



## Ghana's Culture

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## People

Ghanians come from six main ethnic groups: the Akan (Ashanti and Fanti), the Ewe, the Ga-Adangbe, the Mole-Dagbani, the Guan, and the Gurma.

### Ashanti Tribe

The Ashanti tribe of the Akan are the largest tribe in Ghana and one of the few matrilineal societies in West Africa. Once renowned for the splendour and wealth of their rulers, they are most famous today for their craft work, particularly their hand-carved stools and fertility dolls and their colourful kente cloth. Kente cloth is woven in bright, narrow strips with complex patterns; it's usually made from cotton and is always woven outdoors, exclusively by men.

The village is a social as well as an economic unit. Everyone participates in the major ceremonies, the most frequent of which are funeral celebrations which typically last several days. Attendance at funerals is normally expected from everyone in the village and expenditure on funerals is a substantial part of the household budget.

The Ashanti are noted for their expertise in a variety of specialized crafts. These include weaving, wood carving, ceramics, and metallurgy. Of these crafts, only pottery-making is primarily a female activity; the others are restricted to male specialists. Even in the case of pottery-making, only men are allowed to fashion pots or pipes representing anthropomorphic or zoomorphic figures.

### Ewé

The Ewé have over 600 deities to turn to in times of need. Many village celebrations and ceremonies take place in honour of one or more deities. They also weave kente cloth, and their more geometrical patterns contain symbolic designs handed down through the ages.

The Ewe occupy southeastern Ghana and the southern parts of neighboring Togo and Benin. Most Ewe were farmers who kept some livestock, and there was some craft specialization. On the coast and immediately inland, fishing was important, and local variations in economic activities permitted a great deal of trade between one community and another, carried out chiefly by women.

### Fanti Tribe

The Fanti tribe are mainly located in the coastal areas of Ghana.

### Ga-Adangbe Tribe

The Ga-Adangbe people inhabit the Accra Plains. The Adangbe are found to the east, the Ga groups, to the west of the Accra coastlands. Although both languages are derived from a common proto-Ga-Adangbe ancestral language, modern Ga and Adangbe are mutually unintelligible. The modern Adangbe include the people of Shai, La, Ningo, Kpone, Osudoku, Krobo, Gbugble, and Ada, who speak different dialects. The Ga also include the Ga-Mashie groups occupying neighborhoods in the central part of Accra, and other Gaspeakers who migrated from Akwamu, Anecho in Togo, Akwapim, and surrounding areas.

### Gaun Tribe

The Guan are believed to have begun to migrate from the Mossi region of modern Burkina around A.D. 1000. Moving gradually through the Volta valley in a southerly direction, they created settlements along the Black Volta, throughout the Afram Plains, in the Volta Gorge, and in the Akwapim Hills before moving farther south onto the coastal plains. Some scholars postulate that the wide distribution of the Guan suggests that they were the Neolithic population of the region. Later migrations by other groups such as the Akan, Ewe, and Ga-Adangbe into Guan-settled areas would then have led to the development of Guan-speaking enclaves along the Volta and within the coastal plains.

## Personal Space/Interactions

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Personal proxemics, how close people get to each other and how often they touch each other, may be surprising to those of you who are accustomed to western, eastern, or Latin American culture. Ghanaians will approach very close to you when speaking, and may even attempt to hold your hand. It is quite common to see men holding hands with men and women holding hands with women as they walk down the street. If this behavior is disconcerting for you keep in mind that it is unconscious for them as you formulate a response.

### Etiquette and Customs in Ghana

#### Meeting Etiquette

- Traditional or native greetings vary among the various ethnic groups.
- With foreigners the most common greeting is the handshake with a smile.
- When shaking hands between themselves Ghanaians will hold the right hand in the normal manner but will then twist and click each other's middle finger. **(This is very distinct and sometimes difficult, but your new friends in Ghana will be happy to teach you their greeting)**
- Unless you are experienced it is best to stick to a normal handshake!
- Christians will generally shake hands between the sexes; practising Muslims often will not shake hands with people of the opposite sex.
- Address Ghanaians by their academic, professional, or honorific title and their surname.
- As a sign of respect, males over the age of 30 may be addressed as "pah-pah" while women of the same age may be called "mah-mee". People over the age of 50 may be referred to as "nah-nah".

#### Gift Giving Etiquette

- Gifts need not be expensive; the thought is more important than the value.
- If invited to dinner at a Ghanaian's home, you are not expected to bring a gift.
- However, a gift for the children is always a nice touch as it shows a concern for family.
- Gifts should be given using the right hand only or both hands. Never use the left hand.
- Gifts should be wrapped, although there are no cultural taboos concerning paper colour.
- Gifts are not always opened when received.

#### Dining Etiquette

- Ghanaians enjoy entertaining in their homes and you should accept any invitation as a sign of friendship.
- Dress well; Ghanaians place a lot of emphasis on how people dress. You may need to remove your shoes.
- Greet elders or heads of family first.
- Ghanaians table manners are relatively formal.
- Wait to be told where to sit.
- A washing basin will be brought out before the meal is served; use it to wash your hands.
- Food is generally served from a communal bowl.
- Do not begin eating until the eldest male does.
- Eat from the section of the bowl that is in front of you. Never reach across the bowl to get something from the other side.
- If you do not want to eat with your hands then ask for utensils.
- If you use your hands then scoop the food with the thumb and first two fingers of the right hand. Do not use your left hand.

### Communication Style

Ghanaians are more indirect communicators. This means they take care not to relay information in any way that could cause issues, whether that be giving someone bad news, turning down an invitation, refusing a request or any other such matter. Ghanaians always want to protect their own and others' face as well as maintain harmonious relationships.

As a result they tend to use proverbs, wise sayings, analogies readily. This allows ideas or messages to be conveyed in a manner that does not seem so blatant. In fact people who are viewed as wise frequently speak in proverbs.

Silence is a common means of communication. If someone is uncomfortable with a question or do not think the asker will appreciate response, they will say nothing rather than make the other person uncomfortable.

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## Food

Soups are the primary component in Ghanaian cuisine and are eaten with fufu (either pounded plantain and cassava or yam), kokonte (cassava meal cooked into a paste), banku (fermented corn dough), boiled yam, rice, bread, plantain, or cassava. The most common soups are light soup, palmnut soup, and groundnut (peanut) soup. Jolof Rice, West Africa Curry, Kontonmire Stew or Palaver Sauce, Kele Wele - served as a dessert, are other popular choices.

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## Leisure Time

### Festivals

Ghana is a country that celebrates festivals. There are several rites and rituals that are performed throughout the year in various parts of the country. They cover the right of passage child-birth, puberty, marriage and death. To the majority of people, these celebrations provide all that is satisfying to their communities and families.

Many festivals include thrilling durbars of chiefs, when tribal leaders and Queen Mothers process in decorated palanquins, shaded by the traditional umbrellas, and supported by drummers and warriors discharging ancient muskets.

### Panafest

This festival is held every summer. It celebrates Ghanaian roots. People from other African countries as well as the African-Americans with roots in Ghana visit the country and celebrate their heritage.

### The Homowo Festival

The word "Homowo" actually means 'making fun of hunger.' Traditional oral history describes a time long ago when the rains stopped and the sea closed its gates. A deadly famine spread throughout the southern Accra Plains, the home of the Ga people. When the harvest finally arrived and food became plentiful, the people were so happy that they celebrated with a festival that ridiculed hunger.

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## Transportation

The most common means of transportation in Ghana is the Tro-Tro. From Wikipedia:

Tro Tro (Ghana)

Tro tros or just tros are van-like vehicles, ranging from small minibuses within cities to large vans to go between large cities. They used to be [[trucks] with bench-seating in the back. (This was the origin of their name: they used to typically be gaily decorated often with local proverbs or sayings e.g. "one tree fall down".)

A typical tro-tro will also have a "small boy", who is a young man responsible for rustling up passengers and for collecting the fares. "Small boy" is typically the last one on the truck before it leaves - often hanging precariously on the outside.

Typical tro-tros seat about 14 people-two in the front seat, and then three rows of four bench seats, which have a folding partition in order to maximise space. The larger vehicles can seat anywhere up to 26 people,

although competition for space and limited routes often means that they will be packed to beyond their limits. The ride is packed and uncomfortable, and there is often a great deal of jostling as people try to get out and in from seats at the back.

Tro-tros generally try to get as many people aboard as possible. You can pick up a tro-tro along the road, but all cities in Ghana have a main tro-tro station in order for you to find a route to almost anywhere within the country by some means or another, the biggest being Accra's New Tema Station. All tro-tros operate with a driver and a ride-along mate whose job it is to take money, open and close the door, and lean out the window looking for passengers.

These vehicles are maintained by the driver, and may be fairly dangerous, but they remain the main source of transport across the country or within the city for many people, with Ghana lacking a workable railway system. They should not be confused with the 'line' or 'drop' taxi's, which are, like the bush taxis described above, old cars which will run routes with shared passengers and one driver, or will be available for hire should the traveller pay for it.

Every journey by Tro-Tro is an adventure, an experience you will remember for a lifetime. You do want to make sure that if you board a Tro-Tro, it is in good running condition. This is especially true if you're embarking on a longer trip. For this, a local person or your program coordinator will know what's best.

Other options include chartered buses and private taxis. The chartered buses are generally more reliable and safe. They are larger buses, more in the most of the type of vehicle commonly pictured as a bus component of a transportation system. They are more expensive and mostly available only to prominent destinations i.e. Ho to Accra, Accra to Kumasi, etc. Private taxis roam the streets in all the major cities. You may at some point find yourself sharing one with another rider. Some are metered and others are not. In either case they are quite a common and reliable for of transport in and around the cities.

## Education System

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### From Wikipedia:

The Republic of Ghana has 12,630 primary schools, 5,450 junior secondary schools, 503 senior secondary schools, 21 training colleges, 18 technical institutions, two diploma-awarding institutions and five universities serving a population of 18 million;[1] this means that most Ghanaians have relatively easy access to good education. In contrast, at the time of independence in 1957, Ghana had only one university and a handful of secondary schools. In addition, research in the Ga District has found that approximately 15% of the children in Ga attended private schools unrecognised by the government.[2] In the past decade, Ghana's spending on education has been between 28 percent and 40 percent of its annual budget. However, according to Odenaho Ababio, President of the National House of Chiefs, many children only have access to basic education because of the private schools in their communities.[3]

Primary and middle school education is free and it is planned that it will be mandatory when enough teachers and facilities are available to accommodate all students. Pupils are enrolled in a nursery school and kindergarten prior to their 6-year primary education at age six. Under educational reforms implemented in 1987, they pass into a new junior secondary school system for 3 years of academic training combined with technical and vocational training, where they pass a Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE).

Those wishing to continue with their education move into the 3-year senior secondary school program. Most of the senior secondary schools provide boarding facilities in which most of the students use. Students select courses leading them to courses they may offer in the universities like General arts, General Science, Visual Arts and may other courses offered. At the end of the 3-year course in the senior secondary schools students are required to write an exam called West African Senior Secondary Certificate Exam(WASSCE). Other international exams are also taken such as SAT, TOEFL and IELTS. Entrance to universities is by examination following completion of senior secondary school. School enrollment totals almost 2 million: 1.3 million primary; 107,600 middle; 48,900 secondary; 21,280 technical; 11,300 teacher training; and 5,600 university.

Ghana Institute of Languages is one of the oldest Institutes to learn foreign languages. It has three branches in Accra, Kumasi and Tamale. In Accra the Institute is situated in Adabraka, in the old campus of Workers college not far from TUC. The Institute consists of three schools; the school of Languages, the school of Bilingual Secretary, and the school of Translation. Seven foreign modern languages are learned there,

namely English, French, German, Portuguese, Spanish, Russian and Arabic. The institute has about 2,000 students in the academic year 2008.

There is currently an on-going educational reform in Ghana, and teaching is mainly in English, Ghana's official language.

## Language

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The major languages spoken are Twi, Fante, Ga, Hausa, Dagbani, Ewe and Nzema. English is the official language of Ghana, and most everyone you meet will speak some degree of English.

The Ashante are part of the Akan tribes who speak various dialects of Twi. The language is very rich in proverbs, the use of which is taken to be a sign of wisdom. Euphemisms are very common, especially about events connected with death.

## Employment and the Economy

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### Industries

#### Agriculture

The country is mainly agricultural, with a majority of its workers engaged in farming. Common crops include Okro (Okra), bananas, and mangos.

#### Mining and petroleum

Main articles: Mining in Ghana and Petroleum industry in Ghana

#### Manufacturing

Ghana's industrial base is relatively advanced compared to many other African countries. Import-substitution industries include textiles; steel (using scrap); tires; oil refining; flour milling; beverages; tobacco; simple consumer goods; and car, truck, and bus assembly.

#### Services

Tourism has become one of Ghana's largest foreign income earners (ranking third in 1997), and the Ghanaian Government has placed great emphasis upon further tourism support and development.

The financial services in Ghana has seen a lot of reforms in the past years. Ghana through the Banking (Amendment) Act 2007 has include the awarding of General Banking license to qualified Banks and this allows Offshore Banks to operate in the country. Barclays Bank (Ghana) limited has become the first Bank in Ghana to be awarded the General banking license in the Country. It has therefore become possible for non-resident individuals and foreign companies to open offshore Bank Accounts in Ghana.

## Religion

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60% Christian, 15% Muslim, 25% traditional African religions

Ghana has the highest percentage of Christians in West Africa, but the belief in traditional animist religions is still extremely common

## Music

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Ghana is often described as a land of festivals, music, and traditional dances. There is hardly any community, clan, or tribe which lacks an occasion to celebrate annually.

There are three main types of music: ethnic or traditional music, normally played during festivals and at funerals; "highlife" music, which is a blend of traditional and 'imported' music; and choral music, which is performed in concert halls, churches, schools and colleges.

## Musical Instruments

### Axatse

is the name of this rattle or idiophone. It is constructed by hollowing out a gourd or calabash. Then beads are attached to it with some string which is woven around it in a fishnet style design (more info... )

### Gankogui

is the name of this double bell or gong. It is constructed from iron. In Ewe music in general, and during Atsiā in particular, gankogui keeps the time. (more info... )

### Kaganu

is a narrow drum or membranophone. It is about two feet tall, its head is about three inches in diameter and it is open at the bottom. (more info... )

### Kidi

is a drum which is about two feet tall, its head is about nine inches in diameter and has a closed bottom. Kidi responds to calls from the lead drummer. (more info... )

### Sogo

is the largest of the supporting drums used to play Atsiā. In some other pieces it is used as a lead drum. It is about two and a half feet tall, its head is about ten inches in diameter and it is closed at the bottom. (more info... )

### Atsimevu

is the lead drum. It is a narrow drum approximately four feet tall and its head is about eleven inches in diameter (more info... ) Kpalogo Drum

Kpalogo

### Childs Drum

Carved from a single piece of wood, covered in skin to create the drum head. It belongs to the percussion family and is classified as a membranophone.

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