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ELEVATION STORIES PART II

茶人: Antonio Moreno, Nick Dilks,
Ira and Dima & Max Ulasevich

In this second installment of Elevation Around the World, Antonio shares about his trip to Sun Moon Lake years ago, Nick talks about how Elevation traveled back home to the United Kingdom with him after he had lived in Taiwan for some time; and three of our Russian brothers and sisters have some amazing Elevation anecdotes, including a wedding and the most unlikely Global Tea Hut member ever!



DREAMING OF MOON LAKE, BY ANTONIO MORENO

Sun Moon Lake. I don't care where it is or what it looks like—I want to go! The name alone evokes a place you have to see. There's intention there. This place has to be worthy of its name. It must be exceptional! I'd go to a place called "Sun Moon Lake" in any country! What? You say they grow tea there? All the more reason to go. I really can't believe it. Tea from a place called "Sun Moon Lake." I want to go there. I want to drink it. It must be unbelievable! How could such a tea not be beyond belief!

This was my initial stream of consciousness upon hearing about Sun Moon Lake. It was long ago, on my first trip to Taiwan. However, I didn't get to visit the lake on that trip, which was just another great reason to return to Taiwan! For some time, Sun moon Lake would remain a dream...

It wasn't until seven years later that I did have the opportunity, leaving Tea Sage Hut one early morning. I remember getting there took some time but we were wonderfully received by a friend of Wu De's, Mr. Liang, who took us in. He drove us straight to the Sun Moon Lake Tea Research Center. There we walked amidst the wild seed-propagated Assam tea trees that the Japanese had planted. Taiwan was under Japanese control in the decades prior to WWII and Mr. Liang explained that they had found in Sun Moon Lake a soil they thought would be ideal for producing fine red tea—an important discovery since they had been previously unsuccessful finding an appropriate location for red tea production in Japan. Fortunately for us tea lovers, these fields were abandoned after the war and still stand today in all their glory. Seeing those trees was dream come true!

After visiting the fields, we were taken to make Ruby Red tea (Taiwan 18 and last March's Tea of the Month) with our own hands! It was the first time I had ever rolled fresh tea leaves. Surprisingly, the type of circular movement required was familiar to me from the days when I kneaded dough at my father's bakery. And just like when you're making fresh dough for bread, your hands get really sticky and your nose never forgets that aroma. You've immersed yourself so fully in its essence that you're steeped in it for life! You can evoke it at will, and it always takes you back to that moment of indescribable pleasure when you were transforming something pure and beautiful and giving it a new incarnation.

It was truly a monumental day. And I still hadn't had time to take in the beauty of the Lake itself. That would come later by way of a

highly memorable tea session beside the lake. In fact, it was one of my very first outdoor sessions, and I had the special pleasure to be able to enjoy it as a guest!

Of course, Sun Moon Lake tea isn't just any ordinary tea from any beautiful lake with a beautiful name! It's the tea that has been chosen to welcome countless guests at Tea Sage Hut and given to them freely as they part on their journey. It's the tea that Wu De always recommends for people to initiate themselves into the morning ritual of a life of tea, inviting them to begin by spending a week starting each morning with three bowls of Sun Moon Lake red tea in silence before asking yourself if this Way of Tea is good for you.

I've seen people take his advice at one of the Barcelona workshops and come back glowing, saying that they were going to keep beginning their days thusly, as they've created a sacred space and ritual to begin their day.

This tea is the only tea that has truly been a Global Tea Hut staple. Year after year, at the same time of year, you know it's coming and we all eagerly anticipate the year's fresh Sun Moon Lake tea, which quickly earned the title "Elevation." This month, I'll sip mine full of memories.

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