

## **International Public Interest Law Fellowship Summer 2017**

### **Experience Living and Working in Accra, Ghana**

**Justin Webber**

During my 10 weeks in Ghana I was able to meet so many wonderful people and experience a culture unlike anything I had encountered before. From the clueless feeling when I first arrived at the airport, to having that same feeling wandering through the market for the first time. To the feeling of belonging when negotiating the fare for a taxi or making friends with shop owners who go out of their way to help you find anything you are looking for. Simply living in Accra is an adventure in and of itself.

During my stay in Ghana I chose to live away from the center of the city in a spare room of a family's home. Every day I took the 30 min – 1 hour commute into the court via Tro-Tro (Ghana's finest public transportation). Although summer is the rainy season the weather was almost always hot and humid without a cloud in the sky. While navigating to the court complex and ultimately finding the office in which you need to be can be a challenge, everyone is willing to help you find where you need to be (even if they have no idea themselves).

As an American intern at the Supreme Court I found myself given a lot of responsibility from the get go. My first assignment was to write an opinion for my Justice having the interpret the Constitution of Ghana as well as numerous other statutes. Moving to library research could be challenging, but the USB case database made researching Ghanaian law a little more familiar. The Justices make themselves very accessible and open to questions, and while they have high expectations for all their interns they are also very understanding. Aside from the Justices, all the Court staff were so friendly and willing to help. From the Secretaries to Librarians and even the assigned police detail, I never felt apprehensive about approaching anyone with a question. During my stay at the Court I was assigned increasingly complicated cases based on my previous work. In addition to case work, a large component of the internship was also attending Supreme Court hearings. There are many peculiarities to a Ghanaian Court proceeding but listening to the Justices give their opinions really helps in your own casework.

Aside from work in Ghana there is time to explore not just Accra but even more remote areas of the country. In Accra there are beautiful beaches to go along with the beautiful weather. Outside of Accra I was able to travel to Mole National Park, where safari goers can see wild elephants within nearly arm's length. Further yet I was able to travel to the far Northwest of Ghana along the border with Burkina Faso. There lies the Wechiau Hippo Sanctuary where a guide will take you out on the river a safe viewing distance from wild Hippos. After a canoe trip, visitors can visit a traditional village and learn more about the culture of rural Ghana. While the work experience gained in the Court was amazing, I can without a doubt say that my travels through Ghana and the cultural experiences therein were the most valuable part of my 10-week stay.

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All in all after a short period of adjustment Ghana was a very rewarding place to live and work. The day to day interactions are some that I will never forget. Although this is a summer experience that won't necessarily lead to a position after graduation, I can say first hand that it is not only a memorable experience but will stand out on a resume. I wouldn't trade my experience in Ghana for anything.