



MEDIA RELEASE

An unforgettable Amazonian quest for Travellers Choice Gold

11 April 2018: **It might be best known for the Galápagos Islands but venture to Ecuador's interior – as a group of award-winning Travellers Choice members did last month – and you'll discover an equally extraordinary ecosystem boasting lush Amazon jungle, snow-capped mountains and some of the planet's most curious wildlife.**

The Travellers Choice agents – all recipients of prestigious Gold Choice Awards – explored Ecuador on a custom-made Adventure World itinerary that read like the plot of a Jules Verne novel.

The 'ripping yarn' began in the capital of Quito, once the northern hub of the Inca Empire, from where the group flew into the heart of the Amazon for a three-night voyage down the Napo River on *Manatee Amazon Explorer*. There to greet them were a dazzling array of colourful locals, including monkeys, sloths, toucans, macaws and even some notoriously shy pink Amazon dolphins.

Managing Director Christian Hunter says a few brave souls even dipped their feet into the black waters of Lake Piranha and had their toes duly nibbled by the curious – but thankfully not too hungry – inhabitants. However, not all the locals were as obliging.

"At one point on a jungle trek we accidentally disturbed some ground-nesting bees," says Hunter. "They weren't very happy with us and a couple of agents felt their wrath, one being stung on the nose. Luckily the bites weren't too painful – they just swelled and proved a bit itchy."

The Gold Choice Award winners then boarded a lovingly-restored, antique steam locomotive for the 'Train of Wonders', a spectacular and luxurious journey from the Andes to the Pacific coast. Along the way they navigated the Avenue of Volcanoes, stayed at charming Haciendas (ranches) and descended the mythical Devil's Nose pass (one of the steepest stretches of railway in the world) to emerge from the cloud forest into Ecuador's tropical plantations.

"What was most memorable about the journey was the sheer diversity of Ecuador's landscapes," says Hunter. "The variety of ecosystems is remarkable and most people

don't realise there is so much more to the country, all of which can easily be incorporated into a Galapagos trip."

Each year a total of 30 Travellers Choice members are awarded Gold, Silver or Bronze Choice Awards, with winners determined by the level of support they provide the network's preferred suppliers. As well as dedicated educational trips, recipients enjoy exclusive sales incentives and receive service grants worth up to \$1500 per agency, which they can use towards member services.

For more information on Travellers Choice please visit www.travellerschoice.com.au.

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