

Ayahuasca: Amazonian Cultural Matrix of Global Impact

The therapeutic, spiritual and aesthetic culture of ayahuasca, which is rooted in ancient indigenous traditions of the Amazon region, has become a global experience extending to South American, North American and European latitudes. It has gained the attention of a wide range of disciplines, from anthropology, ethnobotany, pharmacology, therapeutics, sociology, philosophy and the study of religion, to literature and the arts.

Ayahuasca is a brew prepared with the vine with that name (its scientific name is *Banisteriopsis caapi*) and with the stem of another unrelated plant called chacruna (*Psychotria viridis*). These are the main active plant species combined, but others might be added. This brew acts first as a purgative, then as a psychoactive that induces hallucinatory states also regarded as states of amplified consciousness. These last 4-6 hours.

Ayahuasca is not a “drug” in the sense that stimulant chemical substances are. It is regarded as a plant of knowledge because, aside from its curative effects, ayahuasca users say that they obtain insight and awareness concerning their health, their relationships, and other personal and family issues. It also produces zero addiction and reverse tolerance: progressively smaller doses suffice in obtaining the same effects until the user decides that meditating on the ayahuasca experience can substitute for drinking it.



Twisted Banisteriopsis caapi Vine