

6. Timing

You may have as much as fifteen months between leaving school and starting university. How you use this time may be constrained by a number of other factors such as you needing to raise additional funds for your gap experiences or to start university, the dates of a programme you wish to participate in, and/or local weather conditions, amongst other things.

If you are an inexperienced traveller or have not spent time away from home before, then spending a long period of time outside the UK might be daunting. Consider whether you would like to go away for a long or short period of time – there are pros and cons to each. There is also the option of undertaking several short periods away, returning to the UK in-between. To help you decide, consider points such as:

- Environmental impact (multiple short periods may mean more flights)
- Whether you want to develop a wide experience and understanding of the culture
- Whether you want to learn a language (this takes time!)
- Cost (again, multiple short trips may be more expensive as flights are often the single biggest expense)
- How much of the country you want to see
- Homesickness (particularly if it will be your first extended time away from home)
- Culture shock on return to UK (this can be a consideration if you are away for a long period of time)

If thinking about participating in a project with a provider, consider the potential pros and cons to a long or short term project. A short term project may enable you to experience volunteering whilst allowing time for independent travel, and fit into a shorter time frame. A long term project is a greater commitment, but may give you more time to get involved with the local community and potentially make a greater contribution.

Exploratory questions to ask yourself:

- How long do I want to be away for altogether?
- Am I confident about being away from home for this amount of time?
- Do I want to undertake one long-term gap experience or multiple shorter ones, returning to the UK in-between?
- When would I like to leave the UK? Are my departure dates flexible, and do I have to be back in the UK by a certain date?
- Are there any time constraints on when I could do my gap experience? E.g. are some of my planned activities only on offer for specific dates?
- Do I want to keep my arrangements flexible to allow for changes or spontaneous trips?
- Do I want my travel to coincide with a particular time of year in my destination(s)? E.g. for a particular activity, event or season.
- Is there a particular time of year I should avoid travelling in the country or countries I plan to visit, e.g. hurricane season?
- Can I extend my flight ticket whilst away if I wanted to stay out longer?

Example itinerary template

If you're someone who likes to be organised and well prepared, or if it's your first trip away alone, it's a good idea to put together an itinerary of your trip so you have a clear idea of where you'll be and when. The table below shows a sample of the itinerary for part of the trip shown in the budget (see section 7). You may wish to use it as a template for your own proposed gap experience and adjust it as necessary. If you are doing the same activity for a period of time you can group the days together as one row.

Date	Activity	Details	Accommodation	Address or contact
15/03/16	Flight London Heathrow to Auckland airport, New Zealand, via Los Angeles International	Flight NZ15: Depart 16.00, Arrive LA 19.00 Flight DJ165: Depart LA 23.45	-	-
17/03/16	(flight leg LA to Auckland)	Arrive Auckland 07.30	Anna's hostel	146 Hobs Street, Auckland Anna.hostel@auckland.nz
19/03/16	Move out of hostel to friend's house		Room in friend's house	Tom Green, 286 Craiger Road, Auckland +64 9 8693521
20/03/16	Start work at Tom's parents' cafe	The Red Pepper café, Brickster Street, Auckland +64 9 1027549	Room in friend's house	Tom Green, 286 Craiger Road, Auckland +64 9 8693521
21/03/16 - 24/03/16	Work in Red Pepper cafe		Room in friend's house	Tom Green, 286 Craiger Road, Auckland +64 9 8693521
25/03/16	Day off – sea kayaking with Tom	Grovey beach, 30 mins drive from house	Room in friend's house	Tom Green, 286 Craiger Road, Auckland +64 9 8693521
26/03/16 – 02/04/16	Work in Red Pepper cafe		Room in friend's house	Tom Green, 286 Craiger Road, Auckland +64 9 8693521