

# Episode 14 - Why I Choose a Gap Year

📅 Thu, 7/16 12:34PM ⌚ 23:39

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

college, scoops, gap, year, bliss, travel, home, planning, blog, youtube channel, spain, trip, self directed, wanted, sponsor, interested, central america, stay, website, host

## SPEAKERS

Moira McCullough, Beatrice

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**M** Moira McCullough 00:00

Welcome to the College Scoops podcast. I'm your host, Moira McCullough and today we are talking with Beatrice, the creator and designer behind The Blissbean, a wellness blog focused on helping young adults create a more meaningful, intentional, fulfilling life each and every day. Beatrice will also discuss why she chose a gap year.

**B** Beatrice 00:18

You have to trust that you have the power to make the decision that's right for you. And even if that's not what everyone else is doing, just stick to your guns and go through with what you've decided for yourself and make it the best experience that you can.

**M** Moira McCullough 00:41

This is the College Scoops podcast and I'm your host Moira McCullough, we focus on everything college related from the admissions process to where to eat, stay and explore on and run campuses. Our guests include founders, educators, authors and experts in the college space. Join us as these experts share their knowledge experiences and lessons learned to help you have stress free, informative and tasty college journeys. Whether it's your first or last child going to college, or you're just interested in going to a college town for a game or meal, we've got you covered. If you haven't already, please subscribe to the

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Beatrice 02:23

Thank you so much for having me. I'm really excited to be here.



Moira McCullough 02:27

You graduated from high school in 2019. And you said you always knew you wanted to take a gap year your gap year was a self directed gap year and one that you had set intentionally because a you wanted to freelance photography and work on that aspect. You wanted to work on your The Blissbean blog and you wanted to travel. So you're very intentional in terms of what you wanted to do.



Beatrice 02:50

Traveling was something that I wanted to do, but I knew that at any time, I could always spend my time working on my YouTube channel. That was always something thing that could keep me plenty busy. So when I came home and when I had to stay home unexpectedly, I had something else that I was passionate about that kind of moved me in the direction of my goals.



Moira McCullough 03:13

Can you share with us your journey creating the Blissbean,

**B****Beatrice** 03:15

I've had little vlogs on and off since middle school. Like I remember having my little blogger website and sharing craft tutorials and learning HTML and CSS so I could customize it. I didn't start the BuzzFeed until April of 2017. And that was kind of what I started to take blogging more seriously. And then a year later, I started my YouTube channel. I just wanted to like add videos into the content that I was creating. Because up until then I was just doing blog posts. And so it has been a little more than two years now that I've been having my YouTube channel. It started out kind of as a health and wellness blog because throughout my life all the little blogs that I've had are just representation of what I was interested in at the time. So my first vlogs were craft vlogs, because I was a middle schooler, and that was what I was interested in. And then I got really interested in health and wellness. And then I kind of dropped that. And then I realized that my favorite blog posts and videos to make were the ones about like, planning and organization and things like that. After that I really decided to narrow in on like productivity and self improvement and mindfulness and kind of that theme for my YouTube channel. So I was working on it throughout high school and just trying to balance it with my schoolwork, which definitely got very difficult sometimes lots of late nights spent editing, but I stuck with it. And I'm really proud of myself for doing that. Because now sometimes I go back and I look at my numbers when I started. And the growth was just so slow in the beginning for so long. And as I said, it really wasn't until this year that I started to see really big growth across my social media and my YouTube channel and my newsletter. Like, I wouldn't have gotten to this point if I hadn't gotten through that initial really difficult phase of putting in all those hours and not really getting anything out of it. So at this point, I'm really starting to think about it more as a business and something that could evolve into a career. For me, that would be the ultimate goal for me, monetizing my video was working with sponsors, creating digital products. That's kind of my focus. Now,

**M****Moira McCullough** 05:31

Tell me about a digital product like I'm looking right now. And I loved your 11 things you can do right now to be more productive. How do you come up with Do you have a calendar? And do you take feedback from your audience that says, Okay, why don't you create a video on this? Or can you tell us how to do that? Is that how you kind of evolve in terms of offering digital products and services?

**B****Beatrice** 05:54

In terms of figuring out my content, I mean, as would be expected from someone whose YouTube channels like approach productivity channel, I'm super organized about how I

manage all of that. So I have a Trello board where I schedule out all of the different kinds of content that I do. And I plan it out and I have checklists. I think one thing that has helped me to be successful in this and like, stick with it for so long is having those systems in place from the beginning, not from the very beginning. That's something I always tell people is that you can't let that paralyze you from starting, because you learn as you go. But you also have to put in the effort to get organized and learn how to do it right. I do get a lot of video ideas from viewers who will message me like can you make a video about this or about this? And I just added to this big list of content ideas that I have, in terms of the digital product. I had actually put together a 30 day challenge back when I first started vlogging but I barely had an audience then so I made an ebook version of it. And for a few months I had one purchase of it, and it was my teacher who bought it. This one was definitely more successful. So I made some progress, thankfully. But basically, I wanted to expand it into something that would allow me to create passive income, whereas for every video, I do make money from monetizing it or from having a sponsor, but it requires me to make a video every week. And so I wanted something that I could create and put it out there and just like have it as an offering. I also noticed that like, with all the videos that I make, it's just little 10 minute chunks of advice and I wanted something that was more of like a, here are the steps that you need to take to get organized in your life. So this was this year like two months ago, I wrote on a post it note that I wanted to launch it by May 31. And so then I launched it June first, and I just went through all the steps of planning out like how I wanted this course to go building all the videos. Writing all the scripts, designing the workbook, and then planning the promotions for it, and finally launching it.

M

Moira McCullough 08:08

Congratulations. I've used Trello. And that's a great project management tool, and something for content creators to be able to pull everything together off of different platforms.

B

Beatrice 08:20

I actually just finished the redesign of it yesterday. So the design that you're seeing now is super fresh.

M

Moira McCullough 08:28

It is great. So I'm giving you immediate feedback. Work away as a platform you use to find a host and job during your time in Europe. Your first host families responsibilities

included teaching English and bringing their children to school. Can you share a little bit more with us about this experience?

B

Beatrice 08:45

So I stayed with that first host family for about two and a half weeks and I felt like I was just starting to get a hang of everything like of all their weekly routines, and then suddenly it was time to leave. So as a first time Workawer like seeing that some of these families wanted you to stay with them for a month or two months. Seemed like a lot. But I think the time goes by pretty quickly.

M

Moira McCullough 09:10

And then you said it was a couple times that you stayed with a family. Right? So you stayed two times in Spain, and then you were had the opportunity in Germany as well.

B

Beatrice 09:18

It definitely, again, depends on the specific worker that you're doing. There's a setting where you can check to see who's looking for last minute workers, and then everyone else will put in their profile. Like when their availabilities are how far in advance they need you to contact them. I would always say like it never hurts to contact someone too early because then they'll just tell you like, reach back out to us later. And then you can do that. I probably reached out to the first family. Maybe like a month or two in advance. It's really hard to remember at this point, but then the second family it was just very much a coincidence because my host mom knew this other family who also regularly Work Where's with them? And she was saying like, Oh, I have a worker where my work aware and you're working Where could hang out, I planned to be traveling from the middle of November to the middle of February. And I actually came home in the middle of January. That was just because my parents had found some good deals for flights to Florida and they wanted to take a family vacation there figured, might as well come home. You know, when I was telling my host mom about this, she was like, your parents just want you to come home. That's why they did that. And I was like, I'm fine with that. So I came home in the middle of January. And then my plan was to do some planning for my Asia trip, and then leave for that trip shortly after that. And then kind of the news started developing around COVID-19. And like looking back on it, it's funny how naive I was, but I thought that it would just be a couple of weeks thing that it wouldn't be impacting the entire world. It's good that I hadn't really done much planning at all for the Asia trip because as time went on, it just became more and more clear that it wasn't going to be possible. So it was a very

gradual process. It wasn't like suddenly I realized, Oh, I'm not going but it was just like, the probability of me going was going down and down. The entire time, I was keeping myself busy with making YouTube videos. So I never felt like I was just sitting around waiting to find out if I could go on this trip or not. I wanted to do another trip. I had met a friend in Spain who was currently traveling in Central America. So I thought maybe I'll go there. And shortly after I started planning that, my friend had to leave Central America and it was like this whole big situation because he bought a plane ticket, which was cancelled the next day. They didn't refund it. He was stuck in Panama. And so I was like, well, I narrowly have avoided being stuck in Central America. Yeah, I attempted an Asia trip I attempted a central america trip. But neither of those things worked out. I think everything worked out. Okay. In the end.

M

Moira McCullough 12:11

I think things happen for a reason. I know that many of the students who had just left my son just left in the beginning of February to go to Australia. He fortunately had signups for some orientation events. And looking back on it, that was the best thing he ever did, because the fact that he was called home at the end of March, his six month, semester abroad turned into an actual two month of which, you know, three weeks was self directed travel, which, again, you have to be thankful for the opportunities you get. And in some ways, if you're going on a self directed trip, it's now having the knowledge and the infrastructure and the people to call if you were over there and had to get home and how to go about that. You and I were naive together because I just did assumed. I said to my kids, don't worry, it's a flu. It will be over in a month, we'll all be back to normal and how wrong I was.

B

Beatrice 13:08

Yeah, even beyond that I was naive and thinking, Oh, I was so lucky that I took a gap year this year, because I've averted this entire situation. But now it looks like it's continuing like into the next school year. So I definitely didn't miss out on all of it

M

Moira McCullough 13:24

To your peers who are looking at going and doing a gap year, are there any helpful resources or people or programs that you would recommend?

B

Beatrice 13:34

When I was planning I didn't really know about a lot of the scholarships that are out there. I actually did like a collaboration with the gap year association to share some of my gap year experiences on my YouTube channel. And as part of that I shared with my viewers some opportunities for scholarships and I was a little bit jealous of them because I did not know about all of these opportunities that were out there when I was leaving. Definitely looking into scholarships, the gap year Association in general is a good resource for learning a lot about that.

**M** Moira McCullough 14:07

You've run The Blissbean and you wrote an article on gap years do a lot of students reach out to you for advice and help and planning their gap years?

**B** Beatrice 14:15

A lot of people would message me asking, what should I do now that COVID-19 is happening? Like it's very different for students who are planning gap years for this year? And so they were saying, like, I would like to travel or I would like to do this program. But what would happen if it was just cancelled? What would I do? Even if COVID-19 were not happening in future years? I think it's really important to have a couple of ideas for what you would want to do during your gap, your different backup plans.

**M** Moira McCullough 14:44

So I guess the question is What next?

**B** Beatrice 14:46

I decided on IE University in Spain, which was a college that I had been looking at, pretty much since I started looking at colleges. I wanted to study in another country. I was very open to that. So I went to I think the website is called like bachelorsportal. And it helps you to search for bachelors programs that are available worldwide. So I kind of narrowed my search, I knew that since I was taking Spanish at school, that would be really nice to be in a country where I already knew the language. So that narrowed down my options a lot. When I stumbled upon that college, I really liked how focused it was on like, the business aspect of it. Because when I was doing all my college research, a lot of colleges like crossed off because they would have media programs that were more like broadcasting like TV journalism or something like that. And I wasn't interested in that I wasn't interested in like journalism and reporting. I had a pretty clear idea of what it was that I wanted to

do more like media and social media and kind of the business aspect of that. And the program at I University fit that the best out of everything. And so that's where I decided to go. I'll be using Studying communications and digital media. The first two years of the program are in Silvia, which is a smaller city. The entire city is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It's so beautiful. The other two years are in Madrid, which is the business hub of Spain. So that'll be really cool as well.

M

Moira McCullough 16:18

So it's a four year program. Okay, so two years on one campus, and then two years on another. Did you reach out to any students? Do they have an opportunity for prospective students to reach out and ask questions,

B

Beatrice 16:31

I actually did apply to some colleges in the United States, but I was just really leaning towards studying in Spain. So applying in the US was more of like, I will apply and see if I can get like scholarships, because if yes, then it might be a good option to stay. But I think it ended up actually being the best option financially for me to go abroad, which college I think in Europe is generally cheaper. So that worked out nicely. But yeah, so I didn't really do tours for the American colleges because I applied to Boston University, USC, Fordham University. And those are all so far away from where I live in Wisconsin. So it didn't really feel worth the trip. But I did apply to UW Madison, which is where I live. I did go on the tour for that one. In terms of IE university, I did reach out to some students, I had some students reach out to me, because they'd seen my college q&a video, and they messaged me to say like, Oh, I'm studying at IE, I can help you out if you have any questions. So it was nice to get that perspective. And my dad also knew one of the, I think she's a professor there. So I was able to talk to her. They just have a lot of information on their website as well. So even though I didn't visit their campus, they had like this 360 virtual tour, so I feel like I've visited it.

M

Moira McCullough 17:57

Have you heard yet if you're able to leave in August.

B

Beatrice 18:02

It's very up in the air right now. And that's taking up a lot of my brain space right now. So they have been talking about doing like a liquid learning model where it's very adaptable.

They can have some classes online, some in person, they can have people in the classroom and other people joining in via, like video call. There's a lot of like safety protocols for on campus. But like, no one even knows if they'll be able to implement those safety protocols because maybe we'll all have to be at home. Because it's such a big move. Like to move to Spain, such a big deal. I've been really thinking about whether I should just stay at home and do online classes. I've even considered taking a second gap year because there's a lot of reasons why it wouldn't be entirely like a bad thing to do.

M

Moira McCullough 18:53

I think my kids, my kids is are saying the same thing. I think students are sitting there thinking there's something To be said, For in person, and we're all fingers crossed, hoping that it will happen. So if you had any bit of advice for a student who's thinking in high school, I don't know if I want to go to college just yet. What would it be?

B

Beatrice 19:16

I think I kind of have two pieces of advice. So the first one is more specifically for students who are thinking about doing a gap year, just following your own path, I think is really important. So, at least at my high school, I don't think I know anyone else who took a gap year. And so it definitely wasn't like I could talk to someone else at my school and be like, what are you doing for your gap year, I definitely felt quite alone. But you just have to trust that you have the power to make the decision that's right for you. And even if that's not what everyone else is doing, just stick to your guns and go through with what you've decided for yourself and make make it the best experience that you can Then kind of a general piece of advice, not even necessarily about college. But since you were talking about my blog, I feel like I would really encourage students in high school to if they're thinking about starting a blog or a YouTube channel, just go ahead and start it. Because even if you don't end up making it a big YouTube channel, I think it's really powerful in many ways. For one, I got this communications internship with my school district. And in my interview, I showed them my blog, and pretty much as soon as they saw my blog, like I had secured that internship because they saw that I had the initiative to do something like that. And I was already developing and interested in those media skills. It's just really good to have an online presence and start establishing that because when I launched my first 30 day thing and only my teacher bought it, once you have an audience, then you have all these other channels to go down. So like I've been thinking about starting a podcast and Know that if I were to start one today, I would not start at zero listeners, because I've been building an audience who just in general is interested in what I'm doing. And then it also just really allows you to explore your interests. So first, it was a craft blog than it was a wellness blog. And it's okay to not be sure of what you're most interested in the

beginning, but you just have to start and along that journey, you'll figure out what you're most passionate about.

M

Moira McCullough 21:28

You said it in such a way that really resonates with me because I think as somebody who loves to learn, and loves to try different things, as you said, You evolved from the time that you first saw that first ebook to a website that was just redesigned as of yesterday and launch. So it takes somebody who has the courage and the confidence to know that I can do it, and it's gonna change and it's going to grow and lessons learn. There's better ways to be more productive or to change convey your message in a way that resonates with your audience as you continue to grow and the audience grows. Well, thank you so much for joining us today.

B

Beatrice 22:08

Yeah, it was so fun. Thank you so much for having me.

M

Moira McCullough 22:12

Thank you, Beatrice for joining us today. We appreciate you sharing how you plan implemented a self directed gap year for all the students looking to take an intentional gap year to take provides helpful tips on how she went about her plans, her goals and intentions and how she created an itinerary. Always have a plan B as things happen, and it is important to be flexible, adaptable and resilient. As a successful YouTuber and blogger, Beatrice shared her journey with The Blissbean and her brand new website design. You can find all of our show notes and links to the helpful resources mentioned throughout our conversation on our website at [collegescoops.com/podcast](https://collegescoops.com/podcast). You can learn more about Beatrice on her website at [TheBlissbeing.com](https://TheBlissbeing.com) and on Instagram. Please take a couple of minutes to rate review and subscribe to College Scoops. Thank you for listening to our College Scoops podcast. Our entire College Scoops team strives to make the college journey a little bit easier, less stressful, fun and tasty by sharing all the inside scoops we have curated along the way. We would love to hear from you about topics to cover and your ideas and everything college related. Reach out to us at [college.scoops.com](https://college.scoops.com) or follow us on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook.