

THE JOURNEY OF TEA

We all love tea, but where does it come from? Who picks it? And what happens to it before it arrives in our shops and cafés?

The tea plant

The tea plant is called *Camellia sinensis*. The plant grows best in areas where it is warm and rainy and there is light soil. It grows well in high areas too.

The biggest tea-growing countries in the world are China, India, Sri Lanka and Kenya. African countries like Kenya only started growing tea about a hundred years ago, but African teas are now very popular.

The main tea-growing countries in the world



Tea picking

Tea is picked by hand. Only the top two leaves and a bud are picked. The plants grow all year round. The leaves are picked every one to two weeks.

There are 300,000 tea pickers in Sri Lanka and most of them are women. Life for a tea picker is hard. They work long hours and carry the leaves in baskets on their backs.



Tea pickers in Sri Lanka



Drying tea in Kagoshima, Japan

Tea processing

The tea is weighed and then it goes to a factory. There it is laid out to dry. Green tea is steamed first to keep the leaves green. Black tea is left to dry for the longest time. The tea is sold at auctions to tea companies around the world for blending.

Tea blending

Most of the teas drunk in Britain are blends. Tea blenders taste all of the teas when they arrive from the auction. Then the teas are mixed in a machine and put into packets and tea bags. The tea is finally ready to enjoy!

Do people in your country drink tea? Where does the tea come from?



What do these words mean?
You can use a dictionary.
basket steam auction