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Projects Together

A leading overseas volunteer organization, **Projects Abroad** offers over 100 projects in 26 countries. They teach children in Rio de Janeiro, care for orphans in India, help with conservation efforts in Mozambique, and more. Couples share a unique experience while enjoying the beauty and hospitality of exotic destinations.

A Personalized Experience ... "People tell us their skills and we find the right project," says **Tom Pastorious Jr.**, Vice President of Projects Abroad. "You tell us when you're going to arrive and we arrange everything. Our on-the-ground presence lets us provide face-to-face training and support."

"Volunteers get a private website with packing lists, training documents, insurance forms, and logistics details. They also get phone calls and emails from our staff in their destination country and a profile of the host family and project."

A lot of their programs work with kids and schools. "The programs with schools and orphanages have a time minimum of a month. We also offer one and two-week projects where you're effective on day one, like building projects."

An important current project is their teaching program in Peru, with about 100 schools in a region close to Macchu Picchu. "We teach the teachers during their summer break, January to March. They speak a bit of English, but by the eighth or ninth grade, the kids basically speak the same level of English. By educating the

teachers, we're hoping to raise the level of education. It's also no bad to leave the U.S. in January for a Peruvian summer where it's 80 degrees, no humidity, blue skies, and beautiful mountains."

The Host Family ... Volunteers usually stay with a host family, "Sometimes we can find a host family with a garden apartment or an apartment over a garage, so it's more private. In some cases we've helped volunteers get their own apartment in town. If it's a shorter program we'll recommend a comfortable but fairly cheap hotel that's reasonably close."



For many volunteers, staying with their host family is very rewarding. "We went to Capetown and stayed two and a half months with a host family, which was one of the best parts of the experience," says **Natalie Finkelberg**, who with her husband **Erik** recently volunteered through Projects Abroad. "The host family was beyond accommodating, warm, and welcoming. They felt like real family, and we still speak to them."

"Erik and I had never volunteered outside of North America but I always had a dream about volunteering in Africa. Several agencies offered volunteer trips, but Projects Abroad answered all our questions and was really helpful. I called repeatedly because I had so many questions. Their 24-hour on-site staff and the global awareness of the organization made us feel safe and secure."

Natalie and Erik worked together



in an orphanage and nursery with underprivileged children. "We met a woman who dedicated her life to helping people. We fell in love with her and her organization, and worked with her for the majority of our stay. We helped everyone, from children who had just been abused to family members who would show up in the middle of the night with children who had been beaten."

Long-Lasting Friendships ... The close friendships made on these trips help volunteers feel more comfortable. "Being away was easier than we thought," says Natalie. "The first night was the hardest, because we didn't feel very comfortable in someone else's home and didn't know what to expect. In the end, leaving was more difficult than anything. We eventually met a huge group of volunteers who we become very close with. In fact, we're all meeting for New Year's this year!"

Tom applauds such camaraderie. "I instantly have friends and connections every time I visit a destination. I just got engaged earlier this year, and as part of traveling, we were able to experience how different cultures celebrate the news. In India, for example, they give you jewelry. In Ghana, they give you a kente cloth. Having personal connections in these countries is the best part of what we offer." **Projects Abroad**, 888.839.3535, projects-abroad.org