

# Preparation for The Healing Retreat

*A Guide on How to Prepare for  
Healing with Ayahuasca*

# Why Preparation is So Important

Comprehensive preparation for working with ayahuasca and a resolute commitment to ongoing integration after your retreat are *as important as* the healing you will experience whilst at the Temple. It is critical that you commit at the deepest level possible to the advice contained in this document – before, during and after your retreat – in order to ensure your healing experience is positive, safe and sustained over the long term.

Many people from the West who are new to ayahuasca come with a misconception of the way the medicine works. There is no ‘quick fix’ when awakening to higher aspects of consciousness or alleviating long-term pain and suffering. We can never offer any guarantees regarding healing, but we do sincerely and wholeheartedly promise to always try our best.

Indigenous traditions have worked with ayahuasca for thousands of years and have never viewed it as a quick fix or a recreational experience. However, ayahuasca and the healing traditions of the Amazon are often able to offer a significant intervention into chronic emotional/psycho-spiritual imbalances and, sometimes, physical health conditions. It is fundamentally a transformational pathway to integrate and release the causes of pain and suffering.

Ayahuasca is a powerful cleansing and purifying medicine that can rid the body of physical impurities, the mind and body of emotional blockages and self-limiting fear-filled patterns that have accumulated over a lifetime, as well as retrieve fragmented aspects of one’s soul due to past traumatic events. The medicine is also a teacher who initiates or accelerates us into a lifelong journey of continual self-discovery, deep personal transformation and remembrance of the divine within us all.

The Temple's ayahuasca retreats are an opportunity to rebalance, cleanse and learn about your true self. You will need personal integrity and courage as you will face the whole of yourself, including 'shadow aspects'. Although it is impossible to predict what you might experience with the medicine, it is essential to understand that ayahuasca brings the experiences of your inner world into your conscious awareness; this includes the 'shadows' within that lie at the root of disorder, imbalance, suffering and pain. We are deeply committed to providing a safe and caring environment to support you in anything that might arise.

The best way to approach ayahuasca is to develop a relationship *with* the medicine and not seek to simply *take* the medicine. When working with ayahuasca in a healthy manner, you enter into a relationship of reciprocity – *receiving* the healing and teachings, and *giving back* through taking responsibility for your 'shadow,' a long-term commitment to change, courage to face your fears, and a willingness to find and offer your gifts to the world.

True transformation, personal growth and evolution are marked by gradual and grounded changes requiring sustained conscious awareness and actualization. Working with ayahuasca can be a highly beneficial spiritual practice that activates evolutionary healing, provided your intent and approach are sincere. The ceremonial experience itself is only one component of the healing experience, no matter how powerful or profound. Comprehensive preparation and total dedication to the integration period afterwards are as equally important as the healing experienced during ceremony.

## Preparing to Face Your Shadow

Workshops at the Temple can be intense and often one of the most challenging yet ultimately rewarding experiences of your life. An ayahuasca retreat can be considered 'boot camp' healing – it takes courage to face your shadow.

Our shadow is everything inside us that we have disowned, avoided and kept in the dark. We all turn away from pain at some stage in our life, especially during our

childhoods, yet whatever we have not processed gets relegated and hidden in our shadow. Our shadow is where our life force gets trapped and is no longer available to us. It is energy that is not integrated with the rest of our being, akin to pieces of us that have become compartmentalized, pushed aside and treated as an unwanted child. Shadow work is counter-habitual: we turn towards pain, not away from pain. We access that place of pain within us and slowly bring it into the open, become acquainted and then intimate with it, until the estranged pain is not a dreaded “it”, but a reclaimed “us”.

There is a well-known Sufi story about Mullah Nasr Id'n, out at night under a street lamp on his hands and knees, frantically searching. A friend comes along and asks: *“What are you doing?”* The Mullah replies: *“I am searching for my keys”*. His friend asks: *“You lost them under the light?”* The Mullah looks up, grinning and replies: *“No, actually, I lost them over in those dark bushes by the door, but the light here is so much better for seeing.”*

Ayahuasca healing is a journey to the heart of what really matters – an opportunity to face and integrate our shadow, transmuting trapped energies and making them available for life-affirming purposes. The medicine helps us search for the keys where they have been lost: in the darkness. True healing with ayahuasca can be very hard work, requiring courage, determination and commitment to your healing journey. Ayahuasca is also an amplifier that will bring to the surface patterns and programs that do not serve you. Ayahuasca is not a recreational ‘drug’ taken for entertainment, relaxation or escapism. The medicine does not allow us to suppress issues and escape reality. In fact, quite the opposite is typically the case. Ayahuasca compels us to face, resolve and release issues that have been buried throughout our lives.

Our healing work at the Temple is to clean, clear and transform trapped energies that hold you back in life, cause emotional distress and create perpetual discomfort that often manifests as ‘dis-ease’. Surrendering to the healing process is essential to cleansing and integrating painful memories, deeply embedded emotional blockages, energetic imprints and self-limiting patterns. It is the accumulation of suppressed memories, blocked emotions and energetic imprints that prevent us re-discovering our ‘true self’ and living a life filled with joy, abundance and inner peace.

During and after the process, perseverance, courage, a strong will, and patience all significantly facilitate the healing journey. The results are highly beneficial with the end goal to come back into alignment with our true nature, find balance between our heart and mind, balance between our sub-conscious, conscious and super-conscious selves, and to re-awaken self-respect, self-worth and ultimately, self-love.

*“Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it.”- Rumi*

# Pre-Retreat Preparation Tips

## 1. Intention

Consider: Why are you seeking this medicine? Your intention is your mantra, focus and thread to the material realm. It can help you keep focus while engaged with this deep work and is the most important first step of integration. Of course your intention may change, but it is the initial work in a meaningful, empowered and transformational encounter with this sacred plant medicine.

Ayahuasca will show you many things, but you can also ask her *what* to show you. Further, when trying to understand and make meaning of your experience with this medicine, you will find your original intention a helpful reference. If you simply ask the medicine to “teach me”, you may get a confusing – albeit potent – lesson, so it is best to ask for something more specific so the lesson can be translated with more clarity.

## 2. Developing and Fine-tuning Your Intention

Consider: What do you need? Where are you stuck? What do you want to know about yourself? Are you in a relationship that is causing you to suffer? Are you looking for resolution with something? Do you need clarity? Do you want to believe in something bigger or love yourself more?

Whatever your questions, find the ones that are the most deeply present for you and write them down. Let them sit for a few days, perhaps on your altar and begin to feel into their potency. If you have a meditation practice, perhaps use some of your sitting time to reflect on your list of intentions.

## 3. Intention Object

Power stick, power object, wand, crystals, photos: Bringing something powerful with you to the Temple from home that you make while considering your intention can be useful to keep your intention alive. After finding your intention for this work, see what objects

call you, or what creations you feel compelled to craft/make, to concretize your intention into something tangible that you can carry with you as a reminder, or a tether, to yourself as you are now.

#### 4. Meditation Practice and the Preparation *Dieta*

For at least two weeks prior to ceremony, it is vital to clear the mind and body of as many impurities, poisons and intrusions as possible, so you may approach this deep work with your energy intact and strong. In addition, this will help your endurance for the long nights in meditation with the medicine.

If you are a seasoned mediator, sit for your longest sustainable time, every day leading up to your arrival at the Temple. If you are a beginner, or new to meditation, try sitting for 10 minutes a day and working up to a half hour over the two weeks. The Temple has clearly outlined the *dieta* in this document and elsewhere. It is to be taken seriously and followed to the absolute best of your ability – especially regarding medicinal supplements.

#### 5. Take Care of Business, or TCB!

Before leaving for your time at the Temple, take care of as much business as you can, ideally leaving a solid two-week window for preparation without business chaos interfering. Before your two-week final preparation, take care of all those lingering details, such as finances, emails, bills, washing the car, making arrangements with the cat-sitter...

Before you depart, clean your home or your room, so that when you return there isn't a pile of dirty clothes on your bed and a stack of overdue bills on your table. You are preparing now for your return, so create a soft, safe and clear space for when you land. As you will notice, what is without is also reflected within, so a clean space will provide a sense of inner calm that allows you to focus your energies on integration when you get home.

#### 6. Community

Begin thinking about your community: Do you have allies to share this work with? Do you have a psychotherapist who is friendly with this type of work? Are your family and friends sympathetic to your spiritual process? If so, let those closest to you know that you are embarking on this venture into the Amazon and into your self. Ask them to hold

you in their heart, perhaps light a candle for you on the days that you are with the medicine, and/or to pray for you (or however you choose to express these requests).

This work is deep and it requires support, as does all deep psycho-spiritual work. Letting your loved ones know about your work provides them with an opportunity to help you prepare and deepens your support network for when you return and integrate.

## 7. Nature

This last point is so important it should almost be mandatory: If possible, spend time in nature. If you live in a city where nature is hard to find, research botanical gardens, greenhouses and Zen gardens in your area. Take long walks in the woods, on the beach, whatever landscape calls you. This will provide your body and mind an opportunity to relax and help to establish a deeper connection to yourself, outside the noise and movement of life. All of which is vital to setting your intentions and all aspects of preparation.

## 8. Post-Workshop Planning

In planning your trip, realize that you will be extremely open and sensitive in the days immediately following your retreat. Joining a raucous group tour or immediately diving back into your hectic schedule are probably not ideal situations. Try to build in some quiet time in a beautiful location -- a few days in Iquitos (although it's not everyone's idea of beautiful), a jungle retreat (sans further ayahuasca ceremonies), or some time in Peru's Sacred Valley outside Cusco.

If your home base supports serenity, head back there after a few days, and keep your schedule light for as long as possible. Time in nature, deep connection with understanding loved ones, and quiet time for reflection are the kind of things you'll be craving. Supportive practices like yoga and meditation will be very welcome in the integration process.

# Your Commitments

## The *Dieta*

One of the most important aspects of working with ayahuasca is adhering to a honored tradition of following a special diet in order to prepare not just the body, but also the mind and soul to incorporate the healing energy of ayahuasca. This diet also shows the spirit of ayahuasca your intention, and is a test of discipline and commitment.

The central aspects of the diet we follow at the Temple are common to the teachings of all *ayahuasquero/as* across the Peruvian Amazon. In the case of some of the food restrictions, there is also definitive scientific evidence that they are essential for safety. On a physical level, ayahuasca inhibits the action of the enzyme monoamine oxidase (MAO) in the body. While MAO is inhibited, compounds that the enzyme would normally break down could accumulate in the body to toxic levels, causing headaches and other medical issues. Foods containing these compounds are to be avoided.

We advise you to begin the diet at least two weeks before a retreat (9-day, 12-day and 1- month) and to continue the diet for at least two weeks after the last ceremony. It is essential to continue the diet to ensure the *ikaros* you have received and any possible plant remedies you are prescribed, are given sufficient time to integrate.

**Please abstain from the following prior to, during, and after your retreat:**

Two Weeks Before & After:

- Pork
- Sexual activities of any kind, including masturbation
- Alcohol
- Marijuana
- All street drugs (cocaine, MDMA, amphetamines, etc.) – obligatory for your safety
- Spicy foods



- Ice, ice cream, or ice cold drinks

One Week Before & After:

- Refined sugars
- Red meat
- Junk foods
- Salt or pepper
- Sweets or chocolate
- Oils (if you must use oil, use olive or coconut oil very sparingly)
- Animal fats (lard, etc.)
- Carbonated drinks (including diet sodas, energy drinks, non-alcoholic beer)
- Dairy products
- Fermented foods
- Caffeine & other stimulants

Additional restrictions:

- **IMPORTANT:** Please contact us if you are currently taking any medication or supplements.
- Ayahuasca is not compatible with pregnancy.
- If you will be menstruating during the retreat, please inform your facilitators when you arrive.
- Avoidance of synthetic soaps, perfumes, toiletries, etc.

By eliminating the previous items from your diet, you will prepare your body physically for the ayahuasca journey, and perhaps also reducing the amount of purging needed to clean your physical body. In addition to the physical aspects, by showing your commitment and determination to ayahuasca and the master plants, you are creating the foundations of your relationship with them and offering them the respect that is essential for this work.

***Critical Note:*** Due to a very limited number of past guests who have not adhered to dietary restrictions after leaving a workshop, we need to re-emphasize that maintaining the diet is an absolutely essential factor in the healing process.

**The three most fundamental restrictions after a workshop are street drugs (cocaine, ecstasy, LSD, etc.), sexual activity, and pork. If a guest decides to not adhere to this critical advice after leaving the Temple, we cannot be held liable for the consequences (which can be severe psychological and energetic damage).**

**Please consider the work of the healers like a ‘healing mirror’ that is delicately woven onto the system of our guests. In the first two weeks immediately preceding a workshop, if the three key restrictions are not adhered to, then the mirror can be ‘smashed.’ To repair the mirror and the potentially fractured psyche is then an extremely difficult process.**

Other Recommendations:

We strongly advise you to practice breathing exercises, yoga and/or meditation, as they are very compatible with the medicine work and highly supportive in the healing process.

The safety aspect of the diet, although obviously important, is far from the whole reason for following the *dieta*. The *dieta* is also crucial to your psychological and spiritual preparation for the experience and also begins to cleanse the body.

Foods we do enjoy during a general workshop:

At the Temple, we provide a simple diet of chicken, fish, rice, fresh vegetables, legumes, fruit, salads, eggs, oats, herbal teas, and fresh smoothies and juices.

## Managing Expectations

With the initial work focused on cleansing and purifying your physical body to prepare you for the next stages, one quite reasonable expectation is that you will experience a strong purge (hence the name given to ayahuasca, “*La Purga*”). The purge is an important part of the ceremony experience, yet not everyone purges in the first ceremonies.

The purge usually takes the form of vomiting, but sometimes takes the form of diarrhea. It is an energetic cleansing that will help clear vibrational imprints and emotional blockages as well as physical toxins. Many people purge strongly in their initial ceremony experiences, and move into deeper experiences as these blockages are removed. Other people experience the reverse: they do not purge early on but have cleansing purges in later experiences.

Some people have unrealistically high expectations of their first ceremonies. If you do not have any visions in your first ceremonies, this is not unusual. Breathtaking visions at an early stage are rare, although each person is different. You may also see a proliferation of colors, lights, geometric patterns and/or animals. These are actually somewhat peripheral to the medicine work: the more profound healing work is taking place on deeper levels. Please remember we are a healing center and not a tripping center!

It is impossible to outline exactly what will happen on your personal inner journey. Everyone is different and will go through a deeply personal experience. Even though things may become difficult, there are no 'bad' experiences. The most challenging experiences are opportunities for profound transformation and deep healing. No ceremony is ever the same as another, and even the most seasoned participant cannot predict what direction their experience will take.

## Items to Bring

- Flashlight with a red-light setting for walking from your mat to the toilet during ceremony
- Journal/art supplies
- Light/spiritual books
- Rain jacket
- Rain boots (*strongly recommended* for the hike through the jungle to the Temple)
- Loose, lightweight clothing (quick-dry or bamboo is best)
- Swimsuit
- Flip flops or athletic wet/dry sandals (such as Chacos, Crocs)
- Sunglasses, sun hat
- Compostable feminine products

- Biodegradable soap and cosmetic products
- Mosquito repellent
- Sunblock
- Water bottle
- Lighter
- Batteries (please take used batteries back home with you as they cannot be safely disposed of in Peru)
- We will provide bed linens, a blanket, and a towel.

**Some helpful things to bring to ceremony:**

- Your flashlight with a red-light setting for going to the toilet
- Sweater/sweatshirt (nights can be cool)
- Your blanket and pillow from your tambo (which we provide)
- Long-sleeved shirts and long pants (to protect you from the occasional mosquito that finds its way into the maloka)

**Additional notes:**

- Please bring your belongings in a backpack that we can carry from the river. A suitcase is much more difficult for the porters to carry through the jungle from the port to the Temple.
- We advise you to bring long-sleeved shirts and pants to wear after 5pm, as this is the time when mosquitoes are more prevalent. If you are coming in the wet season (November through April), the number of mosquitoes will be higher. All of our buildings (including all *tambos*) are protected by mosquito netting to help ensure your comfort.
- We offer a laundry service that typically takes two to three days, depending on weather conditions.
- If you would like to leave behind any books or art supplies for future guests at the Temple, we would be very grateful.

## Vaccinations

Although you may be advised that a large number of vaccinations are needed for travel to Peru, yellow-fever vaccination is not obligatory for travel to this region and the disease is very rare around Iquitos. Hepatitis A and typhoid are a small danger, not at the Temple itself but these water- and food-borne diseases can be contracted in Lima or Iquitos. You are personally responsible for the decision on which vaccinations to receive.

Here are the suggested vaccines you would need from the Center for Disease Control: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/peru.aspx>. Remember that the CDC follows the conventional medical paradigm, and is deeply embedded in the pharmaceutical industry, which is very much out of alignment with the healing model promoted at the Temple. The side effects of the vaccines are varied and sometimes very unpleasant.

Both forms of malaria (*plasmodium vivax* and *plasmodium falciparum*) occasionally occur in our area. Though malaria is normally not a high risk, attention to preventative measures is entirely your choice. Ideally, it is better to work without these measures when drinking ayahuasca although this must be your decision.

If you decide to take anti-malaria medication, we strongly advise *against* using Lariam (Mefloquine) due to the potential effects on mental health.<sup>2</sup> Doxycycline is also *not recommended* as a malaria preventative in conjunction with ayahuasca. Note that some antimalarial medications, such as Lariam, have been associated with neuropsychiatric effects including anxiety, hallucinations, depression, unusual behavior, and suicidal ideation, which could be particularly problematic if you are going to drink ayahuasca.

If you feel that you want to take pharmaceutical anti-malaria medication, Malarone shows no contraindications when taken in conjunction with ayahuasca. Please seek professional medical advice on preparations, including vaccinations, for the journey to Peru and keep us updated if you begin with any new medications.

# Preparation Practices

## Mindfulness

What is Mindfulness?

At its core, the concept of mindfulness is very simple. To be mindful means that you are paying attention to your experience, in the present moment, without judging it. So, whatever it is that you are doing, feeling or thinking, if you approach it mindfully then you are attending to it in a non-judgmental, open and gentle manner. It does not matter if your experience is pleasant (feeling happy, for example), unpleasant (grieving a loss, enduring physical pain) or neutral (commuting on a bus, washing the dishes). Whatever is happening, being mindful means you are able to be with that experience, and to observe it with curiosity. In other words, you can accept the situation you are in without fighting it or wishing it was different. As we will see, cultivating this mindful attitude towards our lives brings profound benefits. It is also extremely supportive of the ayahuasca experience.

### Being in the Present

If you really pay attention to what is going on in your mind, from moment to moment, you will probably notice that you tend to spend a lot of time ruminating over the past or worrying about and planning for the future. Thoughts about what happened yesterday or 20 years ago play on a repeated loop, and without realising it you can get lost in this vortex of memory, often wishing things were different and imagining better outcomes for yourself. Or, you might notice that instead of actually paying attention to whatever it is you are presently doing, you are worrying about an upcoming meeting or planning your day tomorrow, or even imagining where you will be in 10 years' time and if you will have achieved all your goals by then. This tendency to be absorbed in past and future thinking is problematic because it distracts us from what is actually happening, creates inner stress and tension and separates us from our innate wisdom. It is not that remembering the past or planning for the future are inherently bad for us, it is just that we tend to overuse this mode of thinking at the expense of *being here now*. And this diminishes our ability to connect to the pulse of life and to tune in to what it has to teach us.

So, how can mindfulness help us access present-centred awareness? Mindfulness helps us notice when we are being seduced into thoughts of the past or future (even if

they are random thoughts or daydreams). Then, as soon as we are aware that we have been distracted by these thoughts, we are able to acknowledge the distraction, let it go, and come back to the present moment. We can enter the moment by focusing on something that is happening now: sensations in the body, the feeling of the breath moving in and out, listening to sounds around us – anything that shifts our centre of awareness from our habitual thoughts into our sensory experience.

The pioneer of Gestalt Therapy, Fritz Perls, described this process as “losing your mind and coming to your senses”. After a time our attention will drift back into distraction again and the well-worn habit of evaluative thinking will entice us back; but as soon as we notice that this is happening, we have woken up! We now have the option of once again acknowledging our wandering minds and returning, without judgment, to the present moment – back to our breath or physical sensations. We are awake, alert and attentive to our unfolding experience. The more we practice this meditation of recognising distraction, the longer we are able to anchor ourselves in the present.

Mindfulness also encourages us to approach our present-moment experience with curiosity and acceptance. This is particularly helpful when what is happening is painful or unpleasant. For example, if you are feeling anxious, your habitual way of dealing with this might be to distract yourself from the anxious sensation, maybe by throwing yourself into your work, or by self-medicating with alcohol or other drugs. This strategy may disguise the anxiety for a while but it will not help you manage it effectively or to work through it. Mindfulness presents the possibility of actually attending to the anxiety by *leaning* into it, rather than pulling away. This means that you are allowing the feelings to be present (maybe you will become aware of shallow breathing, an accelerated heartbeat or a dry mouth, for example), and are curiously examining them. This is not an intellectual curiosity but rather an interest in the sensory quality of the anxiety as it is felt in the body. You are experiencing the sensations, accepting them, not judging them or trying to fix them. Approaching difficulty in this way allows you to cultivate equanimity – an unshakeable peace of mind in the face of anything that life throws at you.

### A Mindful Approach to Ayahuasca

When we commit to working with ayahuasca we are effectively expanding our consciousness beyond its habitual remit and inviting ourselves to watch the workings of our minds. This can be liberating, blissful, and transformative. It can also be a confusing, even frightening experience. In fact, we can never know for sure what kind of experience we will have. All we know is that we *cannot* know, and if we approach this

state of not knowing with equanimity, with mindfulness, we support ourselves to be open to the teachings of this extraordinary plant teacher.

From the moment we become aware of our intention to work with ayahuasca we have begun a meditative relationship with her. This means that we are consciously beginning to notice thoughts, emotions and sensations that arise in connection with our commitment to this work. Our mindfulness practice of noticing and approaching these thoughts, emotions and sensations with friendly curiosity supports us in preparing for the ceremonies to come. We may notice a flux of constantly changing experiences – excitement, nervousness, curiosity, doubt, inner tension, conflicting and ambivalent emotions and thoughts – all of which can be observed without judgment. By cultivating an abiding, relaxed watchfulness, we are tending the ground, preparing the foundations for the work ahead. It is this capacity to observe our experience with a gentle yet firm robustness that will see us through the most challenging of ceremonies.

During ceremony, our job is simply to show up, to be as fully present as possible so that the medicine can work on us. We do not want to get in the way of the work, to obstruct it by reacting mindlessly. This might take the form of fighting with or resisting the medicine – not wanting to have the experience we are given. Or, we might freeze or ‘zone out’; disengage. Perhaps you recognise these reactions as the components of the ‘fight, flight or freeze’ mechanism that animals and humans resort to when we feel threatened. This would be an appropriate response if we were actually under attack and needed to defend ourselves, but ayahuasca does not attack – she reveals. Sometimes what is revealed may *feel* threatening but whatever it is, we have the ability to meet it, to observe it, to learn from it by remaining mindful and present. We are able to watch our thoughts, emotions, visions and intuitions from an inner space of groundedness and safety. It is from this space that we are able to integrate the learning from the ceremonies. Whatever it is that we have experienced – the good, the bad, the ugly, and the seemingly incomprehensible – it can all be processed over the days of the retreat, and afterwards for weeks and months, from this watchful inner centre that we have been cultivating through mindfulness.

### Cultivating Your Mindfulness Practice

An integral part of the ayahuasca experience is committing to the *dieta*, which prepares body and mind to meet the medicine. A major part of this *dieta* concerns the foods and liquids we should avoid, limit or allow ourselves before, during and after the retreat. It also includes being mindful of certain behaviours and habits that might cloud or scramble our energy – such as sensual and sexual contact, and watching too much



mindless television. But because these habitual activities are often so ingrained in us we may not even notice that we are indulging in them; we simply perform them automatically. This is where a daily mindfulness practice can really support us in paying attention to our conditioned behaviour and help us to maintain a steady eye on our intention to embrace the *dieta*.

Here are some suggestions for introducing a daily mindfulness meditation practice to harness your energy and intention before, during and after your visit to the Temple:

- Choose a time of the day that you can more or less stick to every day. First thing in the morning works for many people as they are more unlikely to forget to do the practice or run out of time if they decide to practice later.
- Find a spot where you can sit on a cushion on the floor or upright in a chair. This place should be comfortable and quiet, where you can be undisturbed for the next 10 minutes. If you have a timer (on your phone, for example), set it for 10 minutes. There is a free app, Insight Timer, which can be downloaded and is useful for this purpose.
- At the start of your session, silently remind yourself of your intention for doing this practice. You may say something like, 'I intend to be fully awake and attentive to my unfolding experience, without judging it', or something similar that feels right for you.
- Then, with eyes closed (or open if you prefer – gaze gently at a spot on the floor) begin to take your attention into your body. Notice the feeling of your feet or legs on the floor; the touch of your hands on your lap; clothing against your skin.
- Then become aware of your muscles. Perhaps you notice that there is some tension or tightness stored in them. If so, as you breathe out see if it is possible to breathe out the tightness, allowing your body to soften on the out breath as you let go of the tense sensations.
- Spend a few moments simply watching the changing sensations in the body, not trying to change them or fix them or wish them to be any different. Just accept your present experience, whether it feels pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.
- When your mind begins to wander from the sensations in the body, by getting lost in distractions such as thoughts or sounds, simply acknowledge that the mind has wandered and then, without judging yourself for having strayed, gently return attention to the body. It is natural for the mind to go off-track like this, so do not worry if it repeatedly does this. Trying to stop the mind from wandering is like attempting to stop the sea from ebbing and flowing – you will fail miserably so better to not even try! Rather, accept that the mind has drifted and as soon as you have noticed this, escort your attention back to the body.

- Your attitude whilst doing this is one of warm curiosity towards your experience, a kind of befriending. By cultivating this attitude you are laying the foundations for a friendly, inquisitive and grounded meeting with ayahuasca, regardless of what she reveals to you.
- You can spend the rest of your session watching sensations in the body, or you can shift attention to your breathing. Notice the feeling of the air entering the nostrils and the sensation of the breath flowing out. Follow the natural flow of your breathing, being curious about the texture of each breath – whether it is rough, smooth, cool, shallow, deep – and again, if the mind wanders, bring it back to the flow of the breath. When you are in the midst of an intense experience during ceremony and feeling unbalanced or overwhelmed, you can always use your breath as an anchor, as a safe place to which to return. A mindfulness of breathing practice will help you cultivate this trusting, intimate relationship with your breath.

**Including a daily 10-minute mindfulness practice as part of your *dieta* will assist you in preparing for the ceremonies, will be indispensable during them, and will help sensitize you to the learning that emerges long after you have returned home from the Temple.**

## Our Commitments

### Conducting Responsible Ceremonies

The Temple provides a comfortable, caring and safe space for ceremony in the *maloka* and our Shipibo healers are highly experienced in holding ceremonies. In addition to our healers and two workshop facilitators, a ceremony assistant will be stationed inside the *maloka* during ceremony to guide you to the toilet, if necessary, and a toilet assistant will be present outside the *maloka* next to the toilets.

It is normal to feel apprehensive if it is your first time taking ayahuasca. Please consider this in a positive light, as an attitude of healthy respect and reverence for ayahuasca. Participants who are new to the medicine begin with a small dose. Please know that we

create an extremely well held, supportive and reassuring container without overstepping personal boundaries. We ensure that you are appropriately and responsibly cared for at all times on energetic, emotional, psychological and physical levels throughout the ceremony and after the ceremony has closed.

During the daytime, we like to keep a light and friendly atmosphere and encourage you to relax. Time alone in your *tambo* (sleeping hut) is also necessary to reflect and integrate the work.

## Focus on Integration

Our facilitators offer a substantial amount of integration support during the retreat in order to assist you to process your healing experience after every ceremony. We also offer instruction on how to sustain and cultivate any breakthroughs and insights received during your retreat and how to ground transformative healing experiences into day-to-day life.

Ayahuasca helps to dissolve the illusory self and significantly increases your awareness of self-constructed boundaries, as well as highlighting and helping release fear-filled and self-sabotaging beliefs. Ayahuasca initiates a long-term healing journey that supports overall liberation from the hypnosis of conditioning, shines a light into your shadow, and helps you become aware of negative patterns.

You then need to become intimate with your fears, embrace your shadow and consciously parent yourself back to wholeness over the longer term. This is the slow path towards freedom from fear, resulting in increasingly feeling lighter, brighter, more vital, more compassionate, and more in touch with yourself and the world around you. Ayahuasca will support you throughout your process for many months, even years after your retreat.

## Safety Protocols

The safety of our guests is our first priority at the Temple. We have a risk-management program in place and have implemented the following measures and practices to ensure safety at all times for our guests:

- Protocols for emergencies so they are handled effectively and harm is minimized.
- Fully equipped first-aid kit including snakebite anti-venom, anti-histamines, etc.
- Contract with local medical clinic in Iquitos in case of an emergency that we cannot handle onsite.
- 24-hour transport to Iquitos (travel time is 1.5 to 2 hours).
- Permanent communication with Iquitos via fully functional cell-phone network.
- Written disclosure form that provides full and complete information about medical, environmental and other risks that are inherent in participation in our programs.
- Highly experienced healers and facilitators.
- One to two facilitators supervising and one ceremony assistant present in every ceremony.
- Support of over 12 international and 60 local staff working around the Temple.
- All ayahuasca provided at the Temple is comprised of only ayahuasca vine and chacruna leaf (no other admixtures).

## *References*

1. Savinelli, Alfred, and John H. Halpern. "MAOI Contraindications." Newsletter of the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies MAPS 6.1 (1995). 58.
2. "Exclusive: The Lariam scandal - MoD 'ignored decades of warnings about dangers of suicide drug'." [www.independent.co.uk](http://www.independent.co.uk) N.p., 27 Sept. 2013. Web. 1 Jan. 2015.
3. [Templeofthewayoflight.org](http://Templeofthewayoflight.org)