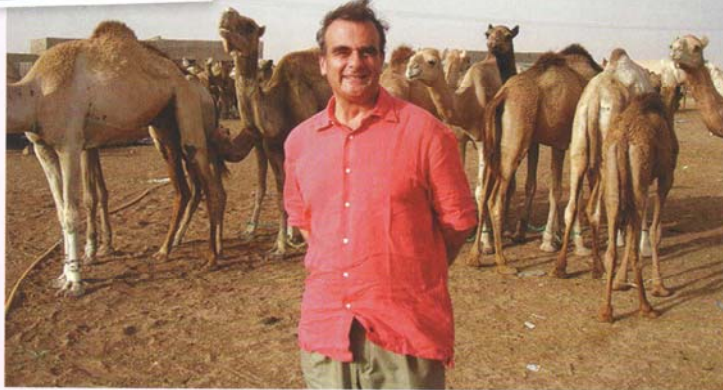




SMALL BUSINESS DIRECTORS AND ENTREPRENEURS MIND THE GAP



More than half of the 60% increase in older volunteers leaving on gap years in developing countries are British small business directors and entrepreneurs, according to Projects Abroad, the world's leading commercial volunteer service organisation. Over 500,000 small businesses have ceased trading since the credit crunch began, which has led to the increased interest in gap-year programmes.

"As a result of the economic crisis, we have picked up significant numbers of people from the small business sector and entrepreneurs opting for gap years," says Dr Peter Slowe, Founder of Projects Abroad. "Rather than Career Breakers, as we used to call them, this group are Career Escapers. They are getting involved in ready-made enterprise schemes ranging from an organic farm in India, a football academy in Ghana, an IT company in Sri Lanka and a web-design company in Mexico. Some are going for one month, some for a year and even 18 months in countries as far flung as Peru, Mongolia, China and Bolivia.

"The other half of the jump in older volunteers are redundant professionals using their final pay cheques from the finance,

DR PETER SLOWE MEETS LORD MANDELSON, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR BUSINESS, ENTERPRISE AND REGULATORY REFORM; DR PETER SLOWE

telecommunications or media sectors to fund their trips."

For some time the volunteering industry has been moving away from straight aid schemes towards constructive volunteering and enterprise volunteering is the evolution of that general trend, according to Dr Slowe. Others are choosing conservation and environment projects, human rights, law and even English as a Second Language. These projects are being assisted by practical on-the-ground support by British businesspeople in terms of marketing, seed finance, accounting and distribution.

Projects Abroad was the first volunteer organisation to join hands with Global Entrepreneurship Week, which promoted enterprise in 77 countries worldwide when it launched in November 2008. It recently launched Partnership in Enterprise to further encourage entrepreneurs to take up enterprise gap years as an option, whether through Projects Abroad or other commercial operators of charitable organisations such as the Volunteer Service Abroad.

Experts predict opportunities for UK tourism industry

Experts from Bournemouth University's International Centre for Tourism & Hospitality Research (ICTHR) are predicting major opportunities for the UK Tourism industry, thanks to the cost of UK holidays being dramatically cheaper than many international destinations. Add to this the fact that people from overseas will become keener to holiday in the UK due to the declining strength of the pound, and it's clear that where there is crisis, there is also opportunity as it signals major economic benefits for the UK and the opportunity of much-needed jobs being generated.

Professor John Fletcher, Director of the ICTHR said: "The short-term picture for UK tourism is looking very good as the weak pound makes overseas travel expensive for UK citizens and trips to the UK relatively cheap for international visitors. As well as giving the tourism industry a much needed boost this will generate additional income and employment opportunities."

Professor Fletcher adds: "There is a window of opportunity for the tourism industry to set out its stall, showing the quality of its products and services, so that as we move further into the 21st century, with the combined forces of higher energy costs and the pressures of climate change, the UK tourism industry can look forward to a strong, robust future."

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