

Ghana, Togo & Benin

PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION



GETTING READY FOR YOUR TRIP

Passports

- ❖ Passports are required of U.S. Citizens to enter
- ❖ Must be valid for at least 6 months after your trip – if not, apply or renew immediately
- ❖ Keep a copy of the picture page of your passport in a separate place while traveling
- ❖ Carry an extra passport photo in case you need to apply for a quick replacement

Visas

- ❖ Visas are required for U.S. citizens for Ghana, Togo & Benin, and should be obtained in advance
- ❖ The necessary visa applications and instructions will be sent to you
- ❖ Nationalities of other countries please inquire regarding visas

Health, Immunizations

- ❖ **Yellow Fever vaccination certificate is required** for entry into Ghana, Togo & Benin
- ❖ Recommended standard immunizations include: polio, tetanus, typhoid, MMR, hepatitis A & B
- ❖ Malaria prevention is strongly advisable
- ❖ **SEEK INDEPENDENT MEDICAL ADVICE** from your physician or local travelers health service
- ❖ For the latest recommendations for immunizations or malaria prevention contact the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia: 800-311-3435, or visit their website: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>
- ❖ Many universities have immunization clinics that can assist you

Time Difference

- ❖ Ghana & Togo are on Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) all year
- ❖ Benin is 1 hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+1 GMT) all year
- ❖ When it is 10 PM in Benin, it is 9 PM in Ghana & Togo, 4 PM in New York, and 1 PM in Los Angeles

Electricity

- ❖ Togo: 220 volts AC, 50 Hz; Plug: C (Type C plugs can also be used in place of type E plugs)
- ❖ Benin: 220 volts AC, 50 Hz (127V in Lome). Plug E
- ❖ Ghana: 230 volts AC, 50 Hz. Plugs: D & G



ARRIVAL

We use local operators (private contractors) in each of the African countries where we offer trips. They all have extensive experience organizing safaris in their respective areas. All of our guides in Ghana, Togo & Benin are experienced, knowledgeable, and speak English.

- ❖ Upon arrival at the airport, you will be welcomed by our local representatives after passing immigration.
- ❖ Contact information for our local operators will be sent with your *Last Minute Reminders* a couple of weeks before your departure.

GETTING ALONG AS A VISITOR

Food & Restaurants

- ❖ Meals are generally well balanced. When meals are not included in the trip cost, your guide will be



available to make dining recommendations.

- ❖ Eat only foods that are thoroughly cooked, and raw fruits and vegetables that you have peeled yourself
- ❖ Drink only bottled drinks, and avoid tap water, fountain drinks and ice cubes
- ❖ Don't buy food from street vendors or stalls
- ❖ Avoid fresh salads unless the vegetables are washed with purified water, and avoid dairy products that are unpasteurized or may not have been refrigerated properly
- ❖ Special diet or meal requests cannot be guaranteed, but our operators will do their best to accommodate you. Please advise us ahead of time if you have any special dietary requirements.

Accommodations

- ❖ We use the best accommodations available, however they are not without their quirks and malfunctions. Expect the worst, and you won't be disappointed. Some things you may expect to encounter...
- ❖ Bathrooms may not have hot and cold water working at the same time, or any water at all.
- ❖ Electricity can be limited to certain hours of the day or night. Bring a flashlight.
- ❖ Hotel continental breakfasts are meager and you should ask the price of extra entrees.
- ❖ Phone service is very poor, and forget about checking email outside of major cities!

Money and Currency Exchange

- ❖ **Ghana:** The official unit of currency in Ghana is the Cedi (C).
- ❖ **Togo & Benin:** Both Togo & Benin use the West African CFA Franc (CFA).
- ❖ US dollars or Euros in cash (or in traveler's checks) are best to bring with you
- ❖ It is a good idea to bring newer dated currency that has no rips, marks, folds, or holes
- ❖ The best place to exchange money is in major banks (travelers checks) or Foreign-exchange bureaus (cash only) in major cities: Accra, Lome & Cotonou. Your guide can advise you on the best place to exchange
- ❖ Credit cards are not widely accepted outside of major cities. You may find some hotels, restaurants and up-scale crafts merchants do, but expect substantial surcharges at point of sale and as added by the credit card companies for currency conversion and non-dollar transaction penalties.
- ❖ Be aware that you may need to show your passport when using a credit card. Also, credit card companies are now charging a 3%+ surcharge on all foreign currency purchases (purchases of goods made outside of the US). Check with your credit card company before you travel as the charges change frequently without notice and vary with card and destination.

Tipping

- ❖ Gratuities should be in Euros or the local currency. Recommendations for good service are:
- ❖ Guide: \$5 per person, per day (approximately 4 Euros)
- ❖ Driver: \$2 per person, per day (approximately 2.50 Euros)
- ❖ You may want to consider tipping a little more if you are in a small group.
- ❖ Anytime you especially appreciate someone particularly informative or helpful, an extra tip is always gratefully accepted.

Emergency Services

- ❖ Prevention of injury is always the best policy.
- ❖ Emergency services and care for major medical illnesses may be limited
- ❖ Your guide will advise you in the case of urgent medical need during your tour

SPECIAL REMARKS

People

- ❖ Sensitivity to local culture and customs can prevent misunderstandings and unpleasantness. By respecting the culture and with consideration for your hosts, you can be a welcome guest throughout Ghana, Togo and Benin.
- ❖ If you want to take pictures of an individual person, always ask permission. While most people are



receptive to posing for pictures, it's best to ask before shooting. Children will almost always agree, but adults might say no.

- ❖ Often people will ask for a gift for a picture. It is up to you to decide if you want to do this or not.
- ❖ Do not take pictures of anything connected with the government or the military, such as post offices, banks, bridges, border posts, barracks, prisons, airports and the U.S. Embassy. You risk your camera being taken, your film confiscated, and a fine.

Language

- ❖ **Ghana & Benin:** The official language of both Ghana and Benin is English.
- ❖ **Togo:** The official Language in Togo is French.
- ❖ Each of the many ethnic groups has its own language, and most people know one or two other languages

Time

- ❖ Relax and enjoy the easy-going rhythm of North Africa
- ❖ Do not expect everything to happen on time; remember that in some places time is not as important as it is back home, and there is often little concern for punctuality
- ❖ Despite best efforts, departures and arrivals could be a little before or after the time given. This applies particularly to aircraft movements. Operating requirements, weather and terrain sometimes present problems, and on these occasions, to ensure your safety, flight times may vary

Restroom Facilities

- ❖ It is a very good idea to carry your own small supply of toilet paper. In cities where there are flush toilets you will usually find a wastebasket next to the toilet - most sewage systems can't handle paper. Most bathrooms will neither look nor smell as sanitary as those you are used to.

Safety

- ❖ Be careful with your belongings especially in crowded markets. If you're on a group tour, it is usually safe to leave your bags in the company's vehicle provided someone will be keeping a watch on them.
- ❖ Observe the same precautions taken at home
- ❖ Do not flaunt a bulging wallet, lock unattended vehicles, do not leave baggage unattended in public
- ❖ Make use of security facilities provided for valuables in your accommodation and on the boat
- ❖ In towns, the best place to carry your passport and money is in a pouch worn around the neck inside of the shirt or in a money belt around the waist
- ❖ It is highly recommended that you buy travel insurance that covers your baggage before you leave
- ❖ Don't take anything you can't afford to lose or can't replace
- ❖ For the latest security information consult the US State Department: <http://www.state.gov/travel/>.

Shopping

- ❖ **Ghana:** Souvenirs include traditional arts & crafts such as batik, kente and adinkra cloth wood carvings, pottery, leatherwork and baskets.
- ❖ **Togo:** Arts & crafts such as batik and wax printing, and the most well-known textile is Ewe kente cloth.
- ❖ **Benin:** Voodoo sculptures and carvings are unique souvenirs.
- ❖ Bartering is the norm at street markets. Ask your guide for tips on local bartering. But don't push too hard - remember that what is only a few dollars to you may mean a great deal to the average seller or artisan. Never barter unless you intend to buy.

Seasons & Weather Conditions

- ❖ **Hottest months:** April and May, with temperatures rising up to 115-120 degrees Fahrenheit.
- ❖ **Wet season:** June to September
- ❖ **Best time to visit:** October to February, when temperatures are pleasant 75-85 degrees Fahrenheit, and the roads are good because there is no rain.
- ❖ The Harmattan wind, that takes dust from the desert to the southern regions, blows from December to February. It does not cause much harm, but does however obscure the views.



Equipment & Packing

- ❖ A good goal is to fit everything into a single piece of checked luggage and a carry-on daypack
- ❖ We recommend a durable, water-resistant, soft duffel bag or lightweight soft-sided suitcase as your checked luggage. Hard suitcases are not practical due to space limitations.
- ❖ A small backpack or hip-pack is ideal for carrying bottled water, camera, extra sunblock, etc, while on excursions where the terrain requires your hands to be free.
- ❖ Choose a distinctive, easily identified bag, and use a JOURNEYS luggage tag for bag identification by staff, and your name and address should be also indelibly affixed inside the luggage.
- ❖ We recommend versatile clothing that is comfortable in warm climates, but which can be layered to provide warmth during the cooler evenings.
- ❖ Lightweight & light colored clothes will help keep you cooler. Also keep in mind that synthetic fabrics dry faster than natural fibers like cotton, especially in humid areas, so you can pack less if you are able to wash and dry your clothes easily.
- ❖ Casual clothing is appropriate at all times
- ❖ Some hotels may have laundry services, but you will probably need to wash out some clothes en route
- ❖ For regional flights, most air carriers allow 22 kilos (about 45 lbs.) per person, or two pieces.
- ❖ You may want to bring an extra smaller, collapsible (lockable) duffel, to leave items in a city hotel while you are on an excursion or to use on your return for souvenirs

CLOTHING & EQUIPMENT SUGGESTIONS CHECKLIST

Pre-Departure Tasks

- Obtain or renew passport
- Buy travelers checks in low denominations
- Evaluate and obtain trip cancellation, baggage and medical insurance
- Consult with physician for immunizations and prescription medicine recommendations
- Break-in primary footwear
- Make final payment to JOURNEYS at least 60 days before trip departure

Clothing

- Comfortable, lightweight walking shoes
- Sport sandals or light walking sandals with Velcro strap
- Shorts
- Comfortable, lightweight pants
- Lightweight long-sleeve shirt
- T-shirts & short sleeve shirts
- Warm sweater or sweatshirt
- Windbreaker or rain poncho
- Sun hat or cap with wide brim
- Bandana
- Swim suits
- Socks
- Sleepwear & under clothes

Personal Items

- Sunblock (waterproof, high SPF)
- Lipbalm with SPF
- Insect repellent with DEET content
- 2 spare passport photos (in case of lost passport)
- Wrist watch and/or travel clock
- Sunglasses (with strap, case)



- Extra eyeglasses/contacts
- Money belt or pouch for valuables
- Small flashlight with extra batteries
- Copies of all important documents
- Day pack (can also serve as an airline carry-on bag)
- Camera, memory cards, film, batteries, charger
- Lead bag/containers to protect film in X-ray machines
- Binoculars (lightweight)
- Plug adapter (if needed)
- Soft duffel with shoulder strap or durable suitcase
- Luggage tags
- Ziploc-type bags for packing shampoo or other liquids
- Stuff sacks or plastic bags for organizing inside luggage (also useful for dirty laundry)
- Thread, needles, safety pins for minor repairs
- Small packable umbrella

Personal First Aid Kit

- Aspirin or other pain killer
- Cold relief tablets, antihistamine, cough drops
- Band-aids, gauze pads
- Antibiotics
- Prescription medicines
- Aloe gel or lotion in case of sunburn
- Anti-diarrhea medicine
- Antibiotic cream/ointment
- Supply of feminine hygiene items
- Motion sickness tablets
- Earplugs

Essential Items For Your Carry-On Bag

- Passport
- Domestic and international air tickets
- Travelers checks, money and credit cards
- Insurance certificates
- Address and telephone number of emergency contact
- Prescription medicines
- Extra set of underclothes
- Toiletries in small leak-proof bottles
- Camera gear, film and other valuables

Optional Items

- Address book, writing paper, or journal, pen/pencil
- Map
- Video camera
- Phrase book
- Small washcloth
- Wet wipes/moist towelettes and Kleenex
- Favorite snack foods (pre-packaged)
- Pictures of your house and family

