To Go or Not to Go?
(Definitely Go)

by Eben Lindsey, BCom ’11, MGB ’13

Looking back at the last eight years of my life, my greatest source of passion is clear: travel and exploring new cultures. It’s what inspired me to pursue a Master of Global Business degree; to start a consulting company in Chile; to painstakingly learn Spanish; to spend eight months volunteering in Peru; and to write about travel, in the hope that I might inspire just one other person to step outside his or her comfort zone and click “book” on that airline ticket.

It was exactly such a mouse-click that changed my life eight years ago. I didn’t grow up travelling abroad. In fact, at the age of 19 I had travelled to exactly two countries: Canada and the U.S. When the chance arose to leave the nest for an exchange semester during my BCom, I was apprehensive. As a good business student, I thought about both the real and opportunity cost of living abroad: the cost of airline tickets and passport fees, the lost part-time work opportunities. There were so many reasons not to go—or so I thought.

As I’ve done so many times since, I jumped in with both feet despite my trepidation. Months later, I returned from an exchange semester to Singapore having lived, dined, studied and commuted as a Singaporean. By then, I had witnessed the seemingly never-ending sunsets in Malaysian Borneo, sleepily watched the same sun rise over Angkor Wat in Cambodia, and enjoyed the best curry of my life in Thailand. Most importantly, I could now count many new and incredible people among my friends. It’s not something I’ve so much as considered giving up since. In the past eight years, I’ve visited 23 different countries, spending a good part of my time outside Canada. Volunteering abroad and meeting new people along the way brought me to the current stage of my journey—managing a kitesurfing school in Peru and writing about travel professionally.

If you had told me prior to going abroad for the first time that I would be doing either of these things, I would have laughed you down, but here I am. That’s the beauty of travel. That’s the power of giving it a try, even—or especially—if you’re afraid at first, or don’t see the business sense.

As one friend to another, I’ll let you take it from here. I’m not so presumptuous as to expect that these words alone will change your outlook on life, but I know from experience that travelling will. At the very least you’ll likely discover a new passion. And who knows, you may even discover a new profession!