Oh, the places you’ll go…
Travel can be a mixed blessing, as UCL graduate Sally Broom (BSc Human Sciences, 2006) discovered on her gap year in South East Asia in 2007. Her desire to get off the beaten track and discover the heart of a place had been successful in Thailand, but led to an unpleasant experience with border guards in Cambodia. The difference, she realised, was the ‘insider knowledge’ gained by having good contacts in Bangkok. From this, the idea for Tripbod.com, which links curious travellers with trusted locals who can advise them on their journey, was born.

Adventures in entrepreneurship
When Sally returned to UCL to complete her degree, she still intended to pursue a career in law. But having enrolled on a Business Entrepreneurship course, run by Professor Philip Treleavan, she registered for UCL Advances’ London Entrepreneurs’ Challenge. “Sally was different from many other students in that she had a practical, workable concept,” says Philip. “She was also determined and enthusiastic. UCL Advances gave her the support to turn a good idea into a high profit-margin business, one that not only helps Brits abroad but also benefits local communities in more than 50 countries.”

After three months of workshops on topics ranging from assessing an idea to securing funding to maintaining intellectual property rights, Sally launched YourSafePlanet.com, aimed at gap-year students and volunteers. Due to queries from a wider range of potential travellers, YourSafePlanet became Tripbod, which has since linked hundreds of travellers with locals (‘tripbods’) in destinations ranging from Russia to Rwanda. In late 2009 Tripbod was named best new travel website by the Times.

Hitting the big-time
Back home in Cumbria, Sally continued her relationship with UCL Advances. “With UCL’s help, we increased the number of full-time employees and investors, and built a better technical platform with specialised help.”

Now she offers UCL graduates internships as well as mentoring to those who want to start businesses.

In May 2014, TripBod was acquired by internet travel giant TripAdvisor. This exciting next step matches the company’s goals and values. “When TripAdvisor expressed an interest in bringing our community, team and product into their ecosystem, we knew this was the way to go. Anyone can see the fit is perfect,” says Sally, “so we are naturally very excited about the next chapter.”
About UCL
UCL (University College London) was established in 1826 and is ranked as one of the world’s top-ten universities. The university is a modern, outward-looking institution, with more than 4,000 academic and research staff committed to engaging with the major issues of our times. It has a global reach, with 34% of its students coming from outside the UK, from almost 140 countries.

www.ucl.ac.uk

About UCL Advances
UCL Advances, UCL’s centre for entrepreneurship and business interaction, helps anyone who wants to learn about, start or grow a business. Its primary role is to promote a culture of entrepreneurship on campus and engagement with entrepreneurs and small businesses beyond UCL’s boundaries. It works to support start-ups and small businesses across London by helping them to access the technical and business expertise of UCL’s staff and students through a series of programmes to help support ambitious young companies.

UCL Advances is affiliated with UCL Enterprise, which provides UCL’s structures for engaging with business for commercial and societal benefit.

www.ucl.ac.uk/advances
www.ucl.ac.uk/enterprise

About Student Engagement
UCL does more to help students learn about, start or grow a business than any other UK university, giving them the critical skills to get a job or start their own venture. A whole programme of support is available to UCL students, taking them through their entrepreneurial journey.

One of these training programmes is the London Entrepreneurs’ Challenge a workshop programme and business plan competition open to all members of UCL, SOAS, Royal Veterinary College, Birkbeck, and the London Business School that aims to show participants the process of starting a business by helping them do it for themselves. The competition is part of a programme of events designed to enhance UCL’s reputation for entrepreneurship and build deeper relationships between UCL and partner institutions.

londonentrepreneurschallenge.com