

# Learning & Leading Gap Year Scholars

## ● Rosie Ryan

Dates	January 2011 to July 2011
Locations	Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada
Activities	Work and independent travel



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

My aims for my gap year were to experience as many different cultures as possible. I wanted to do some volunteer work in Australia and New Zealand and I hoped to achieve independence and guidance of what direction in life I would like to take; personally and career wise. I believed it would mentally prepare me and provide me with essential skills needed for the pressures university would bring and make me a more confident and self-assured person; equipping me with life experiences that I would not otherwise have gained.

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

Australia whilst dodging all the rain (the most in 30 years!) I saw all the iconic sights such as Bondi Beach, the Great Barrier Reef, Whitsunday Island and Fraser Island.

New Zealand was by far the most stunning country I visited. I travelled around with the 'Kiwi Experience'. I was on and off the coach frequently so had new people to meet at each destination. Whilst there I did a lot of walking. I also did a skydive, swam with dolphins, walked around Able Tasman National Park, hiked to Franz Josef glacier and did a boat tour of Milford Sounds. I went on a Maori culture night which was an insight into their way of life. USA was much hotter than I had expected. In Miami we had the opportunity to go to a part of the Everglades. We visited two southern towns; Savannah and Charleston. I loved Washington DC for its diversity and culture. It was then on to the bright lights of New York. To top it off I managed to visit the Niagara Falls which I had always wanted to see.



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

The thing I found the easiest was making friends. Everyone is so friendly and approachable. However, the biggest shock as a result was how incredibly sad it was to say good bye to the newly formed friendships. I also found it quite difficult travelling with friends.

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

The fact that I can now relate first hand to these countries will help me tremendously. I have visited three different countries all differing socially and environmentally. I have seen many iconic and



natural wonders of the world. Personally there has been a greater impact. I have now had a taste of what is on offer and how much I have yet to see that I am motivated to succeed in everything I put my mind to.

***What were the highlights of your gap experience?***

Just being able to travel outside of the UK was a highlight. The most exciting activity was my Franz Josef glacier hike in New Zealand.



***Were there any unexpected outcomes?***

The biggest outcome of my trip is the amount of new friends that you make along the way that you become really close to. Within a short of space you get very close with people.

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

I believe the experience has helped me massively, mainly in terms of what I want to get out of my education and in my future aspirations. During my six months away I have met so many people all with different stories and advice to give. This has reassured me that there is not one path we should all be taking.

As a result of my gap year I am planning to take another year out after my degree and I am determined to do a sandwich course if possible so I can do a bit of studying abroad. Mostly of all has confirmed that seeing the world is a must in life.

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

My plans now are to complete my degree, carry on travelling and continue to give back through volunteering.



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

If you do not intend to travel on your own then you are really missing out. Even if it is just a little part of your trip, it is a completely different experience to travelling with friends. People approach more easily and you approach others more frequently; you interact with others in a different way to when you are with your peers.

Don't start your trip with the mind frame that your plans are set in stone, as they are likely to change. It is part of the beauty of travelling that you can end up going anywhere and doing anything. Embrace it.

Always have an option two. This way if the first option does not happen then you are not left doing nothing and you don't panic. Take two cards and always have cash. Keep a bus itinerary with you and emergency numbers on you.

