

Field Report – International Development Grant



14th Century Mosque – Larabanga, Ghana

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11/16/2010

Ghana 2011 Study Tour – Field Report

The following report details the travel itinerary that I followed along with the possibilities and challenges of each destination as a potential site for the 2011 Eco-tourism study tour. The final section of the report is a suggested itinerary and focus for the study tour along with some consideration of the potential “road blocks” for the actual implementation. Note: Most of the travel detailed below was done in the company of the Ghanaian Community Coordinator for the Protected Areas and Poverty Reduction (PAPR) project (KAS) and the PAPR project was taken into consideration in the development of the intended itinerary.

The Road Travelled

The table below provides specific details on each of the hotel properties/destinations visited during the familiarization tour. For each destination the mode of transportation is also noted and discussed; however, it does need to be acknowledged that due to time constraints private transport was used rather than public buses and trotros (it is unlikely that we will make use of either of these options during the study tour).

Destination/Description	Potential Site Analysis
<p>Gilbert Guest House (Accra)</p> <p>This guesthouse offers clean serviceable rooms at an affordable price. Located close to the airport and other destinations in Accra it is a great location for the first two nights in Ghana. The cost of the rooms (approximately \$55) is very affordable by Accra standards. There is a small kitchen that provides breakfast as part of the room (common in Ghana).</p>	<p>This is a much cheaper option to the one that we have used for the last couple of years but is also extremely busy. We will need to book into it as soon as our dates are known.</p>
<p>Safari Beach Resort (Dixcove)</p> <p>Traditional bungalows with large beds and contained washroom (pit toilet) facilities. The facility is generally in good repair but has an overall feeling of recent neglect. The proximity to the ocean and the perpetual ocean breezes left everything feeling damp (rain didn't help). The cost of the large room (Queen Bed) with a single bed added was \$72/night. The smaller rooms with double beds were \$52. There are also some units that are not self-contained (i.e., bathroom facilities are shared) for \$40/night.</p>	<p>The primary purpose for visiting this site was to determine whether it and its close neighbour “the Green Turtle Lodge” would be suitable sites for students to develop case studies on properties that are currently being used as examples of “good” community-based eco-tourism development. While at the Safari Beach we visited</p>

<p>The travel from Accra to Safari beach was \$GH 272 for a private minivan. This included the cost of fuel but not the cost of the highway tolls (approx \$GH 3). While we did have the driver stop at the Elmina Castle and at the Coconut Grove resort for lunch we were informed afterwards that we should have been charged more money for those stops. The trip took the majority of the day.</p> <p>Travel from the resort back to Sunyani was \$30 for a cab from the Safari Beach to Takoradi and \$300 for private transport (SUV) from Takoradi to Cape Coast to Sunyani. This fee include all gas, tolls, and the driver's fees. We had originally arranged for a taxi to travel this same route for \$250; however, the older brother of the taxi driver told us that we should not take the car as it was not sound enough (it was pretty darn good by Ghana standards) and then he proceeded to arrange for other transport!</p> <p>The food at the resort was outstanding, by far the best food that I have had in Ghana. The fruits, vegetables, and meats are all locally sourced (part of their "eco" plan) and prepared on site. There was a general lack of variety of vegetarian dishes on the menu; however, the staff was quite willing to accommodate that request. Breakfast and lunch prices ranged from \$8 - \$15 and the dinners from \$12 - \$25. This was definitely the most expensive place to eat and generally there were only 2 - 4 items on the menu, which changed every meal (except breakfast).</p>	<p>the Green Turtle and spoke with some staff while taking a short tour.</p> <p>Both of these properties would make great cases for community-based eco-tourism development; however, the relative expense of the Safari Beach and the logistical issues with travelling that far up the western coast (but off the primary highway) makes both sites less than ideal.</p> <p>To be affordable we would need to stay at the Green Turtle Lodge and would need to keep students on a pretty strict food budget - I think both of these properties have potential as sites but would need to be one (if not "the") of the primary sites due to the challenges of getting there.</p> <p>Like many tourism properties world-wide, studying these two sites would also only give students a limited view into the community unless we were to also spend extensive time in the Akwidaa Beach community which is located just down the coast from the resorts.</p> <p>Recommendation: Do not use these as potential sites.</p>
<p>Sunyani</p> <p>Sunyani is a very familiar destination for VIU; however, next year it is intended that we will only spend a few day in the community. Approximately 2 days at the beginning as part of our team building</p>	<p>This is a good site for us to stay while in town as the cost (with two per room) is quite reasonable, there is a pool, and a restaurant attached. The big challenge will be trying to</p>

<p>and research training and perhaps 2 – 3 days at the end of the trip to allow for report writing and presentations, and of course goodbyes.</p> <p>While in Sunyani we took advantage of the Chesville Hotel \$30/night – which was one of the nicest (and newest) properties that we stayed at. The biggest challenge is that is so new that it is still off gassing! The services offered by the hotel include laundry service at approx \$1/article.</p>	<p>convince students that they should attempt to “not” use the air-conditioning as they acclimatize.</p> <p>Given our relatively short stays in Sunyani and the general confusion with staying at the guest houses (including the need to purchase equipment) I recommend that we stay at Chesville.</p>
<p>Larabanga</p> <p>The community of Larabanga is located on the outskirts of Mole National Park. It is intended that this be one of the two primary destinations and study sites for the 2011 study tour. The predominantly Muslim community is adjusting to living outside park boundaries and from stories told at meetings attended there has recently been a positive shift in the community’s relationship with the park.</p> <p>The community itself has limited accommodation and food/beverage options and most visitors stay at Mole Motel. Perceptions outside the community are quite negative as the locals are seen as being a group of poachers, as well as very aggressive ‘tour’ guides.</p> <p>Meetings with the community during the 2010 GCPFEE Study Tour and a follow-up meeting with the Eco-Tourism Board confirmed that community leadership is open to developing a relationship with PAPR, VIU, S-Poly, and FFRT. They were quite excited by the prospect of us coming to stay for a week even after we very clearly indicated that we were NOT bringing development money nor were we building anything.</p> <p>Transportation to Larabanga (and the majority of the trip) was done using the PAPR truck from S-Poly. The cost of using the vehicle (if available) is: \$20 top-up for the driver, driver’s accommodation</p>	<p>This is the site that can potentially provide the biggest rewards/life experiences but also the largest challenges. While there are a number of locals who speak exceptional English, the local dialect of Larabanga is one that not even our Ghanaian partners (who speak Twi) are generally familiar with.</p> <p>The two existing options for accommodation are not currently operating at an acceptable standard. KAS is going to be working with the local community to develop home-stay options for the students. We have discussed (at length) that minimum standards need to be met – safety, students will need to be in pairs, access to toilets and showers (albeit most likely outside), as well as the need to be able to hang mosquito netting.</p> <p>Note: As part of this project we will be purchasing</p>

<p>(often hotels will have dorm options for drivers) and meals, and all gas. The truck is a small diesel crew-cab that comfortably fits 5 people but would have trouble hauling the full gear of 5 people unless they only have 1 pack each. Note: it is also important to travel with a pocketful of single cedi notes to pay for tolls. The total cost of the northern portion of the trip including trips to Wechiau and Bolgatanga was approximately \$208 for the driver's expenses and \$186 for fuel.</p>	<p>mattresses and mosquito nets that can be used in subsequent projects run through BAREC.</p> <p>As mentioned KAS will be working with the Community and the Eco-Tourism Board to ensure adequate accommodations. If this turns out to be impossible we would most likely stay at the Mole Motel and community to Larbanga daily – this would be a last option, as it would interfere with the students' ability to integrate into the community and do the work that we plan to accomplish.</p> <p>Food and beverage would be sourced within the community and KAS has worked with Canadians long enough to know that while we can live on chicken and rice for weeks, we are not too fond of things like Fufu! We will continue to determine how to best meet the communities and our needs.</p>
<p>Wechiau Community Hippo Sanctuary</p> <p>This NCRC site is an award winning example of community-based eco-tourism development. There are very rudimentary accommodations available and a variety of eco- and cultural-tourism products to explore.</p> <p>Located southeast of Wa in the Upper West Region, this area is hot, dry, and very different than the Coast or Brong Ahafo (where Sunyani is). A number of science based field schools from the University of Calgary have visited the site and it is co-sponsored by the Calgary Zoo.</p>	<p>This is to be the first major site of the study tour. We will use this site as a great familiarization and acclimatization site as preparation for home stay and community work in Larabanga.</p> <p>Donna Sheppard from NCRC/Calgary Zoo met with myself and KAS and has</p>

<p>Accommodations are typical mud and wood construction and include beds and mosquito nets. Food can be provided and they are equipped to offer basic meals that are a blend of continental and Ghanaian.</p> <p>Eco-tourism options include: Canoeing on the Volta River to see Hippos, sleeping outdoors in the Hippo Hide, Bird Watching, Entomology (bugs), visiting a Lobi village (displaced people from Burkina Faso), tours of the local Wechiau community. We will most likely rent bikes as to be our primary mode of transport while in the community.</p> <p>NCRC staff will help with the development of an itinerary as well as accommodations, food, and even transportation. It is thought that we will be “dropped” at Wechiau and then have NCRC staff arrange for Trotro (private in our case) transport to Larabanga.</p> <p>Travel to Wechiau using the Bole highway would take approximately 5 – 6 hours from Sunyani and is mostly on “good” road. The trip from Wechiau to Larabanga is approximately 2 ½ hours on some good and some bad roads.</p>	<p>agreed to help with the coordination on the Ghana end. She works closely with a professor (biology) at U of C and has voiced an interest in wanting to interact with Tourism students (and others) as well.</p> <p>Wechiau and NCRC have an established price list and listing of services which will make coordinating this portion of the trip easier than most of the others.</p> <p>NCRC is also one of the Ghanaian partners in the PAPR project; although, Wechiau is not one of the study sites for that project.</p>
<p>Mole National Park This is the site of the elephants, antelope, baboons, monkeys, and more birds that you can imagine. The accommodations are basic but clean and the pool and general location make up for the food services, which can be inconsistent.</p> <p>Accommodations include dorm style rooms with three beds to double rooms with A/C. Wildlife and the pool are the primary attractions of this site; however, we will hopefully be taking advantage of the onsite Tourism Coordinator and Community Relations Coordinator to present the “results” of the Larabanga project as well as learning (from the Park itself) the history and future of Mole in relation to tourism and the communities that once existed within the park.</p>	<p>As a primary motivation for students (and Prof’s!) is to see large animals like elephants a trip to Mole is essential. This will also be used as the reward for the hard work (under what will surely be challenging circumstances) while at Wechiau and Larabanga.</p> <p>While at this site it would be useful to have students explore and comment on a variety of the tours available. If possible it would be great to have students be able to</p>

<p>The cost of accommodations is moderate (depends on the room) but the food costs can add up quickly. In the past we have tried to eat all at once and/or they have prepared a buffet. Neither options seems to work particularly well so it may be easier to simply give students their per diem (perhaps with a slight increase) and let them figure out how to eat within those limits.</p> <p>Tourism services include walking and driving safaris and staying in a 'tree hide' for the night.</p>	<p>experience a trip into the heart of the park (Note: to get to Wechiau we actually drove through the park which was an incredible experience) as there is better wildlife viewing there. A meeting with the Head of Wildlife Division leads me to believe that road construction and bridgework in the park may open it up. The cost of such exploration could prove to be cost prohibitive however.</p>
<p>Bolgatanga (AKA: Bolga)</p> <p>The trip from Mole to Bolga took approximately four hours, half of which was on the rough road from Mole to the main highway. Bolga is a major transportation stop on the way to Burkina Faso and a site for cultural arts such as clothing and basket weaving. Close to Bolga is Paga, home of the sacred crocodiles that apparently allow one to sit on them (not sure I'm willing to take that risk!).</p> <p>We travelled to Bolga as we were originally considering having a few days that where those who are interested in arts and culture could move onto Bolga, and others interested in other tourism niche markets could move onto another location like Boabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary.</p> <p>While in Bolga I visited the Nsamini Guest house (\$12/double occupancy), which was extremely clean and well maintained. The rooms were very basic and despite the incredible heat were relatively cool (all had fans but no A/C). There were two showers and toilets and there were the cleanest to be found in the North.</p>	<p>Since visiting Bolga and re-evaluating the purpose of the trip and the travel logistics, I would recommend that it is not included in the final itinerary. While I'm sure the community has a lot to offer and there are some tourism and cultural collectives that would make great learning sites, the distance from other study sites makes it somewhat unrealistic for the study tour.</p>
<p>Boti Falls & Royal Botanical Gardens, Eastern Region</p> <p>A relatively short and extremely scenic drive from Accra the Boti Falls were a nice tourism site to examine from a 'redevelopment' and/or product</p>	<p>While these sites are both beautiful and the drive to them can be built into the drive to Sunyani, it is felt that</p>

<p>development perspective.</p> <p>The Botanical Gardens offer a beautiful collection of native and non-native plants as well as affordable if somewhat rundown accommodation. These sites were viewed as potential sites for an “enroute” stopover from Accra to Sunyani.</p> <p>We ate/stayed at the Palm Hill Hotel, located closer to the Gardens. The restaurant was reasonably priced as well as the hotel (\$50/double).</p>	<p>spending the two nights in Accra (upon arrival) allows for an easier adjustment to the heat as well as an opportunity to visit things like the High Commission, NCRC offices, and the Artist Alliance Cultural Centre (students’ first real shopping opportunity).</p>
<p>Amomabo Beach Resort (near Cape Coast)</p> <p>This resort is the same one that the GCPFEE study tour has stayed at for the past couple of years. It provides a great backdrop (ocean front with a reasonably safe beach to swim at and hot showers that help remove weeks of dust, bug spray, and sun screen... to only name a few things) for the final few days in country. The rooms range from \$USD 65 – 50/night but the beds are easily large enough to host 2 people. The resort is located a \$10 taxi ride from Cape Coast home to a well preserved and developed “Slave Castle”, good souvenir shopping, and Cape Coast University which hosts Ghana primary tourism program.</p> <p>Transportation to and from Accra was done through private taxi at a cost of \$60/each way. The time is approximately 2 ½ - 3 hours and we generally drive directly from the resort to the airport.</p> <p>Food in the restaurant is pretty consistent if basic. The cost of eating here would be possible on \$20 – 40/day. One of the best breakfasts in Ghana is offered at this resort.</p>	<p>This is a great site for the end of the trip as it allows for the settling in and taking the time to debrief experiences. For the 2011 study tour it will also provide a stark contrast to the other tourism products experienced.</p> <p>It is hoped that we will be able to connect with tourism professors from Cape Coast University to have discussions about coastal tourism development including the future challenges with environmental change (sea level increase will have dramatic impact on this sector) and plastic waste issues (beaches are covered with garbage).</p>

Intended Itinerary for 2011 Study Tour

This is the preliminary itinerary for the 2011 study tour – dates are all hypothetical and will be dependent on a number of factors include availability of accommodations, transportation, and students. Ideally it would be great to leave earlier in the term; however, given that exams do not end until April 28th that is likely not possible.

Date	Location: Activity
May 3	Vancouver - Travel
May 4	Accra – Arrive
May 5	Accra – Attend High Commission Burger & Beer Night.
May 6	Sunyani – Meet team
May 7	Sunyani – Team building
May 8	Sunyani – Sunday (day of rest)
May 9	Wechiau – Travel
May 10	Wechiau – Community Stay
May 11	Wechiau – Community Stay
May 12	Wechiau – Community Stay
May 13	Wechiau – Community Stay
May 14	Wechiau – Self Exploration Day
May 15	Wechiau – Sunday (day of rest)
May 16	Larabanga: Travel & Community Stay
May 17	Larabanga: Community Stay
May 18	Larabanga: Community Stay
May 19	Larabanga: Community Stay
May 20	Larabanga: Community Stay
May 21	Mole: Relocate & Safari
May 22	Mole: Sunday (day of rest)
May 23	Mole: Safaris & Presentations
May 24	Sunyani – Travel (stop at Kintempo & Boabeng – Fema)
May 25	Sunyani – Report clean-up
May 26	Sunyani – Presentations & Goodbyes
May 27	Anomabo (Cape Coast) – Travel
May 28	Anomabo – Cape Coast Tourism
May 29	Anomabo – Debrief & Celebrate
May 30	Accra – Airport for flight
May 31	Vancouver

The cost of this study tour is still being worked out as it will largely depend on the transportation options used.

Up-date

The report above was written in the field and since returning to Canada and planning the study tour some aspects have changed. We are still focusing our time in Northern Ghana (Wechiau & Larabanga); however, the focus has changed from a study tour to a research and study tour that will focus on two objectives: a) completing research that will contribute to the Protected Areas and Poverty Reduction project (ICCURA funded) that is currently facilitated at VIU, and b) to continue to build relationships with our Ghanaian partners and the community of Larabanga in order to help facilitate on-going international project work in Ghana.

The 2011 Research and Study tour will involve six students from the Dept. Recreation and Tourism Management and will be co-lead by myself and Amanda Moore (BTM '07) an alumnus of the program and of the CIDA project who currently resides in Ghana. The students have been selected and we are in the process of raising funds and making plans for our adventure next spring. The final itinerary will be slightly different than the one originally proposed above and should be confirmed by early January.

Planning for this year's tour has been significantly easier as a direct result of the funding that was provided by International Education. By staying in Ghana longer, I was able to meet individuals who have been participating in community development work in Northern Ghana for almost a decade and that relationship has proven to be a fruitful one. Using contacts made and/or strengthened during my extended stay, we will work to expand our network of relationships with universities and NGOs in Ghana.

The opportunity to extend my stay in Ghana beyond this year's study tour was extremely helpful in the development of the 2011 research and study tour. It may also prove to have been the essential first step in the development of an on-going, long-term project in Northern Ghana. Thank you for the opportunity.