

loads the van, collects the money, and prepares everything for the driver, who doesn't appear on the scene until the last moment.

Tots of smiles. Fun to hear Ghanaian English. Prices here reflect the black market exchange rate - twice that of the bank rate.

Tots of turkey tails! These are popular cause they're cheap. Composed primarily of chemicals & fat, they're shipped in by the boatload, purchased overseas by entrepreneurs for practically nothing.

The taxi ride to Accra was incredibly pleasant. Our taxi driver was friendly and considerate - he did unheard of things like explaining he was going slow ~~to~~ because the roads were bad, or stopping ~~in~~ in heavy traffic to let cars turn.

Accra - the road outside Accra becomes a wide smooth thoroughfare, swings through a large traffic circle, and aims down a long straight avenue past the airport and into the center of town. Noticed amusing "Britishisms" in

the English signs & billboards.

Restaurants are chop houses - one sign read: Beer, chop, & minerals.

Taxi slogans, as in Togo, are mainly about God: all in God's Time, God knows best, God's time is best. It's rare to see a taxi without one.

Accra struck me as very big, very modern, much more so than Lomé. Lots of billboards, lots of traffic, and it seems you can buy just about anything here - but for a price. Most prices are based on the black market rate of exchange. But govt. workers' salaries are based on the legal rate of exchange, which is half the ~~govt~~ B.M. rate. This includes Peace Corps workers, whose wage is equivalent to $\frac{1}{5}$ what we make in Togo. Yet the cost of living here is equal or higher. They can't afford to eat in restaurants - they can hardly afford to drink beer - and for vacations or souvenirs, they have to use money from home. Which repudiates the Peace Corps rhetoric about "equal opportunity employment". To the contrary, one must ~~be~~ have money to afford to join.

Accra was once a thriving city -
one of the playgrounds of W. Africa.

The crumbling, overgrown villas,
ghosts of their former, obviously
plush ~~sets~~ selves, attest to it.

Accra is very different from
Lomé. It rambles & sprawls,
like a giant suburb. You
feel there is space here. The
streets are wide, and ^{wide} dirt
pedestrian paths ~~are~~ are
common. There's lots of greenery,
as if once manicured lawns
& hedges have been long neglected.
Now the routes are lined
with tall grass, sprawling
shrubs, and ancient neglected
trees, twisted, gnarled, and
long unpruned.

People smile here - they say
hello & welcome to Ghana. Even
children. Haven't once heard
"Yovo, yovo", and noone has asked
for money or a gift. At the
"sory stands", people ask where
you're going, and "Do you know
the way?". Music is toned down.
Haven't heard the blaring
volumes so common in Togo.
And the music itself seems

less repetitions, less tinny, canned, without that tiresome dance beat.

People seem relaxed here, much calmer & more in control.

People don't seem to just break out dancing in the street. Sat with Brian from Togo, and a volunteer from Sierra Leone, and compared notes. We all felt a sense of this purposefulness, or confidence. People seem busy here, going about their business. A fair amount of rhetoric urges them to "grow what we eat, and eat what we grow", to work hard, be nice to each other, to aid the cause of "African Unity" and "the People's Revolution".

Ghana has come a long way in these last few years. From a thriving country, it has endured a revolution, a change in currency, and a ~~collapse~~ nearly complete economic collapse.

Embassies were abandoned, shops closed down, and almost nothing could be purchased.

Peace Corps also left. But now all is on the rebound.

Crumbling villas in once posh neighborhoods are rising from their scraggly remains. Embassies,

looking a bit battered & bruised, are nonetheless abuzz with renewed activity.

Accra is like a Phoenix, rising from the ashes.

A view of the NW corner of the city from Castle St., on the ridge, is reminiscent of old Lisbon, with its hazy undulations, scattered palm trees, and red-tile roofs.

Around the corner from the PC office is the American Club, a hotel & recreation complex exclusively for Americans. One catch however: as usual, Peace Corps is made to feel less than welcome, i.e. tolerated. And out-of-ghana volunteers must be sponsored by a ghana PCU.

Food is all-American, pretty yummy, and not too expensive on a Togo PCU budget. Best of all, you can choose from a large selection of videos - not great, but when you're stowed for movies...

The P.C. office supports about 70 volunteers. It's more crowded than Loni's, but has more ambiance, incl. a screened-in front porch / lounge, lots of magazines, a pailote out front, and a big lawn.

Arrived Mon. afternoon, and spent the night at Chip's in Madina, a suburb just north of Accra.

He has a nice rambling house, full of the usual unnecessary hallways and wasted space (indoor windows?). The ~~some~~ ride out was fun. Everyone was eager to know where we were going, and how we were getting to help us get there.

We've been walking miles these last 2 days. Managed to get a Mali visa fairly easily, but got the ~~unaround~~ around on a Ghanaian visa extension.

Last night, walked to the Wato Club down by the waterfront. Had to pass through a crowded, dark, rundown part of town, and we all got pretty nervous. Visions of Harlem. At one point a little boy stepped back and into a deep sewage ditch. Roads here are treacherous! Heavy traffic, ^{open} sewage canals, and holes & pits are common. At night it's especially scary.

The Wato Club was tucked in a shadowy corner and with an abandoned cement plaza in front of it. Dim lights

in doorways, and oil lamps flickering on vendors' tables gave the whole scene a feeling of the

1800's - before electricity. The Wato Club is a relic of the colonial past - a once glorious night spot for the Accra elite. Perched on the second floor of a 2-story bldg., a wide balcony skirts it. The front of the building is rounded, red lights cast a glow and give the impression of red velvet, hanging lights recall brocaded drapes, and a banister adds the finishing touch. The resulting impression is of a proud old Steamer ~~from~~ ~~the~~ Mississippi, from the days when wealthy passengers rode ornate boats down rivers like the Mississippi. Sitting on her deck, looking out over the shadowy shapes bustling about on the plaza & streets below, we all commented on how much it resembled a set from a movie.

Wed. morning we walked to the Nat. Museum. We were pleasantly surprised to find that it's a very nice museum, and well worth an hour or two's appraisal.

Beautiful

A visit to ^{across} ~~the~~ National Museum comes highly recommended. For \$20 you can spend a fascinating hour or two getting to know Ghana the history and crafts of Ghana, and its west African neighbors.

Attractive displays are well-labeled, and ~~the museum boasts a variety of~~ ~~enter~~ and varied. Displays ~~cases~~ hold incl. intricate beadwork, ancient pottery, glass bead-making, leatherwork from the north, kente cloth patterns, and traditional carved wooden stools. A scale model of Elmina castle, and a life-size display of ~~a~~ iron smelting are among ~~the~~ the other things worth seeing.

~~Wed~~ Thurs. July 10

Had a lovely evening with a brunch of volunteers at the Amer. Club last night. Dinner was chicken Kiev with baked potato, sour cream, and cauliflower with real cheese!

Whiskey sours were added the final touch, nearly half price for Wed's all we happy hour!

Will was there, from our Colorado training, and we had a great time.

We're trying to get our Ghana visa extended, and are getting the red tape runaround. First they said it would take 7 working days - so we slipped \$100 inside our passports and he said maybe he could shorten it. We shall see.

Thursday morning at the State Transport yard, trying to get a bus to Takoradi. Promises to be a real run-around, but that's half of travelling.

Have had good weather, but now a light mist is falling. I'd enjoy seeing a storm on the coast, but we didn't bring proper clothes for it.

Fri July 11

The ocean is green this morning, since the blue sky it usually reflects is covered in clouds. It rained most of the night, but this morn only a light mist remains, and even promises of sunshine. We arrived at Busua Beach yesterday afternoon,

after a 5 hour bus trip to Sakoradi, and 2 harrowing lush taxi rides, and a slippery wet hike across a headland from Dix Cove.

Gave up on State Transport. Noone knew when the bus would come, and it appeared we'd have to "dash" someone (ie bribe) just to get a ticket. Walked a mile or so to the private taxi yard and found a bus. Took a while to fill up, and was a bit crowded, but all in all a pleasant way to go. Loading the bus, I remarked again that here in Ghana people often wait in lines!

People here seem in general more polite - I hear lots of Please, Thankyou, and excuse me's.

Busses here in abundance - lots more than Togo. Cheaper transport also.

As we waited for the bus to load, a series of "travelling salesman" came on board to ply their wares. One stuck with us an hour into the journey, sending the passengers into frenzies of laughter with his comic antics. He had an expressive, Bill Cosby face, and though I only caught snatches of his mixture of English & a local language, I found myself giggling at his antics. One fellow, young & handsome, harangued the crowd

Tenaciously until he had ousted 420 from most of them for his product called "Magic Soap". Like a good snake oil salesman, he claimed miraculous properties for his soap: not only would it kill lice, ringworm, and fungus of any kind, but it controls dandruff and is guaranteed to make your hair beautiful. When the crowd had paid out for that product, he pulled out yet another, some sort of miracle powder for who knows what. This one was \$50, but people bought it! After a few minutes of haranguing, the salesman would boom "amen", and the crowd echoed a rousing "amen". They ^{salesmen} also interjected "thankyou" a lot. In general, vendors here have been less pushy. There's tons of stuff for sale - not the variety of some, but there's some of almost everything.

Christianity has ^{had} a huge influence here - or at least its rhetoric has. The Portuguese arrived in the 1400's, and built El Mina slave castle around 1482?

Every taxi has a name, and at least 3/4 are religious oriented. Most contain the word god in the title. Many appear to count on god to make up for the deficiencies in their decrepit, mortal vehicles: God will protect us; God have mercy; Pray to god. One taxi was even called The Lord.

Business names also echo the by now deeply engrained religious sentiments: The good Lord's Chop & Mineral House; Our Saviour Tailor Shop; Jesus of Nazareth Carpenters.

Ghana's roads are a sea of signs. In contrast to Togo, businesses here advertise aggressively, & their signs & placards are often very professional. Interspersed with these are signs for govt. agencies, and a variety of foreign organizations. A good portion of these latter are religious. Saw dozens of signs for churches & schools of myriad denominations, incl. a Shiva Temple.

Saw our first castle in Abandze, just before Cape Coast. Small, square & drab. We started getting views of the coast, and at one point were almost driving on the beach. Tall coco palms line the ~~coast~~ straight sandy beaches. Some areas are rocky. People here fish for their livelihood, and we began seeing clusters of banco fish-smokers. These resemble a small banco hut, about a meter high & wide. Wood is fed in through a small door. A grill is inset 10 or 15 cm down ~~in the~~ ^{from the top} hut. The smoke rises up through the fish-covered grill. Ate some fresh-smoked fish last night - delicious!

The coast road turns into a super highway between Cape Coast & Takoradi. It seems the coastal countries are building a Dakar to Lagos coast road. Germany has received the contract for the Ghana section. The results so far are a 4-lane swath complete with lines and arrows & medians. Nonetheless a welcome relief from the bladder-jolting ruts & holes previous.

Began to see bamboo growing, and noticed it used for huts, fences, and construction of all kinds. Wonderful, versatile stuff. Noticed dugout canoes carved from a single log. Most were painted & carved. To our right, opposite the coast, were a series of lagoon backwaters. Noticed bamboo wiers and wicker fish traps.

Takoradi was a ~~sp~~ surprisingly large town, a miniature Accra almost, ~~the~~ but more compact. 2 story bldg. in fading colors were packed close together along the streets, their lower levels a maze of shops & vendors selling a huge variety of goods. Seemed to be an even bigger variety than Accra. The drizzle had turned the streets

(Lesthere - stuff comes from Abidjan)

into a sloppy muck, and we tip-toed around puddles to find a taxi to the beach. A van was going just to function, where we could then catch a taxi for the short spur south to Dix Cove. The van was on its last ^{legs} ~~hours~~, and they crammed it full, as if to maximize its few remaining voyages. A steady trickle dripped down my arm from the rusted roof, and a wooden window substitute kept popping out of place in the wind. The driver flew through the mud & ruts & puddles oblivious to the white knuckles of his passengers. The taxi from the function wasn't much better.

the return from

24 people in a small pickup, 4 of them hanging off the back, and a raised bed, so that the whole thing was topheavy, and swayed perilously as we swerved to miss holes and puddles.

Drizzle & mud & forests of droopy coco palms w/ massive ferny heads. Beneath these a soggy mass of thick green shrubs, and more mud. The world had that haggard look of having just been through a solid 24 hrs. of heavy rain. We felt right at home in the

dripping, lush foliage & impenetrable undergrowth!

Dixcove is much bigger than I expected, a crowded town of ~~data~~ weatherbeaten houses clinging to the hills around a small stretch of sandy beach & rocks.

Christiansburg Castle, built in the 1800's, sits on top of one headland. Mossy & a bit eroded, it has a ^{doping} ~~wide~~ stone terrace around it, and a flight of wide stone steps leading up from the village. Beds can be had for \$50 a night, and we hear it's not too bad there.

Dix Cove is very picturesque, a quaint if dirty fishing village complete with carved wooden boats, grizzled old men repairing nets, barefoot children, and toiling women.

The hike to Busua beach is perhaps 2 kms., across a low, forested headland. The trail was a sea of slippery mud, and I finally had to go barefoot to keep from losing my sandals from the suction. I also managed a less than graceful fall flat on my butt at one point. The trail comes out on a small lagoon where a creek spills into the

ocean. It was high tide, so we waded across with our packs on our heads. Busua village is a small fishing village of wattle & daub huts. It is very dirty. There's a road to it, and we were surprised to see a large white-washed church, and several big buildings. (The minister is Ghanaian). Busua beach is long & sandy, & lined with coconut palms. Just down from the village is a series of about 25 bungalows stacked along the beach. These are for rent for 4440 + a night. They're pretty run down, but not bad, and cold beer can be had at the reception. Built about 20 years ago by a wealthy Ghanaian Accra businessman, it was reputedly quite a swinging place in its heyday, with a restaurant, electricity, running water, and sometimes live music. Now it's a dilapidated retreat for a lot of young white people. It's often full in the dry season, but now in the rainy season it's very calm & quiet. So far the people here are very nice, and the service surprisingly good. A very nice young man named Koffi fixed us dinner of rice & smoked fish last