# Learning & Leading Gap Year Scholars

Royal Geographical Society

with IBG

Advancing geography and geographical learning

# 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?

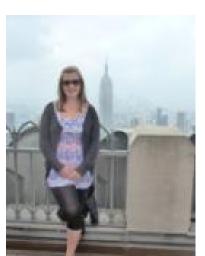
The fact that I can now relate first hand to these countries will help me tremendously. I have visited three different countries all differing socially and environmentally. I have seen many iconic and



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.



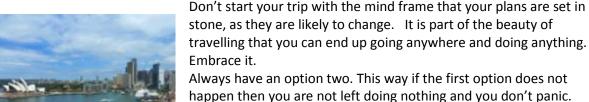
#### What do you plan to do next?

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.



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.

