



Ben Jacobs (fourth left) chose football in Ghana over normal gap-year pursuits



"The youngsters cope with the heat amazingly," pants Ben

has to be experienced to be believed, but all the youngsters cope with the climate amazingly well."

"The pitches aren't great either. They're mostly made up of sand, with bits of gravel in it, so you have to stop the ball from bouncing or it's like a rugby ball – you have no idea where it's going to go! But the first touch of some of these players is incredible."

Jacobs hasn't done badly, either. He's already made three friendly appearances for Inter, and despite a strict registration process, is hoping to appear in a league fixture before he heads home at the end of May. "Although I've played to a decent standard before I've never played in front of more than one man and his dog, so to have the opportunity to perform in front of a crowd is unbelievable."

Jacobs is planning to study English and Drama at Warwick University on his return, but believes that playing in Ghana has brought his game to another level and given his ambitions as a footballer new impetus.

"In England, by the time you're 16 most of your hopes have been sucked out of you," he says. "I'm lucky, though. My grandmother is from Luxembourg, and I'm hoping that if I play for a semi-professional side while I'm at university I can grab their attention. If I could play international football it would be a dream come true."

It would also make all those early starts worthwhile.

*If you want to do something different with your gap year – or at any time – go to [www.projects-abroad.co.uk](http://www.projects-abroad.co.uk)*

# It ain't half hot mum!

Meet the English student who chose to play football in Ghana in his gap year and now wants to play for Luxembourg. Naturally...



**London to Luxembourg via Accra is an unusual route into international football, but Ben Jacobs is used to defying convention.**

While most gap-year students backpack round Asia and Australasia, the south Londoner, along with two fellow 18-year-old Brits, paid £2,000 to spend three months in the Ghanaian capital – as part of new project set up by the Worthing-based organisation Teaching Projects Abroad – where, as well as coaching at Cantonments FC, a club set up for young Ghanaians in 2002, he's been training with Inter Millas from the country's Second Division.

"We'd been here a couple weeks when we were asked if we fancied training with Inter," says Jacobs. "We do our coaching in the late afternoon, so we have some spare time."

They jumped at the chance to train and play with some of Ghana's finest young talent under the tutelage of former Stuttgart star Salim Baroudi, despite having to endure a 45-minute bus journey at a time when most gap-year travellers are only just turning in for the night.

"Because of the heat we play our games at 7.30 in the morning, which is just crazy, but due to the scorching temperatures, people are up and starting their day at four in the morning," explains Jacobs. "The heat out here

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