

6 weeks Ghana in summer 2019

I studied medical biotechnology and after I finished my bachelor thesis I went to Kumasi, Ghana with IAESTE for a 6-week-internship.

Preparation back in Germany

For Ghana it is important to have a visa. For my experience it was harder to get a visa for Ghana than it would be for a lot of other countries as a German citizen. Maybe it isn't harder, but takes more effort. You should apply for the visa 4 weeks before you leave and you need an invitation letter from Ghana; it is enough if you just use the acceptance note and provided contact details which you find at the IAESTE exchange platform. It is normal even if you apply for the 3-month visa, that you get a 60-day visa at entry. You have to expend it, if you stay longer, for ~ 15 euros.

Through Ghana is full of mosquitos carrying the malaria parasites it is highly recommended to use malaria prophylaxis. It is mandatory to get a yellow-fever vaccination to enter the country and to apply for the visa. Other vaccination are recommended, which can be discussed with a doctor specialized in tropical medicine. I brought a mosquito net to Ghana and would recommend it. Furthermore I would have been happy about bringing a bedsheet, pillow case and thin blanket (for interns staying in Kumasi).

I booked a flight from Germany to Accra (the capital of Ghana) and one from Accra to Kumasi, this is not necessary because there are a good and safe bus connections running between these two cities. If anyone needed to stay overnight in Accra it was always possible to ask the IAESTE people and stay with the group of IAESTE-interns in there.

Living situation

IAESTE-Ghana organized an accommodation for me. I lived with all the other interns in rooms rented in a hostel which rents a lot of rooms to students. We had rooms for four persons with bunk beds and a bathroom with each room. There came a fridge with every room, some rooms had a sandwich maker, toaster or water boiler. We shared with the whole hall a "kitchen"; two gas stove which went sometimes out of gas for days. It was possible to hand in the laundry for little money. There was no wifi, but the mobile data is quite cheap in Ghana. The conditions were totally fine and it was a lot fun living with all the interns.

In the same hall lived the IAESTE-"boys", who were a great help to get along in Ghana. They brought me to work the first day, showed me around the city and we went out to party together.

Kumasi

Kumasi is the capital of the Ashanti region and is the second biggest city in Ghana. It is not really exciting and there is a lot more to do in Accra concerning cafes, bars and clubs. But there are some party locations and restaurants we went to. Additionally Kumasi has the biggest market in Ghana and different national parks and the lake Bosomtwe is not far. On weekends we stayed in Kumasi, we went to the pool which was located near by.

Working placement

I had a working placement at a small private hospital in Kumasi. I applied for an internship at the lab. Unfortunately the lab was really small and bad equipped. Furthermore there weren't a lot of samples to analyze. Luckily I shared the placement with two other interns, who study medicine. We spent a lot of time observing doctors and patients during consulting and discussed cases. We could observe surgery and endoscopies. I also learned to take blood samples, performing wound dressing and taking vitals. All together I would say I was misplaced, but I still learned a lot and made experience which wouldn't be possible for me back in another internship fitting more my studies. In general a lot of the interns in Ghana complained about to little work leading to boredom or placements which do not fit the description.

Trips

IAESTE Ghana is great in organizing affordable and nice trips. In the year 2019 they offered six trips in total in which I participated due time just in two. Normally they go to the Northern region, Accra, Kumasi, Busua, Ada Foa and Cape Coast. I went to the last two and had a great time with the Ghanians and the other interns. You can expect a trip every second weekend. Due the fact that Ghana is quite safe and the infrastructure is alright it is also possible to do trips by yourself or with other interns/Ghanians. I went without IAESTE to the Volta region, Accra and Kokrobite.

People and food

The best thing about Ghana are the people. They are really kind, interested and full of joy. Everyone wants to be your friend, just to be your friend. I got questioned a lot walking the streets how I am and what my name is. People in the Ashanti region speak Twi, but almost all of them speak at least basic English.

If they had food or something to drink I was almost always invited which was something I had to get used to, especially because they often just eat with their bare hands. I don't want to be dramatic; when I asked for a spoon I got a spoon. The ghanian food is really tasty from FuFu, Jollof and fried Yam to Banku. I am a vegetarian and had no problem to find alternatives for meat. The food was really cheap and was sold as street food or directly from the head of a lady at a red light through the bus window.