



Amy Broughton joined Raleigh's ten week spring expedition to India and believes that the skills gained whilst she was away have helped her pursue a career in law.

I had attended a couple of gap year fairs whilst at school and had always been impressed with how Raleigh set up their gap year schemes. One thing that was particularly impressive was the particular destinations that Raleigh offers, such as Borneo, Costa Rica and Nicaragua and also India.

Raleigh seemed like an excellent opportunity for me to travel on my own within a secure environment, with the opportunity to make friends to do further travelling with after the Raleigh experience. Raleigh offers the opportunity for personal development within its expeditions and I was most attracted to the fact that on each project we each had a day as leader, something I found particularly rewarding.

From my gap year I wanted to see a completely different culture, and by joining Raleigh's expedition to India I was certainly offered this opportunity. I also wanted to push myself out of my comfort zone and challenge myself, which Raleigh also allowed. Travelling has always been a desire of mine however I didn't want to just see India through the eyes of a tourist. I wanted to contribute to the country and leave a positive mark on its infrastructure. As a result, I also wanted to see areas that other tourists don't get to see or experience.

Raleigh has an extremely good reputation; having spoken to friends from school all of them expressed how it was a well run and enjoyable experience. To be honest, having been on a Raleigh expedition I think it would be hard to find anyone that had not had a good experience with Raleigh! The expedition was well organised offering the opportunity to experience India in the form of three different areas; community, adventure and environmental; this offered the chance for my gap year to be filled with diversity. The 200km trek was something I had never had the opportunity to accomplish before and although at times it was tough, it turned out to be one of my favourite experiences.

To raise the funds for my expedition, I worked part-time at a doctor's surgery as a receptionist and saved the majority of funds myself. However I also received donations from family and friends. **I feel that the process of working to save money for Raleigh will be very rewarding in a future legal career. I found that it takes determination and consistency to reach any goal, whether that be in raising enough funds to go on a Raleigh expedition or a legal case and I now feel these are skills that I can transfer into legal practise.**

One project on expedition that I found particularly rewarding was the 200km trek through Kerala and the Western Ghats. When I first put on my backpack when heading to the airport I wondered how on earth I was going to get up the mountain let alone finish a 200 km trek! However, I discovered that the trek was not simply a physical challenge; along the way we saw outstanding areas of beauty with incredible sunrises and sunsets. Along the route our group had to set up camp every evening, taking it in turns to cook, wash up and do the communications for the evening. As we travelled, *chai* and *parota* stops offered a fantastic opportunity to interact with the Indian community. Overall, the kindness and friendliness of the Indian people shone through, especially when the families who owned the campsites cooked for all of us.

It was this particular project that I felt I really learnt new skills. It may sound cheesy but one thing I learnt was that teamwork is essential to any group of people. When I injured myself and it was incredibly painful to walk, there was always someone there willing to offer

encouragement and support. In turn if I ever felt someone was struggling it was essential to offer support whether it be by chatting away to pass the time or an occasional game of 20 questions. **The challenge of the trek also led me to realise that I am a much more determined person than I thought and that faced with a challenge I can step up if needed and I feel these are skills that will be essential not only when I start my GDL but also in a working environment.**

One of my best moments of expedition was on the community project. This was based in a village called Huskeraadi and we had been digging trenches on the local farmer's fields to stop rainwater destroying his crops. Every so often the Raleigh fieldbase vehicle would arrive from field base with the tuck shop and news from home. This particular time everyone in our group decided to put on a sports day by the reservoir to entertain our visitors. It was probably my favourite day of the project as everyone pulled together as a team to put on a three legged race, obstacle course and 100 metre sprint and we also made a fantastic picnic with groceries from the local town. It was a day that showed just how well we had pulled together as a team and it was also just a day for us to enjoy ourselves and relax after all the digging.

The most challenging moment on expedition was the 2nd day of the trek when we had to climb the second biggest peak outside of the Himalayas. It was an extremely tough and long day having only done a short 5km trek the day before and so my fitness was not yet up to standard. It was difficult to keep my motivation up as at each rise in the land there was yet another steep climb. However I surprised myself by finding ways to get myself up that peak even when at times all I wanted to do was sit down and never get up again. It may have taken me longer than other people but I eventually reached the top of the peak and realised that the struggle had been worth it when I saw the incredible view! **I now feel having conquered this challenge I can now face any challenge by taking a step back, assessing the situation and finding a way to conquer it.**

Overall, Raleigh offered me a chance to challenge myself and not only learn new skills but also to be comfortable when using them. **As a result of having to take on the role of leader on a number of days throughout the expedition I was able to really analyse and improve the way I lead groups of people. When I started I was unsure how to take on the role however by the end of the 10 weeks I learnt that communication was essential to any leader and also how important the skill of listening was in any leadership role; skills that I feel are essential between a solicitor and a client.** I also learnt how to deal with a diverse group of people learning that everyone is different and as a result everyone deals with situations in contrasting way. Therefore allowances have to be made for people to allow them to deal with this situation and thrive.

Raleigh has certainly allowed me to gain the skills that I feel will aid me in future law applications. **Within the role of leader I feel much more comfortable, so much so that I now thoroughly enjoy the experience. There has been nothing better than Raleigh to develop my position in a team environment which I feel is essential in the practise of law.** Generally, I am now much more focused and determined in the route I want to take in my life having seen a more deprived society I wish to make sure I make the most out of my life and future legal career.

I have become more determined and confident of the track I want to take in life and I feel this is something that I will be able to communicate to future employers. I feel that I am now a much more self-confident and independent person who can conquer any challenge placed in front of me and deal with it appropriately.