



WHY TAKE A GAP YEAR?

BECAUSE THE RESEARCH SAYS YOU SHOULD

HERE ARE THE MOST COMMON REASONS WHY STUDENTS CONSIDER TAKING A GAP YEAR:

- To get hands-on life experience
- In search of relief from the pressures of high school
- To find out more about themselves
- To gain language fluency via cultural immersion
- To clarify personal interests and possibly hone in on a course of studies or career path to pursue
- To gain exposure to different worldviews
- To practice professional and personal development skills through experience
- To slow down and find time for personal reflection
- To adventure in the mountains, open spaces, and wilderness
- To learn about service and/or apprentice with a problem in the world of personal importance
- To build meaningful (and offline) friendship and relationships
- To try something new, daring, and challenging

HERE ARE MORE REASONS, BASED ON THE LATEST RESEARCH, WHY YOU SHOULD CONSIDER TAKING THE LEAP WITH A GAP YEAR OR SEMESTER ABROAD EXPERIENCE...

- Research shows that students who take a Gap Year graduate with higher GPAs than their peers and are more satisfied with their careers. This advantage held when controlling for socioeconomic background or academic performance in high school. Clagett, 2011. See: http://thechoice.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/12/27/clagett-gap-year/?_r=0
- 98% of colleges and universities accept deferrals for planned Gap Years. In fact, Harvard, Princeton, University of North Carolina, Colorado College (to name a few) encourage it because students enter more focused, mature, and passionate.
- A majority of students now take five or more years to complete their college educations, while a majority of Gap Year students graduate in four years. If you think a Gap Year is expensive, try six years of college tuition.
- Gap Years are serious endeavors and, in our experience, it's often the most ambitious, curious, and motivated students that are called to them. A high quality Gap Year program is holistic and experiential; students learn about place and global issues, but more significantly they gain clarity on who they are, what they believe in, and what they're capable of achieving.
- More than 90% of students who do a structured Gap Year program enroll in university within one year of their time-off. When researchers tried to identify what major factors distinguished facilitated programs from unstructured time-off, they discovered that a significant homestay experience in another culture and excellent mentorship were two factors critical to making the Gap Year a transformative experience.

*MANY MORE INTERESTING GAP YEAR FACTS CAN BE FOUND AT:

WWW.GAPYEARASSOCIATION.ORG/DATA-BENEFITS.PHP

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

The best way to learn more about Gap Year programs is to connect with other students who've done them. If you'd like to speak to any of our alumni personally, please give us a call and we'll put you in touch with some! In the meantime, here are a few student quotes from past Dragons Gap Year students.

"My semester with Dragons in Indonesia ignited a passion for environmental and social justice causing me to choose my specific majors and minors at school. It gave me so much direction for who I want to be. Even three years later, I think about my homestays, instructors, and friends from the trip all the time."

-CRISSY McCARTHY, INDONESIA SEMESTER

"The Ladakhi guides, the Buddhist monks and nuns, my language teacher, my host family—all these friendships opened my eyes to how diverse the world can be and how many lifestyles one might find to suit them."

-CHARLIE SANTOS, INDIA SEMESTER

"I am leaving with a foundation on how to travel, learn, expand my worldview, and connect with people on a deeper level."

-GRACE POWELL, SOUTH AMERICA SEMESTER

"This will be the most profound experience of your life. It will be educational, exciting, beautiful, challenging, deep, and raw. The hardest moments will teach you just as much as, if not more than, the magical ones."

-CLAIRE LINDSAY, AFRICA SEMESTER

"My biggest goal was to leave the trip more present, curious, and inspired. I came alive on this trip. I am excited to continue to push myself when I return home."

-EL WILLIAMS, SOUTH AMERICA SEMESTER

HOW TO TAKE A GAP YEAR:

1. CONSIDER APPLYING TO COLLEGE FIRST. Most students prepare for college admissions as usual. When admitted, they then request a deferral, which 98% of colleges will grant if presented with legitimate Gap Year plans.
2. PLAN AHEAD WITH CLEAR GOALS. What do you want to learn? How do you want to be challenged? Spend some time sorting out your motivations as the more you invest in a vision for your Gap Year, the more confident you (and your family) will feel in your plans. Plus, the stage of dreaming and anticipation is fun!
3. GO ALONE OR GO WITH A GROUP? Do both. Educational consultants recommend that students start with something more structured in the Fall followed by a more independent experience.. For example, Michael Gellman spent the fall on Dragons Central America Semester. As a Dragons student, Michael learned to construct composting toilets while working with a Guatemala-based community organization. He stayed in Central America after his three-month Dragons program—where he spent four months applying his new skills to other community projects.
4. PREPARE TO MAKE THE INVESTMENT. A Gap Year can be a significant investment, but is well worth the cost. Investing in a Gap Year allows students to start college with greater focus and a stronger idea of what they want to achieve. This can help them connect their studies to potential career paths. Think of this year between high school and college as a bridge, not a gap.
5. DO YOUR RESEARCH. Compare and assess Gap Year programs based on safety, access to meaningful experiences, and the quality of mentorship. Ensure that your experience is with others who share your values and who are committed to the well-being of participants, but also to the well-being of local communities. You can visit Dragons Blog for a full list of questions that we recommend students ask when researching different Gap Year programs: www.wheretherebedragons.com/news/questions-ask-researching-gap-year-summer-abroad-programs