Questions to Ask a Ceremony Organizer

A six-page due-diligence checklist for comparing retreat providers

Use this guide to request clear answers before you pay, travel, or share sensitive information. It is a checklist, not an endorsement of ayahuasca or any organizer. You may decide not to attend, pause the conversation, or seek independent medical or legal advice.

How to use the questions

Choose the questions that fit your situation and send them in writing. Ask the organizer to answer directly, not only to send testimonials, promotional videos, or spiritual explanations. Save the answers, policies, payment terms, and contact details. If two providers give different answers, compare the details rather than assuming that the most confident-sounding answer is the most reliable.

Start with the basics

- What exactly is included in this program and what is optional?
- What is the full schedule, including rest periods and time when no staff activity is planned?
- How many participants and staff are expected? Who remains present throughout?
- Where is the event held, and what lodging, transport, meals, and accessibility arrangements are included?
- What is the total cost, currency, deposit, payment schedule, and cancellation policy?

Practical perspective: people who have attended often say they wish they had asked ordinary logistics questions sooner—where to rest, how to contact a staff member, and what happens if they want to leave. Such advice is a general synthesis, not a direct quote or safety guarantee.

2 | Question set 1

Who is responsible for the program?

- Who leads each activity, and who is the on-site person in charge?
- What training, experience, or community tradition informs the organizer's work?
- How does the organizer describe their relationship to any Indigenous community, lineage, or religious tradition they reference?
- Can you speak with a former participant who is not a paid promoter, subject to that person's consent?
- Who handles complaints or safeguarding concerns, and how can I contact them privately?

Staff presence and participant support

Ask what the staff-to-participant arrangement means in practice. Are the same support people present during the evening and overnight? Are staff sober and available to respond? Is there a private way to ask for help? Who covers breaks? What happens if a participant needs individual support while the rest of the group continues?

Ask about boundaries before arrival: Is touch ever used, and is separate, specific permission requested each time? Are staff prohibited from sexual or romantic contact with participants? Can participants decline photos, testimonials, private messages, or post-event contact?

Look for accountable answers

A clear answer names a person, procedure, and limit. "We are all family," "trust the medicine," or "nothing bad happens here" does not tell you who responds, what choices you have, or what happens in an emergency.

- Can I receive the staff roles, complaint process, and boundaries in writing?
- What happens if I decide to stop participating after I arrive?

3 | Question set 2

Health screening and medical questions

Ask what screening is requested and who reviews it. Ask why sensitive details are collected, how they are stored, who can see them, and when they are deleted. Clarify whether the organizer is a licensed clinician acting within a clinical role or a nonclinical facilitator. Do not treat a waiver, questionnaire, or brief chat as a medical clearance.

- What happens if someone reports a health condition, current medication, or past mental-health concern?
- Does the organizer direct people to disclose the plan to their own clinician?
- Will any staff member tell participants to stop or alter prescribed medication?
- Can I decline participation or withdraw my application without being pressured to explain?

For your personal circumstances, speak with a licensed healthcare professional who knows your history. Bring a complete medication and supplement list and ask about possible interactions. Never stop, skip, taper, or change medication on an organizer's advice alone. Published literature describes adverse effects and possible interactions; current evidence is incomplete and cannot predict individual outcomes.

Ingredient and activity transparency

- What substances, plants, supplements, smoke, incense, oils, or other activities may be offered?
- Will the ingredients and optional activities be disclosed before I travel?
- Can I opt out of any activity without losing access to basic support or being shamed?

Do not request or rely on a recipe or potency promise as a substitute for provider accountability. If the organizer refuses to describe what participants may be exposed to, consider that a significant information gap.

4 | Question set 3

Emergency plan: ask for the real procedure

- Who is trained and designated to respond if a participant becomes acutely unwell or distressed?
- How does staff contact emergency services, and what exact address should responders use?
- How far away is the nearest appropriate medical facility, and how would transport happen?
- Who stays with the participant, and who supervises the rest of the group?
- What happens overnight or when the primary facilitator is unavailable?
- How are incidents documented and communicated, while protecting privacy?

Ask what staff do if a person has trouble breathing, collapses, has a seizure, is injured, cannot be roused, or faces an immediate safety concern. “We hold space” may describe emotional support, but it is not a substitute for medical emergency procedures. Confirm that staff will call local emergency services when needed.

Consent, privacy, and group rules

- How can participants pause, leave, request quiet, or ask for help during the event?
- What are the rules about touch, bedrooms, bathrooms, recording, photography, and visitors?
- Is personal sharing optional, and how are other participants asked to respect privacy?
- What limits apply to confidentiality in a group, and when must staff seek outside help?

Consent should be specific and ongoing. Agreeing to attend does not mean agreeing to every activity, touch, photograph, or disclosure. Ask for a simple stop signal and what staff will do when they see or hear it.

5 | Question set 4

Logistics, money, and written policies

- What is included in the fee, and what costs extra?
- What are the deposit, payment deadline, refund, cancellation, and rescheduling terms?
- What insurance is available or expected, and what exclusions should I check?
- Who books transportation and lodging; who is responsible if plans change?
- What accessibility, language, food, privacy, and communication arrangements can be confirmed?

Request the terms before paying. Verify the legal name and location of the business, payment recipient, and a working way to contact the organizer. Keep copies of receipts and messages. Ask whether a deposit is refundable if the provider changes the dates, venue, or main program.

Local law and travel

Ask where the event physically takes place and what legal information the provider relies on. Laws differ across countries and may change. In the United States, DMT is listed in federal Schedule I regulations; specific religious-freedom decisions concern particular facts and do not establish a universal exemption for all organizers or participants. Confirm current local requirements independently and consult a qualified lawyer when the consequences matter.

- Will the provider give the legal entity name and venue address before I book travel?
- What documents, entry rules, or travel insurance should I independently verify?
- What is the plan if travel is disrupted or I need to leave early?

6 | Question set 5

Aftercare and integration support

- What follow-up is included, for how long, and who provides it?
- What training or professional scope does the follow-up person have?
- What is the plan if someone experiences difficult or persistent effects after returning home?
- Can I get an appropriate referral to qualified care if needed?

Ask for concrete availability, contact method, fees, and limits. “Integration support” can mean very different things. It should not be presented as guaranteed treatment, and it should not prevent someone from contacting a licensed clinician or emergency service.

Warning signs and pause points

- Pressure to pay immediately, secrecy about important details, or refusal to provide policies in writing.
- Promises to cure illness, guaranteed transformation, or claims that medical care is unnecessary.
- Instructions to hide information from your clinician or to stop prescribed medication.
- No named emergency lead, no clear venue address, or no plan for contacting local medical help.
- Retaliation, shame, unwanted touch, or threats when someone declines or asks questions.

Experienced-attendee practical tips

Common peer-informed suggestions include getting the full schedule and exit arrangements in advance, carrying key contact details, setting aside recovery time, and avoiding pressure to explain or compare your experience. These are practical reminders synthesized from attendee perspectives; they are not direct quotes, clinical guidance, or evidence that a provider is safe.

Decision record

Organizer and event: _____

Most important answer I still need: _____

Independent person I will consult: _____

Sources and scope

Global Ayahuasca Survey study:
https://journals.plos.org/globalpublichealth/article?id=10.1371/journal.pgph.0000438

Ayahuasca and traveller risk review: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34785376/

U.S. federal Schedule I regulation, 21 CFR §1308.11: https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-21/section-1308.11

U.S. Supreme Court, Gonzales v. O Centro:
https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/boundvolumes/546bv.pdf (case 04-1084)

This checklist is general education, not medical or legal advice. The marketplace is not an endorsement or verification of listed providers.