

## 2. What to do

There is a wealth of opportunities open to you. Some you might be able to do by travelling independently and others may take place in a more formal setting such as on a course, voluntary placement, or an expedition. Below is a list of just some of the activities gap year students choose to do:

- Conservation projects e.g. working on wildlife reserves; planting trees
- Field research e.g. as a field assistant on a research project, independent research or on a course at a Field Study Centre [www.rgs.org/fieldcentres](http://www.rgs.org/fieldcentres).
- Expeditions in remote or challenging environments [www.rgs.org/je](http://www.rgs.org/je).
- Caring e.g. working with street children, in an orphanage.
- Teaching e.g. being a teaching assistant or Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL).
- Outdoor education and camps e.g. working in Outward Bound centres or Summer Camps.
- Learning a new outdoor skill: e.g. climbing, sailing, canoeing, trekking, skiing, desert travel.
- Courses and cultural exchanges: e.g. languages, university summer courses.
- Work: e.g. paid work, work experience, internships.
- Independent travel.

Also look at the 'Meet the Participants' part of the Learning and Leading web pages to see how other gap scholars have spent their time [www.rgs.org/Land/](http://www.rgs.org/Land/)

To help you decide:

- Think about what experiences would fit in with your aims and objectives.
- Speak to people who have been on or are knowledgeable about gap years.
- Look at books and gap year web-sites. Some you may wish to look at include:
  - [www.rgs.org/je](http://www.rgs.org/je)
  - [www.yearoutgroup.org](http://www.yearoutgroup.org)
  - [www.gapadvice.org](http://www.gapadvice.org)
  - [www.gapyear.com](http://www.gapyear.com)
  - [www.gap360.com](http://www.gap360.com)
  - [www.freevolunteering.co.uk](http://www.freevolunteering.co.uk)
  - [www.omprakash.org](http://www.omprakash.org)
  - [www.volunteersouthamerica.net](http://www.volunteersouthamerica.net)
- When you find something which sounds attractive, search for other similar opportunities and compare what is on offer.

### Exploratory questions to ask yourself:

- What are the particular activities I would like to do during my gap year? E.g. teaching, conservation project, research, instructor training.
- Are there any particular skills I want to acquire or environments I would like to experience?
- Do I need any specific qualifications or a certain level of health and fitness in order to participate in any of these activities? If so, how will I achieve this before departure?
- Will the activities fit in with my budget?
- Do I want to travel with a provider or independently?
- Do I want to travel alone or in a group?
- Do I want to organise the activities before departure or during travel?
- If booking activities with local activity providers during travel, what should I look for to check that they are reputable and offer good value for money?

See **Section 5: Choosing a Gap provider** for more detailed questions to consider if thinking of travelling with a provider.

If travelling independently, you may choose to undertake activities when you get to your destination, perhaps using local providers. If so, it is important that you check them out to ensure they are safe, reputable, and give value for money. Some of the things to look for include:

- Do they hold a suitable license? E.g. PADI or BSAC for diving schools.
- Are guides/instructors suitably qualified?
- Does the equipment look well looked after and of good quality?
- How long have they been in operation? Are they well established in the area?
- How are they reviewed? Consult guidebooks and talk to other tourists staying in the area. You can also use internet travel forums for reviews and to contact previous customers e.g. [www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree)