

School supplies delivered by tour company Aqua Expeditions in Peru



## BAGS OF SUPPORT

Holidaymakers are being asked to help community projects by bringing supplies in their luggage. Report by Paul Miles

SOME SAY THAT the best things to pack for travel are an open mind and a sense of humour. Rebecca Rothney would add pencils, deflated footballs and perhaps a stethoscope.

Rothney, a former teacher from North Carolina, is the founder of Pack For A Purpose,

a non-profit organisation which encourages holidaymakers to take with them a small quantity of supplies for community projects. She and her husband came up with the idea while planning a safari holiday in southern Africa. They found that their baggage allowance

for the long-haul flight exceeded what could be accommodated on the plane that would transfer them to their safari lodge.

'Even in North Carolina we have to beg for school supplies, and I thought: what must it be like for schools in Africa?' says Rothney. She contacted the holiday company, Wilderness Safaris, to find out what would be suitable items, took them on the plane to Africa, then had them shipped overland to a school near their lodge in Botswana. This small mission spurred a big idea: 'What if everyone going on holiday took just a small package of much-needed supplies with them?'

More than a hundred tourist destinations are listed on the [www.packforapurpose.org](http://www.packforapurpose.org) website, along with the projects they support. These include schools in Turkey (supported by The Ritz-Carlton, Istanbul) and Tanzania (Selous Safari Company), and medical-care facilities in Nepal (Tiger Tops

Tharu Lodge) and Peru (Aqua Expeditions). The specific needs of each project – from baseball mitts to pregnancy-testing kits – are also listed, with advice on how to pack the goods for transit.

Already, more than 360kg of supplies have been delivered by holidaymakers to projects in five continents. 'We have received school supplies and clothing, and they have gone a long way to help more than 300 kids in the slums of Nairobi,' says Isaac Okumu, manager of Village Life Safari in Kenya. In Tanzania, visitors to the Ras Kutani lodge have brought with them 30kg of stationery for the local primary school, according to Daniel Draisey, general manager of the Selous Safari Company. 'Pack For A Purpose is a good way of getting guests to realise that we support local projects,' he says, 'and once they have been to the local school they often make a donation when they check out.'

