

17. Before you go: actions and guidance

Once you have planned and finalised your trip, carry out the following actions to make sure you are as ready and prepared for your travels as you can be.

1. Pre-departure arrangements and preparation

Activity

- Read the provider terms and conditions again and make sure that you understand everything and are happy with the details
- If provisional, confirm your place with your chosen provider/s, after reading **Section 5** of the **Gap Experience Planning Toolkit**
- Attend briefing event of provider if applicable
- Do any training you may need to prepare for activities you plan to participate in

Travel arrangements

- Book flights for travel from/to UK and between countries
- Book airport transfers if needed and accommodation for your arrival
- Get any other tickets for internal travel if necessary

Finance and budgeting

- Get a credit card or other that will work in the country/countries you are going to.
- Buy foreign currency, traveller's cheques and/or pre-paid cash cards.
- Tell your bank where you are going and whether you plan to use your card.
- Note the telephone number of your bank.
- Give copies of your bank, card and traveller's cheques details to parents or guardian.
- Raise any additional funds needed.

Health

- Have any remaining vaccinations you need.
- Get any other medication you may need to take (e.g. anti-malarials).
- Get sufficient supplies of personal medication if needed (and a note from your doctor if illegal/unusual in the country you are going to).
- Inform your insurer and provider if applicable of any pre-existing medical conditions

Safety

- Note the British embassy telephone number for the country/countries you are travelling to and leave a copy with your parents/guardians.
- Monitor the countries you are planning to travel to on the FCO website and seek advice if the safety situation changes. Sign up for Foreign Office country-specific travel advice updates via email www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice, follow the FCO on Twitter @foreignoffice and Facebook www.facebook.com/foreignoffice to keep updated with the latest information and advice on what you should do if you need help in the event of a crisis

Documentation – passports, visas and other

- Renew your passport if required.
- Get any visas and other documentation needed for entry.
- Make copies of all your documentation for a parent/guardian and email them to yourself.

Insurance

- Buy a suitable insurance policy that you have checked out using the questions in **Section 12** of the **Gap Experience Planning Toolkit**. Take a copy of the policy with you and leave one with family/friends.

Accommodation

- Pre-book accommodation where possible, especially for any late-night arrivals.
- Create a list of accommodation options for each location.

Equipment and clothing

- Buy or borrow any equipment and clothing you need including kit for protection against malaria where necessary.
- Ensure you have a complete medical kit. Get advice from your GP, travel clinic or travel health and safety provider about what to put in the kit

Communication

- Let family and friends know you are going away: give them your itinerary and contact details for when you are abroad.
- Note the contact details of family and friends in the UK, any pre-booked provider, and any contacts in-country.
- Set up a blog or website page, or buy a travel diary if you intend to use any of these to record your experiences whilst travelling.

2. Plans for your return

Plan your return in advance

Before you leave for your gap year, just take a little while to think about what you will be doing for the first few weeks when you return.

If you are going with a provider find out what the debriefing arrangements are:

- What contact will the organisation have with you on your return?
- Will you be encouraged to contact other returned participants?
- Will your experience be used in briefings for future participants?
- What certification, reference or testimonial will the organisation provide?
- Will you be debriefed?

Reverse culture shock

Coming home after overseas travel is usually an exciting time: you've had a great trip and are really happy to see friends and relatives. Often, however it can be tricky or can become tricky once the excitement of being home has faded and the reality that your trip is over hits. Sometimes people find themselves constantly reflecting on their overseas experiences (whether happy or stressful) and find adjusting to life at home very difficult. This is very common and often sorts itself out given a period of time for adjustment. If you are finding it very hard to adjust, however, you may wish to look at online forums advising on how to cope or to seek professional support.

Contact with your gap friends

Keep in touch with the friends you make when travelling. For those who hail from your home country, a reunion could be fun. For those based overseas, small presents from the UK will mean a lot. On your return, you might wish to support an organisation overseas through fundraising.

Perspective

Reflect on your experiences and put them into context by asking yourself questions like:

- What did I learn about myself during my trip?
- What did I learn about the places I visited, the people I met and about travelling in general?
- What, if anything, would I do differently if I made the trip again?
- Do I need to now adjust my education and career plans?

Personal development

You will have undergone many demanding experiences and will undoubtedly have learnt new skills, developed and probably matured a significant amount. Take advantage of this and write down your personal development whilst your memory is fresh. You may wish to recall your learning in a CV or future job application.