

Visiting Ghana: FAQ's and Guidelines

Welcome to Ghana, which is celebrated for its cultural diversity, historical richness, and the warmth of its people. This guide provides essential information for a safe and enjoyable visit, focusing on LGBTQ+ visitors attending The *2024 Dakar Translation Symposium- Accra Edition (DTS- Accra)*.

General Safety and Considerations

Ghana is one of the safest countries for travel in Africa. However, like anywhere in the world, it's important to stay vigilant, especially against petty theft in crowded areas. Always secure your valuables and remain aware of your surroundings.

Safety Tips for Visiting Ghana

- Be cautious with personal belongings, especially in crowded areas.
- Register with travel advisory programs for safety updates.
- Respect local customs and etiquette to ensure a respectful and trouble-free experience for your visit.

Local Terms to Know

Familiarize yourself with local terms, such as "Akwaaba" (Welcome), "Chale" (Friend), and "Medaase" (Thank you), which can enrich your experience and help build connections with locals.

Laws and Customs

Respecting local laws and customs is crucial for a harmonious visit. Important points to note include:

- **Dress Code:** Wearing military or camouflage clothing is prohibited. Besides avoiding military or camouflage clothing, it's advisable to dress modestly, especially when visiting rural areas, religious sites, or cultural ceremonies. Revealing clothing is often frowned upon.
- **Greetings:** Ghanaians place a high value on polite greetings. A simple "Good morning," "Good afternoon," or "Good evening," depending on the time of day, is appreciated. Handshakes are common, but remember the custom of using your right hand. In addition, in group settings, please remember to always start greetings from the person on the far right and proceed to the left side.

- **Gifts:** When offering a gift, it's customary to use your right or both hands, never the left hand alone. This is similar to using your right hand to give and receive items.
- **Religious Respect:** Ghana is a religiously diverse country, with Christianity, Islam, and traditional African religions coexisting. Showing respect towards religious practices, events, and symbols is crucial.
- **Time Perception:** The concept of time in Ghana might be more flexible than what you're used to. Appointments and meetings might not start exactly on time, and being patient is seen as a virtue.
- **Photography:** Always ask for permission before taking photos of people, especially in rural areas or of traditional ceremonies. Some people may expect a small tip in return, or they might decline for personal or cultural reasons.
- **Elders and Authority:** Respect for elders and people in positions of authority is deeply ingrained in Ghanaian culture. Always show respect and deference to older individuals or community leaders. If you wear a hat or cap, please remove it when speaking with an elder.
- **Food and Dining:** If invited to a home for a meal, it is polite to wait to be told where to sit and to follow the lead of your host for when to start eating. Eating with your hands is common for Ghanaian dishes, but always use your right hand.
- **Environmental Conservation:** Be mindful of your environmental impact. Littering and plastic waste are significant issues in many parts of Africa, including Ghana. Use reusable items when possible and dispose of waste properly.
- **Language:** English is the official language, but learning a few phrases in the local languages, such as Twi, can be appreciated and is a sign of respect towards the local culture.
- **Drugs:** Marijuana is illegal. This includes CBD oil and anything that is deemed similar to marijuana.

LGBTQ+ Visitor Considerations for in Ghana

Introduction

This section aims to offer LGBTQ+ attendees of DTS Ghana tailored advice to navigate the social, legal, and cultural landscape of Ghana, drawing on local and international insights to address unique challenges and considerations.

Author and Audience

Crafted with input from both local allies and international LGBTQ+ community members, this guide is intended to ensure a safe and respectful visit for LGBTQ+ attendees.

Public and Private Lives

Ghanaian society is generally conservative, and public displays of affection are uncommon, regardless of sexual orientation. Privacy is valued, and personal matters are considered private. However, LGBTQ+ individuals may need to exercise caution due to limited societal acceptance and legal recognition.

Diversity and Acceptance

Ghana's rich cultural diversity means various viewpoints on LGBTQ+ issues exist. While Ghana does not have a widespread history of tolerance for sexual orientation and gender identity, communities and organizations within the country advocate for greater acceptance and understanding.

Laws and Practices

Ghana's legal system does not currently provide explicit recognition or protection for LGBTQ+ rights. There are laws in place that can significantly affect the LGBTQ+ community negatively. For example, "non-natural intercourse" is criminalized, with existing laws dating back to 1960 that can impose up to three years of imprisonment for gay sex. Recent legislative proposals aim to criminalize LGBTQ+ identities, relations, and advocacy, including imposing penalties for those who support or advocate for LGBTQ+ rights. Visitors should be mindful of these legal landscapes, exercising caution and discretion in public spaces to ensure their safety and compliance with local laws.

Trans and Non-binary Individuals

Ghana presents particular challenges for trans and non-binary visitors. The country does not offer legal recognition or rights consistent with gender identity outside of the sex assigned at birth. Accessing gender-affirming care and updating legal documentation, such as passports or IDs, to reflect one's gender identity is difficult. The proposed legislation further seeks to criminalize any medical interventions for gender reassignment and outlaw the advocacy or support for trans rights. It is advisable for trans and non-binary individuals to consider these factors when planning their visit carefully and to connect with local advocacy groups for support and guidance.

For LGBTQ+ visitors, including trans and non-binary individuals, navigating Ghana requires a nuanced understanding of the legal and social environment. While Ghana is known for its hospitality, the current and proposed legal frameworks pose challenges for LGBTQ+ people. Visitors should remain discreet, especially in public spaces, and stay informed about local laws and developments. Engaging with local LGBTQ+ organizations can provide valuable support and up-to-date information, ensuring a safer and more informed visit to Ghana.

Recent Legislative Developments

The passage of an anti-LGBTQ bill by Ghana's parliament has raised significant concerns. The bill is currently awaiting a decision from the Supreme Court, highlighting the evolving legal landscape for LGBTQ+ rights in Ghana.

Online Resources and Support

Seeking credible information and connecting with local LGBTQ+ advocacy groups is crucial for up-to-date advice and support. Please visit <https://rightifyghana.org/>.

Participating in Change

Ghana is experiencing social evolution, with ongoing dialogues about LGBTQ+ rights. Events like DTS contribute to these discussions by bringing diverse perspectives into the country.

Solidarity and Support

The DTS Ghana planning committee is committed to inclusivity and diversity, providing a safe environment for all attendees. We stand with the LGBTQ+ community and offer resources for support during your stay.

For further assistance or LGBTQ+ resources in Ghana, please contact info@rightifyghana.org.

Last Thoughts on Safety

By taking moderate precautions and staying informed, visitors can fully enjoy the hospitality and richness of Ghana. Despite challenges, many travelers find Ghana a welcoming and safe country to explore.