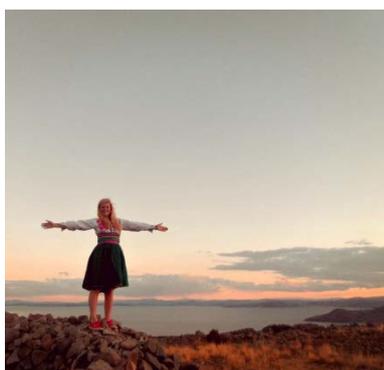


# Learning and Leading Gap Scholars

## ● Angela Rose

Dates	4 <sup>th</sup> Feb – 15 <sup>th</sup> August 2014
Locations	Tanzania and Peru
Activities	Volunteering, trekking up Mt Kilimanjaro, exploring



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

I wanted to take the opportunity to explore, embark and achieve as much as I could through this trip, because I think that travelling is the best way to accomplish something in a really amazing way. I saw the opportunity as a way to become more independent and confident, and to be more willing to try new things. I was looking forward to travelling under my own leadership, and to completely immerse myself in another culture, its customs, language, traditions, and day to day life, all of which I was able to do due to the long time period I spent away. As well as this, I was really eager to make a difference: to help where I could and to contribute towards making a positive change wherever it was needed. Finally, I love adventure and challenging myself, and after ascending Mount Kenya in 2011, I saw Mount Kilimanjaro and Machu Picchu as the next challenge.



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

I began my gap experience in Tanzania. After a week of being there, I climbed Mount Kilimanjaro, reaching the summit at sunrise – an incredible experience. Following this, I volunteered at an orphanage for primary school children in Moshi and at a nearby primary school where I taught maths and English to 80 children. After school in the orphanage I had the most amazing time playing, talking, learning Swahili, teaching English, singing and dancing with the children. I also made time to explore the country by going on weekend excursions and mini breaks to Zanzibar and Pangani.



In Peru, I began with an organised tour of the country, going from Lima to Cuzco. On this tour I visited a lot of really amazing places and tried so many new things, including trekking the Inca Trail up to Machu Picchu, seeing the Nazca Lines and eating guinea pig. Following on from the tour, I spent time volunteering in Cuzco in various positions: teaching English to young children, constructing a kitchen, and lastly working in the Amazon rainforest carrying out conservation work such as tree tagging and making and monitoring butterfly traps.



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

I found it easy to settle into an environment and a way of life which was very different to what I was used to. After just a week in a place it started to become my home. Making friends was a lot easier than I had imagined because travelling makes for interesting conversations, and there are so many stories to listen to and to tell. However, a downside of this was that I formed a strong attachment to the culture, people and country I was in and didn't want to leave. It was incredibly hard to say goodbye to the children I worked with at the orphanage in Tanzania because I saw them as my family.



Another aspect I found challenging was the transition from place to place. During the tour of Peru I became used to seeing my friends every day and to a certain structure, and then when I began to volunteer with completely different people and in a different style I found the transition quite difficult.

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

As a result of meeting people from all walks of life, I have become a more open minded person, and am more aware that there are many different ways of seeing the world, many different perspectives, and many different truths. I am more willing to try new things, and I think I am more relaxed and laid back as a person.



I think my biggest personal achievement from my gap experience has been an increase in self-confidence, and I feel much more comfortable in social situations. In terms of geographical skills, I have a greater understanding of different climates around the world, and have learnt that no matter how close you are to the equator you should always pack a raincoat!

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

I lost my bag and my camera in a mugging in Tanzania. At the time I was really shocked and angry, and I lost a lot of the photos from my trip. However, it made me more aware of myself, others, and my surroundings, and I learnt to accept the situation quite quickly.



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

I am now studying BSc Geography at Swansea University and am drawing on my experiences to help me with my course. I also use the experience on a day to day basis, so I am more socially confident and open to new experiences. I hope to travel more, and to use the skills I learnt to do this.

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

- 1) Book a flexible plane ticket because you may want to extend your trip.
- 2) Have fun, relax and take things as they come. Don't dwell on bad things that happen.
- 3) Just go for it – make the most of the opportunity and do things you might not feel confident doing at home.

