



ROAD TRAVEL REPORT: GHANA



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO...

- Most primary roads are paved and well-maintained, but the roads outside major cities generally are in poor condition. Almost all secondary roads are unpaved.
- Road crashes occur frequently on the road from Accra to the Cape Coast tourist area.
- Road crash related fatality and serious injury rates per 100,000 population are highest in the Central and Eastern regions of Ghana, partly due to the fact that these regions contain major highways that link Accra with Kumasi (the second largest city) and the port of Takoradi. Road improvement projects currently are in progress in Accra and Kumasi.
- Driving at night outside of major cities is extremely hazardous.
- Many people live outside areas of business and must travel considerable distances to their place of work.



ROAD REALITIES

DRIVER BEHAVIORS

- Drivers perform illegal U-turns.
- Road crashes are attributed mainly to alcohol, illegal passing, speeding, poor road network, and carelessness on the part of pedestrians.
- Speeding is a factor in 50 percent of all road crashes in Ghana.
- Some of the new drivers are not trained adequately before they are allowed to drive private and commercial vehicles.
- A recent survey carried out in Tamale revealed that 25 percent of commercial drivers were blind in one eye.
- Taxi and *tro-tro* ((minibus) drivers tend to drive aggressively. They sometimes block roads, creating traffic jams.
- Cyclists in southern Ghana are more likely to be more aggressive than those in the northern regions.



- Pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists, and passengers in buses, mini-buses and trucks have the highest death and injury rates.
- There are 73 fatalities per 10,000 motor vehicles in

- The high illiteracy rate in Ghana limits the ability of some pedestrians and drivers to understand road signs and posted warnings.
- Applicants for driver's licenses are not tested for their knowledge of road regulations. Vision tests are not required to get or renew a driver's license.

GENERAL ROAD CONDITIONS

- There are 30,000 km of classified roads in Ghana, 15,000 of which are trunk (main) roads and the rest are feeder roads. Only one-fifth of the total road network is paved.
- Ghana's roads vary from safe to very poor.
- The road system is not as well developed in northern Ghana. Many are in poor condition, and many bridges are weak structurally.



- While vehicle ownership remains low, approximately 8-10 cars per 1,000 people, it is increasing at about 10 percent a year, putting a great strain on roads, traffic control devices and pedestrians.
- In urban areas such as Accra, Tema and Kumasi, vehicle ownership is much higher (around 38 vehicles per 1,000 people).
- Road signs are poor or inadequate, and lighting is poor.
- Motorized vehicles must share the road with pedestrians, bicyclists, and freely roaming farm animals.
- The road from Accra to Lomé in Togo is surfaced. Note that the border between Ghana and Togo closes at 6:00 pm daily. Sometimes, it is completely closed due to tensions between the two countries. Roads in the Cape Coast region are generally passable. The coastal road between Accra and Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire is in good condition.
- The Kumasi-Accra-Tema road corridor has a much higher traffic density than the coastal and northern road corridors. The Accra-Kumasi road has been resurfaced and generally is in acceptable condition.
- The Accra-Takoradi and the Kumasi-Accra highways have high road crash injury and fatality rates. Speeding

(especially dangerous where these highways pass through towns and villages), poor pedestrian safety facilities, inadequate road signs and markings, and failure to alter traffic flow or road structure at known high road crash sites contribute to these high rates.

- The Mampong road, running northwest out of Kumasi to Pankrona, Ahwiaa, Ntonso, Mampong, and Lake Volta, is a good road. The Mampong road and Sunyani road out of Kumasi are being expanded to four-lane divided highways.

URBAN TRAVEL

- Maintenance and condition of urban roads is fair to good; however, some roads in major cities are in poor condition.
- Urban streets generally do not have curbs; drivers sometimes drive on pedestrian walkways.
- Road improvement projects are currently underway in Accra and Kumasi to improve traffic problems.
- 38.8 percent of road crash fatalities and 47.7 percent of road crash injuries occurred on urban roads.

CITY	PROBLEMS	USEFUL INFORMATION
ACCRA	<p>Accra is one of Africa's largest cities. Accra has a total of 1500 km of roads, two-thirds of which are paved.</p> <p>Cycles make up a large portion of the vehicle fleet.</p> <p>Cycling is not recommended.</p> <p>Motorists, especially taxi drivers, generally have hostile attitudes toward cyclists. The long, congested streets pose safety risks. Pedestrian traffic is very heavy, and street vendors are common. Pedestrians and street vendors may act aggressively toward cyclists. Pedestrians may step in front of cyclists.</p>	<p>Accra is surrounded by Ring Road. The two main roads in the city are Nkrumah Avenue and Kojo Thompson road. They run north to south through the city from the older Jamestown district to Kwame Nkrumah Circle (known as the Circle).</p> <p>Some taxis drive to a specific destination, while others are collective "line taxis" (shared taxis). Line taxis follow specific routes.</p> <p>Minibuses (<i>tro-tros</i>) are available.</p> <p>Privately operated bus and taxi services are well developed.</p> <p>Kokota International Airport does not have a bus service, but private taxis are available. Less expensive minibuses (<i>tro-tros</i>) and shared taxis are available just a short distance from the airport.</p>
SEKONDI-TAKORADI	<p>The Adiembra, Inchaban and Africana (Harbour) roads will be under construction until late 2004.</p>	



CITY	CONDITIONS	USEFUL INFORMATION
TAMALE	Tamale has a total of 251.60 km of roads, 112.4 km of which are paved and 139.2 are unpaved—approximately 47 percent are in poor condition.	One-half of Tamale’s roads are in good or fair condition. A bike path system over 60 km long is integrated with other transportation modes, such as taxis and lorries (used for long-distance travel). Special signaling is required for cyclists at traffic lights and zebra crossings. About 80 percent of Tamale’s residents own bicycles, but very few own motor vehicles.

RURAL TRAVEL

- Maintenance and condition of rural roads is poor.
- 61.2 percent of road crash fatalities and 52.3 percent of road crash injuries occurred on rural roads.
- Road crashes on rural roads generally are more severe than those in urban areas because of poor maintenance and road condition, lack of emergency medical service (EMS) care, poor condition and overloading of buses and mini-buses, and speeding of buses, mini-buses and other passenger-carrying vehicles.
- 82 percent of the fatalities and 72 percent of the injuries associated with bus or mini-bus crashes occur in rural areas.
- Many new rural roads are designed for non-motorized traffic and are only one lane wide. In many cases, trees are planted along these roads and wells are drilled near them to make non-motorized travel easier in Ghana’s semi-arid climate.

NIGHT TRAVEL

- Driving at night outside of major cities is extremely hazardous. The lighting is poor, and the unpredictable behavior of farm animals, pedestrians, and cyclists considerably increases the risk of driving in rural areas at night.

PEDESTRIAN TRAVEL

- Lack of sidewalks increases pedestrian deaths.
- Pedestrians are likely to cross the road anywhere and at any time.
- Drivers seldom slow down for pedestrians. They simply honk their horn, assuming people will get out of their way.

- Children younger than 16 years old account for 46 percent of pedestrian road crash fatalities.
- Pedestrians account for 46.2 percent of all road crash fatalities in Ghana, but the severity of injuries to pedestrians in rural areas is generally greater.

SEASONAL TRAVEL

- Central and southern Ghana has two rainy seasons, which occur from April to July and September to November.
- The far southwest has very heavy rains.
- The northern part of Ghana is hot and dry most of the year. Its rainy season lasts from April to September.
- The harmattan, dry desert winds coming from the northeast, can make driving difficult because of the associated heat and dust. In northern Ghana, the harmattan occur from December to March. In the south, they occur during January.

POLICE ENFORCEMENT

- Police often stop travelers and bribe for cash.
- Police checkpoints are frequent. Automobiles and passengers may be searched. Be sure to have your passport and visa at all times.
- Speeding and drunk driving enforcement as well as the law prohibiting transport of passengers by trucks is inadequate.
- Traffic police forces are understaffed. Equipment and resources available to them are inadequate, making enforcement difficult. Installing rumble strips at the Suhum junction on the Accra-Kumasi highway has reduced road crashes.



ROAD WATCH

SOME DANGEROUS ROADS

ROADS	CONDITIONS
FROM KUMASI TO TAMALE	Sealed road heavily potholed
FROM TAMALE TO BOLGATANGA	Primarily poor dirt road; should be avoided in the rainy season
DIRECT ROUTE TO TAKORADI AND CAPE COAST	Route very rough and often impassable in rains
ROAD TO VILLAGES OF PRANG	Ragged asphalt and dirt
MOUNTAIN ROAD TOWARD LOGBA TOTA	Steep mountain road; twisting hairpins
ROAD LEADING TO BURKINA FASO VIA BOLGATANGA	Road north in very bad shape
THE NEW DODOWA-ACCRA ROAD	Improved road encourages speeding; road claims more than 10 lives a week
THE SUHUM JUNCTION ON THE ACCRA-KUMASI HIGHWAY	High road crash rate



ROAD RECOMMENDATIONS

TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

BUSES

- The safety of public transportation is fair.
- State Transport Corporation (STC) buses generally run according to schedule, but book your ticket in advance.
- Omnibus Services Authority (OSA) also provides bus service in some regions of Ghana.
- Private buses leave the station when they full, so it is wise to arrive early.
- The government has improved and expanded the bus service.
- Minibuses (*tro-tros*) and Peugeot 504s (*caravans*) are less comfortable than buses, leave more frequently, and travel faster; but they are less comfortable and often very overloaded.
- In Accra, most minibuses leave from the depot between Kinbu road and 28th February road. Minibuses to Labadi and Osu leave from the depot on High street.
- Mammy wagons are even more uncomfortable and overcrowded. They squeeze as many people as possible onto wooden planks in a boarded-up truck.
- On-road bus stops create hazards for pedestrians and vehicles.
- Unmarked protruding loads on trucks are road hazards.
- Small private buses do not always maintain safety standards.
- Commercially operated passenger-carrying buses, minibuses, and trucks have the highest risk of being involved in fatal crashes.
- Occupants of buses and *tro-tros* account for 21 percent of all road crash fatalities—second only to fatalities among pedestrians.



- Trucks are not permitted to transport passengers, but many do. Trucks are converted to passenger vehicles by constructing seats from heavy sheets of metal. These metal seats are a great safety risk in the event of a road crash. Seatbelts are not provided. Occupants of trucks account for 11 percent of all road crash fatalities.

TAXIS

- Taxi drivers at the airport may be aggressive. Keep calm. Negotiate the fare ahead of time.

RENTAL CARS

- Rental cars are not widely available; however, some are found in Accra.

MOTORCYCLES & BICYCLES

- The terrain is favorable to cycling as long as one stays on the better roads.
- Southern Ghana is more favorable than the northern regions of the country for cycling. Distances between destinations are shorter, the terrain is flat, and the climate is more favorable. Motorist attitudes toward cyclists are very negative in the south, partially because of the high risk of road crashes caused by cyclists. Motorists in the north are much more favorable to cyclists, even though a cyclist's risk of being in or causing a road crash is just as high as in the south.



EMERGENCY INFORMATION

TOURIST ASSISTANCE

- Roadside assistance availability is poor.
- Tourism facilities are limited in the remote areas of the country but are available in larger towns in the greater Accra region, Cape Coast area of the Central region, and Kumasi in the Ashanti region.
- For tourist information on Ghana, contact the following:
 - Ghana Tourist Board, Head Office, P.O. Box 3106, Tesano, Accra. Phone: 233 21 222153 and fax: 233 21 231779.
 - Ghana Tourist Board, Greater Accra Office, Regional Administration Block, Accra. Phone: 233 21 228711.
- The Cape Coast area of the Central region, city of Kumasi in the Ashanti region, and larger cities and towns in the greater Accra region have facilities for tourism, but there are limited facilities in more remote areas.
- The government prohibits the wearing of any military apparel or any clothing—such as camouflage jackets or trousers—or accessories that may appear connected with the military.

- Women cyclists may experience some harassment, because Ghanaians regard cycling as an inappropriate behavior for women.
- The Mampong road is good for cycling.

INTERNAL AIR SERVICE

- The service of regional air carriers—including Ghana Airways—is reportedly unreliable. Schedules may change and flights frequently are overbooked and may be cancelled on short notice.

CRIME & SECURITY

- Petty theft and scams are the most common crimes tourists face.
- Avoid political rallies and street demonstrations.
- Contact the State Department or the Department of Commerce before pursuing any advance fee (money that must be paid upfront) business deals. Most contacts for such deals come via e-mail.
- Violent outbreaks between Muslim sects in central Ghana have occurred. They do not target foreigners, but caution is suggested. Seek local advice in regard to these incidents.



MEDICAL CARE

- Major hospitals are in Accra and Kumasi. Smaller hospitals can be found in towns throughout the country, but medical facilities are limited anywhere outside of Accra. A private clinic is recommended for a serious problem. Doctors and hospitals often require immediate cash payment for medical services.
- Emergency medical services are extremely limited. Trauma management facilities are rare in rural areas. Those that exist generally are understaffed and lack adequate supplies and equipment. Most physicians, even those along major highways, lack any formal trauma care training.
- The average response time for a medical emergency is 120 minutes in Kumasi.
- U.S. medical insurance is not always valid in other countries. Medicare and Medicaid do not cover medical expenses rendered outside the U.S. Medigap policies (plans C through J) cover 80 percent of what Medicare would cover in the U.S. for the first 60 days of each trip; a \$250 deductible applies. Maximum lifetime limit of \$50,000. Medicare Advantage may offer coverage for care abroad. Phone: 800-633-4227; website:
www.medicare.gov/publications/pubs/pdf/11037.pdf.

EMBASSY INFORMATION

- The Embassy of Ghana, 3512 International Drive, NW, Washington, DC 20008. Phone: 202 686 4520, fax: 202 686 4527, e-mail: gghemwash@cais.com or infocon@cais.com, and website: <http://ghana-embassy.org>
- The US Embassy, Ring Road East, P.O. Box 194, Accra. Phone: 233 21 775 347 or 48 and website: <http://www.usia.gov/posts/ghana>
- For current travel and security information, contact the Consular section of the US Embassy Annex, 10th and 11th Lanes, near Danquah Circle, Osu, Accra. Phone: 233 21 776 601 or 02 and fax: 233 21 775 747

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the Association for Safe International Road Travel
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ASIRT is a non-profit humanitarian organization established in memory of Aron Sobel, age 25, who was killed along with 22 other passengers in a Pamukkale Bus Company road crash on the roads of Turkey. © ASIRT 2004

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