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TRAVEL

Ayahuasca Tourism Is Ripping Off Indigenous Amazonians

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Increasingly over the past decade, Westerners have flocked to the Amazon for a taste of the region's most notorious elixir: ayahuasca. In the jungle, the plant mixture is the "vine of the soul" or the "vine of the dead," depending on who you ask. In the United States, it's a Schedule 1 drug. It's been popularized as mind-blowing, life-altering, universe-opening—an experience that has no comparison.

Ayahuasca attracts Westerners to the Amazon for all kinds of reasons. Some are searching for their next big spiritual awakening; some want to be healed of serious illnesses and addictions. Others try it to recover from debilitating grief, to combat anxiety, or just to get high on the holy grail of drugs. And to meet up with the demand, hundreds of ayahuasca retreats, scattered across the Amazon from Peru to Brazil, stand waiting for the next eager tourist.

But while Westerners delight in the drug's intoxicating powers, not all Amazonians are pleased with the rise of ayahuasca tourism.

Vidal Jaquehua, a Quechua native, worries about the way ayahuasca tourism is changing his home. Born and raised in the highlands of Cusco, Peru, Jaquehua runs a tour company called Adios Adventure Travel but made a conscious decision not to offer ayahuasca retreats, despite outsider interest.

"The name tells us that [it] is the vine of dead, so you don't play with it," Jaquehua told me. "We don't offer those kind of trips because we do respect our people, the costumes, traditions, and believe there are rituals that are practiced all over the world that need to be understood and respected."

Jaquehua's philosophy has always been to "let the people practice it, and don't make a business out of it." But plenty of others—both foreign and native—have gone ahead and done just that, opening ayahuasca retreats that sometimes administer the potent vine to tourists without the proper study, caution, and care.

"As ayahuasca has become more and more popular with foreign tourists—and at the same time, less and less popular with the Indians themselves—we have found that pseudo shamans have sprung up everywhere to cater for the demand," said Valerie Meikle, a Reiki master and holistic healer who lives outside of Leticia, Colombia, and who's seen the rise of pseudo-shamans in the area. "This means that the ayahuasca rituals have obviously lost some of their original power and very often the ceremony is adapted to suit foreigners who are ready to pay high prices on low-quality rituals."

It's these types of business ventures that have some indigenous rights' groups concerned. Cultural Survival, a Massachusetts-based nonprofit that partners with native peoples to protect their cultures, is among those voicing opposition to ayahuasca tourism.

"Ayahuasca is a spiritual cultural practice that is rooted in specific cultures and should not be commercialized and exploited, but protected [as] a private community sacred practice," said Agnes Portalewska, Cultural Survival's communications manager.

While some argue that the commercialization of ayahuasca has bastardized the ritual, others claim that it's brought much needed attention to the region. The renewed interest in ayahuasca has fueled a cultural renaissance of sorts, as more young locals are taking interest in old, somewhat forgotten traditions. And the rise of ayahuasca retreats has brought in much-needed money to one of poorest regions in the world. Entire towns like Iquitos, in Peru, have re-built their economies on ayahuasca tourism, and Peru as a whole has proclaimed the vine a part of its cultural heritage.

"Being Amazonian is not any warranty that the person in question is qualified or has good intentions," said Luis Eduardo Luna, an anthropologist and ayahuasca researcher who was born in the Colombian Amazon. "Conversely, being non-Amazonian, from any region or country, does not mean that the person is doing sessions mainly for financial gain. In our global world, anybody can learn anything and be able to teach it to others."

But it's still worth asking: Who's ultimately benefitting from this, and where are the proceeds going?

"The indigenous groups of the Amazon are some of the poorest and most marginalized peoples on the planet," said Lesly Vela, who works for the UK-Colombian nonprofit Yageceros, which aims to preserve the traditional culture of indigenous groups in the Colombian Amazon. While many shamans (both foreign and native, real and pseudo) employ indigenous peoples and contribute to the local community, many others don't.

"The growth of ayahuasca tourism and its popularity in the West has the potential to address these issues, but only if we accept the responsibility and work together," Vela

said. "It is also making some people very rich, yet the indigenous communities where these practices originated continue to live in poverty and at risk from various environmental and social issues."

Ayahuasca's rise to folklorish proportions has brought along the ideals, expectations, and stereotypes that Western consumers associate with it. Some locals, in an effort to meet tourist demands, have altered their traditions to conform to a foreign-constructed image, even if it betrays the authenticity of their culture. Even as early as 1999, a declaration from the Union of Indigenous Ayahuasca Healers of the Colombian Amazon noted that "even some of our own indigenous brothers do not respect the value of our medicine and go around misleading people, selling our symbols in towns and cities."

Other locals, whose indigenous cultures did not originally include ayahuasca are following foreigners' lead and adopting the tradition as a way to profit. Native appropriation of this kind has been expanding across the Amazon.

Jaquehua points to his hometown of Cusco as one example: "When a local sees a sign of ayahuasca ceremonies, [they] say, 'Isn't that a ritual done just in the jungle?' People will do anything to get money."

SOURCE: https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/qbn8vq/ayahuasca-tourism-is-ripping-off-indigenous-amazonians

1 – Sobre a ayahuasca **NÃO** é correto afirmar:

a) É possível de ser encontrada em retiros que se estendem do território peruano ao brasileiro.
b) Atrai a chegada de turistas na Amazônia.
c) É usada para fins medicinais nos Estados Unidos.
d) Pode causar efeitos psicoativos em quem experimentá-la.

2 - A partir do excerto *"[...] But while Westerners delight in the drug's intoxicating powers, not all Amazonians are pleased with the rise of ayahuasca tourism"*, é possível concluir:

a) Embora a ayahuasca também seja usada em cerimônias ritualísticas, o autor do texto a considera uma droga.
b) Orientais usam ayahuasca com intuitos recreacionais.
c) O consumo de ayahuasca por estrangeiros é uma alternativa amplamente aceita entre os habitantes da Amazônia.
d) Nem todos os amazonenses apreciam a ayahuasca.

3 – Entre as prioridades do empresário peruano com atuação no ramo de turismo, Vidal Jaquehua, estão todas alternativas abaixo, **exceto**:

a) Respeitar seu povo, costumes e tradições.
b) Abrir retiros onde a ayahuasca seja consumida sob o devido estudo e precaução.
c) Não transformar a ayahuasca em negócio.
d) Não atender aos pedidos de clientes estrangeiros quando aqueles comprometerem a cultura local.

4 – Qual das relações abaixo é **falsa** segundo os depoimentos dos críticos do turismo da ayahuasca:

a) A ayahuasca tem se tornado cada vez mais popular entre estrangeiros e cada vez menos entre indígenas.
b) O aumento de falsos xamãs implica na perda de poder dos rituais com ayahuasca.
c) Os críticos do turismo da ayahuasca trabalham para instituições governamentais.
d) Turistas pagam preços altos por cerimônias ritualísticas de baixa qualidade.

5 – Um dos argumentos usados pelos defensores do turismo da ayahuasca é:

a) A promoção de atividades ocupacionais para os idosos.
b) O interesse dos estrangeiros na cultura local.
c) O desenvolvimento econômico de regiões pobres.
d) A ayahuasca também pode ser usada como combustível.

6 – No excerto *"in our global world, anybody can learn anything and be able to teach it to others."*, o fenômeno da globalização destacado pelo antropólogo Luis Eduardo Luna **NÃO** está relacionado a:

a) Estabelecimento de fronteiras bem estabelecidas entre as nações.
b) Advento de novas tecnologias.
c) O livre deslocamento associado com a figura do turista.
d) A influência de práticas globais no espaço local e vice-versa.

7 – De acordo com Lesly Vela:

a) Os índios da Amazônia estão entre os mais populosos e marginalizados do mundo.
b) O turismo da ayahuasca requer responsabilidade e trabalho coletivo.
c) A comercialização da ayahuasca tem sido benéfica para os indígenas.
d) Alguns indígenas têm promovido a inserção de xamãs no turismo da ayahuasca.

8 – Sobre o turismo da ayahuasca é **falso** afirmar:

a) Os habitantes da Amazônia têm adaptado características de sua cultura para atender a demanda estrangeira.
b) Nem todos os indígenas respeitam as tradições em torno da ayahuasca.
c) Não trair a autenticidade de sua cultura é uma das prioridades dos indígenas ao lidar com o turismo da ayahuasca.
d) A ayahuasca já tem sido comercializada na zona urbana.

9 – Todas as opções abaixo trazem características do turismo da ayahuasca, de acordo com o texto, exceto:

a) Alguns xamãs geram empregos para indígenas em seus retiros espirituais.
b) Pessoas têm se tornado bastante ricas ao usar a ayahuasca para fins econômicos.
c) Indígenas cuja cultura não inclui o uso da ayahuasca passaram a se apropriar da tradição visando lucro.
d) Alguns grupos sem fins lucrativos controlam o acesso de estrangeiros às cerimônias que envolvem a ayahuasca.

10 – No trecho *"When a local sees a sign of ayahuasca ceremonies, [they] say, 'Isn't that a ritual done just in the jungle?' People will do anything to get money."*, um nativo da cidade de Cusco no Peru:

a) Reclama da manutenção de cerimônias religiosas apenas na selva.
b) Critica os métodos utilizados por pessoas para obter lucro.
c) Exige que a ayahuasca seja consumida somente em rituais.
d) Lamenta por não ser convidado a participar da cerimônia.

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