

GLOBAL TEA HUT

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

July 2019



OUR
ANNUAL TRIP



THREE FRIENDS

Once again we set out on our magical tea bus to tour China, exploring tea history, processing and lore. We had the trip of a lifetime, led by Master Tsai Yizhe. It was an action-packed ten days. Of course, we have stories, photography and a beautiful tea to share with all of you, bringing you along for a tea-inspired ride!

*Love is
changing the world
bowl by bowl*

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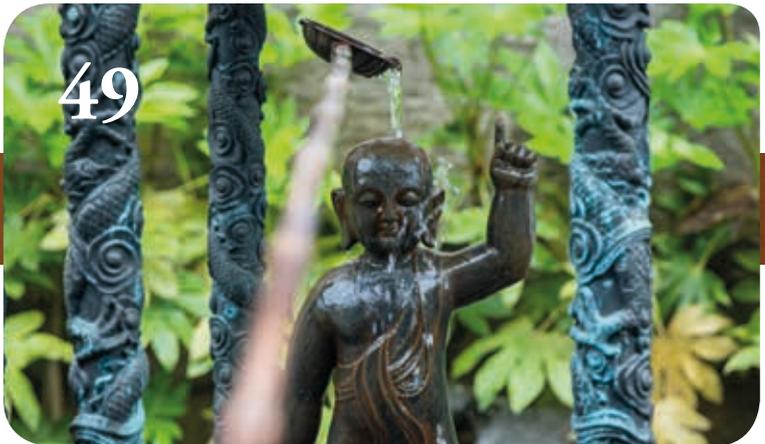
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Help us to build the best Tea Center the world
has ever known. Help us spread the word!



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recycled & recyclable



Soy ink

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From the editor

In July, the weather in Taiwan is very, very hot. We turn towards young sheng puerh, green tea, white tea and white puerh during these months. In tea there has always been an attempt to harmonize with the weather through a Chajin's tea drinking, chaxi and life. Drinking green tea leaves in a bowl on such a hot summer day is a real treat, especially if the bowl is white and you use a chaxi that makes you feel cool. Even in scorching Taiwan, a morning spent thus makes one feel naturally acclimatized and in harmony with the world...

Of course, everything is in high gear here at the Tea Sage Hut, as we say goodbye to our beloved Center of almost ten years. The last-ever courses are officially over, and all eyes are on the future and where we will land. The fundraiser is in full swing right now. We hope that you all feel inspired to help out, giving what you can and spreading the word to all your friends and family so that we can together build the best Tea Center the world has ever known. We have the chance to buy the most glorious property possible in all our wildest imaginations, though we aren't sure that is where Light Meets Life will end up. It will depend on you. Still, I thought it would be cool to do my best to briefly describe the Sanyi Botanical Garden Center in the hopes that it will inspire you to get involved:

It is a mystical and magical place that is more than beautiful; it changes the way you breathe. It clears the mind and heals the soul. Any and all who took a ten-day course there would be transformed as much by the property as by the curriculum of meditation and tea. The owners wanted to support the dying crafts and arts of Taiwan and so built the place over meticulous decades. Every single centimeter of the property is handmade, without exception—no machinery whatsoever! There are 1,700 Han Dynasty (206 BC–220 CE) mill stones that make up the courtyard, Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) temple doors and pillars gracefully crafted into the structure and the beams of one hall are made from the ribs of a sunken Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) ship. Just to give you a small idea of the level of detail and craftsmanship, one of the public restrooms in one small corner of the Center has a ceiling that has been tiled in reclaimed branches from the nearby mountains that were collected, sawed into little round tiles and affixed there by hand using mortar. The process took hundreds of hours. And then there is the gardens, oh my Mother Earth, the gardens... There are orchids, ferns, hanging plants, trees and flowers beyond belief—many of which have been cultivated for decades. The whole place feels like being in a forest.

Of course, we would be happy with a much more humble version of Light Meets Life, but it sure would be amazing to share this space with all of you and with all Chajin worldwide, including future generations of tea lovers who will also need a space to boil their kettles and steep their pots. Help us spread the word about your fundraiser!

Every year, around April when tea is being harvested all throughout Asia, we guide a group of tea lovers through the tea mountains to meditate, drink tea, learn from all the tea farmers and experts, experience firsthand how difficult tea production is, see the effects of conventional farming and compare it to living tea grown properly and have an all-around heartfelt, joy-filled, bonding experience in the home of Tea.

This year, thirty-five intrepid tea lovers arrived in Shanghai from all over the world to be oh-so-lovingly guided through Zhejiang and Jiangsu by Master Tsai Yizhe and his Chinese students. We had the most epic trip ever, and were treated to the unparalleled hospitality that the Chinese do so well. We walked in the footsteps of the great tea saint, Lu Yu (陸羽), who wrote the *Tea Sutra* (茶經), which we translated in September of 2015, drank tea and said prayers to a 1,000-year-old mother tea in Anji, learning all about Yixing pots and then sipped tea in historic Hangzhou before wrapping up right where we started in Shanghai. There were so many beautiful memories made on this trip, many of which will last us all a lifetime.

As usual, we made a conscious effort to bring you all along for the ride. We talked about you often, raising bowls and saying prayers for the greater Global Tea Hut community. Of course, we also brought along our cameras, hoping to use the art of photography to allow your spirits into these precious moments. This issue is the experiences, challenges and fond memories of this year's participants. We hope you feel inspired by our journey and excited to join us on future tea treks!



Wu Ji

—Further Reading—

This month, we recommend re-reading the wonderful trip issues thus far, sharing in all the memories we have made together. Of course, reading all these memories is great if you were there, but it also helps the rest of you feel a part of the trip and inspired to come next year!

TEA OF THE MONTH



ver the course of this month, we are going to travel through Zhejiang, Hangzhou and Huzhou and other regions famous for their long tradition of great green tea. This is a great time of year for green tea. It is fresh and bright and heralds the warm weather coming, the blossoms opening and cooling our bodies and helping us be in tune with Nature's changes.

In the Chinese lunar calendar, Qing Ming (清明) is an important holiday. People pay a visit to their family tombs and clean them up before making prayers. It's usually in April each year, though it wavers like the moon. The highest quality spring green teas are often pre-Qing Ming (明前茶). The leaves that sprout just before this time are more tender and sweeter, often with less bitterness and astringency. For that reason, they are valued in the market as the highest grades of green tea. The next highest grade is that which is produced a couple of weeks after Qing Ming, which is called "pre-rains tea (雨前茶)." The buds from this flush are also often tender, but not as much so as pre-Qing Ming teas.

With climate change, agrochemicals and other human influences, much of the meaning and premium of "Qing Ming" is lost nowadays. Even leaving aside the many fakes, different regions have very different terroirs, which means different qualities of tea. Also, what is valued by the mainstream is often based on different standards than the tea lover has. Sometimes we value the energy (Qi) of the tea more than the flavors, especially when viewing tea as medicine. And all of this does not take into account the changes that have started due to climactic fluctuations and agro-chemicals, especially chemical fertilizers, which change the time and manner that tea bushes flush with buds. The best teas are always made in harmony with Nature, encouraged by a healthy environment. The best teas are made by Nature, Heaven and Human working together.

Still, some years are good years, and this happened to be one. The leaves are lighter in color and richer in amino acids and nutrients in the early spring, before temperatures begin to rise. Once the weather gets hotter, the leaves will darken and change flavor. The first flush of the year also has all the energy and stored nutrients of the winter, rising into the spring. It is the purest and freshest of all green teas. Our tea is a pre-Qing Ming, which means it is almost double the price of later tea. Everyone on the trip donated a small amount towards sharing this tea with all of you, as did our host Sunny Song (宋晓萍). We should all raise a bowl or two to her, and to all the Chajin on this year's trip, for these leaves carry their generosity, good wishes and tea spirit to all of you.

Our Tea of the Month is a precious, organic tea from Huzhou called "Three Friends." As you will read about in the coming article, "A Deeper Session," it is named after the three famous Tang Dynasty (618-907) tea friends, Lu Yu, Jiao Ran and Yan Zhenqing, who roamed these hills drinking tea and discussing Zen. Our Tea of the Month is Anji Baicha varietal, though processed a bit differently than Anji green tea. It is made of more mature leaf sets than a lot of types of green tea, lending it body and breadth. There is a power just beneath and through its delicacy.

Three Friends is sweet and bright with an incredibly uplifting energy. We had several sessions drinking it along the way on this year's Annual Global Tea Hut trip, which we hope you can tune into as you share some bowls with your tea friends and family around the world. You were all with us in spirit, and we raised a bowl or two to all of you along the way. Travel with us in this very bowl to the hills, beautiful smiles, long bus rides, great banquets, so many hugs, and, of course, silent tea sessions with this very tea in our bowls as we sat in a giant ring of Chajin gathered from around the world...



Three Friends (三癸茶)



Huzhou, Zhejiang, China



Fresh Green Tea



Han Chinese



~750 Meters



A DEEPER SESSION

Further Exploration into Our Tea of the Month



 ver the course of this month, we will be traveling through the glorious green tea mountains of Huzhou, Anji, Jing Mountain and Hangzhou, drinking tons of bowls with a huge tea family whose minds were blown by the mountain vistas, the hospitality of our hosts and the wisdom of our guide, Master Tsai Yizhe. What a trip! As we all buckle in for the much shorter imaginary trip this magazine provides, let's first review a bit about green tea in general, in classic Global Tea Hut fashion, and then turn to our special Tea of the Month, "Three Friends," in particular.

Green tea is one of the purest kinds of tea, and the least processed. It is often a Chajin's first love—the Tea whose aroma carries us to the places where names like "Temple Mist" and "Fur Peak" make perfect sense. Green teas often taste of such vistas as well, recalling clear stream water singing over stones, forest pines, or sometimes the lightest fragrance of a flower caught on the breeze, though not for long

enough to identify... There is a magic in these light aromas, and in the uplifting Qi that often sweeps us up off our cushions. Sometimes it is nice to return to our roots, remembering Nature through perfect fragrance. The freshness of green tea also reminds us of the weather, though it can also be great when it is aged. Let us all celebrate the poetry of tea fragrances this month, as we stray into old dreams of bright leaves floating around a cracked bowl...

The official beginning of spring in ancient China was the day the emperor sipped the first cup of the first flush of green tea, heralding the arrival of the New Year. There is a part of the great tea poet Lu Tong's (盧仝) poem where he says that "the flowers dare not blossom until the emperor has sipped his green tea (天子須嚙陽羨茶百草不敢先開花)." There is the magic of spring in green tea, as you will see when you begin drinking this month's precious Three Friends tea. And that is why tea lovers have always praised it so.

Preserving the freshness is the key to all green tea processing. This is done by intruding but minimally. The two most important aspects of green tea production are one to reduce the withering/oxidation as much as possible and two to shape the leaves in a way that suits their nature, color and fragrance.

Green tea has been the most popular tea in China since the Song Dynasty (960–1279). In the beginning, it was made into cakes that were made of green tea powder, which were then ground and whisked, like matcha. As we learned in the April 2017 *Classics of Tea* issue, the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) emperor Taizu outlawed these cakes, and people began producing and consuming loose-leaf green tea. In the early days, green tea was steamed, as it still is in Japan, but as new varieties evolved, so did unique processing methods. To this day, China produces almost two million tons of green tea a year. Sadly, the most mainstream genre of tea, with such high demand,



is also the least environmentally-friendly or sustainable, but there are many projects beginning that aim to change this. If Chinese green tea could go organic, it would be a great example to tea producers around the world!

Green tea is lighter than other teas because the processing is minimal. Plant cells have thick walls, and so without cellular breakdown, the tea does not release as much of its essence. It is impossible for tea to be processed without some oxidation; it begins oxidizing the moment it is picked. Also, the water content of fresh leaves is too high to process. If you fired or shaped such tea, it would break, being brittle from the water in the leaves. During the trip from the field (or forest if it's living tea) to the processing area, the tea naturally withers, losing moisture and becoming soft enough for processing. Ideally, green tea should be processed quickly, on the same day as plucking. This fosters the feeling that green tea is frozen in a fresh, Yang state for the brewing to unlock.

Traditionally, the best green teas were made from buds only. It takes tens of thousands of buds to make one *jin* of tea (斤, 600g in Taiwan and 500 in China). The buds can also be processed with less oxidation, retaining more of the essence of the fresh leaf. They are also young and Yang in energy, which contributes to the magic of green tea. Over time, a greater demand for green tea has led to many kinds of green teas that are combinations of buds and leaves, or even just leaves. In many instances, such blends or leafy green teas are inferior quality. But as green tea has gained popularity, more regions are producing it and using many different varieties that weren't traditionally used in green tea production. Sometimes, depending on the varietal and terroir, a leaf/bud blend can actually be better than just buds, adding depth and Qi to a particular green tea. Our Tea of the Month is one such tea.

Though green tea began in China, by the tenth century it had spread to both Korea and Japan. These three

could be considered "traditional" green tea. There are many ways of processing green tea, based on local varieties of leaf and terroir—especially if we include the mastery of tea production handed down generation to generation within the umbrella of what "terroir" is. Remember, "terroir" is a French word that is generally used in discussions of wine, but it is so applicable to tea as well that most tea lovers have adopted it into their discussions of the Leaf. Terroir denotes the special characteristics of a place, found in its geology, geography, climate and even cultural heritage, which interact with a cultivated plant species to create unique expressions. Terroir is the soil and weather of a particular region—the geography and culture of the people and their relationship to the plant, and even the local microorganisms. Every place has a unique soil composition, pH, minerals and climate, all of which create a distinctive tea. When we talk about a tea's "terroir," we are speaking to the unique environment that created it.



And that unique environment cannot be reproduced elsewhere. Even if you took a grafting of a tree and cloned it elsewhere, it wouldn't be the same since the sun would be weaker or stronger, the soil composition different, etc.

Green tea is most essentially defined by a lack of oxidation. The aim is to arrest oxidation as quickly as possible, and thereby preserve the freshness of the tea. Green tea is picked and then goes through some form of heat to arrest oxidation. This could be steaming, baking or most commonly pan firing. It is then dried. If the green tea has leaves along with buds, then after firing, it is rolled/shaped before drying. The rolling shapes the tea. The rolling for a green tea will always be significantly less than for other teas. All-bud green teas are not rolled, however. They are shaped in the drying.

The most common method of drying green tea in China is to use a hot wok. Sometimes, with pan-fired green tea, the firing and rolling will be repeated a few times until the desired shape/color is achieved. The liquor of green tea can be clear to yellow or even vibrant green, depending on local variations. The Qi often enters the body through the aroma and/or mouth.

Whether or not the green tea is all-buds, bud-leaf sets or just leaves will also determine how it is processed.

The basic kinds of traditional hand-processed green tea are: pan firing, basket firing, oven baking and steaming. With the introduction of modern machinery, however, many of these steps have changed. Pan firing to arrest oxidation and de-enzyme the tea, for example, is often done in large, heated tumblers nowadays. Steaming

tea is only done in Japan, which is how they arrest oxidation/de-enzyme their tea. The result is the dark green color of Japanese teas, as well as the bright green liquor and distinct flavors such tea offers.

There is great skill in processing green tea, since it is so simple. Sometimes we assume that mastery is in the more refined of the arts, but it is often the simplest things that take the greatest effort and skill. Great chefs don't need to cook with tons of spices all the time; they can also bring out the natural flavors of ordinary ingredients in unexpected ways. We once had a vegetarian chef stay at the Center, and he cooked up the carrots we eat regularly, only they tasted somehow more "carroty" than usual! They were delicious. And it was carrots, oil and salt—nothing else! Similarly, green tea at its finest



清明 Qing Ming

In the Chinese lunar calendar, Qing Ming (清明) is an important holiday. People pay a visit to their family tombs and clean them up before making prayers. It usually falls around April 5th each year, though it wavers like the moon. The highest quality spring green teas are often pre-Qing Ming (明前茶). The leaves that sprout just before this time are sweeter and more tender, often with less bitterness and astringency. For that reason, they are valued in the market as the highest grades of green tea. The next highest grade is that which is produced a couple of weeks after Qing Ming, which is called “pre-rain tea (雨前茶).” The buds from this flush are also often tender, but not as tender as Pre-Qing Ming teas can be.

With climate change, agrochemicals and other human influences, much of the meaning and premium of “Qing Ming” is lost nowadays. Leaving aside the many fakes, different regions have very different terroir, which means different qualities of tea. Also, what is valued by the mainstream is often based on different standards than those of the tea lover. Sometimes we value the energy (Qi, 氣) of the tea more than the flavors, especially when viewing tea as medicine. And all of this does not take into account the changes that have started due to climatic fluctuations and agrochemicals, especially chemical fertilizers that change the time and manner in which tea bushes flush with buds in the spring. Still, pre-Qing Ming tea can be magical.

茶 Dawn at the amazing farm where our Tea of the Month was grown, just behind our first beautiful hotel, Huixin (慧心谷). Master Tsai Yizhe protects these fields, assuring they stay organic for tea lovers like us.

is an expression of simple tea leaves as they are in Nature: bitter, astringent with a transforming sweetness that lingers on the palate. And the simplicity shines when a green tea is good, like ours this month! Sometimes more is less and less is more; sometimes the simplest teas are the brightest.

All-Bud versus Bud & Leaf Green Tea

Usually, when discussing the production of green tea, we have to start by saying that green tea is processed with the goal of arresting oxidation completely. As we have discussed in previous issues, oxidation is an enzymatic process: basically, cellular breakdown due, of course, to the exposure

to oxygen, like when a banana or apple turn brown on the counter. While that works as a general description of green tea processing, the truth is much more complicated, like most things in tea. To start with, it is actually impossible to prevent some oxidation in tea. If bugs bite the tea leaves—and let’s hope they do, because otherwise it means our tea was made with pesticides, which are unhealthy for the environment, the farmers and us tea lovers—the tea starts to oxidize, and once the leaves are plucked, they will also oxidize some. Even if the pickers ran at a break-neck speed to rush each and every leaf to the processing facility one by one in an absurd attempt to prevent any and all oxidation, the leaf would *still* oxidize some before it reached the heat that will eventually arrest the oxidation. All tea oxidizes.

Alternatively, some authors choose to say that green tea is defined as “un-withered,” since withering is the stage where most oxidation occurs in tea processing. Withering traditionally meant spreading the leaves out on round bamboo trays suspended from a rack so they had upward air flow from beneath, but nowadays large-scale mass-produced tea is often withered on the ground (or even the road) on large plastic tarps. Saying that green tea is “un-withered” is a bit more accurate than saying it is “un-oxidized,” but it still doesn’t complete even a basic, general understanding of green tea production, especially since some green teas are withered (our Tea of the Month, for example, is slightly withered). To clarify, we have to make a distinction of our own: all-bud and bud-and-leaf green teas.

This distinction is important because all-bud green teas are, indeed, un-withered while green teas made from bud and leaves require some withering. Green teas that are made exclusively from buds can go straight from harvest to the heat that will arrest oxidation, but if there are leaf sets with the buds, the leaves will have to be withered to reduce their moisture content. Freshly-plucked leaves, full of water, are brittle and would crumble if processed immediately, so they have to be withered to withstand processing. Most often, all-bud green teas are also shaped in the firing, but bud-and-leaf green teas also have some rolling to break the cells down more and also shape the tea.

The distinction between all-bud and bud-and-leaf green teas also opens the door to some interesting quality discussions with regards to green tea in general. Some people might dismiss bud-and-leaf green teas, thinking that they are later, market-driven innovations to increase quantity and therefore retreat to the idea that true green tea is un-withered, but that would be misleading. It is true that in many

kinds of green and white tea, a demand for greater quantities of famous teas has resulted in the production of lower grades of the same tea that include leaf sets, so the best grade will still be all-bud, in other words, while some cheaper grades made with leaves, and often of later flushes, are also sold alongside the traditional tea. There is a big “but” that we have to place rather emphatically next to this statement, however. *But*, not all leaf-and-bud green tea is produced just to increase quantity and/or profit margin. There are also bud-and-leaf green teas that have always been made that way, because the varietal demands that it be so.

It is important to remember that in tea production, the previous step is always more relevant to the overall quality of the tea than the next—in part because in mastered tea production, the earlier stages will determine how the later stages are done, if at all, to bring out the best in the tea. Ultimately, this means that the terroir will *always* be the most influential factor in determining the quality of a tea. Like all plants, tea is a product of its

environment; it is the sun, the mountain, the fog and mist and the weather, so the better the environment, the better quality the tea. And the terroir will determine the varietal most suitable to grow there, which is, frankly, always going to be the varietal that evolved naturally to suit that environment. (Farmers in Pinglin can grow nice Tieguanyin varietals, for example, since the environment is slightly better than Muzha, but such tea will always lack the “Muzha character” that makes Muzha Tieguanyin special.) The varietal will then determine the harvest time, which will determine the next stage and so on. What this means, in the end, is that in the best of tea processing, the terroir, varietal and weather/harvest time will determine how the tea is best processed to bring out its best qualities. And sometimes, with some green teas, this means that the tea is actually better as bud-and-leaf sets than it is as all-bud tea.

It is true that all-bud green teas tend to be higher quality, as the buds of most small-leaf varietals are sweeter and far less bitter and astringent, having a lot less chlorophyll and tannins.



OTHER FAMOUS GREEN TEAS OF CHINA

Longjing 龍井

“Dragon Well” green tea from Hangzhou is perhaps the most famous of all Chinese green teas. It is pan-fired and pressed as it is dried, resulting in unique paper-flat leaves with a bright yellowish-green hue.

Biluochun 碧螺春

This tea is produced in Jiangsu. It is pan-fired into dark green curls with hints of white. *Biluochun* is named after the leaves, which are shaped like curled-up snails.

Maofeng 毛峰

Huangshan Maofeng green tea (黃山毛峰) literally translates to “Yellow Mountain Fur Peak” tea. It is produced in Yellow Mountain, Anhui Province, and is one of the most famous green teas produced in China. It is baked dry, traditionally in bamboo baskets over charcoal heat, creating a delicate and nutty brew.

Zisun 紫筍

This famous green tea from Guzhu in Zhejiang is remarkable enough to be included in Lu Yu’s *Tea Sutra*. “Zisun (紫筍)” literally means “purple bamboo shoot,” referring to the purplish hue of the buds and small leaves of this green tea.

Zhen Mei 珍眉

This “Precious Eyebrow” green tea is better known in the West by its Cantonese name, “*Chun Mee*.” It is famous for tasting subtly of plums, with a bright, tangy liquor when it is well made.

Lu'an Melon Seed 六安瓜片

This green tea is made in Anhui, near where our Tea of the Month comes from. It is a very unique green tea in that two leaves are plucked separately to make this tea, as opposed to the bud sets that are more common in green tea production. You can read more about this tea in the March 2017 issue of *Global Tea Hut*.

Xinyang Maojian 信陽毛尖

This tea from Xinyang, Henan Province is called “*Maojian* (毛尖)” in reference to the furry buds (*mao*, 毛) and shape of the leaves (*jian*, 尖), which is a “sharp point.” This is one of the most ancient teas still in production in the world. *Maojian* is one of the older types of green tea in China. Fine *Maojian* is made exclusively from small, sharp handpicked buds that produce a delicate, refined liquor.

Zhu Cha 珠茶

“Pearl Tea” is better known in the West as “Gunpowder Tea,” due to the fact that it is made up of small, rolled-up pellets that often have a smoky flavor. According to some tea scholars, this rolled-up green tea from Zhejiang Province may be the precursor to oolong tea. The highest grades were called “*Pingshui* Gunpowder (平水珠茶),” which means “Temple of Heaven Gunpowder.” This tea is withered and steamed before drying, which means that dark, shiny pellets are usually a sign of freshness. They can be smoky due to pinewood fires near the withering tea and/or used to heat the woks during the de-enzyming, similar to *Zhen Shan Xiao Zhong* red tea.

Taiping Houkui 太平猴魁

“Peaceful Monkey Chieftain” tea is another Huangshan varietal. Because the medium-leaf trees used to make this tea traditionally grew in shady valleys, they have less chlorophyll and tannins, making them less astringent than most tea leaves. For that reason, larger, pretty leaves are used to make this extraordinary green tea, which is often considered the emperor of all green teas when it is well made. Traditionally, the leaves were processed in individual sets of three leaves to a stalk; this shape was referred to as “two knives and a pole (兩刀一槍).” But nowadays, stalks of *Taiping Houkui* often have five or even seven leaves.

Meng Ding Ganlu 蒙頂甘露

This “Morning Dew” tea is an ancient green tea produced in Sichuan Province. It is an all-bud green tea with an especially light, bright and fragrant liquor.

中國著名綠茶

進貢皇帝茶 昭告春天臨

Such teas are also more valuable as they demand hand-picking, so that the buds are not damaged, and it usually takes thousands, or even tens of thousands, of buds to make a single *jin*. In general, all-bud teas are much more conducive to better green and white tea production. But there are natural exceptions like our Tea of the Month, which we'll discuss in a bit. We say "natural" because, once again, the best teas are always made in harmony with the nature of the leaf. In other words, the best of the best in tea is always made in a way that brings out the best in the varietal of tea used, which was in turn "chosen," which means evolved by and through the environment it is found within.

The famous Anhui green tea, "*Taiping Houkui* (太平猴魁)," literally "Peaceful Monkey Chieftain" is a great example of a green tea that is better as a leaf. In fact, the leaves are left to grow quite large in this unique green tea. Traditionally, *Taiping Houkui* grow in valleys, which means that the tea

trees receive less sunlight and therefore produce much less chlorophyll, which means the larger leaves are still quite sweet and lack the astringency and bitterness of most teas. This unique green tea is also made from a large- or medium-leaf varietal called "*shi da* (柿大)." They are also quite beautiful, especially since they were traditionally produced one leaf at a time (yes, every single leaf). When you find some authentic *Taiping Houkui* (there are oh-so-many fakes), brew it in a dark rabbit's fur bowl, and you'll have found one of the many doorways to the Heaven realms through tea!

Three Friends Tea

Zhu shan (杼山) is in the southwest of Huzhou Prefecture. The emperor and his court often spent summers here, strolling through the gardens, forests and taking in the natural glory that is all around. This place is also famous for its temples, boasting an

ancient lineage and is, for that reason, sometimes called "Baoji Mountain (寶積山)" due to the temple of the same name. Zen and Daoist masters practiced self-cultivation here, and monasteries, abbeys and hermitages dotted the hills all around.

The abbot of the Baoji Temple (寶積寺), which is also called "Miaoxi Temple (妙喜寺)," was a teacher and friend of the great Tang Dynasty (618–907) tea saint, Lu Yu, who wrote the *Tea Sutra*. The abbot, who was named Jiao Ran (皎然), loved Lu Yu's tea, and the two often gathered to share tea in the hills around Huzhou, chasing glorious springs and the experience of Zen, when the sounds of Nature meet the boiling cauldron and you sip away delusion, waking up to find you are the same as before. Imagining these old saints wandering the same paths brought us great joy. We can only imagine how deep truths passed between them silently, as nothing more need be said—the Tea had said it all.



三癸茶人

茶 We saw so many Lu Yu statues on this trip that it was hard to choose a photograph. This one in Hangzhou was amongst our favorite, as we love the cauldron by his feet and his wistful expression. Imagining a great Chajin, Lu Yu, his master Jiao Ran and the great poet Yan Zhenqing sipping tea together, writing poems and discussing Zen is a sentiment that would inspire any tea lover. Walking where these sages walked and perhaps drinking tea in the spot that they sat was a highlight of our trip. There is so much ancient tea history that a Chajin could cast a stone in any direction and find a place where legends drank tea and discussed the Dao. Let us raise a bowl or two of this month's tea to our forefathers in Cha Dao!



Eventually, Lu Yu and Jiao Ran picked up a third tea friend, the great poet and governor of Huzhou, Yan Zhenqing (顏真卿). They would meet on Lushan and drink tea, write poems, meditate and discuss the Dao, Zen and all that cannot be said, for those who know do not say. As all of these great men have become legend, so too have their tea exploits. In October of the eighth year of the Tang emperor Dali (773), Yan Zhenqing built the “Three Tea Friends Pavilion (三癸亭)” for Lu Yu and Jiao Ran.

Over the years, Yan Zhengqing sponsored cultural events in Huzhou, many attended by Lu Yu, along with other artists and scholars. They say that Lu Yu spent decades living in Huzhou and probably wrote the *Tea Sutra* here, along with many other works on tea, water for tea and other subjects that have unfortunately been lost. Lu Yu traveled to most tea-growing regions researching and practicing tea ceremony. He died in Huzhou, in the twentieth year of the Tang emperor Dezong

(804) at the age of seventy-one. There is a tomb on Lushan that is said to contain his body.

Due to the popularity of tea, everywhere in Huzhou is the place where Lu Yu wrote the *Tea Sutra*. We went to a new, giant and bustling museum that is said to be on the site of his small cottage, and an old one with a now-defunct spring that has become unkempt and overgrown because tourists are all going to the new location. The old one is scheduled to be torn down, in fact. Of course, there is marketing in all this, as museums are selling history, heritage and tea to tourists, but it also demonstrates the depths that these great men permeated the mountains, rivers and tea trees of this place, filling every cup since with their presence and captivating the imagination of tea pilgrims like us for generations. To many tea farmers, Lu Yu and his friends are gods to which they pray for a successful harvest. Legend has turned to myth, and has filled the hearts of tea farmers for generations.

The work these masters did will also continue long into the future as well. Some tea sessions linger long after the last bowl of tea is served...

Our Tea of the Month is called “Three Friends” in honor of these amazing men (as are many other teas in the area). It is a great tea, filled with the history of these men’s ceremonies in these very mountains. Perhaps you will have a vision of them, or catch a glimpse of their robes just out of the corner of your eye—just opened after a particularly pleasant bowl. The varietal used, however, is from Anji and is called “Anji White Tea (安吉白茶),” even though it is a green tea. “Three Friends” is the name of the Anji Baicha grown on this farm, in other words. There are other “Three Friends” green teas in the Huzhou area, but we aren’t sure what varietals are used in the production of those teas. Therefore, we thought it would be worthwhile to share some more about Anji green tea, which is called “white” tea but is actually a green tea...



☞ Every morning when we woke up, the pickers had already risen and headed out into the fields to harvest the tea at dawn. It was amazing to see them each morning. We got up extra-early one morning to be there when they arrived, chat a bit with them and make some photography of them hand-picking your Tea of the Month. They are deft and fast, since they are paid by weight, but they loved chatting with us. One cute elderly woman asked if we would take her picture to America, since she would never go there herself. We replied that we would show her picture to many countries around the world. She smiled and began bragging to all her friends about it. True to our word, she is the one picking above and to the left.

安吉白茶 ANJI BAICHA

Anji “white” tea is a varietal and type of tea that can be a bit confusing because it is actually a green tea. Anji is a county in Huzhou Prefecture, Zhejiang Province. It has been a tea center for centuries, producing some of the finest teas in history. Baicha is one such tea, shared with the emperor as tribute. To this day, Anji Baicha remains one of the most expensive teas in China, often given as gifts to friends. It can be very expensive as a result.

The leaves of this amazing tea are very pale yellow to whitish in color, which is why it is called a “white” tea. Some say that the Anji Baicha trees are the descendants of the white tea that the emperor Song Huizhong (1082–1135) mentioned in his *Treatise on Tea*,

which we translated in the April 2016 issue of *Global Tea Hut*. There is no solid evidence for this, though it is poetic to think that we are connecting to the same spirit as our beloved “Tea Emperor.” The modern varietal of Anji Baicha was discovered in the late 1970s or ’80s. There is a very old tree, which the locals claim to be 1,000 years old, that may be the ancestor of all the Baicha trees in the county. (We visited Her on this trip, so you will read more about our tea session beneath Her limbs later on. The photograph opposite is Her as well.) Apparently, this mother tree is one of a pair, and the other died some years ago. Most Anji Baicha is grown between five hundred and eight hundred meters above sea level.

Though the pale leaves of this stunning tea are whitish in color, the processed leaf is a bright green. The liquor is pale yellowish-green. Baicha’s ashen leaves are high in amino acids, which some studies show may increase the health benefits of drinking this tea. This is especially true of the pre-Qing Ming flushes, like our Tea of the Month, which is harvested first in the spring before the temperature gets too high. After that, the tea starts to develop too much chlorophyll and polyphenols, changing the flavor and decreasing the quality significantly. Though modern climate change has affected the quality of pre-Qing Ming tea (see *the box on the previous page*), it is still the best when it comes to Anji Baicha.



茶 Anji Baicha is actually a green tea, even though it is called “white.” The buds of this varietal are often whitish-yellow when they flush, turning greener as they grow and produce chlorophyll. To the right is the mother tree of all Anji Baicha, from which all the trees throughout the area descend. As Chajin, we felt the need to pay our respects.





三茶友的製程 PROCESSING THREE FRIENDS TEA

As with all tea, the terroir is the most important part of making fine tea. The environment plays a greater role in tea production than we ever will. Tea *is* its environment. One cannot grow Wuyi Cliff Tea elsewhere or puerh outside of Yunnan. The place makes the tea. Our Tea of the Month is an organic farm in Huzhou run by two generations of farmers, Luo Xin Jiang (羅新江) and his father Zhang A-Duo (章阿多). The trees are around twenty years old and thrive in an organic plantation, with some biodiversity and no agro-chemicals. This is, of course, not as nice as living tea, which is seed-propagated and grown in ecological gardens with space between trees, but it is a nice compromise—one that we have to support to make sure everyone in the world can have tea. At least it does not harm the Earth, the pickers, farmers and their families or the tea lovers who drink it.

All the tea on this farm is hand-picked starting in the early morning, but Mr. Luo told us that the best teas are harvested around noon when the temperature is hottest, but in the very early spring before the chemistry of the tea has started to change. Since this is a bud-and-leaf green tea, it needs a withering before it can be dried, to evaporate some of the moisture. This is done in different ways depending on the quality of the tea leaf and time of year it is picked. Mr. Luo feels that a controlled withering of around four hours in humidity- and temperature-controlled troughs is better than one hour on a tarp as some farmers do. There really is no timer controlling this process, though. Farmers always smile when you ask them, “How long do you X?” Like a chef, they will let you smell the leaf and reply: “Until it smells like this!” They use their senses to gauge the tea—in other words, stopping and

starting the processing phases in harmony with the nature of the leaves before them, not according to some generic recipe.

After the withering, the tea goes through an eight-minute kill-green (*sha qing*, 殺青). This arrests oxidation and de-enzymes the tea. As we mentioned earlier, green tea is either baked dry, pan-fired or steamed. Throughout Huzhou, Anji Baicha, Three Friends and other types of green tea are de-enzymed in a very unique machine that is a modern-kind of pan-firing, as it is metal. It is a series of steel ridges and troughs that are heated to around 300 °C. The troughs vibrate back and forth rapidly, shaking the tea up and down vigorously. This process also shapes the tea, creating the spear-like leaves of Three Friends and Anji Baicha that are oh-so-beautiful to behold. These are amongst the most gorgeous tea leaves on earth, as you will see.



茶 *A tea is its environment. Understanding terroir is how you understand tea in general, and any tea specifically. This is why most transplanted teas grown in regions other than where they come from are almost always inferior to the original. Champagne is not just a way of making bubbly wine, in other words; it is also a place. Without the deep roots and biodiversity that keep tea trees healthy, the uniqueness of the place is not as present in the characteristics of the tea. Tea grown in sterilized soil with agro-chemicals lives without as much connection to the minerals of the earth, the unique flora and fauna of that place and the connection between all the living things that make up an ecosystem. Also, terroir includes the human element: the history, culture, processing methods and love of the farmers. When the farmers use agro-chemicals, they turn their fields into a product and distance themselves emotionally from their work and their land, which also depreciates the resulting terroir and quality of the tea. To the left is the beloved producer of our Tea of the Month, Mr. Zhang A-Duo (章阿多).*



These leaves are gorgeous when they are dry and also when you add hot water and watch them unfurl in a bowl. These firing machines are expertly operated by tea masters who watch the tea bounce, grab it occasionally and shake it, feeling the texture and softness, and, of course, smell it to know when the firing is done. This has to be exact, as the heat can easily scald the teas. The quality is proven in a matter of minutes, and even thirty seconds too soon or too late can mean a great or even ruined leaf.

After the firing and shaping, the tea is roasted dry at a gentle 100 °C. This is done in two to three roasts of around twelve minutes each. Again, constant supervision is necessary, and this process has to be done with great skill, like toasting pine nuts in the oven, which are perfect for only a few seconds before they burn. The tea cools down, to prevent burning, and then goes for a second, or rarely third roast until it is dry. After that, the tea is sorted into grades, and mis-processed leaves, along with broken bits, are all sorted out and saved for donation to local monks or for the farmers to drink at home. This is the spirit of Tea as it shines in small tea villages like this, with kindness and hospitality.

Because green tea has fewer steps than most tea, and is therefore simpler, many tea lovers assume that it is easy to create fine green tea. Nothing could be further from the truth! Fine green tea requires first and foremost a clean, healthy and pristine environment, like all tea, with healthy tea trees flushing well because of the right, stable climate. All tea *is* its terroir, its place. Then, there is a tremendous amount of skill in processing fine green tea that shines with the glory of spring's essence—soft, light, sweet and fragrant, but with breadth and depth to leave a lasting impression on even a seasoned tea drinker. This is challenging, indeed, and as with most genres of tea, is only achieved by the right combination of: Earth (in the form of the garden ecology and trees), Heaven (in the form of the climate and spirit), and Human (through their skills). Only when Heaven, Earth and Human are dancing together in perfect harmony do we see a fine tea. You can decide if this month's Three Friends green tea reaches that level or not...





茶 Since Three Friends tea is made of leaves and buds, it needs to be withered before production. This is done until it “smells right,” as Master Tsai shows us. As far as we know, these kill-green machines are unique to Anji Baicha production. They shake the tea while heating it up and de-enzyming it. A master shakes the tea, feeling its temperature and smelling it all the while. When he feels it is done, he lifts up the whole apparatus using the wooden handles shown to the left, and the de-enzymed tea goes down a conveyor belt and is emptied onto a tray. Another farmer then roasts the tea dry in two stages.



Brewing Tips

冲泡技巧 完成好茶

This month's tea is the perfect leaves in a bowl tea. These magical leaves with some bright spring water over them are glowingly green, adding so much visual appreciation to the experience of drinking tea. Watching green tea open in a bowl is one of the great joys of a tea lover and adds so much to the flavor and aroma. It is not so often that the sense of sight plays such a huge role in our appreciation of a tea. These leaves are truly gorgeous to behold. Make sure you take the time to appreciate the sensual aspects of this amazing tea, with deep and slow inhalations of the aroma, both of the leaves and in the bowl, savoring the nutty sweet flavors and taking the time to glance lovingly into the bowl. We love drinking green tea this way. You can also drink this tea in a sidehandle if you wish.

Most of the time, we prefer light bowls for tea ceremony, as they allow us to see the tea liquor, especially when brewing with a side-handle pot. However, when drinking such stunning green tea as this month's tea, it is very nice to use dark bowls, most famously so-called "rabbit's fur (*tianmu*, 天目)" glaze. The dark patterns in these amazing bowls creates the perfect background for the bold and saturated greens, yellows and whites of this month's gorgeous green tea. The contrast is stunning and makes drinking such tea even more appealing. (We have a whole issue on *tianmu* bowls, which you can read in the archive: May 2018.) A nice white bowl can also be very enjoyable for watching these leaves unfurl.

This month, water will be even more important than other months. Of course, every cup or bowl of tea is 99% water, so choosing good spring water is essential in tea brewing. There is no faster, easier or better way to improve *all* your tea than choosing fine water. You should read up on the "Ten Qualities of a Fine Tea" in our past issues (or watch the video on our YouTube channel), as these qualities can all be used to evaluate water as well. Water from a good, clean source that is stored and heated properly makes a greater difference on tea quality than the teaware or even brewing skills of the person steeping the tea (unless you include water selection and storage as brewing skills).

When drinking such a delicate, fragrant and light tea, water will play an even more pronounced role. You have to make sure that your kettle imparts no flavors to the tea. We want to enhance and encourage the simplicity and sweetness of this gentle tea. You also want to use a lower temperature of water, choosing "crab-eye" water, which is roughly 80-85 °C. If the water is too hot, it will scald the delicate tea, and some of the fragrance will be overwhelmed. Contrary to popular belief, this is not true of all green teas. Many do respond well to higher temperatures. You must be gentle with this tea, even in the pouring. Be sure to pour along the inside of the bowl and not touch the leaves themselves with the stream of water, allowing them to spin and start steeping in the first place, and to lift off the bottom of the bowl in later steepings. If you choose to brew this tea sidehandle, you can increase the temperature slightly and create a different brew. Though this tea is best leaves in a bowl, it should still be prepared and drunk with a bit more upright grace.



Leaves in a bowl

Sidehandle

Water: spring water or best bottled

Fire: coals, infrared or gas

Heat: mild, crab-eye, roughly 80-85 °C

Brewing Methods: leaves in a bowl or sidehandle (leaves in a bowl is better)

Steeping: longer, no flash, then growing (fewer leaves is better in a bowl)

Patience: five to ten steepings

茶 Try to avoid pouring water directly onto the leaves this month. These leaves are delicate and can be scalded by hot water. If using a teapot, pour quickly and move in circles.





湖州

竹之夢

Huzhou

We landed into the arms of Great Nature. After a quick meet-up in Shanghai, we hopped on the bus and drove a few hours to Huzhou, having our orientation on the bus. We didn't know it yet, but our guide, Master Tsai Yizhe (蔡奕哲), had prepared ten days of stunning Nature, spirit and tea for us. It wouldn't take long to realize this though. We pulled up to our first stop, the Huixin Valley Resort (慧心谷), owned by our first wonderful host, Sunny Song (宋晓萍) and her husband Du Yong Ping (杜永平). We would spend our first three nights in this glory.

The Huixin Resort hadn't even opened yet and Sunny lovingly invited us to stay a few days. As we arrived, we immediately realized that was quite the gift. The Huixin Resort is situated in a bamboo forest, with green tea all around, beautiful rolling mountains that stretch to the horizon, lakes and streams and the sounds of Nature. The villas are all built simply with wood, bamboo and stone, and are luxurious but still tasteful and natural. Our subsidized stay there could easily read like an advertisement for the resort, but it really was that beautiful. We were all stunned.

The hospitality on these trips is always one of the greatest highlights for us, and there has not been a single trip where we did not make lifelong friendships with our beautiful Chinese hosts. This year was no different. By the second day, everyone was in love with Sunny, and she was getting hugged by a huge gaggle of moist-eyed foreigners (she took it in stride and smiled gracefully throughout it all). The resort is filled with tea spirit: there

are tea rooms and spaces everywhere. We had several memorable tea sessions in those first days, including a lovely evening sit by a candlelit lake and a morning session on a balcony overlooking the bamboo forests. On the last night, we drank tea on the roof and Sunny hired a light company to project the words "Global Tea Hut" across the entire mountain, which lightened our hearts and made everyone smile.

We didn't get to our villas until late in the evening, after dark. It is always special to arrive at a place at night and then wake up in the morning to see where you are for the first time. The Huixin villas offered such an experience in an incredibly transformative way. We were fortunate to have a gorgeous and extremely talented Estonian musician with us on this trip, Triinu, and many of us woke to the sound of her flute gently rolling off the hills. Stepping out onto the balconies of our villas that first morning, we found ourselves perched on stilts on the incline of a glorious mountain, completely, utterly and wonderfully surrounded by tea—endless tea fields! We looked around and saw all our companions emerging onto their balconies with tea bowls in hand and the same look of wonder on their faces, and contemplated if we were perhaps still dreaming. "Huixin" means "Wisdom Heart," and our experience here certainly reflected that. We all left wiser and more heart-centered than when we arrived. Most of us felt like we could have spent the entire trip in the Huixin Valley.

It was also here that we had the opportunity to participate in our first tea production, harvesting and observing the procession of Three Friends tea. The tea picker's laughs echo even now.

Aside from our lovely silent tea sessions, we spent our days driving to various monasteries nearby and the amazing Lu Yu museum, where we were treated to a demonstration of Tang Dynasty (618–907) tea brewing techniques. We got to drink tea with the abbot of the largest local monastery, and he gave a small talk on the relationship between Buddhism and tea.

The relationship between tea and Zen was a major theme of this year's trip. We visited many monasteries and discussed the fact that Zen and tea are "one flavor" amongst ourselves and with our hosts. The fact is that any tea tradition with any kind of duration must pass through the halls of Zen, as does all tea really. As a tea lover, one must bow to all the tea masters of old who were also Zen monks.

One afternoon, Master Tsai showed us some small wild tea trees in a bamboo forest and led us on a pleasant hike up to a small and humble temple only accessible by trail. It was built by the farmers who made our Tea of the Month. We all got to drink from the neighboring spring, which they say Lu Yu used for tea and then had lunch there. In one of the most touching moments of our whole trip, the sole resident monk teared up and told us that seeing us all there from all over the world meant that his prayers had been answered and his merits were ripening. He put our copy of the *Tea Sutra* on his altar next to Lu Yu and said prayers to it. It touched us all deeply. He brought out a jar of his best tea, from wild trees and crafted himself by hand. We drank it in our bowls using Lu Yu's spring water the monk had fetched that morning. It doesn't get any better than that for a Chajin!

MATTHEW GROHNE, USA

I sit with legs crossed and back straight, steam rising from a cup of wild red tea from Yixing. The vapor mingles with thin wisps of incense smoke as I raise the cup to my lips, my nostrils filled with heavenly fragrance and my mouth with smooth ambrosia. Each sip makes my body heavy, rooting me 10,000 meters below the surface of the Earth. Or maybe it's 10,000 kilometers? That would be closer to the distance from Seattle to Shanghai, where we both began and ended this Annual Trip. The aloeswood does seem to be beckoning me, with its slow, serpentine gestures, to come closer. Listen. Remember.

I will remember, but only to a degree. My memory isn't so good, and I like to focus on what's right in front of me in the moment. Actually, I prefer to say that I'm good at forgetting. One of the important functions of memory is to integrate what is important and forget the rest, so that those cognitive resources can be free to do other things. So, rather than share a travelogue or series of vignettes from the trip, I'd like

to offer how some of the experiences of the trip relate to, and have affected, my daily life. On the final day of the trip, I shared that it was difficult to choose a favorite experience—the pages were still scattered about the desk, not yet organized by section and chapter. While that is still an ongoing process (as is the editing), I will do my best to communicate some of the major themes. Consider this a rough draft.

Chapter 1: *Mountains and Rivers*

The red tea I am currently drinking comes from wild trees, nestled among a forest of bamboo and growing low to the ground due to limited sunlight. We did not have the good fortune to visit these particular trees—it had been planned, but the road was closed, and to hike from further away would have limited our time to see other things in Yixing. However, we did visit a wonderfully biodiverse tea plantation, lower in elevation and closer to the road.

Upon arriving, Master Tsai pointed out the variety of other plants growing around the tea—a good sign, indicating a healthy ecosystem—as well as the location. Behind the tea gardens were mountains covered in bamboo and shrouded in mist, while below us was a large lake. Not only does this relationship ensure that the tea has a stable environment in which to grow (tea loves ample humidity and loose soil), according to principles of *feng shui* (風水) the location itself is auspicious.

From the perspective of *feng shui*, mountains and rivers (or other water sources) have layers of meaning. For a nation, mountains provide protection from enemies and represent the stability that the nation hopes to provide to its people. They are strong, steady, and powerful, the result of enormous forces deep within the Earth. Rivers, on the other hand, are fluid and dynamic, able to adapt whenever they meet an obstacle and embracing anything that flows into them. For a nation, rivers represent a strong economy, with commerce flowing back and forth.



高山與潺湲河流

However, there is another meaning and significance to mountains and rivers. Within a human being, there is ideally a harmony between the stability of the mountains and the flexibility of the rivers. The nature of the mountains leads one to be dependable and trustworthy; however, too much stability and one becomes rigid and unable to adapt. The nature of rivers leads one to be adaptable and equanimous; however, too much flexibility and one becomes undisciplined. In embodying both mountains and rivers, one is able to overcome any obstacles that may arise—standing as firm or becoming as soft as is called for by the situation.

In my own life, I also find that rivers run down from mountains. Having elements of stability—in terms of a tea practice, a meditation practice, an ethical practice and a physical practice—helps me to be more balanced and adaptable in all areas of my life. In modern society, the word “discipline” often seems to take on a negative connotation, as if the stability that discipline offers is somehow confining,

limiting one’s freedom. But I think of discipline as facilitating freedom. Just as literal mountains offer a nation protection from enemies and invaders, so too does a disciplined practice, offering protection from the enemies of craving, anxiety, laziness and habitual thinking that sometimes invade one’s consciousness. The more I embody the mountains in certain areas of my life, the more the rivers descend the mountains into my relationships with other people and the world.

Chapter 2: Prayers and Offerings

As the aroma of aloeswood takes me deeper, I remember the offerings we made on the trip at the altars of various buddhas and bodhisattvas. Many of the most profound moments on the Annual Trip took place in temples and monasteries with long histories—from the impressive grandeur of Jing Shan Monastery, with its many beautiful halls and statues, to the small temple

we visited early in the trip, tended by a lone monk who shared with us tea that he himself had picked from the wild trees a short ways from the temple. As a result, one of the threads woven through our journey was prayer, as it seemed that I had more occasion (and impulse) to practice than perhaps at any other time in my adult life. However, although I grew up going to church on Sundays and repeating the words, I realized early on that I had very little idea of how to actually pray.

In actuality, I had already begun a prayer practice prior to the trip. Using some of the practice at the Hut, I had set up an altar to Guan Yin, made offerings of tea, rice, water and flowers, and whispered wishes for wisdom and compassion. Occasionally, I even caught a glimpse of what it might feel like were I not directing these prayers to a piece of wood but rather to a divine bodhisattva of light and love. However, seeing the reverence of tea sisters and brothers as they entered halls and approached altars, I had to ask myself whether my approach was true.



茶 One of the main highlights of this year’s trip was our hike into a bamboo forest where we drank from a spring that Master Lu Yu may have used to prepare his tea. We had lunch at a humble temple, where the sole monk cried, touched by so many guests from so far away, saying that we were the manifestation of his merits blossoming! He got out a jar of wild tea he had made himself, put our Tea Sutra on his altar and made us all tea...



One of the things I learned while on the trip was that, from a Zen perspective, the issue of belief—in the realness or un-realness of that to which one prays—is to some degree moot. The importance is placed not on the objective reality or rationality of the prayer, but rather the effect that it has on the practitioner. In other words, the benefit of prayer is in becoming the type of person who prays.

There are five types of prayer in Wu De's lineage of Zen: prayers of *metta* (loving-kindness), prayers of gratitude, prayers of humility, prayers for the embodiment of higher qualities (serenity, courage, wisdom, etc.) and prayers for the healing of others. None of these forms of prayer is predicated on reality being any different than what it already is (because really, whom among us knows what would *really* be good for us?), but rather offers transformation because the act of praying is itself transformative. In his series *Awakening from the Meaning Crisis*, Dr. John Vervaeke suggests that ritual (including prayer) can be thought of as a form of play—not in the sense that it is fun or frivolous, but rather in that it places one between the world in which one lives and the world in which one wants to live. In other words, deep engagement with prayer allows one to see what it would be like to be a more kind, humble, and grateful person, and over time the line between the ritual and real-life blurs until one becomes that which one seeks to become.

At no point during the trip did I experience this liminal space more acutely than when we visited Jingci Temple in Hangzhou. Jingci Temple is located at the foot of Huirui Peak and has a history of more than 1,000 years, although it has been destroyed and rebuilt several times. Its most famous attraction is a bell tower that houses a large copper bell, on which is inscribed the 68,000 characters that comprise the Lotus Sutra. The bell is rung each evening and can be heard from miles away, but it was the significance of ringing the bell that made an impression on me—it is said that for as long as the bell is ringing, the beings in Hell are relieved of their suffering. During our visit, we ascended the stairs of this bell tower, and one by one took turns ringing the bell, the deep reverberations lasting more than a minute each

time. I'm not sure whether the beings in Hell noticed our actions or intentions, but I do know that I used a little more strength when it came to be my turn. May all beings, without exception, be free from suffering.

Chapter 3: *Sangha*

Although I am currently drinking tea alone, I am drinking tea with all of you. This was not the case two years ago, when I went on my first Annual Trip. Then, I was meeting everyone for the first time. It was my first encounter with Wu De, my first time meeting other Global Tea Hut members, and my first time traveling to Asia. Until that point, Global Tea Hut had been primarily a magazine; the community was abstract and impersonal, and I only shared tea with others very infrequently. Things have certainly changed in the last couple of years—not only has tea permeated nearly all aspects of my life, but this community (both local and global) has become a source of great joy and connection. Whereas two years ago I felt anxious about meeting and traveling with so many new people, this Annual Trip I looked forward to reconnecting with many old friends.

Tea has a wonderful way of connecting people, and all the more so when those people have an approach to tea in common. As we shared conversations on the bus, shared rooms at resorts and hotels, shared space and silence during numerous ceremonies, and shared bowl after bowl of tea, I found myself reflecting on how my relationship to this community has grown. The seeds that were planted two years prior have put down roots, sprouted and begun to bear fruit. Friendships have emerged within the global community—including new ones on this trip—and a small local community has begun to form and take shape where I live. (You can create a local community if you just persevere and serve lots of tea!)

Thich Nhat Hanh, the eminent Vietnamese Zen teacher, has said that the next incarnation of the Buddha will be a *sangha*, a community of practitioners. In changing the world, bowl by bowl, we go as a river—each droplet

by itself having limited impact, but together having the power to carve great valleys. And as the river descends the mountain, not only does it inscribe its own path on the Earth, but branches into myriad streams and rivulets that bring water and life to countless areas. These Global Tea Hut trips are in some ways a returning home, coming back to the main river so that the teachings and relationships can more easily flow into one's home and community. However, they are also an opportunity to forge new relationships and connect communities, forming a network of streams flowing back and forth around the world.

Epilogue

The kettle has run dry; however, the influence and memories of this Global Tea Hut trip will continue to be processed in the weeks and months to come. The next time we share tea, I hope to be able to steep them for you; these leaves have only recently been plucked and are now withering, awaiting the rolling and the fire of practice that will bring them to their true potential. To my mind, experiences such as these are worthwhile to the degree that they can be remembered, integrated, and have lasting benefit to one's life and the lives of others. And just as a fine tea lingers in the throat long after it has been swallowed, the lessons of the trip continue to linger in my thoughts even as I return to my day-to-day life and work. For someone adept at forgetting, I think that's a good sign.



🍵 *We got to harvest our own Three Friends tea. Picking tea is a lot of work, and everyone left with a newfound appreciation for tea farmers!*



ALEX TIJERINA, USA

Imagine yourself with your face deep in a tea plant: eyes closed, inhaling its subtle fragrance. As your lids lift, you glimpse the various shades of green and small fuzzy shapes. Your eyes slowly focus, and attention is drawn to the small, lighter colored buds and leaves that are prime for picking and turning into tea. In that moment I had the urge to embrace the entire plant, and that's exactly what I did.

On this day, we were given the privilege to practice picking the delicate buds and leaves. This was during the peak picking season of the year, so it was special that we were allowed to take part in this. Surrounded by the beauty of Chinese hills and tea gardens, we set to work with our only tools being baskets and fingers, trying to search for the proper part of the plant that hadn't yet sunk into my brain pattern. Time swiftly moved in relative silence as we gently plucked at the tops of the trees so as not to damage them. A mindful flow quickly set in. I felt so at peace

among the trees, my new friends, and the women who spent weeks of their lives out in the fields harvesting tea. It was at this moment where I first experienced the stirring of a deeper connection to not only the plants, but the land, and the people here.

I joined Global Tea Hut's trip to China with purposely little expectations. I wanted the journey to unfold the way it wanted to, and ultimately met with experiences that I could never have envisioned. I could write about so many of the deepening connections I have to Tea that came from my being absorbed by that place, but what comes to mind now are the people that traveled with me. I have visited the Hut and experienced numerous bowl tea ceremonies previously; however, there was something that shifted this time: a quiet awakening to the larger community of people who care about Tea and the Earth. We were each gifted a bowl that we all had to carefully cradle on our travels so that we could use them in ceremony. They got shuf-

fled around each time, so, at the end of each ceremony, we were given a different bowl, and I would stare at it and notice the subtle differences between them. Many bowls of tea were shared on this trip in so many beautiful, varied places and constellations of people.

Back at home, I sit with Tea in my daily practice and stare at the bowl in front of me. This bowl has passed the lips of many in shared moments of silence. Then I remember there is a whole community out there in the world that is waiting for me. It makes me smile to think of the new friends I was lucky enough to share time and experiences with on the trip. By partaking in this practice, I feel as if our hearts are connected by a string that hums and vibrates gently when I taste that first sip: a reminder that even when drinking tea by myself I am really never alone. For that I am ever grateful...



ELINA NAAN, ESTONIA

Estonians are really connected to Nature. Every Estonian has a summerhouse or grandparents' place in the woods or by the seaside. We all know how to grow our own food or how to read signs from Nature to predict weather. It is in our genes, in our blood, our energy field. The soil in Estonia is dark brown, even black. The sky is blue and the trees are green in the summer and colorful in the autumn. In the winter we rest, dive deep inside and hibernate. If you meet an Estonian you must keep that in mind: We *do* hibernate, but it is a good thing.

So, I've been wondering about the fact that there are so many Estonians who feel tea. I mean not just study the Leaf, but really speak Her language and feel Her power. In Estonia, if you serve tea to people who have never met tea in a ceremonial way, people start to share their feelings and visions like they have visited the land where Camellia comes from, like they have read thousands of stories about famous emperors and like they have seen tea trees growing. The connection is so obvious you'd start to believe it yourself. But then I really traveled to China...

When I finally walked the mountains where tea trees grow, I understood how those roots grow through the cliffs. When I breathed in misty air, I understood how tea trees drink through air. When I gently touched their leaves, I understood their love story with humans.

When we talk about tea, we mostly talk about connection. And I believe this is the essence of my trip: *Connection*. I connected deeply with the homeland of Tea, with the trees and mountains, with the leaves we put in our bowls and drank, and, of course, with several of my companions. We have now become tea brothers and sisters for life. There is a power in all that connection. It is transformative, and in a lasting way. So much of this trip will travel on with me.

I was touched by the way people who work with tea daily are tea whisperers without maybe even knowing it themselves, by how their skin and hair are soaked by tea oils and how their

eyes shine and sparkle despite tiredness and lack of sleep. Those people are truly a bridge between the Leaf and the rest of the world—humble servants who live in the moment. Wu De often says that the real tea “masters” are the pickers and farmers, not the brewers, as the Way of Tea wouldn't be possible without them. They are truly worthy of our respect. By respecting our tea and the Earth, we also respect the farmers, even from as far away as Estonia.

How often do we forget about what connection really is? That it is put together from little unseen moments where every centimeter is equally important. Sometimes we are sad when we lose connection, sometimes angry—any kind of connection. And we don't even dare or bother to look closer, to note all the little details. What was really disturbing this connection? What or who was missing? We also don't fix things. We buy new ones without trying to fix the old ones. This trip offered me the chance to reflect more deeply on this habit and to begin the process of breaking it. What would happen if we all devoted more time and energy to healing our connections as opposed to constantly seeking new ones in a mindless way? What a world that could be!

It is very curious to ponder the fact that all of us went on the same trip, but we all experienced our own journeys as well. Mine was deeply about honoring tradition: Connecting with my Nordic roots and respecting The Way of Tea, observing how these two different worlds combine and dance together, how and when they clash and when they harmonize, complement one another and who I am in this game called life, dancing the Way of Tea.

I feel my Estonian roots grew deeper in China and my Tea wings grew new feathers. And that combination gave me an insight that if we trust our journey and stay honest, vulnerable and sturdy, only then are we able to truly connect to each other, to Nature and follow our paths. And of course—one has to bring her heart. Always.



永遠迷失在茶夢之中

究竟是我做夢變成茶芽？還是茶芽做夢變成了我

茶道

JAANUS LEPLAAN, ESTONIA/TAIWAN

Imagine for a moment, walking down a mountain slope at the first light of dawn, as the thin veil of mist gently caressing the surrounding tea bushes is being painted by the first rays of the rising sun in hues of pink and gold. In the distance, a procession of ladies carrying wicker baskets ascends the winding, narrow mountain path, their faces beaming with smiles as they hike to the top to start picking tea for the day. This is how I remember the start of this year's Global Tea Hut Trip.

Each of the ten days was packed full of astounding experiences—from picking tea on hillsides, to temple visits, tea sessions, incredible dinners, museums and a traditional incense ceremony. Traveling to places like Yixing and Hangzhou are on every tea lover's bucket list. However, more than the sights and the incredible locations we visited on this trip, the memories that I appreciate the most are of people I met and the experiences we had together. Now that I have had some time to unpack and digest (both figuratively and literally), I reflect on the lessons I took away from this journey.

Tea is Kindness & Hospitality

It is the small moments that make up most of our lives, while the big ones add color. A lot of profound life lessons can be found in mundane activities if we but stop to listen and pay attention. A simple act of hospitality or kindness from someone you meet for the first time can be deeply touching and carries in itself the power to shift our perspective completely.

One of my favorite such moments happened on the third day when Master Tsai took us to visit a temple in a nearby bamboo forest. The sole full-time occupant of this place, a Buddhist monk, shared with us a meal and some simple green tea (growing wild in the area) that he himself hand-picked and processed. Although we had many other delicious and more elaborate meals on this trip, this one stands out the most. Not only because it was prepared with love on a traditional wood-fired

stove, but because the monk had accepted us into his humble home and shared with us quite literally everything he had. Seeing him moved to tears by the fact that our love for a life of tea had brought all of us together from different corners of the world is something that will stay with us forever.

Tea is Connection

As a beverage, tea is ubiquitous in China, so much so that we often forget how much hard work really goes into a cup of tea. Meeting the farmers and seeing the picking and processing as it happens every spring (and has been for generations) is another bright highlight for me. After just half an hour of tea picking and just a few handfuls of leaves to show for it, it had become clear that this process is no cakewalk. One has to know the picking technique, move quickly with dexterity and have patience to fill a whole basket with leaves. And this is just one part of the tea-making process.

This firsthand experience has made me appreciate these simple green leaves in my bowl even more and reminded me once again of the interconnectedness of all life. Nothing can exist independently of anything else. Nature, the elements and plenty of skilled humans had to come together for me to be able to drink this bowl of tea. And for this I am grateful!

Tea is Service

Just like there cannot be a tea ceremony without first cleaning and decorating the space, laying coals, fetching water and a myriad of other tasks, there could not have been a Global Tea Hut trip without the help of so many people who planned, prepared, and served us during it. Some of these people, like Joyce, did a lot to make this experience happen despite knowing they wouldn't be able to join us (after all, someone has to take care of our Center while we're gone). We all said prayers for Joyce, raising our bowls to the one who stayed behind so we could go.

In this tradition we learn to *serve* tea. This means also serving the occasion and people around us. Sometimes this means not having the experience yourself but facilitating it for others. This could be viewed as the server missing out; however, if we look closer, we realize that the reward for service is *getting to be of service*. Without service, tea is just a beverage or a hobby. With service, it is a Way.

I am very grateful for having been able to contribute and give back in a small way as one of the photographers on this trip. Capturing the special moments so we can share them with all of you meant occasionally not being able to participate in the ceremonies and tea sessions. Other times, it meant having an unexpectedly rewarding experience, like the morning I hiked up a mountain before sunrise to take photos of the tea pickers. As the rising sun flooded the mountain slopes and the valley with golden light, both the pickers and I stopped for a moment to listen to the faint sound of music reaching our ears from afar. As I looked around to find the origin of this unexpected soundtrack to this movie-like scene, I saw our companion Triinu in the distance, sitting on a boulder playing her flute to tea. This is perhaps one of my most vivid memories that highlights the uniqueness of this trip.

Making a Difference

In a way, we are indebted to past Chajin who devoted their lives to serving tea. It is thanks to Lu Yu and masters like him, who truly loved tea, that these places we were able to visit have remained.

With the choices we make today, we can all support the work that our guides on this trip, Master Tsai and Wu De, are doing to ensure that there will be clean and sustainable tea for future generations to drink and many, many more tea adventures like these to come...





茶 Lu Yu (733–804) played a large part in this year's trip. We carried copies of the Tea Sutra with us. Everywhere we went, the locals claimed that we were standing where the "Tea Saint" had drunk tea, meditated or wrote the Tea Sutra. While a lot of this was no doubt propaganda, with all the references we must certainly have crossed his trail at some point, walking where he walked. This sense of history and tea lineage filled our souls. Overcome, we all crowded down on one of the decks at the Lu Yu museum and drank green tea.



XIAOLI (林曉莉), CHINA

Perhaps you will never know what it has meant to me to take part in this tea trip. I was shocked and my heart was touched when I saw how you all were moved by the tea, the teardrops flowing from the bottom of your hearts, which were purer than Morning Dew (甘露).

When I offered the bowl of tea to the thousand-year-old tea tree, the mother of Anji Baicha tea, I seemed to hear Her whisper. When I cleansed my face and drank from the spring water that gave birth to life, She purified not only my body, but also my heart. When I made a rough and small purple-clay tea pot for the first time, I couldn't stop jumping for joy. When you all started to call me by my given

name, "Xiaoli," I felt touched so tenderly. When I heard more than a dozen languages singing happy birthday songs, I felt the world at peace...

I am proud to tell my friends that I have tea brothers and sisters from so many countries. Meeting you all was predestined. I love you all. I love Global Tea Hut. I love Tea. All of this stems from Tea and is due to Tea. I am thankful for all that Tea has given me.

Through Tea, I converse with history. Through Tea, I communicate with culture. Through Tea, I listen to the voices of Heaven, Earth and Nature. Through Tea, I make friends with the world. Through Tea, I see purity of heart. This trip was a trip from tea to Tea, from heart to Heart.

Tea has no boundaries; countries have no boundaries; people have no boundaries; and the heart has no boundaries.

I learn to drink tea, to make tea, to communicate with Tea Herself. Drinking tea is a kind of practice, and the spirit of a Chajin is one of service. Let's experience pure tea with a sincere heart.

Thank you to my teacher, Master Tsai Yizhe of Taiwan. Thank you, Teacher Wu De, shepherd of Global Tea Hut. I give thanks for all these encounters. I give thanks for this magical Leaf.





土地寺廟
安吉徑山

Anji & Jing Mt.

After leaving with hearts full of wisdom, we drove to the center of all Anji Baicha production, hiking up into the park with our breath held deep between each exhalation. The valleys are filled with gorgeous rivers, streams, rocks and tea trees everywhere. We watched the tea pickers balance themselves precariously halfway up the cliffs to pick this magical tea, reminded of how much energy goes into tea production. In fact, one of the main principles of all our Global Tea Hut Annual Trips is to instill a deeper respect for tea production in the hearts and minds of all the participants, so they go home with a deeper respect for the tea they prepare.

The fact is that tea is one of the most labor-intensive agricultural practices on earth. The tea we enjoy is hard work. Not only does Nature have to use sun and earth, love and light to grow the tea trees, but the people who harvest and process tea are incredibly devoted and offer up lots of sweat, blood and heart to create our teas. Seeing the pickers perched halfway up the cliffs reminded us that the real “tea masters” of the world aren’t shop owners or tea lovers brewing tea in pretty tea centers, but the farmers who make it all possible. Hopefully, some of that respect filters through our accounts, photography and the spirit of our trip to our extended community. Let us all raise a bowl or cup to the tea farmers of the world, who make all this possible!

At the top of the mountain in Anji, we had what would be the most memorable tea session for most of us, seated on an old, rotting wooden deck beneath the mother tree from which all Anji Baicha tea derives. Apparently, there used to be two mother trees and one died of

old age. The locals claim the living tree is more than a thousand years old. Master Tsai said that some genetic testing done a few years ago did in fact show that tea trees in a giant radius were descendants of this magical tree. We drank tea in silence for an hour or so and then naturally and effortlessly moved into prayers, offering a bowl of water to the roots of this old Queen. One by one, with hearts opened and tears free flowing, we all paid our respect to this wonderful medicine, given so freely by Mother Earth.

After a hike down the same gorgeous trail, we headed off to Jing Mountain, where we would reach our second amazing destination to stay. Master Tsai had said that our second residence was “much humbler” than the glorious Huixin Resort, and that it was “but a guest house.” Most of us were expecting something very simple, but we were blown away when we arrived—completely and utterly, jaw-droppingly stunned.

The Hua Cheng Guest House (化城民宿) was in a way humbler, as there was no giant bamboo forest or stunning tea fields to wake up to. But what it lacked in grandiosity it made up for in charm. It also was way beyond our budget, and was offered to us because Master Tsai teaches tea classes there.

The Hua Cheng Guest House was a temple, built in the Tang Dynasty. It had come on hard times and was starting to fall down. The owners bought the property and renovated it into a Zen retreat guest house, preserving as much of the original temple as possible, including a giant Jizo (地藏菩薩) statue, several walls, gorgeous Guanyin altars and more. There were koi ponds, Zen rock gardens, gorgeous walkways and stun-

ning little tea, incense and meditation rooms tucked here and there. We were all in Heaven. It was the perfect place to land after a long day hiking, and the perfect aesthetic for a traveling band of tea gypsies.

The next day we visited Jing Mountain monastery (徑山寺), which is a huge temple on the top of a hill. The chamberlain in charge of public relations gave us a tour, and a nice lecture on emptiness and how to pray to Guanyin, which touched everyone. He also left us with a koan that resonated with many in our group. We toured their museum, which is devoted to the relationship between tea and Zen and shows how this monastery in particular was incredibly influential to the tea traditions of Japan. Then, we had a very memorable tea session in the oldest building on the property, at the very peak of the tallest mountain, which was old and run down and perfect. We all crowded in the room and drank several bowls of amazing tea—yet another epic tea session forever in our memories.

That night, we also had the most beautiful tea session next to the rock garden in the Hua Cheng Guest House. We drank ancient-tree puerh leaves in a bowl while a local musician played the hang (a metal instrument), accompanied by our very own Triinu who sang and played the flute. She is incredibly talented and channels a lot of spirit into her music, filling our bowls with glory. Our hostess performed an interpretive dance that somehow matched the moment perfectly. We kept noble silence for the rest of the evening after a few bowls, drifting apart to continue drinking this tea in various nooks and crannies of the property under the auspice of a glorious full moon—Tea Heaven!

MASCHA COETZEE, RUSSIA/AUSTRALIA

This year's Global Tea Hut Trip was the second time I've been to China, and those ten days spent together in Huzhou, Hangzhou, Anji, Yixing and Shanghai have proven to be life-changing, filled with memorably amazing tea experiences, and deep life lessons to bring home with me!

It is always very hard to narrow down the most unforgettable experiences when you are a part of an Annual Global Tea Hut Trip though, as every day is filled with a great take away and a memory to treasure. Having said that, let me very quickly share with you the most exciting and educational moments lived on this trip. (There were lots of memories to last a lifetime, so choosing was very difficult!)

Getting a copy of the translation of Lu Yu's *Tea Sutra*, visiting the Lu Yu Museum and learning more about his life along with what he taught about tea and its ceremonial significance at the very beginning of the trip was a wonderful introduction to the direction this trip was going to take!

It is worth mentioning a special treat of a tea ceremony on the grounds of Lu Yu Museum, where Master Tsai shared with us Purple Bamboo Shoot Tea (Zisun, 紫筍), the tea which is believed to be described by Lu Yu himself in his text.

Immersing into Zen and Tea in monasteries and temples carried a huge significance, too, as that was where for the first time I gained understanding of the well-known "Tea and Zen One

Flavor" phrase, so widely used in China, linking Chinese culture to Tea and the domestication of tea by Zen monks who brought tea into monasteries, where tea became a part of their practice, so many tea mountains in China are also home to monasteries. Wu De drew a further connection between tea and Zen by saying: "If you don't have an understanding of Zen, you don't really understand Tea's heritage."

Spending a day at Shou Shen Temple (壽聖寺), experiencing walking and seated meditation with the monks of that temple, being absorbed in their chants and sharing tea and lunch there on the second day of our time in China; together with our visit to Jing Shan Monastery later on, where Zen was transmitted from the Chinese Chan



Monks to the Japanese Monks who came to China to study Chan (Zen) during the Song Dynasty—both were very powerful and insightful experiences. Both helped land the relationship between Zen and Tea in my heart.

Looking over the tea fields protected by Master Tsai and hearing the enchanting sounds of the flute played by our beautiful tea sister Triinu from Estonia; picking tea on a misty day in Jiangsu in the organic tea field between the mountain and the lake; together with sharing seventy-year-old Taiwanese oolong among tea brothers and sisters accompanied by the sounds of refreshing rain outside an old tea house in a scenic area were the most magical moments of the trip, which I cannot leave unmentioned either.

Lessons of Humility & Whole-Hearted Giving

On the third day of our trip, while in the Huzhou area, we visited a temple located in a serene bamboo forest with the sweetest spring water that we got to have a taste of, ladled by the hands of Master Tsai himself.

The Temple mentioned here is very small, and is attended to by a Buddhist monk—a very humble man who lives on its grounds, maintains the temple, prays for the wellbeing of all, and gathers and makes wild tea.

This beautiful monk welcomed us to this little temple and shared his abode with us, as if we were his most treasured family members! With the

謙遜和奉獻

helping hand of a very humble lady who had a radiant glow to her, he served us the most abundant (and oh-so very delicious) vegetarian lunch (meal of the trip, for sure!) followed by sharing wild tea he had produced himself!

You see, this monk does not have many possessions, has the humblest of dwellings, yet is so abundantly rich in his service, intent, love for humanity and loving-kindness he so generously shared with us!

The tears he shed, expressing his honor at welcoming the Global Tea Hut community into his temple,



saying that his prayers have been answered, now that he had gotten to share a meal, tea and himself with us, brought in turn tears of humbleness and beauty from the eyes of all of us, teaching a lesson in humility and giving whole-heartedly. I think this will be a highlight for many of the participants on this year's trip. It touched us all so deeply, and many of us will never forget it.

Lessons of Being Proactive

Since my first issue of Global Tea Hut magazine, I have received many lessons on tea, on the importance of sustainability and organic farming and the need to support organic tea farmers and suppliers.

Over the last few years, Wu De, through his support and articles, has introduced many of us to tea farmers, whom we get many of the Teas of the Month from.

I have learned about the ceremonial importance of tea, its inter connection with Zen, and had many experiential a-ha moments on how healing and transformative tea and tea ceremonies can be.

What I did not know prior to this trip is that Master Tsai protects a number of tea fields (one of which we had the honor to visit) in China and Taiwan. This was very inspiring.

Seeing Master Tsai's dedication to protect organic tea farms, together with educating non-organic tea farmers on sustainability with such compassion, has brought a realization that I, too, need to be more proactive, by getting more education on tea, being of service, sharing more tea and speaking to the life-changing impact that being a part of the Global Tea Hut Family has had on me.

Lessons of Surrender

It was day four of our trip when we embarked on a journey towards a what-is-believed-to-be 1000-year-old mother tea tree in Anji. It was a warm day, and we

went on a hike to get there; the sun was shining bright as we sat in a circle to share tea. Truth be told, I was physically a little uncomfortable and resistant on that day. But as I settled in my chosen seated position for tea, by the second bowl of tea, the resistance I had to the hot conditions around me miraculously evaporated. And as I lifted the second bowl of tea during that ceremony, a feeling of gratitude over filled me—gratitude for being at this special place with my tea family, gratitude for joy filling my heart and gratitude for a beautiful tea savored at the roots of this ancient tea tree! A few more bowls of tea were shared afterwards, and with every bowl I entered a deeper state of meditation, which to this day has appeared to be one of the most insightful and gratitude-filled experiences in my life. This was a lesson of letting go of expectations and surrendering.

Lessons of Being of Service

As I mentioned above, every day appeared to be a highlight on this trip, and that happened in so many ways due to the extensive planning, and arrangements that had been done prior and during this trip by teachers Wu De and Master Tsai, Joyce (our angel) and Global Tea Hut students (I love you all so much!).

We rarely see or are told about all the long hours of work and dedication that go into bringing travel plans into reality prior and during Global Tea Hut Trips; we do not always get to meet all the people who have been catalysts to the planning and the success of the trip, and these are the people who serve us; serve us for the sake of being of service, serve us as they have reverence for tea, and have seen how tea is changing lives, bowl by bowl. Thank you! You inspire us, humble us and teach us by example...



KATRINE FRIIS OLSEN, DENMARK/HONG KONG

How does one portray a journey of the heart, soul and mind? How to word the kind of joy that comes from depths unknown and makes your heart space flutter? The feeling of connectedness that makes everyone family, everything a dear friend. As I sought the Leaf, the Leaf certainly took me for a ride. And so, as this is my first article for you, my fellow tea friends, and a time of great change and uncertainty, this is as much an article of gratitude towards tea and our community as a whole, as an article about the ten days I spent with a few. But just like a painter only has her colors and her canvas to depict the intrinsic beauty of the evening sky, so do I only have my words—I apologize in advance for any errors as well as my limited ability to transmit the depth of my experience. I hope that all of you will have the good fortune to go on a Global Tea Hut trip and see the land of the Leaf for yourself one day.

Sitting down with a kettle and a bowl, hoping for the words to come as the tea leaves unfurl, I soon realize that in my bowl is the very same puerh, *Beyond*, that was blended with the 1930s puerh we had on the very last day of this tea trip. A funny coincidence or one thread of a bigger web? It's moments like these that make me think of all the fortunate strokes of serendipity Tea has brought me. In Chinese they call this "yuan fan (緣分)," a word that could loosely be translated as "coincidences that feel like predestined events conditioned by one's past lives," but indeed a word with so much meaning and depth in its original form, that my English translation is a poor attempt at best. No wonder with words destined for good poetry and legends like this, that Tea and its culture developed with farmers and poets alike. Let's hope *yuan fan* will lead the way to our Light Meets Life Tea Center too.

And just like that, with memories filling my cup, the tea moistening my throat, peeling away my mental clutter, and freeing the mind to wander aimlessly through mountain trails, I trace back my footsteps, those footsteps that might have been Lu Yu's once upon a time...

...To crystal clear springs of such marvelous taste and aliveness. To lush hilltops of such vibrant tea, the pickers moving slowly to the otherworldly tones of our tea sister Triinu's flute. The monasteries full of such warmth and beauty, the solitary monk who shed a quiet tear... The moments you remember straight after are not always the ones you tell a year later. And so, as I write nearly a month after we said our final goodbyes, the memories that come to mind are these small pockets of joy and connection, those you cannot plan but always arise when like-minded people spend time sharing what they love. The warm morning hugs shared generously—a discipline the Estonians excelled at but proved more contagious than the flu. Hotel tea ceremonies in abundance—sometimes with a suitcase as gongfu table when space was in short supply. Deep conversations of philosophy and life. Tea ceremonies with leaves that made your soul and spine tremble—and of course the many impromptu discourses shared by Wu De with his usual charm, wit and enthusiasm, that each could have been a topic for many sleepless nights of tea and "moon watching." We were indeed like a moving retreat. Every day had its lessons, its challenges and its rewards, and eventually you return home with a newfound perspective on the Leaf, its stewards and what it means to live a life of tea. That said, traveling with tea people is not without its inherent troubles; the rather amusing irony of tea students great ability of *being* instead of *doing* often translating into lateness, (over)flow and a too-much-in-the-moment-ness wasn't lost on me and still leaves a humorous smile and a giggle on my face as I write this. A Zen discourse on how to be on time might be a necessary oxymoron of our time.

But just as sadness and tears are often an expression of love, so was our "loving" lateness often an expression of deep gratitude towards the beautiful, heartwarming people and places we met on our way. I cannot thank them enough for opening their doors, their knowledge, their crafts, their tea and their hearts for us and wish I could mention every one of them to do their

generosity justice. But Master Tsai and his student Xiaoli, guiding us on our entire journey, their patience knowing no bounds, deserve a special mention and a deep bow.

And so, as all good things have to come to an end, our ten days of tea ended with tears and many gracious words of thanks—no one wanting to leave, yet everyone eager to share all the beautiful tea, memories and knowledge with all of you back home. And as the tones of the pipa floated out into the warm Shanghai night, the egret silently watching the waters, we shared our seventh steaming cup, reminiscing...



我們的緣分
等待永恆找到彼此





送淵師歸徑山

我昔嘗為徑山客，至今詩筆余山色。
 師住此山三十年，妙語應須得山骨。
 溪城六月水雲蒸，飛蚊猛捷如花鷹。
 羨師方丈冰雪冷，蘭膏不動長明燈。
 山中故人知我至，爭來問訊今何似。
 為言百事不如人，兩眼猶能書細字。

(徑山夏無蚊。余舊詩云：問龍乞水歸洗眼，欲看細字銷殘年)

*Accompanying Master Yuan on his return to Mount Jing,
 I now know how it feels to be a visitor here,
 and my brush strokes echo with the beauty of these hills...
 The master has lived on this mountain for thirty years,
 where wonderful words get you the bones of the mountain.
 In June, it steams with humidity, while ferocious mosquitoes swoop like falcons.
 Yet the abbot admirably remains cool as snow, graceful in his stillness,
 his eyes as bright as lamps.
 An old friend living in the mountains, knowing I am here, asks me for news.
 I say that although things are not going as I like, at least I can still read fine print.*

—Su She (a.k.a. Su Dongpo, 蘇東坡) Translated by Zach Goh
 This poem was in the Jing Monastery museum.

(Note: there are no mosquitoes on Mount Jing in the summer... Fragment of an old ode: “Begging a dragon for water to wash my eyes, so that I can still see fine print to spend the remainder of my days.” Water from a dragon’s well is supposed to be good for eye ailments.)



茶壺首都
宜興

Yixing

This is the second time we had the amazing fortune to take a group of tea lovers to the Teapot Capital of the world, Yixing. We were, of course, greeted by our tea family with open and loving arms: our Yixing teachers, Masters Zhou and Chen, and some tea brothers and sisters from Shenzhen, Beijing and Malaysia. As is so often the case when traveling in China, the hospitality was overwhelming. We arrived to a giant red sign that said “Welcome Global Tea Hut to Yixing” and a whole hall filled with tea tables and love.

Every year, we try to plan two or three special gongfu tea ceremonies in which we can all drink some rare and expensive teas. When you have a large group and everyone contributes a small amount of money, together you can buy some really rare and special teas that none of us would have the chance to try otherwise. We had two such sessions planned on this trip and had every intention of drinking the first one here, but we were quickly overpowered by our hosts, who wanted to treat us to their own special teas. First, we drank a rare wild Yixing red tea from old trees at the top of the peak. This tea was stunning, of course. Later, our dear tea brother from Malaysia, Henry, treated us all to a spectacular early 1990s 7542 puerh that blew our minds.

It was amazing to separate into tables and sip some teas from the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) cups we had all been given at the beginning of the trip (another Global Tea Hut tradition).

In between the two teas, we celebrated what is becoming an annual Global Tea Hut tradition: watching Master Zhou handmake an Yixing pot. This demonstration never, ever gets old. Even the seasoned travelers who have seen this happen two or three times were transfixed by it, watching every detail in wonder. It is beyond belief how focused Master Zhou can be, even amongst the chaos of so many people and cameras. With devotion and sublime concentration, he turns a lump of clay into the beginnings of a masterpiece, reminding us over and over again that this pot is “rough” and that he would actually spend months when making a “real” pot. After that, everyone got a chance to get this year’s teapot, which is one of Wu De’s favorite shapes, called a “Pan (蟠壺)” tea pot, after a Qing Dynasty wealthy merchant who supported Yixing craftsmen by ordering many pots of this shape. They are the most stunning souvenir a tea lover could take home!

There is only one vegetarian restaurant in Yixing, so we always end up eating lunch and dinner there every day, which becomes a running joke throughout the trip. (Thankfully, it is a buffet, so there are many choices!)

The next day we woke up and went to a nearby organic tea farm that produces Yixing red tea. All the tea trees were around eighty years old (except for the babies we stepped over on the way in). Master Tsai gave us a wonderful lesson on how to tell if a tea is organic or not, pointing out all the no-

ticeable characteristics around us. Everyone got the chance to harvest some tea, and our host showed them how to pick properly. We were encouraged to roll the tea on our own, or at least keep some in our pockets and observe the oxidation process as the day progressed. Shen Su actually finished his tea, drying it with a hair dryer in his hotel room that night, which shows tea spirit, indeed.

That afternoon, we spent a few hours in the Yixing museum, which is a must-see for tea lovers. It is filled with wonderful history, including teapot demonstrations, dioramas of famous potters from the twentieth century, and, our favorite, the old Qing and Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) teapots. These old pots shine with such glory. Master Chen walked through the museum with us, which was a real treat, and pointed out what was so significant about one of the antique masterpieces. After that we went to visit the old Dragon Kiln where Yixing teapots were once wood-fired. This kiln is still active, firing once or twice a year, making it one of the oldest active kilns in the world.

There is so much history, heritage and art surrounding tea that a lifetime is not enough to explore it all. Yixing is a must-see on the list of any tea pilgrimage. Having family there to show us around and teach us about the deep history here made all the difference. We all left filled with our quota of awe for these special handmade pots and all the joy they bring to our tea tables.

JEREMY RIESENFELD, USA

Just got home a couple days ago, and this is the first time back on my laptop in over two weeks. This was actually the longest time I've spent in ten years in an email and social media blackout, and not doing a single work-related task. Thank you to my partner and business co-owner Nadia for holding things down while I was gone! Being able to totally detach created a purification and relaxation in my body, emotions and mind. As my stress levels cleared and decompressed, my mind cleared and was able to reconnect to deeper priorities and perceptions. If the trip was just about this alone, it would have been well worth it—a huge benefit to me at this point in my life!

I've been studying and practicing acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine since 2000, and for a few of those years, intensively studied and practiced qigong, tai chi, and Daoist meditation. So, let's just say that something related to China has been on my mind in various ways most days of my life for the past twenty years. But before this trip, I had never been to China! In the early days of my qigong studies, I did have fantasies of meeting a Daoist master and becoming his disciple, roaming the hills, finding medicinal herbs, and intensively practicing Daoist disciplines. But somehow, that never materialized, and any dreams of going to China gradually faded away.

Fast forward to eighteen months ago, looking at the bookcase of my mom's apartment in downtown Washington D.C. This book called *Tea Medicine* caught my eye, and I picked it up. Three bowls each morning in silence for a week? Sure, I can do that. I had some loose leaf Darjeeling tea from a random manufacturer at home. It was beautiful, delicious, transcendent... I fell in love with tea practice at that time, and have practiced daily since then. My mom told me about Global Tea Hut magazine, and, after getting jealous of all the tins of awesome tea that she had, I subscribed.

It must have been a couple months later that I was reading the TeaWayfarer section of the magazine and just randomly started crying. I felt, "This must

be significant." I didn't expect that I would intuitively feel a deep *sangha* connection with a group of spiritual tea lovers. But there it was.

Having followed the magazine and watched a bunch of videos, I felt ready to do a ten-day course at the Hut. But it was always full! I had peeped the Annual Trip a few times, but always wrote it off as something I didn't have time for... But suddenly in March, a month before the trip, it occurred to me: I had time! Even though it was a pivotal time for all things work and business, it was time to go! I saw it as part tea education, part an excuse to see China, part adventure, and part spiritual retreat. Turns out I was right on all accounts.

I arrived in Shanghai a couple days early to get acclimated. Right away I felt at home, even though, sorry to say, I don't have a really high opinion of Shanghai as a city. I think monstrous and extremely overbuilt are good adjectives. Nonetheless, I felt welcomed, charmed, and enjoyed wandering around the streets and being part of a totally new culture.

I joined the rest of the crew on Sunday for the start of the trip. My tears upon reading the TeaWayfarer columns proved to be right on, and I couldn't be happier to have met a group of such like-minded friends. The opportunity to basically spend all our waking hours together for the next ten days created a unique and wonderful chance to connect with each other. What a gift!

In this current part of my life, I don't have a large and vibrant spiritual crew back home to hang out with. The chance to be with the folks on the trip was a true highlight, healing in many ways, and a chance to forge meaningful friendship and spiritual connections. People were from all over the world, and now I feel like I have tea and friendship waiting for me in a whole lot of places (some of which I never expected—looking at you Estonia!).

As we piled on the bus for the first leg of the journey, Wu De got up and gave us his intro to China. Apparently, the hotels were going to suck, we were going to have to get used to using a bathroom that was a pit in the

ground, and put up with holes in the walls. China is still a developing country, and so forth. Just kidding, but I have to admit, that put a little fear in my heart. But I put on my stiff upper lip and prepared myself to deal with the worst.

What I could not even have conceived of at that moment was how totally and completely luxurious the trip was going to be. And by that I mean the first five nights were spent in two hotels that were among the nicest hotels I have ever stayed in. The food was totally awesome. The service from staff was spectacular. The doors in the first hotel were probably the nicest, most quietly closing doors I've ever encountered. The sunrise over the ridge covered in bamboo forests the first morning at the Huixin Resort was a huge announcement: "You've arrived in China." It was incredibly beautiful.

The luxury and pampering just continued over the course of the trip—more nice hotels, some spectacular meals at great restaurants, musicians hired to perform for the group, tea



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sittings at some beautiful teahouses, a private incense ceremony with a top incense master... and the list goes on. Relaxing into the hospitality and generosity of the trip itinerary was a healing experience. Through the kindness of Wu De and Master Tsai's network of friends and students, an elegant space was opened up for enjoyment, relaxation, connecting with tea, with friends and with spirit. Another huge gift.

But, wait, I haven't talked about tea yet! Okay, here we go... Highlight for me by far: the three sidehandle bowl ceremonies I went to in the mornings. Huddled into people's hotel rooms, we gathered in small groups for morning tea. I had never experienced being served at a ceremony before this trip. The combination of music, chaxi, brewer and group—it blew me away and concretized my interest in this lineage.

A very close second: the seventy-year-old aged oolong gongfu ceremony. As we deepened into the ceremony, around cup three, I felt its

presence solidly appear. It was like an old master visiting the room: expansive and spiritual, yet heavily grounding. The word “guru” came to mind. Guru means “heavy” or “deep,” and indicates someone who is “heavy” or “deep” in knowledge. This tea presented the embodiment of guru energy as a felt experience. I learned from this, and am grateful to have encountered it. Tea is a wise old teacher.

Another tea experience: the one-hundred-year-old puerh. There are many things I could say about this gongfu ceremony, but a key take-away was a realization of what shou puerh is shooting for. The aged puerh was so aged that, in my mind, it tasted like what shou puerh is trying to approximate.

Take it as a beginner's observation; I have no idea if it's correct. But at that moment, it felt like an understanding clicked into place, and I felt a deeper appreciation for puerh.

And yet another tea experience: green tea. Since we were traveling during the first flush period, it was

peak green tea season! We had some absolutely marvelous green teas. In fact, when I opened one of the packs for my partner Nadia yesterday, she was astonished at the aroma of the tea! She kept saying it smelled like mangoes...

The most special green tea I had on the trip was the wild tea served by the solitary monk we met at a monastery in the hills. The full-body vibrancy was so strong, that from a Traditional Chinese Medicine view I would classify it as a Qi tonic and Qi mover, as well as a Shen tonic—one of my favorite bowls of the trip.

I could go on, talking about the monasteries, the museums, the grand reception we had from Masters Zhou, Chen, Henry, and so on in Yixing... Actually I will give a quick shout out to the wild Tieguan Yin we drank at that reception—soooo good! But I think that's a good snapshot of my trip. Well worth a trip around the world!



YULIYA MASLYN, UKRAINE/SWEDEN

Some of the best moments of the Global Tea Hut Annual Trip were visiting tea gardens. Tea is my sister, mother, friend and teacher. She can comfort, challenge and guide me. Not a single day of my life passes without Her being part of it. To be among tea trees brings the Tea spirit to life, helps me to connect to Her, communicate with Her and understand Her better back home.

This year Master Tsai took us to a place where he protects a tea mountain. He showed us how to pick tea buds with care and attention, to allow this process to promote further growth. If the buds are picked incorrectly the stems are damaged, and the pruning effect is reversed. He explained with visual examples how to recognize an organic tea garden by careful observation. We picked leaves, to the amusement of local tea pickers, reminded of how labor-intensive this process is. And then at the dusk of the

hot day on the plantation, we were in the yard of the tea factory, mixed into the patchwork of refreshed tea picking ladies, dressed in their best outfits. At first, they stayed in the corners sneakily snapping pictures of us, giggling like kindergarten kids at every try from us to reach out and get closer to them. But in no time we all melded and become one. Their sun-browned faces, their earthed hands and genuine smiles, bright, warm and friendly, have been burned into my memory. I know that I took my time to watch and listen, to remember this evening. You also have got your portion of that love in the Tea of the Month with this magazine. Just this experience alone was enough for this trip to be life-changing!

And then there was another part, hidden behind gates, guarded by walls and veiled by the smoke of incense. The weight of reverence made me feel again like a small girl entering church for Christmas Mass, filled with the im-

portance of the occasion and then getting used to the surroundings, like eyes getting used to the dark. Starting to see into the hidden, from quick glances to long stares. Walking across the yards paved with stones, melting in the heat from above and below, evaporating into a state of Zen. It's always difficult to pick favorite parts of the trip, but I am sure that visiting all those monasteries and meditating with monks was a profound experience. This alone was worth all the effort to join this trip.

The concluding part of the journey was bringing us from the hills covered with tea bushes and rooms filled with monks in orange robes, back to civilization. With the help of the Tea Spirit, we managed to see the magic and calmness in the midst of one of the busiest and most touristy places in China, and probably the world, Hangzhou. We were taken to an incense shop with a ceremony room above it. The place was exquisite, down to the



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smallest detail. The owner, who is a Master of Kodo (香道) incense ceremony, gave us a demonstration of this art. Hypnotized by her moves and with fully focused attention on the objects with unknown shapes and functions, I can't even say how long we were sitting in that incense ceremony space. It may have been half an hour or four hours; my body just let go of the tension of traveling and the under-slept late nights talking to roommates. That experience was like the touch of a feather—tangible, gentle, almost unreal, yet embodied.

Above all the geographical and cultural explorations, the biggest highlight of the trip is people! I can't think of any other sober group of adult people meeting in the Western world and openly and inevitably falling in love with each other on such a mass scale. At least that is what happened to me. It's some kind of restoring of karmic connections happening for me when-

ever I meet with my Global Tea Hut family! The soothing and healing process of recognizing myself in others, dissolving borders in the shared bowls and bowls of tea.

As for the trip highlights, I would rather tell you about them once we meet for tea and share heart to heart. Now I have another insight to share. I have worked in fashion for over twenty years, and eventually ended up traveling to China to visit suppliers and overview the production. After showing the collection at Paris Fashion Week, we would launch the production season to deliver new collections to the stores in time. My first visits were sobering, even though we worked with large and modern factories with progressive owners. The battle for higher standards and decent conditions for workers was ongoing. Part of my task was to incorporate catwalk craftsmanship to the Chinese production process. Every season, again and

again, we asked for improvement for the final products, knowing that we would be ignored.

With years passing by, Tea took a central part in my life, and bigger space in our home. Eagerly absorbing the tea wisdom shared by Global Tea Hut, sharing it with friends and strangers, I was correcting misconceptions and mistakes deeply rooted in Western culture. But can we be blamed for creating shortcuts in adopting the ancient tea culture into the rhythm of an established industrial society? And could the Chinese be blamed for using the advantages of technology to neglect the Western craft of dressmaking? I found myself in the middle of double-sided traffic: Tea Tradition from East to West and Couture Tradition from West to East. Both moving in very different directions that were sometimes hard for me to resolve, let alone to work with in my life. I was literally and figuratively at a crossroads.



茶 It has become an annual tradition to watch Master Zhou Qi Kun (周其坤) make a teapot in an hour. Even when we don't go to Yixing, he flies to us with his tools. It is a glory to behold his work. He is a magician. Despite the fact that the pot is not "real," and way too rough to be sold (which Master Zhou reminds us again and again), it is still a masterpiece in our eyes. Master Tsai was transfixed, saying that Master Zhou was a true living master. There is a magic point where a few lumps of clay become a teapot and everyone oohs and ahhs, sighing in wonder.



Our Annual Trip

Haute Couture was born in Paris in the mid-nineteenth century as the culmination of many generations of seamstresses working relentlessly long hours, creating the finest garments for us to admire. It took as long as it took to finish a dress, the process was viewed as something non-negotiable, the final product spoke for itself in an aesthetic and qualitative way. The origin of my skill lays in customized dressmaking, with attention to details, oriented on the manual processes and with a priceless but worthy result. Sadly, due to the industry and the consumer-dictated shortcuts and compromises, we all adjusted and simplified towards streamlined mechanized production lines. But my hands still remember all the moves I learned as an apprentice to the master in the atelier.

The six principles of living tea talk about the relationship between the human and the tea. However, as members of the Global Tea Hut, we know that there is not enough living old-growth tea, hand-picked and hand processed, for everyone. As Wu De has repeatedly shown, there are still tea farmers out there who care about the process as much if not more than the result, because the proper process will inevitably give the best product. By customer demand, compromises are all over the tea mountains on a smaller or bigger scale, just as I had seen in garment production.

After seeing this connection between two significant parts of my life I realized that no matter which part of the world the tradition originates from, it is process-oriented, in contrast

to the result-driven modern approach. Modern life makes us insensitive, because we are customers, wanting faster, cheaper convenience regardless of country of origin, race or gender. “Mastery” is the way to fix this. Instead of calling Wu De a “tea master,” pause and reflect on your own mastery; what tradition are you carrying? I personally got tired of fashion and moved to another part of the industry, but this insight brought my pride back. It provoked me to rethink my perspective, and this feels exciting and fresh. I hope we will meet for tea. In the meantime, I will try to go through life like I’m serving a tea ceremony, with grace, honoring the space and the occasion. I encourage you to do the same.



茶 Qing Dynasty pot by Shao Da Heng (邵大亨). Left is Master Zhou showing us how pots were wood-fired in the old days.



LAURIE GILLARD, USA/CANADA

Due to personal hang ups and struggling to put words to an experience that almost defies this possibility, I've been procrastinating writing this article, but now I hear Wu De's voice: "Sit and drink some tea." So, I do. As always, this opens my heart, settles my mind, and dissolves my fears. So, here goes...

The Global Tea Hut Annual Trip was nothing short of transformative. It was full-on and intense on every level for ten days, and even now one month later I am still processing, integrating and sharing as much as I can from this epic experience.

If I had to choose my favorite experience, or the most difficult challenge, or the best part of the trip, I could not. To me, it was and still is a colorful mix of emotions, feelings, moods and tones flowing together to create this painting.

I could share highlights of the outstanding itinerary, such as: drinking fresh cold spring water from the spot Lu Yu did, lunching on homemade "monk noodles" and meditating with monks and also sharing tea with them, trying rare and expensive teas, beholding beautiful sights as we hiked through mountains and picked tea, listening to women completely entranced chanting unbroken mantras in

a Buddhist temple, meeting an ancient (maybe 1000-year-old) Mother tea tree or sitting for tea ceremonies every day in incredible locations and then hearing words from a wise monk about the truth of who we are. See? This list is that incredible!

Instead, I feel the essence I wish to share is the deep lasting impact this trip had on my life. It served to dissolve many of my fears and preferences. (Yes, at times we had to share a bed with someone we didn't know, and we were around people 24/7 for the full ten days... I need alone time to recharge and just be in silence and this was not really possible.) And by the end of the trip I more fully understood what surrender feels like, how it feels to go with the flow instead of knowing or making the decisions, to let go of preferences and accept what is as it is and who people are as they are. No judgment! No preferences (which is actually even deeper than no judgment). In fact, on the last night I was asked if I'd like a single room, and instead of being excited to finally have my own space and privacy, I felt sad that I would lose the opportunity to spend the night getting to know one more woman more deeply (and my last night was spent with an incredible woman who will live in my heart forever). Once I was able to let

go and surrender my preferences and judgments and "my want" to do things a little differently, I was able to accept what and who showed up exactly as it and as they were. It just was... no good or bad... just *is... as it is*. The "no-big-deal-me," as Wu De calls it, had taken a seat and it felt really great (and still does).

I realized I truly only had me to rely on as I knew no one, and there really was minimal contact with anyone outside of the trip. So, as I sipped tea in silence in ceremony, my inner voice became even more clear and strong. Now my heart is telling me, gently but firmly, to pour more love into this world with all of the gifts and learning I have had the privilege to receive. "Share it or it will be lost" says someone I adore, and now I understand this truth. Since I've been home, I have served and shared tea in a whole new way, and it will continue to be a source for allowing Tea to bring more love into this world bowl by bowl.

TEA!!! The focus of this trip.

All things tea held me, spoke to me and healed me. She is a gentle yet incredibly powerful plant. All of the tea ceremonies were otherworldly. Those led by Wu De, Master Tsai, the initiates and my beloved new tea friends at morning sittings will stay with me forever.

They will be part of my being and sharing from now on. I learned more from these daily sits with these beautiful, open-hearted Chajin than I can express in words. As Wu says, “All tea lessons are life lessons.” The experience of this truth was immense for me on this trip and lives in my heart and soul to this moment and always will.

A trip that revolves around tea is beyond anything you could imagine. My experiences have allowed me to drop so many old ways of being and step into tea as a Way of life in a whole new light. I have served tea to friends and family, and they have all felt the love from this trip flow through me. I am able to share this way with my family, which is such a blessing. No television or phones, just silence and connection so we can reconnect with truth and our selves... our hearts.

I’ve come home, and friends are constantly asking me how my trip to China was. I stumble and stutter to find the words, because I really don’t know how I can describe the depths of emotions and feelings I felt for Mother Earth, Mother Tea, my new friends, my teachers, this lineage, the food, the intense challenges, the epic highs and the exhausting lows? Instead, I respond by inviting them to come share tea. Then I don’t have to say a word, as the Tea, the teachings, the experiences, the learning and the love that I shared with the people on the trip flow through me. This has been such a blessing, as I have had the privilege of serving and sharing, and they have had the opportunity to receive and experience the magic and wonder of Tea, as well as to taste in the sweet ambrosia of this amazing trip.

Now I am able to pour even more love into my family and friends and this world in such a beautifully simple, yet profound way, and it is such a blessing to be able to hold this space for myself and others. It is so simple: just leaves, water, heat and a bowl. And then the magic happens... Love and sharing couldn’t be more simple, meaningful or healing. I always aim to be more conscious and connected, and this trip gave me this gift. Thank you, Global Tea Hut, Light Meets Life and all of the tea friends who were on this trip with me. You all served to deepen my understanding of love, service, sharing and surrender. I look forward to being together again soon, but you all live in my life as Tea is my Way of life.



茶 The day after our beautiful tea gathering, we woke up to a wet and drizzling morning and headed off to an organic tea farm with eighty- to one-hundred-year-old tea trees. Master Tsai taught us how to pick tea. We wandered the dew-laden fields, communing with these old bushes. Connecting to Nature is, of course, one of the themes of all Global Tea Hut trips. We always try to have some quieter time amongst tea trees (preferably older and wiser), to let the Chajin feel the energy of the trees in the wild. Sometimes we get stuck relating to tea philosophically, spiritually or in a geeky way as a hobby—but always from behind the tea table—so it is important to step out into the fields and meet Tea in person, remembering where She comes from and leads back to.

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同茶同被此我們合在一起



EVA HOLBROOK, USA

*Before I was born, who was I?
And who am I at the time of my birth?
After I have grown up, am I me?
When I close my eyes for final rest, is that still me?*

These wise words have been echoing in my head... a rough translation spoken by a monk living on a high mountain in China. (I am told the poem has a much deeper essence before translation into the English language.)

I leave the Motherland of our beloved Leaf feeling a little more whole. As I settle back into my simple yet easy pampered life here in San Francisco, I think of those men and women in the tea gardens working day and night with little sleep during this harvest season (most of their entire yearly income is made during these few precious weeks). The tea gets picked during the day, rain or shine, and then processed through the night and all over again the next day. It is very hard work.

As we hiked through a tea mountain, men were carrying out the day's harvest: huge baskets full of tea leaves, one on each side supported by a bamboo stick over the shoulder. As we walked by, one fellow was taking a rest. My curiosity reached out, and I attempted to lift one of his bags sitting on the ground. Oh my! I'm pretty strong, and this was heavy—probably forty kilos per basket, and they are carrying two! I am humbled to my core after witnessing this process—so thankful and honored to be able to drink such beautiful organic tea.

For most of my life, I didn't really care what I put inside of my body. I spent many nights in my twenties drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes and eating whatever greasy food I came across. As I started to wake up, those patterns shifted. Today I view my body as a temple, part of the Earth, I am not separate from Her; She created me. When I drink organic living tea, I can feel this essence in every cell of my body: boundless. It was time for me to escape some boundaries, flying to the other side of the world to travel through lands I'd never heard of, with people I had never met before. It was a journey to the beyond.

This was my first visit to China... Even having a relationship with *Camellia sinensis* for many years, it doesn't quite capture the power of visiting the land where these magnificent trees come from. To breathe the same air, touch the soil, taste the water. To be in the presence of such old trees—our ancient elders, our wise allies.

This trip really brought home a deep understanding of what plant medicine means, and why tea is such a great example of this. It is hard to put into words the effect that all the amazing silent tea sessions had on my being, my healing, my journey and the unfolding of my self.

The wise words of the monk, spoken after one such session, still echo in my heart even after I have returned home. So I ask myself: Who are you, Eva? I saw glimpses of her on the trip. In the mundane: during a long bus ride, sharing a meal with monks in the monastery, or releasing control and surrendering to the flow of the group instead of what I personally want. The real me: soft, vulnerable, open, unobstructed by the blocks or triggers of daily life at home. While my life in California is somewhat simple, I believe I can do better—better as a friend, better as a woman, better as a human being living on planet Earth. I believe I am capable of so much more: more compassion, love, understanding, patience, learning and growing. This reflection does not come in a judgmental way, but in a deep knowing of the powerful energy inside of my soul.

Have you ever met someone that makes you laugh so hard, it turns into tears? Like so deep that you can't even look at each other from across the room or else the laughter will inappropriately start again? Well, that's what it feels to be with my tea brothers and sisters. Such a supportive, loving, passionate group of people. I will be holding these memories close to my heart.





杭州
富有文化
上海

Hangzhou & Shanghai

After being fully and thoroughly steeped in teapots, we headed off to a mecca for tea lovers and tourists alike, Hangzhou. We took a gorgeous boat ride across West Lake, and were given a tour by the boat guide, which our own Zach Goh translated with great fun and humor, cracking jokes and waxing poetic about all the gorgeous islands and temples around Hangzhou. It was very nostalgic to wonder about all the history in this place, which was the capital of China for a short time in the Song Dynasty (960–1279). How many thousands of spectacular tea sessions have happened at the banks of this beautiful lake? Under that very willow tree?

After we landed, we went to the tea museum in Hangzhou, which has a decent display of the history and culture of tea in China. We looked through it quickly, trying to beat the rain, but feeling like we all needed to return and spend more time reading the captions next to all the displays and discovering new little details about tea. We set off at a quick pace, looking up at the building black clouds as we hiked into Longjing Village to see the eighteen trees that are purported to be the ancestors of all Longjing tea, dating back to the early Qing Dynasty. Many tea lovers argue that these trees are actually only around eighty to one hundred years old, though. Whatever the case, they are glorious to behold. It finally started raining just as we arrived, so we quickly paid our respects and went inside to drink some tea and nibble on snacks, laughing and falling deeper in love with each other. We all were saddened by all the “conventional” Longjing we passed on the way in and wished that more of the farms were cared for as the eighteen trees were.

The next day we woke up and went to a gorgeous center for incense ceremony and flower arranging. It was built in an ancient Ming Dynasty building with very little renovation. We went upstairs and sat on tatami, drinking bowl tea while our host demonstrated two different types of incense ceremony with such grace, devotion and love that we were all extremely touched. Her introductory talk could have been lifted from the page of any tea brewing manual (or issue of *Global Tea Hut*), leaving us all inspired to learn more and practice our tea as well. After getting some incense, we headed off to another monastery.

We visited the Jingci (净慈) Temple in Hangzhou, which was our fifth and final monastery on this Zen- and tea-themed trip. Along the way, we had eaten a formal lunch with monks, drunk lots of tea, listened to “Tea & Zen One Flavor” lectures, sat in silence and drunk endless bowls. This time we were treated to another private tour by the chamberlain, and got to say prayers for the new Center, Light Meets Life, along with our guide who said that we were doing very good works, indeed. For the third time, we also ate what came to be known as “monk noodles” in the monastery cafeteria.

We had planned to space out our two special gongfu sessions, but they both happened at the end of the trip as it turned out. We drank a beautiful seventy-year-old oolong on our last night in Hangzhou at a gorgeous tea house owned by another of Master Tsai’s students. Our hosts were very impressed that we sat in silence so long, and by how deeply we appreciated this special tea. It was a stunning session indeed.

After saying goodbye to Hangzhou, and feeling like we had only just scratched the surface of this marvel-

ously rich and deep town, we boarded our sturdy bus-home and made one last journey to Shanghai, where it all had started—coming around full circle is a great way to finish a journey. One of our compatriot’s sister worked for a swanky hotel chain and got us a deal to spend our last night at the pinnacle of luxury, which also seemed fitting considering we started at the Huixin resort. We first went for lunch at one of our favorite vegetarian restaurants in the world, which is a giant buffet filled with foods from all over China and the West. It is so giant and has so much food that you have to multiply whatever you are imagining by ten at least. Everyone was so happy, raising toasts, eating three desserts and having a great time coming to terms with the fact that we were all going to have to say goodbye to people we had grown to love the very next day.

After a bus-nap, we arrived in the Old Town of Shanghai, where Master Tsai had rented the top floor of a gorgeous old teahouse that used charcoal to heat the water. Here we drank our final tea, a very, very old loose-leaf puerh made from broken 1930s cakes. After tea, everyone got to share about their experiences on this trip, which is a *Global Tea Hut* tradition. Many tears were shed, and it was so wonderful to see the trip through the eyes of all our brothers and sisters. Then, we had a nice meal (with tea of course), while a traditional Shanghainese singer performed for us.

After our last night in our posh hotel, we met for a final breakfast, hugs and goodbyes, carrying the memories of this epic circle-journey with us forever. Really, truly... What a trip! We will never forget these hugs, these smiles, endless bowls of green tea, teapots and tea friends most of all...

SHEN SU (聖素), TAIWAN/CANADA

In the life of a tea lover, a trip to China is essential to deepen one's relationship to the Leaf. The closer we are to the roots of anything we love, the more connected we feel to it. And when you feel more connected, you find a sense of deep reverence, which lends itself to gratitude, an essential quality in leading a skillful life. I have also noticed that the closer I am to the source of something I love, the more willing I am to protect it, because not only do I see where it comes from, but I see my interconnection to it. When you get closer to the source of your food or water, for example, all of a sudden you feel responsible for them because you see through the delusion that you are separate from them. You become aware of the fact that what happens to your food and water also happens to you, in a very direct way. Of course, then, you want to protect

that which is an integral part of you, in the same way you would protect your own body from danger. This kind of understanding can change our perspective and behavior towards leading a more connected life. This is a very healing and necessary experience for us as individuals, especially in times of disconnection—as we are in now—which can lead us to think and behave in ways that do not facilitate our own health or the health of our environment. And it goes beyond all of this because when we feel connected, grateful, and protective towards that which matters, we begin to preserve it for future generations as well, so that they may benefit from these treasures in the same way that we do now.

This is part of why our Global Tea Hut trips are so essential in the life of a tea lover. By going closer to the source of Tea, we find a deeper sense

of connection to this amazing way of life, a sense of connection that lends itself to reverence, protection, preservation, and inspiration to make positive changes as a result of that experience. This year's journey was no exception. Though the places and people differed, we all experienced that amazing sense of connection to each other and this Leaf as a result of journeying to the homeland of Tea.

Less generally speaking, and more personally, I love these trips most because of the people, both the Global Tea Hut participants and the people we meet along the way. When we're all on the same page—the same side of the leaf as it were—friendships develop as naturally as an unfolding tea bud, bursting forth towards rays of light and basking in mountainous fog and morning dew. It doesn't matter if we speak the local dialect or they speak ours,



茶 Hangzhou is a must-see pilgrimage for all tea lovers. We hiked around twelve kilometers up the mountain to get to the eighteen mother trees in Long Jing Village. We saw lots of "conventional" farming on the way, which we decided not to show in this magazine, as we want to keep the trip issues inspirational. It was nice to peek into houses along the way and see the farmers pressing the leaves against hot pans to make the characteristically flat shape of Dragonwell tea. The bowls of Long Jing we had at the top made the hike worthwhile, and it was nice to pay our respects to the old ancestor trees of yet another kind of tea. The hike back down in the pouring rain was actually a highlight for many of us because the mist, rain and fog were gorgeous, and we surrendered to it all.



龍騰飛出井

because we all share a love of the Leaf; we all speak the language of Tea. “Oh, you don’t speak Mandarin? Let’s drink tea.” “You don’t speak English? No problem, let’s share tea.” It’s actually better like this because we bypass all the small talk and chit chat and just focus on what’s important—communion. These annual trips truly facilitate the old Chinese saying, “Through tea make friends.” As well, because we are a *global* tea family, it opens my heart to meet these fellow tea lovers and connect in person. Yes, the world is round, and we are always connected through the roots of this tradition, but nothing beats hugging other Global Tea Hut brothers and sisters while traveling to glorious tea locales together, at least once a year!

I also love the harshness and reality of mainland China. The food, people and places, cultural differences,

weather, infrastructure or lack thereof, never cease to amaze and challenge me. With respect to tea, it really shifts one’s perspective, because we’re all so accustomed to tea and teaware arriving at our front doorstep just a few days after the click of button. When in reality there are real people out there doing hard labor to grow that tea, harvest it, process it, package and sell it. It’s a rigorous process, and that’s not even including the accumulation of energy that Nature provides in making any of this possible. It’s simply not easy, and harvesting tea is often only glamorous to foreigners who have never done it before. There are those, however, who still approach it as a sacred practice, carrying on traditions of old. Otherwise, it can be real backbreaking work for thousands upon thousands of people, often women, and they probably struggle to understand why we’re so ea-

ger to give it a try. Though to be honest, they’re usually full of smiles when they see us out in the fields, probably laughing at our poor picking form! It might be akin to the idea of harvesting fruit or planting trees in the west. When done for a few moments, it feels fun and rewarding. When done as a job to make ends meet, it can be painful and unpleasant at best after only a few days. So, it’s important to have the experience of harvesting tea and to see the reality behind it, because as true tea lovers, the truth matters. Harvesting tea, as we always experience on the Global Tea Hut trips, isn’t just a heavenly, joyful experience, nor is it just a job to pay rent; it really depends on one’s orientation, so it is important to garner a greater perspective, and Global Tea Hut trips always offer that. They are always mind-opening, to say the very least.



One of the highlights on this trip for me was actually while harvesting tea in Yixing. I was honored to pick tea alongside one of the garden owners for a brief time. I couldn't really speak her language, and she surely couldn't speak mine, but we both found our rhythm and connected silently in that way as we harmoniously shuffled down the organic rows of abundantly flushing tea plants. It was a simple treasure of a moment, with water to the west, mountains to the east and settling fog everywhere in between.

As well, after harvesting tea, it's a very humbling (and humiliating!) experience to see just how little leaf we can pluck as a group. It's really not easy, and the fact that our fresh leaves will reduce down about five-fold after drying really goes to show how much work goes into making tea on any sort of large scale. After this kind of experience, it really changes the way I think about the tea in my home, especially when I'm surrounded by such an abundance of it. This is a direct example of how getting closer to the source of tea shifts our perspective towards more gratitude and deeper reverence.

As I said before, the people make the trip. This year, we were truly honored to be guided by none other than Master Tsai Yizhe, a dear tea brother of ours, long time Global Tea Hut supporter, wise teacher and protector of tea mountains! His contributions to the world of tea are forever inspiring. As a Taiwanese cultural ambassador and master of tea, what he has done to protect the environment and promote sustainable, organic tea farming is beyond what any of us could do, and he does so with humility and one of the most contagious smiles you'll ever come across. Truly, he is someone to admire, so how lucky are we as a global tea community to travel through China with such a Chajin! Not only that, but as you might expect, he is very well-connected in the world of tea, especially in Taiwan and China, so we were greeted with open arms of hospitality and bowls of warm tea by his many students across China. One such student even accompanied us the entire trip. She was such a bright tea spirit, so full of positivity that she quickly became the highlight for many of us on the trip—our bright and shining Xiaoli, never, ever to be forgotten.

For ten days Xiaoli tirelessly demonstrated what real, heartfelt service looked like, all out of a love for the Leaf.

Of course, every year there are different trip members, often spanning fifteen-plus different countries. This year was no exception, but there was one striking difference that stood out amongst previous years. For various reasons, many of the old students who usually attend these trips couldn't make it, leaving room for other Global Tea Hut members to fill their spots. It just so happened that many of these new members were just beginning their tea journeys, and so they came with empty bowls, raised brows and plenty of curiosity! At Tea Sage Hut, we welcome all to our Center regardless of their experience with tea. Beginners, experts and everyone in between are all greeted equally to invite this practice into their lives. Beginners, however, come with that same sense of excitement and curiosity that I noticed in the trip members' eyes. They question everything and have a desire to learn the very basics, not ashamed but instead excited to ask the most elementary questions. How refreshing! They come with a beginner's mind, like a child, ready to absorb, learn and listen intently. This is a very important reminder for those of us who might already have a few leaves of experience in our bowls! After all, a bowl's function lies in its space, not its walls. We must come with an empty bowl to receive the wisdom of Tea, and once full, we must drink it to integrate Her lessons. Empty and full again, full and empty once more. This is a healthy cycle. We should not stagnate in one phase or the other, lest illness set in. The rhythm needs to ebb and flow. The beginners remind the experienced to empty their bowls, and those with experience remind the beginners to fill them. This is why I really appreciated the different levels of experience on this trip.

As well, when beginners ask questions, it is a test of our own understanding, for real understanding of any subject, no matter how complicated, can be measured by the ability to explain it in layman's terms, so that even a child can grasp the basic concepts. The greater your understanding, the greater your ability to express complex concepts simply. It also goes without

saying that when you attempt to teach something to others and maintain an open mind, you fortify your own understanding, thus learning yourself. This trip, therefore, became a chance for students with some experience to test themselves and step up in a more mature role, which many of them did.

So, if you're reading this and want to be one of the "people who make the trip," then set aside your time in spring because these are truly the trips of a lifetime! Find out what it's like to travel closer to the source of yourself and your love for tea with a group of like-minded Chajin! All the places, hikes, temple visits and tea ceremonies wouldn't be possible without the people. Like Tea, you are the most important part of the ceremony, for without you, all the greatest teaware and tea can't prepare itself, and all the greatest Global Tea Hut trips can never be had. That human element is absolutely essential, and it's the heart at the core of these tea journeys. I welcome you to join us for future Global Tea Hut trips. See you then!



茶 The museum in Hangzhou was informative, and we all wished we had more time to explore all its nooks and crannies. The entrance was this gorgeous waterfall, landscaped and with the Chinese character for tea (茶, cha) in relief on the stone wall, water cascading slowly over it in rivulets. Somehow this wet and lush fountain with its ferns and rocks was an emblem of our long hike on that day, and of our whole trip. It said something to the heart that all these accounts couldn't: an upper radical for herb, a bottom one for wood/tree and human right in the middle, between the roots and the medicine.



ZACH GOH (吳殷輝), MALAYSIA/HONG KONG

As a tea lover, one of the most wonderful experiences I can have is the chance to visit tea mountains and monasteries and experience the terroir of some of my favorite teas. In the past, I have had the luxury of visiting Yiwu and Wuyi Mountain, along with some other tea mountains in China, so when the sign-up form for this year's trip was released, I immediately persuaded some of the other Hong Kong members of Global Tea Hut to sign up for the trip. However, because of work commitments, I wasn't able to sign up until the very last minute, and so when I was finally sure that I could make the trip, I was committed to make the best out of the journey, and to hopefully have something useful for my research. And following Lu Yu's *Tea Sutra* seemed a great place to start our journey.

Many opportunities for service arose in the trip: moving things, serving tea, etc. Yet the greatest opportunity for service for me was to interpret for the group, and try to act as a bridge between different cultures, which was not an easy task. We were a group of more than thirty travelers, from fifteen different countries, and everywhere we went, we became the attraction. I was acutely aware of my own outsider status, as I hold a Malaysian passport, and require a visa to enter China. Also, even though I am able to speak and read Chinese and communicate with the locals to a certain extent, it was sometimes challenging to try to represent what some of our hosts and our guide, Master Tsai, were trying to convey, and at times, the words would completely break down. Unfortunately, many things were "lost in translation" on this trip. I understood acutely what Okakura meant when he said that "translation is always a treason," as there are usually untold layers of nuance and cultural baggage that cannot be interpreted on the spot, without taking a few hours to provide context and background. It was at these moments when I realized that not everything can be translated, nor does everything need to be translated. Sometimes, human connections transcend language, and while I went into the trip with the

idea that the group would benefit from a bit more interpretation and translation, I also realized the magic of the situations where translations were not needed or required, and I understood how the previous Global Tea Hut trips went on just fine, even without any need for interpretation. Many of our group have commented how even without understanding what is being said, the emotional weight of the words being spoken in Chinese are still effectively impressed on them, such as when all of us were drinking tea under the moonlight on the final night at our first resort, and listening to a tea friend's reflections on our journey as we sat in silence drinking tea, or when we had lunch in a small temple at a site where a monastery that housed three hundred monks once stood, but which now housed a solitary monk who hosted lunch for all of us, or when all of us were sharing tea in the upper floor of a small pavilion on the top of a hill overlooking the tea plantations of Jing Shan Temple, with a monk who shared a koan/poem with us: Who was I before I was born, and who am I at the time of my birth? At the time of growing up I am me, yet who do I become when I close my eyelids? (*Others may translate this differently: 未曾生我誰是我, 生我之時我是誰? 長大成成人方是我, 合眼朦朧又是誰?*)

There & Back Again

What a wild adventure it was traveling there and back again through Zhejiang to Huzhou and Hangzhou in Lu Yu's footsteps, where dragons roamed the mountains and springs gushed forth with gusto. At times, I did feel slightly like a modern-day Bilbo Baggins, trekking along far away from the comforts of home, yet being invited into places that were amazing sights to behold during our adventure.

The first part of our journey took us from Shanghai to a valley called Huixin in Huzhou. Huixin (慧心) can be translated as "*prajna*," or "wisdom heart." Retreating into the valley to seek wisdom—that is perhaps what we were doing. In some way, this re-

sort felt like the Last Homely House in Rivendell, located in a hidden valley with tea bushes all around it. It is surrounded by Nature, whose voice reverberates through the valley. It seems we were retracing Lu Yu's footsteps as he retreated from the world to live as a hermit near the end of his days. We probably drank from some of the same springs that he wrote about.

It was not until the next morning when the tea-picking ladies started serenading us with their tea-picking songs that we actually realized what an amazing place this was for beginning our journey. Our rooms overlooked an amazingly verdant hill bristling with the energy of the first flush of spring tea just waiting to be picked.

We visited a Lu Yu Museum on the first day, and then the "Great Tang Tribute Tea Court," built to memorialize Lu Yu on the next day. All around this "tribute tea court" was development, built to capitalize on the rising tide of success it was experiencing. We also witnessed the rise and fall of other memorials constructed to commemorate Lu Yu. Although we've arrived at a point in history when one of the smaller memorials in Anji seems to have failed, the site is a palimpsest, and will be knocked down and reconstructed (probably into a bigger, better memorial to compete with the others).

On day three, we had green tea on the patio of the hotel, before heading to a Lu Yu spring hidden within a bamboo forest. A small temple with a solitary monk served us one of the best meals of the trip. The hill in Huixin used to house a monastery that supported more than three hundred monks, but now, a lone temple surrounded by bamboo forests is all that remains—that, and the ruined foundations nearby. Nothing is permanent; change is the only constant.

Later that afternoon, I went tea picking wearing a cardigan. How hobbit-like of me. Needless to say, despite spending a couple of hours picking tea, very few of us managed to pick enough tea to earn ourselves our dinner for the night (Master Tsai said we should each pick a *jin* (斤, 5/600g) of tea if we wanted dinner). Despite not picking enough

以茶會友

tea, all of us ate our last meal in Hui xin heartily, and we had a night with amazing red tea from Guangxi that night, while watching a light show put on for us by our host. It felt like we had strayed into a dream, beyond this ordinary world.

Huzhou is named after a great lake, Lake Tai (太湖), and along that lake was Anji, where we hiked up to pay a visit to a 1000-year-old mother tree of Anji Baicha (“white tea” here refers to the cultivar, not the processing method; Anji white tea is usually processed as green tea), and we had an intense tea session there. Huzhou is also home to many temples and monasteries that we also visited, including the Shou Shen Temple that housed 1000-year-old ginkgo trees (a male and female), where we had a taste of the one flavor of Tea and Zen, walking and sitting meditation, as well as eating monk-style (which was very quick). We also spent a day at Jing Shan Temple, from

which many Zen lineages can trace their roots. Here, we had some discourse, as well as amazing “monk noodles,” before heading up to a small pavilion on top of the hill to drink tea. It was a warm afternoon, and yet a breeze was ever present when we were all up there in that pavilion, accompanied by the chamberlain of the temple.

Yixing, the heartland of purple-sand pottery, was amazing, and Master Zhou demonstrated how a Yixing purple-clay teapot was constructed from clay to pot. While we did not visit the mines (which have been closed by the government since the 1990s), we did pay a visit to the Yixing Ceramics Museum. I could have spent the whole ten days of the trip in this museum alone! The magical transformative properties of Yixing clay teapots on tea makes the clay more precious than *mithril*. We also had the chance to visit the Dragon Kiln in Yixing, another rare opportunity to learn about

teaware production up close and personal. I have a feeling I will return to Yixing many times in the future!

When we arrived at Hangzhou, it was as if we had arrived at China’s own version of Lake-town. There is a Chinese saying: “Be born in Suzhou, live in Hangzhou, eat in Guangzhou, and die in Liuzhou.” As we took a boat across West Lake to reach the legendary eighteen Long Jing trees, the guide told us the usual touristy information about the various tourist spots around West Lake, but only one of them stuck in my mind, and I struggled to convey the beauty of the mental image in words. This is how it goes:

“At Mid-Autumn Festival, when the moon is fullest and brightest, we come to the center of the lake, where three pagodas stand. Each pagoda has five nooks, and we place a candle into each nook. The lights of the fifteen candles in the pagodas are beautifully reflected on the still surface of the lake.



Our Annual Trip

And along with the moon above, and the reflections, in addition to the moon you carry in your heart, you can see up to thirty-three moons on a still mid-autumn's night in West Lake." (These pagodas are pictured on the one-yuan note, and the scene is called "Three Pools Mirroring the Moon.")

We also had a very interesting incense ceremony in Hangzhou. While it was one thing to read about the incense ceremony in Global Tea Hut's November 2016 issue, it was a different thing entirely sitting next to the incense master of ceremonies while she demonstrated and explained each step in real time. The aloeswood incense was phenomenal, but we had another appointment to keep: a visit to Jing Ci Temple. Here, we took turns to ring the Nanping Evening Bell, bathed the baby Buddha, and prayed for the new Center. After that, we shared a seventy-year old oolong in a tea house constructed with parts of an old building. It was gorgeous.

When we returned to Shanghai, the first thing we did was feast at a vegetarian buffet that was next to Jing temple, and then, we adjourned to Qi Bao old street, where we had our final gongfu tea ceremony, with an amazing 1930s puerh, followed by our sharing and reflections. I was tempted to start my sharing with "I don't know half of you half as well as I should like." Since I did not, I am saying it here, now, to all my travel companions during the trip: "I don't know half of you half as well as I should like, because ten days is much too short to really get to know such an admirable company of travelers. Despite that, I feel that this trip has somehow bound us together in a way that cannot be explained in words." (*Zap! And Zach disappears...*)

After my sharing, I immediately came down with a really bad cold, which in itself was good timing (there was nothing left to interpret). I felt like Bilbo when he arrived at Lake-town for the first time with a really bad cold and

felt a little sad that the trip had come to an end. I was also thankful that my trip back to Hong Kong was relatively shorter than everyone else's trips home, because I could not wait to share parts of my trip with friends back in Hong Kong, and now I am sharing parts of my trip with you, the reader. If circumstances allow, why not join next year's epic trip? I know I will try my best to be a part of it as well!



茶 We learned three different kinds of incense ceremonies from a master of Kodo. The experience was transcendental. Wu De served bowl tea while she shared the incense. For an hour we sat in silence, smelling Aloeswood and drinking green tea.



Frederick Ballario, France

"Two Leaves & 33 Moons"

Two leaves in a bowl
That connect to the All
Ancient melodies whispered to our hearts

Noodles in a bowl
That connect to the All
Offered & shared by a monk in his shack

33 moons, 33 times we rang that bell
Next to the lake on which we sailed

Older women & older trees
Hanging freely, cooled by the breeze

Holy beings, holy temples
For a moment opening their souls

Fresh green leaves & old dark ones
For an instant sharing their truth

Many new friends, yet, like the old
We meet & sit, & sip & hold

The bowl that was handed to us
Through the ages, Through the sages...



A CALL TO ACTION

Help us make Light Meets Life a reality!

It is a time of exciting change and transformation here at the Center, as our dream and vision for Light Meets Life rapidly nears, far sooner than the maps of our imagination foretold. This is a well-needed push out the door into the unknown where there lies tremendous potential for serving thousands of more tea lovers, facilitating ten-day courses for more people than our current small and humble Center, Tea Sage Hut, ever could possibly hold. It is an exciting invitation to listen and expand our capacity. It was just a few weeks ago that I was in Australia, but, here I am now serving again at the Tea Sage Hut, doing my part to help support the Center as it takes flight on the gentle winds to land somewhere that will facilitate greater growth and hold the Center as it takes root—growing with each bowl of tea shared and each heart that is transformed into a place for future generations to experience the medicine and spirit of Tea. Light Meets Life will be a home away from home for countless Chajin where they can periodically journey to draw a nourishing ladleful of tea, finding healing in the energy that vibrates from every stone and tree. It will be a beacon for those who come after; to remember the sacrifices that were made to preserve Tea as a spiritual practice and wisely steward living tea so that one day future tea lovers may sit at one of the countless tea sessions going on at any moment. It is through all of our collective efforts as a com-

munity and global family of Chajin that we can land our Center and all that it holds somewhere that will offer the nourishment and space required to grow strong roots and branches.

That is where you can help! Showing up to help support the physical manifestation of our shared vision for the world's greatest Tea Center. With the support of our global tea family, coming together to create something truly magical and alive in this world, we can build Light Meets Life. Remember it is not *our* Center, but *yours!*

There will always be charcoal burning in the main hearth, meaning that all you need to do is arrive and we will put a kettle on. The central hearth connects you and all the chajin around the world as they sit for tea whether alone or with loved ones, so that even though vast distances may separate us, we are all sharing tea together moment to moment.

Let us bring together all of our energy to light a roaring beacon fire to call out to all those who may not know about Global Tea Hut or tea as medicine, but have a twinkling of tea spirit burgeoning, calling out to them as a united community who have come together when we are needed the most, to send out the message that now is the time for Light Meets Life. If Tea has ever touched your heart or you have sat a ten-day course, then you know intimately the profound magic of Tea and the importance of preserving living tea.

With your help, countless other people can experience the transformative magic of Tea. The time is ripe and abundant for the world's best Tea Center. Share this message with all of your loved ones, on your social medias, and together we can land safely and gracefully in *our* new home.

Already we have experienced a tremendous surge of energy and support from our community and Chajin around the world. Many of you have already been filled with such an abundance of tea spirit and generosity. Let us continue this momentum, reaching more and more people who without your help we would never reach. Every donation made helps support the safe passage from the Tea Sage Hut as we are blown into the unknown.

With your donations we can make Light Meets Life a reality now, so that we can all share tea in a Center that will be there for not just us now, but for future generations of tea lovers whose hearts and bowls will be overflowing abundantly with gratitude for the actions of those who came before them. They will be inspired greatly by the generosity we embodied, coming together to light the charcoal in the heart of Light Meets Life. We could all be sharing a bowl of tea together there very soon, not in a distant future. But we need you help!

LOVE & LIGHT,
Connor Goss

www.lightmeetslife.org

愛正在改變世界一碗接一碗

呼喚改變世界的行動



Testimony of Donors:

茶人: *Tom Carroll*

It is my thanks and gratitude I give to you. Your school is more than tea; it's a Way. It is a bead in my *mala* that passes through my fingers every day. Sitting with tea is a way into myself and mindful relationships with other beings. I can only repay such a treasure by sharing.

茶人: *Katrine Olsen*

Tea showed me the way home to Nature and myself. I wish for everyone to find that way home too.

茶人: *Lindsey Stillwell*

Global Tea Hut has been an integral part of my life for the past 6+ years, and through being a part of it, I've shared Tea Ceremonies all across Australia. Tea brings me home to myself and the Earth in a profound and beautiful way. I'd love my next visit to Taiwan to be in the brand-new Light Meets Life Center. Supporting this campaign wholeheartedly.

茶人: *Matthew Grohne*

I donated because I love this tea community. When I think about the Tea Sage Hut (and Light Meets Life), I think about it as a home away from home. I think about the amount I spend on tea each year and realize that more than a new teapot or more tea, the center, the teachings, and the people there are the things that help support my tea practice. So now, it's time to support them, and in doing so support this global tea community, present and future.

茶人: *Rich Allum*

I donated because Global Tea Hut, Tea Sage Hut and the community surrounding both have changed my life and the life of my family more than I ever could have imagined. I would like for Light Meets Life to become a reality and for this community to continue to do the same for countless others now and far into the future.

茶人: *Samson Swanick*

No words or amount of finances could ever suffice in sharing what Cha Dao means to me. I'm sending ALL my love and blessings!

茶人: *Alison Chuang*

Global Tea Hut and its family have become an extension of my *ohana* here on Kauai, Hawaii. In a world that seems busy and politically controversial, the spirit of tea brings to it a neutrality of peaceful reflection. Just think, with this growing community a conscious change blossoms and expands! It's all so good. I truly believe in this service. Blessings from our tearoom to yours...

茶人: *Zoe Konovalov*

I feel so grateful for everything I learned and shared while staying at the Tea Sage Hut. It changed my life and it's a practice I still use every day. I hope there is a wonderful new home waiting for this special generous group of people.

www.gofundme.com/globalteahut

TeaWayfarer

Each month, we introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you in order to help you get to know more people in this growing international community. It's also to pay homage to the many manifestations that all this wonderful spirit and Tea are becoming as the Tea is drunk and becomes human. The energy of Tea fuels some great work in this world, and we are so honored to share glimpses of such beautiful people and their Tea. This month, we would like to introduce Jennifer Swann.

I sometimes wonder, what if every single one of us on this planet had a mission to complete, before returning to where we came from. What would yours be? This question has been on my mind since Tea became a friend to me about three years ago. Hello tea family, I am Jenny, sitting on a bunk-bed in the Tea Sage Hut, mentally preparing for the next ten days that I will spend here, diving deeper into the wisdoms of Tea.

My current life started twenty-six years ago and was accompanied with ordinary red tea for over two-thirds of my life. I would spend hours with my parents and two sisters sitting around the dining table, chatting and laughing over endless mugs of tea. My dad, being British, introduced tea into our German countryside life from early on. I believe that these simple teatime hours were very important to grow close to my family and open my heart.

In my late teens, I started to travel. I was drawn to Japan and its traditional arts. It was in a simple Japanese tearoom, with its fragrant tatami mats and delicate paper doors, that I first encountered tranquility within myself. The mere presence of the space and host made me feel connected to my inner being. I sensed the connection between my inner state and Tea. Wanting to understand better, I looked into Japanese *Chanoyu*, the Way of Tea. The fine flavors of tea and the traditional preparation was something completely new and exciting for me. Curiosity pulled me further in...

Do you believe in destiny? Three years ago, a completely new path unfolded in front of me. I had the chance to live for six months on a tea farm in the Japanese countryside. Being with the tea plants, harvesting fresh leaves, hand rolling tea for hours upon hours and meeting inspiring tea people and farmers, made Tea a loyal friend. I realized that Tea means responsibility, respect and trust. There is responsibility in growing natural, chemical-free tea, respect towards the tea producers, who alongside with Nature are the origin of tea, and trust in one's own growth and brewing skills. Sometimes, while we philosophize about certain teas and their qualities, we forget the hard work that went into any given tea, the effort and probably the pressure that lies on the shoulders of the farmers to produce the tea we drink, along with the need to feed their families. Being with the farmers brought me back down to earth. Tea is a connection between us humans and Nature.

Again and again, I went back to Japan to explore more tea regions, tighten my tea bonds and connect to more organic growers. Being in the fields, listening to tea farmers' stories and sharing cups of tea has stirred something deep inside me. I knew that I wanted to share this, so I became active in the Berlin tea community.



茶人: Jennifer Swann, Germany

It was an encounter in Berlin that deepened my interest in the Global Tea Hut and its teachings. My friend, being an active member in Berlin's Global Tea Hut community, opened a completely new world to me, that until then, I had only observed from the outside. Raising bowl after bowl in the Hut tradition, we were contemplating and meditating while watching the leaves unfold. Smiles were exchanged silently, while tea ran like streams into our hearts. In this last year, Tea began speaking to me—first a silent mumble and now an audible whisper I hope grows into conversation. I am still at the very beginning of my journey.

Even if the Universe didn't want us to traverse this human life together, and we now went separate ways, every bowl would still connect us, just as every bowl dissolves into oneness.

Nothing more profound could have happened to me. I walked into the Tea Sage Hut today, knowing perfectly well that I would return back home tomorrow. After finding out about a last-minute cancellation, I was invited to spend the next ten days here. In the coming days, I will listen carefully to these leaves, changing my life, day by day, bowl by bowl.

Inside the Hut

COMING SOON TO GLOBAL TEA HUT MAGAZINE

茶主题: Tetsubins

茶道

茶主题: Classics of Tea

茶主题: Chajin & Teahouses

茶主题: Wuyi Cliff Tea



We need your help to get to a place where we can build your permanent Center, Light Meets Life. (And we do hope that you feel that our Center is yours, not ours.) If everyone in this community donates, we can together buy the most gorgeous Tea Center ever. Obviously, not all of us have a lot of money to give, but we can all do our part. Each of us is also connected to a larger community of people who can share in the building of this project. As a global community, we can do this for us and for future tea lovers!



Please spread the word about the fundraiser. We will be giving away lots of amazing tea and teaware to Global Tea Hut members who are most active in helping us build Light Meets Life.



We have launched a "Tearaiser," where we will be awarding rare teas and unique pieces of teaware from our collection to the one who donates the most each week. We will be offering some very special teas!



We have a new "community" page on our Light Meets Life website (www.lightmeetslife.org). Visit and see all the ways that community members are sharing their work with the new Center. And if you want to contribute some of your work, let us know.



Your donations will cover: first, fees related to starting a non-profit organization in Taiwan; second, GoFundMe processing fees; third, finding a location within the budget of what we fundraise that is suitable for Light Meets Life; fourth, remodeling and crafting this space into a Tea Center, including any construction we need to do. We will document this whole process as we go, publicizing the expenditure in a section of every issue and on our social media platforms as well, so that everything is transparent.

Center News



It is Light Meets Life time!!! We have launched a giant, worldwide fundraiser to make the move this very year. This will be our permanent Center, offering tea courses for the rest of our lives and beyond, serving future generations of tea lovers. Visit www.lightmeetslife.org now!



It may seem daunting, but together we can raise the funds we need to move into a new Center, your new Center. If you have any experience dealing with fundraisers of this nature and want to get involved, please email us and let us know your ideas.



The Center will be closed indefinitely after June for obvious reasons. There will be no courses for the second half of 2019, though if all goes according to plan, we hope to restart in 2020 with an even better and more varied schedule than ever before.



We are all human here. Say prayers for us. This is stressful, busy, scary, sad and exciting in waves. Our meditation and tea practice keep us rooted, but we could use your prayers!

July Affirmation

I give to give

Sometimes the greatest gift you can give someone is the opportunity to give. All too often, I give because I want something. Tea is a gift given for its own sake. Through this practice I learn to share just for sharing's sake, and to give freely.

茶友



www.globalteahut.org

The tea-trippiest tea magazine in the world! Sharing rare organic teas, a magazine full of tea history, lore, translations, processing techniques and heritage, as well as the spiritual aspects of Cha Dao. And through it all, we make friends with fellow tea lovers from around the world.

GLOBAL TEA HUT

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