

## **Tania Duran**

**(Translated from the Spanish by Google Translate.)**

**Prepared by Program Assistant, Valeria**

Tania is a 61-year-old Ecuadorian who studied social communication and alternative education throughout her life.

She lived in the United States for ten years with her husband and daughter where she started her first venture related to alternative tourism, letting herself be carried away by previous knowledge and a taste for nature and its culture. She decided to devise an easy way to bring foreigners from all over the world to hike in the Ecuadorian Amazon and Andean areas rich in diversity of landscapes so that they can enjoy a unique experience living with the communities that exist there.

From there Tania's interest in living in a simpler, healthier, sustainable and calm way, committed to responsible tourism, sustainable with the nature that surrounds her and in general with the environment and the inhabitants of the place itself grew.

When she returned to live in Ecuador in the 2000's with many illusions, she made the decision to live in the most organic way possible and away from the monotony of the cities. Her goal was to lead a healthier life in an environment of reconnection with the earth and with herself.

Although it was a radical change in her life when she went from the prosperous city of Cuenca to a remote area with so many deficiencies, she decided to venture out and bought a piece of land with the savings from her life and her family on the outskirts of the high mangrove parish in the San José commune. This place had it all, combining the sea a few meters away and the dense vegetation of the populated forest that surrounds the area with mountains. It was all she was looking for.

Its initial objective was to share the place with people and that they could enjoy a relaxing and peaceful moment, which was provided to rest through a holistic approach carrying out the treatment of possible diseases and seeking to provide visitors with a greater sense of general well-being based on spiritual retreats trying to heal the body, mind and spirit, while practicing technical yoga that relieves stress, improves breathing and relieves anxiety along with the presentation of a menu that included foods without

additives and with a high organic percentage in its composition. It is a rest center where guests can find a massage area that makes them forget their problems, with the clear intention that the people who visit them leave refreshed and light. She called this place SAMAI, which means “spirit” in the Quichua language.

It was the first to be business founded and offering this type of service in the parish of Santa Helena.

Tania has always seen this as a calling and her mission in life. She never had a monetary interest or to recover the investment she made because she saw the privilege of inhabiting a place like this and sharing her knowledge with others as her greatest gain.

The money came as an addition, and of course, it helped her to continue improving and adapting the SAMAI center, which over the years has achieved recognition and preference, knowing that it is current among so much competition with similar services, a place that the more years it has, the better generational reference and remains one of the favorites to rest in the area.