

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED IN LATIN AMERICA from July 2019

Students of Spanish looking for a placement in their year abroad for the academic year 2019-2020 could consider teaching English in the historic country town of Santa María de Fe, Misiones, Paraguay. Though the work is unpaid, life is very cheap. The students are selected for their aptitude and pay nothing for their classes because they are poor. Prior training in teaching English language teaching is not necessary. The Santa Maria Education Fund is a UK registered charity.

We are looking for people with the following qualities:

- Excellent Spanish (University-level Spanish is required.)
- Interest in working with the poor (The job satisfaction comes from seeing life opportunities open up for young people who would otherwise have no opportunity to study English.)
- Willingness to come for several months (The longer you stay, the more effective you become, and the more you enjoy the experience. As a general rule the minimum is three months but we will give priority to applications for five months or longer.)
- Natural teaching ability (Imagination, rapport with students, clear speech and an aptitude for grammar are key qualities. If you have training or experience that is a bonus.)
- Financial independence (You get no pay and have to cover your own fare, travel insurance, rent and living expenses; but unlike most other volunteering organisations, we do not ask you to pay any fees to us. Paraguay is a cheap country. You can live on £200 a month or less.)

Santa María de Fe — a former Jesuit Reduction or mission, with an important historical, artistic and spiritual heritage — is an attractive, small, tranquil country town. It has a wonderful museum of Guaraní-Jesuit baroque art. We will find you a family to live with at the beginning, and most volunteers opt to stay in their families throughout their time.

Most classes are small and the students, mostly aged 13-30, have five classes a week, in the morning or early evening. The levels are from Zero Beginners to Advanced. We also have three levels of children's classes. The Santa Maria Education Fund pays for students to sit Cambridge English examinations, and we have now picked up 186 such certificates.

Afternoons and late evenings are free for you to get involved in other activities according to your skills and interests. Past volunteers have taught music or another language, ridden with the *caballeria*, danced the *samba* in the carnival, played the harp, taken Guaraní lessons, embroidered with the sewing workshop, helped the craftswomen with their marketing, and interpreted for the Santa Maria Hotel.

Applications are invited, especially from people who can start in July 2019 or January/February 2020, although other starting dates can also be considered. If you are interested, we will ask you for your CV and email addresses of three referees, and will arrange an interview.

Ellie Hill (Spanish & Italian, Bristol University) spent 6 months here in 2017.

"You see your students every day so you really get to know them, and living with a local family was great, both for language practice and to make friends for life. It's a lovely town and lovely organisation."

(elliemayhill@hotmail.co.uk)



James Woodley (Spanish & German, University College London) spent 2 months here in 2017.



"Within days of being in Santa María de Fe, my experience had already transcended all expectations I previously had with regard to how much Spanish I would speak. Verbal communication has been the key element during my time here in Paraguay and this opportunity has allowed me to get my feet wet as far as the growth of my spoken Spanish is concerned. ."

(james.woodley@hotmail.co.uk)

Jennifer Beckner (graduate in Spanish & Neuroscience from Michigan State University) spent 14 months here in 2016 – 2017.

"The kids are creative, eager, and full of energy; they learn impressively quickly and are such a joy to teach. You follow a book, but once you get to know your students well you're able to modify how you explain and teach. While in Santa María, I learned to play the Paraguayan harp (and actually brought one home in the end),



sewed a few times with the ladies in the *Taller*, opened an ice cream shop with my host mom, sang in the church choir (though I'm not actually a singer), learned to cook *Sopa*, *Chipa*, and other Paraguayan delicacies with my family, and spent countless hours with friends and students drinking *Mate* or *Terere*, watching occasional football matches or *danza*, relaxing in the plaza, or going for early morning runs to explore the beautiful countryside. I also spent some time travelling within Paraguay and Argentina – going to beaches, caverns, cities, waterfalls, and more. I can't say enough about how much I loved my year in Santa María, and I ended staying a month longer than I had planned."

(becknerj@msu.edu)

The updated website www.santamariadefe.org has many more experiences of volunteers.

Applications / requests for information to info@santamariadefe.org