





— 150 —  
**TEA HOUSES**

**YOU NEED  
TO VISIT BEFORE  
— YOU DIE —**

By Léa Teuscher

Lannoo



*The first cup kisses away my thirst,  
and my loneliness is quelled by the second.  
The third gives insight worthy of ancient scrolls,  
and the fourth exiles my troubles.  
My body becomes lighter with the fifth,  
and the sixth sends word from immortals.  
But the seventh – oh the seventh cup –  
if I drink you, a wind will hurry my wings  
toward the sacred island.*

— Lu Tong (795–835 AD), translated by Christopher Nelson

From the intensely smoky Chinese lapsang souchong to Japanese genmaicha dotted with popped brown rice, from ice-cold American sweet tea to the time-consuming but deliciously foamy West African *ataya*, the world of tea is truly full of wonders. It might have been overshadowed in recent years by the popularity of a certain beverage made from roasted beans (We will avoid using the ‘C-word’ wherever possible in this book), but tea is still the world’s most-consumed beverage after water, and tea-drinking traditions remain strong and are even thriving, with a new generation discovering the beauty of bright-green matcha and fragrant masala chai. In this book, I hope to show you what’s brewing, whether it’s in a cool café in Istanbul, a historic tea plantation in Darjeeling, an elegant hotel in London or a beautiful Kyoto *ochaya*. Every country has unique teas and different ways of savouring them, whether they are true teas made from the leaves of *Camellia sinensis* or from other plants such as rooibos and yerba maté, and I hope to celebrate as many of them as possible within these pages. I can’t decide which one I prefer myself: as a teetotal Londoner, I start my day with a strong cup of Yorkshire Tea and a dash of milk, but I like nothing more than a cold jasmine or lemon iced tea on a hot day, an Earl Grey on a rainy afternoon or a calming verbena in the evening. All in all, I’d say that with an average of about five a day, this book has been fuelled by at least 500 cups of tea. I wish for you to enjoy many more, and discover your new favourite teas and unique blends along the way.

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## 01

# LATITUDE AT BANYAN TREE ANJI

Baimu Nong, Baishuiwan Village, Tianhuangping, Anji,  
Huzhou, Zhejiang, China

TO VISIT  
BEFORE YOU DIE  
BECAUSE

Savour a cup of rare Anji white tea from a rooftop lounge offering views of Zhejiang's tea gardens and bamboo forests.

Located near Lingfeng Mountain, Banyan Tree Anji is about an hour's drive from Hangzhou, famous for its West Lake and its Longjing, or 'dragon well', tea. A popular weekend retreat, it's a peaceful space from which to explore the region, which is known for its amazing teas, including Anji white tea. Rich in amino acids, the tea takes its name from the jade-white colour of its leaves during the cold season and is among the rarest and most expensive teas in China. The resort runs tea-picking tours, including visits to the picturesque Huangdu Village and its lush surroundings, which encompass 16.7 hectares of tea gardens, where both Anji white and Longjing teas are grown. The best spot to enjoy a cup of tea is the hotel's Latitude rooftop lounge, which offers stunning views of the mountainous landscape. Its menu features jasmine, Keemun, *da hong pao* and *bi luo chun* teas, while the afternoon tea is seasonal. In the colder months, the menu includes a selection of fruit, such as persimmons, which you can grill at your table.





## 02 WOODS BALI

Jalan Dalem Lingsir No. 8, Pererenan, Kecamatan Mengwi, Kabupaten Badung, Bali, 80351, Indonesia

TO VISIT  
BEFORE YOU DIE  
BECAUSE

Enjoy Bali's lush vegetation, healing infusions and delicious dishes at this laid-back spot on the island's western coast.

This greenery-filled restaurant was built around existing trees using reclaimed wood, and the team's love for nature extends to celebrating the power of plants through an unusual tea library. 'We tried to create a warm, cosy décor in the most natural way we could,' explains owner Joshua Criado, whose passion for tea and desire to do something original led him to offer a large selection of medicinal infusions. The bestselling Pandan Panacea, a cooling mix of pandan, pineapple and mint (good for digestion and high in vitamin C), is joined on the menu by the likes of ginseng flower and lotus leaf tea, as well as blends such as the anti-inflammatory Moringa Melody, with lemongrass and globe amaranth flower. Add to this popular jazz nights and a menu featuring *matcha* waffles with green tea jelly, or a seafood platter served on an afternoon tea stand, and you have the perfect place to hang out after a day spent at the beach or exploring Bali's temples and highlands.



# 03 SINDHORN KEMPINSKI HOTEL BANGKOK

80 Soi Ton Son, Lumpini, Pathum Wan, Bangkok, 10330, Thailand

TO VISIT  
BEFORE YOU DIE  
BECAUSE

Enjoy a spectacular afternoon tea served on a miniature tree in this greenhouse-inspired tea lounge.

Located close to Bangkok's Lumpini Park and 'green corridor', the Kempinski Hotel is surrounded by lush vegetation. Its lobby, by P49 Deesign, is home to a tea lounge that brings the outdoors in, with ferns, orchids and birds of paradise dotted around a light-filled, double-height space opening onto the garden. Dark rattan furniture is arranged under a vaulted concrete ceiling next to an ornate glass pavilion, and it's all pretty spectacular – but wait until you see the afternoon tea. Seasonal offerings include the Verdant Afternoon Tea, served surrounded by a dry ice mist in eco-friendly containers hanging from a miniature salapee tree. Treats include scones, salmon with pickled onions on toast and salted caramel tacos, while the Tea Master's Selection features four rare teas, from a Sri Sindhorn Assam green tea to a loose-leaf silver needle white tea. You can also try the national drink, Thai iced milk tea. Ronnefeldt teas, such as Peach Blossom *sencha* and organic Pandanus black tea, as well as chrysanthemum infusions, complete the menu.







## 04 KSANA MATCHA

One City Centre building, 548 Phloen Chit Road, Lumpini, Pathum Wan, Bangkok, Thailand

TO VISIT  
BEFORE YOU DIE  
BECAUSE

This cave-like specialist matcha tea room offers a unique haven of tranquillity away from chaotic central Bangkok.

Thai tea – black tea mixed with condensed milk – sets itself apart from other South Asian milk teas with its bright-orange colour. But here at Ksana Matcha in cosmopolitan Pathum Wan, it's another tea with a bold hue that is the star of the show: matcha. Seen 'as a medium for fostering mindfulness, with its roots deeply intertwined with monk meditation', the powdered green tea is served here on simple wooden tables in a cocooning white cave designed by local practice JUTI architects. Ksana Matcha works closely with Japanese heritage farms in Uji and collaborates with cutting-edge tea estates in Shizuoka to source the finest-quality matcha and select only the finest tea leaves. Its four teas are Coastal Breeze, with umami flavours that evoke the fresh serenity of a coastal morning; Silenced Highland, with nutty and malty notes; Bitter Rainforest, which is bold and intense; and Smoky Peaks, a *hōjicha* with a hint of hickory. Also on the menu are traditional Japanese *wagashi* sweets, such as yuzu and yokan jelly.





# 05 AMAN SUMMER PALACE

1 Gongmenqian Street, Summer Palace, Haidian Qu,  
Beijing Shi, 100091, China

TO VISIT  
BEFORE YOU DIE  
BECAUSE

This is an afternoon tea fit for an empress, served in the stunning UNESCO-listed surroundings of Beijing's Summer Palace.

Drinking tea in China is a daily activity, fuelled by refilling flasks throughout the day (there are even free hot water taps in train stations) or buying a cold bottle of jasmine tea from the local shop. But here at Aman Summer Palace, tea drinking is elevated to something completely out of the ordinary. Just steps away from the Summer Palace's East Gate, in a tranquil courtyard with a lotus pond filled with koi and surrounded by ancient willow trees, you can enjoy a luxurious afternoon tea while admiring the colourful pavilions that once welcomed the Empress Dowager Cixi's guests. Facing the Summer Palace's Grand Theatre, the Reflection Pavilion offers treats such as seasonal fruit tarts and cream-filled éclairs, as well as matcha *mochi* cake and savouries such as crab focaccia. Fine teas include souchong and the famous Xihu Longjing tea. Speaking of which, there is also a beautiful Aman hotel in Hangzhou, Amanfayun, surrounded by the city's famed Longjing tea plantations.



# 06 LAO SHE TEAHOUSE

3 Qianmen West Street, Xuanwu District, Beijing, China

TO VISIT  
BEFORE YOU DIE  
BECAUSE

Experience tea drinking Beijing-style, with a full programme of entertainment, at one of the city's landmark teahouses.

For many Westerners, the word 'teahouse' inspires thoughts of a zen space with hushed conversations. But for Beijingers, it's a whole different story. In the Chinese capital, teahouses are a place for people to gossip, play mahjong and discuss politics while enjoying tea and perhaps even a kung fu show or a comedy act. These are lively places with huge dining rooms, and the most famous one of them all is the Lao She Teahouse, named after the writer Lao She's well-known play *Teahouse*. Skip the second-floor Si Heo Teahouse and its private tea pavilions, and instead go for a musical afternoon or evening performance in the main halls. The ticket includes tea (served in a traditional cup with a lid, by waiters in traditional *qipao* and Tang jackets), and there are snacks such as sunflower seeds, pistachios and *zilaibai* mooncakes. Another option is to enjoy the famously cheap 'big bowl' of jasmine oolong, served at the entrance during the day – a remnant of how the drink was sold at roadside stands at the turn of the 20th century.



# 07 MANDARIN ORIENTAL QIANMEN BEIJING

No. 1, Caochang Alley 10, Dongcheng District, Beijing,  
100005, China

TO VISIT  
BEFORE YOU DIE  
BECAUSE

Reconnect with your inner self in the tranquil surroundings of this courtyard haven in the heart of the bustling Chinese capital.

Ever since the first century, when Shennong recorded the stimulating properties of the tea as giving ‘joy to the body and sparkle to the eyes’, tea has been part of healing and calming rituals. Here at the Mandarin Oriental Qianmen Beijing, next to the Temple of Heaven, it forms part of the hotel’s spa offering. After enjoying the spa treatment or personalised healing classes, guests are welcomed into the peaceful Tea House, which offers space for inner contemplation and refined tea ceremonies. An aesthetic, meditative ritual, the Chinese *gong fu cha* (‘making tea the right way’) involves precise gestures and specific teaware, as well as meticulous attention to the details, from prewarming the vessels to enjoying many rounds of the same tea, each brew slightly different from the others. You could also simply visit the serene courtyard of the hotel’s Maple Lounge, and enjoy the finest traditionally served Chinese and Oriental teas, alongside an exquisite afternoon tea featuring Amur caviar, smoked pepper steak, black sesame jasmine mousse and oolong osmanthus profiteroles.



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