



TRIP NOTES

Ghana Building & Teaching

Join a group of like minded volunteers to experience and contribute to daily life in a rural Ghanaian village. Split your time between a building project and teaching at a local school. Working alongside local builders, staying in the community and spending time with the kids, you'll become an essential part of the community. This project will tackle needs that have been identified by your host community to ensure that your financial and physical investment is sustainable long into the future. Take part in a unique experience where you can really make a difference to a Ghanaian community.

Itinerary Disclaimer

This itinerary is correct at time of printing. Please note: Our itineraries are updated during the year to incorporate improvements stemming from past travellers' comments and our own research. Our brochure is usually released in Dec/Jan each year. As such the information given in this itinerary may be slightly different to that in the brochure.

It is VERY IMPORTANT that you print and review a final copy of your Trip Notes a couple of days prior to travel, in case there have been changes that affect your plans.

Itinerary - Day 1 (Saturday)

If arriving on day 1 of the itinerary a complimentary airport pickup is provided. You must provide Madventurer with flight arrival details including flight number and arrival time.

Starting in Accra, Ghana.

Meet your leader and your group in Accra. Please try to be at the hotel for no later than 7pm when we will have a welcome meeting with rest of group and leader. If your flight is delayed or you are not schedule to arrive until later that evening please do not worry as your trip leader may do the orientation meeting in the village instead.

You will spend the first night in Accra and we normally set off to our village in a rural part of Ghana the following morning (Sunday), depending on any flight delays etc. You will be taken in the local style tro tro (mini bus) (approx. 4-5 hrs) and enjoy our first views of the magnificent lush hills.

Travelling along the road look out for bustling crowds on their way to market carrying anything from sacks of rice to live chickens on local transport and the back of bicycles. Arrival at our project house will be marked by a welcome from our host family, head teacher or community representative.

You will have the opportunity to unpack and pick your spot in one of the shared rooms. Accommodation is in a shared house with your group. Your house will be close to a water source but may not have running water. You will have a shower cubicle either indoor or outdoor and you will take the traditional 'bucket shower'. Electricity may not be available but alternatives will be provided - usually paraffin lamps which create a really cozy environment in the evenings. You will be given a chance to charge phones at least every weekend. Beds will be mattresses on the floor and bedrooms are shared with your fellow adventurers. You will have a social area such as a living room and there may be a garden to enjoy relaxing in after school. Storage will be limited but we will provide a lockable room for valuables. Your accommodation is selected in a secure, proximate location to the school. A local cook is provided which often will be a member of the host family within whose house you are staying.

On your first day in the village you will have the option of taking a tour of the school and local village. Take time to soak up the scenery and meet some of the people you will be working with both in the school and the village. You will be given a chance to see the building site and see where you will be working on a new project or continuing an existing one. Enjoy the first of many 'how are you?' greetings from groups of giggling children who will follow us when we're out and about in the community.

Our first night in the village will be settling into our new house, planning our first day in school and enjoying our first meal provided by our local cook or host family. Every Madventurer project is unique and the experience is enriched by your input and commitment, the more you put into your project the more you will get out of it.

Days 2-13

Meet the school community from the teachers to the board of parents and chairs to the many small faces peering curiously at you. The welcome smiles will be many and widespread.

Get to know your surroundings, find out where the local 'store' is and what delights they sell, be introduced to the nearest water source is and how your community makes the journey home with it. Enjoy the hearty local cuisine that will build up lots of energy for the busy weeks to come. Food is very much seasonal in Ghana enjoy the fresh local fruit and vegetables. Mark the first sight of your new building or plot with a photo, the scene will soon change.

We will establish the routine at school, and it will depend on the schools timetable and your traveling date/month. Please be aware during school holidays or exam periods there will be reduced teaching opportunities.

This can be the perfect opportunity to concentrate on the building aspect of your trip. Your usual working hours are 8am - 4pm with breaks during the day; the hours can vary from day to day.

You will have an opportunity to take a morning break for fresh fruit taken at school as well as lunch. Throughout the day we will rotate teaching as and when lessons are timetabled. When not teaching we can return to work on the building site or plan our next lessons.

Each day we have the opportunity to explore the community after school and take part and organise activities with the community. We can take walks and discover the countryside or help out on the local farm or assist with any planting/weeding.

There are many opportunities that await you in your village. You can help set up other programmes if you have any relevant experience or support projects such as recycling or energy saving projects that tend to be unheard of in rural communities. Take the chance to visit the local clinic and learn about medical care. The key is getting to know your village and how they need your support.

You may be able to join local adults in their social groups. We also can look for opportunities to play sport with youth groups – football, volleyball and netball are always winners. Each project reaches a 2 week milestone so your contributions will be recognised at the end of every milestone.

Day 14 Accra – end of a two week project

You will be returned to Accra, the end point for no later than 7pm. Please see important “Finishing Point Instructions” below.

Days 14-27

Relationships in your community will be developing so that you can take on more responsibility in your work. Running classes for adults or researching your village's particular challenges will lead to exciting side projects.

Tackling side projects such as educational murals or organising sports programmes will inspire your community to work with you and achieve their goals that also become yours. You may even surprise yourself with how much local dialect you have picked up. Make sure you try your hand at preparing local dishes with your cook, or sharing your own culinary skills. You'll be making lifelong friends and if you're good at helping in the kitchen, your cook may even become your honorary Ghanaian Mum. Evenings will now have favourite games to play to occupy the few hours after dinner and before bed, sometimes with village children coming to pay you a visit.

Your building will be changing radically from when you first began - make sure you photograph every stage so you can look back and appreciate the hard work that you've all put in.

Appreciate every day with your new friends in the community - the time will fly but the memories will last forever.

Day 28 Accra – end of a four week project

You will be returned to Accra for no later than 7pm. Please see important “Finishing Point Instructions” below.

Days 28-41

In your final weeks on the project your ideas will have been implemented in the building project and classroom and a good knowledge of the local culture gained. Give this time your all and see the results of your hard work on the building site and in the school. You will be leaving behind a sustainable project for the community and local children who will have benefited from your classroom work. Visit the families of those you have worked alongside and share a meal. Learn how to make local palm wine to prepare for the ceremony to come. There will be plenty of opportunities for exchange of songs and stories and don't forget contact details with your fellow travellers and friends from the village. Watch the last sunrise in your village to mark a unique experience that will never fade from memory and is only the beginning of your bonds with your home away from home.

Day 42

Leaving your community will be marked with a special ceremony that will incorporate many members of the whole village. This is your chance to demonstrate and display the good work that you have achieved in the classroom, on the building site and out amongst the community. Be prepared for the lengthy Ghanaian speeches of thanks, heartwarming as every word is said with genuine appreciation. You can complete the event with dancing and song, these make vibrant memories to cherish for always.

You will be returned to Accra the finishing point for no later than 7:00pm. Please see important “Finishing Point Instructions” below.

We recommend you consider booking at least 1 extra night's accommodation after this trip to see all the sights of Accra.

Arrival & other Complications

We don't expect any problems (and nor should you!) but if for any reason you are unable to commence your group trip as scheduled, please contact the Madventurer HQ on 0845 121 1996.

If you arrive on the first day of the project (Saturday) you will get collected for free from the airport in Accra. It may take you up to an hour to clear immigration, change your cash at the forex counter, collect your bags from the conveyor belt, and clear customs. Once you are outside in the busy pick up area your crew will meet you but if you have not made contact with our crew within 30 minutes, stay in the pick up area inside the barriers and please give the crew a ring on their emergency contact number, which you should take from www.madventurer.net before you travel.

Please do not leave the airport without talking to our crew first. Crew will be wearing a Mad t-shirt or carrying a Madventurer sign and be wary of any porters who will say that they may be from Madventurer to carry your bags as they will want paying.

No refund is available on missed transfers or portions of your trip owing to a different flight arrival or delayed flight arrival. Any additional cost incurred in order to meet up with your group is at your own expense.

Before 7pm on day 1 and after 7pm on the last day of your project, which is either day 14, 28 or 42 (depending on your project length) Madventurer and our crew are not responsible for you and will not always be available for assistance.

Pre-trip accommodation - *If you arrive early*

If you arrive early and would like to chill out before the start of your project then we recommend staying at the Paloma Hotel. It's a 2 star mid-priced business and tourist hotel located in the heart of the city not far from the airport (depending on traffic) They offer an airport pick-up service, just remember to ask at time of booking. All pre-trip accommodation/transport needs to be budgeted for separately.

If you book pre-trip accommodation please remember to take down the hotels contact details and booking information (including airport pick-up details) before you set off. If you have any problems give the hotel a ring directly. Please also take our overseas crew's number and give them a call if you have any emergencies.

Check hotel reception for a message from your Leader about what time you will be picked up on day 1.

You can book the hotel direct from our website. Just follow the link below then choose country "Ghana" city "Accra". This will bring up a list of accommodation including the Paloma Hotel. www.madventurer.com/page/hotel-quotes

Pre-trip accommodation

Paloma Hotel
PO Box 02394
Osu
Accra
Ghana
Phone: (233) 21 - 228700
Fax: (233) 21 - 231815

Joining Point Instructions - Saturday

If arriving on day 1 of the itinerary a complimentary airport pickup is provided. You must provide Madventurer with flight arrival details including flight number and arrival time/date no later than 2 weeks before departure.

Accommodation on the first night (Saturday)

Please bear in mind this hotel is recommended for anyone arriving early, or who will already be in country as it has good facilities and offers a good airport collection service. This is not the accommodation that you will stay at on the first night of your project.

The first night of your project (Saturday) you will be staying in a back packers/hostel in Accra chosen by our overseas crew. The accommodation will depend on group numbers, arrival times and availability, there are a few that we use on a regular basis including "The Salvation Army Hostel" and "The Pink Hostel". We like to keep our group together so the crew will arrange the accommodation in country accordingly.

You will spend the Saturday in Accra as we don't like to travel at night and you will probably be tired after a long flight. You will then set off to the village location on Sunday Morning bright and early. This will depend if there is any flight delays etc.

Finishing Point Instructions - Accra

We will return you to Accra the finishing point, on the last day of your project no later than 7:00pm. **From here you will need to make your own way back to the airport.** We find that volunteers will share a taxi to the airport, go on to do some independent travel, join an organized overland adventure, or stay in Accra for an extra night or the weekend. We recommend booking 1 night's extra accommodation at the end of your trip if you wish to see the sights of Accra before you leave.

All projects finish on a Friday and accommodation for this night is not included.

We recommend you book your flight departing Accra after 10.00pm on the Friday, no earlier to allow for any traffic delays. You have the option to leave for onward travel from this point, share a meal with your group or stay in Accra. If you need accommodation for the last night in Accra (Friday) it's very important that you let our crew know as soon as possible and well in advance of your departure date so they can help to advice on hostels/backpackers/hotels.

Post-trip accommodation – if you want to say longer

If you would like to spend the weekend/week in Accra before you fly home then we recommend the Paloma Hotel. Most of our volunteers will arrange post-trip accommodation in country in order to share rooms or airport transfers. Our overseas crew can help to organise this.

Group Size

Min 4, Max 16 - We need a min of 4 volunteers for our departure dates to be guaranteed!

Accommodation

Accommodation does vary from project to project, but typically venturers and Crew live together in a house (neighbouring house) in the village. Rooms are shared, and you are likely to be sleeping on a mattress on a concrete floor. The majority of houses will not have running water, so be prepared to have to carry water from an outside tank to wash – the great African bucket shower!

Electricity supply is available on some of the projects, but not all of them, which would mean that you will take the Sun's lead and learn early mornings and early bedtimes. If you have electricity on your project it may be intermittent and subject to frequent fluctuations.

We usually employ a local cook to provide meals, which will be mainly traditional dishes. It can take a bit of time to get used to fufu, spicy goat stew and red-red. You will be encouraged to help with cooking so that everyone is involved in getting stuck-in to the running of the project.

Private multi-share house: 2 week project = 13 nights
 4 week project = 27 nights
 6 week project = 41 nights

Food

This takes a bit of getting used to! You will become very well acquainted with 'Fufu' during your time in Ghana. It's made using plantain (a lot like a banana in appearance but hard and starchy) and cassava (a woody shrub with edible roots a bit like potato) which are boiled and then pounded furiously to make a dough ball, which is served with soup or stew.

Jollof rice is another firm favourite and is a spicy dish containing rice, peppers, tomato paste, onions and usually some kind of meat or fish. Vegetarians are well catered for as most meals are made without meat, which is then added near the end. If you like seafood you'll be in your element, particularly if you travel to the coast on weekends, where you can eat the freshest grilled fish, and try some you may not have had before such as Tilapia and Snapper.

The most traditional of Ghanaian food is served at 'chop bars' offering the equivalent of fast food, which might be just as fast through your system, if your stomach is not accustomed to the food on offer! These chop bars often have quite amazing names as well such as 'observers are worried chop bar' (possibly one to avoid!).

You'll also see people trying to sell you 'grasscutter' at the side of roads. These are quite big rodents, a little like guinea pigs, which are sliced open and stretched out on a wooden cross and then smoked. If all this sounds a little too authentic for your tastes, then don't worry as you will be able to get a western fix of food at weekends if you do some independent travel, especially in Accra where there are lots of western restaurants.

Activities Included

This is a list of included activities on this trip. If you choose not to participate in the included activities on this itinerary, the cost will not be refunded.

Every Community project is slightly different depending on the needs of each community/village. Our key focus is youth development and the provision and improvement of health, education and sanitation facilities. In the past Madventurer has helped to build sanitation blocks, school rooms, pipes for fresh water pumps, basic housing maintenance (sinks), water storage tanks, community centres and clinics.

Building:

Undertaking labouring work usually broken into 3 phases you will assist and learn from skilled local tradesman. The building project will be run by a local foreman. You will take part in the following activities depending on what phase of the project you are working on.

Phase 1 - Digging, brick laying, concrete mixing, carrying water
Phase 2 - Brick laying and basic carpentry, passing/carrying materials
Phase 3 – Plastering, sanding, painting, cleaning/brushing
Not every building is the same so you may get to do more than just the activities listed above. The breakdown above is based on a 2 room classroom block.
Depending on the aim of the Project building activities will vary.

Teaching:

Liaising with teachers and your leader you will conduct classes individually or in pairs in English, Math's, Sports, Creative Arts and other subjects, depending on the schools timetable.

Additional activities range from sports, healthcare and conservation depending on the needs of your community, school timetables and local resources. A lot of the village schools we work in teach on a black board with chalk, and share text books.

Optional Activities

All optional activities are entirely your choice and are not included in price of this trip. Your weekends are free so you can choose to do some independent travel with your group, or chill out and relax in the village. Your leader can help to recommend points of interest and places to stay though they may not travel with you on this excursion. This is your time to relax in the village, enjoy the independence of discovering your host country's attractions or catch up on emails in the nearest town. You will need to be back at your host village no later than 5pm on the Sunday evening. **All independent travel away from the project site needs to be budgeted for separately including transport/food/accommodation.**

Culture Shock

Expect to rough it every now and again, whether it's very simple and basic group-share accommodation at a homestay, a packed public bus where you are forced to stand, a cold shower or an encounter with a squat toilet.

Visas

Please be aware that visa requirements may change, so you should check the Ghana High Commission website for the most up to date information. You can find this by doing a quick Google search for "Ghana High Commission"

Please note that visas are the responsibility of the individual traveller. The visa requirements for your trip vary depending on where you are from and where you are going. We keep the following information up to date as much as possible, but rules do change. It is important that you check for yourself.

Tourist: £30 (single-entry); £40 (multiple-entry; six months)

Valid for entry three months from the date of issue. However, length of stay is at the discretion of airport officials and only 1 month is guaranteed. Visas may be extended when in Ghana. All nationalities should check with the Ghanaian Embassy for more information.

Visas are only valid for entry to Ghana within 3 months of issue. If you apply for your visa more than 3 months in advance of your arrival in Ghana, the Ghana High Commission will hold onto your application and passport, and process it later to ensure that you are within the 3 months validity.

You must be in possession of a full **passport** (not temporary), **valid for at least six months after the project or adventure**. If this is not the case, or if there is too much of a difference between your appearance now and your appearance on your passport photo, then you should apply for a new passport and allow plenty of time for the processing of your application.

For entry to Ghana, you will require a **Tourist Visa**, which must be obtained before you leave your home country. You can apply for a Ghana Tourist Visa in the UK either by post (special delivery) or in person at the Ghana High Commission in London.

This visa info is correct at the time of writing however, visa requirements can change and you should check with the relevant visa office before departure.

Flights and Travel Insurance

Madventurer work in partnership with STA Travel to offer you the best prices, flexibility and knowledge for all of your travel needs!

For a flight quote email madventurer@statravel.co.uk or call STA Travel on 0871 468 0668. STA are our travel partners and they have a dedicated member of staff to deal with all the Madventurer questions. Why not give them a call with your travel dates and airport details, along with your full name as printed on your passport (the one you will travel on) and telephone number/email address.

If you are unsure of arrival or departure dates and times to book your flights it's very important that you check with us first before making any confirmed plans, as amendments with airlines have to be paid for. Please do not arrive after the start date as our community projects are in rural locations (up to 5 hour drive outside the capital) and you can not miss this transfer.

Please note that under our terms and conditions we will not cancel a Trip less than 60 days before departure except for unforeseen circumstances outside of the Company's control. This means that you should not be booking any non-refundable flights more than 60 days ahead of departure in case we do not have sufficient numbers (usually a minimum of 4) to run the trip. We recommend refundable flights.

Use this opportunity to see the world! STA Travel can tailor-make your trip to suit your needs, so if you want to go traveling after your project with Madventurer or maybe visit friends or family in another country, let STA Travel know and they will organise it all. From Round the world tickets to discount cards, flights, accommodation and bus tours, STA Travel have it all.

Travel Insurance

STA travel will be able to help with Travel Insurance quotes as well. **Travel insurance is compulsory for all our trips**. We require that, at a minimum, you are covered for medical expenses including emergency repatriation. We strongly recommend that the policy also covers personal liability, cancellation, curtailment and loss of luggage and personal effects.

When travelling on a group trip, you will not be permitted to join the group until evidence of travel insurance and the insurance company's 24 hour emergency contact number has been provided to our Mad HQ in the UK via a pre-departure form.

If you have credit card insurance we will require details of the participating insurer/underwriter, the level of coverage, policy number and emergency contact telephone number rather than the Bank's name and credit card details. Please contact your bank for these details prior to arriving in-country.

For information on insurance cover please go to:
<http://www.madventurer.com/page/insurance-quotes> or give STA a call on 0871 468 0668.

Valuable or sentimental items

You are strongly advised not to take items of a valuable or personal nature like ipods, expensive jewellery/clothing etc. If you do decide to take digital cameras or phones please make sure these are covered in your personal travel insurance policy. Every policy will differ slightly so it's best to enquire about personal item cover.

Health

All travellers need to be in good physical health in order to participate fully in the group travel experience. If, in the opinion of our group leader, any traveller is unable to complete the itinerary without undue risk to themselves and/or the rest of the group, we reserve the right to exclude them from all or part of a trip without refund. We therefore ask that you read the itinerary in these trip notes thoroughly and then realistically self-assess your physical ability to complete the trip as described. Please consult with your doctor if you have any doubts.

For more general information on vaccinations and health please refer to the Inter Health link on our website, you will be given more info when you book up. For individual health advice you will need to visit your own doctor or travel nurse directly as well. They are the only one's that can recommend individual advice as they will have your medical records and details of any allergies etc.

Physical Preparation

Previous work experience is not required for work on the building site however a general level of fitness is very important bearing in mind that some labour can be intensive in hot weather conditions. Venturers are given every opportunity to take breaks when needed and encouraged to take them regularly. Some light exercise and preparation will be beneficial but you will find your body will also adapt and strengthen the more time you spend building, we stress that you do this at your own pace. **If in doubt seek medical advice prior to travel. If you have any medical conditions that we should be aware of please ensure that you include details of this in your pre-departure form. We may also ask you for a "Fit to travel" note from your doctor to confirm your booking.**

How to take your money

Currency exchange rates often fluctuate. For the most up to date rates please refer to the following websites: www.oanda.com or www.xe.com

The currency in Ghana is the Cedi (pronounced “see-dee”).

£1 = 2.4 Cedis (Oct 2009)

Ghanaian Cedis are only available once you get to Ghana. It is possible to change money in the arrivals hall when you land in Ghana.

We recommend taking as much cash as you feel comfortable carrying in Pounds Sterling (Euros and US Dollars are also widely accepted but note that US dollars must be dated post 2000 as notes dated before this will not be accepted). Small denominations offer poor exchange rates compared to larger ones like £20s. Do not take Scottish or similar notes as they will not be accepted. Notes should not be creased, torn or written on. Please check with your travel insurance as to how much cash you are covered for carrying. We strongly advise against carrying large amounts of cash around.

The rest of your spending money can be taken in travellers’ cheques (Sterling, Euros or US Dollars are all fine). They should be purchased from well known companies such as American Express or VISA/Barclays for ease of replacement if they are lost. Thomas Cook travellers’ cheques are more difficult to change in Ghana, but it is possible in the capital Accra. You must carry the receipts for all travellers’ cheques in order to change them, but keep this separate from your cheques.

Visa cards can be useful as a back-up or in an emergency. Visa and Visa Electron are the most recognised card in West Africa and you can use it to withdraw cash in major towns and cities. Switch, Maestro and even MasterCard are **not accepted** in most places in Ghana. Please check with your bank for credit card fees for overseas travel.

Spending Money

Every traveller is different and therefore spending money requirements will vary. Some travellers may drink more than others while other travellers like to purchase more souvenirs than most. Please consider your own spending habits when it comes to allowing for drinks, shopping, participating in optional activities and tipping. Please also remember the following specific recommendations when planning your trip.

Any tip that you wish to give your local guides or leader in recognition of excellent service is always appreciated. **However please be wary of giving anyone large amounts of cash claiming that it’s for school, medical, or family emergencies.**

We recommend between £50-£100 spending money per week

Departure Tax

All departure taxes should be included in your international flight ticket.

Emergency Funds

Please make sure you have access to additional emergency funds, to be used when unforeseen incidents or circumstances outside our control (e.g. a natural disaster, or an outbreak of swine or bird flu) necessitate a change to our planned programme. This change may have to be decided prior to departure. This is a rare occurrence but it is well worth being prepared! The amount will depend on your length of stay and any pre or post tour travel. We also recommend using Western Union for emergency cash when you are overseas (www.ukmoneytransfer.com). Friends/family members can send a money transfer however it's best to contact our Mad HQ first for more details.

Costs

What we cover

- Airport pick-up on first day of the project (Sat)
- Transfer to and from the project site (arrival/departures)
- All accommodation, food and transport whilst on the project site

What we don't cover

- Pre or post trip accommodation/transport (we can help with recommendations)
- Travel, accommodation & food at weekends if you leave the project site
- Transfer back to the airport, or last nights accommodation

Payment

To get your place secured then all you need to do is an online application form from our website so we have all your contact/travel details. Then you need to pay a GBP deposit of £150 to secure your place. You can do this with a credit (3% fee) or debit card over the phone. If you are booking from outside the UK its internationally recognised card payments only please. Or pop a cheque in the post made payable to 'Madventurer' with your name, contact number and project departure dates written clearly on the reverse.

Full payment is due no later than 75 days before you depart. If you are booking under the 75 day bracket you will need to pay in full on booking.

Keeping in touch while you are away

If you need to be contacted while travelling we recommend that you set up an email address that can be accessed on the road, rather than relying on snail mail. Email has quickly become the preferred way for our crew and travellers to stay in touch and email cafes are commonplace throughout the regions we visit.

If someone wishes to contact you in an emergency while you are on one of our trips we recommend that they contact our Mad HQ in the UK first during office hours on 0845 121 1996. Outside of office hours they can leave a clear message with their name, contact number, and reason for calling.

We don't recommend that family and friends try to contact you through hotels, as they are subject to change and the reception staff may not speak English. It's always a good idea to let loved ones know that you have arrived safely. There won't be much mobile reception in the rural villages we work in so try and call when you arrive into Accra and have met up with our crew.

Mobile Phones

If you want to take your mobile phone for emergencies please be aware that calls made/accepted to mobiles can be very expensive, especially if friends etc don't know you are overseas. You can get your phone unlocked in the UK or in Ghana and then you can buy a Ghanaian sim card. Sim cards can be bought at most local stores/markets and should make your calls a little cheaper. You will need to let family/friends know your new number. However most volunteers use email for all other non-essential communication. If you are taking your phone please make sure this is covered under your travel insurance policy.

Emergency Contact

In the case of a genuine crisis or emergency, Madventurer can be reached during office hours (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm) on Tel: 00 44 (0)845 121 1996. Out of office hours, emergency contact details for our crew can be found by going to: www.madventurer.net. This will take you to a list of our overseas crew emergency mobile contact details.

Before you head off – It's very important that before you head off to your chosen destination that you remember to take down the appropriate emergency contact number from the website. Please keep this number safe and on your person for the duration of your project. Our village locations can be quite remote so if you can't get through please **text a message** on our crew's mobile and they will get back to you as soon as they can. If you have a problem before you set off then please also leave a clear message with your name, telephone number and reason for calling on our UK Mad HQ answering machine as well.

Your fellow travellers

As you travel on a group trip you will be exposed to all the pleasures and maybe some of the frustrations of travelling in a group. Your fellow travellers will probably come from all corners of the world and likely a range of age groups too. We ask you to be understanding of the various needs and preferences of your group - patience with your fellow travellers is sometimes required for the benefit of everyone's travel experience.

Remember too that you have responsibilities to the group. If you are requested to be at a place at a certain time, ensure that you don't keep the rest of the group waiting. We have found time and time again that the very best trips we operate are those where the dynamics within the group work well - this takes just a little effort on your part.

Please note that due to privacy reasons we are unable to provide you with contact details and any personal information about your fellow travellers booked on your trip prior to departure. We encourage our travellers to join the Madventurer facebook group and post their details if they wish to be contacted by other Madventurer travellers.

Group Leader

Every project has a leader – the person directly responsible for running the project. All leaders are trained including first aid training. They are selected for their knowledge of the country they are working in and their ability to act as a liaison between you and your host community.

Leaders are there to set things up, ensure the smooth running of the project and deal with any unexpected situations. It's important to remember, however, that this project is a team activity, and they are team leaders. Here are a few points highlighting what to expect:

Project leaders are responsible for the final stages of the project implementation and know the background of the project.

Leaders are there to liaise with the local community and any local partners who may be involved, to ensure the smooth running of the project. They will sometimes give specific responsibilities to group a member, which helps to keep all members of the team involved and help everyone to get the most out of the experience.

Leaders are not responsible for organising weekend activities for venturers. On occasions they may decide to arrange a trip but they are under no obligation to do so. Venturers are expected to organise weekend trips themselves and they can seek advice from their leader for this as it will promote your independence as a traveller.

Your leader is trained & equipped to deal with any emergency situation which may arise.

Finally, leaders are there to make sure you have a good time and get the most out of the project. If you have any ideas, please talk to your leader e.g. if you want to start extra activities or extend your coaching programmes to adults or other communities.

If you are unsatisfied or unhappy with anything whilst on your project then it's very important that you speak to your overseas crew first, in order for them to help rectify the problem. Please don't leave this until a few weeks into your project, or the end, or until you get home, as it's very difficult for us to be able to do anything about it then. You can, of course, always contact Madventurer HQ in Newcastle by phone or email from overseas at any time if you wish to.

All trips are accompanied by one of our group leaders. The aim of the group leader is to take the hassle out of your experience and help you have the best time possible. We endeavour to provide the services of an experienced leader however, due to the seasonality of travel; situations may arise where your leader is new to a particular region or training other group leaders. You can expect your leader to have a general knowledge of the country visited on the trip, including historical, cultural, religious and social aspects. We also aim to support local project partners who have specialised knowledge of the regions we visit - and who better to hear it from than the locals themselves!

It is important to note that your project leader, while available 24 hours a day 7 days a week to respond to emergency situations, they do have other off-site responsibilities which means they may be away from the project site for certain periods which may include weekends.

Responsible travel

We believe strongly in low impact or rather positive impact tourism. Broadly speaking this means that we try to minimise the negative aspects of tourism on the local cultures and environments that we visit and highlight the positive aspects.

A couple of rules

Illegal drugs will not be tolerated on our trips. Possessing or using drugs not only contravenes the laws of the land but also puts the rest of the group at risk. Smoking marijuana and opium is a part of local culture in some parts of the world but is not acceptable for madventurers. Madventurer's philosophy of travel is one of respect towards everyone we encounter, and in particular the local people who make our destinations such special places. The exploitation of prostitutes is completely contrary to this philosophy. Our group leader has the right to expel any member of the group if drugs are found in their possession or if they use prostitutes.

Madventurer has a strict zero-tolerance policy on the use of illegal drugs. Penalties are severe if you are caught with drugs in Africa, and there is very little either Madventurer or the British High Commission can do for anyone convicted of a crime under African law.

The MAD Foundation

For more info on our registered charity the Mad Foundation (Reg No 1111805) go to: <http://www.madventurer.com/page/mad-mission> or check out our JustGiving page on <http://www.justgiving.com/madfoundation>

Laundry

You can enjoy hand washing your own clothes outdoors along side other members of the village or negotiate to pay a member of the local community. You can buy washing powder locally or bring some with you if you have room.

What to Take

Generally speaking, you should pack as lightly as possible. On the vast majority of our trips you are expected to carry your own luggage, and though you will not be required to walk long distances with your luggage we recommend keeping the weight under 10kg/22lb. Please check with your airline/airport for their recommendations as these can differ.

Suitcases are not recommended, most travellers carry their luggage in a backpack, although an overnight bag with a shoulder strap would suffice if you travel lightly, this will depend on your project duration. Smaller bags with wheels are acceptable, although we recommend your bag has carry straps as well, as you may be required to negotiate bus steps and rough paths/ground.

You will also need a day pack/bag to carry water and a camera etc for day walks and day trips if you chose to do some independent travel.

Community donations:

We encourage anything that can aid teaching such as pens/ exercise books/ activity books/ arts materials/ teaching aids and sports equipment. Any donations should be used as part of lessons or directed through your leader or teachers to be dispersed on need or merit and not given as a handout.

What to pack & checklist

The following checklist is to be used as a guide only and is not intended to be a complete packing list. Any other items that you wish to pack are at your own discretion however you should attempt to comply with the suggested luggage weight limit.

Passport - plus a photocopy to be kept separately (plus Visa attachment)

Money: cash and/or Traveller's Cheques – Keep a note of the serial numbers of your Travellers cheques and also the emergency contact numbers. Keep these details separately from the cheques. Credit cards for ATM withdrawals.

Travel Insurance - Take a photocopy of your policy with you or leave a photocopy at home

Airline Tickets – Take a photocopy of your tickets

Vaccination Certificates - if applicable (photocopy)

Vouchers – occasionally vouchers are issued for certain services. If you receive a voucher please ensure you bring it with you.

Emergency contact details for our overseas crew. If you have booked pre or post tour accommodation then please ensure you bring along the hotels contact details and booking information.

1 Pair boots or strong shoes (must be worn for building work, useful for trekking)

1 pair sandals

Socks

Underwear

T-Shirts (Suitable for building work, they will get very muddy/dirty)

Long-sleeved top (for evenings when mosquitoes are out)

Lightweight trousers

Fleece/Sweater

Shorts (knee length)

Hat and sunglasses

Swimming gear

Lightweight rainproof jacket

Backpack (60 to 80 litre capacity should be enough to carry everything you need)

1-2 season sleeping bag

Sleeping bag liner (cotton or silk)

Sleep mat or Thermarest (optional for added comfort), Travel pillow (again optional)

Towel

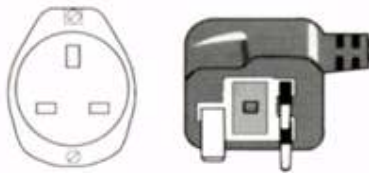
Paracetamol/Ibuprofen (adhesive plasters, antiseptic wipes) plus diarrhea treatment plus rehydration sachets.

Mosquito net (impregnated with insecticide is best) wedge or box shape is best for hanging
Insect repellent (essential malaria protection, you'll use a lot)
Bite & sting relief ointment
Torch with spare batteries
Sun cream (high protection factor, the sun is strong on the equator)
Aftersun/moisturiser
Toiletries
Day bag
Camera (spare batteries and memory card)
Work gloves/face mask (if you will be doing building work)
Cards, travel games, books

We recommend that you also take your own medical kit for personal use as well and if you plan on doing independent travel. This should include any medication that you know you are likely to use.

A good travel tip - Photo copy all your important documents and keep them in a separate envelope to the originals. You can also scan these documents in and attach them to an email, then email yourself/family/friends with the info. This means you/family/friends can access the documents in an emergency.

You will need an adapter to fit a flat 3 pin socket (if your items are not from the UK) to charge electrical items in Ghana, please see below:



Local Dress

Women should dress modestly whilst staying in the village. T-shirts and shorts are fine, shorts that cover the knees should be worn within the community, vests that show the shoulders or stomach is not appropriate. Please note these recommendations come straight from the village chiefs/village elders and local NGOs themselves.

Smart clothes should be changed into for teaching such as a shirt with a collar for men and skirts below the knees for women.

Safety

Many national governments provide a regularly updated advice service on safety issues involved with international travel. We recommend that you check your government's advice for their latest travel information before departure. We strongly recommend the use of a **(hidden)** money belt while travelling, for the safe-keeping of your passport, air tickets, cash and other valuable items. Leave your valuable jewellery, ipods, expensive cameras etc at home - you won't need it while travelling. A lock is recommended for securing your luggage.

Your leader will accompany you on all included activities however during your trip you will have some free time to pursue your own interests, relax and take it easy or explore at your leisure. While your group leader will assist you with the available options in a given location, please note that any optional activities you undertake are not part of your Madventurer itinerary, and Madventurer makes no representations about the safety of the activity or the standard of the operators running them. Please use your own good judgment when selecting an activity in your free time. Please also note that your group leader has the authority to amend or cancel any part of the trip itinerary if it is deemed necessary due to safety concerns.

Cultural Sensitivity

Please remember that you are a guest in the local community and are representing your country as well as Madventurer. Always take time to treat people with respect and, although things may not happen as quickly and easily as they would back home, be patient and understanding. An ability to keep calm when frustrated will win you many friends in Ghana and will also improve your time on and off the project site.

Ghanaians consider politeness and respect very important. If you want something from someone, you are far more likely to get it by addressing them as Sir or Madam and taking time to say a polite “Good morning” and “How are you?” before asking for it than if you are blunt or unfriendly.

While in Ghana you will quickly pick up the traditional Ghanaian handshake, which is used by friends greeting one another. Its just like a normal handshake, except rather than let go of each others hands, you slide your palms apart, and use your thumb and middle finger to squeeze your friends middle finger, making a clicking noise. Sounds complicated but it’s really not, you’ll soon get the hang of it!

When eating, meeting, greeting or gesturing, always try to remember to use your right hand as using your left is seen as disrespectful. It’s also considered impolite to allow the sole of your foot to point at someone.

Clothes-wise girls are ok to wear shorts on the building site, and around town but these should be knee length so as to avoid causing offence. To teach you will be expected to dress quite smartly for example, in a clean vest and knee length skirt. Vest tops are absolutely fine and revealing shoulders causes no offence, although midriffs should be kept covered except at the beach where a bikini is fine. You should always remove a cap or hat when greeting an elder, or entering someone’s house. Dress code is more important in the village than in Accra, where they are more accustomed to western dressing. Please bear in mind these recommendations come straight from local tribal chiefs, NGO’s and school authorities.

Language

Although English is the official language of Ghana, over 75 African languages and dialects are spoken throughout the country. The language of the Volta Region is Ewe (ay-way). You will almost certainly visit the Volta Region's beautiful waterfalls during your stay. Here a few Ewe phrases which you will hear:

English	Ewe
Welcome	Wezo
Welcome response	Yo
Good morning	Ndi
Good afternoon	Ndo
Good evening	Fie
Good morning response	Ndi pometo
How are you?	E foe
Fine, thanks	Eē
Thank you	Akpe

Country Guidebooks

The *Bradt Travel Guide* to Ghana by Philip Briggs (4th edition 2007) is probably the most comprehensive guide to the country as it is one of the few books aimed at budget travellers that covers Ghana in details rather than the wider region. Bradt's text is generally accurate and well written, be aware that some of the sketch maps can be inaccurate and phone numbers outdated. www.bradt-travelguides.com
Rough Guide and *Lonely Planet* both produce reasonable guides to West Africa. www.roughguides.com & www.lonelyplanet.com

Security

It is worth splitting your money between various places and keeping a small amount of cash as a reserve in case of emergencies. Many venturers use a money belt to contain the bulk of their money and keep daily amounts in a wallet. If the money belt is visible, then it is USELESS. **The money belts/purses worn round the neck or as bum bags should NEVER be worn, as they could make you a target for mugging.** Please check your travel insurance for how much money you are covered for carrying, as part of your travel insurance policy.

Please don't carry your important documents such as passport/insurance and tickets on your body while walking around.

You can use your wallet to pay for daily items so that you don't need to expose the money belt. Some venturers choose to carry two wallets for increased security / bargaining ability at markets [claiming to only have a certain amount of money left].

In most areas there is little to fear from violence, although foreigners can be a tempting target for pickpockets and con men. Be wary of anyone with a hard luck story, asking for assistance & money, soliciting sponsorship (particularly education) or anyone offering a deal to change money at favourable rates – these are often con artists.

Never leave things lying around since they will certainly be stolen and be alert at all times, particularly in crowded areas or after changing money. Please do not lend, give or borrow money from crew or other travellers, or local guides.

Please be careful with your valuables, i.e. do not leave anything valuable (purse/camera etc.) lying around or wear any expensive watches/jewellery. We advise that it is best not to bring any expensive jewellery, cameras, watches etc. with you at all.

Be careful where you walk after dark and never walk alone at night, particularly in unlit areas. Take taxis in cities at night if you have to travel, and around unfamiliar areas, and try to stick with other people.

You will be given a full briefing at your orientation meeting when you arrive in country on safety in country and on project. This will cover all areas from theft, taking public transport, sun/altitude exposure and safety on the building site.

1. You will have a supply of treated drinking water supplied by your cook and/or the school.
2. Project leaders are first aid trained and use first aid kits on each location.
3. Project sites are located with a maximum 4hr driving radius of a hospital that can be reached in case of emergency.
4. Be prepared that safety standards on the building site are not exactly as you would expect to find them at home. Our leaders risk assess the project regularly throughout and will guide you on avoiding unnecessary dangers.

We want your Blogs, Photo's and Video's

Before you depart you can set up your own free MAD Tribe Blog (www.madtribe.com) by going to <http://www.madtribe.com/register> and following the online instructions.

At any point during your trip or when you return you can access the Mad Blog allowing you to keep everyone back home and us here in HQ up to date with what you are doing or have been doing whilst on a Madventurer project. You can even upload photos of your travels for friends/family back home.

We always ask our Mad travellers if they would kindly give us copies of their photos, and permission to use them on the Mad Tribe Blog/Brochure/Posters. These can be via email to team@madventurer.com or disc sent to our Mad HQ office. You never know, your picture might make it to the front page of our brochure, posters or be on the next Madventurer Newsletter!

Best of luck and Happy Travels Mad HQ!