

Our Honeymoon Trip to South America

By Kory and John Macy

We were looking for something to do for our honeymoon that was accessible and fun. Most places had accessibility but few or no activities that were. We were really frustrated so I typed in accessible travel in South America. I found a trip in Ecuador. It met all of our requirements and I have always wanted to go to South America. After a year of planning, we were off. I have AOA2 and use a wheelchair and John has CP and uses crutches.



Kory and John Macy in South America

We arrived in Quito late. The old airport is in the middle of the city, very busy and chaotic. We could not believe how close we were to the residential buildings. Finally we got our bags, met our guide and were off to the hotel for a good night's sleep.

The next day we drove to the Amazon. It was a beautiful drive. We stayed at a lodge in the Napo Province. The staff were really helpful,

even though they barely spoke English. It was in an isolated spot and the views were spectacular. Everything was universal design so we were able to get everywhere. The buildings were made out of bamboo with thatched roofs. The food there was amazing and so much that we had to ask them to make the portions smaller. At night it was so dark, you could not see your hand in front of your face. It was so scary that we kept the bathroom light on. After lunch we visited a typical indigenous community called Rukullakta. There we learned about how the indigenous people from this area keep their traditions. We ate food that they prepared, saw some typical dances and John had a shaman (indigenous doctor) perform a *limpieza* (cleansing of the body and the soul).

The next day we went for a quick walk on an Amazon secondary rainforest path to observe native medicinal plants. We both had to use off-road wheelchairs. Our guide, the leader of an indigenous community, was very knowledgeable. We learned a lot and we enjoyed it. After lunch, we went to a zoo. Its original intent was to be an animal rescue. We felt sad because the cages were too small and muddy. We met an indigenous artist who had us make necklaces out of seed and plant fibers found in the forest. He and his children had great patience with us as we struggled. The end result was two beautiful necklaces.

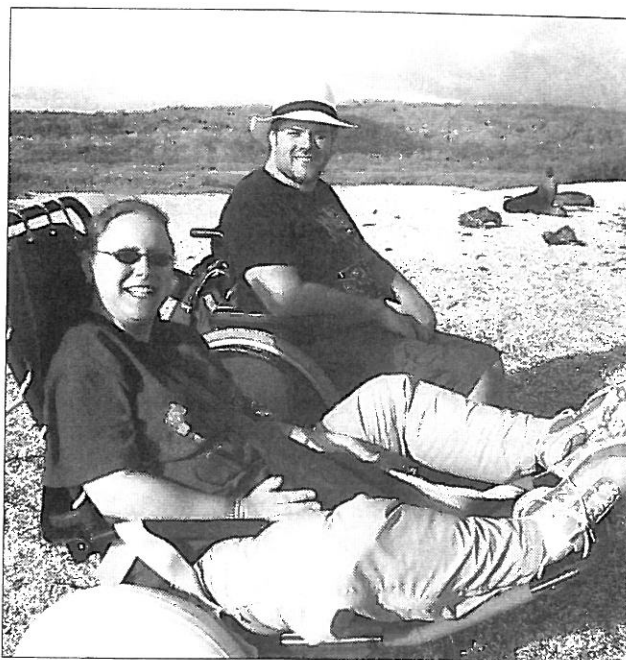
The next day we visited a cacao collection center operated by Kallari Association, which is a self-governed coalition of Amazon organic farmers and artists that produce and export organic fair trade cocoa beans. They produce their own chocolate as well. We saw how ►►

the bean was collected, fermented and dried before it goes on sale. The collective works with the locals to grow the high quality kind because they will make more money. We had lunch in a local town at the top of one of the rivers that go into the Amazon, then we went to Tena, the capital of the province. We sat in its parks and observed how people live in town. It looked like a town in the United States but everything was in Spanish.

The next morning we traveled to the Anzu River, where we took a raft. The river was very calm (class II) and there were some rapids. We saw some indigenous people on the river banks. We went swimming in the Anzu River. Before we left the Amazon basin, we went to a local food market. We saw local people and local foods. We drove to Baños de Agua Santa which is a cute little town on the edge of the Amazon. This town lies at the bottom of the Tungurahua, an active volcano. We walked around at night and enjoyed the night life. Next morning, we went to a local food market and tried some local juice and fried dough. We drove to Riobamba in the Andes. When we arrived we spent the afternoon discovering the town, plazas, colonial area and the people.

The next day we drove to a local leather manufacturer where they tan, color, and sew leather products. Then we drove to Cuenca which is surrounded by four rivers. After breakfast we started our tour of the city. We visited the main squares, plazas, churches of Cuenca and a Panama hat manufacturer. Downtown Cuenca was also declared Human Heritage by UNESCO. (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). About 18 miles west, we visited Cajas National Park. The park is 110 square miles and is 5,000 meters (3.10 miles) above sea level, cold and beautiful. After the park, we visited the Inca ruins, There were not many of them here. Then we went to Chordeleg, which makes silver pieces.

The next day we drove to Guayaquil. On the way we admired the changes in vegetation from



Kory and John Macy in the Galapagos Islands

the highlands to the coast. We observed the different banana, cacao, and rice plantations. It is the biggest city in Ecuador. We walked along the boardwalk and then we took a boat ride around the city.

The next day we flew to the Galapagos Islands. It was a short flight. We had lunch and then we went to the beach and watched the sea lions. They are protected animals and they walked right up to us. They put John in an off-road wheelchair and I sat in a beach wheelchair. The next day we went to a park on the other side of the island. We observed different vegetation and also saw some tortoises. Some other activities we did were a speedboat ride around the island where we saw blue footed boobies, masked boobies, marine iguanas, dolphins, and more sea lions as well as Kicker Island and a swim in the Pacific Ocean. We visited an information center that explained the history, current problems and solutions with the island.

We finished our trip by flying to Quito to meet up with Juan. We had dinner and went to bed, ending the trip with a tour of the city with its many beautiful churches.

For more information, please contact us at kstab77@yahoo.com. ❖