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# GHANA



**AMIZADE**  
Global Service-Learning



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## GHANA VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

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### **Introduction**

This Handbook was written to provide you with useful information regarding your participation in an Amizade sponsored program. It answers many of the frequently asked questions by previous participants. We encourage your feedback on how it can be improved for future participants. Please read this entire handbook carefully and contact our office if you have any questions.

### **Amizade's Mission & Vision**

At Amizade, our mission is to empower individuals and communities through worldwide service and learning. Our vision is to create an equitable world where all people can connect freely and forge lasting friendships.

### **Amizade's Commitment**

At the heart of Amizade is the sincere belief that intercultural understanding & the development of global citizens is essential to our increasingly connected global world. We are committed to providing you with an intercultural experience that allows you to make concrete contributions to a community resulting in a deeper understanding of your role in the global community.

### **Approach to Service**

#### **Ethic of Service**

Amizade strives to promote an "ethic of service" on all our programs. This means that we envision the entire experience as one of service to our fellow human beings. There will be scheduled time for completing service projects on each program but we also encourage you to carry your ethic of service with you throughout the program. You can do this by volunteering to help with food preparation, cleaning, or various other daily tasks.

As guests in the host community, Amizade volunteers are encouraged to act respectfully in all community interactions. The global service experience provides a unique opportunity to learn from the traditions, beliefs, and customs of a new community. Since most Amizade volunteers come from outside of the community, they are often seen as "ambassadors" representing their countries and are able to use this opportunity to share positively about their culture. At the same time, volunteers have the unique opportunity of experiencing another culture while taking the time to absorb and respect new views.

## **Volunteer Opportunities**

Our service partner is the Peace and Humanity Foundation. Amizade, in partnership with Peace and Humanity Foundation, organizes a variety of projects, including the construction of primary or secondary schools, roads, and hospitals, as well as reforestation, cocoa plantation, literacy projects, community development, oil palm production, and AIDS awareness campaigns. Each project is designed to assist communities on projects they decide are needed. Currently, Amizade is assisting in building a community library and computer center for the Jukwa village. Please contact your coordinator for more detailed information about your volunteer program.

## **The On-Site Experience**

### **The Amizade Experience**

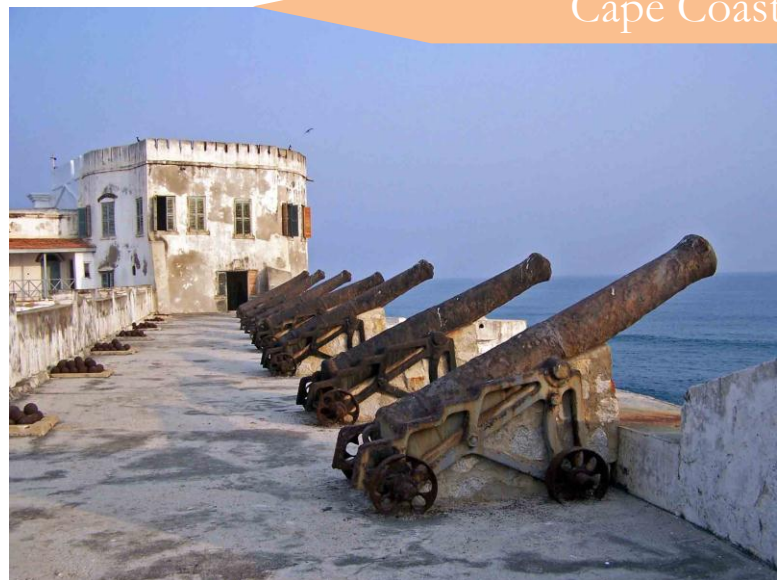
The time that you spend in Ghana is sure to be one filled with many new experiences: new outlooks, new cultures, and new situations. Therefore, the Amizade experience is enhanced by looking at some of the things that have been written in relation to the country and the issues over the last several years, getting a rough idea of what's happening, and going with an informed set of questions in mind. The entire experience is about getting in deep enough and starting to dream enough to realize that your time abroad can't possibly be enough to see and understand all of Ghana or Africa, but it can be enough to get an idea of it, connect with new friends, meet and struggle with some significant challenges, make connections, create difference, and begin to understand an entirely different kind of place. That's really a lot for such a short amount of time, and much of it will happen.

And all of this will take place in the context of a relatively unpredictable environment. Unpredictable does not mean that it is unsafe. Groups of students and volunteers have been to Ghana many times before. All work through our partner individuals and community organizations.

Unpredictable simply describes the “climate” of Ghana as a developing country. That means it's characterized by something called a “lack of redundancy.” Lack of redundancy refers to an absence of continuously present and reliable systems and products. With electricity, that means it may go out sporadically. With transportation, it means there may be no real bus “schedule.” In stores or restaurants, it may mean the things they sell are not what they advertise outside, but rather whatever they have in stock (or can quickly get from a neighbor) inside. All of this relates to an absolutely essential ongoing Amizade motto, which is:

### **“Okay, Good.”**

“Okay, good” refers to moments when we show up for transit at the right time, yet quickly learn that transit will not be arriving for eight hours. “Okay, good,” we have an opportunity to hang out in Ghana. “Okay, good” refers to moments when we long for some familiar comfort foods, but we have another helping of the same, exotic local foods. “Okay, good,” we have a great deal more exotic local food than most of those around us. “Okay, good” refers to times when we're crammed into transportation (cars, vans, trains) in a way that we did not previously believe was possible. “Okay, good,” we have transportation and are moving to our desired destination more easily than most people in the area. “Okay, good” is about remembering – even when we feel that we are struggling – that we are fortunate for the opportunities to travel and serve; that we are still in amazing places with incredible people; and that life will go on even though (unlike in our US



Cape Coast Castle

environment) the day-to-day life is just not all that predictable. Of course, “Okay, good” is also useful when the last leg of the return flight to the US doesn't connect at the right time!

### **Amizade Staff**

Amizade programs are staffed by a variety of motivated, trained people. We encourage you to get to know the staff members that will be coordinating your volunteer program. Any concerns or questions during the in-country experience should be directed to the appropriate Amizade staff.

### **Site Director, Chris Nyame**

The site director is the primary program contact responsible for coordinating volunteers. The site director is responsible for coordination of logistics such as greeting volunteers, arranging housing and meals, setting up cultural experiences with local community members, and leading reflection discussions. Coordination also involves setting up the service project, arranging transportation to and from various locations, partnering with local masons and builders, procuring building supplies, and any other related planning. Chris Nyame and his staff will work closely with the Amizade volunteers during the program.

### **On-Site Orientation**

Upon arrival in Ghana, Amizade will hold a program orientation for all volunteers. Many issues such as health, safety, and security will be addressed as well as site logistics, standard procedures, and other important information that will benefit each volunteer to know.

### **Group Living**

Amizade programs generally have a strong core element built around group living. For many people, living, volunteering, studying, completing projects, and spending leisure time in a group may be new. Therefore we ask all Amizade volunteers to approach group interaction with flexibility, openness, and constructive communication. We strive to respect each other's space and needs while also supporting each other to achieve personal goals on the program.

### **Flexibility**

Flexibility on behalf of the participants is the most important element on an Amizade program. Itineraries may change at the last minute in order to meet current community needs or participate in unexpected opportunities for recreational, educational, or cultural exploration. Many aspects of traveling are unpredictable and time-consuming, so be prepared to enjoy the unexpected surprises and embrace the opportunities they provide!

### **Canopy Walk at Kakum National Park**



### **Housing**

Volunteers will stay in either a house, which Amizade has rented for the program, or a local hotel. Please check with your coordinator to find out what accommodations have been made for your particular program.

### **Internet Access**

Larger cities in Ghana generally have good internet access with access to e-mail, social networks and internet communication services like Skype. However, in rural regions, the internet can be inconsistent and/or very slow. When the internet is available, it is an extremely cheap and quick way to stay in contact with family and

friends back home.

### **Meals**

Eating abroad is an adventure of new tastes, smells, and meals! Since you are living as part of the community, you will have the opportunity to try genuine local dishes. You may be eating the same or similar food every regularly if that is the local custom. In Ghana, there are many delicious dishes, such as beans and fried plantains, fufu (mashed yam or cassava), kenkey (fermented corn meal) and ground nut (peanut) soup. A few grocery stores in town carry products common in the US (cookies, cheese and other pre-packaged items). The Kotokraba Market in Cape Coast has seasonal fresh produce: pineapples, peanuts, oranges and bananas.

### **Note to Vegetarians**

Vegetarianism is not very common in Ghana. Most Ghanaians eat fish, chicken or some other meat each day; however, fresh fruit is widely available, as is vegetable stew and beans and rice. Amizade will make every effort to provide vegetarian options, but sometimes they will need to be supplemented with further protein and vitamins. We encourage vegetarians to bring healthy snacks and vitamins with them. Please indicate your dietary needs and restrictions on your Amizade Medical Form so we can best prepare for you.

### **Transportation On-Site**

Transportation will be arranged for the duration of the program and will be provided by Amizade.

### **Laundry**

Volunteers will do their laundry by hand so it is recommended to bring light easily washable clothing. Detergent can be purchased in Ghana.

### **Climate and Weather**

Ghana's average temperatures range between 75°F - 90°F with the primary rainy season lasting from April until June.

### **Cultural and Recreational Activities**

Ghana offers visitors a vast variety of cultural and recreational activities in both rural and urban settings. Ranging from coastal areas, to rainforests, to mountains, volunteers will have the ability to explore an array of environments. The bustling capital of Accra is diverse and provides visitors with plenty to see and do. Ghanaians are well-known for being very friendly which helps to enhance activities for those visiting the country.

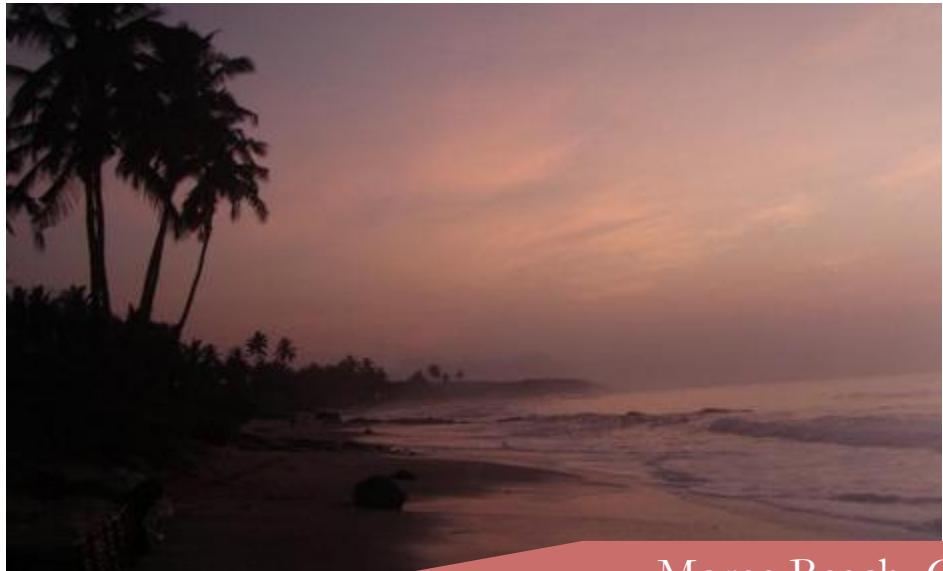
### **Culture and History**

Ghana is an extraordinary country, rich in history, culture and natural beauty. With such diversity in language, religion and lifestyle, Ghana is sure to be an unforgettable travel experience. For more information on Ghana, please visit the following websites:

US Department of State Country Background Notes: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2860.htm>

BBC Country Profiles: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country\\_profiles/1023355.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1023355.stm)

Encyclopedia.com: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/G/Ghana.asp>



Moree Beach, Ghana

## Preparing For Your Program

### **Transportation to Site**

Amizade participants will fly to and from the airport in Accra. An Amizade staff person will meet you at the airport to transport you to the program site. All volunteers

### Palm oil plantation



are required to arrive on or before the scheduled program start date and depart on or after the scheduled finish date. If volunteers arrive early or stay late, the individual volunteer will need to make his/her own arrangements for food, lodging, and airport transfer.

### **Travel Documents**

The following information is for US citizens going abroad. If you are a non-US citizen, you must check with the consulate in your country regarding travel documents including passport and visa requirements.

Travelers should obtain the latest information and details from the Embassy of Ghana, 3512 International Drive, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008, (202) 686-4520.

A passport, tourist visa and proof of yellow fever vaccination are required for entry into Ghana. Contact your coordinator for information regarding the completion of the visa application. Please note that passports can take up to 6 weeks to process, so if you do not have one or it has expired, please address this immediately. Information regarding US passports is available at: <http://www.travel.state.gov/>

Please be prepared in case of losing your wallet, passport, or other travel documents. Bring copies of all your important travel documents and monetary documents, especially your passport and visa, and store one set of copies in your luggage while leaving another set of copies with your emergency contact at home.

### **Electrical Voltage and Outlets Abroad**

The electrical outlets of Ghana allow 230V at 50 Hertz to pass through them and are utilized with both D and G outlet plugs. By comparison, the electrical outlets of the United States allow 120V at 60 Hertz to pass through them and are utilized with A and B outlet plugs. Use this information to purchase any electrical voltage and/or plug adapters for your electronic belongings. Keep in mind that most laptops have the “black box converter” attached to their power cords.

## Health & Safety

### **General Notes**

- Traveling often affects one’s health so it is imperative that all volunteers are in good physical condition.
- Typical travel ailments include stomach upsets and diarrhea, bug bites, jet lag, minor cuts, scrapes, bruises, and sunburn. Please feel free to bring travel-sized portions of over the counter medicines such as headache medicine, stomach medicines, sun block, bug spray, band-aids, etc.
- An on-site Amizade staff member will have a first aid kit.
- Check with your medical physician regarding further information about healthy travel abroad.

## Immunizations

Participants in Amizade programs are solely responsible for receiving immunizations. Amizade defers all inquiries to the current recommendations and requirements from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). All participants are expected to consult the CDC for required and recommended immunizations for the country or countries they will be visiting for their Amizade program. See your doctor at least 4–6 weeks before your trip to allow time for immunizations to take effect.

**Current information regarding immunizations can be found on the CDC website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov). Please refer to the website for further information.**

## For more information:

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1600 Clifton Rd.  
Atlanta, GA 30333 USA  
(404) 639-3311 (404) 639-3312 (TTY)

Public Inquiries 1-404-639-3534 and 1-800-311-3435  
National Immunization Hotline (English) 1-800-232-2522  
National Immunization Hotline (Spanish) 1-800-232-0233  
Traveler's Health 1-877-394-8747

Traveler's Health Website: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm>

Email form: <http://www.cdc.gov/netinfo.htm>

## Prescription Medicines

If you have prescription medicines, bring them in the original prescription bottles with your name on them and bring an ample supply for the duration of your program. In some countries, certain medicines are not as readily available.

## The Best Medicine is “Preventative Medicine”

Throughout the program, please rest, drink plenty of water, and take care to avoid overexposure to the sun. While on the program, let the Amizade staff know if you have any concerns about your health and contact them immediately if you experience a health emergency.

## Amizade Medical and Insurance Form

All volunteers are required to complete and submit the Amizade Medical and Insurance Form prior to participation. It is imperative that you complete this form as comprehensively as possible so that the Amizade staff can best address medical situations on site. On this form you will also list your immunization record. Please consult with your physician regarding your healthy participation in the service work and activities for your program and recommended immunizations.

Unless otherwise noted, international traveler's insurance is included in your program cost. Our policies are underwritten by CMI Insurance.

## Safety

As a volunteer in the community, you will have local companions and friends. Volunteers should observe and imitate local customs regarding safety. Regardless of where you are it is best to travel in pairs, especially at night.



West African Drumming & Dancing

Amizade highly recommends taking a taxi after dark. Be cautious with your money and make sure you store it in a safe place or money belt.

Trust your instincts. If you do not feel safe in a situation or someone's behavior is making you uncomfortable, get out of the situation immediately. Firmly say "no" to any invitation you do not want and turn away. Ignore persistent overtures.

## **Money Matters**

### **Currency Converter**

For the latest conversion rate for your country, please visit [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com).

### **Bringing Money Abroad**

Many of the costs of your program are included in the program fees for Amizade, so keep this in mind when you plan for the amount of money that you would like to bring from home. When traveling, having cash-on-hand is always a useful and wise idea. However, it is recommended that you bring an amount of cash that meets your needs but does not hugely exceed the amount you would typically spend over the course of a few days. Upon arriving in Ghana, there are exchange bureaus. Banks in larger cities will also have currency exchange services. Nevertheless, it is highly recommended that, for the purpose of money access, ATM

machines are utilized. With ATMs, exchange rates

are applied automatically and are generally up-to-date with the current rates.

### **ATMs**

Perhaps the best, most highly recommended way to access money while abroad is utilizing ATMs. ATMs can be easily found within any larger city in Ghana, such as Accra and Cape Coast. Jukwa, however, has no access to ATM machines. Visa is the most widely accepted card in Ghana (and often, worldwide). ATMs automatically apply

The library in Jukwa, Ghana



exchange rates and are generally up-to-date with the current international rates. It is very important to inform your bank that you will be using your card to withdrawal money while in Ghana. This will help to avoid them from issuing a "hold" on your card which prevents one from withdrawing money. As always, use common sense and care when using an ATM and planning the amount needed for your activities.

## **Packing List**

### **What to Wear**

First and foremost, participants should plan and pack according to the weather, climate and temperature. As previously stated, Ghana experiences a generally stable climate with temperatures ranging from 75°F - 90°F. Keep in mind that, depending on your service placement while on-site, you may consider bringing clothing

that you don't mind getting a little dirty. It is also important to remember that you are acting as "diplomats." While abroad, you represent not only your country of origin, but also your university or organization, Amizade and even yourself. It is highly recommended that, along with packing for the climate of the region, you pack clothing that is tasteful, respectful and conservative.

### **PLEASE PACK LIGHTLY!**

You should bring a maximum of two bags. Ideally, this includes one medium-sized suitcase/duffel bag and a smaller daypack for daily activities. You should be able to carry your luggage comfortably by yourself. Rolling luggage does not always work effectively in developing countries. Please use your best judgment regarding valuables. Amizade does not recommend that volunteers bring expensive jewelry, electronics, etc. Amizade is not reliable for lost or stolen articles.

### **Strongly Encouraged Packing List:**

- Documents: passport, airline tickets, personal health insurance information, and cash, ATM/credit cards (and copies of each in a separate place)
  - Bring three copies of your passport
- Money belt or wallet
- Water bottle
- Amizade Journal
- Swahili Dictionary by Nicholas Awde
- Notebook and pens
- Watch
- Camera
- Converter/Adapter
- Flash Drive if applicable
- Towel and wash cloth
- Toiletries – just the basics such as toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo/conditioner, and soap
- Prescriptions in original bottles (remember to bring enough for the entire program!)
- Clothing
  - T-shirts
  - Two pair of pants
  - Bottoms
    - Men: 2-3 pairs of shorts
    - Women: 4-5 dresses or shirts which fall below the knees
  - One nice outfit
  - Socks and underwear
  - Pajamas
  - 1-2 long sleeve shirts
  - 1-2 jackets, including one rain jacket
- One pair of closed-toe, comfortable walking shoes
- One pair of sturdy sandals
- Sun protection: bandanas, hat, sunglasses and sun block
- Bug spray containing DEET

### **Recommended Packing List:**

- Family photos to share with the community
- Postcards of your hometown to share with the community
- Travel alarm clock
- Small day bag
- Over-the-counter medications (headache, stomach, band-aids, anti-itch cream)
- Shower shoes or flip-flops
- Laundry line and plastic clothes pins
- Modest bathing suit

- ❑ Flashlight & batteries
- ❑ Playing cards, some form of entertainment
- ❑ Hand sanitizer

### **Gifts**

You may choose to bring small gifts or thank you cards for community members. Photographs are generally appreciated around the world so feel free to collect addresses and mail pictures back if possible.

## **While You Are Away**

### **Culture Shock**

Culture shock is a term used to describe the emotional upset that may occur when a person travels to a new culture. When experiencing culture shock, people sometimes feel unsure about what is appropriate in the new culture, confused about how to manage daily tasks (such as banking or telephoning), frustrated with managing language and cultural barriers and generally vulnerable. This experience is normal and affects people at different times throughout a cultural immersion program. Remember to rest, eat and take care of your physical and emotional needs in order to function at your best!

### **Drug Use**

Amizade in no way encourages the use of or purchase of drugs while visiting any of our sites. As an organization, our primary concern is that of safety for our volunteers. For this reason, we adhere to a drug-free policy for all of our programs. We ask that all volunteers please respect this as a rule of Amizade. Failure to comply with this rule is grounds for removal from the program.

### **Contacting Home**

Ghana has several cellular service providers. However, it is important to remember that cellular service may not be available in all areas of your travels in Ghana. It is recommended that if you desire a cellular phone while on-site, you purchase a prepaid phone upon arrival in Ghana. World Phones are typically very expensive and some participants have experienced difficulties while on-site with World Phones purchased at home. Prepaid wireless phones are inexpensive and incoming calls do not incur any fees on you! Also keep in mind that internet access is available in Juwka, Cape Coast, and Accra.

### **Amizade Contact Information**

If someone from home needs to contact a volunteer with an emergency message, they can phone the Amizade US office to relay a message.

- **Amizade US Office Phone:** 304-293-6049. This phone line is staffed 8 am - 4:30 pm EST from Monday - Friday.
  - Have the person leave:
    - Their name
    - Your name
    - Their phone number
    - The message to be relayed
- **Amizade Emergency Phone #:** 412-444-5166. This phone line is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week during volunteer programs.

To call the United States from Ghana, dial 00-1-area code-local number. For instance, if you were to call Amizade from Ghana, you would dial 00-1-304-293-6049.

## **Returning Home**

### **Reverse Culture Shock**

Many participants find that they encounter difficulties when transitioning home. Volunteers will be happy to return home and visit with family and friends but after the initial reunions take place, they often find that they experience problems when trying to communicate the experience they had abroad. Many people feel alienated, knowing that they have grown while many of those around them remain the same. It may help to connect with others who had travel similar experiences, as they understand the need to talk about the experience in greater detail. If you would like to be connected with past participants from an Amizade program, please let an Amizade staff member know, and we will facilitate that for you.