

Real Geographers series



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What do you love about geography?

For me, it's the breadth of the discipline – there's something for everyone! I'm interested in everything from glacial environments and geopolitics and love visiting places and being able to appreciate them through a geographer's eyes. I also value the fact that there is always more to know, always more to learn about the world and I find that really exciting.

Why does geography matter in the world?

Geography matters to me personally, because it helps me to begin to understand my place in the world but it's also so much more than this.

It's never been a more important time to be a geographer. There are so many complex local, national and global issues which geographers have a critical role in trying to solve. I don't think there's another discipline which can match the knowledge, skills and different perspectives which we can bring to the table. It's why I believe that my job, and the work of the Geographical Association more broadly, is so crucial.

Why do you think it's important to get students excited about geography as a subject?

Geography is inherently interesting and so I think it's quite easy to get excited about! As well as the knowledge that studying geography gives you, the skills that you develop make geographers highly employable. It's not all about having a career in geography though. Being a geographer means that you are well equipped to make a difference in the world and that's both important and exciting.



What are your most pressing environmental concerns and what environmental issues should we all care about?

This is a really difficult question because there are many pressing environmental concerns and their impacts affect people in different ways.

Climate change is certainly something that we should all care about but it's such an all-encompassing, global issue that it can be difficult for us to know where to start and how to make a difference at an individual scale. That doesn't mean that we shouldn't try though, and so I think it is worth having a look at your lifestyle and seeing what small changes are possible. Whether it's using peat-free compost in the garden or recycled toilet roll, there are things that everyone can do. Not only that, but being an inquisitive geographer means that you are more informed about what the possibilities are.

Where is your favourite destination in the world from the point of view of a geographer?

I think many geographers would say Iceland but I haven't actually visited yet – something I'm planning on doing soon! So I'm going to say Madagascar (with the Lake District a close second). I travelled around Madagascar when I was in my second year of teaching with 18 students and it transformed my understanding of development and poverty, as well as being the most stunning and beautiful environment. I think it's very easy to fall into the trap of seeing places uncritically through the eyes of textbook authors or television programmes and my visit to Madagascar really did give me a different perspective of this place and its people.

Contributor: Rebecca Kitchen, image taken while travelling in Madagascar.





What would you say to students passionate about the world and thinking about taking their geography studies further?

Do it! If you are already passionate about the world then geography is a natural choice as it provides both breadth and depth. Most courses at university can be tailored to your particular interests and needs so that as well as having a broad geographical foundation, you also have the opportunity to focus in depth on aspects that you are particularly interested in. I would also say that as my knowledge, understanding and experience has grown, so has my passion for geography. However, it's also true to say that while having a formal qualification in geography may be the right path for some, for others being a geographer is more about their informal, individual and day-to-day interactions with the world. Taking time to observe your surroundings as you go on a walk, making small changes to your lifestyle to be more sustainable, watching the news and being able to have an informed discussion about what is happening... these are also valuable things that you can do to take your geography further.

What tips do you have for schools, teachers and pupils on being more sustainable / eco-friendly?

I think my top tip would be to educate and inform yourself so that you are able to make the best choices that are right for you. It can be a bit overwhelming as there are so many sources of information but being able to look at things with a critical eye is an invaluable skill. I would also say that it's worth seeking out sources of information and companies who can tell you exactly what impact your actions are having. It's easy to do something because it feels as though it's the right thing to do, but does it actually make a difference?

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