



Holly Dunlop is joining the India Autumn 2009 expedition this October after receiving the Raleigh Graduate Bursary Award for volunteering overseas.

My Dad was the one to notice the Graduate Award being introduced in his paper and cut out the article for me. I read more about it on Raleigh's website and thought it sounded really exciting and rewarding - though the application form seemed daunting at first. I assumed it would be very popular and I wasn't confident I was the experienced trekker type that Raleigh may be looking for.

However, I happened to be working with a girl named Gemma who had already applied and I knew that if she got through and I heard all her stories on her return, I would regret never even having tried. Gemma's off to Costa Rica and Nicaragua this week - so success all round!!

I graduated from De Montfort University this summer and felt pretty unsure about what to do next, but was glad of the freedom to have some time to think about it. I hadn't spent time applying for graduate jobs in my final year, as I wanted to focus my time either working hard in the library or making the most of my time left as a student (mainly in the S.U!). The only option I considered once I had actually graduated was that of getting a job.

In July, I earned a place on a week-long 'Summer School' for graduates in my field, which introduced me to some great contacts in the Marketing industry - however, given the current climate, there were few jobs being handed out at the time. I persevered with applications and eventually I did have some success with gaining first and second interviews. In the meantime, I had gained enough experience in application forms and the confidence to apply for Raleigh and found out I had a place around the same time.

Whilst at Uni, I had thought about travelling and discussed it with a group of friends, but eventually the idea of earning in a job or learning on a Masters degree got the better of everyone. I had settled on applying to jobs until I gained a position I was happy with, but then Raleigh came along...

I have never ventured out of Europe, so I am keen to experience the alternative climates, cultures, landscapes, foods and wildlife that India has to offer. I aim to put into practice (or more like test to the max!), some of the skills I developed whilst at Uni, including keeping organised, staying positive, working in groups and sometimes taking the lead. I'd also quite like to bring back an elephant, but I'm not sure on the rules about that.

I like the idea of travelling to other parts of the world in the future and I am keen to see how I cope away from home comforts and luxuries for so long. This fairly structured, group expedition feels like a safe and guided way to experience volunteering and trekking overseas for the first time.

Raleigh

I am keen to meet lots of new faces who I have plenty in common with and can gel with straight away. Though I am just as keen to spend time with people very different to me in a range of ways, to work together with them and learn about their lives and share details about mine.

I have briefly looked at a range of similar organisations over the past few years but have always been overwhelmed by all the fantastic, but epic, stories and pictures on the websites. These would eventually lead me to thinking it was more suited to the Action Men of the world, rather than the Barbies...

Raleigh was the only organisation that I think made the effort to get through to me that if I really wanted to do something like this, I would be able to; regardless of the experience that I had. Added to this, all communications I have had with them since have left me feeling more and more confident about what I had to offer on an expedition and in return, what I'd get out of it.

One of the biggest ways in which this Raleigh expedition, plus any further travelling I decide to do because of this, will improve my employability is that I will feel completely focused on wanting to get a job when I start looking again. When interviewed about 'where I see myself in 5 years time', I shan't need to bluff the fact that I'll most likely be on a gap year that I wish I'd have taken earlier.

There are skills which I anticipate to use over the next 10 weeks that I have never had the opportunity to develop before. These include physical aspects of pushing myself to go the extra mile, when I'd probably rather give up. Also, working with people that I may not get on that well with to start with is something I would usually be able to find a way of getting out of. I expect my employability to improve through being in situations that I have avoided before, yet need to confront and find the skills to deal with as a necessity.

The logo for Raleigh, featuring the word "Raleigh" in a bold, green, sans-serif font. The letter "R" is significantly larger than the other letters and is positioned to the left of the rest of the word. The letters "a", "l", "e", "i", "g", "h" are stacked vertically on top of the "R".