



# Ghana

## TRAVELER HANDOUT

### — CUSTOMS & RESPECT

The Sankofa Foundation Impact Tour · Iture, Ghana

*We are more  
than travelers.  
We are family.*



#### 1 GREETINGS

*A warm greeting goes a long way.*

- Always greet people warmly, acknowledging elders first when appropriate.
- Follow your hosts' lead on handshakes and other greeting customs.
- Use respectful titles such as Nana, Auntie, Uncle, Mr., Mrs., or Madam.
- Learn a few words: **Akwaaba** (welcome) and **Medaase** (thank you).



#### 2 HANDS & GESTURES

*Show respect in simple ways.*

- Use your right hand when greeting, giving, receiving, eating, and passing items (the left hand is considered unclean).
- Avoid pointing at people or waving an open palm in someone's face.
- Be mindful of your palm down, not with a curled finger.
- Keep your feet to yourself. Don't point them at people or use them to move objects.

#### 3 MEETING THE CHIEF & ELDERS

*A time of honor and respect.*

- Remove hats and sunglasses.
- Wait to be introduced and invited to sit.
- Don't offer a handshake to the Chief; wait for him to extend his hand.
- Sit respectfully and follow the seating guidance of your hosts.
- Speak through the linguist if one is present.
- Follow the traditional departure protocol, which may include stepping back a few paces.
- One spokesperson will speak for our group.



#### 4 DRESS

*Dress modestly and respectfully.*

- In the village, wear clothing that covers shoulders and knees. Avoid anything too tight or revealing.
- Colors have meaning. Black and red can signal mourning, while white signals celebration. We will confirm dress colors for the legacy gathering with our hosts.
- Bring comfortable, modest clothing for community visits and cultural sites.



## Akwaaba to Ghana!

A JOURNEY OF CULTURE, CONNECTION  
— AND A LASTING IMPACT. —



## Customs & Respect

### — CONTINUED —

#### 5 CEREMONY, FAITH & TRADITIONS

*Be present and respectful.*

- Ghana is a deeply religious country. Stand or bow your head respectfully during prayers and blessings.
- Libations (pouring a drink to honor ancestors) may be part of a blessing. Stay quiet and respectful.
- Never touch sacred items or symbols without permission.
- If you receive a Ghanaian name, understand that it carries cultural, familial, and spiritual meaning. Receive it with gratitude and respect.



#### 6 PHOTOS & SOCIAL MEDIA

*Capture the beauty. Protect the dignity.*

- Always ask permission, especially for the Chief, elders, and ceremonies.
- Get permission from a parent or teacher before taking photos of children.
- Do not post identifiable photos of children without parent/guardian permission and the Foundation's consent.
- Avoid photographing homes, living conditions, or personal circumstances without permission.
- Think before you post. Share images that reflect the beauty, joy, culture, and accomplishments of the people you meet.

#### 7 FOOD, GIVING & SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY

*Enjoy, give thoughtfully, and support locally.*

- Eat with your right hand and wash your hands when water is offered.
- Accept hospitality graciously, but let us know in advance about any dietary needs or health concerns.
- Do not hand out money, candy, or gifts to children or individuals. Give through the Foundation and village leadership.
- Purchase locally made products such as crafts, art, and clothing to support the local economy. Ask permission before bargaining and compensate fairly.



#### 8 CONVERSATION & CULTURAL AWARENESS

*Be curious, humble, and open-minded.*

- Speak of partnership, not pity. Avoid words like "poor" or "helpless."
- Avoid initiating sensitive political, religious, or social debates. Treat everyone with dignity and respect, even when beliefs differ.
- Don't criticize in public. If you have concerns, raise them privately with a trip leader.
- Different does not mean wrong. Instead of "Why do you do it that way?" consider asking "Can you help me understand the meaning behind this tradition?"
- Be patient with time. Events may start late, so stay flexible, but be punctual for the Chief.



#### 9 CHILDREN, FAMILIES & COMMUNITY DIGNITY

*Engage with respect and genuine connection.*



- Avoid treating children or village residents as tourist attractions.
- Engage with children through conversation, games, and shared experiences rather than immediate giving.
- Do not make promises of financial support, sponsorship, or future visits unless you genuinely intend to follow through.
- Remember that the people we meet are not defined by what they may lack, but by their dignity, wisdom, resilience, and humanity.

#### 10 IF IN DOUBT

*Follow the lead of your hosts.*

- Watch your hosts and follow their lead.
- Ask a trip leader quietly if you're unsure.
- It's okay to politely decline food, physical contact, participation in a ceremony, or anything that makes you uncomfortable.
- A sincere smile, a respectful greeting, and an open heart go a long way.

## The Sankofa Spirit

COME WITH AN OPEN HEART.

Our greatest gift is not what we bring in our suitcases, but what we bring in our hearts. Bring humility instead of assumptions. Curiosity instead of judgment. Gratitude instead of entitlement. We may arrive as visitors, but our hope is that we leave as family.

*Sankofa — Go back and retrieve what has been forgotten, so that we may move forward together.*