

Hello!

I have been in Ghana for one week, and it has been an unbelievable experience so far. I am living in the village of Kwamoso, in the Akuapem Hills, with a wonderful and very respected Ghanaian family and several other volunteers. The father of the family is a reverend, and the entire family wakes very early because he conducts a church service every morning at 4:30 a.m. Though the house has no running water or electricity, I am very comfortable here. I shower using a bucket of water, which is actually very refreshing and has become one of the highlights of my day, and there is a non-flush toilet that is as nice as I imagine a non-flush toilet can be.

Typical meals at home include rice, boiled yams, plain pasta, plantains and an occasional salad. Foods such as boiled eggs, grilled corn and kebabs are also sold along the side of the road and in markets and other busy areas. I also haven't gone a day without hearing near-constant shouts of "Obruni!" (white person), especially from children.

Tro tros are my main form of transportation here in Ghana. They are essentially vans, probably meant to hold a maximum of 12 people, but they are almost always packed with 16 to 20. They also drive incredibly fast, pass other cars on blind turns, breakdown fairly frequently and often come dangerously close to hitting people walking along the side of the road. They are also cheap, however, and I have gotten used to taking tro tros everywhere, including the thirty-minute ride I have to the orphanage each day.

There are 17 children at the Mt. Zion Orphanage. They have essentially learned to take care of and entertain themselves from a very young age, due in large part to a sometimes neglectful orphanage staff. But the kids do seem to enjoy having volunteers around to play with and to practice their English with. In my first week with them we drew pictures, made and colored paper plate fish and beaded necklaces and bracelets. I am still learning all of the kids' names and looking forward to getting to know all of them over the next few months. I go to the orphanage

early every weekday morning and stay until mid-afternoon.

During my first weekend in Ghana, I made a trip with another volunteer to the Boti and Akaa waterfalls, which were beautiful. So far, I have spent most of my time in Kwamoso (the village where I live), Tinkong (where the orphanage is located), Mamfe (a great place to hang out in the evenings with locals and other volunteers) and Koforidua (a larger city with a bank and a great bead market on Thursdays), but I can't wait to spend more of my weekends exploring other parts of Ghana.

All the Best,

Abby