

Ghana – background facts and figures

Location:

Ghana is located in west Africa.

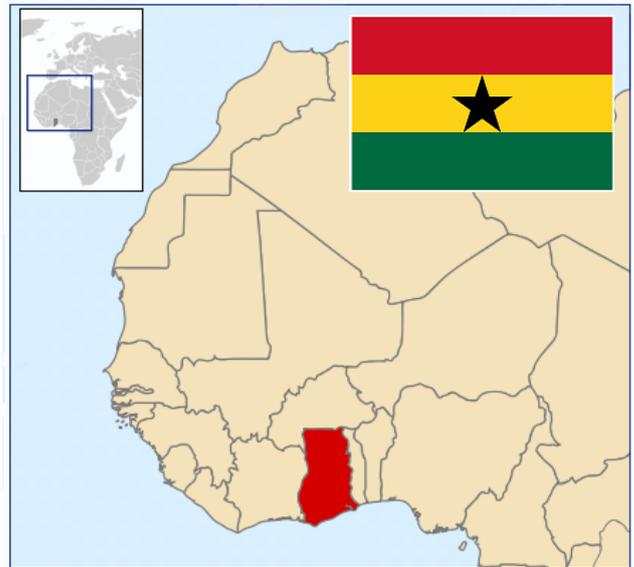
Capital city: Accra

Latitude: 5 ° North

Longitude: 0 °

Population: About 23 million of whom about 2 million live in the capital city Accra.

Neighbours: It borders **Côte d'Ivoire** (Ivory Coast) to the west, **Burkina Faso** to the north, **Togo** to the east, and the **Gulf of Guinea** to the south.



Map source: Wikimedia



"Map courtesy of www.theodora.com/maps used with permission"



Satellite image: NASA public domain image

Official language: English

Political system: Democracy

President: John Agyekum Kufuor (elected 2001)

GDP (PPP) 2007:

total \$70 Billion (75th in the world)

per capita \$3141 (130th in the world)

Human Development Index (2007): 0.553 (medium) (136th in the world)

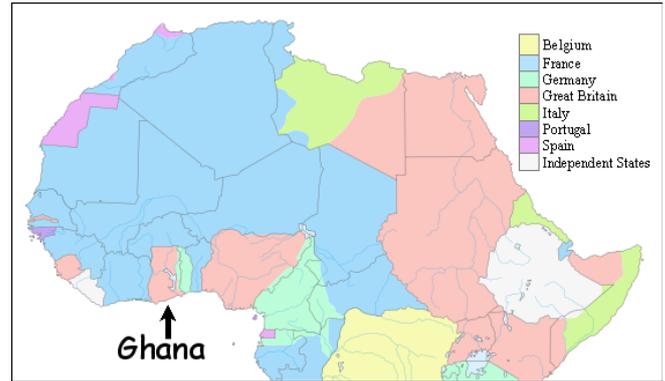
Average per capita income: US\$680 (about £300) - 45% of the population live on less than **\$1 a day** and 79% on less than **\$2 a day**

Food: A typical Ghanaian meal consists of starch staple such as rice, fufu (mashed cassava, plantain or yam), kenkey or banku (fermented maize meal) eaten with a sauce or stew. Common sauces or soups are made from greens, egg, tomato, fish or meat. Other menu regulars are fried rice with chicken or vegetables, bean stew with meat or fish, and fried plantain. Meat in Ghana is usually chicken, goat, or beef. Fish that is dried and smoked is also an important part of many meals.

Breakfast is usually kenkey, a sort of liquid porridge made from fermented maize, with a hunk of bread, or bread and an omelette. Ghanaian bread is soft, white and sweet.

History:

Ghana was once part of the huge Empire of Ashanti which covered much of west Africa. In the 15th century Dutch explorers discovered this part of Africa and started to set up small settlements with forts to protect the land that they claimed. In the next two hundred years explorers from English, Dutch and Portuguese explorers also came to this area looking for resources, particularly **gold** and most importantly - **slaves**. By the mid 17th century this area was known as the **Gold Coast**. In 1874 the British declared the Gold Coast a 'protectorate' and it became part of the huge British Empire that stretched right across the world.



Map source: Wikimedia (Eric Gaba) GNU Free Documentation Licence

By 1901, all of the Gold Coast was a British **colony**, with its kingdoms and tribes forming a single unit. Various natural resources, such as gold, metal ores, diamonds, ivory, pepper, timber, corn and cocoa were shipped from the Gold Coast to Britain. The British colonisers built railways and a complicated transport infrastructure which formed the basis for the transport infrastructure in modern-day Ghana. Western hospitals and schools were also built, an attempt by the British to provide what were then modern day amenities to the people of the Empire.

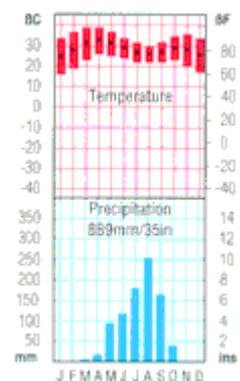


Elmina Castle – a fort built by the Dutch in 1481 Source: Wikimedia (Dave Ley)

However, by 1945, demands for more autonomy by the Gold Coast population were beginning to arise, in the wake of the end of the Second World War and the beginnings of the decolonisation process across the world. By 1956, **British Togoland**, the nearby **Ashanti tribal** protectorate, and the **Fante** tribal protectorate were merged with the Gold Coast to create one colony, which became known as the Gold Coast. In **1957** the colony gained **independence** under the name of **Ghana** (from the Ashanti language where it is spelled *Gaana*).

Physical Geography:

Ghana is a country located on the **Gulf of Guinea** in west Africa, only a few degrees north of the **Equator**. The **Greenwich Meridian** also passes through Ghana. The coastline is mostly a low, sandy shore backed by plains and scrub and intersected by several rivers and streams. Formerly, a **tropical rainforest** belt, broken by heavily forested hills and many streams and rivers, extended northward from the coast, but most of the rainforest was felled in the twentieth century, leaving scattered remnants, principally in the southwest, some of which are under protection. North of this belt, the land is covered by **savanna** and grassy plains.



The climate is **tropical**. The eastern coastal belt is warm and comparatively dry; the southwest corner, hot and humid; and the north, hot and dry. **Lake Volta**, a huge artificial lake, extends through large portions of eastern Ghana.

Population:

The **major ethnic groups** are:

Akan 45%

Mole-Dagbon 15%

Ewe 12%

Ga-Dangme 7%

other tribes 21%

(2000 census)

Average life expectancy: 59 years

Religious divisions:

Christian 63%

African beliefs 21%

Muslim 16%

The Christianity practiced in Ghana has many aspects of traditional African religion integrated into it.

Population of major cities:

City	Population
Accra	2,096,000
Kumasi	1,604,000
Tamale	390,000
Sekondi-Takoradi	260,000
Tema	230,000
Teshie	155,000
Cape Coast	155,000
Obuasi	147,000



Accra

Image source: Wikimedia (Richlover)

Language:

More than 250 languages and dialects are spoken in Ghana. **English** is the country's official language and predominates government and business affairs. It is also the standard language used in schools and colleges.

Economy:

Ghana is well endowed with **natural resources**. Even so, Ghana remains somewhat dependent on international financial and technical assistance as well as the activities of the many Ghanaians living and working abroad. **Gold, timber, cocoa, diamond, bauxite, and manganese** exports are major sources of foreign exchange. An oilfield which is reported to contain up to 3 billion barrels of light **oil** was discovered in 2007. Oil exploration is ongoing and, the amount of oil continues to increase . The domestic economy continues to revolve around **subsistence agriculture**, which accounts for 50% of GDP and employs 85% of the work force, mainly small landholders.