



**Intercultural Exchange Programs  
Ghana**

# **Safety Tips for GHANA**

**Please bring this booklet with you to the  
Arrival Orientation in GHANA.**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

We wish to say a big thank you to you for choosing Ghana as your exchange destination! AFS Ghana considers the safety of our participants a top priority. In order to achieve this, this document has been specially written for AFS participants in order to make the first days easier in Ghana. In this document participants will find answers to the many questions that they may have at the initial stay here in Ghana.

The handout also serves as a cultural and safety introduction to Ghana. It seeks to prepare the participant to absorb all the extreme cultural shocks during the early stages of the adjustment process.

Though you have this guide with you, it is important for you to consult your host family or your local liaison for additional information. In all things use common sense, be open-minded and communicate.

Please read all of the information contained in this booklet.

Wishing you a safe and successful stay in Ghana!

## **Ghana in general**

Ghana is a relatively safe country.

There are Police stations in all cities and most towns with personnel on duty 24 hours a day. Anyone may walk in to ask for help.

## **INSIDE THE HOME**

It is important to discuss with your host family the safety measures that have been put in place in the home.

### **Locking Doors and Windows**

- Lock all doors when going out whether day or night. (If you have a room to yourself)
- Never open the doors to strangers, unless your family informs you that someone is coming (relatives or friends).
- If you are not sure who it is, ask them to come back later when your family is at home or call them to confirm when the person arrives.
- If your host family gives you their house key, you should keep it properly.
- Ask your host family what are the things that you need to do before leaving the house (e.g. close the windows, what switch to turn off when you are going out or going to bed at night, and make sure you get the instructions correctly).
- AFS recommends you to let your host parents know whenever you are concerned or frightened. Ask them what they suggest to help you feel safer
- Ask your host family of the house curfews, as to whether you are allowed to go out at night and what time they expect you to be at home. If you have to delay your outing, call your family so they are aware of your safety and your where about. Do not violate the curfew.
- Never leave the home without informing your host family of where you will be going and when you will be returning.
- It is good to know if your host family has a first aid kit at home and where to find them.
- Ask your host family how safe the neighborhood is during the day and at night.
- Do not leave jewelry all over the place. It is not unusual for many people to go in and out of the house or even your room.
- Do not leave your money openly at any place.

### **Telephone**

- It is important not to abuse the opportunity to use your family phone. Don't make long distance calls on your family phone. It is very expensive.
- Get the number of your family members and keep it in your wallet or purse for emergencies.
- It is also important to know who you should contact in case there is problem when you are alone at home.
- Ask your host family if you are allowed to give the home phone number to your friends, and ask them if they have rules about this issue.
- Do not give your address, family information to strangers over the phone. Do not indicate that you are staying alone at home if you do not know whom you are talking to. Try to cut the conversation as short as possible if you received suspicious calls.

### **Toilet and Bathrooms**

- There are bathrooms and toilets in homes where you will be placed. Please keep the toilet or bath rooms clean all times. Be careful of wet and slippery floors.

### **Internet usage at Home**

If your host parents have intent please ask for permission before you use it.

Beware of internet fraud (popularly known as SAKAWA)

Keep your passwords private.

Never give out personal information like your name, address, or phone number

- Don't share photos of yourself, your family, or your home with strangers you meet online.

Always delete unknown e-mails without opening them. They can contain destructive viruses. They may contain links to pornographic material and upon accessing them you may encounter serious consequences.

Remember that nothing you write on the Web is completely private including e-mails. So be careful and think about what you type and who you tell.

- Not everyone is as nice, cute, and funny as they may sound online. Never make plans to meet an online "friend" in person.
- When you are in doubt always ask your host parents for help or simply just log off if you're not sure! You can always go back online later.

### **Pornography on the Internet**

Engaging in pornography whether by accident or on purpose is unacceptable. As such, AFS Ghana strongly discourages participants from accessing any pornographic materials. Not only does it carry a bad image of you, it does not show respect to your host family. By doing so, your host family's perception of you would most likely become extremely negative, as would any potential host family. Therefore beware!

### **Animal / Insects / Reptiles**

- There are some reptiles such as frogs, snakes etc. In case you see them don't be alarmed. Seek for help. It is possible to see House lizards, cockroaches and rats sometimes. They are usually exterminated by family members.
- If a snake has bitten you, always seek medical help.
- Dogs are not all friendly. Don't go petting strange dogs. A Muslim host family may not like you to touch dogs as it is against the Muslim religion to be contaminated by the saliva of a dog.

### **Emergency**

- Energy for cooking is usually in the form of gas, which is sold in cylinders. Make sure the gas switch is off after use. If you smell gas, open all windows and check for leakage. Never light fire. Inform your host family
- It is usual for homes not to have fire alarms, smoke detectors or fire extinguishers. Do not smoke in any part of the house.

## **OUTSIDE THE HOUSE**

- You can carry your identity card with you whilst in town.
- Avoid walking in dark and lonely places alone. You could be robbed and harmed!
- Also don't carry huge sums of money on you when going out, you could be a target of pick-pockets.
- When you are going out, please inform your host family or leave a note of your where about: telephone number, the destination, what you are going to do and whom you are going with. So that you could be reached in case of emergency. Please listen to the advice of your host family when you are choosing friends in your community because they know the community more than you.
- Be careful when you are in crowded place take care of your money or personal belongings.
- When your friends or classmates invite you out, you should obtain permission from your host family before agreeing to go anywhere. Remember to ask your family if there is any risk related to the place you are going to.
- If possible call your host family as soon as you arrive at your destination so that they will not worry.
- Ask your host parents for a safe place to keep your passport at home just in case you want AFS Ghana to keep it for you.
- Students below 18 are not allowed to buy cigarettes or smoke.
- Do not take a ride with your school mates, since they won't probably have a proper driving license to drive. The license is given to 18 year old people or older.
- It is advisable not to carry more money with you than you intend to spend that day. Also, be cautious when taking money out of a wallet. Do not wave money around.
- Fast motorcyclists may snatch your bags while you are crossing the road.
- Do not leave your bags unattended in public.
- Do not give your telephone number or address to strangers who approach you in the street, taxi or bus. Even if someone seems friendly and trustworthy you have no idea what kind of person they are. Try to cut the conversation short and walk away. Also, do not pay attention to any sales talk while walking through the streets.
- Never ask or accept rides from strangers. Never hitchhike.

- Never presume that a decently dressed person is not a potential threat. They can be neatly dressed yet steal from you.
- Be careful not to flash your credit cards in front of people. It is a dangerous and an act of bad taste.
- If any of your belongings are stolen, report to the nearest police station as soon as possible.
- If you are in a situation where you feel suspicious or uneasy, please move away immediately.
- When you have lost your way, it is best to call host family, local liaison or report to the Police station.

### **Illegal Drugs and Use of Alcohol**

- It is illegal to engage in drugs such as Marijuana, cocaine, cannabis etc. When you are arrested one could serve a jail term of about ten or more years. Also trading in the above drugs is illegal.
- In Ghana people who are less than 18 years not allowed to consume alcohol.
- Getting drunk is not acceptable by our society and therefore AFS students who get drunk deeply affect the AFS image at the local level.

### **Sexual Harassment**

- In some situations, you may be unsure if you are being sexually harassed or not. An important resource is your own instinct. Your siblings, host parents, local liaisons will be able to advise you about the sexual behavior of people you don't know, and about cultural differences. You can also seek for advice from teachers at school and AFS Ghana's National Office.
- You should be aware of the possibilities of sexual harassment in crowded buses, or walking alone in some areas. The person may say rude words or attempt to touch you. If it happens, try to get away and shout for help.
- In the event of sexual attack, please tell your host parents what has happened. They will immediately contact the AFS local liaison or other representatives who will assist you. The national office would be notified.

### **Weather**

- Ghana is a tropical country so the weather is generally warm and humid temperatures range from 25 degree Celsius to 35 degree Celsius. We experience some rainfall in the rainy seasons. When it rains some portions of the road get flooded it is better to be careful of open drains, bridges and falling trees. It is common to experience bad thunderstorms when it rains.

## **HIV/AIDs and Sexually Transmitted Infection**

In Ghana there are people living with HIV/AIDS. There are also sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis, gonorrhea etc. Students are advised to protect them whilst engaging in sex.

## **Emergency**

In case of personal emergencies, contact either:

- ✓ Host family
- ✓ Liaison person
- ✓ AFS office or AFS Emergency Cell Phone.

Please ask your host family for the following local phone numbers and keep them in your personal phone book:

- ✓ Police Station,
- ✓ Fire Service
- ✓ Hospital or Family Doctor.

## **Conclusion**

We would continue to urge you to read this manual carefully as it is good of information to you.

Enjoy you stay in Ghana!