

The old woman dries her clothes, feeds her and gives her a teaching: The grandma picks up a large needle and holds it over a saucepan, pouring grains of rice from her palm onto the needle. She asks the girl to try to balance a single grain of rice on top of the needle head. After some trying the girl concludes that it simply cannot be done, and the woman continues explaining that the probability of balancing a single grain of rice on top of the needle head is the same as being born as a human being in this world.

Somehow, I was reminded of this sentiment rephrased as “the needle in a haystack” when thinking about our trip: the places we visited, people we met and how several of our discussions revolved around the traditional knowledge, skill and wisdom that has been lost in the modern era. It is easy to think that the world is constantly

evolving. We are coming up with new technologies, obtaining more knowledge, etc. However, it is not often that we think about the similar amount that is also lost, forgotten in the folds of time. I feel extremely blessed to have come in contact with a living tradition. Considering the thousands of master potters out there whose pots are pleasing to the eye but not functional in terms of tea preparation, tea farms that produce simply mediocre tea, brewing techniques that produce a fragrant cup of tea at most, I feel very grateful. As Wu De has so poignantly put it, he spent many years scouring the Earth for the best brewing techniques so that we would not have to do so ourselves. Of course, I’m not implying that one should take their status for granted, without testing, comparing, experimenting and challenging whether these techniques are true for you. And

when you experience it as such, the things that are true will stand the test of time. (In fact, our tradition encourages such experimentation.) However, not to follow a laid path in front of one is simply a waste of time compared to the lengths one could possibly go if one is to follow the dewy path presented, developing and renewing the tradition naturally in the process.

I cherish the days spent with the Global Tea Hut community in China: the kilometers we walked and many more we drove by bus, the spontaneous gas station dance parties, the amazing veggie food we shared, all the heartfelt conversations and endless laughter, and, of course, all the cups of beautiful, transforming tea. I hope you all can join a trip in the coming years!



## Maxim Ulasevich, Russia

When you go on a trip with people whom you don’t know and haven’t even met before, naturally your mind starts to generate different thoughts like: “Will I be welcome? Will I feel good amongst them?” And you start to ponder these questions instead of enjoying the pleasant thoughts about new experiences and friendship. That’s what happened to me, anyway. But everything changed when I started to meet people from the Hut on the way to Huangshan. It was as if I was in a big and loving family, where everyone is glad to see you and is willing to help you. That feeling, I now know, is extremely important on such trips as this with large groups. This helped me to enjoy every moment of the trip to the fullest, happily communicating with the people around me and with Tea. Nothing could distract me from observing the mountains, Nature and people.

It’s been a while since I’ve returned home, but sometimes I still see the mountains covered with a veil of clouds. Huangshan is truly marvelous! The mountain scenery is stunning and changes the way you think.

I will always cherish the memories of the tea we drank in the mountains.

It was also an unforgettable experience to interact with the tea—with a plant that is budding, and shares itself with people. It was a moment of unity and meditation. The sound when a tiny bud is separated from a branch will always remain among my most precious memories. It is a sound of help, when a natural medicine starts its journey to a person. A tea ceremony among tea bushes, when everything around is permeated with tea energy and vibrates it, when fresh green tea fills you with this energy—all of it helped me to feel unity with Nature on a new level that had been beyond my reach before.

The tea sessions were also unforgettable moments. I was allowed to drink and to connect myself to teas I couldn’t even dream of: 1930s Liu An, 1930s Dragon Horse and 1960s Blue Mark. I had heard about those teas only in the stories of tea collectors. But now all of us have had an experience of interacting with these teas. This experience changes you from cup to cup, session to session.

The high point of the trip for me was the day when Master Zhou showed us the process of creating a teapot. He made it all by hand! As forty people watched him make something beautiful, something precious, I couldn’t have imagined that such a mastery existed.

It was a great chance to reinforce the connection with my inner self, with Tea and with the people whom I consider to be my family after sharing with them all the joys and hardships of this trip.

The evening discourses in the mountains and in the small village also helped me to figure some things out. I feel grateful that our teacher shares his wisdom with us. Before the trip, the Russian tea community told me that I would return a different person. I didn’t believe that. But it really happened. Many inner walls have been demolished. I also feel much more inspiration boiling inside me, which I can now share with others in the gatherings I host and bowls I serve. Now I truly understand the meaning of the phrase: “Love changes the world bowl by bowl.”



茶 Drinking 1930s Liu An in the Qimen museum was a highlight of the trip and our lives! Our quick transformation of the space used for greeting guests into a lovely chaxi, followed by two hours of silent bliss was a testament to Cha Dao.

# 三票孫義順

