISEP organized excursions
- ISEP organized Twi language courses

### Registration

While you were asked to provide your intended course list in your ISEP application, please remember that registration is not finalized until you arrive in country and it is not uncommon to have changes in your intended schedule (classes cancelled, hours changed etc.).

You will register online for courses, but you will also register in person with each department. This process is usually not more involved than signing your name to a sheet of paper or at most completing a one page sheet. Past ISEP students advise that registration can take all day (so be prepared to spend a long time waiting in lines). It may also take about one month for classes to get in full swing, another reason for learning to relax while observing and learning as much as possible.

### Credit

Credits through the University of Ghana are equivalent to US semester credits.

The following credit translation is used for credits coming back to DU:

1 UofG credit = 1.5 DU credits:
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### Grades

The credits and grades earned on a DU Partner Program will appear on your DU transcript. They will not count as “pass/fail.” In order for the credit to apply to your general degree, you must pass with a “D” or better. However, in order for the credit to apply to your major or minor, you must generally pass with a “C-” or better. While the credit earned is considered DU credit and the grades you receive will appear on your DU transcript, these grades will not be figured into your DU cumulative GPA.

The Ghanaian grading system follows the British model and does not suffer from the same grade inflation that has become a problem in the US. Most professors are accustomed to awarding “C” level grades to the average hard-working student, reserving “A” grades for rare and extraordinary students. *Also, note that the grades awarded by percentage are very different; for example, a 70%=A at the University of Ghana. Please ask ISEP directly if you would like a more detailed breakdown of these percentages.*

All courses will have an exam at the end of the semester which, in most cases, counts for 100% of the grade. **Please note there are absolutely no early examinations arranged for international students.** All students are expected to take the examinations during the official examination period. If a

student fails to comply with this practice, he or she will not receive a grade for the course in question.

Letter grades from Ghana are the equivalent of US letter grades. Other grades such as I (Incomplete), X (Fail), Z (Disqualification) or Y (Continuing) can also be granted.

### **Course Materials**

There is a scarcity of textbooks, so a course may consist primarily of lectures at which the basic material is presented. For courses in your major, you may wish to bring a basic textbook from home or be prepared to seek one out independently on campus.

## **Living in Ghana**

### **Accommodation**

The University of Ghana operates the International Student Hostel (ISH) for visiting international students. Upon arrival you will be assigned a room that will be shared with either another international student or a Ghanaian student. In addition to the international students, Ghanaian graduate students make up a small number within this dormitory.

The living space provided to ISEP students is relatively small, but adequate. You will find two beds, two desks and two wardrobe closets. The screened windows provide some breeze. In order to provide protection from mosquitoes and other flying insects, it is recommended that you buy a mosquito net for sleeping after you arrive. They are very inexpensive in Ghana, so you can buy one upon arrival. Insecticide sprays are helpful. The toilet and bath facilities are shared by approximately ten students and are cleaned by dormitory staff.

Although security in the dormitory rooms is generally not a concern, students are advised not to bring items that they cannot afford to lose. Students should always keep their room locked when not occupied. It is not recommended that even the brief walk from the international dormitory to the main campus be made alone at night. A shuttle from the dormitory to other parts of campus operates in the evening.

### **Electricity and Water**

Ghana principally works on hydro-electric power provided by the Akosomba Dam. At the University there is electricity coverage 24 hours per day. All students are advised, however, to either bring a rechargeable electric lamp or buy one in Ghana upon arrival (about \$35). A good, powerful flashlight is also highly advised.

The electricity in Ghana is 220-240 volts and 50 cycles/sec (Hz) and American outlets differ from Ghanaian ones. This means that you will likely need both a converter and adapter to use your electrical appliances from home. You can often find these at stores like REI or RadioShak.

There is no hot water at the ISH, although you can buy water warmers at the local market. When water pressure is low, you should be prepared to carry a bucket of water up to your floor for bathing.

### **Meals**

Students will be charged a DU Study Abroad Meal Plan on this program as they will receive a cash stipend for food intended to cover 19 meals per week. However, students should be prepared to pay for food independently for the first few weeks as there can be a delay in receiving the stipend. Additionally, students should budget their stipend carefully, as spending high amounts on food can lead your stipend to run out sooner than you intended.

Students eat at the cafeteria and restaurant on campus and at nearby market stalls. The food is West African, which is variably spicy, like West Indian or Spanish cooking. There is also a kitchen located on each floor of the dorm for cooking.

Take advantage of the opportunity to try various types of Ghanaian cuisine. Vegetarian students can also be able to find appropriate food, but typically have fewer options available.

### **Ghanaian Students**

While your housing may seem simple compared to what you have at DU, you have been given some of the best housing available on campus. Please be mindful that your housing will vary greatly from (and is often superior to) housing provided for most Ghanaian students. Ghanaian students will receive a lower stipend for food and typically have four students to a room rather than two. Some rooms will also have “perchers”—students who were not able to secure student housing but share a room with friends anyway, meaning there can be more than four students to a room. International students should be respectful of this difference and not be seen to be complaining of their accommodations to Ghanaian students.

### **Student Life**

There are ample opportunities to participate in team sports such as basketball, swimming, volleyball and soccer. Participation on these teams often includes travel to other West African countries or other cities in Ghana for competition.

ISEP students participate in an extensive orientation program including academic, cultural, health & safety information, visits to local areas of interest and two overnight excursions outside of Accra.

### **Living Logistics**

#### **Weather and Clothing**

Bring clothes appropriate for the hot, humid climate of Ghana's coast; loose and cool dressing is recommended. Clothes and underwear of 100% cotton are better than nylon or polyester. In Ghana, dressing nicely and neatly is very important. Jeans and t-shirts may be worn by women and men.

Dressing scantily, in undershirts or bare-chested (for men) for class is not appropriate. It is a very sensitive social issue on campus and in the country in general. You should therefore be prepared to be decently, not necessarily expensively, attired at all times.

Hygiene products are primarily imported and very expensive. What costs \$2 in the United States can cost \$10 in Ghana. Women should bring sufficient feminine hygiene products with them. Contact lens wearers should plan to bring enough solution for their time in Ghana.

You will not need as many clothes as you would take to college in the US. Take a few skirts, slacks or jeans, and shirts or tops, and one or two pairs of shorts for the beach or travel. Be sure to take at least one dressy outfit for social events. Men should have a couple of button shirts and one tie. Bring one sturdy pair of shoes for hiking and one pair of dress shoes. For everyday wear, bring comfortable shoes such as sandals.

See the [ISEP Ghana Student Handbook](#) for a recommended packing list, including clothing, and hygienic goods.

#### **Telephones and Cell Phones**

It is recommended that you buy a mobile/cell phone when you get to Ghana as it is an easy way to communicate with others in Ghana by calling or texting. You can budget about \$50 for the purchase of the phone and starter kit, and you can sell these for almost the same cost you bought them before you leave Ghana. It is usually cheaper for you to call internationally than for those abroad to call Ghana. Phone cards to recharge your account with units run on average between \$7-10 and are readily available. This usually gives you 20 minutes of international talk time and even more for local calls and text messaging.



Alternatively, you may want to check with your current cell phone provider in your home country to find out if they can 'unlock' the phone you presently use so that you can use it in Ghana. Your phone must have SIM card capability as all phones networks in Ghana operate using SIM cards. These can be bought for (approx \$1.00). The OIE cautions that it may be safer to purchase a cheap phone in Ghana than attempt to use your more expensive, personal phone which may be lost or stolen.

Ghana Telecom has available discount cards for use on public phones for international and local calls.

### **Internet Access**

The University of Ghana has an ICT Center which houses hundreds of computers for students to use for internet usage, emailing etc. At this location you can also bring your own laptop and use it on the wireless network. In addition, the office of International Educational Program also has computers dedicated exclusively to use by foreign students for the same purpose. Both of these locations are centrally located on campus. There is wireless internet in the international student hostel, though past students have noted that it is slow at times.

Portable modems are also available for approximately \$30 and can be used contact friends and family back in the U.S. via Skype or other internet-based services.

Students must decide whether to bring their personal laptops or if they prefer to rely on campus computers and leave their laptops at home.

### **Shopping**

If you buy any 'traditional' crafts (wooden artifacts, paintings, etc.) and they are not obviously new, upon leaving at the border or airport you will have to present a certificate from the national museum in Accra or the Arts Centre to prove that the items are not of historic value. This is typically not a problem, as either place will issue you a certificate in a minute or two for a nominal fee.

### **Tipping**

Tipping generally follows the same "rules" as in the United States. Eating in a sit-down restaurant would warrant a tip of around 15 to 20 percent, depending on the service. Buying food at the local "chop shop" or from vendors on the streets does not warrant any type of service tip. If the food is good, it's appropriate to tell the cook that it is "sweet," meaning delicious. Tipping is also expected when someone performs a service for you that has caused him or her to go out of their way. For instance, if someone directs you to a place by personally escorting you, a cadeau, or tip, often is expected. Foreigners are not alone in paying for these services, although less is expected from an African.

### **Ghanaian Time Zone**

Accra runs on Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) and is typically 7 hours ahead of Denver. Ghana does not observe Daylight Savings Time.

### **Emergency Number**

The emergency phone number in Ghana is 191 for police, 192/199 for the Fire Department, and 193 for ambulance services.

Having multiple emergency numbers can be confusing. You should touch base with the ISEP Resident Director to understand when you should make use of each number. The Resident Director and Housing Coordinator will also have 24 hour emergency numbers for you to reach them. As of

3/11/14, these numbers are (+233) 20-8111154 and (233) 302 513886 (housing), though you should confirm these with ISEP before your departure.

### **Narcotics**

The government of Ghana is dedicated to stemming traffic in narcotics in the country. As such, drug violations are taken very seriously and there may be severe penalties against using or selling illegal substances. Driving under the influence of narcotics or alcohol is also prohibited.

### **Local Transportation**

There are a number of local transportation options available to students:

#### **By Bus**

Ghana's government-run buses (STC buses) are known for their high quality; they are large, comfortable, fast and inexpensive. There are two classes of STC buses that travel to more than 50 destinations. The air-conditioned express buses go faster, but cost one-third more than regular buses and fill up rather quickly.

The regular buses are bigger and slower; they often have long delays at the stations. Tickets for express buses are sold only on the actual day of departure, and long lines make it nearly mandatory to arrive at the station very early to secure a ticket. Private buses are also found in Ghana, but these are in pretty poor condition.

#### **By Train**

The three railway lines in Ghana are Accra-Kumasi, Kumasi-Takoradi, and Takoradi-Accra. Trains tend to be slow, but the Accra-Kumasi line is very scenic.

#### **By Taxi**

Car-taxis and tro-tros (minibuses) are examples of the public transportation system in Ghana. Tro-tros are most affordable but often uncomfortable and crowded. These are fine for local travel (i.e. going into town to shop etc), but not recommended for long distances.

#### **By Campus Shuttle**

For getting around on campus, your best bet is the university shuttle service. It operates throughout the day and is very affordable, presently 10 pesewas (10 cents) from any one point on campus to another.

### **Travel**

Several ISEP students have traveled outside of Ghana to neighboring countries during their vacation periods. While ISEP encourages exploration of the region, it is strongly advised that you discuss your travel plans with the ISEP Resident Director in Ghana and heed her advice about areas that are or are not safe. You are expected to give a copy of your travel schedule to the Resident Director prior to your trip, so that you may be contacted in case of emergency.

## Personal Safety

### Crime

Crime exists, as it does everywhere, and people perceived to be affluent, including foreigners, have to take special steps to avoid theft. Violent crime and personal attacks are not a prevalent problem. Instead, muggings and robberies are the main crime risks. As always, take the same safety precautions as you would in the United States. Be aware to not carry around large amounts of money or items of high value—you may want to purchase a money pouch to wear underneath your clothes. Take precaution to walk in groups, especially at night and always be aware of your surroundings.

Don't buy counterfeit and pirated goods, even if they are widely available. Not only are the bootlegs illegal to bring back into the United States, if you purchase them, you may also be breaking local law.

### Local Poor

Beggars are looked at differently in Western Africa than in the U.S. Since there is no government support system, such as social security, most Africans rely heavily on extended family members to care for them if they are no longer able to care for themselves. Most beggars you will see are crippled, have leprosy, or are victims of blindness caused by onchocerciasis (oncho). Ghanaians generally do not look down upon beggars. Often you will see seemingly poor Africans giving to beggars. Beggars don't ask for much, usually around the equivalent of US 5-10¢.

### Traffic Safety

According to the Association for Safe International Road Travel (ASIRT), the single greatest cause of death and serious injury abroad is road accidents. These far exceed deaths resulting from disease, violence or terrorism. While in Ghana, you may encounter road conditions and driving norms that differ significantly from those in the United States. As such, it can be extremely dangerous to attempt to drive in Ghana without truly understanding traffic laws, norms, and expectations. **The OIE strongly discourages students from attempting to drive in Ghana.**

Public transport in Ghana is the recommended method of travel. Please see the previous section for more detail on these options.

## Health & Wellbeing

### Health Insurance

All ISEP students are required to enroll in the ISEP Student Health Insurance Plan. A summary of benefits, information on treatment and claims, as well as other details and contact information can be found on ISEP's website [here](#). Registering for this plan is part of the Acceptance Paperwork that will follow after you have submitted your initial ISEP and University of Ghana applications. This enrollment is a requirement for placement and cannot be waived, even if you are covered under a different insurance plan.

The cost of this insurance plan is included in your overall program cost and will be paid directly to ISEP by the OIE.

You will receive insurance cards once your enrollment is complete. You should take this card to Ghana with you, and the OIE highly recommends leaving another copy with your family at home.

### **Home and travel insurance**

DU students are required to maintain their US health insurance during their term abroad, despite having ISEP insurance. This is primarily to ensure coverage before going abroad, after you return (especially for any ongoing medical issues or care that will need to continue after your program), and during the program for any medical scenarios not covered by ISEP insurance. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that your US insurance continues, to contact that insurance and understand what is applicable abroad, and to understand what may NOT be covered by ISEP insurance and prepare accordingly.

### **Dental care**

Please note dental care is not covered as part of this insurance plan, so it is a good idea to have a dental cleaning prior to going to Ghana.

### Health and Wellness Information

Important! Please read the [ISEP Additional Health Information](#) for participants going to Africa, Asia, and Latin America. It provides in-depth information on the health issues briefly described here.

There are certain health precautions that all visitors to West Africa should take; those who do not follow the health guidelines may pay severe consequences. It is recommended that students going to Ghana consult medical professionals and check with the Center for Disease Control for recommended courses of action regarding the following health risks before departure.

### **Malaria**

The malaria virus is carried widely by mosquitoes in Ghana. Malaria is a preventable and treatable disease, but can be deadly without proper medical attention. The notion that getting mosquito bites without getting malaria makes one immune to the disease is **FALSE**. You cannot know whether the mosquito that bit you was carrying the virus. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the symptoms of malaria and seek proper medical care immediately if you experience any kind of flu-like symptoms. In the past, some students decided not to seek proper and adequate medical advice before departing for Ghana, or failed to heed it once there. This resulted in their early departures from the program after their first malaria attack.

Some of the ways to prevent malaria include the following

- Taking a prescription antimalarial drug
- Using insect repellent and wearing long pants and sleeves to prevent mosquito bites
- Sleeping in air-conditioned or well-screened rooms or using bed nets (popularly known as mosquito nets)

Students should consult with their doctors for further advice, ask them about prophylactics before departing for Ghana, and take preventive measures to avoid bites once in the country. All ISEP students are expected to take *antimalarial prophylactic* medication for the duration of their time in Ghana, including the necessary pre-arrival and post-departure period as prescribed.

According to the CDC, all of the following antimalarial drugs are equal options for preventing malaria in Ghana: Atovaquone/proguanil, doxycycline, or mefloquine. *Note: Chloroquine is NOT an effective antimalarial drug in Ghana and should not be taken to prevent malaria in this region.* Students should consult their doctors on all details regarding these or other antimalarial drugs.

It is important that you read the information on Malaria in the ISEP "[Additional Health Information](#)" Handbook and in the ISEP Supplemental Congratulations packet.

### **AIDS**

The prevalence of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, in Ghana is lower than in other parts of sub-Saharan Africa, but still a risk to be taken very seriously. HIV is transmitted through contact between bodily fluids: blood, breast milk, semen, and vaginal fluids. Students are advised to exercise responsible sexual behavior to reduce the risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. Consult your doctor before departure, and ask the ISEP Resident Director for a list of approved hospitals and clinics upon arrival, so that you can avoid any hassle should you need to seek immediate medical attention.

### **Water**

The water in Accra is treated and generally considered safe from harmful parasites. However, old plumbing systems may acquire leaks and be problematic. For this reason it is advisable to drink only bottled or sterilized water during your stay. It is also important to check with the Embassy, US State Department, or International SOS when planning to travel outside of Accra. For rural areas, many students like to bring pump-action water filters, found in camping stores. Some of the water borne diseases in Ghana includes cholera, typhoid, shigella and amebic dysentery. You should not swim in lakes, ponds or pools that have not been chlorinated, as there is a risk of parasites.

It is also possible that during the first one to two months, while your body is adjusting to the host of changes it is undergoing with new climate, foods and water, you will have frequent diarrhea. This is not necessarily due to the more serious diseases cited above, but your system might simply be adjusting to the host environment. You may wish to bring over-the-counter anti-diarrheal medication with you and be in touch with the ISEP Resident Director if you feel you may need medical attention.

### **Food**

Unclean food is also a source of hepatitis and bacteria spread by flies. This should also be discussed with a doctor or tropical disease specialist prior to departure. The general guideline for food is: cook it, peel it, or soak it. Fruits and vegetables contaminated with fertilizers or unclean hands can be treated by peeling or cooking. Those who insist on eating lettuce, raw tomatoes and other produce

that cannot be easily peeled, should soak them for 20 minutes in a solution of water with enough iodine to resemble weak tea. A sterilizing solution brand name (Milton) is also available at supermarkets in Accra for this purpose.

### **General Health Advice**

During your transition period in Ghana, your body will be under more stress than usual. The heat may cause skin rashes treatable with a good medicated powder. Changes in diet and water may cause diarrhea for a while even without serious parasite contamination. You are likely to arrive tired and jet lagged, but still have trouble sleeping at first because of the new environment. There will be added emotional stress because you are alone and encountering an entirely new world. All of these factors may weaken your resistance so that you are vulnerable to colds and sore throats, headaches, upset stomach, etc. It is not uncommon for women to encounter menstrual irregularities for a couple of months.

The first step in dealing with these nagging problems is to expect them and not let them add to your stress. The second step is to eat a well-balanced diet. Surprisingly, some students fail to do this despite the abundance of food, familiar and unfamiliar, in Ghana. A poor diet always leads to low resistance to disease and illness.

The third step is to learn to relax, despite delays and uncertainties. When someone says "wait," realize that they may mean for hours rather than minutes and accommodate yourself to that fact. Learn that time is a different concept in Ghana. Practicing these three steps will help you with the fourth step, which is to get adequate sleep. This won't happen at first, but sleeping should be more normal in the second week and even more so in the third. Worrying too much could prevent you from getting needed sleep. Learn to tell yourself that none of the day's problems will have long-lasting repercussions, and that you did what you could to deal with your needs for the day.

### **Vaccinations**

Currently, Yellow Fever is the only required vaccination (apart from up-to-date regular vaccines) to go to Ghana. However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention does have a list of recommended vaccinations that you should discuss with your doctor. You can find that list through the CDC website listed below. Additionally, if you plan to visit other countries while you are abroad, check with one of the following to find out what vaccinations, if any, may be required:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/>
- DU Health and Counseling Center: <http://www.du.edu/health-and-counseling-center/medical/index.html>.

## Money

### Currency and Money Exchange

The Ghanaian currency is called “cedi” (GH¢) and “pesewas” (Gp: 100 Gp=1 GH¢). Bank notes are available in denominations of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20 and 50 cedis; coins in 1, 5, 10, 20, and 50 pesewas, as well as 1 cedi.

Ghana has privately operated foreign bureaus called “Forex.” These "Forex" are located throughout Accra and the country and usually offer a much better exchange rate than the banks. For the most part, the larger the bill you exchange, the better the rate you will receive. Exchanging a \$50 bill will bring in more cedis than will the same amount in smaller bills. All banks in Ghana also change money.

### ATMs and Banks

ATM cards have become very popular in Ghana. We recommend that you deposit money in your account in the US and bring along your ATM card to withdraw money from your home account directly. Make sure that your card has a **VISA** logo on it. MasterCard or other networks are not commonly recognized in Ghana.

There are several banks conveniently located on-campus where students can use ATM cards that have VISA logos to withdraw money. There are many other ATMs all over the city of Accra and other major cities where ATM cards with VISA logos on them can be used.

You should also notify your bank that you will be traveling abroad and accessing your account, so that they will not suspect any fraudulent activity and freeze your account.

If you still choose to bring your money to Ghana in bulk, it is recommended that you bring US dollars in large denominations. Students should leave their US dollars in a bank safe deposit box and exchange as necessary. Some international students have chosen to open US Dollar or Ghana cedi accounts at one of the banks on campus. If you choose to do this, please speak with the ISEP Resident Director first to make sure you understand what information you need to open an account.

### Checks, Cards, and Cash

Forex Bureaus do not accept traveler's checks. It can be very inconvenient to cash traveler's checks in Ghana. These can be cashed at only one bank in Accra, so they are not recommended.

The primary means of payment is cash. Some stores will also accept Visa debit and credit cards (though this is not common), but stores will not accept traveler's checks.

### Living Costs

The cost of living in Accra is higher than most students anticipate. As the capital city of Ghana, costs will be higher here than in other cities. Likewise, toiletries which must be imported also typically cost more in Ghana than they may cost even in the US.

Past students have also cautioned to watch your food stipend—depending on how much eating out you intend to do, this stipend can run out sooner than you intended.

Helpful cost of living information can be found here: <http://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/>



## **Important Contacts**

For general questions contact the ISEP Program Associate for Ghana, Michael Yamoah, at [myamoah@isep.org](mailto:myamoah@isep.org). If you have specific questions regarding your courses and studies, please contact the ISEP Resident Director in Ghana (contact information in your acceptance paperwork).

For DU-specific questions, please contact your OIE advisor:

Stephanie Roberts  
Program Coordinator, OIE  
University of Denver  
Email: [stephanie.roberts@du.edu](mailto:stephanie.roberts@du.edu)