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Some of these are very old—the Happy Valley tea plantations are sometimes dated, dates from the 1800s, and the bushes are between 80 and 120 years old. Happy Valley tea bushes are so thick that a rough thatch and they were more than an hour before arriving (with only one flat tire). The manager, pouring the tea, said, “Most tourists don’t serve milk,” whispered. The innkeeper, a matronly lady who had passed his lie detector test, is the manager of the Glenburn tea estate. “This is Sanjay Sharma, the manager of the Glenburn tea estate.” They had brought their tea. “Do you serve milk in tea?” I asked. “This is Sanjay Sharma, tea planter,” said the innkeeper. “No, some people who plant tea,” I asked. “No, the tea planter is the manager of the estate.” They had brought the tea to meet the tour- ist from half way around the world. Sharma was clearly in a hurry, but still gracious enough to answer a few of my questions—after I had passed his lie detector test. “How old, he asked, did I know about Glen- burn tea?”

“Travel

Tea garden standard headline placed here

Clever Cambridge standard headline

The “Other Place” is famous in America, where it is set in the 1910s. The story is based on the 1910s Cuban Revolution, and it is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba. The story is set in Cuba.

Visitors may need to pack an umbrella for the city’s frequent showers. But the only bad suggestion is don’t rent a bike.

“Tea bushes at Glenburn Estate, a high-quality producer of Darjeeling tea.”

Travel

Clear Cambridge standard headline placed here.

West Galch Gazette Sunday, May 8, 2011

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Darjeeling from page 1

darker and more earthly, and autumnal is dark-er and most full bodied. They are stronger in flavor and so considered of lower quality, and less popular than first and sec-ond flush. Monsoon tea usually stays in India and is sold for the sweet spicy drink called masala chai. It’s in the cup you usually get free for haggling at a carpet or jewelry dealer in Mumbai. “Chai” is just the word for “tea” in Hindi and many other languages.

Most Darjeeling tea is black tea. This means it’s “fermented.” Not exact-ly—more like it’s oxidized. The tea leaves are first dried on long wire racks overnight, with blowers, cool in the daytime, warm at night. They are then scooped up and curled—usually by machine. This bruises the leaves. The curling machine in the Happy Valley plantation dated from the 1850s, from London. The fer-
melting is actually a second drying process. The curled leaf produces moisture that cools the leaves. How long to ferment is dependent on the nose and judgment of the tea planter. Black tea is 90 percent oxidized, after which it is dried to stop

the process and preserve the tea leaves from spoil- age.

Green tea, on the other hand, is not oxidized at all. Oolong tea is oxidized a bit, about 10 percent. Sharma said most Dar-
jeeling tea gardens pro-
duce black tea because it commands higher prices at auction.

After fermentation and drying, the raw black tea is worked through a machine to grade. Tea is graded by size. Large leaf is generally higher quality. The dust, or fannings, are sold for teabags. As I was walking around in stock-
ing feet—no one wears shoes in the plants—the fannings collected in a five-foot high pile in the corner. No one had much respect for fannings. Graded tea is poured into sacks, and shipped to the tea auction in the distinct impression of Darjeeling properly steeped is slightly astringent, but not bitter, and offers a slightly floral taste.

Most tea grown outside of Darjeeling is sold in the West as blends, and the cheaper Darjeeling also often is a blend. This doesn’t necessarily mean low quality; although in my experience the Dar-
jeeling blends I’ve tried just haven’t measured up to the single-estate teas. Teabag tea infuses fast—one minute may be too long. Whole leaf Dar-
jeeling, on the other hand, usually needs about three to four minutes. Water just off the boil should cover about one rounded teaspoon of tea per cup. Just place the leaves in the hemp pot. Strain with a tea filter to drink. Black tea keeps a long time—2 years is not unusual, except for first flush, which should be used more quickly.

Tea is supposedly healthy, based on its polyphenols in the tan-
rins. But the research on health benefits of tea, green or black, is still inconclusive. Tea does contain more caffeine by weight than coffee, but because it’s so light, you use less in a cup.

I asked the Glenburn tea garden staff about that—why not plant cof-
fée? It’s pretty much the same growing conditions, after all. “We do grow, in the south,” the innkeeper answered. “Actually, we could grow coffee right here, instead of tea! But why have one harvest per year when you can have four?”

The manager returned to usher me to the waiting Tata 4X4. “Well, thanks for coming,” he said. “We do have a web site. You can buy directly from us. Our prices are not set here. They are set by the tea auction in Calcutta. We have your card. We’ll send you an email with the address.”

The Glenburn visit took about two hours. I had the distinct impression Glenburn Tea Estate had never before seen a lone tourist intrepid enough to hire a vehicle, hire a guide, and find the opera-
tion on his own, and so did not know quite what to do with me. On the way back up the road, Dawn the guide mused, “I’ve never had a tourist who was so interested in tea.” But he didn’t realize that, for someone from Fargo, this really was a once-in-a-
lifetime trip.