



# Welcome to Ghana



## Geography and Climate

Ghana is located on West Africa's Gulf of Guinea only a few degrees north of the Equator. With a total area of 238,538 sq km, the country is bounded by Côte d'Ivoire to the west, Burkina Faso to the north, Togo to the east, and the Atlantic Ocean to the south.

Half of the country lies less than 152 meters above sea level, and the highest point is 883 meters. The 537 km coastline is mostly a low, sandy shore backed by plains and scrub and intersected by several rivers and streams. A tropical rain forest belt, broken by heavily forested hills and many streams and rivers, extends northward from the shore, near the Côte d'Ivoire frontier. North of this belt, the country varies from 91 to 396 meters above sea level and is covered by low bush, park-like savanna, and grassy plains.

Occupying the central part of Ghana, the huge man-made Volta Basin covers about 45% of the nation's total land surface.

The climate of Ghana is tropical. Except in the north

two rainy seasons occur, from April to July and from September to November. In the north the rainy season begins in April and lasts until September. Annual rainfall ranges from about 1,100 mm in the north to about 2,100 mm in the southeast. The harmattan, a dry desert wind, blows from the northeast from December to March, lowering the humidity and creating hot days and cool nights in the north. In the south the effects of the harmattan are felt in January. Average temperatures range between 21° and 32°C, with relative humidity between 50% and 80%.

## Population

In 2007, the population was estimated at 23.3 million people, made up of the Akan, Moshi-Dagomba, Guans, Ewe, and Ga ethnic groups. Just over 1% of the population are of European or other non-African extraction. English is the official language of government and business, although as many as 75 African languages and dialects are spoken as well. Approximately 69% of Ghanaians profess Christian beliefs and 16% are Muslim. 9% of the population adheres to indigenous religious practices.

With a metropolitan area population of 2.8 million Accra is the capital city. The other important urban centres include Kumasi (649,000 est.), Sekondi-Takoradi (370,000 est.) and Tamale (279,000 est.).

## Political Background

Formed from the merger of the British colony of the Gold Coast and the Togoland trust territory, Ghana in 1957 became the first sub-Saharan country in colonial Africa to gain its independence. A long series of coups resulted in the suspension of the constitution in 1981 and a ban on political parties. A new constitution, restoring multi-party politics, entered into force in 1993 to found the Fourth Republic. The constitution calls for a system of checks and balances, with power shared between a president, a unicameral parliament, an advisory Council of State, and an independent judiciary. Elections by universal suffrage are held every four years. President John Atta Mills is currently the Head of State.