

Princeton Bridge Year in Ghana

in partnership with World Learning

Volunteers in Ghana will engage in community service in two regions during their Bridge Year. From September through December, participants will work in non-governmental organizations in Accra, the cosmopolitan capital city of nearly three million people. In early January, participants will move from Accra to rural communities around Kumasi, capital of the Ashanti region. Here, volunteers will serve in Junior Secondary Schools, tutoring students and supporting the work of teachers.

Arrival & Orientation

Upon arrival in Accra, Bridge Year volunteers will receive an eight-day orientation held in a hostel near the University of Ghana. In addition to daily conversational Twi classes, participants will learn about local health and safety issues, Ghanaian cultural norms, and program policies and expectations. The intensive orientation will offer participants an opportunity to bond as group members, express fears and goals, and become acquainted with World Learning staff, partner organizations, and other local stakeholders.



Participants will get to know the city of Accra and the roles that non-governmental organizations are playing in the area of human capacity development.

An additional four-day orientation will take place at the start of the second phase of the program. During this orientation, volunteers will be introduced to the history of the Ashanti Empire, as well as the unique social, economic, and political features of contemporary rural Ghana. On January 6, volunteers will arrive in the village of Ogua, where they will meet host families along with the chief and people of the town.

Homestay

Living with a Ghanaian family provides a special opportunity to establish relationships and integrate more fully into local society, as well as practice language skills.

Volunteers should expect comfortable but modest accommodations. Each volunteer will have his or her own bed, dresser for clothing, and workspace, but may not have a private room, as young family members are often expected to share sleeping quarters. Participants should be prepared for bucket showers (usually cold) for bathing. While most meals will be taken with the host family, stipends will be provided for weekday lunches while Bridge Year participants engage in service assignments in Accra.



The pace of life and leisure activities in rural towns will be different from Accra, because of the more limited number of options. Normally, people will gather together for storytelling, to share news about the community, or to discuss local, national, or international issues. Bridge Year volunteers will be placed with homestay families within walking distance of their assigned school. Homes in the town will have electricity, but indoor plumbing should not be expected.

Language Instruction

Upon arrival in Ghana, volunteers will begin intensive Asante Twi language training. Language classes will be held four hours per day for the first seven days of the program. After orientation, the intensity of the class schedule will decrease, with classes held three hours per day, two times per week. The Twi language instructor will emphasize grammar and conversational skills. Field trips (e.g. to the market), sketches, roleplay and class exercises are among some of the learning techniques to be used.

Part of the orientation period for the second phase will be used to review Asante Twi learnt in Accra and also prepare students for the village. In addition, volunteers will have ample opportunity for practicing and honing language skills through their homestay experience, community service work, and other personal relationships.

Community Service Placements in Accra (September-December)

Bridge Year volunteers will be enlisted to support an Accra-based organization working to develop Ghana's human capital. Participants will spend six hours per day five days a week at their service placements, using public transport (*trotro* or buses) to commute as needed. In each placement, volunteers will work closely with a department head or assigned staff member who will serve as a mentor throughout the program.

Below are some of the organizations that offer placements for Bridge Year volunteers:

Street Girls Aid: www.said-ghana.com

Established in the 1990s, Street Girls Aid provides shelter and counseling services for teenage mothers and abandoned children who would otherwise live on the streets. The organization also provides vocational training for young mothers in dressmaking, hairdressing, cooking, Batik, and tie-dyeing.

The Bridge Foundation: www.thebridgefoundationghana.org

The Bridge Foundation operates within three thematic areas: sports—with emphasis on soccer and boxing, sanitation and the environment, and teaching information technology. The organization works with both school children and adults.

Nubuke Foundation: www.nubukefoundation.org

The mission of Nubuke Foundation is to preserve and promote Ghana's cultural heritage and contemporary art, as well as to offer artists a platform to realize their creative potential. The foundation mounts regular exhibitions on Ghanaian art, photography and cultural artifacts.



Photo courtesy of Cathleen Stone '07



Photo courtesy of Anne Koplinka-Loehr, World Learning / SIT Study Abroad

Office for Students with Special Needs – University of Ghana: www.ug.edu.gh

In its efforts to make higher education accessible to all, the University of Ghana has created an office to coordinate activities and serve as a support system for students with special needs. The office provides services such as recording and/or brailing academic and non-academic materials for visually impaired students, sign language interpreters for the hearing impaired, and other types of assistance designed to facilitate studies.

DAI – Ghana: www.dai.com

DAI is an international organization that provides comprehensive development solutions to business, government and civil society in developing and transitioning countries. In Ghana, DAI—through the Millennium Challenge Compact—is building the capacity of the public and private sectors through programs that enhance productivity in agriculture, improve business literacy, and increase the effectiveness of the management of natural resources and the conservation of biological diversity.

Philip Foundation (Care Net Ghana): www.carenetghana.org

Philip Foundation works closely with both the public and the private sector in capacity building, health campaigns, and education. Philip Foundation partners with Care Net Ghana, which undertakes similar projects but in other parts of the country.

Community Service Placement in Kumasi (January–May)

During the second phase of the Bridge Year Program, volunteers will be assigned to a Junior High School in or around Ogua (near Kumasi). Volunteers will serve as tutors, and support the work of teachers at the school. Below is a list of schools that may offer placements for Bridge Year volunteers.

- Ogua SDA Junior High School*
- Seniagya Methodist Junior High School*
- Seniagya SDA Junior High School*
- Senchi Junior High School*

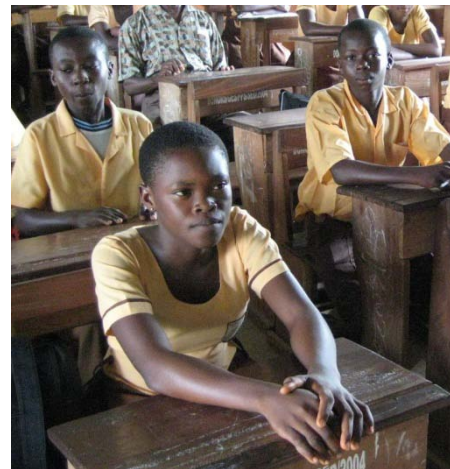
Bridge Year Office

In Accra, on-site staff will have a small office at Osu, about twenty minutes drive from the University of Ghana. Here, participants will meet on a weekly basis to share experiences and reflect on their service work and cultural immersion.

Cultural Enrichment Activities

A number of wide-ranging activities will be organized to add texture to the Bridge Year experience in Ghana. Activities may include traveling to Cape Coast and the Elmina slave dungeons, visiting Kakum National Park, meeting the chief and people of Krobo Odumasi, learning traditional pot making in Vume, and attending festivals.

During the second phase, weekend trips will be organized to museums, seasonal festivals, religious temples, and music and dance sessions.



Excursions

From Accra, a five-day excursion will be organized to the Volta Region of Ghana. This region is one of the country's most ethnically diverse. Participants will visit shrines, meet chiefs and learn traditional drumming, dancing and music.



Photo courtesy of Cathleen Stone '07

A second five-day excursion will be organized for participants to the Kwahu Mountains. The Kwahus are known across Ghana for their hard work and industrious nature. It is said that when a Kwahu man sees a business opportunity, he knows no rest until he has taken full advantage of it. On festive occasions, however—particularly Easter holidays—it is tradition to put work aside and return home to celebrate with family. The trip provides an opportunity for participants to learn and celebrate with the Kwahu people.

Mid Program Evaluation

At the end of the first phase of the program, participants will have the opportunity to debrief and evaluate different aspects of the program. This is to offer participants the chance to reflect on what went well, what needs improvement, areas of personal growth and the plan for the second phase of the program. Participants will celebrate Christmas with host families before leaving for Kumasi area.

Group Service Project

In early May, participants and on-site staff will travel seven hours to Tamale in the Northern Region of Ghana to partake in a two-week group service project. While Tamale is one of the poorest administrative regions in Ghana, it is remarkably beautiful and distinct in terms of its architecture, clothing, and food. Participants will team up with a local organization—the Ghana Developing Communities Program (GDGP)—to work on a micro credit program helping farmers gain access to soft loans to improve agricultural production and the quality of life. GDGP activities include but are not limited to:

- School for life project
- Training center
- Micro credit scheme
- Construction of hand-dug wells
- Training of farmers on best farming practices



Program Wrap up

A weeklong program wrap up will take place in beautiful Kokrobitey, a suburb of Accra right on the beach. This phase is designed to assess personal growth since arrival, to reflect on learning and its relevance to future aspirations, and to begin to plan how to integrate the Bridge Year experience into life back home.