



Press Release & FAQ

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Team Ecuador released successful ethnotourism education platform

Connecting tourists with the nature and culture of Ecuador to foster a better understanding of the Amazon Rainforest and its preservation.

ATHENS, Ga., Jan. 20, 2024 – Team Ecuador, as part of a National Science Foundation grant, released a multimedia guide to educate tourists on the intersection of nature and culture in the Amazon rainforest. Through Team Ecuador’s interactive website and social media channels, tourists can explore the rainforest’s natural beauty through innovative ethnotourism.

Although the Amazon is considered to have a pristine ecological legacy, the ecosystem has been substantially shaped by the human activity of indigenous communities for over 13,000 years. The influence of indigenous communities is often overlooked by tourists and scientists visiting the rainforest. Nevertheless, understanding past human influence is a crucial step in advocating for its preservation.

Team Ecuador’s outreach has given hundreds of tourists access to a wealth of information that addresses misconceptions. The multimedia guide goes beyond traditional scientific research to educate visitors on the land, history, people, and ecological legacy of the Amazon rainforest. Further, rather than focusing solely on ecotourism, Team Ecuador is encouraging sustainability through ethnotourism by intersecting nature and culture.

“The outreach is serving as a stepping stone for the implementation of ethnotourism,” said Lilly Kersh, Team Ecuador’s spokesperson. “Our primary goal was to educate tourists, but we are also serving as a role model for other research studies and sustainable tourism entities.”

Through an easily accessible website and social media channels, people all around the world can learn more about the nature and culture of the Amazon rainforest and Team Ecuador’s mission. For tourists visiting the Amazon, QR codes are placed along the nature trails of the Napo Cultural and Wildlife Center. By scanning the code with their mobile device, tourists gain insight on the ecological legacy, myths, history, and biology of the rainforest’s fauna and flora.

“The information provided went beyond typical tourist sites and was a fun and engaging way to learn about the rainforest,” said Luke Barber, a tourist from Seattle. “I didn’t just experience the beauty of the rainforest, I was also able to learn about the indigenous people and their history as it relates to nature.”

To learn more and explore nature and culture in one of the world’s most beautiful and treasured landscapes, visit our website at www.teamecuador.com and follow us on Instagram at @teamecuador.

FAQ

Where can I access the multimedia guide?

You can access the guide by visiting www.teamecuador.com and following us on Instagram at @teamecuador. If you are a tourist at the Napo Cultural and Wildlife Center, access the guide by scanning the QR codes placed along the rainforest's nature trails.

What are the Napo Cultural and Wildlife Centers?

The Napo centers are located on the Napo river in Ecuador. Located in the heart of the Yasuní National Park, the cultural center connects tourists with the Kichwa Community and their traditions of environmental stewardship. As part of a larger eco-tourism industry, this tourist destination is run mainly by women in the community, according to Dr. Sarmiento, and profits are equally dispersed among them. The center is challenging the conception that tourism harms sustainability efforts and local people, and is breaking the paradigm of the past where mainly men operate successful corporations. The center seeks to create authentic relationships between nature and people, and will host our project as our channel to tourists in the Amazon rainforest.

What is the purpose of this multimedia guide?

The purpose of our multimedia guide is to promote ethnotourism and the intersection of nature and culture in the Amazon rainforest. By informing tourists and scientists about the human influence in the ecosystem, we can better advocate for the rainforest's preservation.

FAQ

What are ethno- and eco-tourism?

Ethno-tourism is travel with the intention of learning about indigenous people and their cultures. Ethno-tourists seek to meet the local people and learn from their history and customs. Eco-tourism is travel focused on visiting natural environments, often with the aim of learning how to support conservation of the ecosystem and its native wildlife. Our project aims to facilitate both these forms of travel by providing channels of information on nature and people to tourists in Ecuador.

How is the Amazon rainforest misunderstood?

The Western perspective has often framed the rainforest as an untouched wilderness of biodiversity. While it is true that this ecosystem is rich with species and crucial to the health of our natural world, we often misunderstand the ecological legacy of the region. Human activities of indigenous communities have shaped the rainforest throughout human history. Human history has had intentional and unintentional effects on different species. This ecological disturbance reminds us that humans are a part of the natural world, not apart from it. Furthermore, indigenous people interpret the environment differently from other cultures. Learning about these human affects and the culture and history of native people is crucial as we seek to protect the rainforest and preserve its unmatched biodiversity.

FAQ

Who is funding this project?

This project is part of a National Science Foundation-funded grant awarded to a transdisciplinary team led by Dr. Fausto Sarmiento of the University of Georgia. The grant was awarded to study the ecological legacy and ethno-tourism in the Amazon, to assess the effects of human activity on the composition of the tropical forest. Involved members include professors from the University of Georgia, Universidad San Francisco de Quito, University of Wageningen and Florida Tech.

What are ways I can support the rainforest?

Fostering a better understanding of the Amazon and the people there is an important first step in supporting its preservation and protection. By visiting our guide you make that first effort to educate yourself on the ecosystem and its indigenous communities. Other steps include reducing our consumption of products that contribute to deforestation, like meat, palm oil and soybeans, purchase responsibly sourced products, reducing our carbon footprint and actively seeking ways to support indigenous communities and their businesses.