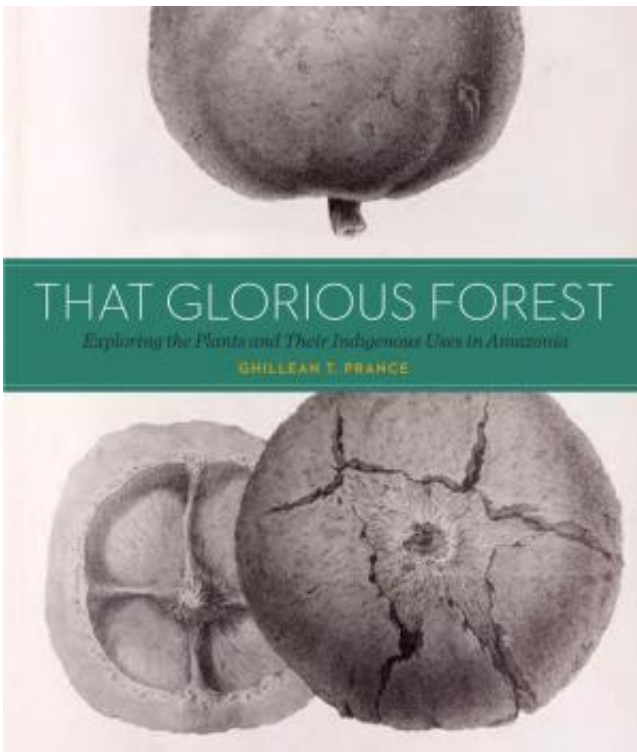


Intrepid scientific explorer recounts lifetime of work and adventure in Amazon

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Sir Ghillean Prance, former head of science at The New York Botanical Garden and former director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, recounts nearly five decades of his experiences as a scientific explorer of the Amazon. Credit: The New York Botanical Garden Press

Drawing on nearly five decades of experience, Professor Sir Ghillean Prance, one of the seminal scientific explorers of the Amazon rain forest in modern times, chronicles some of his most significant and fascinating

expeditions in *That Glorious Forest: Exploring the Plants and Their Indigenous Uses in Amazonia*, now available from The New York Botanical Garden Press.

In a lifetime devoted to the study and conservation of tropical plants, Prof. Prance has participated in 39 expeditions to the Amazon, beginning with a 1963 trip to Suriname as a young researcher for The New York Botanical Garden, described in *That Glorious Forest*.

"This was my first experience in the undisturbed rainforest and I was fascinated and overwhelmed by the diversity and magnificent sizes and shapes of the trees," he writes, referring to that first expedition. "Each day brought a new treat for me, a novice in the forest."

As he notes, his initial one-year research position turned into a 25-year career at the Botanical Garden, during which he ran Projeto Flora Amazônica, a joint Brazilian-American exploration program to survey the flora of the Amazon region, and directed the Garden's scientific research program as Senior Vice President for Science from 1981 to 1988.

From 1988 to 1999, he was Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, in his native England. He is currently Scientific Director of the Eden Project, a horticultural showplace and educational charity, and Visiting Professor at Reading University, both in England.

That Glorious Forest, whose title comes from the description of the Amazon rain forest by 19th-century British naturalist Henry Walter Bates, provides a first-hand account of what it is like to explore some of the remotest regions of the world while conducting rigorous scientific research. From his vivid descriptions and compelling stories, readers gain a clear understanding of the hard physical work and determination necessary to do the vital work of plant discovery.

On perhaps his most ambitious field trip, he and his team trekked more than 170 miles through undisturbed forest in 1971, sleeping in hammocks, encountering anacondas and documenting how indigenous peoples used the local plants for food, hallucinogens, and arrow poisons. The trip yielded nearly 700 plant and fungi specimen collections, including five new species. On another expedition that year, Prof. Prance and several members of his team fell dangerously ill with a virulent strain of malaria, proving that fieldwork can be not only arduous but also life threatening.

In addition to these tales of adventure, Prof. Prance reflects on a lifetime of work surveying the Amazon flora and how his view of that work changed.

"Over the years, my own understanding of my role as a botanist has evolved from simply discovering and classifying the world's flora to preserving habitats, understanding local uses, and educating the next generation in conservation," he writes in the foreword.

The author or editor of 37 books, Prof. Prance is a Fellow of the Royal Society. He was knighted in July 1995 and received the Victoria Medal of Honour from the Royal Horticultural Society in 1999. In recognition of his ongoing dedication to the mission of The New York Botanical Garden and to botany and horticulture internationally, Sir Ghillean was presented in 2008 with the Gold Medal of The New York Botanical Garden, the highest honor that the Garden confers.

Provided by The New York Botanical Garden

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