

# Learning & Leading Gap Year Scholars

## ● Emma Crewdson

Dates	January to July 2013
Locations	Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, Cook Islands and USA
Activities	Internships with a Geophysics company and independent travel



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

I wanted to improve my communication skills and gain applied knowledge of the geological/ geophysical industry. My aim was to finish my gap year knowing that I had done something productive, met friends and contacts for the future. I wanted to be able to make informed decisions when choosing my degree modules and research projects as well as experience a new culture and visit a variety of environments.

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

I spent the first two weeks in Singapore on a work placement where I learnt the basics of offshore surveying, basic geology, sediment classification and some basic interpretation.

I then travelled to Malaysia for six weeks on another placement where I learnt basic processing of geophysical survey results for detailed interpretation, geophysical interpretation skills and compiling of Geophysical and Geological reports for clients. I explored north Malaysia with a work colleague and met up with a friend from my hometown and travelled to Malacca.

Next I travelled to Indonesia for a week where I surfed and snorkelled with friends from home. I then returned to Singapore for a few days where I explored Pulau Ubin and other areas I hadn't seen on my first visit.

I travelled to Australia for four weeks where I explored Brisbane, visited the largest sand dune system in Australia as well as Cape Byron, Jenolan Caves and the Blue Mountains.

I then travelled to New Zealand for eight weeks and spent the first three weeks travelling independently. I explored Christchurch, visited the Antarctic Centre, watched seals and dolphins and walked the longest of the Great Walks, 80km. I drove to both the South and North Island in a campervan with friends from North Devon. We went to Fox and Franz Joseph Glaciers, Mount Cook and several Glacial lakes. We crossed the Cook Strait, visited the Museum in Wellington, Treaty grounds, walked the Tongariro Crossing, visited White Island- live marine volcano and saw lots of geothermal activity including power stations.

I spent three weeks in the Cook Islands where I learnt about the formation of Rarotonga and helped Phd students surveying the fish in the lagoon.





The last country I visited was USA for three weeks, where I met a friend from home. We Explored LA, travelled the coast, seeing Elephant Seals and giant waterfalls. We walked in Yosemite National Park for a few days, explored San Francisco and the state Capital Sacramento.

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

I found budgeting harder than I thought I would, mainly because things that I was used to in the UK were very expensive in other countries and so I had to adapt; Unfortunately this was mainly my food as fresh vegetables and fruit cost quite a lot in Australia and New Zealand which meant I had to change my diet which meant I had less energy and gained weight.

I found being organised and travelling between places a lot easier than I thought I would, I surprised myself at how organised I could be.



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

My knowledge of physical formations and the processes which create and adapt them has extended. My motivation to explore more career pathways and pursue research has increased. My ability to speak to strangers and professional people is much more developed. I have witnessed the importance of teamwork on delivering a product within the deadline from several different sources, departments and employees in the workplace. I have experienced different cultures.

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

I really enjoyed my short breaks in Indonesia and Rarotonga. Some things I will never forget include walking on White Island as the smells, steam, fumaroles and craters showed how it was obviously active. Walking in Yosemite National Park to some of the best views and geological formations I have ever seen. I really enjoyed staying with my colleague's family in a rural village in North Malaysia.



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

Whilst in Malaysia I picked up a small amount of the language which included counting, basic items and some conversational topics. This was also helpful in Indonesia as there language is quite similar, it helped me to barter with locals as well as interact with people who didn't understand English such as young children.

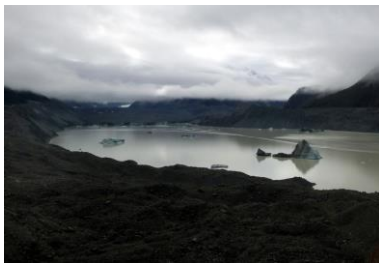
***What you are intending to do as result of this gap experience?***

I intend to research more career pathways and research topics that I could pursue whilst at university to improve the sustainability of the geology and geophysics related industries around the world.



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

I have gained so much knowledge from speaking to people during my work placement; I have made lots of contacts that I am able to call up on when I have questions. This networking will be invaluable throughout my degree and beyond. The basic geological skillset I have gained from a two month work placement I feel is more advanced than if I had studied geology for the same amount of time in college. I will be able to apply any theory I learn at university to the things I experienced during my placement. I feel that I have taken a lot from the Malay culture, it has educated me both socially and religiously. This experience has definitely removed any apprehension I may have had before about meeting new people and working, studying or travelling abroad.

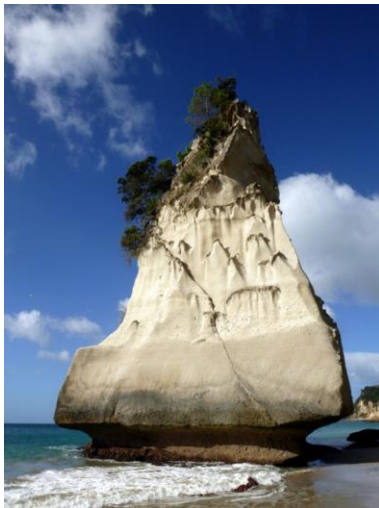


***What do you wish you had known?***

I wish that things like Christmas hadn't stopped me from leaving earlier.

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

I am studying a 4 year MSci geology and geophysics degree at Imperial College London.



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

Be selfish when you plan your trip. Everybody has different thoughts and different things they want to experience. When you're spending so much time, effort and money on a trip, you don't want to arrive home feeling like you didn't do everything you wanted to do.

Be prepared. Don't leave everything until the last minute, if you have everything planned you can drop some things off the list on your way round, but if you weren't prepared enough it is much harder to fit it in.

Think of something that will definitely be constructive. Travelling in itself is a productive experience but if you can come home with something in your hand or your heart which you can look at or talk about and prove that you did something worth your while whilst you were away is so much more satisfying than just naming a list of places.