

Arrival Guide

Development studies 2

Cape Coast, Ghana

Spring 2025

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1 Introduction

Welcome as a student with Kulturstudier!

We hope you are excited about the upcoming semester. Our local staff in Cape Coast will do their best to help you adapt to your new life upon arrival. However, a successful journey always begins at home.

This guide aims to provide you with essential information about life in Cape Coast and help you prepare to make the most of your semester abroad. For details on academic preparations, please refer to the study guide.

We urge you to read this arrival guide carefully, to download this PDF on your computer, and print it to keep with you while in Ghana.

If you have any further questions, contact us at mail@kulturstudier.no or by phone at +47 22 35 80 22.

2 Important information

Make sure to save this information and pass it on to your emergency contacts.

2.1. Local staff contact information

Manager: Michael Asare. Phone: +233 0244987581/ +233 0209353621 / E-mail:

michael@kulturstudier.org

Assistant manager: Orlando Yaw Dablu. E-mail: orlando@kulturstudier.org

Program Manager: Hannah Werkland. E-mail: hannah@kulturstudier.no

Jørgen Wangensteen. E-mail: joergen.wangensteen@gmail.com

Program manager: Dr. Jill Tove Buseth. E-mail: jill@kulturstudier.org

Academic coordinator: Dr. Hege Roaldset. E-mail: hegeroal@oslomet.no

2.2. Your address in Cape Coast

Postal address:	Accommodation address:
C/o Agnes Boger	Jackie Grand Hotel, opposite Winners Chapel
P.O.Box CC517	Jukwa Road, Adisade
Cape Coast	Cape Coast
Ghana	Ghana

There are post offices in Cape Coast and on campus. Sending large parcels can take a long time and may not be worth the effort. If you need to have things sent, use small packages, but be aware that these may also take a while to arrive.

2.3. Medical help in Cape Coast

There are private clinics in Cape Coast with labs and doctors available 24/7. The regional hospital is another option for medical advice, and there are good private hospitals in Accra for more serious cases. At the beginning of the course, a lecture will be given on the most common diseases, their prevention, symptoms, and the necessary actions to take.

2.4. Ethical conduct

We have a zero-tolerance policy for harassment or bullying. We expect students and staff to treat each other with respect and to avoid offensive language in their communication with each other. Sexual harassment is unacceptable, both in the case of harassment of fellow students and from our staff towards students. All Kulturstudier staff and teachers are informed that any sexual attention towards students is strictly prohibited. If you experience harassment, sexual or otherwise, from Kulturstudier staff or lecturers, we urge you to report this to alarm@kulturstudier.org. All reports will be treated confidentially.

3 Preparation: getting ready

3.1. Be prepared to take responsibility

Kulturstudier is an organization run by academics, and we consider the academic aspect of your stay our primary responsibility. We see our students as responsible adults and believe that each student should take responsibility for creating a good life for themselves in Cape Coast.

For instance, if your luggage does not arrive with you, you must contact the airline yourself. If you need to see a doctor, you should go by yourself or with a roommate. We expect you to act in the same manner you would if you were traveling independently. Nevertheless, our local staff serve as a safety net. If you encounter problems or something serious occurs, you can always ask them for help.

You must also be prepared to take responsibility for your studies. Studying with Kulturstudier is fundamentally the same as studying at any university; what you gain from it depends on what you put into it. You can fail your studies and learn nothing, or you can be academically inspired and discover what you want to do for the rest of your life. Read more in the study guide.

3.2. Be prepared to step outside your comfort zone

You will be part of a group of Scandinavian students, which provides a sense of safety in a new situation. It is easy to only spend time with your fellow Scandinavians instead of stepping out of your comfort zone to get to know the locals. However, if you wish to truly experience Ghana, you must be adventurous and make an effort to get to know the locals and their culture.

3.3. Packing

Make a copy of your passport, credit cards, and insurance papers in case you lose the originals. It is a good idea to scan these documents and email them to yourself so you

always have a copy available. One copy of your passport must be submitted to Kulturstudier's office in Cape Coast during the first week of your stay.

3.3.1. Clothing

Cape Coast can get very hot and humid, making much of your regular summer wardrobe unsuitable. Tight-fitting tank tops, miniskirts, and short shorts are not considered appropriate. We recommend bringing t-shirts, knee-length shorts/skirts, and some long-sleeved sweaters. Buying some traditional Ghanaian clothing is appreciated by locals and helps you earn their respect. People in Ghana dress quite formally, especially for school and work, so some of your nicer clothes will serve you well.

For hikes in the rainforest, bring a few rougher clothing items. Jeans are heavy to carry, warm to wear, and challenging to wash by hand. Do not pack only jeans; opt for lighter fabrics instead. Bring one pair of closed shoes for field trips. Avoid bringing silver, gold, or other expensive jewelry. Although crime rates are quite low in Ghana, thefts can occur, and wearing fancy jewelry will increase the risk. Bring a silk sleeping bag. They are lightweight and suitable for the climate. Bring a towel. You may want a handkerchief to dry off in the heat.

3.3.2. Toiletries

You can buy most pharmaceuticals in Cape Coast. It is however hard to find dry shampoo, dental floss, tampons, and contact lenses. Pack some painkillers and digestion relief medication you are familiar with. Bring any prescription medications you need. You can buy mosquito repellent in Cape Coast. Hair products (including shampoo/conditioner) for Caucasian hair can be hard to come by and you should bring this from home if you prefer specific brands. We recommend bringing sunscreen from home, as the quality of sunscreen available in Ghana varies. Bring earplugs if you are a light sleeper. Bring a thermometer as you may not be able to detect a fever if you are ill due to the heat.

3.3.3. Study supplies

Paper, pens, staplers, tape etc. you can get anywhere. Bring your laptop and your books.

4 Your first week: settling in

4.1. Arriving in Cape Coast

If you arrive on the joint arrival with Kilroy, you will be picked up at the airport. If you arrive on a different flight and at a different time, please contact manager Michael, who can help you arrange transportation. As soon as you arrive in Ghana, we request that you register your stay with your country's embassy if you have not already done so prior to departure. Register your travel with your Ministry of Foreign Affairs in [Norway](#) / [Sweden](#) / [Denmark](#).

4.2. Information meeting

An information meeting will be held before the first lecture. At the meeting, we will go through important practical information with regards to the houses, the study center, transportation, social activities, and cultural etiquette. There will be plenty of time for questions. After the meeting there will be a guided tour to see key places in town. The time and location of the meeting will be announced in the Facebook group.

4.3. Visa

In addition to your embassy-issued visa required for boarding your flight into Ghana, you will receive a stamp in your passport upon arrival, valid for one or two months. It is not possible to obtain a longer initial visa, so you will need to renew it at the local immigration office for a small monthly fee. The process takes approximately 10 working days and requires you to submit a form, some passport photos, a typed letter explaining why you wish to extend your stay, and a return ticket. It is possible to take new passport photos in Cape Coast.

4.4. Buy a SIM-card

We recommend that you get a Ghanaian SIM card. MTN is the provider we recommend, as Telecel (formerly Vodafone) mostly offers 3G service and is a less reliable option. A SIM card costs around 1 EUR. You can purchase a bundle with 90 GB of data for about

20 EUR. While Wi-Fi is available at the university, it is unstable, so you should use your phone as a Wi-Fi hotspot. It is always cheaper to convert airtime into internet bundles, similar to package deals. Dial *138# for MTN or *700# for Vodafone to buy bundles. If you have an old phone that still works, bring it as a backup in case your primary phone gets lost or stolen. You can put your home country SIM card in the backup phone to use services like BankID.

4.5. Withdraw cash

The currency in Ghana is the GHS (Ghanaian cedi). 10 EUR = 170 Cedi (approx.). It can be a good idea to have some cash. At the Forex Bureau and in some banks, you can cash foreign currency. There are several banks and ATMs on Commercial Road and on campus. Bring some foreign currency (USD, EUR or GBP) in case of ATM issues. Make sure to alert your bank that you are heading to Ghana.

4.6. Communicating with Kulturstudier

4.6.1. Student representatives

During the first week, we will ask the students to elect representatives who will meet with Kulturstudier staff every other week. It is their job to be an intermediary between students and staff and to notify the staff of any problems. For specific occasions or trips, separate committees may be formed.

4.6.2. E-mail, Canvas and Facebook

Check your e-mail, Canvas and the Facebook group frequently to stay up to date about the academic programme and free time activities. Please use e-mail and not social media channels for urgent matters.

4.6.3. Weekly meetings

Starting the first week, the staff will hold a weekly meeting. Students are invited to attend. The purpose is to share information and to discuss problems and opportunities.

4.6.4. Suggestion box

At the study center, you will find a suggestion box where you can submit your suggestions and comments. We truly appreciate feedback from students throughout the semester. It is important to us that suggestions and grievances are communicated while there is still time to make changes, so please do not hesitate to voice any concerns. This includes issues related to the academic schedule, housing, food, welfare, and other aspects of the programme.

4.6.5. Complaints

If you have spoken with our local staff about issues or used the suggestion box but still feel that your concerns have not been appropriately resolved, you are welcome to file a complaint by contacting Kulturstudier in Oslo in accordance with specifications given [here](#), preferably in time to make us able to act on your issues.

4.7. Academic schedule

The academic program for the semester can be found in the study guide. The academic week lasts from Monday through Friday. Classes usually start at 8 AM and will be held at the University of Cape Coast campus. You will be transported from the student house to the campus by bus. Our study center is located at beautiful Brenu Beach, 20 km west of Cape Coast. Brenu is also where lunch is served and where we spend the afternoon twice a week.

Early on you will be given a preliminary schedule for the whole semester. Here you will find dates, times, venues and important deadlines for lectures, seminars and assignments. The intent is to create predictability throughout the semester. However, changes are bound to occur; lecturers get sick and unforeseen incidents may occur. Changes to the academic schedule will be sent by e-mail and important information about different activities will be posted on Facebook and/or Canvas. You should check your email, Canvas and the Facebook page daily, preferably before breakfast.

5 Health, accommodation and food

5.1. Health: staying well in Ghana

If you are insured with Europeiske, you have access to counselling for health issues by phone at +47 21 49 24 01. Check with other insurance providers what options they have for counseling if you suffer health issues.

Roommates have a special responsibility to look out for and help each other if someone gets ill. If you or your roommate is too sick to attend a lecture or seminar, inform the team before breakfast. It is inevitable that some students will get sick during the semester. You will most likely be affected by an upset stomach at some point during your stay. At the pharmacy, you can buy electrolyte powder, which can help. Preventative measures include washing your hands often and being careful with uncooked/raw foods. However, try not to let anxiety prevent you from exploring and enjoying new foods. In Cape Coast's tropical climate, it is important to stay hydrated—aim to drink at least 3 liters of water daily. Fresh juice is another great way to maintain hydration. If you feel weak and unwell, dehydration is the most likely cause.

If you struggle with mental health difficulties, please consult your doctor before departure and inform the staff beforehand if there is anything we should be aware of. Read more on [your page](#).

5.1.1. Malaria

Malaria is a common disease in Ghana, so it is essential to use prophylactic drugs to reduce the risk of infection. Please note that it is still possible to contract malaria even while on prophylaxis. If you suspect you have malaria, seek diagnosis and treatment as early as possible. Mosquito nets will be installed for each bed, and it is important that you use them. To further reduce your risk, use a mosquito repellent containing DEET in the evenings and keep the door to your room closed at all times to prevent mosquitoes from entering. If mosquitoes do get in, spray the room. Wear long trousers and shirts in the evening.

5.2. Accommodation

The accommodation Kulturstudier offers varies from semester to semester according to availability. Rooms vary in size, furnishing and appeal. Read more on [your page](#).

5.2.1. Student house

You will be staying at the Jackie Grand Hotel, where you will share a room with one other student. The rooms are simple and practical. All rooms are equipped with bathrooms. Common areas include a kitchen, study hall, and dining area. Sheets are provided and will be regularly washed, and rooms are cleaned every other day. If you need more than a thin sheet, you will need to bring or buy a blanket yourself. Tap water is not safe to drink. In an effort to reduce the cost of water and minimize waste from water bottles, Kulturstudier has purchased water dispenser machines. It costs around 2 EUR for 20 liters of water. Staff will ask at the introductory meeting whether you would like to opt into this as a group. Each student must contribute to the cost.

5.2.2. Electricity and wi-fi connection

Ghana uses UK plugs, so make sure to bring an adapter. You can also purchase one in Cape Coast if needed. Please note that the internet connection in the student house and study areas can be slow and disrupted, which may cause frustration for some students. If you cannot live without reliable internet access, studying in a developing country might not be the best choice for you. Kulturstudier cannot promise reliable internet access at your student housing or at the study center.

5.2.3. Laundry

Laundry can be done at the Jackie Grand Hotel. Kulturstudier has organized a collective laundry service that you can opt into if you wish. You may also hand wash your clothes or use laundry services around town, which usually cost around 5 EUR per load. The laundry service organized by Kulturstudier costs 240 Cedi (approx. 14 EUR) for all your laundry for the entire semester, excluding your three-week period of fieldwork. Please provide a list of the items you are washing to the staff to help ensure clothing is distributed to the correct people. Note that, since this is a student-run system and not a professional laundry service, some items may inevitably be distributed incorrectly. There is a lost property basket in the lounge room. We take no

responsibility for lost items, discoloration, or other issues. If you bring any delicate or high-value items, we urge you to wash them yourself with a bucket.

5.2.4. Safety and house rules

The gates to the house must be locked during nighttime to ensure security. Visitors must identify themselves and register with staff, and they must leave at times designated by Kulturstudier. Kulturstudier reserves the right to deny access to any guest. See the full list of house rules below.

House rules

1. Cleanliness and responsibility

All students are responsible for maintaining the cleanliness of shared spaces, including the kitchen, bathrooms, and living rooms. Personal belongings should be stored properly to ensure that common areas remain orderly.

2. Noise control and respect for quiet hours

All students must maintain a peaceful environment conducive to study and rest. Students must respect their neighbors and observe quiet hours in accordance with local laws.

3. Safety first

For the safety of all residents, students must follow the security protocol, which include locking doors and informing staff of any safety concerns. Furthermore, individuals who are not Kulturstudier students are not permitted to stay overnight.

4. Substance use

The use of drugs is strictly prohibited. Alcohol consumption must be conducted responsibly. Excessive drinking that endangers your own safety, or the safety of others, is not permitted.

5. Respectful behavior and non-discrimination

All students must treat their housemates with respect and dignity. Discrimination based on identity, race, sexual orientation etc. is strictly prohibited. So is physical or verbal violence, intimidation, and threats. Sexual harassment, bullying, or any actions that compromise the well-being of others will not be tolerated.

5.3. Food

Breakfast is served at the student house every weekday, and lunch is offered at the university, student house, or study center on weekdays. We provide options for dietary needs such as celiac disease or lactose intolerance. Vegan and vegetarian options will be provided. Leticia is the cook for breakfasts and lunches at the hostel on weekdays. To ensure Leticia does not have to do extra work cleaning up after students, students will be assigned to clean the kitchen each evening on a rotating schedule. On weekends, you will need to organize your own breakfast and lunch. Dinner is not included. There is a kitchen at the hostel, equipped with fridges, gas stoves, and microwaves for your use. During fieldwork, breakfast and dinner will be organized by your host.

Ghanaian food is generally spicy. Some local favorites include Redred (bean stew with fried plantain), plantain in various forms, and Omo Tuo (rice balls in peanut sauce with fish or meat). Chili is commonly referred to as pepper, and a spicy sauce called shito is often added to meals unless you specify that you do not want it. Alcohol is not commonly consumed in large amounts like in Scandinavia. We recommend moderate alcohol consumption for your safety and to ensure respectful behavior.

6 Living in Cape Coast, Ghana

6.1. Ghanaian customs, etiquette, and religion

Patience is a virtue in Ghana, where the concept of efficiency is very different from what you might be used to at home. For instance, timing is flexible—“five minutes” often means twenty. Flexibility is another important virtue since it can be challenging to plan things precisely and make everything predictable. Appointments are not always reliable, so you may need to adjust your expectations regarding efficiency and productivity. When interacting with the local population, it is crucial to be sensitive to what they might consider impolite, rude, or disrespectful. Understanding and respecting these cultural differences will help you build positive relationships and navigate your new environment more smoothly.

Most of the people you meet are warm, friendly, and curious to get to know you. Your experience will be greatly improved if you accept some invitations to church services, dinners, weddings, funerals, christenings, and other celebrations. Occasions such as weddings and funerals are not private as you are likely used to, but a public event. Note that this is not a request to leave your common sense at home. An invitation to a stranger’s house presented to a young woman is best to decline, but perhaps meet again in a public place and with enough money for a taxi home.

Like in much of the world, the left hand is considered polluted in Ghana, so avoid touching food or people with your left hand. If your right hand is dirty, offer your wrist or apologize for using your left hand. Handshakes are customary at all meetings, and extended greetings in the local language are very common. Try to learn the most common phrases, as this small investment yields large returns in terms of building rapport and showing respect. Always ask for permission before taking photos of people, as it is seen as very rude not to ask. Please note that wearing military-style clothing is illegal for civilians in Ghana.

Ghana is quite a religious country, with about 80% of the population identifying as Christian and 10% as Muslim. At times, it may feel 150% Christian. You will notice religious names everywhere, from taxis to barber shops to people's children, often invoking God, Jesus, Grace, or the Lord. Church attendance and Bible study are frequent activities, often taking place several times a week.

Attending a Ghanaian church event is a unique experience. If you get the chance, be sure to dress up in the nicest clothes you have! The service may last from 2 to 4 hours and often concludes with food.

6.2. Culture shock

To stay in a foreign country for a long time is usually a wonderful experience, but you should also expect to experience some difficulties during your stay. Many students go through phases of feeling very happy, followed by times when they suddenly feel sad and irritable. This phenomenon is common enough to have a name: culture shock. Culture shock is often divided into three phases:

1. **The tourist phase:** initially, everything new is exciting and fascinating. You are likely to feel happy and energetic as you explore your surroundings.
2. **The sentencing/reaction phase:** as the novelty wears off, you may start to experience frustration, homesickness, and irritability. Everyday challenges, such as language barriers and cultural differences, may become more difficult to deal with.
3. **Reorientation phase:** you begin to develop routines and feel more comfortable navigating cultural differences. Eventually, you find a balance and start to appreciate your new life more fully.

6.3. Activities in your free time

The cost of living is generally modest in Cape Coast. There are nice beaches around, but make sure to only go to beaches 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. On Sundays, there is a big

market in Kotokoraba, in the middle of town. Shopping is different from the Western malls, but one advantage is the high availability of second-hand clothes and other goods. There are also a lot of colorful fabrics available, and many competent tailors who can make them into beautiful clothes.

Kulturstudier will arrange events such as trips and other activities during the semester. These trips/activities will usually be announced at the weekly meetings. Kulturstudier does not charge to arrange group trips, but those who participate must share the cost of transport and accommodation. If you are interested in leisure activities such as Ghanaian cooking classes, language classes, drumming and dancing lessons, sports activities, or volunteering, local staff can assist you with this. You should try as much as you can to plan and carry out some of your own activities. This is the best way to become familiar with Ghanaian culture. We always make room for one long weekend off, so you can explore Ghana on your own or together with fellow students or local friends. If you go on overnight trips, you must notify the manager.

6.4. Hygiene

In general, the standard of living in Ghana is much lower than in the West. However, people and food are just as clean, if not cleaner, than what you are accustomed to at home. Still, Ghana is a developing country, and you will notice differences.

Always carry toilet paper with you, as it is typically only available in nicer hotels and restaurants and in your hostel. Some toilets are Western style, while others may be a simple hole in the ground with a bucket for flushing. Showers very rarely have hot water and may sometimes lack water altogether. While you are doing your fieldwork, you might find a bucket with water in your house, which you are meant to pour over yourself using a cup. This method takes some practice, but with time, one bucket can provide 1 to 3 full showers, allowing you to shampoo and condition your hair and leave you just as clean as a traditional shower.

6.5. Transportation and traffic

Eighty percent of all cars on Ghanaian roads are taxis. There are shared taxis, which operate more like buses with fixed routes, and regular taxis that take you directly to your destination. For regular taxis, you must haggle to get the right price. Tro-tros are local minibuses. We do not recommend using these. Instead, opt for regular taxis for your transportation needs. While rickshaws are also seen around Cape Coast, please avoid using them as they are considered unsafe. For longer journeys, the national bus service STC is a good alternative. They operate between all major cities, have air conditioning, and are generally safer and more comfortable than tro-tros.

6.6. Illegal drug use

We do not accept that our students use illegal drugs. Students who use illegal drugs will be expelled and told to leave our premises. The use and possession of illegal drugs is a serious criminal offense in Ghana, and the penalties are harsh for those caught in possession of illegal substances. The Ghanaian government is particularly strict with tourists, and some Westerners serve long sentences after being charged with possession of illegal substances. Someone may offer you cannabis claiming that the police do not care. This is not true.

Kulturstudier has been present in Cape Coast for a long time. Local people as well as the authorities pay particular attention to what we do. The police are very helpful towards our students and staff when we need their assistance, and maintaining our good reputation is important for our good relationship with local authorities. Breaking the law would be very damaging to Kulturstudier's work in Cape Coast, and could threaten our very existence in Ghana.

Please keep in mind that while you may be comfortable taking the risk, breaking the law will affect others besides yourself. Our local staff will suffer consequences for your actions.

6.7. Tipping and bargaining

Bargaining is part of Ghanaian culture. You should bargain in a firm but polite way, kindly making the driver or shopkeeper aware that you know the local price, as some may try to take advantage of the fact that you are not a local. Bargaining is a learning experience. It can be very fun, and it helps to consider bargaining a conversation rather than a competition.

6.8. Personal Safety

In general, it is safe to walk around in Cape Coast on your own in the daytime. You will not see too many Ghanaians drunk in public, and generally, people go to bed early especially on weeknights. 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 8 PM. It is not recommended to carry valuables and never carry a bag after dark as it may attract thieves. Be careful with your valuables (phones, cameras) during public gatherings in town even at daytime.

As foreigners, you are likely to receive a lot of attention. Learn how to say no and keep walking. Still, try to remain polite and greet people back. Women, in particular, are likely to receive a lot of attention from men. Even if your skin tone is dark, your accent will reveal that you are non-local. The lighter your skin and hair, the more attention you will receive. Some stems from genuine hospitality, some from opportunistic attempts at charming you, and some from a desire for money. Regardless, all these advances can be met with a smile and a decisive no. Simply walk away and continue as if you know where you are going, even if you do not. Wearing a ring on your finger or mentioning that your husband is waiting for you may help divert unwanted attention. Interactions between men and women are different from what you might be accustomed to in Scandinavia, and Ghanaian women also face persistent attention from men. Use common sense, and this experience will present you with a few problems, a lot of laughs, and perhaps some new friends.

7 After your stay

7.1. Returning home: reverse culture shock

Having lived abroad for months, you may experience a reverse culture shock when returning home. After finally having become familiar with life in the foreign country, the way of living in your home country may suddenly seem strange. Everyday life might feel different, and you may find that you have acquired a new way of looking at things. You are not the same person you were when you left, and it may take some time to integrate your new experiences—and possibly a changed outlook—into life back home. Sharing your new experiences with family and friends who have not gone through the same journey can be challenging. They may not fully understand what you have been through, which can make it difficult to communicate your feelings.

Experiencing a different culture and adapting to a new way of life can greatly benefit you in your studies and life moving forward. Consider how you can keep parts of Ghanaian culture and everyday life with you as you transition back to your habits at home. It can also be useful to stay in touch with your fellow students to share experiences and discuss the challenges of living at home and abroad.

7.2. Honor your commitments

Please remember to fulfill your promises to local people who have helped you in your daily life or as research respondents in group work. It is easy to promise to send photographs or a copy of your group paper, but just as easy to forget to do so. Make sure to deliver what you have promised. It costs you little but can bring great joy to your Ghanaian contacts.

7.3. Evaluation

At the end of the semester, you will receive an extensive evaluation form where you can give us your feedback and help us improve. We greatly appreciate your responses.

**We wish you the best of luck with your studies – get ready for
a life-changing semester!**

Questions?

Contact us at:

mail@kulturstudier.no

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