

# Legacy Cacao Announces 2026 Origin of Cacao Amazon Expedition in Ecuador

Limited to 11 participants, the July 2026 expedition explores the ancient Origin of Cacao through archaeology, indigenous culture, and Ecuador's Amazon.

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, June 30, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Legacy Cacao](#) today announced Origins: Amazon Expedition, a seven-day educational and cultural expedition into the [Origin of Cacao](#) in southern Ecuador, taking place July 15–21, 2026.

Limited to only eleven participants, the

immersive experience offers unprecedented access to the archaeological discoveries, indigenous communities, biodiversity, and living traditions that continue to reshape the world's understanding of [Ceremonial Cacao](#) and the vital role of cacao in rainforest conservation.

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*Michelle Sinnette*

The announcement comes at a pivotal moment in cacao research. For decades, historians believed cacao's story began approximately 3,500 years ago in Mesoamerica. Recent archaeological discoveries in southern Ecuador, however, have revealed evidence of cacao use dating back more than 5,300 years. These discoveries have significantly expanded the known history of cacao and positioned Ecuador as one of the earliest documented centers in humanity's relationship with this remarkable plant.

Developed by Legacy Cacao, the Origin expedition is

designed as an educational, cultural and spiritual immersion rather than a traditional wellness retreat. Participants will travel through the region where the Andes Mountains meet the Amazon rainforest, exploring archaeological sites, cloud forests, regenerative cacao farms, indigenous communities, waterfalls, rivers, and one of the most biologically diverse ecosystems on Earth. "At Legacy Cacao, we've always believed that understanding cacao begins by understanding where it comes from," said Michelle Sinnette, Co-Founder of Legacy Cacao. "The Origin of Cacao



Origin of Cacao Amazon Expedition - Legacy Cacao

is more than an archaeological discovery. It is an invitation to reconnect with the landscapes, cultures, ecosystems, and people who have stewarded this relationship for thousands of years. Our goal is to help participants experience Ceremonial Cacao through direct relationship rather than simply through information."

For nearly a decade, Legacy Cacao has cultivated relationships throughout Central and South America with innovative entrepreneurs, indigenous communities, regenerative cacao farmers, rainforest conservationists, economists, cacao historians, archaeologists, stingless bee keepers, scientific research teams, and local cultural stewards. Those long-term relationships make possible a level of access that is rarely available through conventional travel experiences.

One of the defining moments of the expedition will be an intimate evening inside the ancient spiral temple beneath the stars. Participants will visit the archaeological site of Santa Ana-La Florida in Palanda, Ecuador, where discoveries continue to reshape scientific understanding of cacao's earliest ceremonial use. Guided experiences with archaeologists and cacao researchers provide participants with an opportunity to explore the evidence firsthand while learning how new discoveries continue to influence historical scholarship. Legacy Cacao has been granted private access to not only tour the site, but also to sit in deep ceremony and meditation at night in the central spiral, normally restricted from public access.

Throughout the week, participants will move beyond viewing cacao as simply a beverage. They will harvest wild cacao directly from the trees, observe fermentation and drying methods, taste test every step of the chocolate-making process, and gain a deeper appreciation for the ecology and genetics that distinguish Ecuador's native cacao varieties. The experience is designed to connect participants with the complete story of cacao—from native Amazonian plant to conservation-focused agroforestry to modern pathway for global consciousness.

The expedition also highlights the remarkable biodiversity of southern Ecuador and a chance to experience other medicinal plants native to the Amazon jungle. Guests will encounter native



a hiker looks up at a tree in the Amazon forest



Cacao Amazon Expedition - Legacy Cacao

stingless bees, sometimes called the "angelitas of the forest," whose relationship with rainforest ecosystems and cacao illustrates the intricate connections between pollinators, biodiversity, indigenous livelihoods, and regenerative agriculture. Participants will visit waterfalls flowing from the Andes into the Amazon Basin, walk through cloud forests rich with orchids, medicinal plants, birds, and insects, and experience one of the world's most ecologically significant landscapes.

"This journey exists at the intersection of archaeology, ecology, indigenous wisdom, conservation, economics and personal experience," said Searaya Sinnette, Co-Founder and Expedition Director for Legacy Cacao. "We aren't asking participants to choose between science and spirituality. Instead, we're creating an opportunity to immerse ourselves in multiple perspectives to enrich our appreciation for Ceremonial Cacao and its enduring role in human history."

The expedition begins in Quito, Ecuador, where participants will gather before flying together to Loja in southern Ecuador. From there, the journey unfolds gradually, allowing time for meaningful conversations, reflection, cultural exchange, and authentic experiences rather than rushing from destination to destination. While the itinerary remains intentionally flexible to accommodate weather, direct learning opportunities, and local invitations, participants can expect a carefully curated experience that includes archaeological exploration, wild cacao harvesting, indigenous cultural immersion, daily cacao gatherings, movement practices, live music, storytelling, and community integration.

Unlike many destination retreats, Origin has been intentionally limited to just eleven participants. The small group size allows for meaningful dialogue with archaeologists, indigenous wisdom keepers, regenerative farmers, and conservation partners while creating opportunities for personal reflection and authentic connection throughout the journey.

According to Legacy Cacao, the expedition reflects a broader mission of preserving and sharing the history, ecology, and cultural significance of cacao through responsible education and relationship-based travel. Rather than presenting cacao solely as a modern wellness product, the organization seeks to reconnect people with its ancient origins, living traditions, and continuing importance to communities throughout Ecuador.

"Transformation often begins not by adding something new, but by returning to something ancient," added Michelle Sinnette. "We believe the Origin of Cacao offers more than a historical narrative. It offers perspective, humility, and a renewed appreciation for the people and places that continue to protect one of humanity's most sacred plants."

The Origins expedition is the inaugural experience in the Amazonian Gold Retreat Series, an educational initiative created by Legacy Cacao to explore Ecuador's original wild cacao lineage, archaeological heritage, regenerative agriculture, biodiversity, and indigenous wisdom. Registration for the July 15–21, 2026 expedition is now open. A second week from July 22–28 with a unique, complementary itinerary is also open for registration. Few spots still remain available

in each of the two weeks this summer.

Individuals interested in learning more about the Origin of Cacao expedition or reserving a place may visit: <https://legacycacao.com/>

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