

Name: Marco Cerri
Internship code: GH-2017-0053
E-Mail: affaffino@gmail.com

Report of IAESTE experience in Ghana, August and September 2017

I am Marco, a student of the Technische Universität München, and I am currently studying a Master of Science in Environmental Engineering. I applied for an internship with the IAESTE association (International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience) in Ghana from 05 August to 30 September 2017 and I asked the DAAD Fahrtkostenzuschüsse for flying abroad.

I followed a repetitive procedure that lasted from November 2016 until April 2017. At the end of this process, I was offered an internship in a Cartography company in Accra, the capital of Ghana, from 01 July to 30 September 2017, with the provision of an accommodation.

Once I received the offer at beginning of May, I tried in vain to contact the company in Ghana for the final confirmation and for some explanations about the task. Two weeks later (end of May, one month left to the planned departure) I received an email from the company suggesting me not to go since they couldn't offer me any interesting topic.

Then, I contacted IAESTE office in Ghana for further clarifications and they told me to buy the ticket anyway and to not care about that email, since the company is obliged to hire me. At this point we were at half of June and due to the lack of time and communication, I asked to postpone the internship and reduce the period from 05 August to 30 September 2017.

I also asked additional information about the type of accommodation in Ghana but I didn't receive any reply. I applied for the DAAD scholarship and I got it very easily and quickly.

I left Munich with just few information at the beginning of August. At the airport in Accra I was asked by the border police my address in Ghana, but since I didn't receive any information I needed to indicate a random address. Out of the airport, a woman came to pick me up. The lady is the one who lives and manages a house in Accra where all IAESTE interns stay, paying 3€ per day (another useful information that was not declared before, for a total of 180€ in two months). The house consists of two rooms (one for girls and one for boys), each with six beds, two basic toilet rooms with occasional current cold water, a kitchen and a living room with sofas and TV. In this place the environment is nice and familiar and the lady cooks for the interns daily breakfast, lunch and dinner (included in the 3€ cost). At the day of my arrival there were ten interns in the house.

The day following my arrival the lady, who is also part of the IAESTE office in Ghana, tried to call the company supposed to hire me, with no results. After four days (I arrived on Saturday and on Wednesday I was still waiting for answers) they call us back telling that the company was closed and no operative anymore. Thus, together with the woman, I decided that I should have joined another company. In the end I found a place in the company of the lady's son, that cleans fuel tanks for the gas stations, still disappointed as I left Munich with the idea and the willing to work in a Cartography company. My task was to help on the cleaning site to move weights and fuel buckets. Some days, there was no work and we were waiting in the

office doing absolutely nothing. The colleagues were very friendly and caring. The salary has been the equivalent of 40€ in total for the two-month period.



Figure 1 Me (in blue) at the field. My task was to move out of the tank the bucket with the fuel

The woman was the only direct contact I had with IAESTE Ghana until the first weekend, when some Ghanaian guys of IAESTE Ghana organized a trip for three days to a beach next to Accra. The organization was similar every weekend, nice travels on different beautiful beaches. The locations were always poorly equipped (current water and electricity were not always provided), not too far from the standards of the rest of the country.

Ghana is quite a non-violent country: besides the night hours, the roads are safe and only a couple of the IAESTE interns were robbed during an evening on a beach when we went traveling for the weekend. In Accra nothing wrong happened. The people are generally friendly and kind, always calm and never in a hurry. This means, that everything needs its time and every bureaucratic matter and every problem can be solved, if you wait provided by the right amount of patience.



Figure 2 Some of the trips we did during the weekends

IAESTE Ghana is a local office with willing and kind people but they lack in organisation. The experience in the end was great and unique due to the special country, the experience of a different culture and the outlandish traditions, but I didn't learn anything useful for my field of study. It was just a forced holiday of working in some Ghanaian gas stations. This is a pity since I invested more than 1500€ personally for the flight, the vaccinations and other expenses for the travel, in addition to the 488€ supplied by the DAAD for part of the flight, with the scope of an academic experience.

IAESTE is a very helpful association for students who want to have an experience abroad, but I would suggest a better selection of the offered internships, to avoid unpleasant change of plans or useless working experience from an engineering point of view. I am totally satisfied and thankful to DAAD for the ease of the online procedure to obtain the scholarship. I am thankful to IAESTE Munich for organising the meeting in the Spring 2017 and for the general organization.

Marco Cerri
Munich (Germany), October 2017
affaffino@gmail.com