

Accra, Ghana

Overview

Country Director

Our Country Director for Ghana is the Director for West Africa, Alan Collier (Pepperdine Law, Class of '90), who has lived in Ghana with his wife Libby since opening our Accra office in September 2019.

Country Overview

Ghana is a Democratic Constitutional Republic which gained its independence on March 6, 1957 after being a British Colony known as the “Gold Coast” since 1867. Ghana has a tropical climate and borders the Gulf of Guinea at its Southern Border. Ghana has a population of 32 million people, with 4 million living in its capital city, Accra. Ghana is a very religious country with 71% of the population identifying as Christian and 18% as Muslim.

Ghana was settled by the Portuguese in the late 1400s. Shortly after, Ghana’s coast became a hub for the transatlantic slave trade with an estimated 6 million West African slaves flowing through its shores to the New Worlds of America and the Caribbean. Despite this history, Ghana is now a model of Democracy and a leader in West Africa with many of its diaspora returning to invest and live in Ghana.

Legal Internship

Our West Africa Office is well connected with the Ghanaian government and with the US Justice Department and their work in criminal justice reform in Ghana. We also partner with other local and international NGOs with similar missions in Ghana and West Africa. Additionally, we are working closely with the Ministry of Justice in both the Ogun and Lagos States of Nigeria on various projects.

While subject to the needs of the Ghana Judiciary, work as a Summer Intern in Ghana includes but is not limited to the following:

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Supreme Court and Court of Appeals

- In office 3 to 4 days per week
- Meeting with Justices
- Attending Supreme Court and/or Court of Appeals sessions
- Reviewing/analyzing court files
- Conducting legal research and writing (Note: Students will be provided an online research tool as part of the program plus training from our US and Ghanaian Legal Fellows)
- Preparing Memoranda and/or Draft Decisions/Orders relating to current cases
- Doing research and preparing memoranda on issues of constitutional interest to the Justices

West Africa Justice Center (WAJC)

- Researching and writing on issues relating to criminal justice reform efforts in Ghana
- Writing policy papers and/or legal articles
- Meeting with Legal Aid and WAJC Lawyers about case strategies
- Reviewing/analyzing case files and court records relating to WAJC cases
- Attending court meetings or hearings regarding cases that occur during internship
- Participating in WAJC's Prison Justice Clinics and meeting with prison paralegals and potential or current clients

Travel + Excursions in Ghana

Apart from optional sightseeing and cultural experiences, the Ghana Internship includes a 2-day trip to the Kakum National Park and Rain Forest Canopy Walk, stay at Coconut Grove Beach Resort, and tour of the Cape Coast Slave Castle built in 1610 which was the send off point for slaves going to the Americas. Optional weekend trips include a surf trip to Busua Beach, hiking to Wli Waterfall, and visiting Mole Safari Park.

Accommodations

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Pepperdine Justice House

Pepperdine leases a large home next door to the West Africa Director and his wife's residence. The house is located in the East Legon area of Accra and serves as both the West Africa Justice Center Office as well as a guest house for Year Long Fellows and Student Summer Interns. Students live in this home together and share a large living room, porch, patio, kitchen, and garden. The whole house has air conditioning and WIFI and comes with security measures such as barbed wire fencing, reliable locks, and a night guard. The cost depends on single or double occupancy and is set at a subsidized rate that includes a built-in share for utilities, making it not only a great experience but also affordable with your stipend.

Preparations Before Travel

Once a student is accepted for the internship, the Director and Fellow will provide information to assist with preparations for travel which will include, among other things:

- Visa Application with the Ghana Embassy including *Letter of Invitation* for entry. This process should begin as early as possible but not later than 45 days from travel (note: it is assumed students will have active Passports with expiration dates at least 6 months later than their time in Ghana);
- Information and assistance with regard to required immunization and malaria medicine;
- Instructions for use of phones in Ghana;
- Instructions for use and exchange of money in Ghana (note that the currency in Ghana are Cedis with 1 Ghana Cedi equivalent to .17 USD);
- Travel suggestions (note that it is best if all student interns arrive at the same time if possible. Pepperdine has a driver who will pick you up at the airport at no cost);
- Guidance on clothes and necessities to bring for your time in Ghana;
- Suggested readings before arrival.

Once on the ground in Ghana, the Director and Fellow will conduct a full orientation on cultural sensitivity, safety rules and tips, Ghana law and judicial system, and safe eating and restaurant suggestions. This orientation will include taking students on a walking tour around the neighborhoods of East Legon and the neighboring Obitsiman Village to get a lay of the land, set-up phones, and get initial cash from the bank or exchange center.