

Learning & Leading Gap Year Scholars

● Christopher Jones

Dates	August to September 2010
Locations	Wakatobi National Park, Indonesia
Activities	Marine and coastal conservation project



What did you do on your gap experience?

I went to Wakatobi National Park in Indonesia with Operation Wallacea. I gained my PADI open water dive qualification, took a reef ecology course, assisted in scientific research on the reef and travelled round the Wakatobi area performing reef checks and monitoring.

What skills did you develop?

While I was away, I believe I built up my confidence and strengthened my character, having never been away from home by myself before. I learnt to persevere and to keep at things, as I struggled with some of the reef ecology exams. Also, I gained qualifications in diving, having never dived before, and learnt how to communicate effectively underwater.



What did you learn?

I learnt how to scuba dive with the PADI training program. I also learnt university level taxonomy for coral reef eco-systems.

What did you find easy and challenging?

The scuba diving courses were easy to follow and enjoyable due to the expertise and knowledge of my instructors. I found the reef ecology and taxonomy classes difficult, as these were at university level and were a little out of my league.



What was the impact of your gap experience?

I studied reef ecology during my gap experience and this persuaded me to study coastal conservation and marine biology more closely as part of my university course. I was extremely motivated whilst on my gap experience as I wanted to experience everything and learn about different cultures.

I have developed into a more confident and mature adult. The experience has strengthened my character and has made me more out-going. I am no longer intimidated by independent travel and I have planned to travel to Europe over the summer.

What was the highlight of your gap experience?

I particularly enjoyed meeting new people and interacting with people of different cultures and ages. I loved being a part of



different culture and helping to preserve their way of life. I took great pleasure in learning how to dive, as this is something I have always wanted to do.

How do you think this experience will help you?

The gap experience met all my expectations and more, as I fulfilled a life-long dream of learning to scuba dive and developed a passion for coastal conservation and marine biology.

What is your advice for anyone thinking of taking a gap experience?

Enjoy it, and take two cameras as mine broke. Plan it early and don't leave it until last minute as I did.