

## Welcome to Ghana and Cape Coast

### Spring 2024

*Updated 07.12.2023*

After your arrival in Cape Coast, you will be meeting the staff from Kulturstudier almost every day. They are well prepared and eagerly awaiting your arrival. For the time being, we have made this document to give you the most important information you need when settling into this great town. Please read it thoroughly before departure and bring it with you to Cape Coast.

We are arranging an introduction meeting with all the students and staff on **Sunday 4 February, at 14.00** in the hostel. After the meeting there will be a **guided tour to see key places in town, starting from the house at 16.00**. If you miss this, you will have to ask your colleagues to update you and you may miss out on important information for your stay.

Monday, 5 February, is the first day at the University of Cape Coast. The first week will contain introduction lectures and programs.

### Help yourself

Kulturstudier is an organisation run by social scientists. We do regard the academic courses as our main task. We regard our students as responsible adults and do not want to make your stay overly organized by us. It is mainly your own responsibility to get the most out of your stay in Cape Coast.

If, for instance, your baggage gets lost on the flight, it is you who will have to follow up with the travel agency/ airline yourself. If you have any problems with your ticket, you will have to contact the travel agency yourself. Likewise; if you are having minor health issues, you go to the doctor yourself (or bring some other student along), and if you are going on weekend trips, you do the organizing of transport and hotel booking; if the shower stops working, you contact the manager where you live. In short: we expect you to behave as if you were on your own.

When this is said, our staff represents a security net for you. You will see us every day, and we are available for you when you need advice on different issues. In case of an emergency or a difficult situation, we are always there for you. It is advisable that in case of incidents such as things getting stolen, harassment, etc. you should inform the staff immediately so the necessary steps can be taken.

During the semester, you will also get necessary information about schedules, trips, festivals, long weekends etc. regularly.

## **Visa**

In addition to your embassy-issued visa required for boarding of flight into Ghana, you will get a stamp in your passport for one or two months on arrival. It is not possible to get more than this so you will need to renew your visa at the local immigration office in Cape Coast for a fee of around 100 GHC per month. This will take approximately 10 working days and you will need to submit a form that you can get from the immigration office, some passport photos, a typed letter explaining why you want to extend your stay, and your ticket home. If you had to take new passport photos when applying for the embassy-issued visa, it could be an idea to bring the extra ones to use for this application. It is also possible to take new passport photos in Cape Coast.

## **Accommodation**

On arrival in Cape Coast, you will be accommodated in a room together with one other student. All rooms have bathrooms. Common areas include kitchen, study hall/dining area. There are sheets on the bed, which will be regularly washed, but you have to bring your own towels. Every bed is fitted with a treated mosquito net. Rooms are cleaned every other day. If you want more than a thin sheet to cover yourself with in the night, you have to bring or buy a blanket yourself. Rooms are simple and practical. We expect you to respect your roommates as well as the residence.

## **Laundry**

Laundry can be arranged at the hostel.

Kulturstudier has organised a collective laundry service that you can opt into if you want to. You are welcome to hand wash and buy an iron to do your own washing or to use other services around town. To do laundry in town usually costs around GH¢90 per load, the laundry service organised by us costs GH¢240 for all your laundry for the semester. We have done this because of previous student experience with Putzi fly infection which to avoid requires that all laundry is ironed. To access this, please pay your GH¢240 to the Assistant Field Manager, and then you can just put your laundry basket in or outside the reception when you need laundry done. Please supply a list of what you are washing to staff. This will aid in the distribution of clothing to the appropriate people.

PLEASE NOTE- if you don't supply a paper with a list of what is in your laundry to the laundry staff then you are less likely to get back what you put in. Also, inevitably, since this is a system we've set up to help rather than a professional laundry service and many of us have similar clothes, some items will be distributed incorrectly. There is a lost property basket in the lounge room to deposit clothing that is not yours and to look for clothing you lose.

This service is very cheap and we take no responsibility for lost items, discoloration or other damage. If you have items that are delicate, or high value, we urge you to wash them yourself using soap water in a bucket.

## **Water**

KS has bought water dispenser machines for student use to try and reduce the cost of water for you all and to reduce the waste that individual bottles create. It costs around GH¢25 for 19.5 Litres of water and each student will need to contribute to the cost of buying these water bottles to use with the dispensers. You are welcome to decide as a group not to use these. However, it is not possible to have some opting in and some opting out for this service. We will check at the introductory meeting if you want to opt into this as a group.

### **Meals**

Breakfast is served at the hostel every weekday and lunch is offered at the university, hostel, and study centre on weekdays. However, on the weekends, you organize your own meals. And dinner is on your own accord all week. When you travel for field work, breakfast and dinner are organized by your host, and lunch on your own. You have to budget for these meals as well as water. There are nice places to eat good, cheap food in town. Help each other to find the best places. There is a kitchen at the hostel, with fridges, gas stoves, and microwaves at your disposal.

### **Staff**

Michael Asare is Kulturstudier's manager in Cape Coast. You may contact him by email on michael@kulturstudier.org, or phone 0244987581/0209353621.

Agnes Boger runs the study centre on the beach. Over the years, she has built up a nice beach restaurant in her native Brenu, where we plan to have lunch twice a week.

Leticia is the cook for breakfasts and lunches at the hostel on weekdays. She cooks in the communal kitchen and so in addition to everyone being responsible for cleaning up their own mess, and to ensure she does not have to do extra work cleaning up after students in order to be able to work, we will have a schedule of students to be responsible for cleaning up the kitchen at the end of each evening.

### **Day trips and weekend trips**

With many years of experience, we have learned that students get the most interesting and unforgettable feeling of the country "under their skin" when they organize trips and explore the area by themselves. Therefore, we encourage you to use your time off to explore some of Cape Coast and the nearby areas on your own. Remember to give notice to staff when you leave Cape Coast for overnight trips.

### **Other activities**

In addition to the academic schedule, we also arrange a few get-togethers with different themes during the semester. You will get more information about these events in the second or third week of your stay. If you have any suggestions for these activities, let someone in the staff know. Kulturstudier always arranges welcome- and goodbye parties for the students. A welcome party is held on the first Friday of the semester.

## **Leisure**

Besides the studies, you are generally on your own. If you want to spend your time in town, you will find plenty of good places to enjoy. There are good beaches around. Find a place with a lifeguard. The water can be dangerous with strong currents and undertow. There are opportunities for sports in town and on the campus of Cape Coast University, right outside town. Cape Coast and nearby Elmina are places with a rich history, also in the dark chapters of world history, like the Transatlantic slave trade. On Sundays, there is a big market in Kotokoraba, in the middle of town. Shopping is different from the Western malls, but one treasure is the availability of second-hand clothes and other goods. There are also a lot of colourful fabrics available, and many competent tailors who can make them into beautiful clothes. There are many nice places to go on weekends. Buy a travel guide (E.g. Bradt's Ghana book).

## **Money**

The currency in Ghana is Cedi. 1 Cedi = 100 Pesewas. At Forex Bureau and in some banks, you can cash traveller's cheques and foreign currency. Visa is the most common credit/debit card. There are several banks and automated teller machines (ATM/mini-bank) on Commercial Road near Cape Coast Castle and on campus. Bring some foreign currency (USD, EUR or GBP) in case your card doesn't work in the ATM, and also necessary codes for online banking. Make sure you alert your bank that you are heading to Ghana. Previous students recommend bringing about between 5 – 10.000 NKR for living expenses and pocket money.

## **Post**

There are post offices in Cape Coast and on campus. Having big parcels sent takes a long time, and might not be worth it. Use smaller packages if you need to have things sent.

Postal address:

C/o Agnes Boger, P.O.Box CC517, Cape Coast, Ghana.

## **Transport**

80% of all cars on Ghanaian roads are taxis! There are shared taxis that operate more like buses, and there are the regular kinds that take you where you ask and you must haggle for the right price. Tro-tros are local mini-buses. On longer journeys, one alternative is also the national bus service STC. They operate in between all major cities. They have air-con and are generally safer and more comfortable than the tro-tros.

## **Communication**

We recommend that you get a Ghanaian SIM card for your phone preferably MTN which provides 4G internet service or Vodafone mostly 3G. A SIM card costs around GHc10-15. WiFi

is available at the University. Luckily there has been very good 3G and 4G connection which you can access on your phone. It is cheaper than in Scandinavia. You should budget for using your phone as your connection to the Internet. When using your phone as a connection, it is always cheaper to convert the airtime into internet bundles- similar to package deals (for example dial \*138# for MTN or \*700# for Vodafone to follow steps that would allow you to buy internet bundles).

### **Local Knowledge**

In Ghana, life begins with sunrise. Even before six in the morning, you may wake up to pounding music and the sound of people going about business. The dark appears suddenly around half past six. Noise and commotion are something you should get used to. Bring earplugs if you are a light sleeper. Like in much of the world, the left hand is considered polluted. So avoid touching food and people with it. Taking photos of people is not always okay; always ask first. Military clothes are illegal.

### **Climate**

Cape Coast experiences heavy periodic rain between April and June and between September and October. February to May is normally the hot season, with high humidity and occasional heavy rains.

### **The University**

All lectures, and most seminars, take place on the campus of the University of Cape Coast Monday through Friday, and every day there is also time set for self-study or group work. We have our own bus transporting students and staff to the University and back to the hostel. The bus also takes us back and forth from Brenu Beach.

### **Brenu**

We also have access to a study centre located on Brenu Beach, 20 km west of Cape Coast. This is where we have lunch and spend the afternoon twice a week. This is also a place you can come on your own during the week and weekends, by bus or taxi.

Brenu is a wonderful place with a stunning beach. When you feel you deserve a rest after studying, you may relax in one of the hammocks in the shadows of the palm trees or the café located at the study centre.

### **Communication with Kulturstudier**

We appreciate suggestions from students during the semester. It is important for us to make sure that suggestions and grievances are communicated to us while there is still time to make changes. This includes issues with the academic program, housing, food, and other aspects of

the program and the welfare of the students. After many years of experience, there is usually a reason for the way we do things. And if you ask us we can probably give you the reason. But there is always room for improvement and reminders. So please voice your suggestions.

#### *Weekly plans and notice boards*

In the beginning of the semester, you will be given a lecture and seminar plan for the whole semester. Here you will find the dates, times, venues, and important deadlines for the lectures and seminars. This 10-week plan has been developed to create predictability throughout the semester. However, during the semester, changes are bound to occur; lecturers may be sick, and unforeseen things may occur. The Kulturstudier staff does not have the capacity to notify all students in person about changes. At the hostel and on campus, you will find a notice board where changes in the academic schedule will be posted together with important information about different activities. You are obliged to check the board frequently. We also use email lists and WhatsApp to notify changes, so check your email inbox every day as well.

#### *Compulsory Weekly meetings*

Once every week, we have our weekly meeting with both students and staff. *This meeting is mandatory.* The purpose is to share information and to discuss issues that need to be addressed. If necessary, we will give other general information on any weekday after breakfast. If you miss out on these meetings, it is your own responsibility to get briefed on the information given by one of your fellow students.

#### *Student representatives*

During the first or second week, we will ask the students to elect their representatives. The representatives typically meet with members of staff once every week. It is their job to be an intermediary between students and staff, to help make sure that staff know what the problems are and together with students can work together to solve them. For specific occasions, trips, happenings, etc., separate committees can be formed. These will be responsible for planning and carrying out the activities.

#### *Talk to us*

If you need help with something it is important that you let us know. Do not take for granted that your suffering is obvious and visible to everyone. Use your voice and contact us.

#### *Suggestion box*

At the hostel, you will find a suggestion box where you can put your suggestions and comments.

#### *Complaints*

If you have tried the above, and feel that you are not getting serious responses, you are welcome to file a complaint by contacting Kulturstudier in Oslo in accordance with the specifications given [here](#). Preferably in time to make us able to act on your issues. If you decide your complaint is not treated seriously by Kulturstudier, and you want to further your complaint beyond Kulturstudier, you can contact the university.

#### *Final evaluation*

All students will be asked to fill out an extensive evaluation form at the end of the stay; this gives us valuable feedback on how to improve the program.

## **Ethical conduct**

In Kulturstudier there is no tolerance for harassment or bullying. We also expect everyone to avoid using swearing and offensive language in their communication with each other. Harassment also includes sexual harassment from staff towards students. If you experience sexual harassment from Kulturstudier staff or lecturers you should report to [alarm@kulturstudier.org](mailto:alarm@kulturstudier.org), which will be treated confidentially. Staff and teachers are informed that sexual attention towards students is strictly prohibited. We expect staff and students to socialize together, but drunkenness or drugs are not accepted. Neither is drunk driving.

## **Behaviour and etiquette**

In Ghana, you will find quite different concepts about what is considered good behaviour and dress codes than what you are used to. Please remember that you are a guest in a culture that is very different from yours and that you cannot expect things to be the same as what you are used to. This can be exciting, but also at times very frustrating. The staff is trying to make things as smooth as possible for the studies to go well and for your stay to be comfortable, but your attitude is also crucial to how much you will make out of your stay in Ghana.

Patience is a virtue in Ghana; the idea of efficiency is very different from home. For instance, “five minutes” is never five minutes, but more like twenty minutes. Communication difficulties often result in misunderstandings. Please be patient.

Flexibility is another virtue, as it is not always easy to plan and for everything to be predictable. An appointment is not always reliable. A lot of the time you have to take things as it is and make the most of them. You can probably not expect the same level of efficiency or productivity from yourself as you are used to, partly due to the climate and also the circumstances.

When you interact with the local population, you have to be sensitive to what they might consider impolite, rude, or disrespectful. You cannot take for granted that it is enough to just “be yourself”. For example, the more decently you dress the more respect you get. In Cape Coast as well as in the villages there are certain dress codes, and respecting these will enable your communication with the people living there, and you will get less unwanted attention. In other words: the respect you get reflects the respect you show. Learning the codes is a challenge with great rewards. Former students recommend getting a traditional dress, as it is appreciated.

As strangers, you will also get a lot of attention. It is important sometimes to say no and keep walking. You can't be the friend of everybody but do try to be polite and greet people back. Also, when buying things, remember to bargain, as it is a part of the culture in Ghana and there may be people who might try to get a better price from you because you are a foreigner. Be careful with your valuables (phones, cameras) during public gatherings in town.

## **Drugs**

All kinds of narcotics are strictly forbidden in Ghana, and the penalty is harsh if you get caught with any kind of drugs.

Kulturstudier does not accept that our students use any kind of drugs. The police are very helpful towards our students and us when we need their assistance, and we are dependent on

making a good reputation to have a good relationship with the local authorities. Breaking the law in any way would be very damaging to Kulturstudier in Cape Coast, and could threaten our very existence in Ghana. We will not hesitate: students who use drugs will be expelled and told to leave our premises.

## **Nightlife**

In Ghana, most people have a different view on late evenings and drinking than we are used to. You will not see too many Ghanaians drunk in public, and generally, people go to bed early especially on weeknights.

In general, it is safe to walk around Cape Coast on your own during the day, but we strongly discourage you from walking or taking a taxi alone at night. Even when in groups it is recommended to use a taxi rather than walking after 20:00. It is not recommended to carry valuables and never carry a bag after dark as it may attract thieves.

## **Illness**

Some people will become sick during the semester. You are most likely to be affected by an upset stomach sometime during your stay. There is no sure formula for avoiding this. A good start, however, is to wash your hands often and to use hand sanitizer. Be careful with food that is not fried or cooked (e.g. raw vegetables, lettuce, etc). However, do not let anxiety prevent you from trying out new food. As you will soon find out, Ghana has a splendid culinary tradition! If someone invites you to dinner, you should accept. The best Ghanaian food is often served at home.

In a tropical climate, it is very important to drink enough water, at least 3 litres a day. This may seem like a lot in the beginning but you will soon get used to it. Remember that coffee, tea, and beer do not have the same effect as water, but rather drain your body of fluids. If you feel weak and unwell, you may have had too little water to drink. When sweating a lot, or having diarrhoea, the minerals are drained from the body. To replace them, it is important to get enough salt. Use extra salt on your food, and if necessary you can buy electrolyte powder (ORS) at a pharmacy. You can also bring sports drink powder with you.

You should also pay special attention to open cuts in the skin. Make sure you clean them every day with a disinfectant and that you cover them with band-aids. It is much easier to get an infection here than in colder climates.

There are mosquitoes in Cape Coast and malaria is a common disease. Use mosquito repellent in the evenings and keep the door to your room closed at all times. Spray the room if mosquitoes have entered. Wear long trousers and shirts in the evening. You can buy mosquito repellent in Cape Coast. It is essential that you use prophylactic drugs to reduce the risk of getting malaria and potential complications. Get a prescription and bring these with you. Note that you can still contract malaria even whilst on prophylaxis and if you suspect malaria, get a diagnosis and treatment as early as possible.

**Roommates have a special responsibility to take care of each other during illness**, for instance by making sure the sick person has sufficient food, drinks, and medicine. If someone

is so sick that he/she cannot attend classes, notify the Seminar Leader. For assistance, contact Field Manager or Assistant Field Manager.

There are private clinics with labs and doctors available 24/7. The regional hospital is another alternative for medical advice and there are good private hospitals in Accra for more serious cases. A lecture will be given at the beginning of the course on the most common diseases, prevention, symptoms, and necessary action.

## **Fieldwork**

In studying Social Science, we try to understand how individuals and groups interact on a micro and macro level, what they do as individuals and groups – an agency approach, while also developing a greater understanding of the economic, political social, and cultural norms of society – a structural approach to inquiry. This is challenging: there are many uncertainties.

It will be exciting to make sense of all you will learn. While doing fieldwork you will grasp the difficulty of going from observing humans interacting with each other to writing an academic text about it. One objective of doing fieldwork is to learn that the lives and relationships of the people you observe are complicated. It is easy to make mistakes and to be confused during data gathering and analysis. This is how we learn to be critical of academic texts and how we learn to be humble towards the people represented in the texts. You will find yourself at the core of social science.

You will also experience, like all scholars, barriers, and causes for misunderstanding. Language is one such barrier. You may become preoccupied at times with your personal needs for comfort or difficulties may arise with who you live and work with, and it may become frustrating when events do not happen as you had planned. You may have periods when you have little to do and other times when you will feel rushed and too busy. The three weeks of fieldwork should not be micro-planned or micro-managed by Kulturstudier staff. It is not possible to make everything certain and to have complete information before you arrive – field work is not like that. It can be a time of unpredictability, where you will have both good and bad surprises. When you cope you will feel you have learned about more than just academic study, but also about yourself and how it is necessary to adapt and compromise in life.

The field report is an academic and a personal text. It should include a structured academic write-up of your research findings, as well as personal reflection, rather like a diary, of what you have learned as a person, and how you dealt with the problems, issues, wonders, and delights of what you have experienced. You will be given guidance on various possible structures and notes on what needs to be included in the report, but we do not want to provide examples or rules as there is no one correct way to do it. The report is to be your story. It should be guided by your personal experience, and your academic and personal reflection on that experience, and will be evaluated as such.

## **Other**

Make a copy of your passport, credit cards, and insurance papers in case you lose the original. A good idea is to scan and e-mail them to yourself so you always have a copy regardless of

where in the world you are. A copy of your passport is also to be kept at Kulturstudier's office in Cape Coast and must be handed in during the first week.

You are to sign the form with the general rules that you received from us and return it before you go to Ghana.

### **Packing advices & tips**

It could be that some of your regular summer wardrobe will be a rather bad choice for Ghana. Think light, decent, and not too short clothes (knee-length is appropriate). Most likely, you will end up wearing sandals every day everywhere. You can get every kind of pharmaceuticals in Cape Coast at the pharmacies. Bring Imodium and Idoform and medications that require a prescription from your doctor. Remember to bring enough sunscreen lotion. It is expensive, and if you get it, always check the expiry date. Bring the necessary equipment if you use contact lenses. Unless you are very picky, you will find shampoo, conditioner, deodorant, soap, body lotion, etc in Cape Coast. There are many websites about travelling and medicine where you can find advice. Paper and pens, stapler, tape, etc you can get anywhere. You should however bring a portable computer and your academic literature, and then you're all set for Ghana!

For a more detailed packing list, see the separate packing list.

**We look forward to seeing you!**