

Making Gap Years More Ethical

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As students await their A Level results and plan gap years, Richard McKenzie of not-for-profit organisation Lattitude Global Volunteering advises how to include ethics in their plans.

Do Something Different - Make a Difference

A Gap year presents the opportunity to do something different and fun. See the world, face new challenges, and learn about yourself. Volunteering abroad ticks those boxes, whilst adding the ethical aspect of helping others.

Ethical travel is about making a positive impact within communities, and what better way than by volunteering your time and skills to benefit the people or environment where you visit? There are plenty of gap year volunteer projects available such as childcare, teaching English, environmental conservation and Medial projects.

A short quiz at www.whatkindofvolunteerareyou.org.uk helps people determine what type of project best suits them.

Considering Carbon Footprints

Visit parts of the world you've never seen before, but don't forget about the ethical matter of carbon footprints. Rather than backpacking around the world in 20 flights, volunteering on the way, gappers should consider travelling to just one country.

Lattitude volunteers become immersed in another culture for up to a year, getting to know the country from a native perspective and not just as a tourist, making lifelong friends (even second families), becoming part of a community and sometimes learning a new language.

Visiting one country isn't as limiting as it might sound. There is time during or after a Lattitude placement to explore the country and surrounding areas. Done on foot, by bicycle, bus or train, volunteers can relax about their footprints. Using public transport is better for the environment, and is a way of contributing to the country's economy.

Reputable Organisation -Sustained Projects

If travelling with an organisation, research its projects and reputation. Does it genuinely benefit the local people and area? How long has it been running?

Handouts don't necessarily help people, but working alongside a community to help enhance their quality of life, or to preserve the local environment, can bring significant benefits.

Lattitude has over 35 years experience in helping young people take up the challenge of volunteering abroad. Some of its current projects were first established when the organisation began, so Lattitude

volunteers can be assured they will be continuing years of good work.

With many options available, the ethical factor plays a bigger role in the gap year decision and planning process today –and it doesn't even have to be a completely selfless deed.

Volunteering abroad benefits the volunteer, almost as much as the community. It is a once in a lifetime opportunity, providing experiences and skills to stay with the volunteer for life. It can even enhance CVs for University and job applications.

For more information about volunteering projects abroad, contact Lattitude on 0118 959 4914 or visit www.lattitude.org.uk.

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Lattitude Global Volunteering (Lattitude) is a charity specialising in volunteering for 17 – 25 year olds. We have a global vision and aim to provide unique experiences of voluntary work placements for young people from around the world.

Lattitude is an organisation with attitude. We are passionately concerned about the world; we are passionately concerned about the issues facing us all, our families and our communities; and we are passionately concerned to make a difference.

Lattitude has a global network of placements that spans 17 countries for British volunteers and includes projects in conservation, caring, community, camps and outdoor, medical, sports coaching, teaching, and language assisting. Current destinations include Canada, Argentina, Ecuador, Mexico, Brazil, Ghana, Malawi, Tanzania, South Africa, Australia, China, Fiji, Japan, New Zealand, Vietnam, Vanuatu and India.

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