

night - delicious! Today we bought some small lobsters that he'll fix for us.

Many people come equipped for camping, and buy food locally. There's a lot available.

Ate dinner by lantern light and saw ^{the} lights of fishing boats bobbing out on the water. Hear the loud thunks of coconuts falling. Rained most of the night, but was a nice day, with some light mist mixed with sunshine.

Walked to the beach and talked to some villagers. They speak Hanta, and a few speak English. The children clustered around us, playing with my hands and stroking my white skin. They all want to be white - some women use harsh soaps to bleach their skin - why are we never satisfied with what we have.

Although white people have been flocking to this beach for years, the people don't seem too jaded by it. A few children asked us for money, but in general most people ignored us.

The palm trees along the coast are all dying of some disease.

Noone knows what's causing it, but all along the beach are rotten palm trunks with no tops. ~~It~~

Others are turning yellow. The beach will not be nearly so pretty without tall, billowy palms. Stems they were imported long ago - wonder what it looked like without them here before that.

The fishing boats usually go out every evening and come back in the morning. The catch is taken to local markets, or smoked in the village. Some of the boats have outboard motors, and these often go out during the day.

It's humid here. Mist or sea spray hangs in the air, and nothing dries. A sticky salt film coats everything. These bungalows show evidence of years of weather: rusted windows, peeling paint, mouldy tiles.

Not far off the coast here is a lovely island. To the left it's a sloping hump of rock covered in greenery, rising to the center of the island, where it drops off to a small flat area with a cluster of tall palms. At times it seems to float on sea fog,

and it changes color with the changing lighting throughout the day.

Besua Village turns out to be fairly large. A tiny road runs along the backside of it over to the bungalows. Along this crumbling blacktop are vendors selling most every essential, incl. choc. & toilet paper! Sat. morning had omelettes & hot choc. at a small shop run by a jolly fat woman.

Although it's lovely to hang out on the beach & be lazy, I find I'm intrigued by life in the village, and full of questions about life here. The people are surprisingly blasé about our presence, and generally ignore us. It's nice to be left alone, and also to feel we aren't disrupting them too much.

Sat Had a nice day, mostly on the beach. Swam a little when the sun came out. The water was a very nice temperature, and the waves pretty gentle. It's soft sand & shallow for a long ways out. Mike bodysurfed a little, but I'm too chicken.

Two Ghana PCU's, Tom & Mark,

came yesterday. They bought ~~2~~ some barracuda today, and we had 3 lobster left, so we're going to feast.

Went this morning to see the fishing boats come in. Only one still had fish - a mass of slithering silver, all about 10" long, in ~~a tangle~~ of net in the bottom of the hold. Although this is primarily a fishing community, not everyone fishes. Those that do then sell their fish to those that don't.

Sun. July 13

Bought a chunk of shark this morning. Got to the village too late to see it whole. Very pleasant weather - cool nights, cool, breezy days with patches of warm sun. Got burned in a matter of 5 minutes yesterday. A squall of dark clouds sits on the horizon behind the beach, but never reaches us. It dissipates into thinner white clouds above us.

Went to church in the village. A large white ~~rectangular~~ I-shaped bldg., neat & well-scrubbed, with colored plastic windows thrown open to let in the sea air & fresh breeze. A choir in

black & white robes led a singing
processional down the aisle & up
into a choir loft, where an

organ was playing. Their voices,
booming & harmonious, with a clear,
childlike lack of resonance. One
woman, wearing a ^{dark} white pilgrim's
collar, herded the children into
their section, and kept an eagle
eye on them with a swatch
of straw. An older Ghanaian
^{minister} man spoke from an ornate,
throne-like pulpit, intricately
carved in creamy brown wood.

A peaceful feeling comes over
me when I sit in a church
and hear ^{choir} harmonious music.

Outside the windows were green
bushes & sunlight, the smell
& sound of the sea & crashing surf,
and the rhythmic chug of a diesel
flour grinder. The children found
me much more interesting
than the church service, and
I began to feel I was creating
a scene, so I wandered
back out to the beach. The small
town atmosphere of this bustling,
yet peaceful fishing village has
engulfed me. After only 3 days I

feel at home here. We've begun to know a few faces, and chat with some of them on our daily trips

to town. Our friend Koffi (William Koffi Saki, to be exact, as there are perhaps 100 Koffis in this village alone), has turned out to be a really good guy.

He's cooked us some great food, ^{brings it} comes on time, and is fun to talk with. He doesn't hang around too much, and seems to know when to leave. Most

definitely a unique trait in the travelling world where the hapless tourist finds himself forever trying to dodge the leech-like hangers-on who seem to hope by their tenacity to make you their good friend, ie to get something from you.

Koffi is perhaps typical of a young Ghanaian village boy. He was raised by his aunt, his mother's sister, here in Busua, as his parents went off to find work elsewhere (and in separate directions). I don't think they ever came back. Now that he's old enough to fend for himself,

that's exactly what he's expected to do. He has a small farm he goes to by taxi - come to think of it, I wish

we'd gone with him to see it.

He cooks for himself, ~~and~~ buys street food sometimes, and earns a little here & there doing odd things. He speaks English quite well, and would like to continue school, but finding enough money for tuition & books is difficult.

He has the equivalent of a junior high education. He told me he liked geography especially, and I thought how sad he will probably never see any of the places he's studied on maps.

I felt, as I often have, a sense of injustice, and not a little pang of guilt or remorse, ~~that~~ how lucky I am to be blessed with that most magical of all things: opportunity. So very many people in this world long for opportunities they'll never have: to be educated, to have a job, to travel. All of these I take for granted & always have. I've been trained to expect them. And it's not a matter of volition:

Koffi may work hard, but the chances are he'll spend the rest of his life in this village. For

those who accept it, it's potentially a very fine life; but for those who glimpse more than a life in a tiny fishing village, it could be a very frustrating life. After he brought us dinner tonight, he said "So tomorrow you'll leave, and I'll never see you again". I started to protest with the usual lame rhetoric about how you never know, maybe some day... But he was right, and he said it so simply & wistfully, it made me very sad. It's been a rare experience here to meet someone who doesn't have ulterior motives. I almost felt I was betraying him by leaving, just another white person passing through, off to more adventures and travels. I didn't know what to say, and so I said nothing.

As usual I avoided goodbye, because I don't like them. Then later I wished I'd said more, but what? Goodbye, have a nice life?

Sun Another day of sun, sand,
& surf. Hordes of white people
came in their cars, unloaded
picnic paraphernalia, and spent
the day frolicking on the beach,
turning lobster red. So did we.
This sun is vicious. 5 minutes
& zap! you're fried.

Mon. July 14 27th b'day

Left Busua beach early on a
fine warm morning, with red-
tinted clouds & lots of mist.
Hiked the now less treacherous
trail to Dix Cove, swatting at
flies & mosquitoes. The filth of these
fishing towns is starting to get to
me. Leaving Busua, we stepped
around piles of diarrhea. A ribbon
of wave-digested shit sloshed back
& forth at the tip of the waves.
Women came out to empty bedpans
of diarrhea into the lagoon, which
we had to wade across! The
people here have absolutely no
concept of disease transmission.
The beach is their community
outhouse & sewage garbage dump.

It's also where they launch their boats, haul in fish, mend nets, dry clothes, and generally hang out.

It's no wonder they're all sick.

From Dix Cove, caught a crowded bus to Takoradi where we scrounged up a great breakfast at Ann's, a literal hole in the wall serving every possible combination of bread & eggs.

Later we found FAW custard & hot donuts! Then caught a crowded van to El Mina. I'm finally getting used to overcrowded transport.

There's simply a lot of people who want to go places, and not enough vehicles to take them there, so they pack 'em in.

El Mina is a bustling fishing town, boasting El Mina castle, built by the Portuguese in 1482. It's probably Ghana's biggest tourist attraction. The town is filthy but very picturesque. A ^{protected} lagoon boasts 100's of fishing boats, from enormous wooden trawlers to motor canoe launches, and ^{augments} small canoes with only paddles & small square sails. I'd be terrified out on the open ocean in one of them. These small canoes often stay out all night.

The lagoon shores were a colorful sea of vendors & fishing boats. Canoes raced up & down

the lagoon, and under the bridge we stood on.

The castle is a square white monolith, & streaked dark by years of moss & rain. A tour costs \$50 and is well worth it. A friendly young Ghanaian man leads you through the maze of rooms, explaining & telling stories in clear, fluent English. Built in 1482 by the Portuguese, it was wrested from them by the Dutch some 200 years later. The Dutch then sold it to the British in the late 1800's. The Portuguese used it as their gold trading headquarters, and to defend their territory against invading powers. But the Dutch turned it to a more invidious use: slaving. Thousands of slaves, captured by their own countrymen, whom the Dutch bribed with firearms, tobacco, & alcohol, were held in this castle for eventual transport to the Indies & to America. They often spent 3 or 4 months in cement dungeons with iron bars, often without enough room to sit down,

naked. They ate, slept, & defecated in the same spot. Occasionally a ~~£~~ woman slave might get "lucky."

if she struck the governor's fancy she might be allowed sent to him for a night or two. If she was really lucky she would get pregnant, and be allowed set free. ~~Though how they could tell she was pregnant in 3 or 4 months...~~

Thus there's a lot of Mulatto ancestry here along the coast. I've noticed the features here are more caucasian, less pronouncedly Negroid: smaller noses, flatter lips.

Touring the castle is a real eye-opener. Years of reading & hearing about slavery don't prepare you for ~~the~~ ~~so~~ seeing where some of the horrors began. The ~~Portuguese~~ ^{Putch} had their cathedral-ceilinged chapel only a few yards from the series of pitch black tunnels where thousands of slaves, those that had survived the months of imprisonment, were loaded onto the "death ships" for another few months of torture, and a life of bondage.

Unlucky prisoners suffered various fates. Some were chained

to cannonballs and forced to stand in an open courtyard for 24 hrs. Others were put in a tiny cell for

a few days. The worst offenders were simply sent to a cement cell without air or light, and if 3-4 weeks with no food & water didn't kill them, some other method would be found. This cell boasted a cement skull & crossbones above its door.

After the British took power, there ensued a vicious Zyr. war with the Ashanti kingdom. The Ashanti chief was captured, and to prevent him re-igniting his people to rebellion, they kept him prisoner in the castle for 3 years. He was then sent to Ceylon & thence to the Seychelle ~~Islands~~ islands. He returned to Ghana & died here in 1924.

Sat for a while & near the beach, where a jitty juts out at the mouth of the lagoon. It's a lovely spot, under palm trees below the castle ramparts, but with their seemingly innate & obliviousness to our version of aesthetics, it is the

community outhouse, bathhouse,
crash pad, & general hangout for
town riff-raff. Walked up to

the El Mina Motel, famed deluxe
resort. The restaurant is out of
everything & the service is atrocious.
Anyway, we're nearly out of cedis.
Hoped to have a nice birthday
lunch, but didn't change enough
money before leaving Accra.
Food turned out to be good, and
reasonably priced, and arrived amazingly
quickly.

Watched some women building a
clay fish smoker. They make fat
cigar-shaped "bricks", which they
stack in a circle, until they have
a cylinder, slightly flared at the top,
about 4 feet tall. They then cut a
door & insert a grill. The fish take
smoked are many layers deep.

Images: pot-bellied ragamuffins
in tattered layers of faded cloth.

Black crows wearing white,
spaghetti strap t-shirts.

Staying tonight at the Hollywood
Hotel in El Mina. It's quite nice.
4500. Took a walk around town
just after dark. Smoking fish are
everywhere, and I expect to leave

here emanating the smoky scent from every pore. Also a rank, cheesy smell in the air, and

the ^{mixed} smells of grilled corn & sewage & salt air. Stopped at a boat yard, where half-finished wooden trawler hulls towered like sea giants.

A wild rosta man, his ratty, yarn-like hair in dreadlocks it looked like he'd had in for years, approached us to offer "gonja." Very common here. Children followed us, and asked what we have come to recognize as the national English question: "What is your name." I think they learn how to say that before 'How are you'. Had an exemplary dinner: 2 oranges, a piece of corn, and half a coke.

Back at the Hotel, had an interesting chat with the owner, a well-educated Ghanaian man. He was full of questions, and eager to tell us all about himself.

El Mina at night is a bustling town, full of noise & activity. We hear a lot of jazz & other pleasant music heard in Ghana, and so far no west African rinky dink and high volumes.

Wed. July 16

Back in Accra. Left El Mina in a taxi for Cape Coast, where we waited for a bus to Accra. Got to see a bit of the town, but unfortunately, not the waterfront or the castle. Heard that the 5pm fishing boat launch is spectacular. The Accra station in Cape Coast was a marvel of organization, unlike anything I've ever seen before in West Africa. A series of benches accommodate people according to who came first - can you imagine! Each time a new vehicle pulls in the appropriate number of people is sent off single file to climb on. We landed a decent seat with a good view & a window that opened, but absolutely no leg room. 3 hours without moving your feet or unbending your knees. A young woman at the taxi station exhorted us in loud, shrill tones to follow Jesus Christ. This kind of haranguing of an innocent captive audience, for 20 or 30 minutes, seems common here, and surprisingly tolerated. I found it quite obnoxious. She handed out a religious flyer called Ghana Challenge, so I christened her Our Lady of Challenge.