

Letter to my mother



# It ain't half hot, Mum!

**T**HIS is my first letter since I left home, and I can't wait to fill you in on the details. But first, I hope you are doing well?

When I found myself at Ghana's Kotoka International Airport - not to see anyone off, or welcome anybody home this time - I told myself that it was time for me to embark on life's long journey by myself.

I checked in my luggage and after chatting to you, auntie, my siblings and brother-in-law, I had to reluctantly bid you goodbye.

I went to board the plane and soon I was airborne.

With only a faint idea of where I was heading, I started to wonder what it would be like in the 'East'. One of the few things I knew about the East was that the sun rises there each morning.

**Ghanaian student AUGUSTINE ABOTSI has just arrived in Malaysia to further his studies. Here, in a letter to his mum, he relates his first impressions of the weather, food and his first experience of 'Going Dutch'...**

I decided to take stock of the other passengers. I was seated next to this German girl who I felt was a little naive. She told me about her exciting experiences in Ghana, after she had been urged to visit the country by one of her friends.

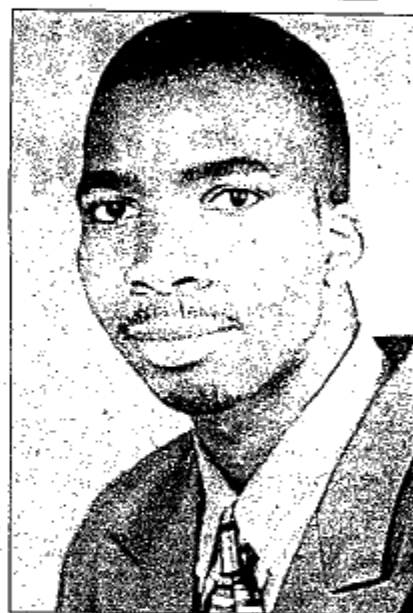
I had the feeling she was expecting some rural no-amenities type place. Whoever advised her to go should congratulate themselves, for I think the trip has done her a world of good.

After two transit stops, one in Germany and one in Singapore, I arrived at KLIA,

the Kuala Lumpur International Airport. The airport is one of a kind, Mum, you can't ignore the size of the building nor its beauty!

However, as soon as I got out of the airport, the sun hit me full in the face. My first thought was: "This place is steaming!"

I soon came to realise that this country still adored the legacies of its colonial masters, (the British). The people drive right-hand drive cars, there are BP petrol filling



**AUGUSTINE: Discovering a whole new world here in Malaysia**

stations all over the place, and most of seven out of 10 football fans will bet if last season Manchester United. What alty!

Generally the people aren't unfriendly but a good number of them aren't used to seeing Africans, so I'm the object of quite a few stares.

My first evening here I ate rice. The morning, rice. For lunch, rice, dinner, rice. Aren't these people sick of rice day-in-out?

Mum, I miss your food. I can't help feeling nostalgic for the food you cook because where I can eat seven days a week without having the same dish twice. My home is miles away from here, so I can't back, even over the weekends.

In this country, you have to carry an umbrella around with you every time you go out because you never know when it's going to rain.

One sunny day, I went to the bank to withdraw some money and when I came out, the sky was overcast and after a while, it started to pour. And boy can it rain here, Mum. It's not like at home when you know when it's going to rain.

And my classrooms can be very hot, roughly about 16°C, and then after class, step out into the sweltering heat of about 31°C or even more. Can you imagine the contrasts in temperature that our boys have to get used to?

Eating out is a common habit among people here. You can actually see families trooping to the eating joints and hawk stalls on the pavements, not to mention some even on balconies. I mean, you can find stalls like that all over the place. It makes me wonder if the real restaurants ever have enough customers.

One evening, a new friend asked me how I would like to go out for a drink with him and then he sat back and waited for my reply. I was a little stunned, as that is the way we do it in Ghana, as he had included me along. But he told me that this is how they did it in Malaysia. So now, I've learnt the concept of 'Going Dutch'.

Well Mum, I have a lot of assignment work to do so I have to end here.

In my next letter, I'll tell you all about