

## THINKING ABOUT A GAP YEAR?

### Gap Year Programs and Resources: Questions and Topics to Consider

Exploring the websites on the attached list will reveal a wide variety of opportunities for spending a gap year. The following questions and topics to consider are intended to help you evaluate the organizations and programs found through these websites.

- Is there a website Mission Statement? Check Home Page or About Us. What are they offering you?
- What is the history of the organization and its founders? Find out about the backgrounds of the staff, guides, and instructors.
- Where are they located?
- How long has this organization or program existed? A year is often posted somewhere on the site, but if not, ask.
- Is the organization non-profit or for-profit? Typically “.org” is non-profit and “.com” is for profit, but this is not always so. If it is not clear, ask. Beware of sites (often for profit) that dazzle you with what they offer, but provide little information about who they are and their objectives.
- Does the organization or program have university partners or other affiliations that lend credibility, support, or grant college credit? If so, who are the partners?
- Do you want to spend you Gap Year in the US or in a foreign country? Some organizations offer programs only in the US, others only in foreign countries, some include both choices.
- Do you want an academic program? A scientific research expedition? A semester at sea? A foreign language program? A cross-cultural home stay? An environmental, outdoors, or physically active program? A volunteer job? A job internship? A summer escape? A humanitarian aid mission? Opportunities exist for almost any combination of these activities and more.
- Gap “year” opportunities exist for almost any length of time to fit your preferences, from one to numerous weeks, from on semester to a full year. Some allow you to extend your stay.
- Does the website have testimonials from former students describing their experience on this program? Or, does the organization allow you to contact former students to ask about their experience? Find out how it touched their lives.
- What are the program fees, and what does it include? Room? Board? Medical insurance? Books? Transportation? Incidentals?
- Is each component priced separately so you can compare the overall cost to similar programs run by other organizations?
- Do they warn about unforeseen circumstances and additional expenses?

- Is there an application fee?
- Is there a payment schedule? A cancellation policy?
- Is a deposit required, and is it refundable?
- Are there eligibility requirements (age, grade point average, language, etc.)?
- Is an interview required for admission? By telephone, okay?
- Can you earn college credits through this program? Find out the specifics of transferring the credits, and costs, if any.
- Is financial aid offered? Find out the specifics.
- Do they offer pre-departure training? Post program debriefing?
- Is there an alumni association? Or, are there domestic or foreign program chapters for former students to mingle and network?
- What kind of support is offered during the course of the program? Is there a (domestic or international) on-site office or local support where you will be living? Is there supervision and how much?
- How does the organization or program distinguish itself from other similar programs? Why sign on with this one?
- Look for FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) on the website for further information and questions that you had not thought to ask.

For an article titled “The Possibilities of the Gap Year” (July 7, 2006), in the “Chronicle of Higher Education,” written by Holly Bull, founder of the Center for Interim Programs, go here: [www.interimprograms.com/chronicle.doc](http://www.interimprograms.com/chronicle.doc)

William Fitzsimmons, the Dean of Admission at Harvard, has written about why Harvard recommends postponing entrance to college for a year, in fact even proposes it in their letter of admission to students. Find this article: “Time Out or Burn Out for the Next Generation”(2000, revised 2006) here:  
[http://www.admissions.college.harvard.edu/prospective/applying/time\\_off/index.html](http://www.admissions.college.harvard.edu/prospective/applying/time_off/index.html)

Fred Hargadon, former Princeton Dean of Admissions, has said he would reserve up to one quarter of the places in each entering freshman class for students who do not come to college directly from high school. (Source: Gap Year Edge website.)

Sources: Taking a Gap Year, Susan Griffin  
 Palo Alto High School Gap Year files  
 Sarah Lindsay, UC Berkeley 2007, “Thinking About a Gap Year?”

# GAP YEAR RESOURCES

## Books

Taking a Gap Year - Susan Griffin

The Gap Advantage – Karl Haigler and Rae Nelson

Taking Time Off - Colin Hall and Ron Lieber

Lonely Planet The Gap Year Book - Joe Bindloss , Charlotte Hindle ,  
and Andrew Dean Nystrom

## Organizations

### Community Service and Volunteering – US

AmeriCorps – [www.americorps.org](http://www.americorps.org)

City Year – [www.cityyear.org](http://www.cityyear.org)

Habitat for Humanity – US and International – [www.habitat.org](http://www.habitat.org)

The Student Conservation Association – [www.thesca.org](http://www.thesca.org)

World Volunteer Web – [www.worldvolunteerweb.org](http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org)

### Community Service and Volunteering – International

#### General Sites

International Volunteer Programs Association – [www.volunteerinternational.org](http://www.volunteerinternational.org)

World Volunteer Web – [www.worldvolunteerweb.org](http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org)

#### Specific Sites

African Gap Year – [www.africangapyear.com](http://www.africangapyear.com)

AFS Intercultural Programs, Inc. – [www.afs.org](http://www.afs.org)

Alliance Abroad Group – [www.allianceabroad.com](http://www.allianceabroad.com)

AmeriSpan – [www.amerispan.com](http://www.amerispan.com)

Amigos de las Americas – [www.amigoslink.org](http://www.amigoslink.org)

Blue Ventures – [www.blueventures.org](http://www.blueventures.org)

Cross-Cultural Solutions – [www.crossculturalsolutions.org](http://www.crossculturalsolutions.org)

Global Citizens Network – [www.globalcitizens.org](http://www.globalcitizens.org)

International Cultural Youth Exchange - [www.icye.org](http://www.icye.org)

Madventurer – [www.madventurer.com](http://www.madventurer.com)

United Planet – [www.unitedplanet.org](http://www.unitedplanet.org)

Volunteers for Peace – [www.vfp.org](http://www.vfp.org)

### Studying – US

National Outdoors Leadership School – [www.nols.edu](http://www.nols.edu)

Sea Education Association – [www.sea.edu](http://www.sea.edu)

Tom Brown, Jr's Tracker School - [www.trackerschool.com](http://www.trackerschool.com)

Woolman Semester – [www.woolman.org](http://www.woolman.org)

### Studying - International

AmeriSpan – [www.amerispan.com](http://www.amerispan.com)

Bridges Study Abroad - [www.bridgesstudyabroad.com](http://www.bridgesstudyabroad.com)

British American Educational Foundation – [www.baef.org](http://www.baef.org)

CESA Languages Abroad – [www.cesalanguages.com](http://www.cesalanguages.com)

Costa Rica Language School – [www.costaricalanguageschool.com](http://www.costaricalanguageschool.com)

CIEE – Council on International Education Exchange – [www.ceii.org](http://www.ceii.org)

Global Education Solutions – [www.gowithcea.com](http://www.gowithcea.com)

Global Quest - [www.gquest.org](http://www.gquest.org)

The Experiment in International Living – [www.usexperiment.org](http://www.usexperiment.org)

LEAP Now – Lifelong Education Alternatives and Programs – [www.leapnow.org](http://www.leapnow.org)

Oxford Tutorial College – [www.oasp.ac.uk](http://www.oasp.ac.uk)

Semester at Sea – [www.semesteratsea.com](http://www.semesteratsea.com)

Sojourns Abroad – [www.sojournsabroad.org](http://www.sojournsabroad.org)  
The World Smart Leadership Program – [www.upwithpeople.org](http://www.upwithpeople.org)  
Young Judaea – [www.youngjudaea.org](http://www.youngjudaea.org)  
Youth for Understanding – [www.yfu-usa.org](http://www.yfu-usa.org)

### **Exploring and Traveling – US**

National Park Service – [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)  
Outward Bound – [www.outwardbound.com](http://www.outwardbound.com)

### **Exploring and Traveling – International**

Audubon Expedition Institute – [www.lesley.edu/gsass/audobon/gapyear](http://www.lesley.edu/gsass/audobon/gapyear)  
BSES Expeditions – [www.bses.org.uk](http://www.bses.org.uk)  
Class Afloat – [www.classafloat.com](http://www.classafloat.com)  
Earthwatch Institute – [www.earthwatch.org](http://www.earthwatch.org)  
Madventurer – [www.madventurer.com](http://www.madventurer.com)  
Where There Be Dragons – [www.wheretherebedragons.com](http://www.wheretherebedragons.com)

### **Working and Interning – US**

#### **Databases and Listings of Internships and Jobs**

JobMonkey – [www.jobmonkey.com](http://www.jobmonkey.com)  
Monster – [www.monster.com](http://www.monster.com)  
Politixgroup – [www.politixgroup.com](http://www.politixgroup.com)  
Rising Star Internships – [www.rsinternships.com](http://www.rsinternships.com)  
Young Politicians of America – [www.ypa.org](http://www.ypa.org)

#### **Programs**

Dynamy Internship Year – [www.dynamy.org](http://www.dynamy.org)  
Group Workcamps Foundation – [www.groupworkcamps.com](http://www.groupworkcamps.com)  
NASCAR Diversity Internship Program – [www.diversityinternships.com](http://www.diversityinternships.com)  
PGA Tour Internship Program - [www.pgatour.com/info/company/internships](http://www.pgatour.com/info/company/internships)

### **Working and Interning – International**

#### **General Resource**

Transitions Abroad – [www.transitionsabroad.com](http://www.transitionsabroad.com)

#### **Other Resources**

AmeriSpan – [www.amerispan.org](http://www.amerispan.org)  
BUNAC – [www.bunac.org](http://www.bunac.org)  
Foundation for Sustainable Development – [www.fsdinternational.org](http://www.fsdinternational.org)  
Go Abroad - [www.goabroad.com](http://www.goabroad.com)  
Institute for Cultural Ecology – [www.cultural-ecology.org](http://www.cultural-ecology.org)  
Interexchange – [www.interexchange.org](http://www.interexchange.org)  
Travellers Worldwide – [www.travellersworldwide.com](http://www.travellersworldwide.com)

### **Consultants and Counseling Service**

The Center for Interim Programs, LLC - [www.interimprograms.com](http://www.interimprograms.com)  
Taking Off – [www.takingoff.net](http://www.takingoff.net)  
Time Out Associates – [www.timeoutassociates.com](http://www.timeoutassociates.com)  
Dynamy Internship Year – [www.dynamy.org](http://www.dynamy.org)

### **Traveling and Housing**

Council on Standards for International Educational Travel - [www.csiet.org](http://www.csiet.org)  
Hostelling International – [www.hihostels.com](http://www.hihostels.com)  
International Student Exchange ID Card – [www.isecard.com](http://www.isecard.com)  
Student Travel Agency – [www.statravel.com](http://www.statravel.com)

### **Fund Raising**

Rotary International – [www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org)  
WorldTeach – [www.worldteach.org](http://www.worldteach.org)

# Advice and Resources for setting up your own Gap Year

(by Sam Bull – Executive Director of LEAPNOW – [www.leapnow.org](http://www.leapnow.org))

With a little work on the part of students and their parents, and with the help of the amazing amount of information available on the Internet, it is now quite easy to set up your own “time on.” This sheet is put together to give you tips and resources.

## Primary reasons to take a “Gap Year:”

1. Take a break from one way of learning (in rows under fluorescent lights listening to someone talk in a classroom) before doing another four years of classroom work. A chance to break the educational trance that tells us that education is something that happens “to” us, rather than through us.
2. Find a valid and personal reason to be in college – beyond the fact that “everyone else is doing it.”
3. To do something real rather than contrived – and to do something developmentally appropriate for ages 17-19 years.

A common parental worry is that “After taking time off, my child won’t want to go back to college.” Our organization, LEAPNOW, and our sister organization have worked with over 3500 students in the past 25 years, and almost all of them return to college. Most find a good reason to be there, understand that it is valuable to them to be there, and almost all have a much stronger understanding that they are learning for their own benefit, rather than because it is something that the rest of the herd is doing. Those who don’t return to college have usually found something “juicier” to do!

Don’t get too hung up on college credit. There is such value in your son or daughter having time when they can listen within, rather than to continual demands from outside themselves. Though our culture doesn’t value it, there is value in wandering and having leisurely experiences in other environments. The plant can be fertile without constantly having to bear fruit. We are much more likely to find our true north, our life purpose, when given time, space and encouragement to listen to our hearts and follow their promptings. One of the most helpful things that a parent can say is that “it’s natural to be confused at age 18, 19, 20....”

## Important questions to answer when thinking about “time on:”

- **How much time is available to you?** A summer? A semester? A full year?
- **How much money do you have available to you?** Include airfare, spending \$\$, & activities.
- **Do you want to travel with a group or alone?** Or some combination of the two? For students who aren’t used to traveling it can be very helpful to take a hybrid approach – start with a semester or summer of organized group travel, then do one or two three-month internships in the second part of your time on. Such an academic year off might look like this: Sept – December : Travel with an organized group Christmas break: Home for the holidays – ground and re-load Jan – March 3-month volunteer stint somewhere April – June 3-month internship, or two months and a month of travel.
- **Do you want a lot of structure or less structure?** It is a good idea to start with more structure, then as the year progresses, increase initiative required & decrease structure.
- **Do you want to do a variety of things or just one thing?**

- **Do you need to build in time to work to make money?**
- **Do you want to include time to be a tourist or to wander?**
- **What do you want to be doing? What do you want to accomplish?**

It works well to **structure “time on” in 3-month blocks** – particularly if you want to save money. Three months is usually the minimum amount of time that you need to give in order to get room and board from an organization – enough time for you to be useful to them. The more time you can give, the more likely you are to receive room and board from an organization.

If you aren't willing to do the work needed to set up your own “time on,” there are organizations dedicated to setting up structured “time on” for you for a fee. They may charge you per placement, or a flat fee for a set period of time. Their experience can give you a sense of security and they may be able to save you money by helping you find situations that pay or give room and board in exchange for work. See the Resources section below for a list of organizations.

**Give particular attention to transitions.** You are most vulnerable when in transition. Pay extra to have someone meet you at the airport you fly into. Make sure you have a backup plan – such as a hotel near the airport to check into if you miss your connection.

To save money, you can do the following:

- Stay in this hemisphere – to keep airfare costs down. String a series of internships together in a region to keep airfares to a minimum. Find people who can donate frequent flyer miles, or use a low cost air service such as Airhitch – [www.airhitch.org](http://www.airhitch.org).
- Work in the areas of social service, teaching, agriculture, environmental work, construction, outdoor and manual work, work with wildlife, or hotel work. These all tend to be situations that can offer room or room and food in exchange for your labor.
- Consider working where you can legally work for pay – in the U.S., the UK, Australia.
- Set up an internship or volunteer stint through a foreign-based volunteer placement agency – they will generally charge much less than a US-based organization.

One way to get oriented and grounded in a country is to start with a period of language study. Plan on two weeks and up if you are brushing up a language, a month or longer of intensive study if you need to gain enough proficiency to get around comfortably. Language schools usually can set up stays with host families, and often can set up internships for you.

**Do your due diligence.** Make sure you can get names and contact information of others who have worked with the organization that you want to work with – then call or email them about the support they received. There is no better source of information than someone like you who went before.

### **Key Resources:**

[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) - US State Dept website. Information about visas, passports, travel advisories,

[www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html](http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html) CIA World Factbook. Background information about each country.

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) Centers for Disease Control Immunization and health information for every region of the world.

[www.hostels.com](http://www.hostels.com) World Wide Youth Hostel Guide

[www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com) Great travel website and series of guidebooks for budget travelers.

[www.goabroad.com](http://www.goabroad.com) Excellent resource for volunteering, studying abroad, work positions, teaching, internships, and much more.

[www.umich.edu/~icenter/swt/study/studyabroad1.html](http://www.umich.edu/~icenter/swt/study/studyabroad1.html) Study and work abroad resources

[www.transitionsabroad.com](http://www.transitionsabroad.com) Website chock full of travel, study and work abroad resources.

[www.idealists.org](http://www.idealists.org) Searchable database of worldwide internship opportunities

[www.gapadvice.org](http://www.gapadvice.org) Independent British website for do-it-yourselfers

[www.wiserearth.org](http://www.wiserearth.org) Website with info about 100,000+ non-profits all over the planet.

### **Organizations that set up Gap Year Experiences:**

[www.leapnow.org](http://www.leapnow.org) LEAPNOW: Transforming Education. LEAPYear program – an alternative accredited first year of college combining 3-month group travel in India or South America, a 3 month individual internship, and two months on retreat in the U.S. to learn conscious living skills, do rites of passage, and that facilitate a conscious and powerful transition into adulthood – see attached flyer.

[www.carpediemeducation.org](http://www.carpediemeducation.org) Carpe Diem International Education. 3-month group semesters in Central & South America, India, Africa and Australia/New Zealand/Fiji. Year-long programs that combine group travel with individual internships and college credit.

[www.interimprograms.com](http://www.interimprograms.com) Center for INTERIM Programs. Organization that can take you in hand and set up every aspect of a gap year. A pioneer in the gap year field – started in 1980. One flat fee and you can use their service for life!

[www.timeoutadventures.org](http://www.timeoutadventures.org) Time Out Adventures. David Denman's organization. Based in Sausalito. In business since 1985.

### **A few volunteer organizations to start with – explore the WWW for more programs:**

**WWOOF - World-Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms.** [www.wwooof.org](http://www.wwooof.org) A worldwide network of organic farms that take short-term volunteers in exchange for room and board. Many countries throughout the world have their own network.

**Volunteers for Peace:** [www.vfp.org](http://www.vfp.org) Low-cost voluntary workcamps throughout the world.

**BUNAC:** [www.bunac.org.uk](http://www.bunac.org.uk) BUNAC offers flexible 5 week to 2 year work and travel programs to Canada, the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Britain and South Africa and volunteering/teaching placements. Open 18 year olds and over in the UK, the USA and Ireland.

**Country-based conservation organizations:** These include Conservation Volunteers Association ([www.conservationvolunteers.com.au](http://www.conservationvolunteers.com.au)), British Trust for Conservation Volunteers ([www.btcv.org.uk](http://www.btcv.org.uk)), and AmeriCorps ([www.americorps.org](http://www.americorps.org)) and conservation corps within the U.S ([www.nascc.org](http://www.nascc.org)).



# LEAPYEAR 2008

*The most unique year of college on Earth.*

Devoted to inner and outer exploration and growth.

3 months of group study & travel in India or South America.

3 month solo internship anywhere in the world.



Developing integrity, emotional literacy, conscious community and a powerful vision for your life.

7 weeks of retreats in the U.S.

Formal rites of passage into adulthood.

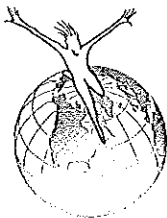
*"...a journey to new places in the physical world can encourage a journey within to places where that mind has not been before." - Laurens van der Post*

LEAPYEAR gives study abroad, college credit, group travel, individual internships, & transformative teachings all in one program. It's a way for young adults to get what they need to make a graceful & powerful transition into creative, independent adulthood. LEAPYEAR provides a full palette of physical, mental, social, spiritual & cultural challenges.

**First Semester in India or South America:** Each participant chooses between the two programs. The group in South America will immerse themselves in culture through studying Spanish, volunteering with local organizations, and exploring the Patagonian Andes with Gauchos. India participants do service work, study yoga, learn meditation, trek in the Himalayas, and study Hindi or the Tibetan language.

**Second Semester:** Students travel to one of over one thousand internships in 126 countries. Students teach in schools in Asia, Africa or Latin America, apprentice with artists and craftspeople throughout the world, learn Chinese and Kung Fu in China, rescue and rehabilitated wildlife in Africa, South America, Europe and Asia, train in outdoor recreation leadership in the U.S. and New Zealand, work at the UN in Geneva, and much, much more.

**US-based retreats and a formal Rite of Passage:** 7 weeks are spent at the LEAPNOW campus in California with a curriculum focused on emotional literacy, practical work skills, simple skills for self-knowledge and a dramatic Rite of Passage involving the student's parents.



**LEAPNOW**  
Transforming Education

[www.leapnow.org](http://www.leapnow.org)

(888) 424-LEAP

*"Be the change that you wish to see in the world." -Mahatma*