

Our Last Page Really Counts!

Amazon Explorer offers these statistics as an urgent reminder about the state of the Amazon Rainforest.

Add Up the Numbers...

- In 1800, there were 7.1 billion acres of tropical forest worldwide. There are 3.5 billion acres of tropical forest remaining. We're losing 33.8 million acres of tropical forest per year. That's more than the total area of New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Jersey and Delaware combined – 2.8 million acres lost per month... 93,000 acres/day... 3,800 acres/hour... 64 acres/minute.
- Between 1960-1990, 1.1 billion acres of tropical forest were cleared.
- Brazil lost 91.4 million acres of tropical forest between 1980-1990 – almost the total area of North and South Dakota combined.
- We lose 100 species every day – 4 species per hour – due to tropical deforestation. At current rates, 5% to 10% of tropical forest species will become extinct every decade.
- Over 50% of the Earth's species live in tropical forests.
- Tropical forests contain 70% of the world's vascular plants, 30% of all bird species and 90% of all invertebrates.
- 43 ant species were found on one tree in Peru – the same number as in the entire British Isles.
- Ecuador's tropical forests contain over 15,000 plant species. There are 13,000 plant species in all of Europe.
- Over 2,000 tropical plants have been identified by scientists as having anti-cancer properties.
- Indigenous Peoples of Northwest Amazonia use over 1,300 plant species as medicines.
- Before 1500, there were approximately 6 million Indigenous People living in Brazilian Amazonia. In the early 1990's, there were less than 250,000.
- Over 90 different Amazonian tribes are thought to have disappeared since 1900.

The Good News Begins With Amazon Herb Company

Amazon Herb Company has already helped save 300,000 acres of Rainforest land. We're working hard to continue to make a difference. Join us in giving a bright future to the Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon and keeping the Rainforest alive.

For more information about our work
in the Rainforest or our products,
call 1-800-835-0850.

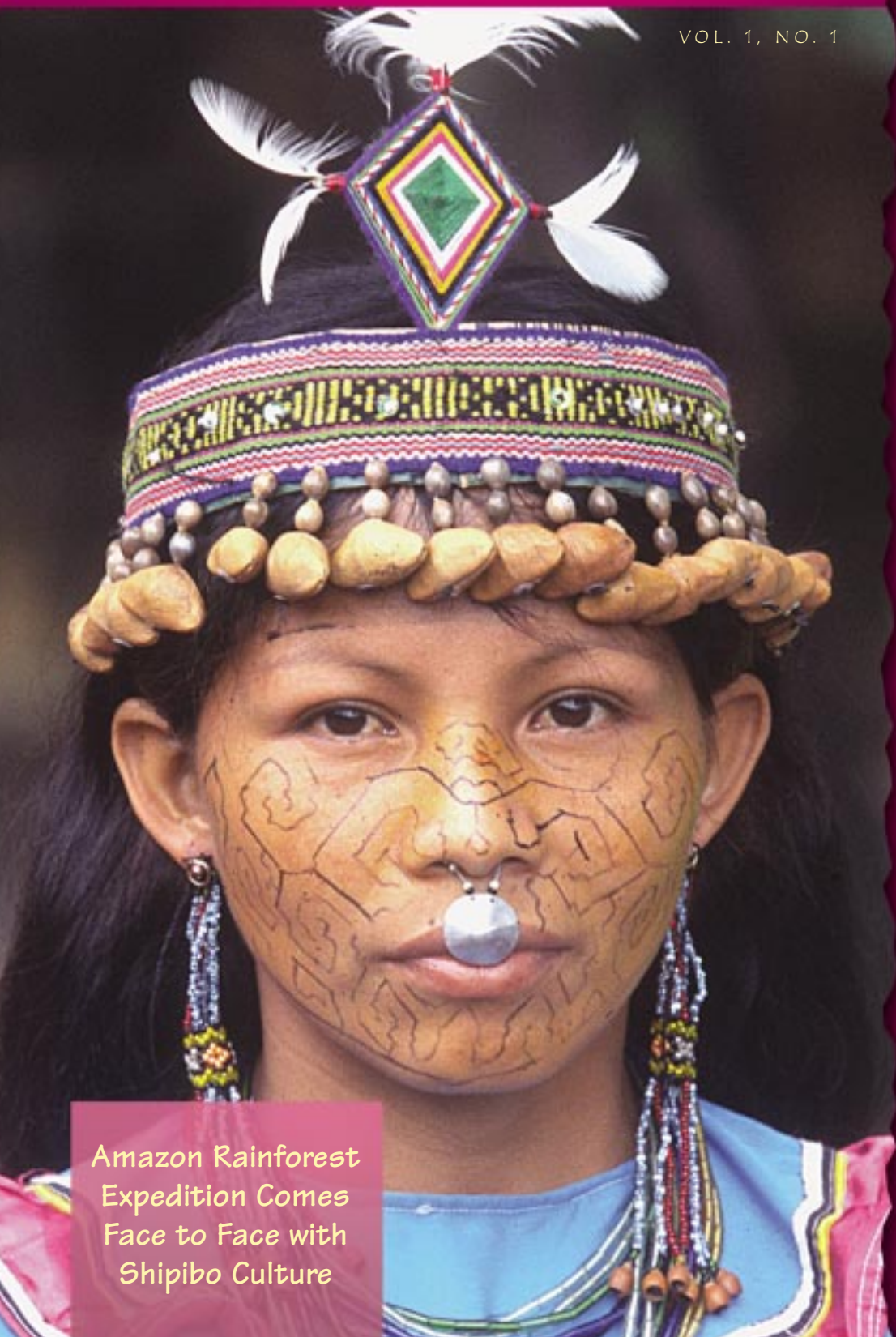


A JOURNAL FROM AMAZON HERB COMPANY

AMAZON EXPLORER

News and Developments from the Rainforest

VOL. 1, NO. 1



Amazon Rainforest
Expedition Comes
Face to Face with
Shipibo Culture

Welcome to the Premier Issue of Amazon Explorer!

Our goal is to bring you good news from the Amazon Rainforest on a regular basis. This publication is designed to convey the mission and vision of Amazon Herb Company through its work in the Amazon Basin.

Our Mission supports working hand-in-hand with Indigenous rainforest communities to create a new model of prosperity and sustainability. Ecologically wild-harvesting our herbs has produced a valuable new income source for the Amazon region. Together, we are making the Rainforest “more valuable alive than dead.”

Our Vision is to offer the world life-changing herbal remedies, economically support indigenous culture and preserve the Amazon Rainforest.

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Explorer's Outlook

Thoughts from Amazon John Easterling

A Celebration of Heroes



Today, we live in the greatest period of exploration that we have ever known.

As we push the frontiers of space and technology, the spirit of adventure continues

to drive us just as it did Columbus, Lewis and Clark, the Wright brothers and John Glenn.

I believe the exploration of the Amazon Rainforest and the discoveries it yields will be recorded by history as the most dramatic story of our century. I am confident of this because of two simple facts: 1) degenerative disease is the leading cause of death in the modern world; and 2) the Amazon Rainforest is the richest source of nutrients and life energy on our planet.

Even with the growing volumes of data proving the life-saving value of the living Rainforest, its very existence continues to be threatened. Our planet's greatest treasure house is being chain sawed and poisoned. The biggest offenders are farming, lumbering interests, cattle ranching, mineral exploration, and oil drilling. Two other culprits, interestingly enough, are cocaine processing (chemical by-products) and the toxic chemicals being sprayed from helicopters by the authorities to eliminate coca fields.

This picture of destruction and pollution is alarming but it serves as a call to action to show the magnitude of the opportunity in front of us. By employing a proven model of environmental economics, we demonstrate the Rainforest is more valuable alive than dead. We can effect positive change.

By purchasing sustainably harvested and renewable rainforest products, we help to protect the Rainforest and support the native people's economy.

This was proven to me beyond a shadow of doubt in the Shipibo village of Shambo. I was in Shambo to consult with the curanderos and collect plants. As I was bidding farewell to the elders, they led me to a counsel where other elders and the chief had assembled. They gave speeches for the next hour on how Amazon Herb Company had saved their village which had been in a state of social and economic disintegration. To survive, they had even considered selling their pristine Rainforest off to lumbering interests.

Now that we are providing them resources for the sustainable and ecological harvesting of medicinal plants, they have an ongoing stream of revenue. They went on to say how their sense of dignity had returned along with the finances to make new choices about their own future.

The drama in the village of Shambo is playing out in real time in many other villages in the Amazon. Building channels of trust and mutual respect with indigenous rainforest communities is at the heart of our corporate mission.

Choosing healthy products and sharing these ideas with others supports a healthy, sustainable future for the Amazon Rainforest. Each of you is making a huge difference in the lives of these people. To these brave men and women of the forest who have given so much and asked for so little, you are very special. You really are one of their heroes! Thank you for being part of the solution.



Amazon Rainforest Expedition Comes Face to Face with Shipibo Culture

By Merry Bateman



Every year Amazon Herb Company does something truly remarkable that does not happen often enough in the world of corporate business. It creates a cultural exchange that brings people together to build a stronger future for the planet. The Rainforest Expedition allows Americans and Europeans to come face to face with the indigenous communities in the Amazon Rainforest of Peru.

Since 1997, CEO Amazon John Easterling has been leading the Rainforest Expedition, which fosters a genuine spirit of unity and cooperation for everyone involved. He takes small groups of Amazon Herb Associates once a year to Peru to experience both the Rainforest and the Andean highlands. "I think it's important to not only see where the herbs come from at the village level but to understand the rich diversity of the country," explains Amazon John.

The cost of the trip is underwritten by Amazon Herb Company as part of its commitment to having participants see the Company's mission up close and personal. "I started this annual trip as a way to give Associates an opportunity to experience the country and the culture at many levels," Amazon John continues. Traveling to the remote villages in the Amazon and interacting with the Shipibo people never fails to be at the top of every participant's list of favorite experiences.

The Rainforest Expedition travelers spend time in the Shipibo villages getting better acquainted through welcome ceremonies, tribal dancing, drinking *masato* (a special fermented drink made for the occasion), offering gifts and communicating with the Indians via Spanish, sign language, laughter and smiles. They live the adventure of a lifetime.

Those who are fortunate enough to go on the Rainforest Expedition enter another mode of time as they venture on the Ucayali River to visit remote Shipibo villages. Some have described it as stepping into a simpler way of life filled with a richness that is lacking in our fast paced, high tech world.

This year, two different groups traveled to Peru a week apart from each other. The itineraries for each group were the same but the experiences were as varied as the 26 different travelers. Each group was met by the Amazon Herb Company SA team of Martin, Freddie, Albert and Pedro. They were given a tour of the Amazon Herb facility in Pulcallpa where the herbs are stored and prepared for shipping. Both groups spent time at the Amazon Herb Ecological Reserve. Each hiked the

medicine trail and learned more about herbs growing in the wild. Group One went to the remote village of Porvener while Group Two witnessed the early arrival of monsoon season and was unable to travel there in the open boats. This was the first time in the trip's history that rain interrupted river travel to a village.

Alberto and Elisa, Shipibo *ayahuasqueros*, visited with Group Two the evening before their planned departure for Porvener. Elisa sang special Shipibo lyrics to keep them safe on





Riding on the river is the most common form of travel in the Rainforest.



Fran Perry (center) coordinates the details of every Rainforest Expedition. She keeps everyone smiling throughout a well-organized trip.



The villagers of Puerto Firmesa greet a Rainforest Expedition group as their boats arrive.



Scott Butwin enjoys a welcoming dance.



Michael Esterling shares a laugh and a lively two-step.



Group One of the Rainforest Expedition poses with new Shipibo friends at Porvener.



Lunch of wild duck — head, feet and all — is a new taste treat for Jan Longshore.



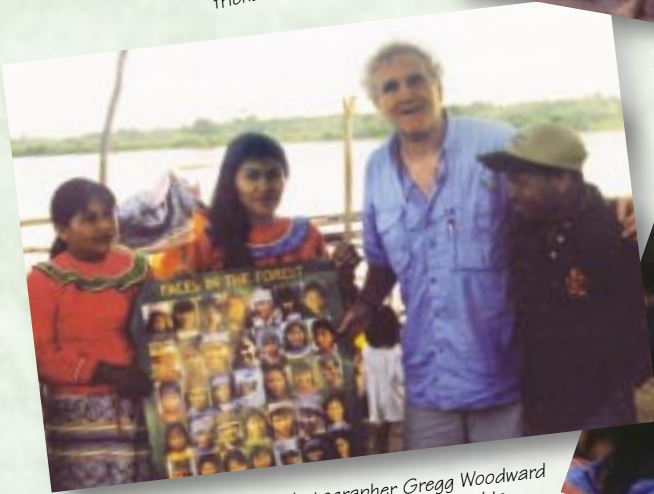
Richard Cicchetti shows off his archery skills during a village game.



Shri Ramchandra meets a new friend in Porvener.



Shipibo women are excited to have visitors in their village.



Old friends greet photographer Gregg Woodward as he shows them their pictures in his "Faces in the Forest" poster.



David Baker gets into the rhythm of the village dance.



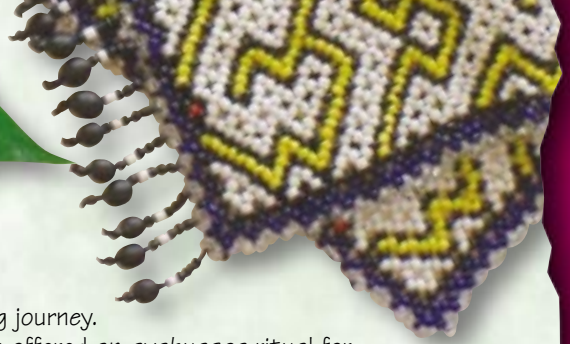
Joy Butwin (top) and Nina Woltering (bottom) eagerly await the outcome of their new Shipibo-patterned faces.



A group encounters changing terrain on the medicine trail at the Reserve.



The fast-paced Expedition includes a nine-hour boat ride to Porvener.



their long journey.

Alberto offered an *ayahuasca* ritual for bringing good luck to all.

The next day the group rose at 3:00 am to the sound of very heavy rainfall. Much to everyone's surprise, the rain didn't slow down in time to leave so it was decided that it was best not to go. In retrospect, it looks like this was an even wiser decision than anyone knew at the time.

"Something terrible happened that day," according to Martin Ccorisapra, Director of Amazon Herb Company SA. "I didn't tell Amazon John or the others about it because I didn't want to alarm them. But a group of lumbermen was assaulted by pirates on the river that very day and had everything stolen from them. The pirates took advantage of the lumbermen's lone boat with no one around to help during the bad weather."

When asked if he thought that the *ayahuasqueros'* blessings had prevented the group from departing on what would have been a dangerous trip, Martin indicated that he felt that something significant had occurred – that the guardian spirits had interceded.

Group Two missed that excursion, but they witnessed a different perspective of the Rainforest during a rainy period. And they enjoyed an especially unique exposure to the Shipibo's spiritual world through the efforts of the *ayahuasqueros*.

Before leaving the Rainforest to return to Lima, Group Two took a trip to visit the village of Puerto Firmesa and was warmly welcomed by the Chief and families of the village. Here, another first in the trip's history occurred – women in the group had their faces painted with fruit dyes in the traditional Shipibo design motifs. The Shipibo women embraced the opportunity to share something of themselves by offering their distinctive face art to the American women. As the rest of the group watched this unfold, they could see that the Shipibo women looked deeply into each woman's eyes to read her very essence. They then proceeded to paint each face with great concentration in order to create a design that reflected that individual. It was both a serious and fun process that no one will forget!

The Shipibo villagers were especially excited when photographer Gregg Woodward presented them with copies of the poster, "Faces in the Forest." Gregg created this poster from photos he had taken of a variety of Shipibo people on previous trips. Many of them were on hand to experience seeing their faces in print for the first time, and were pleased to receive such a beautiful gift.

There is no doubt that the Amazon Herb Company's vision comes to life for everyone who visits the Rainforest. When they see the botanicals growing and thriving... when they taste a fresh *camu-camu* fruit... when they drink *uña de gato* from the vine... when they listen to a Shipibo shaman bless the plants and the land... these groups make a vital connection with the Rainforest and the

Indigenous People. This year's Rainforest Expedition left the Amazon with a sacred trust to honor, and a far greater urgency that the Rainforest is our future.





Journey to Porvener

By Kosa Ely

Rising early, before any hint of dawn, we prepare for our full day's journey to Porvener. By 4:30 am the boats are loaded, and our boatmen beckon us to board.

The loud hum of the 40 horsepower motor makes conversation a chore. My eyes are drinking in the beauty of this tropical paradise. The river is much broader than I expected, and surrounds us in all directions. The sky, too, is expansive, and as the sun rises in the East, we witness a gallery of changing color.

All of my senses are heightened. Yet there is no satiation. From the inner depths of my being, I feel powerfully connected with this river and sky and forest, and the emotion that rises within takes the words, "Don't let this ever end..."

More than five hours have mysteriously passed as we've journeyed the Rio Ucayali. We know we are getting close to our destination now. A beautiful white bird is leading our boat. Around several bends of the tributary and out into the open waters, the bird guides our boat and leads us to the village of Porvener.

The drums are beating. Colorful clothing, then smiling faces, come into view. As soon as our boat arrives at the riverbank, the Shipibo people clasp our hands; assisting us out of our boat and onto their land. As they lead us to the dancing arena, their warmth and friendship are beyond, way beyond, anything I could have expected. I am grateful that our communication is deeper than words.

After dancing with our Shipibo partners, we are seated on wooden benches, and served *masato*. We are treated as honored guests, and the chiefs take turns thanking Amazon John and all of us. John takes the opportunity to express his gratitude to all of them, and introduces each of us to them by name. They repeat our names aloud in unison. While they begin the program of their traditional dances, I enjoy watching their faces, observing the children, and photographing as much as I can.

Now it is time to shop. They've set up a whole marketplace and are inviting us to come there. I've been looking forward to buying some of their handicrafts, and especially their hand painted and embroidered cloths.

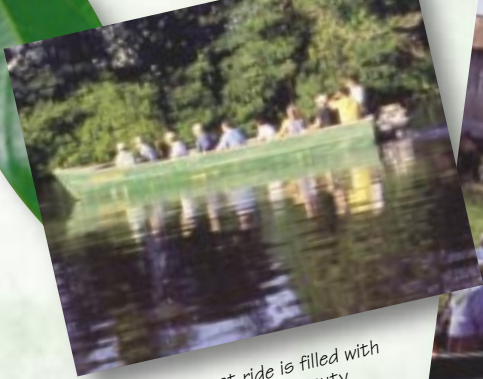
Next, lunch is served, and then it's our turn to give to them. We set out the gifts we have brought. It is their practice to always give a gift after receiving one. Within a few minutes of distributing the gifts we brought, we were all decorated with their handmade necklaces and bracelets.

The Shipibo village band started up again but we are way past the time we were to leave, and we must immediately board the boats. I'm reluctant to go, wishing we had more time for goodbyes. From the boats our eyes meet, and we all wave and smile, and the drums are still beating.

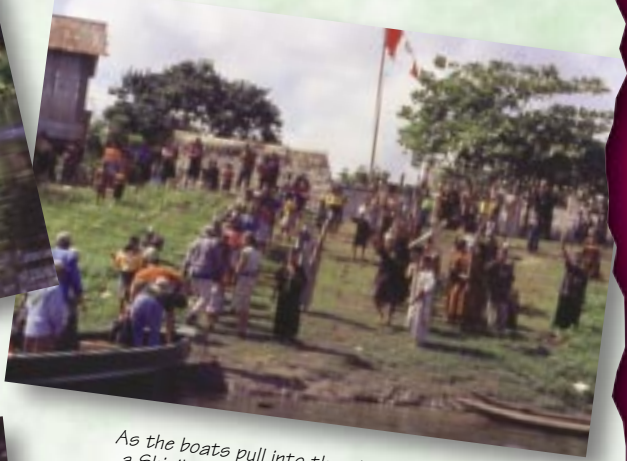
Before long, our American warriors are taking siestas in the other boat. From a distance, the only visible person is their boatman. Four rainbows appear, each unique unto itself, on our return journey. The full moon begins to rise on the Eastern horizon as the sun begins its descent in the West.

We're all intensely quiet, each of us internalizing this day of days, feeling our lives changed, our consciousness altered, and a kinship with the villagers of Porvener that we will never forget.





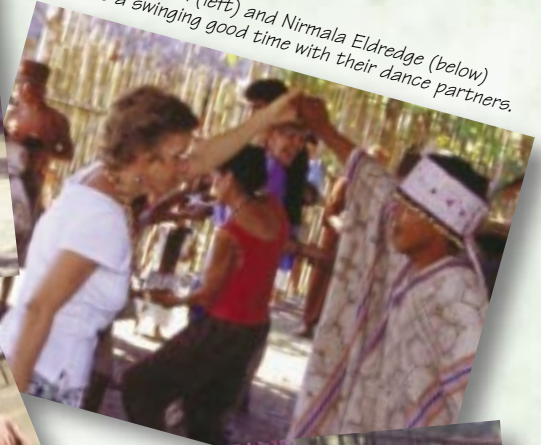
A morning boat ride is filled with the river's scenic beauty.



As the boats pull into the village of Forvener, a Shipibo-style welcome awaits the visitors.



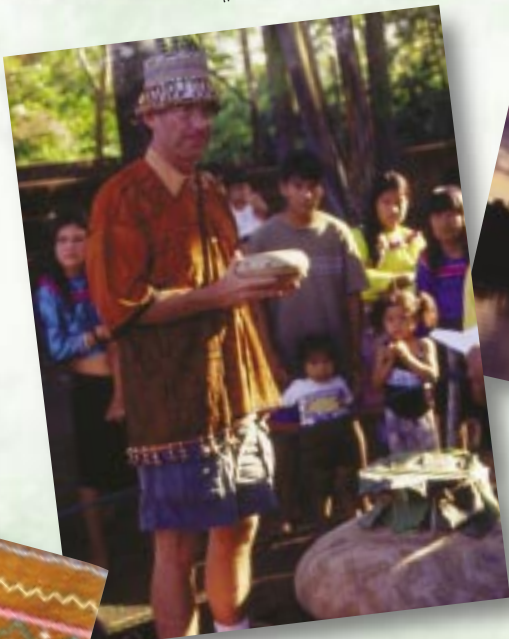
Koda Sun (left) and Nirmala Eldredge (below) have a swinging good time with their dance partners.



August Giovenco becomes an immediate big brother to this group of Shipibo boys.



The universal language of a smile is widely spoken in the Rainforest.



Another glorious day in the Amazon comes to an end.

Amazon John is offered the first taste of masato, a fermented drink the village prepares for its guests.



Canopy Talk

Camu-Camu Harvest Time Yields Abundant Results

Camu-camu is a low-growing tree found throughout the Amazon Rainforest. It produces round, red-colored fruit which contains the highest source of vitamin C currently known.

Amazon Herb Company wild harvests camu-camu from its own grove at the Amazon Herb Ecological Reserve outside of Pucallpa, Peru. There are two harvests each year: March through July and September through December. The peak harvest months are June and October.

In order to pick one ton of fruit, a minimum of 15 people are required, with twice that number brought in during peak months. Amazon Herb Company employs pickers from both Shipibo-Conibo and Cocama villages. "Camu-camu harvests create jobs for the tribal communities," explains Martin Ccorisapra, Director of Amazon Herb Company SA. "The communities stop cutting trees and selling wood as a result of these jobs."

Once the fruit is picked, it is transported by boat to the Amazon Herb Company facility in Pucallpa where the fruit is weighed and then sorted. In order to dry camu-camu for use in Amazon Herb products, the



Camu-camu (myrciaria dubia) is ready to be picked.

Company previously had to transport the fruit to another plant in the highlands of Peru. It was an expensive and time-consuming effort and resulted in a large amount of fruit being discarded due to damage.

That costly step was eliminated this year. With technical assistance from a team of food engineers, Amazon Herb Company has installed a special

large-capacity dryer at its facility specifically for camu-camu. It can dehydrate up to 200 kilos of fruit a day. For every 100 kilos of fruit, the dryer yields five kilos of concentrated dried powder.

"This machine has changed the way we work," emphasizes Ccorisapra. "We can process the freshest fruit as soon as we get it. The dryer lets us dry the fruit at a controlled temperature and retain the highest vitamin C content possible. Then it is finely ground for use in our Amazon Herb products."

"During our recent harvest, we brought in 13,000 kilos of camu-camu and produced 650 kilos of dried camu-camu powder," Ccorisapra continues. "We are so pleased with these results that we are planning to bring in a second dryer before our next harvest."





The small-but-mighty camu-camu fruit contains many times the amount of vitamin C found in an orange and a variety of bioflavonoids.



Camu-camu harvests create jobs for Indigenous communities.



Amazon Herb staff and pickers bring in the latest harvest – over 12 tons of camu-camu.



Freddie, from Amazon Herb Company SA, inspects camu-camu prior to picking.



Camu-camu is sorted at the Amazon Herb Company facility in Pucallpa, Peru. The new camu-camu dryer is seen in the background.



Highlights of Amazon Herb Company Projects in the Rainforest

Amazon Herb Company channels 10% of its profits to a variety of special projects and issues that directly impact the Rainforest. Here is what the Company has been involved with to date:

Manos de la Tierra

(Hands of the Earth) was started five years ago by Amazon Herb Company as a way to give tribal women an opportunity to earn money from their crafts and funnel money back to their communities. Eight different communities from the Shipibo, Matses, Jivaro and Ashanika tribes participate in this program. Traditionally the men collect the herbage and the women create handicrafts that

include pottery, textiles, needlepoint, jewelry and painted cloth. Amazon Herb Company buys these crafts at a fair market price and resells them in the United States and abroad. This generates a greater awareness about the indigenous crafts and their tribal creators as well as the Amazon Rainforest.



Shipibo craftsmen bring their tribal culture to life through colorful pottery and exquisite textiles.

Amazon Herb Ecological Reserve

is land near Pucallpa, Peru that Amazon Herb Company has established to protect from logging and other development. The Reserve contains a camu-camu grove that is harvested twice a year and a medicine trail for observing herbs in the wild. The Company supports a group of tribal families who live there to oversee the Reserve.



A rainforest friend guards the entrance to the Amazon Herb Ecological Reserve.

Amazon Herb Land Preservation Program

was established to help buy and preserve land in the Amazon Herb Ecological Reserve. It also pays



The Amazon Herb Company SA team oversees the land.

Back row, left to right: Martin and Freddie. Front row, left to right: Pedro, Fidel, Albert and Amazon John.

expenses and maintains the land there. As recognition for Amazon Herb Company Associates who achieve a certain level, the Company gives honorary one-acre deeds from its land acquisition efforts. The Associate deed program has helped purchase over 1,000 acres in this way. Currently, the Land Preservation Program is working to acquire the rights to 1,000 acres of land along the Rio Ucayali. It is negotiating with the Peruvian government to buy the land and secure the deeds to this area.



Amazon Herb Rainforest Expedition

is an annual trip that has fostered cultural exchange between Amazon Herb Company distributors and the Indigenous People of Peru. Traditionally, it is the highlight of the year for everyone involved. The tribal people look forward to the annual visit and view it as an important time. The Expedition inspires love and appreciation between cultures and creates a positive framework for the future. Amazon Herb Company believes this face-to-face program is so vital that it allocates \$65,000 each year to make it happen.



Part of this year's Rainforest Expedition gathers at a fallen landmark tree. It towered over previous groups until it was uprooted by a recent storm.

Two New Nonprofit Organizations Have Been Incorporated

Amazon Herb Company has officially incorporated two companies in the State of Florida as nonprofit organizations to carry out its mission to support the Rainforest. The 501c3 applications have been submitted with the Internal Revenue Service and are pending at this time.

Rainforest Rescue Fund

was organized to provide assistance to indigenous communities in Peru and Brazil. The Fund will provide infrastructure to tribal communities by funding new water wells and solar technology, and will offer legal assistance in obtaining deeds and rights to tribal lands. It will also award scholarships and other educational opportunities to the children of indigenous communities. And it will maintain a reserve fund to be used in disaster relief situations in the Rainforest.

This year the Rainforest Rescue Fund has given solar-powered lanterns, and replaced the solar panels and battery for the solar short wave radio at the village of Porvener. It gifted the village of Puerto Firmesa with a four-ton wooden boat and motor. The Fund has provided scholarships and clothing so teenagers from the tribal communities could attend school in Pucallpa, Peru. Most recently, it has engaged engineers and lawyers to fight loggers who are trying to take the rights to tribal land along the Rio Ucayali.



Amazon John presents solar lanterns to a village on behalf of the Rainforest Rescue Fund.



Children are the future of the villages. More scholarship opportunities are planned by the Rainforest Rescue Fund to assist them.

Amazon Herb Research Education Foundation

has been formed to provide herbs and protocols for clinical outcome studies, and to collect and preserve knowledge of botanicals from the native shaman and curanderos of South America. The Foundation plans to work closely with the

Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine in Phoenix, Arizona to assist in clinical studies on the medicinal value of rainforest botanicals. It also plans to provide herbs for analysis and clinical investigation to foundations, universities, hospitals and other research centers.

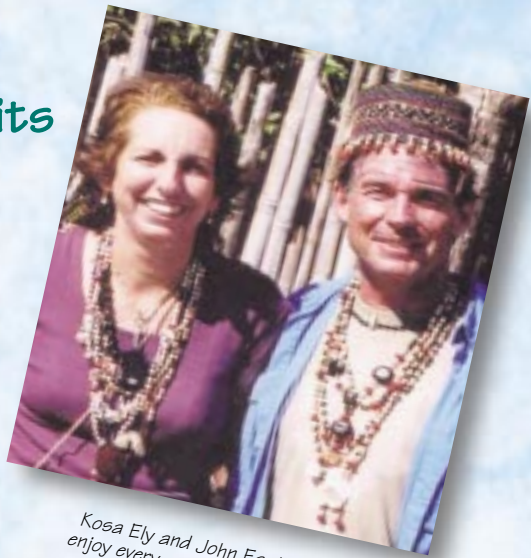
Amazon Herb Company funds all of these special projects to help the tribal communities become self-sufficient. However, the most important role of the Company is to create a working partnership with the tribes through the ecological harvesting of the herbs. This is the most significant business venture that Amazon Herb Company undertakes to provide steady income streams to these communities.



Eco-Commerce Delivers Real Benefits For Everyone

An interview with John Easterling

John Easterling, founder and CEO of Amazon Herb Company, has created a model of ecological prosperity that is benefiting the Amazon Rainforest and its inhabitants. Amazon Herb Associate, Kosa Ely, asked John about his vision and mission, for the present and for the future.



Kosa Ely and John Easterling enjoy every aspect of their visit to a Shipibo village.

Kosa: John, I'd like you to share your model of ecological business.

John: My model of ecological business is simply a model of being a good steward to the planet and to the people on the planet. What I find is in economics and in business, wherever you put incentives, it creates positive behavior and it creates positive activity. We all know the Rainforest is being threatened by many different forces that are based on other models of business. There is oil exploration, there is mining, and there is cattle ranching and logging. The beautiful thing about our business, with Amazon Herb Company, is that we've discovered the true treasure of the Amazon. Not only is it a true treasure – it has a significant value in the marketplace. By bringing that value to the marketplace, and exposing it, we are able to turn the tide on where the incentives are. So now the incentives have become one of ecological preservation. In other words, we want to preserve the biggest treasure that's there, these Amazonian botanicals, so that they will be available on an on-going basis over the years. Simply by our providing resources, by paying the Indians a dollar value that's more than logging, more than oil exploration, and with no damaging side effects at all, we have a real solution.

Kosa: What are your chances of success given the fact the Rainforest is being destroyed at a rate of 75 acres a minute? Aren't you fighting a losing battle?

John: Our chances of success are 100 percent. We are succeeding. Every time an acre is preserved, that's success. Every time an Amazon Herb bottle goes out the door, we're celebrating a great success. And our success will continue on an even grander scale. Now there are 14 communities we work with. The Amazon Basin is about the size of the United States, so there is a long, long way to go, and our mission and our vision is to affect, in a positive way, the entire Amazon Basin. So, is it happening in a small way right now? In a relative sense, it's small, but to the people in the communities where we are working, it's gigantic.

Kosa: And what would it take in numbers for you to be able to bring enough herbs to market here in North America to affect that entire Amazon Basin?

John: I'd say if we had 50 million people using these herbs, we could really affect the entire Amazon Basin.

Kosa: People want to know, John, that harvesting the herbs is not going to

deplete the Rainforest, especially when you talk about 50 million people taking these herbs daily.

John: Think of it this way: there's 270 million people in the United States. Think of them as all eating a plateful of food. They're not taking a couple of droppers or a spoonful – a few times a day. They're eating platefuls of food each day. And every person in the United States is doing that – two or three times a day. So you have 270 million people, times three – so what's that? Eight hundred million plates of food a day being consumed, and yet look at the tiny percent of land that is used to grow all of that food. So just try to put it in perspective in a comparative model. When you compare the consumption of herbs to the masses of food people are eating everyday, you can see how a very small area of the Amazon can feed hundred of millions of people their daily herbage.

Kosa: In numbers, John, how much of the Rainforest have you already helped preserve?

John: I'd say our company has participated now in stabilizing and preserving 300,000 acres. I say that because of the communities we work with and the amount of land that they have. They don't have the temptation to compromise the integrity of their land by inviting any lumber or oil exploration or gold exploration onto their land. So that's 300,000 acres at this point. In addition, we are buying land ourselves.

Kosa: John, as Amazon Herb Company spreads its sphere of influence, how will you deal with the political pressures that are often an obstacle in environmental protection?

John: Quite frankly, I'm apolitical. I just focus on the vision and the mission. I don't pretend to be victimized by agencies or political pressures one way or another, and as a result we've never been interfered with in this country or abroad, taken the exception of the terrorist activity in Peru. I have a high degree of confidence that the consciousness of people is shifting in a dramatic way. I've seen that happen in extraordinary ways in the past 15 years as we've been working with these herbs. For example, the Natural Supplements Industry was not the most welcomed kid on the block in the business community 15-20 years ago. There have been major breakthroughs with DSHEA laws and the understanding of herbs and botanicals, and now the world is recognizing how valuable these plants are. And the consciousness is awakened to a degree where people are looking for a way to participate and be good stewards on the planet. I see things getting better and better. I'm very optimistic about the future, and I feel that any resistance that you refer to would be temporary and benign.

Kosa: John, the ecological business model that you've created – how do you see it affecting other businesses?

John: I'm glad you asked that question. I see its future becoming very popular. I see people wanting to be a part of this simply because of the ecological aspect of it. People are awakening to the fact that there is a limit to the amount of resources on our planet. We're now recognizing that there's a cause and effect relationship and that the resources are finite. So I see the ecological business we're doing becoming a positive influence and a positive model for others. I encourage other businesses to wake up to the possibilities of doing their business in an ecologically friendly way.

Kosa: So what has been your key in crossing cultural boundaries and developing partnerships in the Amazon that work?

John: It really comes down to following one's passion. I didn't set out in the beginning to cross cultural boundaries and set up personal relationships with Indigenous communities. In the beginning, I was following a passion of finding treasure. So that was the driving force that took me across the cultural boundaries, and it was then that I began to appreciate the cultural differences and be able to work with Indigenous communities based on trading and purchasing a variety of tribal artifacts, ceramics and blowguns and things like that. And I did that for years. So that was where the relationship really was formed and really grew. Then later, once I had a life-changing experience with their botanicals, we started talking about herbs and botanicals, and it opened up another entire layer of adventure, another layer to delve into. So if there is a key, I would just say – follow the passion, follow the trail. I just stumbled into this. I am very blessed, and very fortunate with all the things that have happened to me while following that trail. I never know exactly where that trail is going to lead. And in this case, it's led me beyond the gemstones and the tribal artifacts into these herbs, and into relationships with Indigenous communities, and now helping to reverse the effects of degenerative issues with peoples' health. So really, it just gets bigger and bigger. It's a matter of staying on track, and staying with the vision. Now we've got thousands of people with a shared vision and a shared mission and that's what's so encouraging. I can eat only so much herbage myself so I see some really good things happening now well beyond me.

Kosa: John, what is your vision and hope for the people in the Amazon? What is your big dream?

John: Well on the big side, we're probably in the most exciting point in history, and something of historical significance is going on now with the re-empowerment of the communities in the Amazon. What we're doing is empowering these communities to make new choices about their future. As they become more and more empowered, over the next 10 or 15 years, these communities could rise to the level of having such power and influence – they could be calling the shots. This is the next generation of empowerment that's just beginning to start now. I know it's going to play out in a very powerful and positive way.



MYTH FROM THE AMAZON

A Jungle Legend Weaves an Unforgettable Tale



The Secret of the Anaconda

the anaconda. The spiders will join the serpent's body with its head and will proceed to repair the cut by knitting it back together with their weaving abilities. When the body fat of the Anaconda is mixed with the web of the spiders, all signs of any cuts disappear — and the anaconda resumes life. The spiders return to the river. Then the anaconda goes deep into the jungle to a wet, dense habitat to look for its next prey.

Based on this knowledge, it is always recommended to bury the head of any anaconda you kill so that the spiders won't find it and bring it back to life.





Shipibo Ayahuasqueros Honor the Healing Energy of Plants

The shamans of the Peruvian Amazon refer to themselves as *curanderos*. Most *curanderos* use one or more plant “teachers” in their practices. A *curandero* who uses the ayahuasca plant is called an *ayahuasquero*.

In the Quechua Indian language, *aya* means spirit or ancestor and *huasca* means vine or rope. The ayahuasca vine is considered the most sacred plant in Peru. It takes many years of training and experience to become an accomplished *ayahuasquero*.

Alberto and Elisa are *ayahuasqueros*. They personally guided this year’s Rainforest Expedition through the medicine trail at the Amazon Herb Ecological

Reserve and introduced the group to plant energies found in the

Rainforest. Elisa sang the *icaros*, magical lyrics that offered protection to the group. Alberto offered a blessing and ritual with the sacred use of a special ayahuasca drink that he made for the occasion.



Elisa and Alberto are enthusiastic guides on the Reserve’s medicine trail.

Alberto is a dedicated third generation *ayahuasquero*.

Like his father and grandfather before him, he has been preparing himself since childhood to understand the special healing relationships between humans and plants. His wife, Elisa, has been an *ayahuasquero* for five years.

“The most important role for an *ayahuasquero*,” explains Alberto,



Elisa shows how to drink uña de gato fresh from the vine.



Alberto explains the importance of the ayahuasca brew for rituals and ceremonies.

“is to travel between different states of consciousness and to see clearly through our visions.” An *ayahuasquero* receives his healing skills from certain plant teachers who are believed to have a *madre* or mother force.

The *icaros* which Elisa sings so powerfully are an important part of their *ayahuasca* experience. The *icaros* are essential in communicating with the energy of the plant teachers and reinforce the *ayahuasca* ceremonies for healing or bringing good luck.

“Every tree, every plant has a spirit,” says Alberto. “Plants are live beings with their own character. A plant



The *ayahuasca* vine (*banisteriopsis caapi*) growing in the Rainforest.



Alberto looks up in a meditative moment to honor the healing energies of the Rainforest.



Elisa sings a captivating melody in the Shipibo language which offers protection.

may not talk but there is an energy in it that is conscious... that sees everything. It is the spirit of the plant, its essence, which makes it alive.”

It is for this reason that the Shipibo people ask permission before cutting any plants. Alberto tells the story of a group of Shipibo men who cut an old *ayahuasca* branch late one evening. After cutting the branch, the group suddenly saw a 70-year old man appear in front of them looking for his grandfather. He moved toward the cut branch and vanished before their eyes. The next day they learned that it was the spirit of the branch looking for its roots. According to Alberto, “this story reminds us that you must respect the plants and take the right action. You must believe that plants are special with unique healing energy.”

