

George Sand International Section Back From Ghana !



A message from the group leader of George Sand International Section, back home after a ten-day trip to Ghana.

Hello !

Back home from Accra, but still there, after a super 8 day stay.

We couldn't expect anything better with such a big group (49 people : 14 French students / 8 staff + 16 Ghanaian students + 3 young drummers /3 staff + 3 guides + 2 drivers) in two small coaches on the roads of Ghana together from the village in Vome (our students' home) by the Volta River to Ko-Sa Beach paradise on the coast near Elmina Castle.

The programme in 3 parts from the simplest ways of life to the most exotic ones went crescendo and finished brilliantly.

Of course, in the fishermen's village, our students found it a bit hard to cope with basic accommodation & washroom facilities at first, but the welcoming (traditional dancing and singing) was so friendly and colourful that our young people joined in almost spontaneously, which helped them adapt and feel adopted in their new environment. If dancing is the expressive language we knew we would easily share, communicating in English was less obvious because African students, naturally talented for observation and prompt to speak their native Ewe, are not taught to ask questions, though; so, it took them some time to dare ask and find words to express their feelings, but by the end of the stay, they had the same noisy chatty cheerfulness as our group and tears were shed on both sides when we left. We'll make sure most of them go on corresponding and when the DVDs are released, lots of our students will put pressure on their parents to go back to Ghana for family holidays, no doubt about it. Before the beginning of December, we'll have everything ready for a big event at school: Yvan, our very skilful photographer sent by *Sequoia*, will be showing us all his amazing photographs and films. Better than a documentary, a piece of art !

In the mountains of the Volta Region, at the foot of Mount Afadjato, highest summit by the Togolese border, we all felt well. Nature at its best and a small united Ewe community contributed to the general happiness and peace of our settlement of tents, almost unnoticed in the landscape and hardly disturbed by a downpour or two. The walk to the Tagbo Falls at the end of the rainy season was sheer adventure : wet tropical luxuriance, turbulence of streams and a memorable picture in front of the foaming waterfalls. Pristine!

We danced a lot, too, in the middle of the village with a supportive local audience, rehearsing mornings and evenings to be ready for D.Day in Accra. Joseph Aka managed to weave choreography between tradition and modernity, Ghanaian Chicken Dance style and our contemporary input. Result : a breathtaking performance on stage at the National Theatre of Ghana and a major tribute to Efo Kodjo Mawugbe, the famous playwright and director of the theatre Paul had met in December, but who passed away a month ago. Great loss for the country! Our group was congratulated by both professionals and ordinary spectators who enjoyed the energy and the deeply moving interaction between our black and white dancers. A rewarding success for all, Joseph and Paul at their best in their element!

Last part of the journey was rich in history and strong emotions: Nkrumah's Memorial in Accra fascinated our consciences. *'Always look forward and never backwards'* : meaningful motto for everyone in a perspective of action and self-determination for the generations to come. Cape Coast Castle visit with video, museum and guided tour brought tears to more than one adult and teenager, but to end the stay on a lighter note, we spent two idyllic days under coconut trees, enjoying the ocean together. The goodbye party with musicians and dancers from Ivory Coast was memorable : everyone felt like dancing and our students decided to perform their show again in front of an impressed audience.

Well, we're still savouring every minute of our busy timetable... On both sides, our youths have learnt so much. Our Ghanaians are all in a mood for change : they wish to find more effective ways to help their community. Apollo, our organiser, is showing them the way. The French teenagers are all reflecting on their discovery of an emerging African country which puts everyone on a better-balanced level. Tanya, our black girl, now wishes to visit her parents' respective countries (Cameroon and Madagascar) and all the others would like their parents to see for themselves, too. Nice prospect !

A bit long, but I wanted to share this with you.

Annick