Overall Crime and Safety Situation

The Department of State’s Bureau of Diplomatic Security rates Ghana as a “High” crime threat post to visitors and residents alike. Most reported incidents are crimes of opportunity for immediate gain, such as pick-pocketing and petty theft. The greatest threats continue to be road safety and street crime.

Crime Threats

Street crime is a serious problem, especially acute in Accra and other larger cities. Pickpockets and thieves often carry out crimes of opportunity, such as “snatch & grab” attacks, on city streets, in crowded areas, and from vehicles idling in traffic.

Hotel safes can be accessed by hotel personnel even when locked.

There have been burglary attempts against expatriate residences, but perpetrators generally lack the sophistication required to overcome home alarm systems and static security guards.

The government maintains strict regulations on natural resources. All agents must be licensed and all transactions must be certified.

Tourists are often targeted by touts and scam artists. Perpetrators of business fraud often target foreigners, including Americans. Such fraud schemes are prevalent throughout West Africa. Further, American citizens frequently consult the Embassy regarding questionable business offers sent from Ghana. Some Americans have been the victims of false criminal accusations and have found themselves separated from time and money as they seek to resolve these difficult situations.

There are occasional reports of clashes between government forces and criminal groups;
however, foreigners are normally not affected.

**Overall Road Safety Situation**

This information is provided for general reference only and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Primary roads are generally paved and well maintained. However, some side roads within major cities and many roads outside of major cities are in poor condition. Aggressive drivers, poorly maintained vehicles, and overloaded vehicles pose serious threats to road safety. Many accidents occur on the road from Accra to the Cape Coast. Travel in darkness, particularly outside the major cities, is extremely hazardous, due to poor street lighting and the unpredictable behavior of pedestrians, bicyclists, and farm animals (particularly goats and sheep).

Vehicle theft is a major concern as are stolen vehicles being shipped from overseas into Ghana for resale. Thefts from vehicles are also very common. Leaving vehicles unlocked for even a short period or leaving items in plain sight inside a locked vehicle is highly discouraged. Vehicles should park in well-lit areas. The potential for carjacking exists, but there have been no reported occurrences over the past year.

The safety standards of the small, private buses called “tro tros” that transit roads and highways are uncertain. Travelers are encouraged to consider this when making travel arrangements.

Travel to tourist and historic areas are popular and generally safe, although incidents of armed banditry occur on rural roads.

Travelers are routinely stopped at police checkpoints, and vehicles and passengers may be searched. Drivers must possess an international driver’s license (available from AAA and the American Automobile Touring Alliance). Foreign nationals should carry documentation of their status, such as a passport and visa.

**Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence**

Ghana is a stable democracy that has had five elections since 1992 and two peaceful transitions of power between political parties. The most recent election took place in 2012 and resulted in victory for President John Dramani Mahama, a member of the National Democratic Party (NDC), over the New Patriotic Party (NPP) candidate. While there was some sporadic
election-related violence, particularly between grassroots supporters of the two major parties, Ghanaian politics takes place in a generally peaceful context, and defeated candidates have stated that any grievances they have regarding the legitimacy of the election would be handled in the courts.

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

There is little inherently anti-American sentiment. There have been no terrorist acts specifically targeting American interests or U.S. citizens.

Ghana has numerous chieftaincy disputes every year, some of which result in localized violence.

Civil Unrest

In the past few years, there has been little serious or widespread civil unrest. There have been numerous peaceful protests and occasions where isolated violence has broken out, particularly between rival ethnic groups in northern Ghana.

Religious or Ethnic Violence

There is tension between and within certain ethnic groups in northern regions of Ghana, in particular, that can, on short notice, become violent. Nonetheless, government authorities are working to reduce the level of tension and violence in these areas.

Post-specific Concerns

Industrial and Transportation Accidents

Due to poor driving conditions and the poor mechanical state of many vehicles, vehicular travel after dark outside of urban areas is not recommended. There have been increased reports of vehicular fatalities over the past few years.

Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

Counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines.
Regional Travel Concerns and Restricted Travel Areas/Zones

Travelers should check with local authorities before venturing off main roads in outlying areas.

Drug-related Crimes

Ghana has become a significant transshipment point for illegal drugs, particularly cocaine from South America and heroin from Afghanistan. Ghana has taken limited steps to combat illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. Trafficking has also fueled increasing domestic drug consumption. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has an office in the Embassy and works closely with the Narcotics Control Board (NCB), which coordinates government counter-narcotics efforts. These activities include enforcement and control, education, treatment, rehabilitation, and reintegration. Penalties for possessing, using, or trafficking in illegal drugs are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. The use of illegal drugs procured in Ghana may have life-threatening consequences. There have been several deaths of U.S. citizens resulting from the use of narcotics procured locally.

Police Response

The Ghanaian Police Service (GPS) is almost solely a reactive force and demonstrates only moderate proactive techniques or initiative to deter or investigate crime. Police often lack the equipment, resources, training, and personnel to respond to calls for assistance or other emergencies. The police have a poor record of investigating and solving serious crimes. There is a visible police presence in Accra, and the Embassy receives good support from the GPS and the Special Police Units that protect U.S. government facilities in Accra.

Where to Turn to for Assistance if you Become a Victim of Crime

The GPS Headquarters telephone number is +233-0302-773-906. The Police Information Room can be reached at +233 0302 787-373 or via cell phone at 0244 313 820. The local equivalent to the “911” emergency line is 191. Persons violating Ghanaian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned.

If you are the victim of a crime, you should contact the local police and the U.S. Embassy. Contact information for the U.S. Embassy is provided below.
If a visitor is involved in a traffic accident and settlement cannot be reached at the scene, the accident must be reported immediately to the traffic police, who will respond and conduct an investigation.

Various Police/Security Agencies

Ghana maintains a specialized Domestic Violence Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) within the GPS to assist victims of domestic violence, especially women and children. In addition to its law enforcement responsibilities, the Unit can refer victims to medical providers and counselors, as well as to community support services.

Medical Emergencies

Medical facilities are limited, particularly outside Accra. Travelers should carry adequate supplies of any needed prescription medicines, along with copies of their prescriptions, the generic name of the drugs, and a supply of preferred over-the-counter medications.

Motor vehicle accidents, drowning, and water-related accidents due to Ghana’s rough surf, muggings, and other violent attacks, and sexually-transmitted diseases—including HIV—are health and safety concerns that have been reported by U.S. citizens and can be at least partially mitigated by using common-sense safety precautions.

For international treatment and medical insurance: AEA International (International SOS), +27 (0) 11 541-1300.

Contact Information for Recommended Local Hospitals and Clinics

Although there are several hospitals in Ghana, Americans have used the following hospitals: 37th Military Hospital, (233) 0302 777 595, (233) 0302 786 103, (233) 0302 767 691; Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital (233) 0302 673 033; Cardio Thorasic Unit (233) 0302 670-545; and Lister Hospital (233) 0302 812-325.

Recommended Air Ambulance Services

Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation can cost thousands of dollars or more. An ambulance service is available through membership with the West African Rescue Association (WARA) at tel: (233) 024 366 6111.
For air ambulance service (recommended for severe injuries or illnesses best treated in the U.S.), AEA International (International SOS) at 800-752-4195.

CDC Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

All travelers should be aware that documentation of Yellow Fever vaccination is required upon arrival from all countries.


Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Crimes/Scams

U.S. citizens have reported substantial financial losses from questionable transactions allegedly involving gold and other precious metals.

Please refer to the Country Commercial Guide for Ghana for information on business fraud.

Business offers from Ghana are scams and typically begin with an unsolicited communication (usually by e-mail) from an unknown individual who describes a situation that promises quick financial gain, often by assisting in the transfer of a large sum of money or valuables out of the country. A series of “advance fees,” such as fees to open a bank account or to pay certain taxes, must be paid in order to conclude the transaction. In fact, the final payoff does not exist; the purpose of the scams is simply to collect money from the victim.

The Embassy has also received reports of fraudulent charities soliciting contributions through the Internet or direct mail.

Another type of fraud is committed by persons claiming to live in Ghana or who claim to be traveling to Ghana on business and who profess friendship or romantic interest over the Internet. Once a relationship has been established, the correspondent typically asks the American to send money for living expenses, travel expenses, or visa costs. Sometimes a “hospital” or “doctor” telephones to say that the friend has suffered an “accident” and needs immediate financial assistance to cover medical bills. There are other variations of this scam, but the common goal is to obtain as much money as possible from the victim. Americans have reported losing thousands of dollars through such scams. The anonymity of the Internet means that the victim cannot be sure of the real name, age, marital status, nationality, or even
gender of the correspondent. In most cases reported to the Embassy, the correspondent turned out to be a fictitious persona created to lure Americans into sending money.

If you receive such business offers or charity requests, carefully check them out before you commit any funds, provide any goods or services, or undertake any travel. The RSO and U.S. Commercial Service advise visitors and potential business investors to consult with the Embassy before traveling to Ghana for a business meeting or conducting business with Ghana-based companies.

Visitors should also be wary of overly-friendly locals offering tours, discounted lodging, or other services that seem too good to be true.

Areas to be Avoided and Best Security Practices

Normal crime prevention methods will help lessen the likelihood of becoming a victim of crime. Simple precautions--such as not wearing expensive jewelry or watches, not displaying large amounts of cash, driving with the doors locked and windows up, not walking after dark, and staying out of particularly high crime areas--may help to mitigate the number of crimes committed against Americans. Visitors should take all necessary precautions and always be aware of their surroundings. Further, being aware of one’s surroundings has been the time-tested method for avoiding becoming an inviting target of opportunity for crime. Pick-pocketing, purse-snatching, and various types of scams are the most common forms of crime confronting visitors. U.S. travelers have reported these types of theft at crowded markets, beaches, parks, and tourist attractions.

Incidences of violent crime, such as armed robbery, are on the rise, including reports of armed robberies in expatriate residential areas. Victims who resist attackers run a high risk of serious physical injury.

Take security measures, such as traveling in groups and avoiding travel at night. Walking alone is not advisable, especially at night or in poorly lit areas. Travelers who limit their display of jewelry and handle their cash discreetly reduce their vulnerability to crime. Visitors are advised to store expensive valuables in their hotel safety deposit boxes or room safes. Travelers are advised to carry limited amounts of cash and only photocopies of key documents. Use of credit cards in Ghana should be avoided if possible, as a growing number of travelers have been victims of credit card fraud.

Avoid travel in communal taxis. If you see something suspicious be prepared to react quickly. Allow sufficient distance between you and the vehicle ahead of you while stopped in traffic. If
you believe you are being followed, do not drive to your intended destination, but rather detour to a public or well-lit and guarded area and seek assistance.

Although there are a number of security and private guard companies throughout Ghana, it is advisable to research any prospective security company for quality and reliability when considering hiring their services.

**U.S. Embassy/Consulate Location and Contact Information**

**Embassy/Consulate Address and Hours of Operation**

The U.S. Embassy is located in the Cantonments neighborhood at #24 Fourth Circular Road, Cantonments, Accra.

In the event of an emergency during business hours (Monday - Thursday, 7:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.; Friday 7:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.), the U.S. Embassy operator can assist American travelers in contacting the American Citizen Services (ACS) officers in the consular section. After business hours and on weekend and holidays, the U.S. Embassy Marine Security Guard can assist American travelers in contacting the Embassy’s Duty Officer for assistance with their emergency. The Marine Security Guard is there to assist in emergency situations only. All other calls should be placed during normal embassy business hours.

**Embassy/Consulate Contact Numbers**

Switchboard: +233 0302 741-000  
Regional Security Office: +233 0302 741-550  
Telefax: +233 0302 741-389  
E-mail: Questions related to citizen services should be sent to ACSaccra@state.gov.

American Citizen Services (ACS) unit will accept calls Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. at: +233 0302 741-570 or +233 0302 741-000, x1570 but is closed on holidays.  
Emergencies only: US Marine Security Guard Post 1: +233 0302 741-775

The Embassy operates a warden system to communicate with registered American citizens. Periodic messages are sent to test the system so that it will be effective should an emergency situation arise. To register your stay and for more information about the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP), please visit at: https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/
OSAC Country Council Information

Ghana has an OSAC Country Council. The Regional Security Officer provides country briefings for representatives of American businesses when requested. For information on joining OSAC Accra, attending Country Council meetings, or adding your organization to our electronic mailing list for security information, please contact the RSO, James T. Suor, via tel: +233 0302 741-550/423, x1842 or email: SuorJT@state.gov.