

Nothing can ever really prepare you for the Ayahuasca experience. Especially someone like me, who has never smoked, or been remotely interested in the use of drugs or substances to access altered states of consciousness, just never been on my radar, nor have I ever been around people who have been interested or involved in that arena of experience. I went for consciousness development from a variety of fields including; meditation, psychic and therapy training, and the exploration of energy medicine (vibrational, via colour, sound etc), and also developing myself through doing courses which increased my knowledge and skills, through reading and working at assimilating the works of people like Rupert Sheldrake, Gregg Braden, Dr Wayne Dyer, Deepak Chopra, and others in the field like Carlos Castaneda, Dr David Hawkins, the Barefoot Doctor etc, the list is long, and I have been researching this field which encompasses things ET and mind control for a good while.

I happened to listen to Graham Hancock on the iconic American radio programme, Coast to Coast, <http://www.coasttocoastam.com/guest/hancock-graham> sometime in late 2010, telling of his experiences of taking Ayahuasca, which he had done thirty times, and the incredible doorway it facilitated to other dimensions, like nothing else. This medicine plant, also known as the vine of the soul, with hallucinogenic properties is very powerful. His experiences of meeting his father who had passed on, and other dimensional beings lit a flame of interest in my soul, and then synchronistically, I heard an Ayahuasquero, a shaman who does the Ayahuasca ceremony, in the Peruvian jungle, speak about his work, along with a lady who had been through the experience with him, who gave me confidence that if I was going to do this journey, this was the man, someone who could speak English, in case there was any kind of crisis, yet someone steeped in the knowledge, and a master of his trade.

He is an American, called Ron Wheelock; also known as the Gringo Shaman, (more info at these sites), www.ronwheelock.com, <http://www.ronwheelock.com/bio>; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJ1YK-m7u3c> who began his own intense training with great indigenous shamans in Peru in 1996. He has been doing his own work and ceremonies for fifteen years, and offers people the experience in an environment which he calls comfortable but rustic. Well, having travelled to meet psychic surgeons in the Philippines some years ago, I had a very good idea of what he meant. There are people out in Peru, Iquitos who will provide you with a lodge with every comfort and you can pay around \$2,000 for the privilege, or you can go to the other end of the scale, which is Don Ron, who, understanding that people who are on a conscious soul developing journey but are financially challenged, keeps his prices to an absolute minimum, which is also another reason that I admired him, his authenticity, and lack of ego, meant he certainly wasn't doing it for the money. When I heard he only charged around \$30 for a ceremony and only about \$250 for a weeks stay with him, including ceremony and board, I knew that was in my ball park of affordability (many other locals charge in the region of \$100, since the Ayahuasca experience has become something of a tourist attraction in Iquitos).

So with this all in mind, I was telling a friend of mine, whose place I stay at when visiting London. He is often not in sight, being elsewhere away on business, however this one weekend, we were able to have time for a coffee and catch up chat, and when he heard what I had to tell him about the Ayahuasca experience, he wanted to try it, saying he could do a lad's holiday any time. So that set the ball rolling. We were really going to go to Peru and experience this amazing ceremony. I suggested we stick with Ron, as the language was useful, in case of problems, and he was inexpensive. So I set about writing to Ron to see when we could come over, and when would be best. Due to my friend's work commitments, we were unable to get out in March, as hoped, and when I got a call from Zed, my friend, at the beginning of May asking if I would be free to go around the 19th, I was over the moon, I had almost given up on our going, just because of the difficulty in getting time to do it. Before I knew it, we

were in a cab, and on our way to Heathrow, for a 7am something flight with Iberia to Madrid, and after a two hour wait, we picked up our connecting flight from Madrid to Lima, and the last leg with LAN airlines to Iquitos from Lima. This last part of the journey was turbulent, and whilst I never worry about this kind of thing, some people were having a white knuckle ride, so very nearly there, and then the pilot informed us that we were unable to land due to the bad weather. I forgot just how exhausting these long flights are. We were able to get a 5.10am flight to Iquitos, by the skin of our teeth, arriving by Motokar, the three wheeled rickshaw-like bike that is the usual mode of transport and is extremely cheap. It cost us 10 sols to do a 25 minute journey from the airport to our hotel (Hotel Amarillas in Calle Libertad) and there are 4.5 sols (S/.) to the pound, so around £2.20, and fantastic fun. I just loved it. Exhausted, we arranged to have our Motokar guy come back for us later in the day, when we had slept and rested.

The hotel was a little off the beaten path, certainly not in the centre, but we didn't care at this point, just happy that our rooms at least had air conditioning and had a bathroom en suite, which was basic, but great for our needs, they even supplied towels and soap. Once refreshed, we met downstairs to find Wanda, our driver waiting, and he took us to get something to eat at this great place that does a menu of the day for S/.10, whose name I didn't make a note of, but was wonderful. Fed and happy, we then asked Wanda to take us to Ron's place which was out further afield. When I had emailed Ron asking for directions, he said not to worry, just ask for him, the Gringo Shaman, and almost everyone knew where he lived. And with negotiation for a return journey in hand, S/. 40 was the amount we agreed. You need to negotiate for everything! We set off to find Don Ron.

As we took a right hand turning with no sign, along a dirt road, through a lumpy, muddy road way, I wondered how the driver could have known where he was going, but he got us there, and we pulled up outside a brick building, which was Ron's house, and there was Ron, in DIY mode, working on his house, a good space with a dirt floor, and a mezzanine level, where he slept. It was a delight to see him. We chatted for about an hour, had a look around at where we would be for the time there, and realised our arrival in Iquitos was a day out for the Ayahuasca ceremony, as we had flown out on Thursday, and it was now Friday morning, and Ron only does the ceremony these days on Tuesdays and Thursdays, so we had to fill our time with other things, and Ron said it was best to get a bit of sight seeing done first, we were disappointed we had not quite factored in the timing element well; we had hoped to do three sessions rather than two.

However, we were content, and on the drive back, Wanda took us to roadside vendors, getting us to try the various wonderful foods, mainly fruits, cooked and uncooked. He got hold of these very long bean-like fruits, and twisted it, which made it open up to reveal a cotton wool-like looking substance which was sweet and delicious and some black shiny, rather monstrous looking seeds, which were not for eating, it turns out this was Guaba, or Gwaba, and it was heavenly. We ate roasted seeds, and drank fresh coconut and everything was about S/.1 – about 22 pence – just fantastic. The populace may be poor, but they are well fed.

The weather was gorgeous, and although it was getting a bit late, Wanda took us to a nature park, where for about S/.5 we wandered through this pleasant place, sadly with animals like jaguars in cages, but there was a wonderful fishing lake there, and we caught sight of the huge fish known as Paiche, that grows to 3 meters long. There was a lovely sandy beach area, with kids playing in the water, quite idyllic, and there was a beach bar, which I just had to make use of. As dusk turned to darkness, we made our way back to the hotel, and the cheeky Wanda renegotiated his fee, because of what he had done for us, which was ok to a point, but my friend, was not so happy, and with my Spanish stretched to its limit, we agreed to agree a further price, but also that we would use someone else the next time. So he may have won that round, but not the trip!

We got ourselves refreshed at the hotel, and got a Motokar for a couple of sols to the main area, Plaza Armas, the place was alive on Friday night, and there was a pervasive sense of calm and peace, just around then we found Aris Burgers, a fast food sort of looking place, with plastic red chairs and tables, and very cute little waitresses. They had a large menu and something for us vegetarians, and even better, they had the most amazing array of smoothies and juices of all kinds. This we loved, and the great nutrition they provided, was wonderful, we both tried the Acai juice, which is a super food, full of vitamin E, Omega oils 6 and 9 and rich in minerals and protein, and is also said to help in weight loss, but I just loved it, and then we had it laced with Guarana, which definitely called for honey to make it more palatable which amongst other things, helps with fatigue, stamina etc., and contains considerably more caffeine than coffee beans and other elements I forget. They seem to focus a lot on natural Viagra, aphrodisiacs, and orgasms in their drink names, and when I didn't quite read the whole title of one juice I ordered, (right, said my friend, of course)!, It was a multi orgasmic juice, featuring Guarana, and I have to say, it was disappointing, there was no 'When Harry met Sally' moment!, But it was very nice, all the same! Aris became a bit of a haunt for us, more expensive than other places off the main square, but we loved the juices, and lived a lot on those, as well as some of their rice dishes.

We were accosted along the Malécon, (the main pretty walk way by the river in Iquitos) by a very bright lad who spoke very good English, and after checking out some of the trips on offer for our two days we decided we would have before the Ayahuasca experience, we also went to have a look at what his uncle had on offer at the Amazon King Lodge, in calle Putumayo, and ended up spending S/.140 (almost £31/\$50) for a trip, where we would meet at the office at 8.45, have a bit of breakfast at Aris first, then take a Motokar with a driver and guide, (Nel) to pick up a Peci Peci, a small, engine powered, thatch covered boat that would take us up the Amazon, crossing the Nanay river, and where some $\frac{3}{4}$ hour later we arrived at the Amazon King Lodge. It was a basic place, but the room had bathroom facilities en suite, but no electricity, and all was beautiful by kerosene lamp in the evening. There was a communal dining room, and a hammock/chill out room, overlooking the Amazon, which was a bit of heaven, and had much use.

Amazon King Lodge, set deep in the jungle, but not the 250 or so kilometres further up the Amazon that we would have liked, due to time constraints, but it looked every bit the retreat, even it was basic and included in their trip was a discourse on the medicinal qualities of plants in the immediate area, which we got down to after we had arrived, and was fascinating, and I'll never remember it all! After lunch, which was rice and vegetables, quite yummy, we went to Monkey Island, a small island which has boas, several monkeys, a very slow sloth, a turtle that I was told was a type called Muerta, poor thing, looked like he had had his head stepped on, flattened out, and was one ugly thing, bless him. I found myself with a boa draped over my shoulders, which caused me a sharp intake of breath; I do love snakes, but not sure about such close quarters. My camera battery had died, so Zed snapped the evidence, and also of me holding a little snuzzling monkey, which was pressed into my arms by well-meaning locals, where it stayed making muffled breathing sounds, probably because it's head was buried in my arm! We made our way back to King Lodge, and whiled away an hour or two before supper blissfully hammock bound.

There were several others who joined us for the evening meal, around 7pm, the chef had made us some omelette when he knew we were veggies, otherwise, they had a meal of chicken or fish, with salad and rice, a feast indeed.

The rains still came down on occasion fast and furious, and we needed wellies to be out and about in, which we could hire for S/.5, which of course, we did. A trip out the next day on the river to go dolphin watching, the area, a little way from the Lodge is well known for having pink and grey dolphins. Zed, my friend, managed to catch sight of a pink one, just as I looked the other way, listening and watching one in the near distance blowing through his (or her) air hole, and then one swam under our boat, creating eddies, and we thought we were about to get the best view ever, but apart from giving the boat a real knock, he disappeared into the depths. I did get to see the grey dolphin cruising by at a later stage, which was a joy, my friend was pointing out how big the pink dolphins are, and their unusual long beak.

Visiting the Yahuna tribe or group, who are only about 30 souls strong, was a gentle experience, with a gentle people, even if they did have very effective blow pipe tools to trade. The whole point of our going, and there were only the two of us for this trip, was that they trade some songs and dance for us, and then have us also participate in, duly painted with a brilliant orange colour from a local fruit, and we in turn, buy some of their jewellery as souvenirs, which we did. Zed was asked by the lead man for one of the two stripey mosquito bracelets I'd given him, which he parted with, and also wanted his t-shirt, which he didn't part with. One of the women gestured that she wanted my hair clip, which I gave her, and really should have traded with her for it, as I saw the lead man offering me something as we were on our way back, I indicated it wasn't necessary, but on second thoughts, there was probably an element of honour for them with an exchange. Our guide told us they have a problem with water, so whether it is accessing clean water, or that they get bogged down due to lack of housing on stilts, I wasn't quite sure. But it was wonderful to touch base with these people, a reminder of the phenomenal amount of clutter we live with; they live as close to nature as anyone does, bare chested, and trusting, no electronic devices, no modern day accoutrements in any sense., with few resources, using their skills in turning seeds and wood to make their wares, as well as sustain them.

The Piranha fishing part of the package we passed on, somehow, being vegetarians, fishing is not interesting for us, so it gave us more serious siesta time; I now find myself addicted to hammocks, the most comfortable things in the world. I was too comfortable to read, and found myself snoozing for an hour or two overlooking the lovely Amazon, before a tasty supper, after which the rain came down with immense force, how we didn't float off, I don't know, it was just a lovely sound too, backed by thunder and lightning. We all retired early. We were homebound the next day, Monday, and would be back around tea time, to relax, and ensure we stayed on the Ayahuasca diet that is; no salt, spices, sugar, caffeine, fats, pork, alcohol, sex and I think that was more or less it. Our instructions were that on the day of the ceremony, we do not eat anything after 12 noon either.

We arrived around 5.50pm, and said hello to Ron, and our fellow travellers who were there to participate, there were nine of us in all. With no idea at all of the process, Zed and I sat in different areas, having agreed, that should there be a need, we would watch out for each other, in case of what, who knows, but we all arranged ourselves on large square, vinyl covered cushions, and were given bowls to keep by us for when we purged. Don Ron came duly arrived at 9pm, and candles were lit. He gave us one or two house keeping rules, where were that; if we wanted to go outside to throw up, or go to the toilet, we could, but as our energy was part of the group, we were to keep it as short a time as possible, and rejoin the group when we could, otherwise, people would be brought back in; we were also not to lie down at all during the 3 or 4 hour ceremony, Ron said it was dangerous to lie down with the DMT flowing through us; and if we needed help to go to the loo for example, if we felt a bit unsteady on our feet, then we could ask for help, by saying 'I need help', and either Ron, or someone he designated would come over to assist us there and back; and finally, if anyone felt the

experience wasn't happening, we could ask for a further helping of Ayahuasca. Don Ron also spent a bit of time clearing and cleaning the cabin, invoking protection and guidance, for the space and for all of us individually. Then he sat down at the focal point of the room, a low table, arrayed with crystals, icons and all manner of things to support the process.

We were all to go up one by one to take the ayahuasca, and he suggested that on drinking, it would be beneficial and more powerful, if we wanted to ask something specific to ask at the time of drinking. Questions often were in the realm of 'who am I', 'what is my mission' etc., if you wanted to ask anything at all. So with some trepidation, I stepped forward for mine, and let mother Ayahuasca teach me what lessons she had for me.

This was a trip into the unknown.

I began to see gorgeous psychedelic colours at the end of white pencil outline drawn, cone-like shapes, against a black background, they were lovely and the colours were more HD than HD. I saw then a gorgeous backdrop of a gold tableau that seemed jewel encrusted, and which had some movement to it. I just observed its loveliness, then I noticed that the centre of the picture began shifting in a slow coiling movement, and when I looked more closely, it was a beautiful snake or serpent, also gold, with colours, and I think bejewelled. After that point, I suddenly found myself opening my eyes into the blackness of the room, and wondering what was going on, where I was, then thinking that I was supposed to be doing Ayahuasca, in an instant, I realised that I was indeed in the middle of such an event, and with a start, felt my body, because I became aware very quickly that I was lying as if in a catatonic state, rigid, and straight like a soldier, and then I also heard Don Ron's warning in my ears, about the dangers of lying down during the ceremony. At that moment, my neighbour, who was not yet under the influence became aware of my lying down, and asked me politely to sit up, which I was about to respond to, when I saw Don Ron standing over me, demanding I sit up, which I did. I have to say, it was disconcerting, because I had no idea about how I came to be lying down in the first place. Clearly, I had lost consciousness, and that was quite an experience in itself. As I thought I was sitting up, Don Ron pushed me down to the ground and it felt like he was pinning me down, I could feel the area on my arm where I would be bruised tomorrow. I was in a state of shock; I didn't understand what was happening. But obviously, I did sit up again, and carried on with the sensations that were coursing through my body. My whole blood stream seemed alive with the Ayahuasca, my heart rate was up and the dizziness was getting deeper.

Around this time, I think it was before the next event, I saw a black slab in the blackness of what seemed like space, and as I gazed down at this shiny granite-looking black object, something or someone told me, in response to my enquiry as to what this was, that this was the *slab*, I recall thinking it was a pretty unspectacular name, and then I asked what it did. Then I saw musical notes coming off it, though I didn't hear anything, and I was aware of frequencies, as wave patterns going out into the ethers or space, and I was given the impression that this was one of the creator elements of the universe, which was pretty amazing, as looking at it, it was a small slab, in the region of four feet by two, with an undulating wave form at its upper surface, as I observed. So that was that!

I recall thinking that I might need to go to the loo, and becoming aware that I felt very unstable and not at all confident that I could make it to the loo and back unaided, so I followed the instructions, and asked for help. The next thing I remember, is that I began to attempt to get up from the floor, then all was unconsciousness until I came to with Don Ron looking over me, I was on my side in the recovery position, with the guy who was supposed to have helped me, nervously telling Ron that I was bleeding. This I became aware of, as the warm trickle made its way down the right side of my face, it was

rather too warm for sweat. I knew instantly that I was hurt. The fearful energy of this other guy was really unpleasant, and I focussed on Don Ron, as he inspected my injury. His energy was calm, soothing, and cool. He wiped away some of the dirt, and got me sitting up. I was gradually becoming aware of immense pain at my right temple. At that time, Don Ron made no gesture of any urgency, and once he had me upright and stable, did limited cleaning of the wound, he left me, and carried on with the ceremony. I went into shock, I began a horrible cold sweat, my breathing was all over the place, and I think the blood loss, along with the Ayahuasca in my system, made me excessively weak. I spent what felt like the next two hours in absolute agony, desperate to lie down, which I knew was not possible until the end of the ceremony, and I just tried every which way, as I cradled my poor broken head, aware of my blood-matted hair, rocking to take my mind off the pain in some way. Every minute seemed to last ten, and when it was all finally over, Ron asked if I could make it over to the house, a few minutes walk away, to clean my head up properly, but I was incapable of moving without considerable assistance.

Don Ron cleaned my head up well, and Zed had been jolted out of his reverie brutally, by seeing the state I was in, with some alarm, he came over to me, asking how I was, but I felt too weak to even speak at that point. I might add that I had not purged either at this point, and I felt just terrible, Don Ron had to leave, needing an early morning appointment to attend to, and left Zed to see me safely into my bed which he did, after I suddenly had the urge to purge, and did so, it really was an unpleasant end to the experience, not least because of the pain, and the numbing of my lips, thanks to the incredible Ayahuasca brew...