



FROM 2 WEEKS  
TO 2 YEARS

should I go  
travelling?

a guide for school leavers  
and college students

*"The most life-changing  
year of my life!"*

**Catherine Simms**



# Contents

- 05-06** Why go travelling?
- 06-07** How going travelling will help you
- 08-09** Where can I go?
- 10-19** What can I do?
- 20-22** More about where to go
- 23** How long to go for?
- 24-25** Go alone or with friends?
- 26-29** Making friends as you travel
- 30-35** Booking with a travel company
- 36-37** Can I afford to go travelling?
- 38-39** Getting the best deals on flights
- 40-43** Travel insurance, Visas & Vaccinations
- 44-55** Getting ready to go
- 56-57** Travelling tips & tricks
- 58-59** Looking after yourself
- 60-63** Keeping in touch
- 64-70** Parents pages





*"Going travelling... without  
a doubt, a great decision"*  
**Samantha Firth**

# Why go travelling?



## Need a break?

Do you need a break after 13 or so years of studying? Heading off travelling is exciting and stimulating. It will clear your mind and will re-invigorate you.

By exploring more of the world and experiencing new things you will grow and mature as an individual.

## It's fun!

Travelling and discovering the world is brilliant in so many ways.

Make new friends all over the world, with both locals and other travellers.

## Get to know yourself

As a result of going travelling and seeing other cultures, you will come to appreciate what's good about your own home and culture.

## Help your development

Nearly all universities and many employers approve of people travelling with well structured plans, because they return more mature, focused and ready to get on with the next phase of their lives.

*"We think a gap year is a very valuable experience for most students"*

**The Centre for Joint Honours (Science),  
University of Leeds**

# How going travelling will help you



## Big up your CV!

Going travelling is very useful for adding that extra sparkle to your CV or personal statement, regardless of what you do during your time away. It shows that you're not afraid to try new things or work with new people, and that you can appreciate different cultures and languages.

## Get more focused on who you really are

Backpacking is like a more focused, independent holiday. It's about 'finding yourself', discovering your skills and talents and exploring the world to find your real interests and passions.

## Gain a better perspective on your life

Take home some truly life-changing experiences which could have a

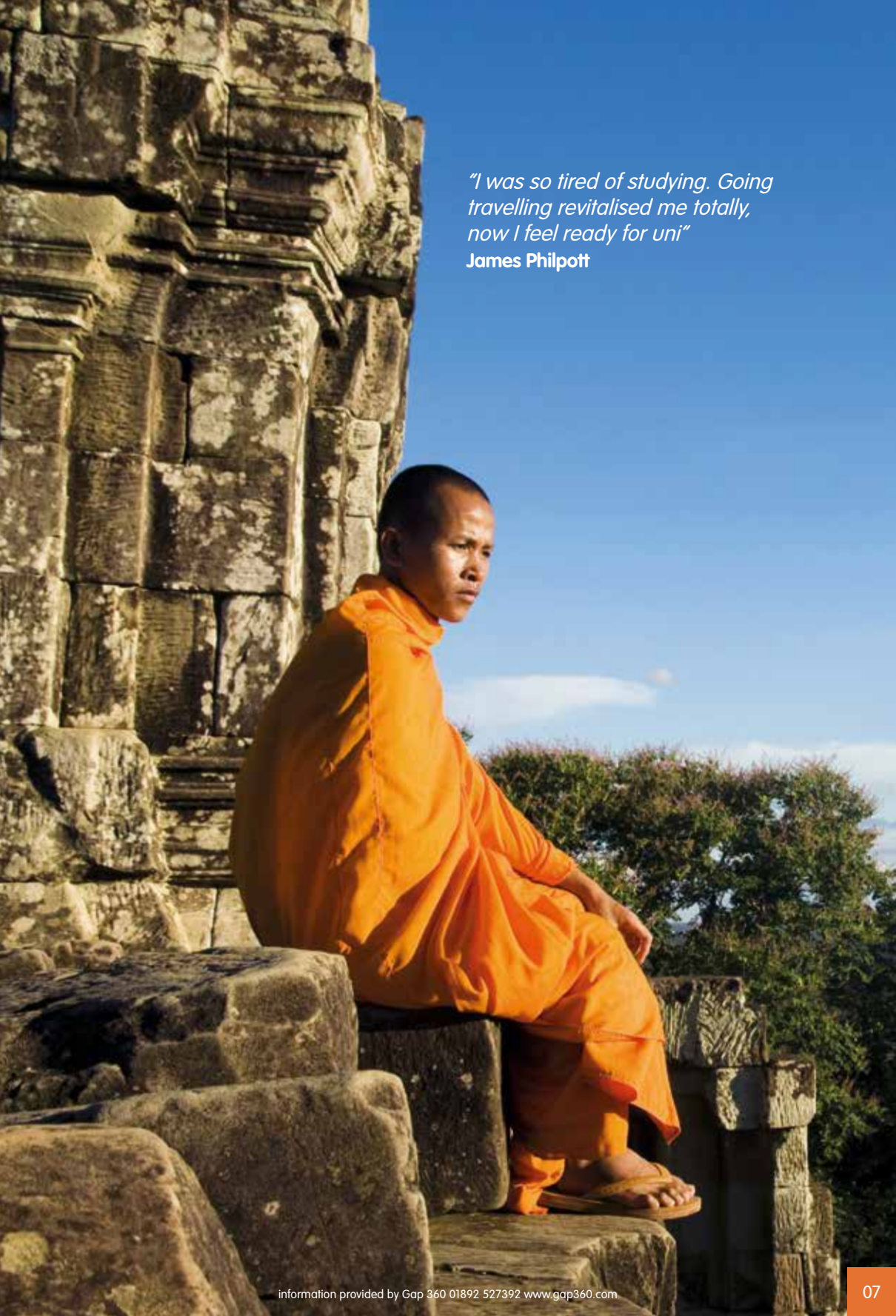
massive impact on your future, broaden your horizons and set you on the road to independence.

## Stepping out of your comfort zone is a good thing!

In challenging yourself to leave your friends and family and head off into the big wide world you will not only gain confidence, but you'll make new friends with people from all over the world.

## You'll return refreshed and ready to get on with your life

It's amazing what a few weeks or months away will do for you. All the cares and worries from back home will fall away like they never existed, and after you get back to the UK you will be ready for the next thing, be it university or work.



*"I was so tired of studying. Going travelling revitalised me totally, now I feel ready for uni"*

**James Philpott**

# Where can I go?

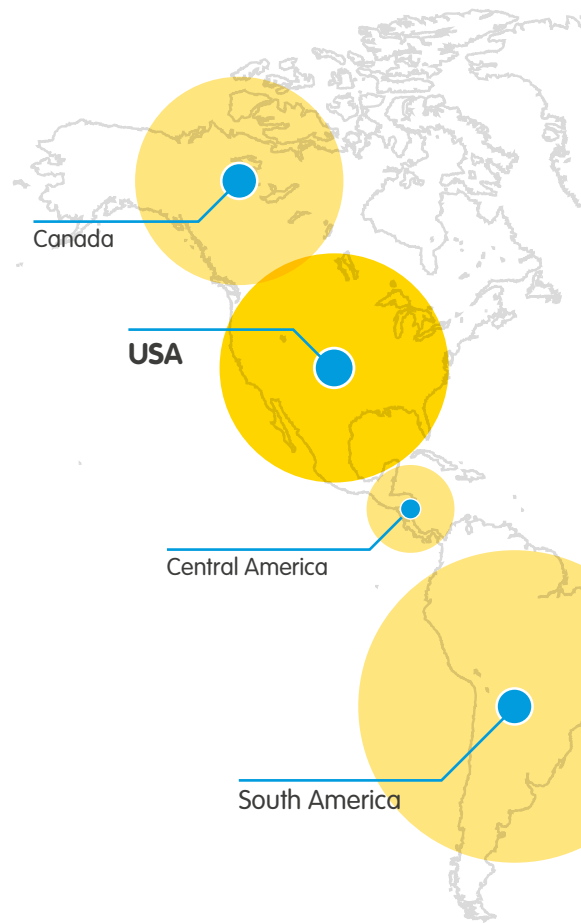
Some people know exactly where they want to go. Seeing places on TV, social media and reading about them in magazines can make choosing a destination an easy decision.

However for many people, though they know they want to travel, they don't necessarily know where they want to go. After all, there are so many terrific destinations to choose from! If you just can't decide ... consider the following:

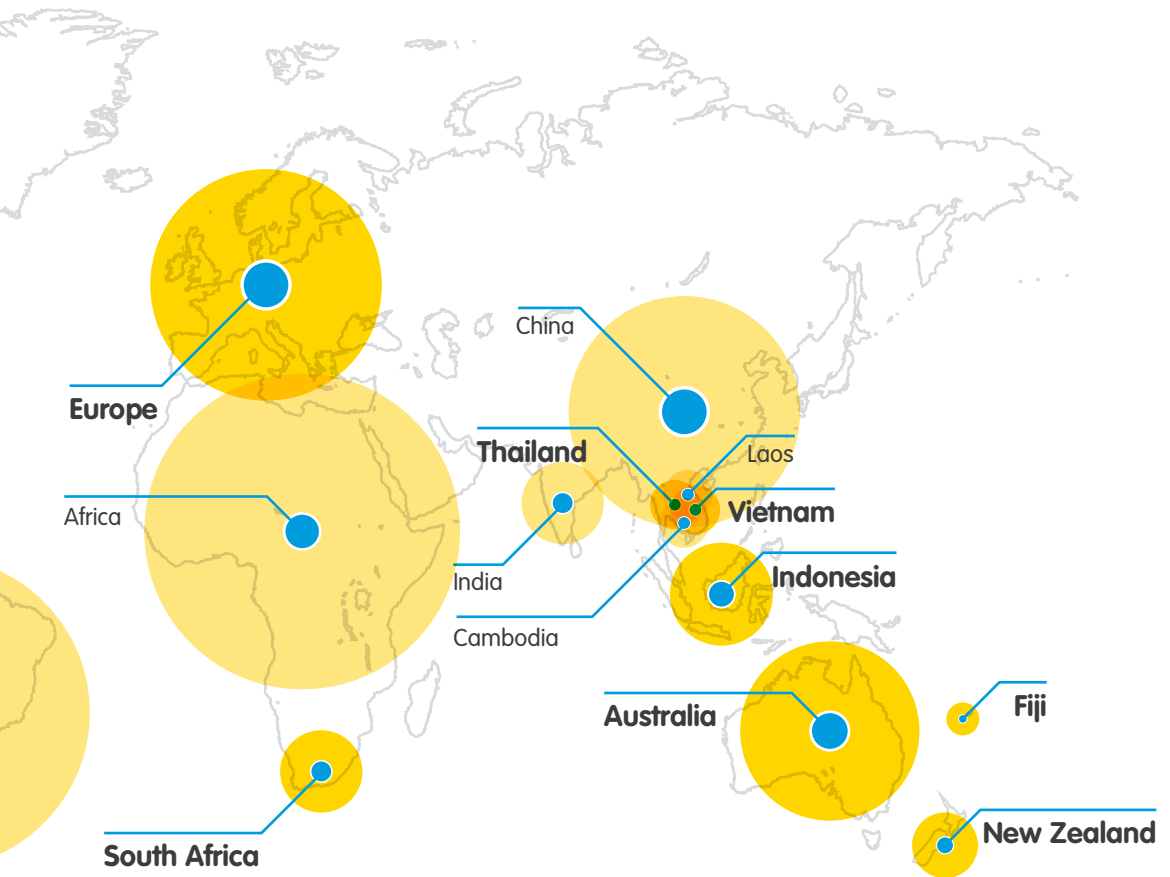
## The top 10

- Australia
- Thailand
- South Africa
- USA
- Round-the-world
- New Zealand
- Fiji
- Vietnam
- Indonesia
- Europe

There are almost 200 countries in the world so in theory you could go to all of them, but in reality you probably will choose from around 40 countries that attract most travellers.







# What can I do?

**T**here are many different types of activities you can do. Here are the options:

- **Work abroad and earn money**
- **Volunteer with people, wildlife or in conservation**
- **Just go travelling and have fun!**
- **Join an adventure tour**
- **Take a thrilling adrenaline adventure**
- **Do a CV boosting internship**
- **Learn a new skill**
- **Take a round-the-world trip**

## **A popular trip: 10 – 12 months**

1. Fly to Bangkok, do a 4 week Thai adventure tour
2. Then volunteer in Cambodia or Vietnam for 2/3 weeks
3. Fly to Sydney for a week of orientation and fun stuff
4. Then work for 6 months in Australia earning £300 a week!
5. Spend a month touring Australia's East Coast
6. Then head to New Zealand and take a 4 week bus pass
7. Move on to spend 2 fab weeks on the beach in Fiji
8. Fly to Los Angeles and take an adventure tour in the western USA
9. Head home to UK

## **A popular short gap itinerary: 6-7 weeks**

1. Fly to Cape Town
2. Spend 2 to 3 weeks volunteering with underprivileged children
3. Take a 10 day trip along the iconic Garden Route
4. Spend two weeks volunteering with wildlife and on safari
5. Fly back to the UK

# Work abroad and earn money

Several countries offer the opportunity to find paid work. Australia is the best as there are lots of jobs available.

You can also teach English in several countries abroad, many of which offer paid placements. In Thailand for example, you can work for a year and earn \$1200 a month, more than enough to live on.

## USA:

Be an au pair for a year where you can earn \$10,000 with free flights from the UK, or spend the summer working at a children's camp.

## Australia:

You can get a working holiday visa to stay and work legally for a year in any job. The jobs vary from casual work to skilled labour and professional work, and the pay is pretty good! Minimum wage is \$17 per hour, but average pay is more, about £300 a week. You can stay for a year so you can fund your travel by working.

## New Zealand:

The working holiday visa is good for 12 months. You can combine the amazing outdoor lifestyle

and adrenaline adventures with working and getting paid in a beautiful country.

## Canada:

Canada is more difficult as visas are restricted in number to just 5000 (2017) for UK citizens. If you are lucky enough to get one, you can spend a brilliant year doing winter and summer work.

## Thailand, Vietnam, China, South Korea:

Stay for up to a year and teach English. Qualifications and pay vary by country, but this is an interesting way to travel the world.



# Help the world, volunteer and make a difference

**T**here are lots of options here, from working with endangered wildlife or helping the environment to teaching underprivileged children. Most projects are from 2-12 weeks, and are available in many different countries abroad.

## **Africa:**

Lots of opportunities to volunteer with wildlife, children and in conservation. You can visit South Africa, Ghana, Tanzania, Kenya, Malawi or several other countries. You will experience life that is utterly different from the UK, but you'll find the people welcoming and beautiful. The wildlife and conservation projects are really special too.

## **Asia:**

Volunteering with children or disadvantaged people in countries like India, Vietnam, Thailand or Nepal is very worthwhile. You will help provide much needed care. There are also wildlife projects, such as with orangutans and elephants.

## **Latin America:**

Countries like Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador offer opportunities to learn Spanish and volunteer with children and the environment. You can also volunteer with saving wild baby turtles in Costa Rica or marine conservation in Belize.



*"Travel – the only thing I have bought that made me richer"*

**Joseph Tuplin**

# Just go travelling and have fun

Some people have a clear idea of what they want from their travels. For example, they may have a strong desire to help the less well off in poor countries, or they may want to work and earn as much money as possible.

However, if you are not sure about what you want from your travels there is nothing wrong with just going travelling and having fun.

Along the way you will find out a lot about yourself and might even decide what you would like to concentrate on at university or in your career.

You have earned your trip abroad by going to school since you were 5 years old, so go out and have some fun! Lots of people who book a trip to Thailand, for example an adventure tour for 4 weeks, will stay for a couple of weeks longer and perhaps volunteer with children or just hang out on the beach with people they met on the tour.

While employers and universities look at a gap year as a worthwhile venture, especially if it is well structured, don't design your travels around what others may think...after all it is your trip, and you should be free to do what you feel like doing.

Once you start travelling, you will meet lots of other young travellers, especially when staying in hostels. You will learn about what you like to do, and what you don't like to do! For example, you may discover that you love bungee jumping!

So do feel free to simply travel and have fun for a while. You'll be very glad that you did.



# Adventure Tours

**F**or many young first time travellers, joining a small group adventure is an ideal way to start travelling on their own. Loads of young people travel to far off countries like South Africa or Thailand. By joining a small group you can have the security of travelling together and also have the help and advice from an experienced tour leader.

Typical adventures will include sightseeing in cities and attractions, parties, beach time, one or two volunteering days and trekking. As well as having fun you will learn about other cultures and meet lots of new people, including both the locals and other travellers.

Trips like this are available in many countries of the world and several specialist gap year providers offer a wide choice of trips at affordable prices. You can choose from trips of one week up to 8 or 10 weeks.

Most popular for first time travellers are:

**South East Asia, notably Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia:**

Visit Bangkok, the Thai islands, Chiang Mai and lots of other cool

places. Explore Vietnam from Hanoi down to Ho Chi Minh City. Discover Cambodia and Laos.

**Australia:**

Trips up the popular East Coast from Sydney to Cairns and throughout Australia.

**Southern Africa:**


Take a safari in South Africa and see the Big Five wild animals, travel along the beautiful Garden Route, or be amazed by the huge variety of wildlife in the Serengeti Park in Tanzania.

**Europe:**

Travelling closer to home is cheaper as there are no big airfares. Europe has so many great places to visit like Paris, Barcelona, Madrid, Florence, Rome, the Greek Islands, the Alps, Germany and Scandinavia.

**USA:**

Travelling around America is much easier on a small group adventure tour where a tour leader does the driving and shows you all the best places.



*"The best experience of my life – every moment was exhilarating!"*

**Madeleine Melton**

# Adrenaline Adventures

**A**long the way you can try out various adrenaline adventures like diving, skydiving, surfing, bungee jumping, even shark cage diving, and lots more. Many destinations have these, and other wild experiences.

Most adventure tours have some opportunities to scare yourself on an adrenaline adventure, but some destinations specialize in daredevil action! Best places for adrenaline adventures:

## **New Zealand:**

Home of the original A.J. Hackett bungee jump in Queenstown. There are lots of other places with jumps. Try jumping out of a plane... Taupo has tandem skydives on offer from

12,000 feet! There are other daring adventures too, such as walking round the top of the tallest building in Auckland... on the outside!

## **South Africa:**

A close second to New Zealand, with surfing, diving, climbing, potholing and even heart-stopping Great White Shark cage diving! In Cape Town you can climb up the Table Mountain too, for amazing views from the top.

Check out what adrenaline adventures are available in the places you plan to visit, you may be surprised at how many you will find!

# Internships



**T**ake an unpaid internship in a profession that interests you, and you'll get a head start on your career, and impress future employers. Most placements will be 1 – 3 months. You may get lucky and obtain a paid placement, but these are few and far between.

## Medical

If you plan to enter the medical profession, an internship at a medical facility overseas will be a help in being accepted on a course. Countries like Malawi, Ghana, India, and Thailand offer placements from a few weeks to a few months. In most places you will get much more hands-on than you would by helping out in a UK hospital.

## Fashion, marketing, journalism and other careers...

These are very sought after and quite hard to obtain. Contact a travel organisation for help.

## Business

The most popular business internships are in cities like New York, Hong Kong, Singapore, Shanghai and Sydney, but it is possible to arrange placements in many other places too. There are organisations that specialize in business placements, but beware, some charge expensive fees. One way around this is to go to Sydney Australia on a working holiday visa, and apply for a short term internship while you are there...you may well be offered a paid job for a few months as a result.



# Learn a new skill



**L**earning a new skill on your travels is a great way to show university admissions departments and employers that you have planned a well structured trip.

## Academic skills

You could learn an academic skill, such as learning a language such as Spanish or Mandarin, or learning to teach.

## Learning on the job

Workplace skills are highly valued by employers and useful to you. For example working in a restaurant and learning to cook, or working in sales and learning how to best structure your time and develop your persuasive skills.

## Fun skills

Fancy learning to surf or dive? How about learning to drive a tractor or ride a horse? Or, study to become a game ranger in Africa, or learn martial arts at a beach school in Thailand.

## Career enhancing skills

Want to be a teacher? Volunteer helping to teach English to children in Thailand and get experience in the classroom. Want to be a doctor? Gain invaluable experience and help others with a medical internship overseas.

There are plenty of opportunities around the world.

*"Fun, fast and we learnt loads!"*

**Emily Turner**



# Round-the-world gap year

**T**ravelling on a round-the-world ticket, and stopping along the way means that you can enjoy a big variety of things to see and do. Along the way you can work, take a tour, volunteer or just chill.

There are ways to make a big round-the-world trip more affordable. For example you can get paid work for 6 months in say Australia or New Zealand, which will massively reduce the cost of the trip. You will still need a flight and travel insurance of course, and have to pay for food, accommodation and fun stuff, but in 6 months in Australia you could earn £10,000.

RTW trips can be as long as 23 months, or as short as just a few weeks, but most people choose to be away for 8 – 10 months.

For school leavers, after A level exams, it is a good idea to spend the summer in the UK, maybe working to save up. Then after A level results (and possibly deferring a uni place) head off travelling in September, returning to the UK the following summer. For those who want a shorter trip, then go travelling after Christmas, say in mid to late January, and return in the summer.

**Most popular round-the-world routes:**

- **London-Bangkok-Sydney-Auckland-Fiji-USA-London**
- **London-USA-Fiji-Sydney-Bangkok-London**
- **London-Johannesburg-Bangkok-Sydney-Fiji-USA-London**

**The triple summer gap year**

- **Spend the summer in the UK**
- **In September/October travel to Australia and enjoy their summer while it's winter in Britain**
- **Return for the British summer in May or June**



# More about where to go



If you don't have a clear idea about where to go (and lots of first time travellers don't) consider these points.

## Do you want to work abroad?

A great way to experience authentic local life and earn some extra money to fund your travels is to work abroad. If you'd like to work abroad you'll need to choose a destination where this is possible. Some countries have working holiday visas which make it much easier. Australia, NZ, Canada and the USA are the most popular.

## Weather

The weather can make a big difference to your trip. For example, travelling across America in the winter is not as much fun as in the summer, and lots of countries have monsoon seasons that are best to avoid. There are also a number of activities that you can't do year-round due to the weather conditions, so think about the kind of activities you want to do and see if they are weather dependent before you decide.



### **Make a list of what you enjoy doing**

Then match up the activities you want with a country that ticks all or most of your boxes. For example, do you fancy learning to dive? Then Koh Tao in Thailand could be a good choice! Have you always wanted to go on a safari to see the Big Five animals? Then you should consider a trip to South Africa or Tanzania!

### **How long do you want to be away for?**

Some countries require you to have a tourist visa, so you may only be allowed to stay in that country for a limited period of time, such as a few weeks.

### **Do you want to visit multiple destinations?**

If so it might be worth investing in a round-the-world ticket. Speak with an expert on round-the-world fares before you book your flights, it could save you hundreds of pounds.

## How are you planning to travel?

In between your tours and activities you may want to consider following a well-trodden backpacking route. Tried and tested, you know this method of travel will be fun, interesting and accommodating to travellers, plus popular backpacking areas are often cheaper than other areas, as there's more competition between local service providers.

## Are the destinations safe?

Before you travel, it's recommended you check out any potential risks and hazards on the Foreign Office website at [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk) which provides up-to-the-minute tourist information and advice.

*"A mind-broadening and cultural experience"*

**Clair Gordon**



# How long to go for?



**A** gap year doesn't have to be for a full year: It can be as short or as long as you like. If you are at school and thinking about going travelling you have lots of options available to you.

## For example:

- Work to raise money while living at home, then head off travelling after Christmas and New Year
- Go right after your A level results and get a job in Australia or NZ to earn money for six months, then go travelling around Australia, NZ and SE Asia
- Just take a holiday break for a few weeks immediately after school ends and come back for your A level results and to catch up with your mates! Then either get a job in the UK to raise money, or if you can afford it, head off travelling again
- Take a trip during the summer after your A level exams, then come back for the results and head for uni

# Go alone or with friends?



## Travelling with friends

- Choosing to share your travels with someone else can be a lot of fun, and has many benefits
- You can plan exciting activities together and share the same experiences. You can rely on them and help each other out in tough situations. You share special moments together and can reflect on what you've seen and done together for years afterwards
- There are practical advantages of travelling as a pair, for example it is cheaper to travel as you can share rooms etc
- There is always someone to watch your back and look after your backpack while you nip to the loo or into a shop
- Travelling together is also a good test of friendship. You will spend more time together than you would if you were living, working and studying together. If you make it to the end without falling out then you know you have a rock-solid relationship!
- Top tip: It's important and healthy to occasionally spend a little time apart from one another. It doesn't have to be a long time, just a couple of hours to do your own thing like shopping, or going for a swim or a walk

*"A leap in life I am so glad I took!"*

**Olivia Dunderdale-Watson**





## Travelling alone

- About 70% of gappers start off travelling alone, so don't be worried about taking the plunge. Remember, even if you start off travelling alone, you won't be on your own for long
- You have complete freedom to choose exactly what you want to do and where you want to go because your time and budget is your own. You have far more flexibility and are therefore open to lots of new, exciting opportunities
- Travelling alone allows you plenty of time for quiet thinking and self-reflection. You may find yourself setting new ideas and goals when you have the opportunity for some peace and quiet on your own
- It is far easier to meet new people and make friends with the locals when you are alone because you will immediately appear more approachable. It's easier to start talking to someone who is on their own than it is to start a conversation with a group of people
- If you are completely overwhelmed by the thought of travelling alone, then plan a tour as the first trip to ensure that you will be mixing with others and making friends from the first day





# Making friends as you travel

**O**ne of the best things about travelling is meeting new people and making friends.

If you are a little shy or cautious about talking to strangers, please don't be. Give it a go! You will find that after a while you'll just do it naturally. It's not like in the UK, where people generally walk past and ignore one another.

Remember, lots of people are travelling for the first time too and are feeling just as nervous as you might be. If you are brought together in a tour group or through sharing the same volunteering experience it will automatically give you some common ground from which to start. You'll be surprised how quickly bonds are formed!

As you travel around the world and meet people for the first time, you will soon realise that everyone starts with the same initial conversation, which includes some or all of the following questions:

- *What's your name?*
- *Where are you from?*
- *When did you get here?*
- *Have you been to any countries before here?*
- *Where are you planning on travelling to next?*
- *How long have you been travelling for?*



Someone might say they have just come from Thailand, which just happens to be your next destination. You can then say 'I'm going there next, can you recommend a good hostel for me to stay in Bangkok?' They will give you some recommendations followed, no doubt, by stories about the mad nights out and how you'll just have to visit a certain bar or place.

It's not all about picking up tips and recommendations of great new destinations. You may find that you have discovered someone to go to the beach or share a few beers with, or if you are heading in the same direction, you may decide to go on there together to share the travel costs.

They may suggest hooking up with a mate of theirs in Sydney who they think you'd get along well with and could show you around the city. Networking opportunities are endless and is part of what makes travel so exciting!

*"A once in a lifetime journey with instant new friends"*

**Alice Campaign**

# Other good ways to make friends



## Book a tour

A tour is the best way of taking in loads of different sights. It might be a guided tour or a hop-on-hop-off bus pass allowing you to meet loads of different people along the way. Whatever it is, you will immediately be with a group of travellers. Chances are you'll end up going to dinner with them or hooking up again for some independent travel.

## Notice boards

Some hostels have notice boards for those wanting to take part in group activities. It could be anything from a guided walking tour around the town, to a pub-crawl at night. If you want to meet people, then it's worth putting your name down and joining a group.

## Stay in dorm accommodation at hostels

There are usually 4+ beds in each room. They are not the biggest of rooms but you are almost guaranteed to meet someone. You'll probably end up having breakfast or chilling out by the beach with them.

## T-Shirts

Travellers love a free t-shirt and other merchandise! These souvenirs can provide you with an excellent starting point for a conversation. For example if another traveller is wearing a t-shirt that shows they've done a bungee jump, skydive or learnt to dive, you could ask them about their experience, saying



you fancy doing something similar yourself in the future. Travellers love talking about their experiences and sharing stories and will, generally speaking, only be too happy to chat to you.

### **Football fans**

People wearing their favourite football shirts normally don't have a problem meeting people. Footie fans are always keen to know the latest scores, discuss new players etc. Even if you don't like the same team, you've found someone with a common interest.

### **Pay a compliment**

Female travellers can strike up a conversation by complimenting another girl in your dorm about her nice flip flops or dress. Everyone likes a compliment and it's a nice, friendly way to start a conversation.

### **Bond over food**

If you find yourself cooking in a hostel, you could comment on your neighbour's food. If you compliment them, they may even invite you to have some!



# Should I book with a travel organisation or independently?

## Advantages of booking independently

### It's usually cheaper

Companies make a profit on the fee you pay them, even "not for profit organisations" (the non-profits often charge more too!) Travelling independently means you know exactly where your money goes. You choose the type of accommodation, excursions and transport that best suits you and your budget.

### More flexibility and freedom

You are free to choose your own itinerary, so you only visit the places that are of interest to you. Plus if you really like a place, you can stay longer without worrying about what time the tour bus leaves. Even if things go wrong, or you have some challenging moments, you invariably learn from them, and they can make an experience even more exciting and make for great stories on your return.

### You choose who you spend time with

If you meet a great group of people you can make the decision to travel around with them, and if they annoy you simply leave them and move on to another group.

### Organise your own activities

Once you start travelling independently, you soon realise that it's relatively straightforward and easy to organise your own activities. You'll learn that you can book an activity locally, which often works out cheaper.

### A sense of achievement

It can give you greater satisfaction and confidence when you organise your own trip, rather than having everything done for you.

# Advantages of booking with a travel company

## Expert advice

Good companies employ travel advisors that have travelled the globe. You are normally given a contact name and number or email address in advance of your trip, so you can ask lots of questions before you even reach your destination.

## Travel support

Many programmes and projects will have in-country representatives who will meet you at the airport, provide you with a local orientation and most importantly be on hand if you experience any problems or need advice and support.

## Emergency numbers

Many companies will offer 24/7 support for emergencies. This will give you (and your parents) the peace of mind that if something goes wrong, you have someone to call for assistance.

## Variety and choice

There will be a wide variety of projects, work placements, programmes and tours to choose from. Some companies can also arrange tailor-made trips around the world or help you build your own trip.

## Convenience and speed

If you are short of time, travelling with a company can be a quick and convenient way to see the country.

## Go off the beaten track

Some parts of the world are less accessible than others or can be expensive to get to. Using a dedicated tour company can make things easier and cheaper and you can see some stunning sights off the beaten tourist trail.

## Make friends in a group

Good for first time travellers or travellers going it alone. Often companies put you into groups, giving you the opportunity to meet people and make friends.

## Join a buddy list

Some companies will provide you with contact details of others members of your group so you can get in touch in advance of your trip and find a travel buddy.

## Hassle-free planning and booking

Makes planning a lot easier. Travelling with a company is less daunting as everything is organised for you, leaving you to concentrate on having a good time.

## Safer travel

It can be safer as you are travelling with others and are often accompanied by an experienced guide or have access to local staff. The projects and placements should have been thoroughly researched and risk assessments should have been completed.





## Be prepared

You normally receive very detailed pre-departure information which includes lots of useful advice about accommodation, placements, country information, kit lists and details on all the travel essentials, so you can be really well prepared for your trip.

## Budgeting

Helps you budget as the fee you pay before you go normally covers most of your major expenses such as accommodation, transport, food and excursions.

## Get the best deals

Booking through a travel company often works out as great value for money, as many trips include

accommodation, meals and other perks, so you are covered for lots of travel costs in one umbrella payment. Special offers often mean you can bag a great bargain too!

## A one-stop shop

Many travel companies can also offer flight tickets and travel insurance, so you only have to visit a one-stop shop to cover all your travel needs.

*"I had never travelled on my own before and I felt perfectly safe throughout the whole trip"*

**Georgia Adams**



# Travel companies, how do I choose?



**T**here are a huge number of organisations that offer gap years. Most are bona fide companies that operate good trips and who will look after you well, so how do you choose which one to travel with?

- Is the company financially secure? Is your money protected? If they issue air tickets, do they hold an ATOL licence? Are they members of ABTOT or another trade organisation?
- Make sure the company has thoroughly researched all of the individual placements and has done a full assessment of the risks
- Read the terms and conditions carefully
- Check what is actually included in the price and find out what other things you need to factor into the cost
- Check the independent reviews for the organisation, look on Facebook, do they have complaints?
- Do they have a 24/7 emergency phone service answered by them and not a service?

## Book with a UK company

If you book with a company based overseas you will have no financial protection and may lose out on exchange rates meaning it may cost you more.

# Can I afford to go travelling?

Once you have decided where to go and what to do, you can work out how much it is all going to cost.

## Travelling doesn't have to cost a fortune

With proper planning and budgeting, you can make sure the greatest experience of your life doesn't land you in too much debt, but you need to plan ahead and manage your money for your travels.

To start your budgeting plans, consider the following.

- Add together the **cost of the flights and travel insurance**. You can easily do this by asking your travel organisation, or if you are travelling independently, by getting quotes online
- **Find out** what is included in the trip cost and importantly what's not included. For the items that are not included, for example some accommodation and meals, ask your travel organisation or do online research to see the likely cost
- **Read** the terms and conditions carefully
- Check what is **actually included** in the price and find out what other things you need to factor into the cost
- **Plan your spending money**. This is tricky, but not impossible. Work out how many days you have to pay for things yourself. For example, if you are on a tour for 28 days and most food and accommodation is included, you just need spending money for drinks and going out, and possibly entrance to some attractions
- If you are going on a working holiday, then you need to factor in the income you will be making against your expenses. For example if you are going to work in Australia for a year, you can find out online the average wage earnings for working travellers, then figure against that the average cost of living for a flat share, and the cost of food

- Use social media as well as the internet to do your research. There is nothing like finding out information from people who are already where you plan to be going. Of course if you are booking with an organisation, ask for past customer feedback details
- If you are off travelling for a year or so, it is a good idea to set up third party access to your accounts with a parent or sibling or someone you trust completely, then if there are problems they can help
- Take at least one credit card with you

### **Other helpful hints:**

- Set up an online banking facility before you go
- Check how much you will be charged to access money with your debit card using an ATM. If it is not free, switch to a bank that doesn't charge or one that has lower fees
- Inform your bank and credit card companies of your travel plans
- Keep a record of emergency phone numbers in case your cards are lost or stolen
- Avoid using your credit card to make cash withdrawals from an ATM, these are often unsafe, especially at night
- Get a pre-loaded travel money card, such as Caxton, where you withdraw down the funds from the card, it's very economical
- Always have a small amount of cash on you even if it's not the local currency. US dollars such as \$1, \$5 and \$10 bills are good
- Don't keep all your cash in one place
- Don't flash your money belt



# Getting the best flight deals

Once you have decided where to go, you need to work out how to get there! Before you book a trip, make sure you know roughly how much the flights will cost.

## Research flight prices

If you plan to book your trip with a travel organisation they should be able to offer flight advice. If you are travelling independently start by going online and checking Skyscanner or Opodo, these will show you which airlines fly to where you want to go, and the best available prices.

## Fly direct or fly cheap

The best deals are often not the most convenient. Some of the cheapest flights involve a connection though a midpoint like Dubai or Abu Dhabi. The cheapest deals can mean many hours on the ground in between flights with lesser known airlines such as China Eastern, and may involve an overnight stopover at somewhere like Shanghai. You need to consider if this is worth the savings over a direct flight.

When planning your arrival dates, remember that changing time zones can mean that you arrive in your destination the next day.

## Changing your return flight

Check that the flights are changeable for a small fee in case the plans change. Some flights are not changeable. Others may charge £100 or more to change the date of your return.

## Do your research, then book

It is definitely worth doing plenty of research here, and when you think you have found a deal, book it, as the price may change tomorrow. Booking as far in advance as you can will usually mean getting the best possible price for your flights, once the seat availability becomes limited the price will increase. It is also important to make sure your flights provider has ABTA or ATOL financial protection and an emergency phone number to ring in case there are any issues with your flight once you are at the airport.



# Travel Insurance

Insurance is essential when you head off travelling. We've all seen horror stories on TV about people who got sick or had an accident overseas who did not have insurance and ended up spending many thousands of pounds to get home.

Responsible tour operators will not allow anyone to travel with them who is uninsured. There are lots of insurance policies to choose from, and it need not be too expensive, but do not choose a policy just because it is cheap... you get what you pay for, and very cheap policies often have a poor record in paying out on claims.

## How to choose a good policy:

1. Make sure you have good options. Don't pay for cover that you don't need. For example, in the USA healthcare costs are very high, so if you are not visiting the USA, why pay for this cover? Choose the option that's best for you and save money
2. Don't buy the cheapest policy first. Compare costs with other organisations, and check their levels of cover too. Make sure you choose a policy specifically tailored for backpackers
3. Check out the insurer on review sites to see if there are complaints from other travellers about paying claims
4. If you plan to try adventurous activities, make sure they are covered in the policy. If it is not clear what is covered, find another policy where they specifically state which adventure activities are covered
5. If you plan to work on your trip abroad, such as on the working holiday visa in Australia, make sure your policy covers this. Many do not
6. Can you extend the policy if your plans change once you've left the UK?

## Beware of cheap insurance!







## Checklist:

- Are you covered for all of the activities you'll be doing on your trip? Think about working/volunteering, surfing, bamboo rafting, horse riding, scuba diving
- If you have an existing medical condition make sure it is covered
- Is the policy with a well-known, reputable company who are based in the UK?
- Is the claims process long-winded and unnecessarily difficult?
- Who looks after you when you're sick? Are you covered at all hospitals and medical centres or do you have to see doctors from the insurers list?
- What's the level of cancellation cover? If your cancellation cover is not high enough to cover the cost of your trip and flights, it can invalidate the whole policy!
- Are your mobile phone and other gadgets covered?
- Are you covered for personal liability? If not you could be sued if you inadvertently cause an accident

# Visas



**M**aking sure that you have the right visas in place is an essential part of your travel plans. Some countries require visas. Visas are a necessary document which give you permission to enter and stay in a country for a period of time.

Some countries require that you get a visa in advance of travel, whereas other destinations will issue you with a visa on arrival at the airport or land border.

If you intend to do paid work abroad you will usually be required to get a working visa in place before you leave the UK. Working visa regulations vary, so please check individual country visa information or call a travel company for information.

Check the latest visa requirements and travel advice on the Foreign & Commonwealth Office website [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)

# Vaccinations



**Y**ou should visit your GP/travel clinic at least six weeks before your departure. Tell your doctor which countries you are visiting and what kind of activities you plan to do. Take a detailed itinerary with you as some health risks apply to certain parts of the country but not others. Your doctor will then be able to advise you of any vaccinations or medication you'll need. Some vaccinations are free under the NHS but there are some you may have to pay for.

Some countries require a certificate proving that you have had certain vaccinations. Your doctor will be able to help you with this but we also advise double-checking the entry requirements for each country on the

embassy websites. While at the GP, make sure you make a note of any of your medical details which you may need; for example your blood type or any allergies to medicine.





# Getting ready to go...

## What to pack

**T**hink about the kind of activities you will be doing whilst travelling and the climate you will be doing them in and then start to create a kit list. Talk to friends who have been travelling and ask them what they consider to be the most important items to bring.

Think about questions such as will I need a sleeping bag, or how important is it to take hiking boots? Get ideas and inspiration from walking around outdoor clothing or camping shops. In the meantime, here are a few essential travel tips to get you started.

Practice packing your bag several times before the big day. This may sound a little excessive, but once you're abroad you'll find yourself having to quickly pack up on numerous occasions, so it's important to have a routine which works for you.

You will have to accept that you can't take absolutely everything you want with you. A backpack and a small daypack should be enough. Take a good look through your kit and be prepared to make some sacrifices.

If you find yourself with the difficult dilemma of what to leave behind, don't panic, you will soon realise that there are plenty of things that you can live without. Once you start travelling, you will find out that you can buy lots of kit when you get there, often at a fraction of the UK price.

### Suitcase or backpack?

Definitely a backpack! Much easier to lug round, and more flexible. You are bound to travel on rough roads, and carrying a suitcase is needlessly painful!



# Choose your backpack carefully...

## Your backpack must be comfortable when you carry it

- Try a few on in the shops and fasten the straps. Just like trying on a pair of shoes you should have a walk around with it to see how it feels. Make sure you are comfortable as you are going to be spending a long time in each other's company
- A comfortable padded hip belt and shoulder strap is a must
- Most backpacks are between 45-80 litres. Around 65 litres should be about right
- Some backpacks have extensions on the top so you can increase the capacity, which is a useful function

## Don't buy a top-loading backpack

- These are not practical, as you end up taking everything out to find what you are looking for. It is best to either get one with an opening at the top and bottom, or better still, a panel loading one which opens around 2/3 of the pack

## Get a good quality backpack

- You really don't want it ripping or breaking while you are on the move
- Some backpacks have extra straps to attach useful kit onto, such as a sleeping bag or hiking boots. Some also come with extra pockets for carrying things like water bottles. All these little functions are helpful

## Buy a waterproof cover

- They cover the whole of your backpack and ensure your kit stays dry when it rains. You don't need a waterproof liner, unless your pack is going to be exposed to the elements for a long time

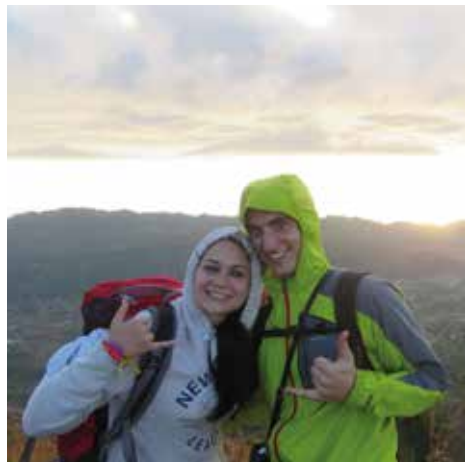


# Choosing a daypack

A daypack is an important part of your kit. It can be a small backpack or (for the girls) even a fashionable handbag. It's basically a small bag which can carry all your important documents and valuables such as passport, mobile, wallet, iPod, medication and camera. It will be your hand luggage on flights and it will be with you when you travel around by train, boat or on bus journeys.

It will be the bag you take with you on day trips, to restaurants and bars. You may even use it as a makeshift pillow when travelling on long journeys. Your bag needs to be robust. It should be big enough to carry all your daily kit but small enough to fit into overhead luggage compartments.

Getting a bag with two zips that join together so you can lock it with a small padlock is a good idea. This will help deter potential thieves from trying to lift items from your bag. A small rucksack can be worn on your front when walking in busy areas, which is also very useful for when you have your main backpack on.





# What clothes to take?

**T**here are some key points to consider when deciding what you should include in your kit list. Ideally your clothes should be practical, lightweight and quick drying. The essential items of clothing recommended are:

## **Waterproof jacket**

It will almost certainly rain at some point in your trip. If you happen to be travelling during the wet season or in the tropics, then you'll be glad you took one. It can rain heavily and relentlessly for long periods of time and feeling cold and wet while you travel is not the nicest of experiences. You can buy anoraks which fold into a tiny bag for a few

pounds, or alternatively you can spend a bit more money and get a waterproof jacket that protects you from the wind and keeps you nice and warm.

## **Trousers**

Cotton casual trousers are great for guys and girls. A combination of full length and  $\frac{3}{4}$  lengths is a good mix. Not only are they light, comfortable and quick drying but they roll up easily and don't take up a lot of room in your backpack. They can keep you warm, but even in hot climates they are useful for protecting you from the sun and from mosquitoes at night. Black, grey or green go with most colours, but more importantly





they hide the dirt. Avoid military camouflage print as it's illegal in some countries and you could be arrested if you wear it.

### **Shorts / skirts**

Many travellers will find themselves in nice hot climates so shorts and skirts are essential. They are great for keeping you cool and are brilliant for the beach. A note to girls: please respect the local cultures. In some countries you will need to cover up and not show off your legs. Wearing short skirts and showing off your cleavage in some places can cause offence and may even find you on the wrong side of the law.

### **T-shirts and vest tops**

These items will probably make up most of your backpacking wardrobe and can be bought cheaply as you travel around. Another note to girls: in some countries it's appropriate and respectable to cover your shoulders. Check before you go and perhaps take a mixture of t-shirts and vest tops.

# More on clothes...

## Long sleeve tops

It is good to keep one or two in your backpack, because, as with long trousers, they are useful for keeping you warm on cooler nights. They can offer protection from insect bites and are great for chucking in your hand luggage when travelling around, as the air-con on flights and bus journeys can be colder than you expect. They offer some sun protection but can also be used for covering shoulders when decency is required, such as visiting temples.

## Fleeces

Carry one with you to keep warm, but remember they can also double as a pillow on long journeys, or when the hostel pillows are too hard or dirty.

## Swimwear

A bikini or swimming costume and swimming shorts should be in everyone's daypack when travelling around warm countries. You never know when you are going to stumble across a gorgeous waterfall or beach. You may simply decide you want a refreshing dip in the sea or catch some sun rays on a beautiful beach, so keep them to hand.

## Cap or sun hat

Sunstroke is something you definitely don't want to experience. You may feel you are not really a hat person, but in sunny climates you most definitely need one. It can not only help protect you from sunburn but can also keep you cool and allow you to enjoy the sunshine safely. At the very least it'll hide a bad hair day!

## Sarongs

A sarong has many uses. It can be used to cover you up in the sun, be worn as a skirt or dress, and you can take it to the beach and use it as a towel or simply use it to dry off after a shower. It is light and dries easily.

It's difficult to give a complete and exact kit list, as this will vary depending on your agenda and where you are planning to go.





# Footwear

**T**rainers and flip-flops are usually essential footwear on your travels, but you might need a good pair of hiking boots too. Your choice of footwear will really depend on the kind of activities you plan to do. Here are some suggestions for essential gap travel footwear.

## Flip flops

There are so many reasons why these rubber shoes should be part of your kit list. They keep your feet cool, they are really practical and you can wear them in a dirty shower. You can easily remove them when camping, when getting on and off a boat or before entering a building where it is courteous to remove your shoes.

## Trainers

You should take one pair of shoes that are comfortable to walk in. Trainers are ideal as they are great both for casual walking and light trekking.

## Hiking boots

If you intend to do some more serious adventure trekking then a good pair of hiking boots is essential. There are many types to choose from. The most important thing is to make sure they are comfortable and that you wear them in before you travel. Make sure

they are waterproof (not just water resistant). If you have weak ankles, you should choose some that are high enough to support your ankles. Make sure that they are big enough to accommodate thick hiking socks. Staff at specialist shops can help you choose a suitable pair.

## Sports sandals

They are extremely useful. They can act as a middle ground between trainers and flip-flops. They offer some support but keep your feet cool. You can get them wet and they will protect your feet if you have to wade through streams or shallow water. They are robust, really comfortable and are a popular choice of footwear among travellers.

## Other shoes to take

You may consider taking a smart pair with you if you intend to do paid work while you travel. Alternatively, you can simply buy a pair as and when you need them. That way you don't have to carry them around and they won't get squashed in your bag.

Ensuring you have good and appropriate footwear is an essential part of your travel preparation and will help you avoid any unnecessary blisters and keep your toes intact!



# Other things to take



- **Passport, visas**
- **Vaccination certificates**
- **Travel insurance policy**
- **Flight tickets**
- **Booking confirmation for any trips/ accommodation etc**
- **Driver's licence**
- **Credit, debit, travel cards**
- **Photocopies of all the above**
- **Cash in USD and local currency**

## **Safety kit**

- **Money belt**
- **Padlocks**
- **Cable lock**
- **Personal alarm**
- **First aid kit**

## More useful items

- Sleeping bag and sleeping bag liner
- Small mirror
- Sunglasses
- Contact lenses/glasses (take spares if you use them)
- Mobile phone and charger with alarm clock
- Camera and plenty of memory cards (take a spare battery)
- Electric plug adaptor/voltage adapters (see country descriptions)
- Torch/head torch
- Batteries for torch/camera etc
- Playing cards
- Duct tape (useful for all kinds of things)
- Universal sink plug
- Travel wash
- Pegless clothes line
- Ear plugs (a blessing in communal sleeping areas!)
- Eye mask
- Reading book
- Travel guide
- Small note books
- Journal and pen
- Notebook or small laptop
- Water bottle
- Travel towel (small and quick drying)



# Travelling tips & tricks

## Stay healthy

Staying healthy is important to ensure that you have the best possible experience on your travels. Make sure you have any medications you take to hand and keep up with any necessary doses.

Visit your GP or travel clinic before you go to get up to date advice.

## Malaria

Taking precautions to avoid malaria is a major consideration if you are travelling to far-flung destinations, and your GP will be able to advise you about anti-malaria medication and other precautions you can take.

## Upset tummy

An upset tummy, sickness and diarrhoea are also among the most common complaints for travellers. It can be one of the few downsides of travelling and can be frustrating if it affects your trip or delays your plans. The best advice is to try your best to avoid getting sick in the first place! Here are some basic precautions:

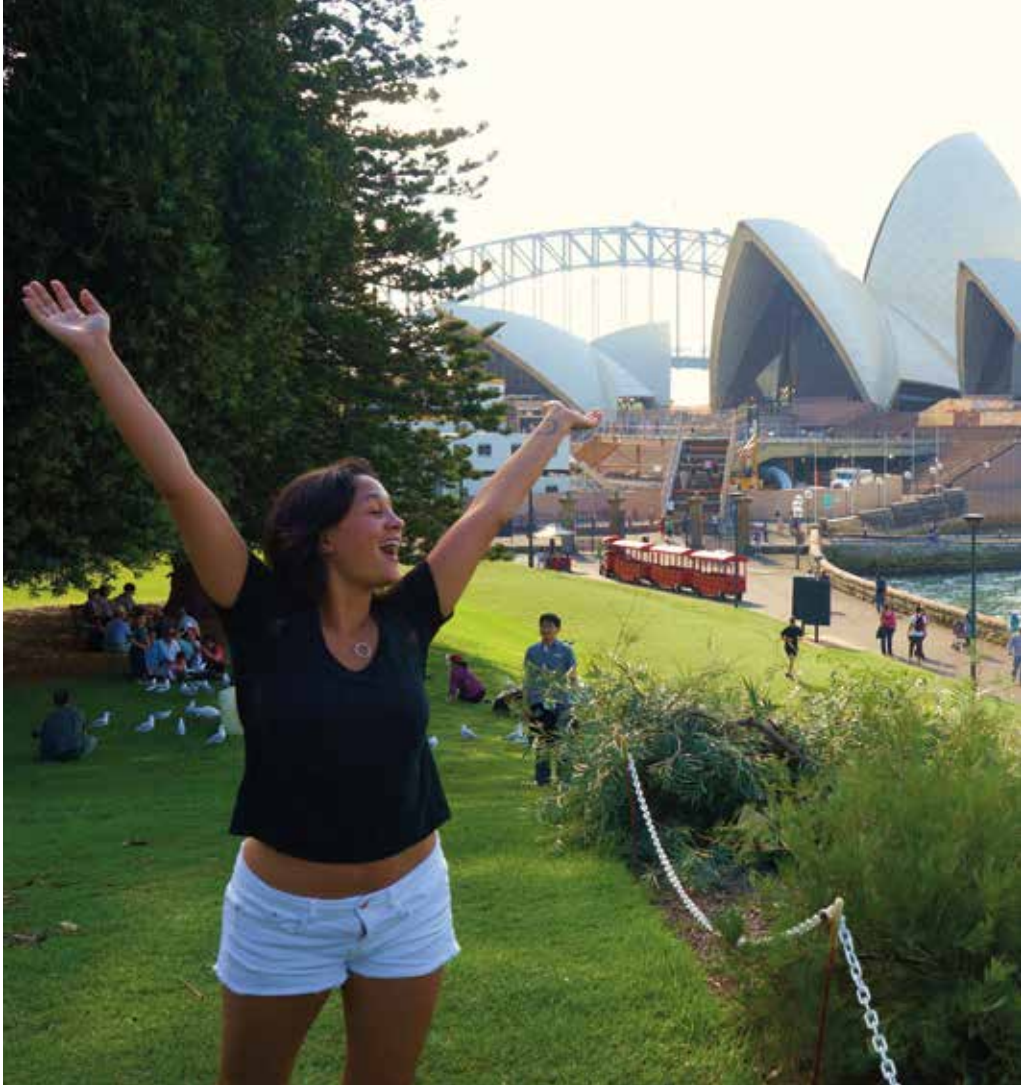
## Food and drink

- Carry anti-bacterial hand gel with you and use it frequently. Some

toilets overseas don't have soap. Use this gel to wash your hands after going to the toilet and before eating

- Ensure the local water is safe to drink. If it's not, or if you're not sure, drink bottled water. Check the seal is not broken. If this is not possible then make sure the water has been boiled and left to cool. You can also buy water purification tablets and iodine which makes water safe for drinking. Make sure you read the instructions carefully
- If the local water is unsafe then be careful not to swallow any when you brush your teeth or shower
- Avoid ice in drinks unless you're sure that it's been made from treated water
- As a general rule, stick to foods that have been cooked and make sure any meat has been well cooked
- Make sure fruit and vegetables have been washed in safe water. If in doubt peel it yourself
- Avoid unpasteurized dairy products
- Don't order seafood if you are a long way from water or the coast





At the very least check where it has come from. Seafood goes off quickly, especially in hot weather

- Avoid raw or undercooked shellfish
- When you arrive at a new destination, introduce new foods to your body slowly. Let your body get used to a new diet and climate
- Don't touch food that has been exposed to flies
- Avoid cafes and restaurants that are empty or really quiet. Get recommendations for the best places to eat from the staff at your accommodation
- Street food is great especially if you can see it cooked fresh right in front of you. Avoid food that has been left in the heat or has been out all day
- Sometimes it's best to avoid meat all together, especially if you are unsure when and how it has been cooked or you don't know what animal it actually came from

# Looking after yourself



## If you are ill

If you are unlucky enough to fall ill, then you should make sure you re-hydrate properly, and drink plenty of fluids such as sugary tea, bottled water and soup. You may need to seek out medical advice, and the sooner you get any problems treated, the sooner you can carry on enjoying your trip. If you do get a stomach upset you should:

- Drink lots of fluids to prevent dehydration
- Take some re-hydration packs with you so that you can quickly replace lost electrolytes, vitamins and minerals
- Eat bland food in small quantities

Most diarrhoea should go within 36 hours. If the condition persists then visit a doctor or medical clinic. You can buy diarrhea tablets such as Imodium, which can help stop you up. It's best only to take these if you have to go on a long journey and won't have easy access to a toilet. If you do have a bug it is often best to get rid of it rather than keep it inside you, plus taking these tablets can make you constipated for a few days.

## Other stuff

- Make sure you practice safe sex while you are away. Do not succumb to temptation after a few beers. It is easily done and often regretted in the morning!



- Do not drink so much that you become unable to look after yourself, if you feel that you are heading this way, be sure to tell a friend
- Avoid drugs of all kinds, not only are they really bad for you (and you won't know where they came from) in many countries the penalties are really harsh for using drugs. Just do not do it
- Make sure you keep your skin protected by enjoying the sunshine safely. Bring a good UV protection with you

### **What if something really bad happens?**

Bad things such as muggings, robberies and sexual assault can happen in the UK just as easily as when travelling. In fact when travelling you are more likely to be on your guard and wary, but if something bad happens, don't hesitate to call the police. If you are travelling with a travel organisation they should have emergency phone assistance... do use it.

# Keeping In Touch

**E**ven if you think you are completely independent, your parents, friends and family will still worry about you when you go travelling. Keeping in touch is important because it makes the people back home feel at ease, knowing that you're safe and being kept updated on your travels. However, don't make promises like 'I'll call you every night, mum' because there will inevitably be periods when you're out of reach.

## Keep your friends and family in the loop

Travel companies receive calls from concerned parents because they have not heard from their children. Some call the emergency contact phone and say something like 'Laura should have landed in Sydney at 5:45pm and it's now 6pm and I haven't heard from her'. In reality, there is every chance that Laura is still in the baggage area waiting for her luggage.

## Make contact on arrival

Tell your family that you will call them as soon as you can when you arrive in a new destination. Don't give them a definite time and tell them not to expect a call from you the moment you are supposed to touch

down from your flight. Hold-ups can and do happen. Maybe make an agreement to call once you have reached your accommodation.

## Let them know if you can't be reached

If you know you are going to be travelling in an area that doesn't have phone signal or internet access, remember to tell them. That way they won't expect a call from you.

Always let at least one other person know where you're planning to go and what you're planning to do so that if something does go wrong someone knows where to start looking, or which authorities to call.







## Agree on regular contact

Depending on your situation, destination and relationship with your family, it's a good idea to agree how often you will try to contact them. A quick call or text is enough for you to tell them that you are safe and well and having a good time.

Most parents like to hear your voice, and messages are just not the same! However emails, iMessage and Whatsapp are a great way to keep in contact with family and friends. Internet and WiFi will usually be available in most hostels and even bars and restaurants in any town or city. Even if it's just a few lines to say you are okay and having a good time, contact is always appreciated!

Skype and Facetime are also great ways to stay in touch when you have got a bit of downtime. It's always nice to get to see your family and friends if you've been away for a while.

Many travellers take a smart phone as well as a laptop or tablet with them. If you do decide to take your own laptop or tablet, remember to check that it is covered in your travel insurance policy.

## Don't cause unnecessary worry

Avoid causing your family unnecessary worry. For example, if something out of the ordinary happens to you but you are

absolutely fine, then consider if your family really need to know about it. If you do want to tell them, consider whether it might be better to wait until you get home so they don't start panicking about your safety.

## Travel blogs

Use blogging and social media to stay in touch.

Travel blogs are a great way of keeping your family and friends informed of your whereabouts, so long as you don't mind them reading the content of your blog. These blogs are good because you can say where you've been and what you've been up to without having to send lots of separate emails. Everything is in one place for everyone you care about to read. And, of course, there's Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, easy and quick ways to keep people informed of where you are and what you are up to. Plus, social media is a great way to share embarrassing photos and fun stories from your journeys.

## Peace of mind all round!

If you make sure you keep in touch regularly you will make important connections with people back home which can be reassuring for you when you are away in a new location. It also gives your friends and family peace of mind.

# Parents Pages

## Advice for parents

Going travelling is a wonderful opportunity for young people to broaden their horizons, see the world and gain valuable life experience. Yet for parents, the prospect of waving their son or daughter goodbye as they set off on a gap trip around the world can be a daunting prospect. Whether you're concerned about how your son or daughter will finance their travels, manage their money or stay safe and healthy while travelling, it's natural for parents to worry about the idea of their child going on a gap year.

## Get involved in their travel preparation

A good way of alleviating your own fears, and those of your children, is to get involved with their travel preparation. You are well-equipped to give them advice on managing their money, setting up a bank account or helping them with opportunities to find paid work abroad.

If they book their trip with a reputable travel firm you will be safe in the knowledge that every booking is 100% financially secure and with a low deposit for making the initial booking, this will allow plenty of time for them to save up the rest of the money and secure their onward travel finances.

If you go through all the practical and emotional preparation with them it will make the transition into travel easier all round. Before they go, tick off all the items on our check list and it will help put your mind at rest.

## Health & safety concerns

One of parents' biggest concerns about their children travelling abroad is the question of health and safety. Read the health and safety advice in this booklet and check the FCO website about every destination your son or daughter will travel to.

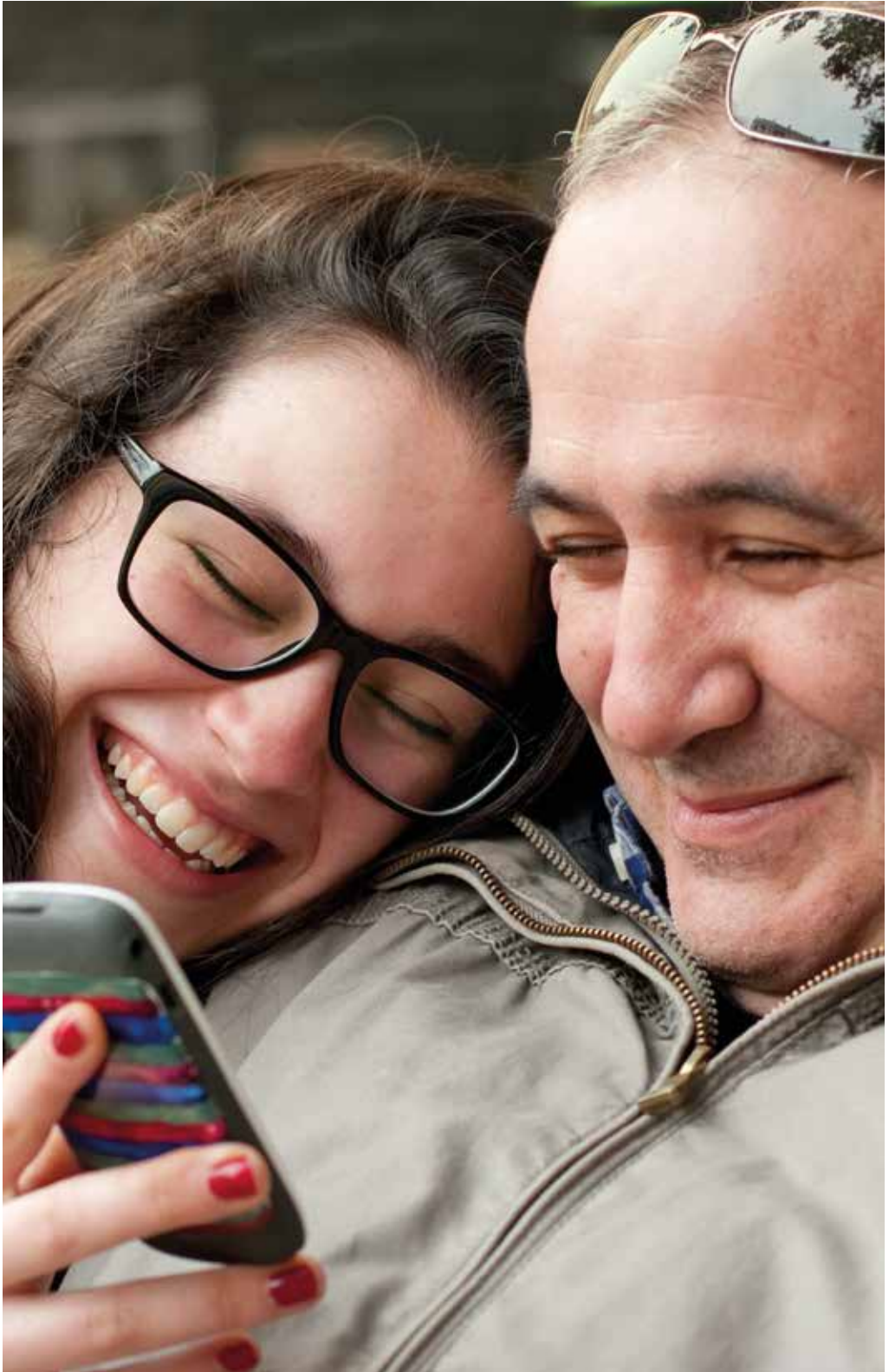
Travelling with a company is a great way of making sure safety is made a priority.

Make sure your son or daughter has visited their GP or a travel clinic around 6-8 weeks in advance of travel, to get any necessary vaccinations or medication. Putting together a first aid kit to take abroad is also a sensible precaution.

Be sure to book with an organisation which offers a 24/7 emergency support line for travellers, so you can rest assured that your son or daughter can get through to speak directly to one of the team at any time should they need to.









## Staying in touch

Please see the previous section on this. Once they are abroad, one of the key concerns is how to stay in touch. It's important to strike the right balance between parental concern and letting them get on with finding their way in the world independently. In no time they'll be back and dying to share all their gap year adventures with you!

## Expectations / realism

Going travelling will undoubtedly be one of the most treasured and unforgettable experiences of your son or daughter's life. You often hear those who have returned from their travels reminiscing about the amazing places they have visited and the incredible adventures they have had. Before they go, it's very easy for them to get caught up in all the excitement whilst they are planning their travels, and forget about the realities of what they need to do as travel preparation. You can help keep their feet on the ground in the planning stages.

## Underestimating costs

Travellers tend to underestimate how much their trip will cost and how much they will spend. Obviously,

you will have far more experience with budgeting and financing issues than your son or daughter, so although they might not explicitly ask for it, they will really appreciate your help and advice. Firstly, it's best to work out how much they could save up in the time they have before they plan to travel. You could help them look at part-time jobs if they don't already have one, or help to come up with some fundraising ideas. You could discuss them setting up a separate bank account where they can start saving, or help them to decide how much they need to save each month.

## Destination reality check

Students often start by saying they want to go everywhere and do everything! It is a good idea to sit down with them and point out that funds have a limit and the amount of time they have to travel is also an important factor. If your child has decided to go with a friend or group of friends, it's worth getting together with them and their parents, as they may find that it's harder to all agree on where to go than they may have first thought. You could help them agree on both a budget and an itinerary.



## Practical travel realities

It's most likely that your son or daughter will be staying in a series of hostels and budget hotels during their trip, or may even be camping or bunking on board a boat. Although there are some very spacious and clean hostels out there, standards vary enormously.

It may not have quite sunk in yet that they will have to fend for themselves during their travels. Depending on whether they are travelling independently or going with a company, they may need to get familiar with a few simple recipes, or find out where the best places to buy local cuisine will be and how much this will cost. The same goes with laundry, and while they are travelling, they will soon make friends with a sink and a bar of soap!

## Culture shock

Travelling is meant to be challenging, whether this means pushing physical boundaries with adventure activities or embracing and accepting different cultures and customs. Depending on their planned destinations, your son or daughter may have to adjust quite dramatically to their new location, so make sure that they are well prepared. If they are planning on an adventurous trip, involving activities such as adventure

trekking or extreme activities, this might include building up their fitness before they leave. It could be that they underestimate how hard it will be to get used to a change in climate, so make sure that they have researched this before they leave. It's definitely worth researching the customs and cultural differences of the countries that they will be visiting with them, as otherwise this dramatic change could be quite a shock to their system, or they could accidentally cause offence. For example, in Thailand it's very disrespectful to touch a person on their head, while in Australia it is advised not to climb Uluru (Ayers Rock) as it is sacred to the native Aboriginal people. A surprising number of travellers are not aware of the traditional customs of the places to travel to, and they can unintentionally upset the local people.

## Safety concerns

There is no way of fully preparing for a travelling, as you will always encounter surprising situations and unexpected events, but help your son or daughter to face the realities of staying safe, and preparing them for what could happen while they are abroad. There will definitely be changes of plan, and there is always the risk of losing property or theft. Make sure that you keep a copy of all their important documents with you at home.

# Should parents pay for a Gap Year?

If your family can afford to pay for your travels, this is an option you can consider, but experience shows that young people who pay for all or part of their trip themselves, get much more out of the experience.

If they have had to save up money from working, or fundraising, they will appreciate the freedom to travel that the hard work has bought them.

By all means help your son or daughter out with say paying for the flights, but it is not a good idea to simply present them with a fully paid trip. They need to learn to stand on their own two feet while travelling. You can be there as a backstop in case they come unstuck and get into money troubles, but the most successful young travellers fund themselves.

There are plenty of places abroad where they can find paid work for a few months, especially in Australia and New Zealand, so they can always help fund or extend their trip by earning money there.

## More advice and checklists

There is a huge resource of ideas and advice for parents on [www.gap360.com](http://www.gap360.com).

This booklet has been compiled by Jane Mclellan, who is a founder and Director of Gap 360 Ltd.

Jane welcomes questions and calls from parents, so please feel free to call 01892 527392 or email [jane.mclellan@gap360.com](mailto:jane.mclellan@gap360.com)



the

# gap year travel

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