

Student life appeals after redundancy

GOING back to college, volunteering overseas or even jetting off on redundancy-funded 'gap years' are becoming increasingly popular options for workers whose jobs have disappeared.

Last month, university admissions body Ucas reported an eight per cent rise in the number of university applicants, with a 13 per cent increase from those aged over 21. Some business schools say they have seen a 20 per cent rise in applications.

Travel and volunteering companies are also reporting increased interest. Peter Slowe, founder of volunteering organisation Projects Abroad, based in Goring-by-Sea, West Sussex, says he saw a 55 per cent rise in applications in December, many from workers who have been made redundant.

'It's also people who can see the writing on the wall or who are just fed up with the crisis,' he says.

Tom Griffiths, founder of specialist travel firm

By **NIC PATON**

gapyear.com, based in Ipswich, says applications for working holiday visas to Australia are up 29 per cent.

He says: 'The average around-the-world ticket costs £1,300, so if you're getting £3,000 to £5,000 from a redundancy payout that can be good money for travelling.'

Jenny Wickett, 27, from Hereford, was made redundant from her job as a designer with a local packaging and labelling firm just before Christmas and is planning a round-the-world trip.

'They decided they would be able to keep half the staff and were looking for people to take voluntary redundancy,' she says.

With a £3,000 pay-off she hopes to set off to Thailand in April. 'I've had a bit of help from my family and am using some savings I had intended for getting on to the property ladder,' she

says. 'But as it's now almost impossible to get a mortgage and I don't have a job anyway it seemed a good time to use it to go travelling. It would be nice to think that by the time I come back things might have picked up.'

Taking time out should not count against you when you return to the jobs market, says Carl Gileard, chief executive of the Association of Graduate Recruiters.

'Many recruiters like it when people can see things from another perspective. The key is to articulate what you have gained from the experience and how that will help you in the job you are applying for.'

NEW WORLD: Jenny Wickett is using her payoff to travel



Picture: SAM FURLONG

