

[Sign into the Guardian using your Facebook account](#)

theguardian

Michael Palin: geography students hold the key to the world's problems

Geography may have slipped out of the top 10 A-level subjects, but that doesn't change the fact that work done by geographers has global importance, says Michael Palin

Michael Palin
The Guardian, Thursday 18 August 2011 17.42 BST



Michael Palin stepped in to defend the subject of geography after it was announced that it had fallen out of the top 10 most popular A-level subjects.

John Hall, my geography teacher at school inspired me to a lifelong interest in geography and a curiosity about our world which has stayed with me through my life, and through [seven television series](#). Geography is a living, breathing subject, constantly adapting itself to change. It is dynamic and relevant. For me geography is a great adventure with a purpose.

So many of the world's current issues – at a global scale and locally - boil down to geography, and need the geographers of the future to help us understand them. [Global warming](#) as it affects countries and regions, [food](#) and energy security, the degradation of land and soils from over-use and misuse, the spread of disease, the causes and consequences of [migration](#), and the impacts of economic change on places and communities. These are just some of the challenges facing the next generation, which geographers must help solve.

It is a subject that helps young people into work. Many employers prize the knowledge and skills that studying geography can provide and geography in higher education is thriving. Geography students are among those gaining [greatest satisfaction from their studies](#), and geography graduates have a [relatively low level of unemployment](#). It's no wonder there is a growing demand to study the subject at university. This is underlined by the Russell Group of Universities, along with the Minister David Willetts MP, who both [recognise geography as one of the key "facilitating" subjects for entry to degree level study](#).

Although there has been [a small drop in the number of A-level students taking Geography](#) that has been more than made up for by an encouragingly large increase at AS-level. More young people are being exposed to this exciting, valuable and rewarding subject.

• *Michael Palin is President of the [Royal Geographical Society \(with the Institute of British Geographers\)](#)*

More from the Guardian [What's this?](#)

[Prince of Cambridge's parents present him to the world at first photocall](#) 23 Jul 2013

[Google's latest misguided attempt to manage your Gmail is easy to turn off](#) 24 Jul 2013

[Spanish train crash: 78 killed and 130 injured in derailment](#) 25 Jul 2013

[English education policy is based on a nasty little theory](#) 22 Jul 2013

['I'd never held teachers in high regard – but I do now'](#) 20 Jul 2013

More from around the [What's this?](#)

web

[Back to School 2013: Laptops](#) (TechnoBuffalo)

[The Best Tips to Care for Your Hair](#) (Womens Health Base)

[Passing for a Brit - it's all in the pronunciation!](#) (The Times)

[Why Is Google So Afraid Of Paid Content?](#) (Outbrain Blog)

[Detroit In 9 Facts with Pictures](#) (Washington Could Learn A Lot)

Ads by Google

[Hypnotherapy Sydney](#)

Specialising in Stress & Anxiety Relief

[www.solutionsfocusedgroup.com](#)

[Social Anxiety Disorder](#)

Social Phobia, Afraid of People

[www.scaredofpeople.com](#)

[Teen On Teen: Prevail](#)

Advice and support for teenagers. Let's get past your problems.

[www.teenonteen.org](#)

© 2013 Guardian News and Media Limited or its affiliated companies. All rights reserved.