

Vicky Lonsdale – Dream Bug Ghana Elective case study

Why did I choose Dream Big Ghana (DBG)?

I knew that I wanted to complete by 4 week elective placement in a developing area of rural Africa, working in clinics and local hospitals. So when I heard about DBG I knew it was exactly what I was looking for. It offers the opportunity to work in numerous local clinics, including involvement in children's' health outreach projects and vaccination programmes. There is also the option to work in a nearby district hospital, working in a range of clinical settings (adult, paediatrics, obstetrics, infectious diseases and surgery).

DBG is situated on the South Coast of Ghana (West Africa), in the Volta region, and is about a 2 and a half hour drive from Accra (Ghana's capital).



The lagoon at Meet Me There Lodge

What also appealed to me about DBG was the other activities you can get involved in whilst you are there and continue supporting when you are back home. They fund and organise a number of community improvement projects, such as the development of a compost toilet sanitation programme, the training of local sports team teams, and the building of a community learning centre.

Planning the Trip

Once I had arranged the 4 week stay with DBG (two weeks in local clinics and 2 weeks in the district hospital) all I had to do was book my international flights. All accommodation is arranged, I stayed at DBGs African lodge, Meet Me There, which is within travelling distance from all of the clinics/hospital. DBG picked us up from Accra International Airport and dropped us back there at the end of our trip.

I did need a few vaccinations before travelling to Ghana (see the UK government travel advice website), and I also took Malaria tablets for the duration of my stay and slept under mosquito nets.

Working at the Clinics

The two clinics I worked at were called Anyanui and Anloga, both are short drives away from Meet Me There lodge. Whilst at the clinics I was able to work in a number of roles, triaging patients, providing primary care or referring to the district hospital, dispensing medication in the pharmacy, assisting with maternal and child health services (including antenatal care and delivery), working in the labs completing blood tests, and carrying out community outreach projects (such as health education teaching sessions and childhood immunisation).

The nurses and medical assistants are happy to teach about the most common illnesses and health needs that patients present with at the clinics and how they treat them.



Anloga Clinic



Working on the child immunisation outreach programme

Working at the Hospital

The hospital I spent my final two weeks in was Keta District Hospital. Keta Hospital has 110 beds to serve a population of 150,000 people. Services include maternal and child health, adult medicine and surgery (including operating theatres), dentistry, general outpatients and eye clinic and isolation beds for infectious diseases.

I generally spent about two days in each of these areas, so that I was able to get a broad experience of all the services delivered at the hospital. Keta is a teaching hospital so there are also Ghanaian student nurses completing their studies there too.



Keta District Hospital

In my Spare Time

There were lots of activities available to participate in my evenings and weekends. Some were related to our elective programme, such as visiting the local herbalist, spirilualist healer and bone healer, so that we were able to learn about alternative medicine options in rural Ghana.

We were also able to go on trips, such as taking a boat down the local Volta River, visiting a monkey sanctuary, participating in local village celebrations (I visited at Easter, which is a very sacred time for Ghanaians), and there is an incredible lagoon situated at the Meet Me There lodge, perfect for swimming and relaxing on days off.



Visiting the Monkey Sanctuary

Would I recommend it?

Absolutely! With DBG you can really get the most out of a healthcare elective placement in rural Africa. You are able to work and assist in a wide range of clinical settings, as well as being able to observe alternative medication options in the community setting. All of the staff at the lodge are so welcoming and make every minute of your stay so enjoyable, and you know that at the end of each day at placement you are coming back to a comfortable safe environment with a excellent home cooked meal. There are lots of opportunities to try authentic Ghanaian cuisine, but if you aren't so adventurous there are lots of other tasty options too. I enjoyed my time there so much that I returned the next summer to work as part of the community compost toilet sanitation project.

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