



experience quest

Villa Maria Children & Construction Project



Where? Villa Maria del Triunfo, a shanty town on the outskirts of Lima, Peru.

History: Experience Quest has been working in Villa Maria since 1996 and it is our longest running project. The project started with an organisation called CEDRO, which was working to help young people escape the prevalent drugs culture in deprived areas of Lima. Alejandro Menéndez, an outreach worker for CEDRO saw the need for a project that worked with children before they became involved in drugs, or ended up on the streets – a project that could provide alternative activities for young, bored children during their school vacations. This is where Quest came in.

As the years have passed and the project has grown, so have the relationships with the communities themselves. This in turn gives the project greater scope and potential, and we have been able to work alongside the communities to establish where the greatest areas of need are, and how our (and your) support can best be focused. One particular area of need is that of providing adequate housing for some of the more disadvantaged families within the communities. Each community rallies round to give support to the poorest families in the area (generally abandoned single mothers with many children) but of course the amount of support they can provide is limited. As such, alongside organising a programme of games and activities, teams are also involved in the construction of simple homes to replace some of the temporary shacks in the area.

Sustainability: Alejandro and his team work and live in Villa Maria year round, coordinating the house building and continuing the programme of activities at times when volunteers are not in Peru. Along with their time and energy, teams also bring a financial commitment to Villa Maria in the form of volunteer donations to our UK registered charity Quest4Change, that provide short and long term resources (to buy building materials, paints, footballs, skipping ropes, general maintenance, and help to fund the nursery school to name but a few). This makes your and Quest's involvement in Villa Maria a genuine and long term commitment. Quest4Change fundraises for the project year-round to ensure the project is ongoing at times volunteer teams are not in the country.

Experience Quest

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What will your students be doing? Constructing simple, wooden houses that will allow some of the most needy members of the Villa Maria community to live in a safe and healthy environment. This work is extremely hands on; students will be sawing, hammering, carrying, digging and painting. In 2 weeks teams will usually complete 2-3 houses. The families and other members of the community will often work alongside the students, allowing them to build relationships with the people who will be living in the houses they build.

Students will also be organising games and activities for hundreds of children in different communities in Villa Maria. These include sports days, football games, basketball games, crafts, face painting, dancing and any other activities they can think of! At weekends your students will also take part in the "Domingos Familiares" or Family Sundays. These are fairs and shows put on by our team and local children in the area to bring together different communities across Villa Maria. Your students will help the children learn dances (and learn some themselves!), perform in the shows, and organise activities for the fairs, becoming an integral part of these unique events.

Other activity options: Following the project, there is the chance to explore the ancient city of Cusco and trek the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu; Trek in the Colca Canyon and visit the colonial city of Arequipa; Kayak on Lake Titicaca and visit indigenous island communities; Sandboard at the Huacachina Oasis; Trek and ice climb in the Cordillera Blanca near Huaraz.

