

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### *Luxury travel company reveals the untold story of chocolate*

March 8<sup>th</sup> 2019 – (London, UK): Bespoke travel company Brown + Hudson has created a once-in-a-lifetime Luxpedition that takes guests deep into the Ecuadorian jungle to discover the most ancient origins of cacao, and indulge in chocolate in a way they never dreamed possible.

In partnership with To'ak Chocolate, makers of the world's finest chocolate, this rare opportunity allows clients to uncover the story of 'Ancient Nacional,' an heirloom cacao variety saved from the brink of extinction.

In July 2012 archaeologists discovered that cacao was in fact first domesticated in Ecuador over 1500 years before the Maya, who are usually credited with 'inventing' chocolate.

As reported in The Guardian in October 2018 "The cacao tree, and in particular the drinks made from its dried seeds, has long been linked to the Maya and other ancient civilizations in Mesoamerica. Now experts say seeds from the cacao tree were first used in present-day Ecuador by members of the Mayo Chinchipe culture."

Ecuador has a rich chocolate heritage, with Nacional once considered the most prized cacao on Earth. Decimated by Witches' Broom disease in 1916, this cacao was believed to have fallen extinct until, in 2007 in a remote valley of Piedra de Plata, Jerry Toth and Carl Schweizer To'ak's co-founders discovered a surviving stand of old-growth cacao trees, which DNA tests confirmed to be 100% pure Nacional.

"In ancient times, chocolate was considered sacred and noble. Then in the industrial era it was commodified and mass-produced. To'ak is working to restore chocolate to its former grandeur and push its boundaries to new horizons". Toth explains.

This June, 12 fortunate aficionados will venture deep into the jungle to meet the visionary thinkers, conservationists, archaeologists, farmers and chefs who bring this story to life. They will witness first-hand the conservation work Toth and Schweizer are doing to secure the future of this prized cacao variety - long prized for its floral aroma and complex flavour. Tasting the world's most coveted chocolate in the

plantation where it is crafted will be the culmination of this Luxpedition to discover the source of the world's rarest chocolate.

During this most exclusive journey you will:

- Immerse yourself in the world's oldest and finest cacao and chocolate
- Uncover Ecuador's gastronomic riches with its finest chefs during private tastings
- Meet the key individuals with exclusive access to To'ak's cacao plantation and the Jama-Coaque Forest Reserve at the centre of the conservation effort
- Discover the archaeological site where cacao's earliest origins were identified
- Explore pristine cloudforest in search of rare birds and orchids
- Stay in Quito's most stylish hotel, spectacularly situated cloudforest lodge and Ecuador's finest beach retreat
- Private dinners in extraordinary locations
- Travel by specially-chartered plane and helicopter

Heart of Darkness: The Untold Story of Chocolate is a 7-night Luxpedition beginning in Quito on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2019. This intimate experience is available to only twelve people and applications to join and must be received by midnight on Friday 5th April 2019.

What better way to give the gift of chocolate this Easter?

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## [Brown + Hudson](#)

Brown + Hudson is a London-based, bespoke travel company. A team of travel experts creating exquisitely crafted, richer travel stories. A cross between therapists and investigative journalists, their bespoke travel advisors begin by working closely with clients to understand their needs, interests, motivations and goals. Incorporating academic research on the psychology of personality and values into their client interview process the company has developed the most scientific approach to travel planning. With a true sense of who a client is, and why they are travelling they can then turn their minds to how the client should travel then

where. They research each destination and reimagine it specifically for each client. Brown + Hudson is utterly creative, insightful and incomparably memorable. Impossible to replicate.

## About [To'ak Chocolate](#)

A native of Chicago, To'ak co-founder Jerry Toth relocated to Ecuador in 2006, where he started a nonprofit rainforest conservation in the famed cacao-growing province of Manabí. His work reforesting land in Manabí quickly converted into a passion for organic cacao farming. Jerry later joined forces with Carl Schweizer, an Austrian expatriate and long-time transplant to Ecuador, and together they created To'ak Chocolate. Their mission is to change the way the world experiences dark chocolate, elevating its making and tasting onto the level of vintage wine and aged whisky.

The company has pioneered the concept of aging chocolate and each To'ak chocolate bar is Organic and Fair Trade certified. Their single-origin dark chocolate is packaged in a handcrafted Spanish Elm wood box with the individual bar number engraved on the back. Their flagship edition was aged for four years in a French oak cognac cask and retails for \$385 per bar.