

Tape script

Speaker One

I knew I'd be short of money if didn't work before going to university, so I decided not to jet around the globe, and found a job in the nearest town instead. I had to live in because of early shifts, and only realized on about day two it meant I couldn't keep up my tennis – which was a blow, because I was a very keen player. But I got over it in the end, which just goes to show nothing's that important. Anyway, I was having too much fun with the rest of the staff to fret about it – I wonder if they're all still there? The worst part of the job was when guests complained, which they frequently did!

Speaker Two

Well, I took a gap year because I thought I hadn't seen enough of the world. I considered doing an overland trek across the Sahara, or helping out somewhere as a volunteer. Then I found a remote village in Kenya where they needed my skills – they're all football-mad there – and a Nairobi businessman agreed to pay me a living wage. I settled in OK, although I never got the hang of the language, and that year gave me some serious thinking time. I realized I didn't want to complete my course back home even though I'd already spent quite a lot of money and time on it. It's all good experience anyway.

Speaker Three

The whole thing was a disaster from start to finish. I'd had a sort of feeling it might turn out badly. We didn't have the right training or equipment, and because there was no office back-up, we couldn't get news forwarded to our families. And the leader – well, I wonder how experienced he really was. He couldn't speak the porters' language at all. You could say our pioneering spirit was crushed by the time we got back to base camp! On the other hand, we did bond as a group, and I see a couple of them regularly and have done ever since that time. So perhaps it wasn't *all* bad.

Speaker Four

I know some agencies will organize your gap year and sort out, say, working for a charity, but I'd much rather do what I did – just go off on the spur of the moment and see where you end up. It was absolutely brilliant, even though it took all the money I'd saved up for it – the fare and the hotels and eating in restaurants were to blame for that. At least I know I can cope on my own now and that's a new thing for me. Sadly, I haven't managed to keep up with the people I met in all those different cultures – I'm not surprised though – that's life.

Speaker Five

I was told to stick to the script whether it was in French, German or Spanish. People don't even ask many questions – it got quite boring after a while, because I felt there wasn't any real communication between me and them. And if it's raining, you get wet just hopping on and off the coach. I didn't have high hopes before I started, although it certainly was a good way of earning some much-needed cash, and there were some nice people at head office, but in the end I did wonder if I couldn't have found something a bit more inspiring. How often do people get a year off in their lifetime?