



Preparing for Ayahuasca

A BEGINNERS GUIDE

For you...

the one who seeks communion with the Mother of The Forest.



Please do not use the following information as a substitute for conducting your own due diligence. This guide is meant to help support your preparation, develop the proper mindset, and ask the right questions. Please honor and respect whatever guidance and information is given to you by the Shaman / Facilitator of your choosing. Check it all with your own intuition and come to your own conclusions as to whether or not they are a good fit for you. Please understand the following information is being shared from my own thought process and experience.

Introduction

Receiving Ayahuasca is a very sacred initiation into yourself. First time journeyers have described their experience as significant as a loved one's death, the birth of a child, or any other life changing (positive or negative) event.

These sacraments have been around for thousands of years and have been used by Shamans for emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual healing.

If you're sitting with **Ayahuasca for the first time**, it's important to know a few things.

One, Ayahuasca is known by various names – Grandmother, Mother, Yage', The Great Medicine of the Forest, and Mother of the Forest, just to name a few. Depending on the culture, the name will be most appropriate to their language.

In the Quechua language, used mostly in Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia, "Aya" means death, "Huasca" means vine. Essentially the word means "The Vine of Death."



"Ayahuasca" does not mean physical death, but rather, death of the ego, which sometimes can feel like a physical death. It's the mind's assumption that interprets the experience as a physical death. The reason for this is due to our deep attachment and identity to the ego. While some journeyers experience this in ceremony, others may not.

It's important to know this so that one understands the power of this plant medicine.

Though it is known by many names, the medicine is made with the same plants – combining a Vine (Banisteriopsis caapi) with a Leaf (Psychotria viridis).

Prior to sitting in ceremony, you must feel comfortable with **where** the ceremony will take place, **how** the ceremony is conducted, and **who** are the Shaman(s) leading ceremony. If any one of these three elements are not in resonance with you, I would highly encourage you to wait. Find another opportunity where the criterion meets your comfort level.



Ayahuasca came into being by "telling" the Shamans which plants to use.

It's also said the Jaguars showed them the leaves that carried DMT by demonstrating hallucinogenic behavior.

How do I know if Ayahuasca is right for me?

It's a feeling. It's a calling. It's a pull. It's simply a knowing in your gut. No one can really tell you if it's right for you. You need to be in tune with yourself enough to know whether or not it's right for you.

With that said, I would also say that Ayahuasca can deeply benefit those who already have a spiritual practice in place.

For me, sitting in an Ayahuasca ceremony was a last resort. For 30 years I had been working on healing trauma, cultivating self-awareness, and doing all I could to help reprogram myself from destructive patterns.

I studied all of the spiritual paths – Zen Buddhism, A Course In Miracles, Shamanism, Nature Spirituality, Quantum Mechanics, Metaphysics. I went to all of the workshops, participated in all of the meditation circles, sat in drumming circles, took classes and read books about how to heal my inner child. You name it, I did it.

I share this because one, I think it's very important that a person has a solid spiritual and self-awareness practice **BEFORE** sitting in ceremony. And two, I wanted to demonstrate that sometimes we can do everything in our power to heal and the breakthroughs still won't come.

I knew there was more inner potential, healing, clarity, and understanding that I just simply could not get to. I felt like there was a wall I couldn't breakthrough. That is why I felt sitting in ceremony was right for me. And sure enough . . . I was right. :)

When a person understands that Ayahuasca is not a quick fix and an end to their problems, but rather, a step in their journey to further their healing, then sitting in ceremony might be a good option. Again, every person must decide for themselves.

On the other hand, I would strongly discourage anyone who wants to sit in ceremony as a way to "trip" or because they think it would be a cool thing to do.

What happens in an Ayahuasca ceremony?

Each ceremony varies due to the differences among Shamans / Facilitators and their traditions and culture.

As far as the ceremony itself, there are several basic components that are included in a traditional ceremony. At the beginning, sacred space is opened. About 30 – 45 minutes after the ayahuasca has been received, the Shaman will begin singing Icaros (prayer songs), musical instruments may be played, and other sacraments such as Hape' or Sananga may be offered throughout the ceremony.

Depending on the Shaman, a ceremony can last up to six hours or it can go through the entire night until morning. Some traditions will hold ceremony during the day and end at sundown.

For the journeyer, four things can happen. One, they will purge through crying, vomiting, diarrhea, laughing, or yawning. Two, they will see visions, receive messages, be shown memories in need of healing, and / or be taken to a consciousness of pure bliss and love. Third, a combination of the first two will occur. Four, nothing can happen.



Let me say a few things about “nothing can happen.” That’s not entirely true. Just because one may not experience any sensations or see visions during the actual ceremony, doesn’t mean they are not receiving benefit. When Ayahuasca is within you, so is her Spirit, Wisdom, and Healing Power.

What questions should I ask the Shaman / Facilitator?

The following questions are simply a guide to help you get started in the conversation. If you have other questions or topics of concern, please bring them to their attention.

- 1.) How long have you personally been sitting with Ayahuasca?
- 2.) How long have you been pouring and facilitating ceremony for others?
- 3.) Who makes the Ayahuasca? Where does it come from? How consistent are the batches?
- 4.) Is there anything added in other than the leaf and vine? (If so, that can be a red flag. Do more research and ask exactly what else has been added.)
- 5.) Do you taste or test the brew before serving?
- 6.) Who are your teachers? What lineage(s) are you connected to or work closely with?
- 7.) Where have you trained?
- 8.) How many journeyers do you allow in each ceremony? (I have sat with nearly 50 in a room and 10 in a room. My personal preference are the smaller groups.)
- 9.) What is the ceremony setting like? Are the lights on / off? Are people allowed to talk during ceremony? Will ceremony be inside or outside?
- 10.) What do I need to bring to ceremony?
- 11.) How is ceremony conducted start to finish?
- 12.) How long does ceremony last?
- 13.) Will you have assistants helping you? If so, how many? What is their training? How long have they assisted you?
- 14.) Will there be bathrooms? Buckets? Tissues?
- 15.) Are other sacraments / plant medicines served during the ceremony? If so, what?
- 16.) How should I best prepare for ceremony?
- 17.) Can anyone receive Ayahuasca? (If they say yes, that is a huge red flag because not everyone can sit. If the person has physical health issues, on prescription medications, or has mental health issues, it is strongly advised for that person **NOT** to sit in ceremony.)
- 18.) What happens if I struggle during ceremony? Will there be someone to help me work through difficult parts of the journey?
- 19.) Will there be integration afterwards? How long is support offered?
- 20.) Who will be facilitating integration?

One of the most important questions you should be asking is, "How is the Ayahuasca made and who made it?"

*Remember, ayahuasca is made from only a vine and a leaf. If other additives are used, be careful. Ask what they are and **do your research.***



The majority of folks seeking the healing medicine of Ayahuasca are usually challenged by trauma and unresolved pain. With that, comes difficulty in listening and trusting their own truth and intuition. Therefore, while it may be obvious, I still wanted to point out how a reputable Shaman should treat you and how you should feel throughout the conversation with them.

Whomever you speak with should demonstrate the following:

- 1.) Interest in your questions
- 2.) Transparency
- 3.) Openness and willingness to be of service
- 4.) Presence
- 5.) Compassion for your concerns around safety and comfortability
- 6.) Patience and sensitive to your questions
- 7.) Knowledgeable and competent
- 8.) Connection to the medicine

How you should feel when speaking to the Shaman:

- 1.) At ease
- 2.) Respected
- 3.) Understood
- 4.) Validated
- 5.) Seen
- 6.) A sense of shared connection
- 7.) Free to ask any and all questions
- 8.) Trust when sharing concerns and / or fears

If the energy exchange between you and the Shaman / Facilitator feels off, disconnected, or just not right, then please listen to that and take it as a sign as it not being the right opportunity for you.

However, if you feel good about the conversation, yet you still have a little fear, that is okay. Nervousness is to be expected. What is most important is your feeling positive in your communication exchange. If that's so, then please acknowledge it as a sign to further explore sitting in their ceremony space.



Did you know that Jaguar is the spiritual symbol of Ayahuasca?

Planning ahead

Part of the preparation process is, after ceremony, ensuring you're not racing back into your life. If you have a family, you may ask for their support in allowing you a little extra time after arriving home.

If you have work responsibilities, you may want to include in your time off a few days to ensure proper time for processing and integration.

How you spend your days after ceremony are as equally as important as how you spend your days leading up to ceremony.

Cultivating the right mindset

Sitting in ceremony is a special gift from Pachamama. Our intention is everything when it comes to working with Ayahuasca or any of the Plant Teachers. The more humble, grateful, and respectful we are towards the medicine, the more it will show up as medicine.

If our intention is one of apathy, indifference, or unappreciation, then we may be in for a difficult journey or no journey at all.

It's vitally important we understand and show gratitude for the traditions by which this medicine has been served. This isn't a "trip" or an escape. It is a deep dive into one's own soul and psyche. That's why we put so much energy and effort into the preparation process and even into the integration process long after ceremony is over.

This path is not for everyone. Sitting in ceremony is a huge responsibility. If you're prepared to take on everything that comes with it, the healing you receive can be profound and lifelong.

Your responsibilities include:

- Adhering to proper dieta prior to sitting – this will be given to you by the Shaman
- Ensuring your comfortability. Do your due diligence.
- Research the ceremonial setting. If possible, talk to others who have sat in the ceremonial space
- Educating yourself about the history and spiritual traditions of Ayahuasca
- Become familiar with the indigenous ways
- Cultivating a mindful and thoughtful approach to sitting in ceremony
- Become clear on why you're being called to sit in ceremony
- Honoring the ceremonial space and how the ceremony is conducted
- Always giving gratitude to the Shamans, Ayahuasca, and all aspects of the ceremony

What is in my control?

Remember, there are four aspects to your journey with Ayahuasca – the Shaman, Ceremonial Space, Ayahuasca, and You. While there are many aspects outside of your control, there are many aspects within your control. . .

- The quality of your mindset
- Your ability to let go of judgments and expectations
- The time you spend preparing
- How you connect with the medicine prior to ceremony
- Staying grounded in your spiritual practice
- Continuing to work through your issues before, during and after ceremony
- Reminding yourself to breathe once the medicine has taken effect
- Surrender to the entire process
- Allow the experience to be what it will be

How Should I Set My Intention?

Honestly, the only intention I would ever set is . . . “allow the truth to be revealed in whatever way I need to see it”. The medicine is going to do what it is going to do. If you knew what you needed, most likely, you wouldn’t need to sit in ceremony. Be careful not to over think it. Be mindful to not get too grandiose in your intention.

I remember when I sat for the first time. Truthfully, I was scared out of my mind. Yet, I knew I was a mess and I needed help. I just didn’t know how exactly this medicine would help me or what to expect.

So instead of setting an intention, I created a prayer . . . “*Grandmother* (Grandmother is another name for Ayahuasca) *please be gentle with me but also, please be thorough.*”

Since my first experience, I’ve continued my relationship with her. And each time, my prayer has been the same.

My friend, I wish you a good journey. Remember, it’s okay to be nervous. It’s even okay to be completely freaked out. If you’ve done your due diligence, checked all of the boxes, and you feel good about your decision to sit, then that is what you must do. I wish you all of the best and I look forward to seeing you on the other side! Aho!

** If you would like to receive my “**Ceremony is over. Now what?**” to help you process and integrate your ceremony, please contact me through my website and we will be happy to send you a complimentary copy.