



# going places

WITH GEOGRAPHY

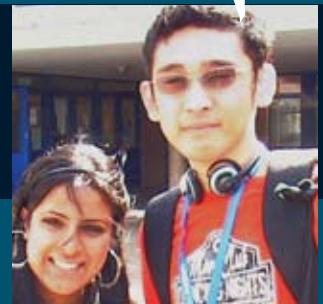
# Welcome to Going places with geography

This booklet is produced by the RGS-IBG Geography Ambassador Project. We hope that the information and case studies provided will encourage you to make geography part of your progression and career plans.

A graduate geographer recently visited my class as part of the ambassador scheme. Like the case studies in this booklet she gave us a real glimpse into the exciting world of possibilities open to geographers.

As a parent I want to be sure that the subject my child chooses will help their employability.

We volunteer as geography ambassadors. We visit schools to talk about geography, our career aspirations and the skills that geography has helped us to develop.



I have really enjoyed geography at GCSE. Now I am looking for ideas and inspiration for how I could use it in a career.

The Royal Geographical Society with IBG is the learned society and professional body for geography. It supports the teaching and enjoyment of geography at all levels from classroom to university, from enthusiast to specialist.



Are you fascinated by the natural environment? Do you enjoy being out in the field studying landforms and researching the processes that have formed them? Are you a problem solver?

Are you interested in where you live, how places are changing and who makes the decisions about the environment we live in?

Are you interested in the way the economy works?

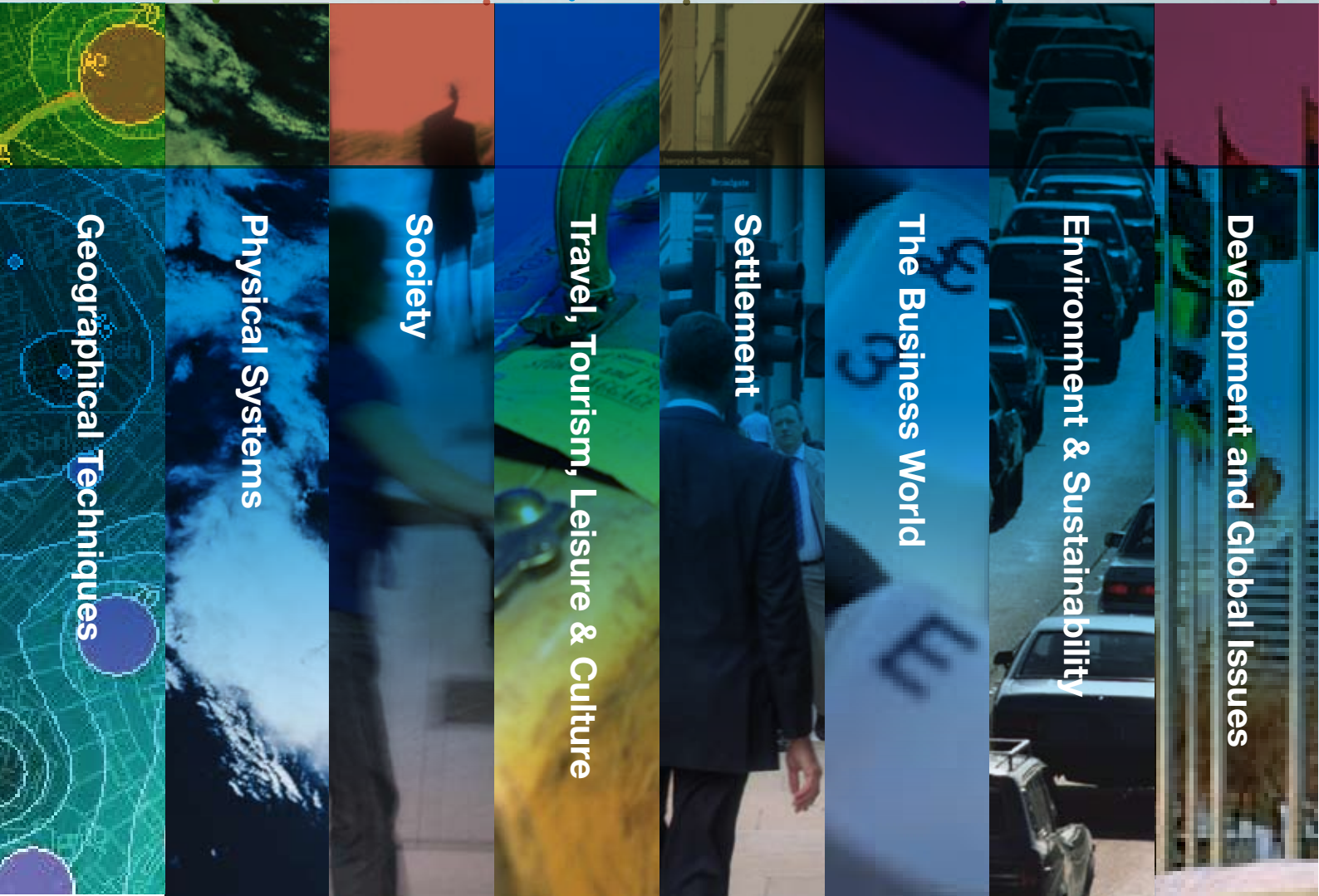
Do you enjoy map work and using software such as Google Earth™?

Fascinated by the world of opportunities out there? Would you like a career which combines a good job with plenty of opportunities to travel and explore new places at home and abroad?

Do you have a genuine interest in global affairs and a real passion to make a difference?

Do you want to work with people and affect their everyday lives?

Do you care about the future of the planet? Are you interested in green issues?



Geographical Techniques

Physical Systems

Society

Travel, Tourism, Leisure & Culture

Settlement

The Business World

Environment & Sustainability

Development and Global Issues

# Environment & Sustainability

Do you care about the future of the planet?  
Are you interested in green issues?

## Environment and Sustainability

At a time of growing concern about climate change, shrinking energy resources and desire for sustainable solutions geography is one of the most relevant courses you could choose to study. Often the top media story of the day, the environment has moved centre stage to the heart of local, national and international affairs.

Geographers are well placed to contribute to the scientific and political debate about the causes, implications and solutions in this area. Perhaps more than any other subject specialists they have the ability to oversee and manage projects in this area – this comes from the breadth of the subject and the global perspective that geographers have.

The following Environment and sustainability jobs are popular with geographers

- Environmental campaign organiser
- Civil servant for DEFRA (Department for the environment, food and rural affairs)
- Conservation worker
- Environmental health officer
- Architect or urban planner for sustainable projects
- Environmental engineer
- Landscape architecture
- Pollution analyst
- Cycle route planner
- Recycling officer
- Forestry manager
- SSSI warden
- Environmental consultant
- Environmental impact officer for oil or quarrying company



Matt, Director of Carbon Limited at the RSA



### How I got here

There was always a good atmosphere in geography at school - a relaxed and open minded approach to geography encouraged me. My interest in climate change started with glacial and mountains landscapes. Learning about retreating glaciers got me interested in the warming climate and how this reflects

human activity- climate change is very much a social issue.

After A Levels I took a geography degree and worked in publishing before coming here to the Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures & Commerce.

### What my job entails

I am Director of Carbon Limited, we are concerned with policy innovations around engaging individuals and citizens in tackling climate change. Our project is developing ideas for introducing a personal carbon allocation, which would give each of us an incentive to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I have to do quite a bit of persuading in my job, making people take climate change seriously. I argue for public engagement through lectures and speeches, radio interviews and writing.

### How I use my geographical skills

Geography is a multidisciplinary subject- a really interesting mix across arts and science. It has given me the freedom to move around within the subject and follow my interests. A range of problem solving skills plus an understanding of what the issue looks like from a range of perspectives has helped me present the climate change issue, through different media to different audiences.

### What I love about geography

It gives me the ability to debate and discuss in a knowledgeable way around contemporary issues like climate change. Geography has given me a mandate to do anything!



# Settlement

## Settlement

Geographers look at how and why the areas we live in develop and change. They understand the interactions and flows between the regional, national and international.

Both private and public sector employers are found in this sector and range in size from small consulting companies or housing charities to huge construction companies or government departments. Opportunities exist for openings in both urban and rural environments, contributing to projects from broad based to the specialised and from administrative support roles to managerial and strategic posts.

Besides evidence of a keen interest and understanding of issues affecting settlement, successful employees should demonstrate skills in communicating their ideas to a range of audiences, problem solving, computer and IT, good spatial awareness and graphical skills, report writing, synthesis and analysis.

In this category we are mainly profiling jobs based in the UK and Europe. For careers in this field based elsewhere see the section called 'Development and Global Issues'.

The following settlement jobs are popular with geographers

- **Planner**
- **Housing manager**
- **Surveyor**
- **Urban regeneration officer**
- **Local government services**
- **Estate agent**
- **Town planner**
- **Transport officer**
- **Environmental engineer**
- **Construction or property lawyer**
- **Environmental consultant**
- **Conservation officer**



**Are you interested in where you live, how places are changing and who makes the decisions about the environment we live in?**



**Kate, Chartered Surveyor**

### How I got here

At A Level I studied Geography, English, Psychology and German. Prior to University I already had an interest in property, but I wanted to be flexible and keep my options open so I thought geography would be a good choice as it was always an area that I was interested in. I studied geography at Cambridge and on leaving I got a job with my current employer, Allsop LLP. I did a masters degree for two years and qualified to become a Member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

### What my job entails

In my work in the residential evaluation department I see a broad range of properties.

I go out and value them, inspect the properties and write up a report which usually goes to a bank. Usually we value for loan security so if someone is re-mortgaging or purchasing a new property we advise the bank. With surveying you are out and about, not tied to your desk! You get to see a wide variety of property all over the country and no two days are the same.

### How I use my geographical skills

I have quite specialist skills in relation to property and the built environment coming from a human geography background. But more generally, in the world of business, I think geography is considered to be a very good subject to have studied because you have a broad range of skills and that appeals to employers.

### What I love about geography

Geography is such an important part of our understanding of the world and that's why I think it's important that people chose to study it. I always enjoyed it at school because you are seeing and doing different things in the world around you and that's what inspired me to do geography at University.



# SOCIETY

Do you want to work with people and affect their everyday lives?



## Society

Geographers' broad skills and appreciation of the inter-connections between people and communities equip them with a sound base with which to enter these areas of work. From curating in a national museum, to organising a media campaign for Oxfam, geography graduates are ready for anything.

Whilst the majority of these posts will be in the public sector or charities, there are also plenty of opportunities in PR, HR and market research which are huge employment areas in the private sector too.

People skills are obviously important in this sector and those suited to many of the roles in this area might identify themselves as being 'community minded'. Employers seek tolerant, empathetic individuals who enjoy contributing to the work

of a team. Strong organisational and administrative skills would help when working in a variety of settings. As you move up the career ladder to managerial and strategic posts it will be necessary to show skills of enterprise in terms of selling your ideas and also perhaps securing funding for new projects.

The following society jobs are popular with geographers

- Teacher
- Social worker
- Youth and community worker
- Emergency services manager
- FE or university lecturer
- Museum explainer
- Exhibition designer and curator
- Health education campaigner
- Advertising executive
- Human resources officer
- Campaign organiser
- Market research analyst
- Public policy research
- Marketing
- PR (Public Relations) Officer



Hayley, Director of Camden Voluntary Unit

### How I got here

I did A Levels in geography, biology and economics & business studies. I was really interested in geography which is why I went on to Study it at Brunel University. One of the modules in my geography course, was called "Geography in the Community" it was about taking what you've learnt in theory out into the real world, and I volunteered as part of my dissertation research. I set up a community garden in a local school, and part of my research was finding out how people felt part of the community, also how the garden might help them in teaching parts of the national curriculum. That got me interested in the volunteer sector and I now work for Volunteer Centre Camden, which is a small voluntary sector organisation.

### What my job entails

I am the director of Volunteer Centre Camden, which means I manage all of our staff and some of our volunteers. I'm responsible for inter-agency work, I meet with organisations such as Social Services and Youth Services and talk to them about how to promote volunteering and involve volunteers in their organisations. We have over 400 different volunteering options with organisations throughout Camden and we aim to find something for everyone depending on what they want to do. Volunteer placements range from the traditional charity shop roles to working with homeless people and supporting refugees.

### How I use my geographical skills

In my university course we did lots of social research methods because I was studying human geography. This involved going out and talking to people, so people skills really – understanding different people and different issues. At university we explored the geographies of marginalised groups and communities and that really helped me understand the different issues different people face; for my job I think it's really important to have that kind of awareness.

### What I love about geography

Geography is about people and places, about finding out how different people live their lives and I find this fascinating.



## Geographical Techniques

Geographical information systems give geographers the electronic tools to show a range of data on maps to analyse and help us understand changing patterns in both the natural and human landscape. With increasing domestic and commercial applications of electronic mapping software and GPS gadgets, people are becoming more aware of the potential of this sector. There are a wide range of interesting jobs in the UK and abroad.

At university and in subsequent employment you will need to be able to demonstrate good interpersonal skills, communication and teamwork. In addition a keen interest in cartography and good all round graphical and technical skills, you will need an interest in data handling and interpretation, fine attention to detail and the ability to self motivate and carry out independent research and decision making.

Today, GIS is routinely used by a wide variety of public and private-sector employers ranging from specialised large employers such as the Ordnance Survey, through to small independent GIS companies with just a few employees. Plentiful opportunities exist with national government departments (The Civil Service), the military, energy and water suppliers, retail companies and local councils.

The following areas are popular choices for geographers with a Geographical Techniques specialism

- GIS specialist (Geographical Information Systems)
- Census data specialist
- Location analyst
- Cartographer
- Surveyor
- Military GIS specialist
- Remote sensing analyst
- Geomatics software designer
- CAD technician
- Aerial surveyor



# Geographical Techniques



Do you enjoy map work and using software such as Google Earth™?

George, Hurricane and Earthquake Risk Analyst

### How I got here

I studied sciences and geography at A Level. I went to university in Edinburgh where I studied Zoology. My work has taken me to various parts of the world including periods in Morocco, Ethiopia (above) and in the UK at London Zoo. I am about to start a PhD in geography and zoology.

### What my job entails

In my job my company provides information to insurance companies about potential risks to people and property in areas prone to hurricane and earthquake damage. Using GIS and spatial information risk management companies supply insurers with specialist information regarding the likely risk of insuring a certain area or resource. I use my spatial knowledge and skills of analysis to understand habitat and migration patterns of animal populations.

### How I use my geographical skills

Spatial mapping, GIS, data analysis and remote sensing are all crucial – they allow me to make a bridge with my work on animal populations. Using GIS and satellite tracking helped me to write a report on wolf populations in Ethiopia. The PhD will be a new challenge requiring more fieldwork and IT skills.

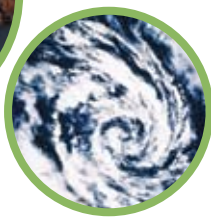
### What I love about geography

Geography armed me with the right knowledge and tools to get an understanding of the world outside of your own environment, so important in a rapidly changing and global world.





# Physical Systems



## Physical systems

Are you fascinated by the natural environment? Do you enjoy being out in the field studying landforms and researching the processes that have formed them? Are you a problem solver?

Geographers help us explain and understand the world's weather, oceans, biospheres and landscapes and the way our environment is shaped by wind, water, ice and tectonic activity. To work in this area, many geography graduates will have undertaken research and postgraduate qualifications such as an MA or PhD as a start to their career. This higher education helps with the higher level skills in analysis, report writing and ICT required in this career area.

Many of the roles listed below involve explaining a complex physical process to non specialists so the ability to explain technical solutions in an accessible way would be valuable. Managing an environmental project would require that you are always able to see the bigger picture whilst keeping an eye on the small details too.

- Coastal engineer
- Soil conservationist
- Hydrologist
- Earth scientist
- Weather forecaster
- Hazard prediction and management
- Flood protection manager
- Pollution analyst
- Risk assessor
- Weather presenter
- Water supply coordinator



Lucy, Weather Forecaster and Presenter, Sky News

Are you fascinated by the natural environment? Do you enjoy being out in the field studying landforms and researching the processes that have formed them? Are you a problem solver?

## How I got here

After taking A Levels in geography, art and general studies I studied geography and earth sciences for three years at Brunel University, West London. As part of my BSc degree course I took a module called applied geography in which I undertook work experience at the Press Association weather centre in London. I wrote press releases for both radio and newspaper in this placement and was pleased to accept a permanent position there when I had completed my degree. I received in-house training in meteorology and four years experience after which I joined Sky News in 2006.

## What my job entails

My main responsibility is presenting complex weather information in a succinct and easy to understand way for TV. Using the meteorological data from satellite and weather sensors, I then present three minutes of this at the end of the news bulletin. Tight deadlines, clear presentation and working with the small team at Sky are the key aspects of my job.

## How I use my geographical skills

A strong physical geographical understanding is required to

understand weather information. Specialising in meteorology, my expertise lies in interpreting local and global weather systems and explaining this in 'plain English' to a given audience. I use the 'soft' skills, such as clear communication, and team work to complete the role.

## What I love about geography

I love the changing patterns of geography; no day is ever the same and geography keeps me on my toes. In the future I hope to work in Australia or the US where their more dramatic weather conditions will offer further challenges.



# Travel, Tourism, Leisure & Culture

## Travel, Tourism, Leisure & Culture

Take geography with you as you lead a group of holiday makers on an expedition, market London to New Yorkers for the 2012 games or research and write travel literature for a guide book company.

It may be that you work in this sector for a short time after graduating, such as spending a year teaching English in China combined with a chance for your own adventure.

If you love travel and experiencing different cultures then this sector may appeal to you. You will need to be hard working, outgoing and adaptable and it is essential that you are able to be customer focused and not phased by facing new challenges- the ability to think on your feet could prove very useful.

- Expedition leader
- Travel agent
- Exhibitions coordinator
- Leisure centre management
- Heritage site manager
- Eco Tour guide
- Tourist information officer
- Visit (London) guide
- Civil servant for DCMS (Dept for culture, media, sport)
- Travel writer
- TV researcher
- Holiday representative
- Cultural arts officer 2012
- TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) teach

**Fascinated by the world of opportunities out there? Would you like a career which combines a good job with plenty of opportunities to travel and explore new places at home and abroad?**



Tom, Film Producer & Director

### How I got here

At school I took geography A Level alongside English and history. I went on to study geography at university and focused quite a bit on development studies, particularly in Africa. I wasn't really sure until my final year at university what was going to be next, but I thought about television and documentary film-making as a way of getting to some interesting places! I was lucky enough to be selected to join the BBC's graduate trainee scheme based in Cardiff, and after doing that for a year I went freelancing and have worked for different independent production companies ever since.

### What my job entails

I produce documentaries for the BBC, Channel Four, National Geographic and the Discovery Channel. Travel is a big draw and I get to some unusual places. The research side allows you to talk to some pretty interesting people and find out about subjects that you'd never find out about otherwise. The creative process of making the film is something I really enjoy. My most recent trip was to the Congo and I spent some time with the Baka Pygmies deep in the swamp forest. This was for a Channel Four series about traditional medicine and health in remote parts of the world. It's not an easy field to get into, because a lot of people want to do it, but the most standard method is to approach a production company or the BBC and to do some fairly basic jobs to start with learn the ropes. Another route would be to go to a production company in a field in which you are very experienced or knowledgeable and try to start immediately as a researcher.

### How I use my geographical skills

Because of the breadth of the subject, geography gives you a huge range of skills. Understanding the real world - how it works and how different elements of the world relate to each other is all highly relevant in my work.

### What I love about geography

It's all about the real world!



Are you interested in the way the economy works?

# The Business World



## The Business World

Geography graduates are equipped with an excellent range of transferable skills which explains why this sector of business, law and finance is attracted to geography graduates. Team workers, self starters, highly IT literate, good data interpretation and research skills- these are all attributes where geographers 'tick the box'. Detail and accuracy and a professional attitude are all nurtured during an undergraduate geography degree.

Invariably the broad subject knowledge helps too. Working as a financial risk analyst in a bank for example, a geographer would benefit from their understanding of borders, peace and security issues, distribution of resources and factors affecting economic growth in various parts of the world. Research skills developed at university would then enable them to access and synthese further information as required.

Although posts exist at all levels in local councils and national government departments the majority of posts in this field are in the private sector. The majority of these posts will be concentrated in larger urban centres. In 2007 for example 45% of UK vacancies in graduate finance positions were in London.

To succeed in this sector you need to be able to work under pressure and enjoy the drive and focus of meeting targets. As with many sectors you will probably undertake further training and even take additional qualifications relating to the specific area where you work. In some roles such as sales and consultancy, skills of persuasion and negotiation will be especially valuable.

The following business jobs are popular with geographers

- **Financial risk assessor**
- **Banker**
- **Accountant**
- **Insurance**
- **Civil servant for DTI (Department for Trade and Industry)**
- **Transport and logistics manager**
- **Retail management**
- **Management consultant**
- **Commercial sales manager**
- **Lawyer**
- **Economic adviser and analyst**
- **Buyer**
- **Location analyst**

Chris, National Account Manager, Groupe Danone



## How I got here

I've always been fascinated with how the world works. At school, geography was a very dynamic subject which really captured my attention. When it came to university I wanted to study a subject that I really enjoyed so I chose to read geography and geology at Brunel University. I always knew that I wanted to work in the business world after my degree.

## What my job entails

I'm a national account manager for Danone Waters, which is part of Group Danone. A lot of people know Danone in terms of the dairy side, but the company encompasses water as well, with Evian and Volvic being stalwarts of our brand portfolio. I'm a national account manager and I look after our customers in the convenience sector, such as Spa, which is the biggest convenience retailer on the high street.

## How I use my geographical skills

I think geographers can draw upon a wide range of skills. For me geography was often about stepping back and problem solving, and these skills are really useful in a commercial environment.

Seasonality is an important aspect of our business, as the weather impacts a lot on our sales. We have lots of facilities for weather forecasting so a geographical background can be useful in this context.

## What I love about geography

With regard to both the human and physical world I always like to know 'why' and I think geography really helps you to answer that question.



# Development and Global Issues

## Development and Global Issues

The challenges of global peace and security, economic and social development, human rights, humanitarian issues and international law offer a demanding yet fulfilling career area for geographers. In our increasingly interconnected world this sector is a core employment area for geographers.

As geography is so broad and inter-related, project management makes good use of the wide ranging skills and knowledge. Ability or enthusiasm for languages, good report writing, skills in presentation and communication will be developed as part of a university course. For some posts you would need to command confidence and be outgoing with good networking skills. For all roles in this field empathy and cultural tolerance plus a desire to embrace new experiences are essential.

The following career areas are popular choices in this sector.

- **Aid worker**
- **Charity fundraiser**
- **Charity Officer**
- **Civil Servant for DFID**
- **Armed forces**
- **HIV education officer**
- **Human rights officer**
- **International charity fundraising**
- **Refugee and asylum adviser**
- **Economic adviser and analyst**
- **United Nations terrorism prevention officer**
- **Diplomat**
- **British council cultural exchange manager**
- **VSO (Voluntary service overseas)**
- **'GAP' project worker**



**Do you have a genuine interest in global affairs and a real passion to make a difference?**

Tania, Civil Servant for DEFRA: UN Strategy Branch

### How I got here

I took geography plus two other subjects at A Level and then studied geography at UCL where I became interested in political and environmental geography. After graduating I worked as a Personal Assistant for a director of a national charity, before applying to DEFRA.

### What my job entails

I am involved in all aspects of the government's international work with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Sustainable Development Programme. I help organise meetings, write speeches and prepare briefings; working closely with ministers of the government. The UNSDP is based in New York and the UNEP is in Nairobi, so I have recently been abroad at high level policy meetings as part of my job. I have also worked on European Union sustainable development strategy in Brussels.

### How I use my geographical skills

Geography has given me a great background when working with other nations - knowing something about global trade and global issues is an advantage when negotiating policy with the EU or UN. I feel that I have really used my geography degree to help with my work, and am now also studying part time for a masters degree at the geography department at Kings College, London. The course is called 'Environment, Politics and Globalisation', which is perfect for the job I am doing now.

### What I love about geography

I love the diversity of Geography. To illustrate this - my three best friends are from university. We all studied geography together. We are each following very different career paths but all using our geography - one in social exclusion work, one in refugee and asylum work and one in education. Different dreams, different paths, same core subject.





“There is no question that the understanding and skills that come from a study of geography are highly valued by employers”

**DARREL SHEINMAN,**  
Managing Director,  
Sheinman Exploration Ltd.  
Founder and Board Director  
of the award winning  
company Polestar- a global  
GIS satellite tracking  
company.

**FIND OUT MORE** about the amazing variety of places that a career with geography will take you on the ‘ambassadors online’ pages at [www.geographyteachingtoday.org.uk](http://www.geographyteachingtoday.org.uk)

**GET ADVICE** on choosing geography at university level from the RGS-IBG directory of university courses at [www.studygeography.rgs.org](http://www.studygeography.rgs.org)

**BE INSPIRED** by a geography ambassador visiting your school. Contact [ambassadors@rgs.org](mailto:ambassadors@rgs.org) to arrange a visit.

Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)  
1 Kensington Gore  
London SW7 2AR

Tel 020 7591 3000  
Fax 0207 591 3001  
Email [ambassadors@rgs.org](mailto:ambassadors@rgs.org)  
Website [www.rgs.org](http://www.rgs.org)

