



FOSTER FRIMPONG TOUR GUIDE, JULES VERNE

INTERVIEW BY Rhodri Andrews

Q. How did you get into guiding?

A. I was born in a place called Akyem Banso in eastern Ghana but my parents relocated to the country's central region. All my education took place there and it's where I still live today. When I graduated from university, I started doing nature tours for Ashanti African Tours, which works with Jules Verne – and I'm still here, nearly 11 years later.

Q. What do you love most about your job?

A. I love meeting new people. I get to show them around my country and gain a new set of friends along the way. We always have an incredible time. When it comes to guiding, it's about sharing great moments together.

Q. Ghana flies under the tourism radar – why should clients go?

A. We're a peaceful country – we've not had widespread unrest since independence from British colonial rule in 1957. We also have variety when it comes to wildlife, culture and beach relaxation. We have close to 1,000 species of butterfly – twice that of Europe – and more than 770 species of bird. There are flatlands and mountains, forts and castles, and the highest waterfall in West Africa – the Wli Waterfalls. So Ghana will appeal to a wide range of clients.

Q. Where is special for you?

A. My personal highlight is the canopy walkway in Kakum National Park. Its highest point

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is 40m above the ground and there are eight bridges you can walk across, so you get to see the different layers of trees from the canopy level. Forest life truly comes alive when you see birds flying around amid the colourful flowers – it's amazing. To see the mammals here, it's better to come at night due to the nature of the vegetation. I also love Mole National Park. The grasses there are short, so you get to see a lot of wildlife, including elephants, bushbucks, civets and hartebeests. People know Kenya and Tanzania have great wildlife, but so does Ghana.

Q. How can visitors uncover Ghanaian culture?

A. We have itineraries that are tailored to explore our heritage. The southern part of the country is where the forts and castles are. Accra, our capital, is home the Unesco-listed

Christiansborg Castle, built by the Danish in the 17th century, and Kwame

Nkrumah Memorial Park, which honours its namesake – our first president – and shows Ghana's journey to independence. Ghana was the first country south of the Sahara to regain its independence from colonial rule and Kwame Nkrumah built Independence Square to celebrate that. Further along the coast to the west, there's a British castle in Cape Coast and a Portuguese castle in Elmina – the oldest European building in West Africa. So there are plenty of historic attractions for people to visit.

Q. How does an escorted tour help visitors see the real Ghana?

A. If clients don't do an escorted tour, they will, of course, still

NEW TOURS

Ghana is among the new destinations added to Jules Verne's worldwide range, alongside a cruise from The Gambia to Senegal, a cruise around Cape Verde and a rail tour of Thailand.



PICTURE: Shutterstock/Artem Avetisyan

manage to see the beauty of the country, but they will also miss a lot. They might have heard they can spy

Lowe's mona monkeys in Kakum National Park, but when they get there, how will they find them? Clients need an expert to help take them to the correct places so they can spot the wildlife they've come to see. I don't think visitors would get the most out of their trip without a guide – they're crucial. **TW**

BOOK IT

Jules Verne's new 12-night Ghana Discovery: Culture & Wildlife Tour starts at £4,195, including flights, most meals, tax, park fees and services of a guide. Highlights include Accra, Wli Waterfalls and Mole National Park along with visits to rural villages and a chance to cook Ghanaian dishes.

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