

“Mind the Gap” says the voice as the doors open on the Tube train on the London Underground; and for just a minute I want share the benefit of a Gap Year, or - in acknowledgement of the cuts as a result of the Spending Review - even a gap couple of months.

My younger daughter has just returned from a couple of months working in Northern rural Ghana; an hour’s journey from the nearest internet connection - even 5 miles away from the nearest electrical power socket - all quite demanding on a teenager, lasting two months without instant technology!

She was primarily, along with another Dutch volunteer, teaching in a little school in a tiny Ghanaian village. But she was also one who was doing so much of the learning. Learning from another vastly different culture, & language & food; learning independence of travel & finances & decision making.

She researched this project herself, the travel & health issues; the teaching aids, and the little gifts she wanted to take. She planned her own solo tourist trip (before returning home) with particular care; managing to safari in the savannah, and camp out in the rainforest jungle; to swim under waterfalls and even touched crocodiles. Quite some trip for a just 18yr-old.

She came back a changed person; and yet the same person. She had grown up; or rather, as the Bible puts it, grown more fully in to the full stature of who the Creator had created her to be. Filled in some gaps, actually.

These gap trips are something of a family tradition; older sister managed solo trips to Japan and NornIron (as we now call Northern Ireland) before university. Their mum, my wife, had a trip helping run a summer camp in the States; and I had not one, not two, but 3 gap years earlier in my career, one working in India, another playing keyboards in a band playing in schools. As a family together, we had a three-month gap job-exchange to NZ ten years ago that was a formative influence on all four of us. We have all grown, individually, and together, through these gap experiences here and abroad.

Perhaps if your life has taken a bit of turn with family or economic changes of circumstances recently, this maybe the ideal time for you to think of doing something a bit different, challenging, stretching; that could help others, but also, particularly, help you to grow into the full stature of who you also could be.

“Mind the Gap”? I don’t mind if I do!

Link to Laura’s trip blog: http://j.mp/LC_Ghana