

Rainforest Medicine Gathering to the heart of the Ecuadorian Amazon
A voyage of empowerment for Personal, Community and Planetary Renewal

An "off the charts" Intercultural Deep Forest Wilderness Adventure
into the world of rainforest plant medicine and oral traditions of the
Siekopai People of upper Amazon in Ecuador

Voyage to Lagarto Cocha (the Black Caiman Lakes) ~ a unique wilderness
sojourn to the ancestral heartlands of the *Siekopai* People.

August 5 – 18th, 2017

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This is a 14-day deep forest wilderness sojourn to visit one of the most pristine and remote wilderness regions in the Ecuadorian Amazon, the mystical lake region, Black Caiman Lakes, near the northern Ecuadorian and Peruvian border regions - ancestral homelands of the *Siekopai* People.

We invite you to journey with elders and youth - forest masters, traditional healers, ethnobotanists and visionaries – who will introduce you to the Ecuadorian Amazon Rainforest.

We intend this event to be an unforgettable experience offering participants an indelible life enriching experience. One that will nourish, enrich and strengthen the root of your life! As a participant, you will be in the company of forest masters, dignified gentlewomen and gentlemen of the Rainforest, who embodying ageless traditions, experiences and far reaching universal wisdom. To be among them is a true joy!

Proceeds benefit The Council for Cultural & Biological Diversity's Rainforest Conservation and Cultural Heritage Projects in the Ecuadorian Amazon, the Andes and the Osa Peninsula of Costa Rica

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The *Siekopai* People, also known as the Secoya, are a joyful and independent people. Autochthons of the Upper Amazon Rainforest, numbering

approximately 350 people in Ecuador and 500 in Perú. Their language belongs to the Western Tukanoan linguistic group. Their name, *Siekopai*, means "People from the Multi-Colored People." They are an original people of the Amazon, whose culture and ancestral homelands, despite hundreds of year of colonial impact on their homelands, they are a joyous and happy people who live daily with a genuine universal spirit of genuine caring.

The Siekopai love meeting those who travel with us on our journeys and we love working with them. Our friendship now spans over 21 years. In addition to the yearly journeys we host to Secoya Territory since 1994, we have been working together on ground-level projects the elders deem necessary to preserve their culture and rainforest.

Despite the struggle in which they find themselves in, while adapting to the changes of an ever-expanding colonization frontier, the *Siekopai* have a strong sense of engagement with their history and maintain their rich oral tradition. They are true masters and mistresses of the forest. To visit them is a privilege and joy, one we always look forward to!

Travel into the Ecuadorian Amazon with ethnobotanist, Jonathon S. Miller Weisberger, rainforest guide, cultural and biological conservationist, steward of Guaria de Osa Ecolodge on Costa Rica's Osa Peninsula and author of Rainforest Medicine: Preserving Indigenous Science and Biodiversity in the Upper Amazon.

Since 1990, Jonathon, aka Sparrow, has been actively involved in the Ecuadorian Amazon among 5 distinct Indigenous communities working on Rainforest Conservation and Cultural Heritage Projects with the Waorani, Secoya, and Kichwa Indigenous Peoples Communities. You will have direct contact with rainforest conservation strategies and hear accounts of ground-level projects Jonathon has collaborated on; experience Nature as Teacher; understand the important role plants play; and sense an overview of the area's bio-region. Around our jungle campfires, we will also explore oral tradition and indigenous mythology. On forest walks and the time spent at our campsite, we can dialogue on vast aspects of ethnobotany and rainforest plant medicine traditions.

Jonathon's zest for life is contagious. A hike with Jonathon cannot be missed. Ultimately, Jonathon's work is devoted to helping people renew themselves by experiencing the magnificent of Nature. He has devoted many years of his life to

what he considers the three pillars: Rainforest Conservation Projects, Restoration of Degraded Lands; and Cultural Heritage Revalidation. These projects have been funded primarily from participants' tuitions traveling with us on our rainforest sojourns in Ecuador and Costa Rica.

Contact:

puravida@guariadeosa.com

please c/c info@rainforestmedicine.net

Tel: +510-235-4313 Skype: dahliamillerkresch

For program details refer to www.guariadeosa.com

Itinerary

Wilderness Sojourn Voyage to Lagarto Cocha

A place known among the Secoya as Pëe'që'yá, the Black Caiman Lakes, located on the Lagarto Cocha River, at the boundary between Ecuador and Perú.

The following passage by Jonathon Miller Weisberger relates some accounts of this mythic region of vast proportion and biological diversity.

The wilderness lakes of Lagarto Cocha, located along the northern boundary region between Ecuador and Perú is a fantastic place. The Siekopai call it Pëe'që'yá, the Black Caiman Lakes. Here one can see many lakes each unique in their own way; for example, the black water igapó region is rich in fish and unique wildlife. Just to mention a few of the wonders of Nature we will experience on this journey: Equatorial Saki monkeys and Hoatzin - a prehistoric bird that is an evolutionary link between reptiles and birds - who live in the trees; and Pink River Dolphins; giant river otter and black caiman in the waters. In the upper region, the forest becomes hilly and one encounters an entirely different flora type, characterized by abundant fruit bearing palms and towering trees. The pristine nature of this wilderness region has left on me its indelible mark on me, and I find myself oftentimes dreaming of when to return!

During the years, I spent with maestro Cesareo Piaguaje between 1995 and 2000, he spoke so much of these ancestral lands. The place where he was born and raised in his youth by his grandfather. It is here, where at a great age, the Cesareo related that the great yage drinker *Waosutu* lived; it was here, where at great age, he transformed into an anaconda, slipping

seamlessly into the water realm – referred to in my book, Rainforest Medicine page 5. And It was here that his grandfather resuscitated from his grave – as written in Rainforest Medicine, page 312.

On these lakes, it is believed that, in the not too distant past, sky boats, carrying multitudes of celestial immortals would descend and enjoy the beauty of the unspoiled paradise that is Earth. Each lagoon has legends and stories from the vast body of oral tradition of the Siekopai Elders. And it is not far from here, where exists the sacred region called *Ñañë Jupo*, meaning, “Our Creator’s Paradise Gardens.” The place where our creator once lived where it is believed s/he brought out from under the Earth the different races of people - humanity as we know today. The entire region, in the mythic perspective of the Siekopai, is undeniably positioned half in the supernatural realms and half in the physical realms. The black water igapó lagoons of Lagarto Cocha, is place held dear to the Siekopai. To return here is more than just a field trip to the woods. It is an epic pilgrimage like sojourn voyage to the heartland of life.

Here is what the day to day trip will look like. Although some changes may be made to this itinerary, any change will be only for the betterment of the overall quality of the trip.

Aug 5th to 18th - 14 days

Saturday Aug 5th

Leave Quito on a chartered bus at 5 am; stop at Papallacta Hot Springs for a soak; travel all the way to Shushufindi; be there by 4 pm to catch a boat to the homestead of Basilio Payaguaje on the Aguarico River. Estimated time on the bus 10 hours with stops. Time on the river is 1 ½ hours to Basilio’s homestead.

Sunday Aug. 6th

Explore the rainforest around Basilio’s homestead; make preparations for voyage downriver towards Lagarto Cocha.

Monday Aug 7th

Awake at 3 am for a sunrise renewal ceremony. Enjoy the forest at the don Basilio’s homestead; swim; hike; share meals of the day.

Tuesday Aug 8th

6 AM departure for Lagarto Cocha by canoe. Although the Secoya like to get there in one day, since it is about 10 hours' canoe ride, depending on how the group feels, we may camp half way down on a beach, or continue the entire way to our destination towards the wilderness lakes.

Arrive to destination and set up camp.

Wednesday – Tuesday, Aug 9 ~ 15

This week will be spent exploring the wilderness lakes region and enjoy the good life in the wilderness. Three nights will be ceremonial nights preparing with fasting. These days will be mellow, maybe just cruise out onto the lakes or take short hikes or rest given how people feel. We also plan to visit the vast area because there are so many lakes - the region is huge! The forest is supreme and there is so much to explore within the forest. These days will be fishing, hiking and exploring the rainforest, or staying at camp.

There is a list of activities, sprinkled throughout our stay, as posted in the Secoya Program Details at:

<http://www.guariadeosa.com/events/secoya2017.html#activities>

Downriver there is a Secoya village called Mañoko, meaning Star. We can visit the community at the village, purchase their arts and crafts and witness how the Secoya live. Last year when we visited they were very thankful. They make very beautiful traditional crafts. We also can buy their traditional corn bread. This is a unique experience and to arrive and reunite with their Secoya family, who they rarely see due to the distance from upriver, makes for the visit all that much more interesting and intimate.

Wednesday August 16th

Departure for Basilio's homestead on the Aguarico River. Although this is a long day on the canoe, of course we make periodic stops to rest and walk around the beaches of the Aguarico River; make lunch and other technical stops.

Thursday August 17th

Rest day at the homestead, wash our clothes, swim in the river, relax and have fun with the family for our final day.

Friday August 18th

Departure from Basilio's house at 7 30 AM; our rental bus meets us at Shushufindi and we travel to Quito, stopping on route at Papallacta Hot Springs.

~ Notes ~

Our meals are deliciously prepared throughout the journey with care and harmony.

A minimum of 6 people are needed to make this trip happen. If there are less, we will stay at the village and continue with a similar itinerary but at the homestead of a traditional family, who live remote off the roads and in the wilderness at the Siekopai Communal Territory on the Aguarico River.

Program Details for the entire journey is posted at:
<http://www.guariadeosa.com/events/secoya2017.html>

The tuition for this journey is \$3100
In the link box above please read what this includes and does not include.

Also click on [Photo Gallery](#) to see a collage of photos taken from past journeys.

And also in the link box please click on [Endorsements](#) where the golden words collectively express the depth, width, and height of what awaits you on this **unique wilderness sojourn to the ancestral heartlands of the Siekopai People.**

~ Just one more note ~

Suggested reading: [Rainforest Medicine: Preserving Indigenous Science and Biodiversity in the Upper Amazon.](#)

A bit more on the Siekopai People from Jonathon

They are an ethnic minority numbering 350 people in Ecuador and 350 in Perú. Their population has plummeted approx. 98% over the past 300 years, mainly at the turn of the century upon arrival of the rubber tappers and the diseases they brought which the Secoya had no immunity.

They have also, due to the loss of their population, lost in the past 75 years, since the "opening" of the Amazon with petrol roads, 95% of their ancestral territory to colonization.

Today in Ecuador the Secoyas occupy an area of approx. 40,000 hectares. My

friends and I were influential in assisting in the recuperation of 60,000 hectares of their ancestral homelands on the actual boundary area between Ecuador and Peru. So now they have a portion of their ancestral lands, two days travel downriver from the Secoya village.

This has been a major important undertaking for their cultural and physical survival as an Original Peoples.

In Lagarto Cocha they are far from colonist and can live their traditional life in peace with their traditional way of life. They are high sages of the forest. Their original name is Siocopai, meaning Multicolored People, or God's Multicolored People.

They are a people that live-in grace as their path to salvation. They are a plant people who adore the plant world.

The Secoya elders have a mastery of knowledge of the plants that is profound and links them back to their ancient past. Especially in their knowledge of Yaje drinking of which they have been noted as the most courageous Yaje drinkers.

Forty years ago before the arrival of the missionaries, drinking Yajé was part of their original study system and everyone would drink Yajé. They would drink in lodges away from the main village in serene and undisturbed areas in the forest. Certain individuals would take it much further and drink Yajé for years in a row. As in the case of don Cesareo, who as a 15 year young boy with his grandfather and other disciples, they drank 2 nights, rested three nights and, in this pattern, drank for 5 years. don Cesareo told me they went up to 4 months eating no food only Yajé!

The Secoya would drink Yajé very strong, and would boil it down to a thick syrup and drink a thick valiant dose, often times more than once. They believe that if small amounts are drunk one can become a witch; so large amounts are drunk in order to fully transcend the ego in order to be humble and be with god and the *huiñawai* -the divine immortals or the ever-new-ones; i.e. the ever fresh ones. They are at the central theme of Secoya cosmology and the objective of Yajé drinking is to meet them and be accepted as part of their family. This makes a person humble and wise person. The elder Yajé drinkers that I have met from the Secoya are happy people, who love to laugh and they have a good healthy sense of humor.

It is important to clarify these things in order to understand how sincere and profound their approach has been with this sacred plant medicine. There are only 4 Yajé drinkers left now. Some youth drink a bit, now and then, to stay on a good track. Sadly, no one drinks hard in order to seriously learn the path of medicine and undertake the responsibility of being the community's spiritual leader - a strong responsibility, not everyone is made for, drinking strong Yajé and receiving the energy transmissions of the immortal prehistoric origin medicine that the masters embody.

Finally,

We intend this event to be an unforgettable experience traveling through an emerald-green Rainforest with unforgettable people that, in some way, will nourish, enrich and strengthen the root of your life.