



The Goins Go to Ghana: Community Members Invited on "Trip of a Lifetime"

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ALTON - The Goins are going to Ghana, and you're invited.

Rev. Sheila Goins has planned the Alton Heritage Pilgrimage Trip to Ghana for October 2025, and she is looking for community members who want to come along. Travelers will experience Ghanaian food, art, history and culture. Goins noted the significance of visiting Africa as an African American, and she said she hopes many people from the Riverbend region will join her on this “trip of a lifetime.”

“It is definitely part of my bucket list to go to what is referred to as the Motherland. In honor of Black history, it is my heart’s desire to visit Africa,” Goins said. “As African Americans, that is where we came from. I’m blessed to have had a vibrant life as an American and it’s all I’ve known, but I do know that my heritage is wealthy in Africa and our ancestors can be traced back there. And so the dream of actually visiting a place that I can actually place my feet in the soil of those that have gone before us, it’s just my heart’s desire.”

The trip is scheduled from Oct. 14–25, 2025, and will be hosted by Tourpedia Travel, a travel agency based out of Ghana. Goins has worked with Tourpedia to plan the trip, and she explained that they are currently trying to gauge interest. The trip costs around \$4,000 for each person, though the exact dollar amount will depend on the number of travelers. Goins is looking for 10–25 people to join her family.

This family includes Goins’s godson, who was born and raised in Ghana. Mark, affectionately called King Mark by Goins “because he is our African King,” met Goins’s son when they were students at Greenville College. The family became close with Mark, and Goins is excited to travel with him to West Africa and learn more about his life and family.

For Goins, who has always been fascinated by African culture, this trip is a dream come true. Her mother was a connoisseur of African art, and Goins makes an intentional effort to dress in traditional African clothing during Black History Month. She said it will be “surreal” to experience African art, clothing and culture in Ghana after a lifetime of learning about it in the States.

“It’s just going to be a life-changing experience,” she said. “Many of us learn about African culture from afar, but to actually be there and experience it firsthand and be standing on the same soil as our ancestors that have gone on before us, that is just going to be very emotional.”

She noted that “time is on our side,” so people have over a year to decide whether or not they want to go and how they can pay for the trip. But she hopes to spread the word and find a few people who are ready to commit. Goins said many people have already expressed interest, and she is excited to see that so many community members are as excited as she is.

“An opportunity to experience visiting the Motherland is just something that you don’t want to pass up,” she added. “I’m just looking forward to sharing this with all those who plan to join us and I think it’s just going to be an experience to remember, an experience that we will have and treasure for the rest of our lives.”

While some of the trip’s details are still being finalized, Goins said people can contact info@tourpediatravel.com with the subject line “Alton Heritage Pilgrimage” for more information, including a full itinerary.