

# Learning & Leading Gap Year Scholars

## ● Amar Jilka

Dates	February to May 2013
Locations	China, Peru and Brazil
Activities	Internship, community volunteer and independent travel



### ***Why did you want to do a gap experience?***

The aim of my gap year was to improve my ability to explore and travel not only independently but with others too. Working in a team is not something I had enjoyed. Whilst on my gap year, I encountered many opportunities to work amongst a team to achieve a target. For example, volunteering in Peru allowed adapting to a new language, culture as well work with professionals in the field of sport to help underprivileged children to excel in various sports. By the end of my 6 week volunteering I was able to communicate with the coaches and children in Spanish and take part and teach in daily drills/matches.

### ***What did you do on your gap experience?***

My gap year was split into three months between China, Peru and Brazil. During my time in China I enrolled into an internship programme in Beijing. My internship was in foreign currency exchange. This programme lasted a month, and the offices were based in the business area of Beijing. During my time here I gained a deeper understanding of the world of work and the Chinese ethos towards work. This further prepared me for what I can expect post-university.

During my time in Peru, I volunteered in teaching soccer to underprivileged children. I would travel every day via bus to a school where children were given the opportunity to be taught by a professional coach and myself. The sessions were intense, starting off with training drills followed by competitive matches and competitions in order to yield the full potential of the children. This experience allowed me to work with very talented young individuals with very bright futures ahead of them. It also allowed me the opportunity to enhance their skills, and to share my experiences with them.

During my time in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil I explored the beautiful landscapes of the country and all it had to offer. Visiting 'Christ the Redeemer' was certainly one of the most memorable parts of my gap year. Brazil was a beautiful country; full of beaches, lagoons, forests and national parks.





***What did you find easy and challenging***

During my gap year, I found the language barrier a difficulty especially in Peru. Having not spoken a word of Spanish prior to embarking, I felt speechless when trying to articulate myself to the volunteer coach. He spoke little English, therefore most of the work in the earlier stages were done through demonstration. I then took some Spanish classes and it improved.

***What was the highlight of your gap experience?***

The highlight of my gap experience was certainly the volunteering. To see children progressively improving in sports and personally through something I have helped in will be a memory I will treasure.

***What impact has your gap experience had?***

My geographical skills were certainly broadened as I had the opportunity to visit amazing landscapes and sites. These encounters have given me a deeper understanding behind the history and formation of the sites themselves.

My team work skills have certainly improved from volunteering. When forced to work into a team, leadership skills are obligatory. I was lucky to develop mine further during my time volunteering and working.



***How do you think this experience will help you?***

This experience will allow me to travel with ease in the future and also give me the confidence to do so.

***What do you plan to do next?***

I intend to complete a three year course at university and ensure I yield my maximum potential. In the future I plan to keep travelling as well as improve my Spanish to the maximum level possible.

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

Say yes to every opportunity you get whilst abroad even if you are scared. Do things far away from your comfort zone. This will be the best year of your life so enjoy it!