



Ghana at 50

by Ras

Ghana used to be ruled by Britain as a colony, but in 1957 it fought for and won its independence. Before then, it was known simply as the "Gold Coast". It was the first West Afrikan nation to achieve independence from European rule, and Ghanaians are very proud of how they gained their freedom.



This is the independence arch in Accra.



- The impressive memorial to Kwame Nkrumah in central Accra shows that many Ghanaians respect him today. They look up to him for his leadership in ending British rule, and honour him as Ghana's first President. The statue shows him pointing forward to signal to Afrikaners that you should always look forwards in life, not backwards.



This year marks the 50th anniversary of Ghanaian independence. While we were there we saw some celebrations, with people riding on buses to promote the commemorations.



An independence anniversary flag given to us in Accra. The Ghanaian flag is very symbolic. The red is for those who died in the struggle for independence, the yellow for Ghana's natural resources such as gold and the green for the richness of the forests. The black star is the lonestar of Afrikan freedom.



Chiefs and kings

by ZaK and Charlie

We met lots of chiefs in different villages around the country, and we also visited the King's palace in Kumasi. The chiefs are an important part of traditional life and local government. I expected them to be powerful heavyweights, but they mostly looked more like people who you take seriously, because they were smaller and looked less fearsome than expected.



-We visited the Manhiya King's Palace in Kumasi on the second Sunday. There were lots of chiefs there, and they were wearing different styles of kente.



-Immanuel and Jehennelle are all dressed up in kente cloth at Adanwomase village, to show they are important. This means they are allowed to sit with the Chief and his Queen.



- Chiefs are treated with a lot of respect. Here we are bowing to show respect to the chief's deputy in a village near Salaga, in the Northern region. They told us that they want more visitors to come to the north, to learn more about where most of the enslaved people were captured.



-The Zongo Chief was dressed in special clothes, mostly white and gold. His people treated him with the utmost respect. The performance that was put on for us in Kumasi by the Zongo people was unique, and many of the performers were given money by the Chief and by others to show their enjoyment.



Traditions and crafts

by Zack

We visited the village of Adanwomase near Kumasi, where we were shown the methods behind important traditional Ghanaian crafts and practices such as kente cloth weaving and tapping for palm wine. We were also shown how to make fufu, a traditional staple food in Ghana. In the northern town of Tamale, we saw shea butter being produced in a cooperative.



Palm trees have many uses; the nuts can produce palm nut oil, the leaves can be woven into baskets or brushes and the bark is used for medical purposes.

Palm wine is an alcoholic drink produced in many parts of Ghana from the sap of palm trees. We saw the sap being collected in a bottle from a small hole in the trunk.



Kente cloth originates from the Ashanti tribe many centuries ago. Adanwomase is a well-known kente-producing village. We were shown the different styles of weaving on the looms, and saw some beautiful examples of finished kente cloth.

Shea butter is a moisturiser and foodstuff widely used in Ghana and also bought by people in the UK from companies such "The Bodyshop". We talked to the women in the cooperative, who told us that these companies pay low prices and that their income is irregular. This is the finished butter ready for sale.



We watched the women grinding up the shea nuts and had a go ourselves.



-This man is sewing the strips of kente together by hand. Only men can prepare the cloth, as it is believed that if a woman touches the loom it will bring bad luck.



We were also shown how Ghanaians make **fufu** by crushing cassava. I had a go at pounding the fufu, and was cautious, in case I hit the girl's hand. It's a skilful job.



Dance

by Immanuel

To Ghanaians, dance is a great means by which the human body can express any aspect of human life and the spiritual beyond. Movement is intertwined with the rhythm and play of instruments and the voice to create a whole response. In Afrika, dance has been used over the centuries as the foundation for many aspects of life, including communication of knowledge and traditions. We were able to experience different forms of dance traditions through special performances, and also gained some practice.



-This is a performance at the Cape Coast Cultural Centre. They used many different drums and other percussion instruments. I found the African dancing interesting and exciting to do. If you let it flow you can really feel the love.



-I was interested in sharing and exchanging ideas about expression through dance and music. I showed Joseph from Ex-Aid some different forms of movement on the beach in Accra.



These are a couple of the dances we watched.



-The Ex-Aid group performed many different traditional dances for us, and showed us how to do some of the different moves. Here, the whole group are dancing to some of the music.



-This was a special evening performance put on for us in Tamale in the Northern Region. Some of the musicians also took part in the dance whilst playing and at intervals one of the females let out a loud, high pitched cry to spur the dancers on. This is a traditional part of the performance.



Fashion

by Martina and Jehenelle

We saw Ghanaian people in traditional and in Western clothing. This shows how western fashions have had an influence on African people. In general, men wear less traditional dress than women, and young people often prefer to wear American style clothes. There is a big market for second hand clothing from Europe, which we saw people selling at the Makola market in Kumasi.



- In Ghana your dresses, jewellery, headwear and shoes should bring out or complement the colours being worn. The type of fabric you wear is also important, as the designs on the cloth have different meanings.



The Ex-Aid group gave us a demonstration of the beautiful traditional clothes worn by Ghanaian women today. They dressed us in the different styles, and we asked them some questions. The clothes we wore are examples of the kinds of styles usually worn by Ghanaian women when going to see family members or acquaintances.



-This is an advert for hair conditioner. Even in the most remote places, we saw small beauty salons and adverts for beauty products. Many women get their hair professionally braided in a variety of styles, and makeup is also popular.



The bigger your head-dress, the wealthier, more important and knowledgeable you are.