

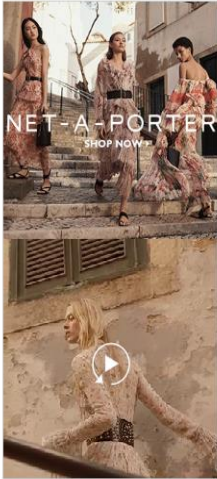
WHY YOU SHOULD TAKE AN ADULT GAP YEAR

Paradise is wasted on the young - much better to be older, wiser and richer when you go on your life-changing round-the-world trip. Francisca Kellett meets the five-star dropouts

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Did you have a gap year? Did you schlep around **India** wearing bad clothes and an ill-advised bindi on your forehead, finding yoga and weed and not much else?

Perhaps you went to **Australia** and drank your way around the Red Continent with a succession of Todds, Shanes and Jasons, returning with a terrific tan and an irritating habit of making every sentence sound like a question?

Or maybe you didn't. Maybe you were too studious/ambitious/anxious to fritter away a year lugging around your entire belongings on your back, eating horrible food and pretending that *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* totally, like, changed your life. But it's not too late. A new breed of smart professionals is choosing to take some time off - four weeks, perhaps, or three months, or even six - to go travelling.

Why? Well, why not? Some do it simply because they can. It's an adventure, yes, but hotels can be five star, villas epic, staff on hand throughout, and if some of the journey happens to be by **private jet**, then that's just fine.



Nihiwatu, on Sumba, Indonesia

Tânia Araújo

'We have lots of City types, hedgefunders, lawyers,' says Henrietta Loyd of top-end travel operator **Cazenove+Loyd**. They are often on gardening leave between big jobs and have the money (if not the time), to check out the places they've always wanted to see, with none of the hassle of actual backpacking. Short, sharp gap 'years' have seen a huge leap, with clients often heading off alone for a month and then flying their partners and kids out to join them. 'Latin America is a big hit,' says Loyd. 'Peru and Patagonia - for the adventure, fishing, hiking, riding.' How much do they spend? '£15k, £50k, £80k... how long is a piece of string?' Others choose that particular, precious window of time when children are at the right age to 'really gain something from the experience', says Philippe Brown of **Brown+ Hudson**, 'but before they become too independent.' He calls them 'legacy' trips - not necessarily with high-end extravagance at every turn, but travels that are more about spending quality time together. Like the **one** Charlotte and James Studholme went on, taking their three boys romping around South America. Hugo Burnand and family did something similar: 'We bonded like glue. We'd do it all again in an instant,' he tells me.

'It's definitely a trend,' agrees George Morgan-Grenville of **Red Savannah**. His clients are frequently between jobs and **send** to take their children with them - along with a nanny and a tutor, mind you (the intense experience of travelling as a family is not necessarily the right time to start doing all the food-mashing/bathtime-wrangling/ algebra-teaching).

South-East Asia and Australia are popular, Morgan-Grenville says, and families usually base themselves in villas and go on short excursions to explore. 'They often want culture and adventure, and a degree of philanthropy', to expose their children to a world they may not be familiar with. A visit to surf-and eco-haven Nihiwatu on the island of Sumba in Indonesia is a favourite; there, families can engage meaningfully with the local community - without scrimping **on** pool villas and daily massages. Or for proper do-gooding, grown-up gappers can join projects such as those organised by **Global Vision International (GVI)**. Prada and Chanel model Sigrid Agren, for example, spent a month last year teaching English to young novice monks in Laos. Not your average fortnight necking cocktails on a sunlounger.

Then there are those who feel **the** need to recombobulate, like Caroline Marten, who wanted to escape the grief of losing her parents and the strain of doing up her family's estate, Ingoldisthorpe Hall (**mountamelia.com**), in Norfolk, with a family journey to India. She decided to share a place she'd been **to** many times before - which takes us to yet another demographic: well-travelled people whose children have left for university and who would like to return to their original backpacking stomping grounds (perhaps minus the weed and literary pretensions). Greaves India, for example, organises mammoth, top-end specialist India tours for those who want to go back again and again, often for months at a time.

Others still take advantage of attractive round-the-world air deals, like Rufus and Jingo Palamountain, who jetted off around the world in first class. Frances Geoghegan of **Cleveland Collection** sends clients on similar four-to-five-week global gambols - they usually spend £20,000 to £25,000 each.

So why wait? Go on, off you go - you're older, wiser, better off. Now's the time to do it, and without the bindis and backpacks. Todds, Shanes and Jasons, though, are optional.