


*The Second Edition to our Darjeeling Tea Anthology*

# The Darjeeling Affair

Ketan Desai



VAHDAM®  
INDIA



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Edited by Mayuri Ghosh

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*“Come oh come ye  
tea-thirsty restless ones --  
the kettle boils, bubbles and  
sings, musically.”*



Rabindranath Tagore

## Preface

How aptly did Tagore's words capture the essence of Darjeeling and its most cherished gift - Darjeeling Tea. The crisp, clean air, the misty clouds, the mighty mountains, and the prized soil - all come together to brew the earth's finest elixir, a steaming, heavenly cup of Darjeeling Tea.

What Champagne is to sparkling wine, Roquefort is to blue cheese, Scotch is to whisky, and Havana is to cigars, Darjeeling is to Tea!

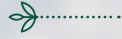
Darjeeling Tea is the undisputed Emperor of the kingdom of teas. This iconic and enigmatic gem of a tea is one of the most expensive and sought after by true tea connoisseurs that include the likes of the Emperor of Japan to the Chancellor of Germany.

For the first edition of our Darjeeling Ebook series, we delved into the many facets of Darjeeling Tea; How did it come to India; The various seasonal flushes of Darjeeling Tea; and 25 Tea estates in Darjeeling that bring us this immaculate gift of the gods.

In our second edition of the Darjeeling Ebook, we invite you to relish the tales of 25 more such Tea gardens of Darjeeling, who have since long been brewing magic into the lives of millions around the globe.

We hope you enjoy the story of Darjeeling tea - truly Mother Nature's rarest gift.





***'Darjeeling' comes from the Tibetan words 'Dorje' and 'Ling'. While 'Dorje' means Thunderbolt, 'ling' means 'place'. Therefore the name 'Darjeeling' means 'Thunderbolt's Abode', a befitting name for this misty haven.***





*Ketan Desai*



## About the Author

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Ketan was born, bred, buttered and jammed in Calcutta, amongst the only race in the world - Bengalis - who are fiercely proud and fanatically particular about their tea: Darjeeling. He grew up in 'tea', so to say, with both maternal and paternal families who have been in the tea business for generations. His earliest memories of tea are of his maternal grandfather sniffing, sorting, and smelling dry tea leaf samples and making cryptic notes on the pages of a thick auction catalogue. He also vividly remembers his uncles noisily slurping, sucking, and spitting endless cups of tea liquor neatly laid out in the tasting room.

He joined the family business immediately after finishing school, working as an intern. From opening up neatly wrapped packets of samples, to writing down tasting remarks, to copying sold prices at the auction hall; this was the time when Ketan learned the basics.

After completing his education, he joined Late Iqbal Ahmed, a global authority on all aspects of tea. It was Mr Ahmed who polished the rough edges by deepening and widening Ketan's knowledge of tea. From plucking the first-fine leaves in Assam to pruning bushes during winters in Darjeeling, from







the art of blending teas for Egypt and Iran, Germany, Japan and Syria and Sudan, to the strategy of buying in a public auction, Ketan's years with Mr. Ahmed added exponentially to his tea experience. It was during this time that the USSR collapsed, and Russia opened new opportunities. Ketan was amongst the first tea professionals to visit Russia during the early 1990s. Over the years, he has travelled extensively to Russia and the CIS countries, even learning the language, writing for a trade magazine and having a flat in Moscow.

With the first dot-com boom in the early 2000s, Ketan was instrumental in launching teauction.com – the world's first B2B portal for online auction of teas. After a successful launch in India, Ketan travelled to Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Kenya to launch teauction.com in these auction centres. He took a sabbatical to complete a full-time MBA.

After the sabbatical, Ketan went the entrepreneurial way and launched CHA - India's premier chain of loose-leaf tea boutiques. He also launched a niche financial communications agency in Bombay and promoted-invested in D:FY – a new-age sports brand with his brother.

Ketan is currently with VAHDAM® India where he is the Chief Tea Educator and Sustainability Officer, leading TEAch Me® -the flagship educational programme focussing on the education of tea workers' children. He is also an investor in VAHDAM® India.







Famous Tea Estates of  
**Darjeeling**



## Barnesbeg Tea Estate

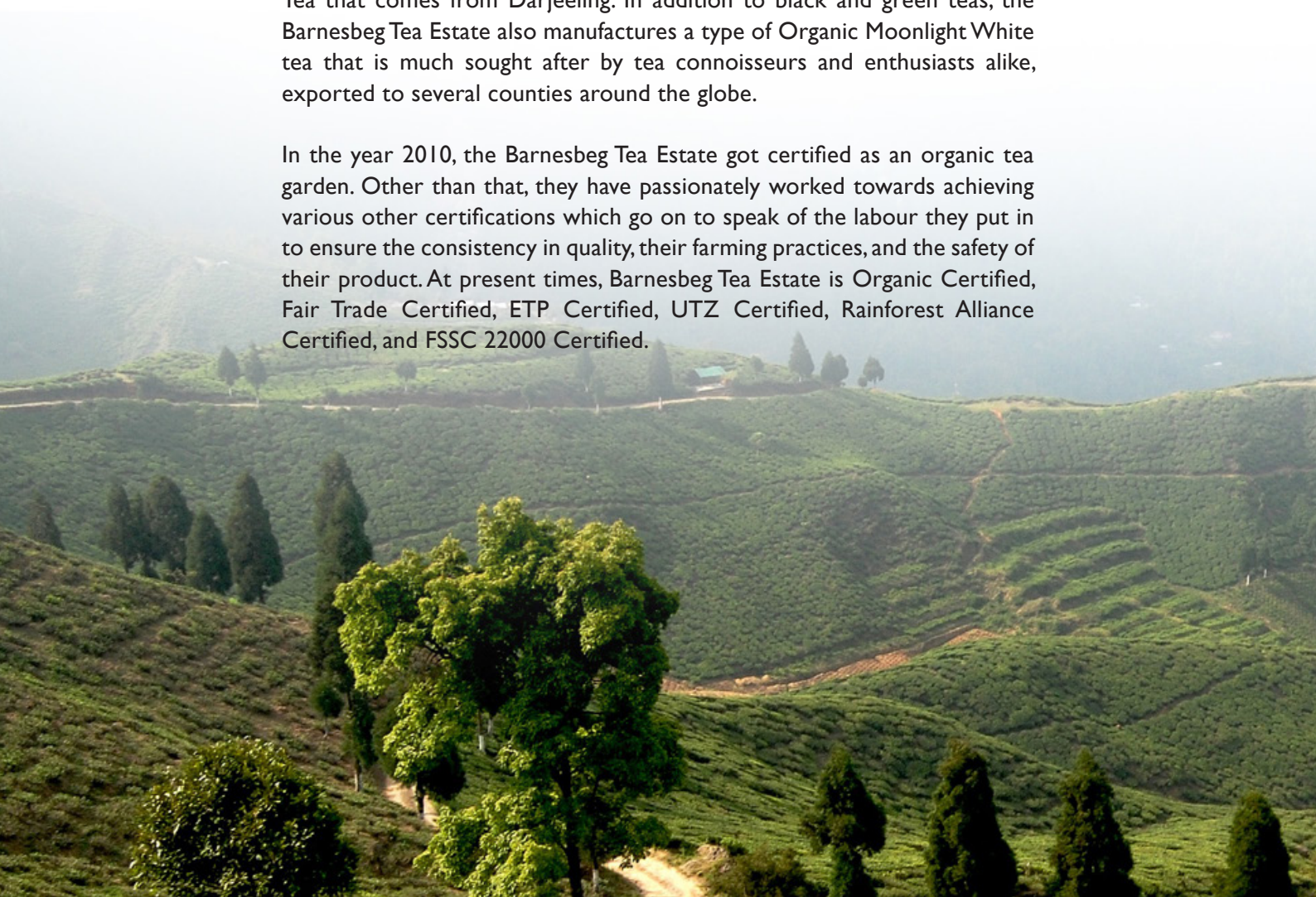
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Welcome to the beloved Barnesbeg Tea Estate! This scenic tea estate is located in the North-Western region of the Lebong Valley, just 17 kms. away from the mystical town of Darjeeling. The picturesque Barnesbeg Tea Estate has an elevation that ranges from 300 metres to 1260 metres. The tea estate was established in the year 1877 by Christine Barnes. And the name of this tea estate— Barnesbeg Tea Estate— was based on its original planter Christine Barnes. Hence, the name ‘Barnes-’bagh’, meaning Barnes’ garden.

The actual area that is used for cultivation is about 130 hectares. The serene Rangeet river flows through the tea estate adding to the precious ecosystem of the garden. The slopes of the terrain and the moderate climate of the area, this symphony adds to the flavour and quality of the produce. The Barnesbeg Tea Estate also provides stunning views of the majestic Mount Kanchenjunga.

Currently, the tea estate is owned and managed by the esteemed Goodricke Group. Though the Barnesbeg Tea Estate produces both, black tea and green tea, they are especially known for producing top-quality artisanal green teas. In fact, their green tea has been rated as one of the best Organic Green Tea that comes from Darjeeling. In addition to black and green teas, the Barnesbeg Tea Estate also manufactures a type of Organic Moonlight White tea that is much sought after by tea connoisseurs and enthusiasts alike, exported to several countries around the globe.

In the year 2010, the Barnesbeg Tea Estate got certified as an organic tea garden. Other than that, they have passionately worked towards achieving various other certifications which go on to speak of the labour they put in to ensure the consistency in quality, their farming practices, and the safety of their product. At present times, Barnesbeg Tea Estate is Organic Certified, Fair Trade Certified, ETP Certified, UTZ Certified, Rainforest Alliance Certified, and FSSC 22000 Certified.





## Dhajea Tea Estate

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The Dhajea Tea Estate is located near the small town of Sonada, in the gorgeous Rongbong Valley, right above the banks of the Balasun river. One of the very first gardens to be established in the region, the Dhajea tea estate has greatly contributed towards the prized reputation of Darjeeling Teas around the world.

Its history dates back to the 1870s when the first tea plants were planted in this region. The garden originally functioned as a part of the Moondakootee Tea Estate till 1955. Post this, the Dhajea Tea Estate got separated from the Moondakootee Tea Estate and became its own entity with its own manufacturing unit. The scenic garden has an elevation that ranges from 790 metres to 1066 metres.

The name 'Dhajea' had been taken from the Lepcha word 'Dhaja', which means flag. 'Dhajea' means a place of flags. Hence, the name of the garden honours the popular Buddhist prayer flags that were put up in many places in the region. These prayer flags hold immense spiritual significance for the locals of the region.

This beautiful garden is surrounded by other tea estates on all sides. It has the Nagari Farm in its East, the Mundakootee Tea Estate in its West, the Avongrove and Dooteriah Tea Estates in its North, and the Balasun and Ambootia Tea Estates in its South.

Currently, the Dhajea Tea Estate is owned and operated by the Lohias of the Chamong Group. From the year 2007, Dhajea Tea Estate started producing 100% bio-organic Darjeeling Teas. In the year 2009, the garden received its Fair Trade certificate. With about 500 workers in its workforce, this tea estate produces as much as 95 million tonnes of tea almost every year.





## Chongtong Tea Estate

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A heavenly garden that hosts the scenic confluence of two streams and stunning vistas of the majestic Mount Kanchenjunga; the Chongtong Tea Estate is located near Pulbazar in Bijanbari, and is just 13 kms. away from Darjeeling town. The Chongtong Tea Estate was established by a British planter named James T. in 1882-83. Since then, the tea estate has changed ownership multiple times. Nonetheless, with time, the quality of the teas produced by them have only gotten better.

Initially, the Chongtong Tea Estate was named 'Chun Thang' from a Lepcha name which is the local dialect. Later on, it was changed to its current name - Chongtong, meaning 'Arrow Head'. Flowing through this tea estate is the River Rangeet, adding to the charm and the serenity of the garden. There are three subdivisions in the tea estate— 'Sirisi Tar' (lower division), 'Chiyasi' Division (middle division), and 'Salabari' (upper division).

Chongtong Tea Estate was originally managed and maintained by the British until 1954, when it was purchased by Pradeep Kumar Daga. He managed the tea estate till 1979 and then transferred its ownership to someone else who took care of its affairs for a year or two. From 1983 to 2006, the tea estate was owned and managed by Ajit Kumar Agarwal. It was again bought off in the year 2007 by Amit Bansal and Sunil Kumar Bansal. Currently, the Chongtong Tea Estate is managed by Darjeeling Organic Tea Pvt. Ltd.

The Chongtong Tea Estate has about 960 acres of cultivable land. Out of this, 4 acres each is dedicated to cultivating the Nanda Devi Clone and P312 Clone tea plants. The rest of the area is used for cultivating the China clone. This wonderful tea estate is famous for the premium-quality 100% bio-organic teas that they produce. Their teas are skillfully developed from a number of tea cultivars such as Assam Clone, China Clone, and the P312 Clone. The Chongtong Tea Estate has an annual production of 1.75 lakh kg. Amongst all the teas produced by this tea estate, the ones that are the most sought-after are its first flush teas and the second flush Darjeeling black teas.





## Dilaram Tea Estate

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A magnificent tea garden on the riverbanks of Rinchengtong, the Dilaram Tea Estate is 8 kms. away from the town of Kurseong. The garden was established in the year 1890 by a Mr. Bell and has an elevation that ranges from 762 metres to 1951 metres and has some of the best views of the mystical town of Kurseong. Owing to these breathtaking vistas, this garden is a popular weekend getaway for city-dwellers looking for some peace and tranquility.

The Dilaram Tea Estate is flanked by other tea estates, adding to the lush sights here. It has the Edenvale Tea Estate on its South side ; the Ringtong Tea Estate on its West Side, and the esteemed Margaret's Hope Tea Estate on its South-West side.

In the beginning, the tea estate was owned collectively by eight sterling companies. Later on, due to changes in certain laws, this tea estate was merged with other tea estates. After the year of 1978, it fell under the ownership of Amoorie India Limited, the parent company of which is the renowned Goodricke Group. It is owned by the same company till this date who lovingly nurture the teas in this garden that are loved by tea aficionados across the globe.

Traditional methods of manufacturing are still followed here to produce the aromatic Darjeeling Teas. The teas from this estate, which are made from 100% China bushes, are famous for their delectable flavour and invigorating aromas. The Second Flush Darjeeling teas produced by this estate are held in high regard in tea circles.





## Balapun Tea Estate

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If you fancy the signature full-bodied muscatel flavour, Balapun Tea Estate will not disappoint at all. It is located about 70 kms. away from Bagdogra Airport, near a beautiful town called Sonada. It falls under the Kurseong Sub division of Darjeeling Hill district. The garden spreads across rolling hills and consists of gentle slopes, with the beautiful Balapun river flowing through the lower slopes of the garden, adding to the panoramic views here.

The Balapun Tea Estate has an elevation between 365 metres and 1375 metres. Balapun Tea Estate was established in the year 1871 by M/s Davenport & Company Ltd. Originally, the Balapun Tea Estate was named 'Nahore Balapun'. Later on, it was renamed as the 'Balapun Tea Estate', based on the Balapun river.

The temperatures at the Balapun Tea Estate range between 7 degrees in the winter to a maximum of 30 degrees in the summer season, a perfect climate that contributes greatly to the flavour of its speciality. An interesting fact about this tea estate is that along with tea, they also have other agricultural products such as ginger, cardamom, oranges, and broom Grass on sale.

Over the years, this tea estate has changed ownership a couple of times. It was taken over by M/s Darjeeling Consolidated Tea Company Ltd. in 1963. Then again in 2005, its ownership was shifted to the famous Jayshree Tea & Industries Ltd. The estate is still managed and maintained with great care by the same company till this date.

The delicious teas from Balapun Tea Estate have a full-body with distinct muscatel characteristics. The garden is surrounded by other tea estates on all sides. It has the beautiful Margaret's Hope Tea Estate in the East ; the Nagari Farm in the West ; the Moondakotee Tea Estate in the North ; and the Ambootia Tea Estate in the South.

The Balapun Tea Estate offers some of the best Darjeeling Clonal Teas, China Wonder, and conventional Black Teas that are exceptionally flavourful. They have a gross yield of about 100 tons per year. The area that is used for tea cultivation covers about 181 hectares. Out of that area, 51% is used for pure China, 40% for hybrid Assam, and 9% for Darjeeling Quality Clonal tea plants. Also, the tea estate has been certified by SGS India Pvt. Ltd., in accordance with the guidelines of HACCP.



## Aloobari Tea Estate

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Founded in the year 1840, Aloobari Tea Estate holds the record of being the first tea estate to be established in the Darjeeling hills. Captain Samler was the first tea planter who planted the Aloobari tea garden in 1856, under the management of the Kurseong & Darjeeling Tea Company. This estate holds the first tea bushes to be planted on the North-eastern hills of Darjeeling, which means that people get to relish the rich, mystical history of tea coming to India when they sip the exquisite teas produced by this garden.

Located in the Pulbazar subdivision of Darjeeling district, the Aloobari Tea Garden has a total population of 116 with about 27 houses in the village by the estate. Darjeeling is the nearest town to the garden and is only 5kms. away.

Gracing the beautiful landscape of the Darjeeling Hills, this historic tea estate is located at a height of 1900 metres. The garden offers clear views of Mount Kanchenjunga, the third highest mountain in the world. The cool breeze originating from the snow-capped Himalayas, graces the Aloobari Tea Estate, adding to the perfect terroir for the teas to be unique and have that distinctly floral flavour.





## Poobong Tea Estate

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A relatively smaller tea estate, but with the passion and will to outshine larger conglomerates, the Poobong Tea Estate is located between Sukhiapokhri and Ghoom. The garden is only 13 kms. away from Darjeeling town. The Poobong Tea Estate was established in 1913 and still continues to produce some of the finest muscatels and green teas.

The name 'Poobong' comes from the local language meaning 'a valley behind the clouds'. True to its name, the garden has a rich flora and fauna. One can find bears, boars, Pangolin and some mesmerizing species of mountain birds. The garden has a total area of 527 hectares, out of which the cultivation area is over 180 hectares. The flora here comprises typical Himalayan trees like oak and pine. A fact about this tea estate is that it is much smaller when compared to other tea estates in the region. So, it is often referred to as 'Chota Poobong'. In the local language, 'chota' means 'small'.

The Poobong tea garden has an elevation that ranges from 1170 metres to 1736 metres, with an average temperature of 25°C in the summers and falls down to 2°C in winters, a perfect temperature range that contributes to the nuanced characteristics of its delectable first flush and second flush Darjeeling teas.

Currently, the tea estate is owned and operated by Mr. Kishorilal Agarwal. The teas manufactured at this tea estate are mostly made from Chinary tea plants. Poobong Tea Estate is famous for their First Flush and Second Flush Darjeeling Teas. The garden has also made a name in producing some incredible Himalayan Green Teas. The Orthodox Loose Leaf Teas produced by this tea estate have been certified as 100% bio-organic. The factory of the garden is ISO 5000-22000 certified. They have a total annual production of approx. 70,000 kgs. of tea.





## Monteviot Tea Estate

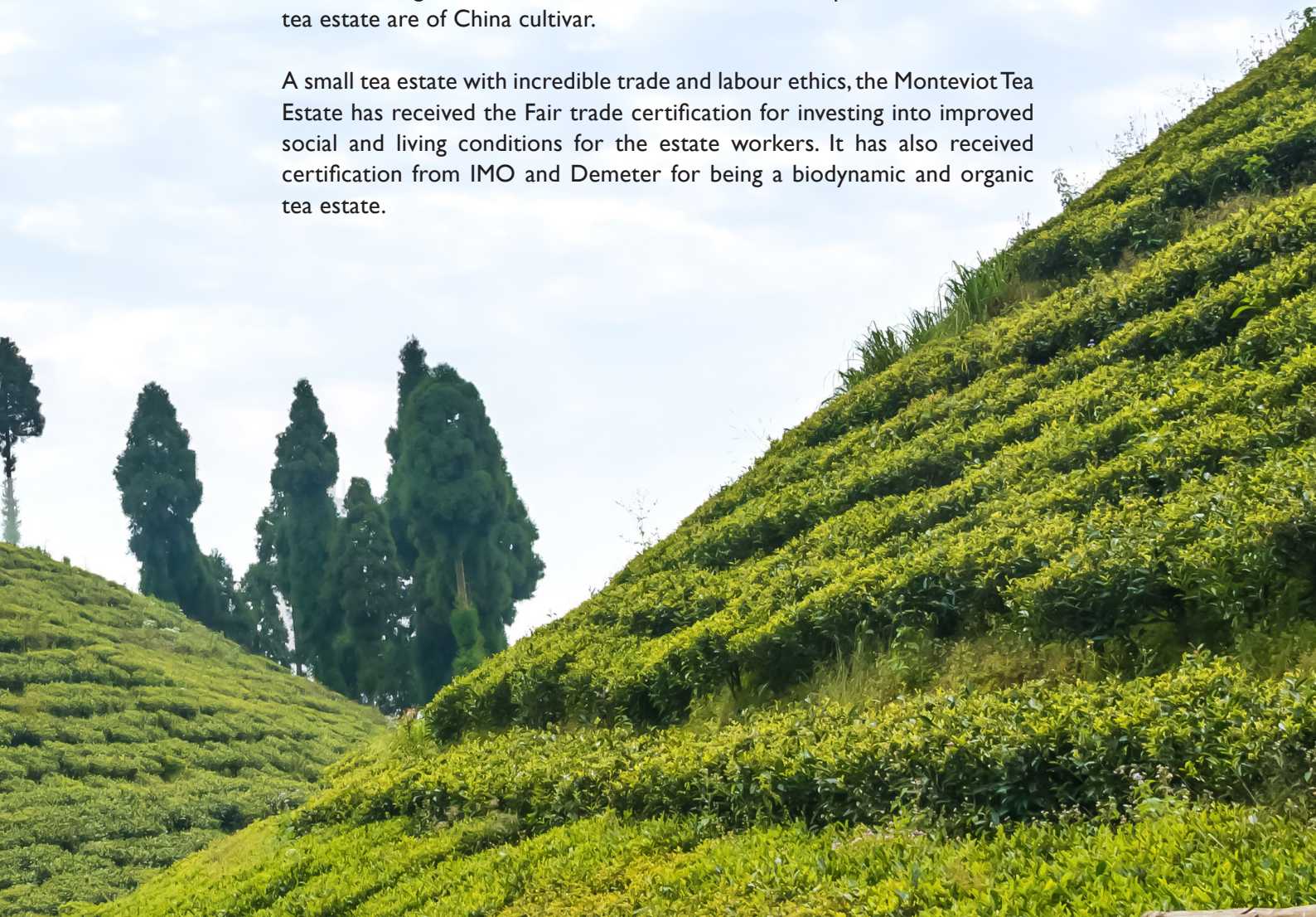
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The Monteviot Tea Estate is a quaint, misty haven that lies just below the picturesque town of Kurseong in the Darjeeling district. It is located in the beautiful North Kurseong valley and is only 2 kms. away from the main town of Kurseong. The Monteviot Tea Estate is amongst the very first tea estates to be established in Darjeeling.

One of the earliest tea gardens to be established in the 1850s, the Monteviot Tea garden was only operational in 1856. The garden gets its name from a French word 'Monteviot' meaning 'rock'. On a clear day, one can witness breathtaking views of the majestic Kanchenjunga. With an elevation that ranges from 950 metres to 1700 metres, the Monteviot tea garden is an organic tea garden with an area of 88 hectares, producing some exceptional Darjeeling Teas.

The current ownership of the Monteviot tea estate is owned by Ambootia Group and managed under the banner of the Darjeeling Organic Tea Estate Private Limited. Monteviot Tea Estate mostly produces Black Teas from First Flush, Second Flush, and Autumn Flush. Occasionally, they also have delectable organic Green Teas on offer. Most of the tea plants of this serene tea estate are of China cultivar.

A small tea estate with incredible trade and labour ethics, the Monteviot Tea Estate has received the Fair trade certification for investing into improved social and living conditions for the estate workers. It has also received certification from IMO and Demeter for being a biodynamic and organic tea estate.









## Marybong Tea Estate

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A renowned garden, synonymous with tea circles around the world, the Marybong Tea Estate is located in the Eastern valley of Darjeeling, also known as the 'Golden Valley'. Located in the Jorebunglow Sukhiapokhri region of the Darjeeling Sadar subdivision, the garden is 12 kms. away from Ghoom. A renowned garden with 140 years of rich history, the Marybong Tea estate has stood the test of time and continues to charm tea lovers around the world.

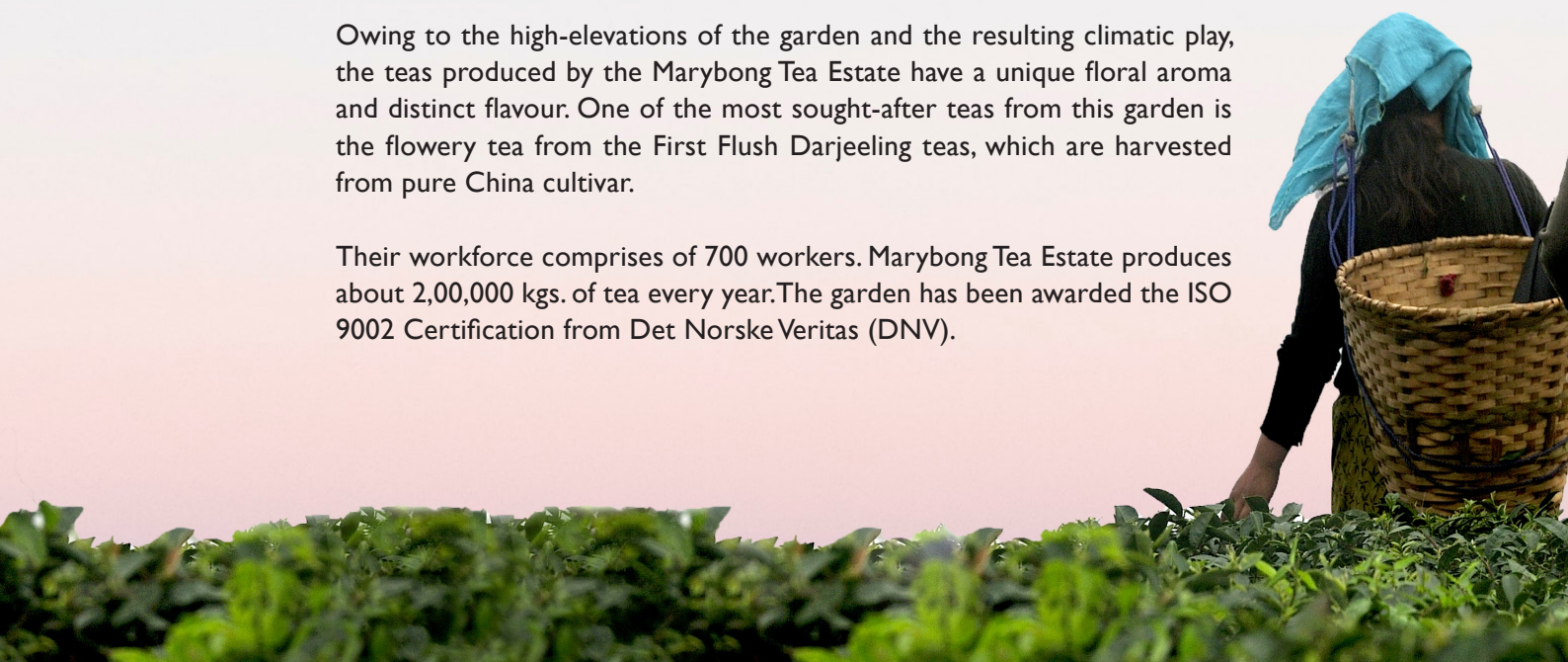
The Marybong Tea Estate was established in the year 1876 by Louis Mandelli. Over the years, the estate has changed ownership multiple times. From 1880 to 1955, it was owned and managed by the Evandon family. After that, the tea estate was taken over by the Duncan Brothers who took care of it for nearly half a century. The Chamong Group of the Lohias, the current owners of the garden, had taken possession of the tea estate in the year 2006 and with their continued passionate efforts, they breathed life back into this ailing tea garden.

In its initial days, Marybong Tea Estate was a part of the Lingia Tea Estate. Later on, it was added to Kyel Tea Estate, which was meant to be a wedding gift for Mary, who was the daughter of the owners of Lingia Tea Estate in that era. Consequently, after the merger, it was named Marybong Tea Estate. In the local Lepcha language of the region, 'Marybong' means 'Mary's place'.

With an elevation range of 883 metres to 1793 metres, the Marybong Tea estate has a total area of 400 hectares, out of which 285 hectares are under plantation. The garden boasts of some of the most extraordinary views of the mesmerizing Kanchenjunga range. This picturesque garden is surrounded by other famous tea estates. In the North, it has Liza Hill Tea Estate ; in the East it has the Rishihat Tea Estate ; and in the West it has the famous Lingia and Tumsong Tea Estates.

Owing to the high-elevations of the garden and the resulting climatic play, the teas produced by the Marybong Tea Estate have a unique floral aroma and distinct flavour. One of the most sought-after teas from this garden is the flowery tea from the First Flush Darjeeling teas, which are harvested from pure China cultivar.

Their workforce comprises of 700 workers. Marybong Tea Estate produces about 2,00,000 kgs. of tea every year. The garden has been awarded the ISO 9002 Certification from Det Norske Veritas (DNV).





## Phoobsering Tea Estate

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The Phoobsering Tea Estate is one of the oldest plantations of the Darjeeling district and yet little is known of the history of this beautiful garden. Located in the northern region of the Darjeeling district, the garden is surrounded by four renowned tea gardens on all four sides. The Phoobsering Tea Estate is located just 10 kms. away from Darjeeling town.

Interestingly, the name of the garden was derived from the name of a local resident by the name of 'Phurpu Tshering' who used to work as a supervisor at the tea estate. With an elevation that ranges between 914 metres to 1828 metres, the Phoobsering Tea estate covers an area of 240 hectares. This historic tea estate was established in the late 1850s by the Darjeeling Tea Company.

Currently, Phoobsering Tea Estate is owned by the Chamong Group, which is a family-operated group, and happens to own and manage many other tea estates in Darjeeling and Assam.

When it comes to the teas manufactured here, the Oolong teas produced by the Phoobsering Tea Estate are quite famous all over the world. The garden is also renowned for its specialty First Flush Teas that have a pale colored liquor with delicate floral notes. It is also known to produce some of the finest flavourful Muscatels from the summer harvest. The tea plants in this estate are quite old and mostly comprises of the China Cultivar. The annual production of the estate is almost 1,30,000 kgs.





## Longview Tea Estate

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Located along the picturesque rolling hills of Kurseong, in the southwest region of Darjeeling, is the beautiful Longview Tea Estate. Parts of this beautiful tea estate line both sides of the road, as one moves towards Pankhabari from Kurseong.

The history of Longview Tea Estate dates back to 1879 when it was founded as the Longview Tea Company. However, it was owned by various companies. Some sources state that it was initially established by a British tea planter C.G. Adams in the year 1873. Over the years, the tea estate has shuffled through different ownerships and consequently, different management. James Warren & Co. happen to be one of those owners at one point of its history. The Dags took ownership of the Longview tea estate in 1954.

A majority of the produce of the Longview Tea Estate is Black Tea. It rarely offers green teas or white teas. The estate is mostly known for producing signature First Flush Darjeeling Tea, Second Flush Darjeeling Tea and Autumnal Flush Darjeeling Teas.

The Longview Tea Estate has a total area of 1020 hectares, out of which 506 hectares are used for cultivation. This tea estate manufactures 7,00,000 kgs. of tea per year which makes up for 10% of the total production of Darjeeling tea. The workforce of this tea estate has about 1,244 permanent workers.







## Lingia Tea Estate

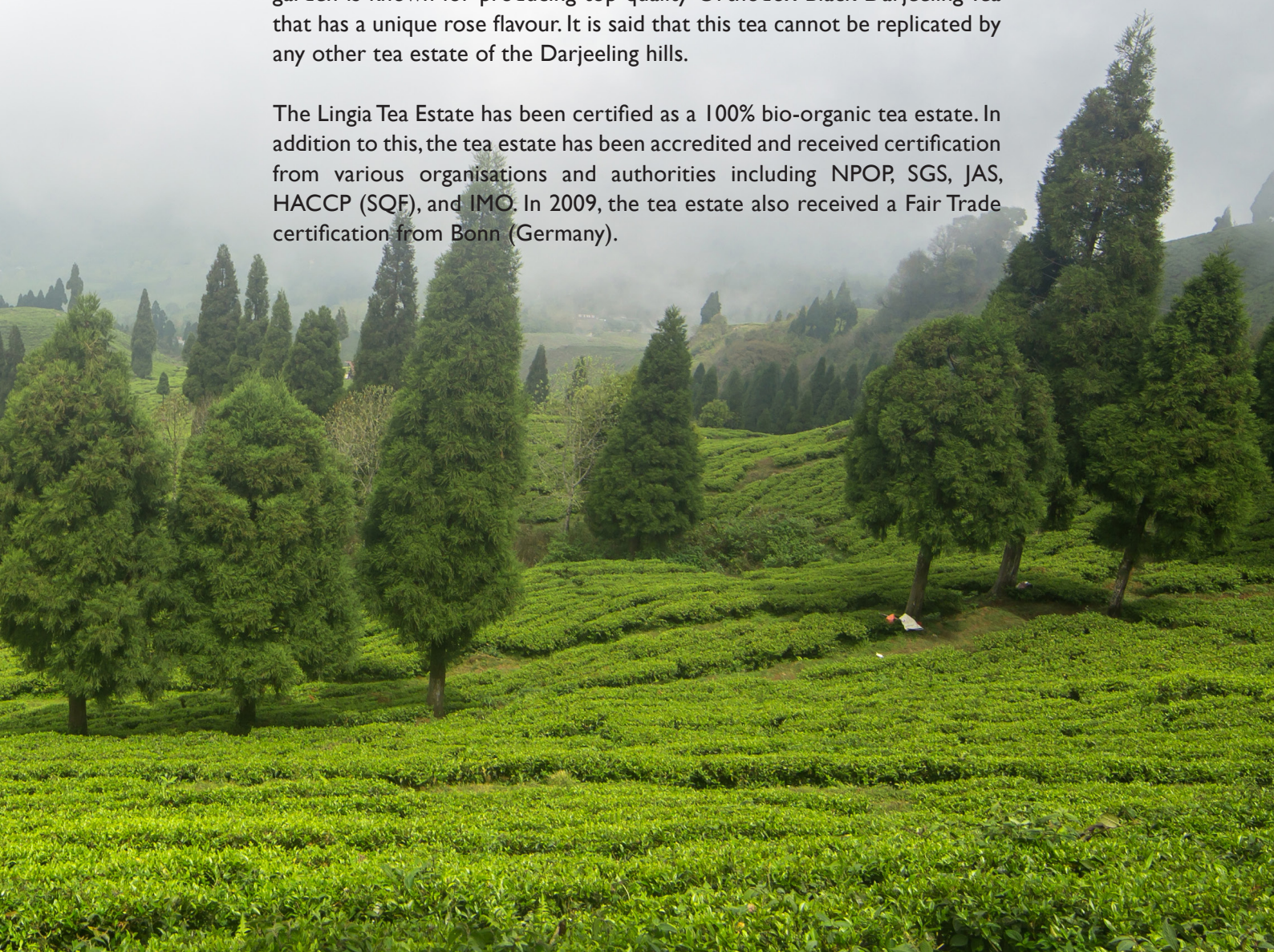
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Located near the Nepal border is the serene Lingia Tea Estate which is approximately 30kms. from the town. Established in the year 1867, the popular Lingia Tea estate was established by two missionaries from Germany, by the name of J.A.Wernicke and F.J.Wernicke, who planted tea saplings in a small patch of land in the Western part of Darjeeling. This was the first ever known instance of tea plantation in this area.

The word 'Lingia' comes from the Lepcha language which is the local dialect of the area. 'Lingia' came from the Lepcha word "Ling-ge" which translates to "the triangle of 8 peaks". This Lingia tea estate has an elevation that ranges from 853 metres to 1828 metres. The total area of the garden is 220 hectares, out of which 141 hectares is under cultivation. All the tea plants in this tea estate are China tea plants.

Lingia Tea Estate is owned by the Chamong group. They bought the tea estate from Williamson Magor Company Ltd in 2001. This historic tea garden is known for producing top-quality Orthodox Black Darjeeling Tea that has a unique rose flavour. It is said that this tea cannot be replicated by any other tea estate of the Darjeeling hills.

The Lingia Tea Estate has been certified as a 100% bio-organic tea estate. In addition to this, the tea estate has been accredited and received certification from various organisations and authorities including NPOP, SGS, JAS, HACCP (SQF), and IMO. In 2009, the tea estate also received a Fair Trade certification from Bonn (Germany).





## Kanchan View Tea Estate

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Formerly known as the Rungeet Tea Estate, the Kanchan View Tea Estate is located in the Northern side of Darjeeling, at a distance of 6kms. From the Darjeeling town. A 45-minute down hill walk from the Hill Cart Road of Darjeeling will bring you to this tranquil garden. The current name 'Kanchan View' was given to the garden in 2002, which means that the garden offers some stunning views of Mount Kanchenjunga.

Kanchan View Tea Estate has a high elevation that ranges from 1066 metres to 1371 metres. This serene tea estate uses about 223 acres of land for the cultivation of tea plants. The garden comprises mostly of pure China bushes that produce some of the finest First Flush and Second Flush Darjeeling Teas.

The Kanchan View Tea Estate is currently owned and maintained by the Agarwala Group Enterprise. The garden has employed 123 permanent workers and 42 temporary workers. Kanchan View Tea Estate is known for using organic methods while cultivating the tea plants.





## Tumsong Tea Estate

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One of the first planted gardens here in Darjeeling, the Tumsong Tea Estate is located on the Eastern side of the Darjeeling district, 23 kms. away from the main town of Darjeeling. Also lovingly known as 'The Garden of Happy Hearts', the Tumsong Tea Estate is flanked by the scenic Lingia Tea garden in the North ; the famous Mim Tea Estate in the West ; and the renowned Marybong Tea Estate in the East. Lush slopes and a misty breeze that graces this garden is sure to transport you to a tranquil haven.

Its history dates back to 1867 when the first tea plants of the estate were planted. Founded by J.A. Wernicke, in the beginning, the tea estate had 200 acres of land. Later on, another 186 hectares were added from a nearby estate. It is believed that the name 'Tumsong' was derived from the name of a Hindu Goddess, 'Tamsa Devi', the temple of whom stands near the estate.

Tumsong Tea Estate has an elevation range of 822 metres to 1676 metres and has an area of approximately 16 hectares, facing the beautiful Himalayan ranges. When it comes to the teas produced by Tumsong Tea Estate, its First Flush and Second Flush Darjeeling teas are much sought-after. The tea plants at this estate are 100% Chinari cultivar. These types of tea plants are known to further develop and become even better with time and age. The teas made from these plants have wonderful fruity and flowery flavours. One notable thing about Tumsong Tea Estate is that most of the teas produced by them are exported to other countries. Only some of it is available for the domestic tea market.

Currently, the tea estate is entirely owned and maintained by the Chamong Group. Also, it has been certified as 100% bio-organic by JAS and HACCP.









## Takdah Tea Estate

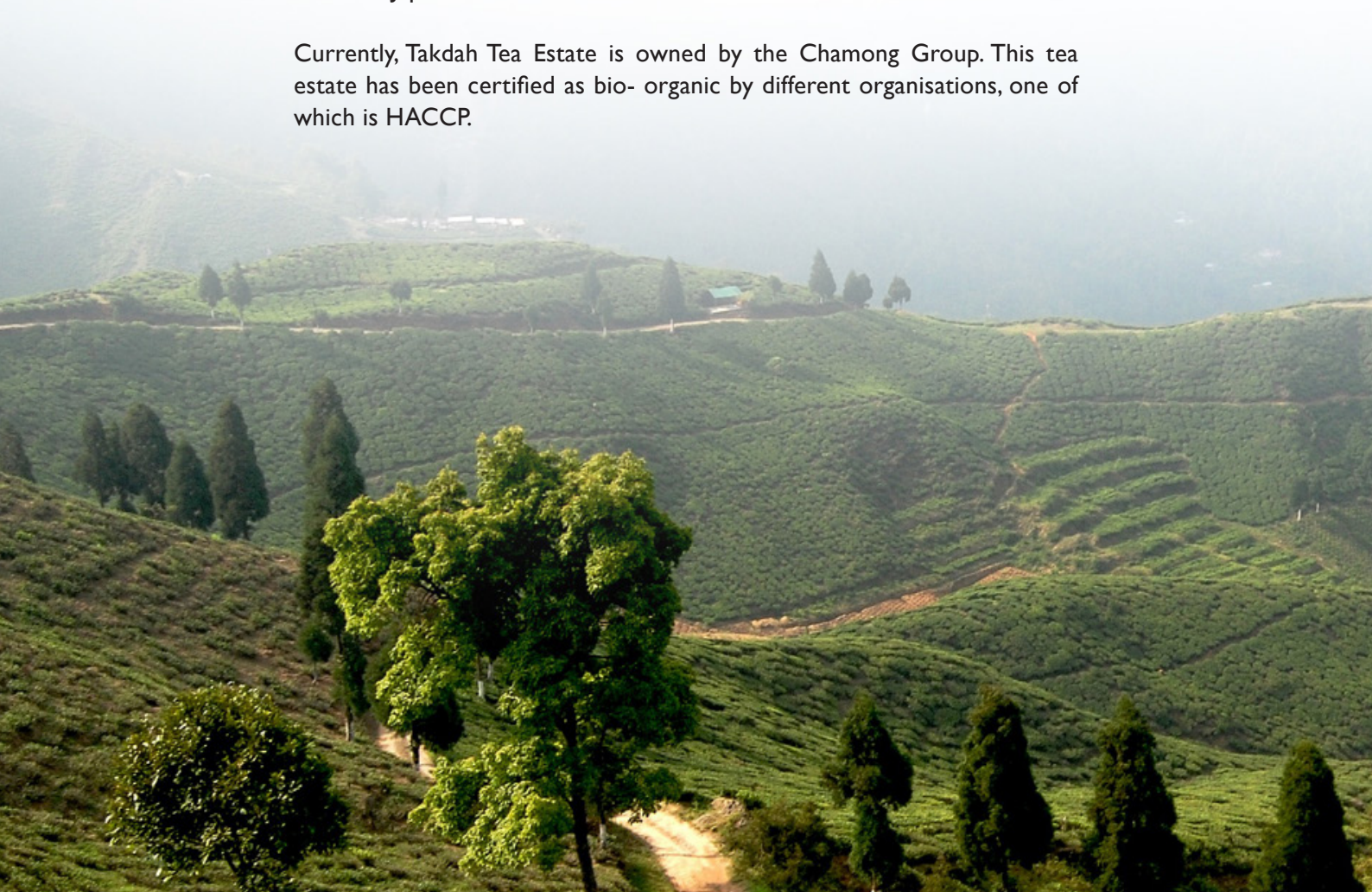
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The sight of misty mountains, aromatic blooming orchards, and scenic trails that are dotted with the uplifting aroma of coniferous trees - welcome to the quaint hamlet known as the beautiful Takdah Tea Estate. One of the first gardens to be established in Darjeeling, the Takdah Tea Estate is located in the Teesta Valley of the Kalimpong district. This picturesque garden is 27 kms. away from Darjeeling town.

This tea garden was established in the year 1864, one of the firsts in the Darjeeling hills. In the local Lepcha language, 'Takdah' means 'the Place of Tigers'. Others say that the original name was 'Tukdah' which in the Lepcha language means mist or fog, which would be a more apt name for the garden. The garden boasts of a quaint British bungalow which attracts a fair share of tourists who are looking for an idyllic place to stay and rejuvenate.

The Takdah Tea Estate has an elevation that ranges from 762 metres to 1981 metres. The garden has an area of 288 hectares for cultivation. Coming to the star offering of this garden, the First Flush and Second Flush Darjeeling Teas enjoy a unique reputation in tea circles. The Takdah Tea Estate is also well known for its Monsoon Flush. Also, most of its teas are exported to other countries. The main buyers are traders from the UK, USA, the Middle East, and Japan.

Currently, Takdah Tea Estate is owned by the Chamong Group. This tea estate has been certified as bio- organic by different organisations, one of which is HACCP.





## North Tukvar Tea Estate

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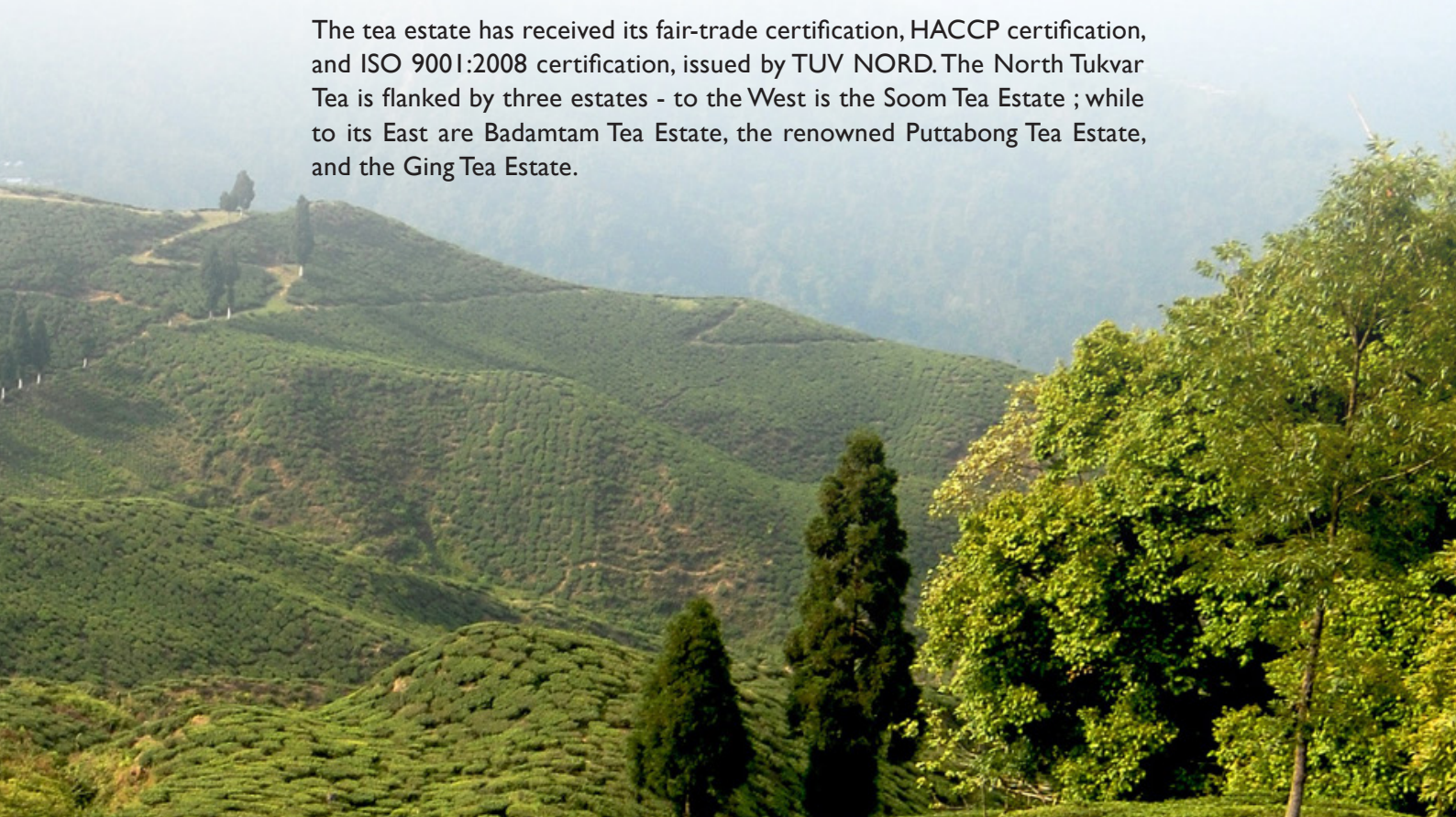
One of the oldest tea gardens, the picture-perfect North Tukvar tea estate is located in the Pulbazar region of the Darjeeling Sadar subdivision. Located 16 kms. away from the main Darjeeling town, the North Tukvar Tea Estate is deemed to be one of the very first commercial tea estates that was founded and managed by the British Government.

The tea estate was established on an experimental basis in the early 1850s. It was only from the year 1856 that it started producing teas commercially. Currently, the North Tukvar Tea Estate is owned by the Jay Shree Tea group under the esteemed Birla empire, who purchased the garden in 1995.

The elevation at the North Tukvar Tea Estate is relatively low and ranges from 457 metres to 853 metres. The cultivation area of the garden is approximately 195.48 hectares. An interesting fact about the North Tukvar Tea Estate is that they produce their own vermicompost, about 300 ton a year. They also have their own nursery with a success rate of more than 95%, in addition to a timber and bamboo forest.

The tea estate is known to produce some of the best Orthodox Darjeeling Teas in the country. The First Flush Darjeeling Tea from the North Tukvar Tea Estate enjoys a great reputation in tea circles. This signature tea is processed from top-quality clonal tea bushes, such as P312 and AV2. Around 25% of the garden is under high-quality clonal plantation. The tea estate produces about 100 ton of tea in a year.

The tea estate has received its fair-trade certification, HACCP certification, and ISO 9001:2008 certification, issued by TUV NORD. The North Tukvar Tea is flanked by three estates - to the West is the Soom Tea Estate ; while to its East are Badamtam Tea Estate, the renowned Puttabong Tea Estate, and the Ging Tea Estate.









## Rungmoonk Cedar Tea Estate

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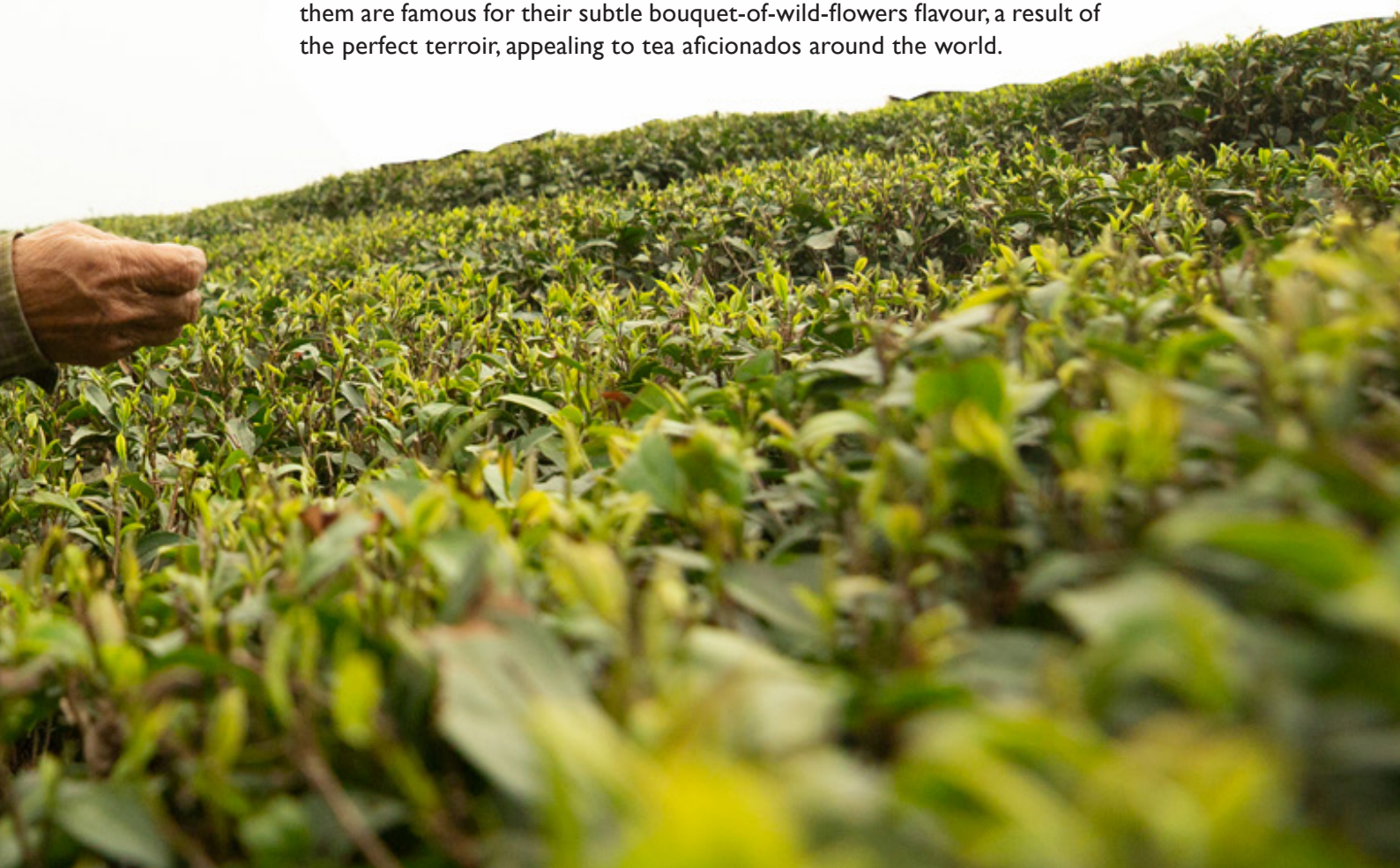
Two lush tea estates, both planted in the mid 1800s, were merged together in the early 1900s, to form one garden in with extraordinary beauty - the Rungmook Cedar Tea Estate is located in the Jorebunglow Sukhiapokhri region of the Darjeeling Sadar subdivision.

The Rungmoonk Cedar Tea Estate is located at an elevation of 1676 metres, the tea bushes here thrive in the plentiful sun and rolling mist. The vast gardens of the tea estate, with beautiful fog-engulfed rolling hills, with neat rows of tea plants are a sight to behold.

Another thing that makes the Rungmook Cedar tea estate even more beautiful is the forested area located within its premises. This forested area supports bio-diversity and hence, creates a healthy microcosm that supports a diverse flora and fauna.

Rungmoonk Cedar Tea Estate established one of the first hydroelectricity projects in the Darjeeling region. During the growing season, when there's a high demand of electricity from the tea estate, these hydroelectricity units supply the electricity to meet the requirements of the estate.

Currently, the Rungmoonk Cedar Tea Estate is owned and maintained by the Darjeeling Organic Tea Estates Private Ltd. The delicious teas produced by them are famous for their subtle bouquet-of-wild-flowers flavour, a result of the perfect terroir, appealing to tea aficionados around the world.



## Orange Valley Tea Estate

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Perched atop the blue mountain in the Pulbazar region of the Darjeeling Sadar subdivision, the Orange Tea Valley Tea Estate was formerly known as the Bloomsfield Tea Estate. It was renamed as the Orange Valley Tea Estate after it was acquired by Orange Valley Tea Limited.

This North-East facing garden with its gentle slopes receives plenty of rainfall throughout the year. The cool temperature, generous rainfall, and plentiful sunshine at regular intervals do their magic to bring out the unmatched flavour of the teas from this garden. The Orange Valley Tea Estate has an elevation that ranges from 1066 metres to 1828 metres, and is spread across an area of 347.26 hectares.

In present times, it is owned and maintained by the prestigious Bagaria Group. It is said that when it comes to the production of China and Muscatel Teas, this tea estate is unparalleled. They are known to produce the best of these variants in the whole of Darjeeling and are famous in the international tea market for the same.

The equipment used in the factory, transportation of the harvested fresh tea leaves, the manufacturing process, and the packaging process used by them - all of it is done in a way that ensures world-class quality. Although a cost-intensive process, the garden is known to still use the old machines that were there when the tea estate was established so that the authenticity of the final product is maintained year after year. An interesting fact about Orange Valley Tea Estate is that as many as 2% of the old tea plants in the estate are replaced by new ones every year.

The garden has an annual production of 1,10,000 kgs. The tea estate has received certifications from multiple organisations pertaining to HACCP, COR, JAS, Fair Trade, UTZ, ETP, and Rainforest Alliance. They have also been classified as a bio-organic tea estate.







## Pussimbing Tea Estate

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Another picturesque garden located along the slopes of the famous Tiger Hill. The Pussimbing Tea Estate is 8kms. away from Darjeeling town. Its history dates back to the early 1900s when the Lohia Group was venturing into the tea industry.

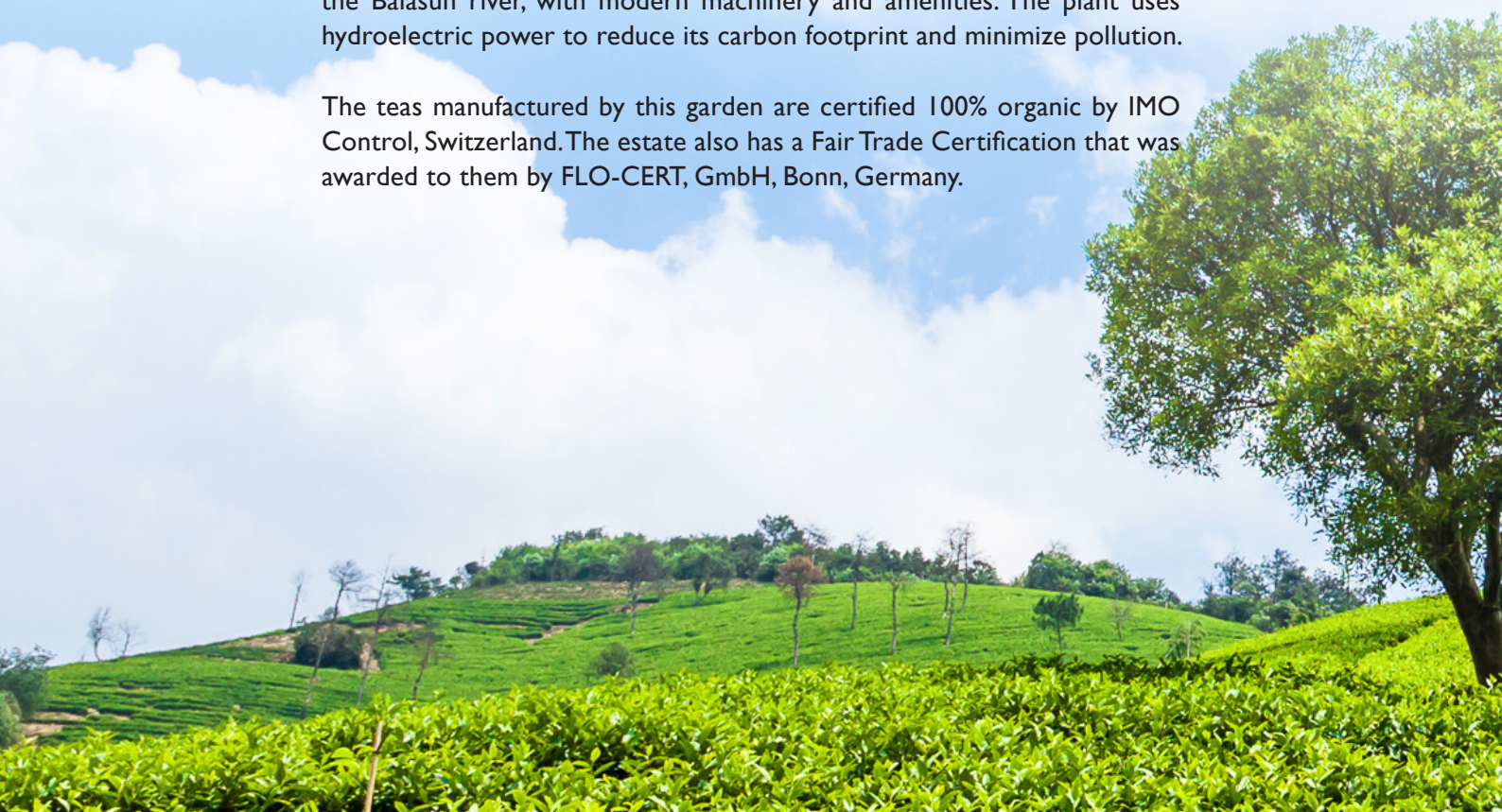
In the local Lepcha dialect, the name 'Pussimbing' means 'an area enclosed with plenty of streams', and is a reference to all the dreamy little streams meandering through the slopes of the tea estate. The Pussimbing Tea Estate has an elevation range of 1371 metres to 1828 metres, making it one of the high-elevation gardens under the Lohia group. The plantation covers an area of 200 hectares.

The Pussimbing Tea Estate is famous for their First Flush and Second Flush Darjeeling Teas. The delectable muscatel teas from this garden adorn that amazing musky aroma, making them a best-seller. Most of the tea plants in this tea estate are of the China variety. They also have a few plants of premium Assam Hybrid bushes.

The garden is surrounded by other popular tea estates. The nearest ones are the Kalej Valley Tea Estate and the Dooteriah Tea Estate located in its South side.

Committed towards sustainable eco-friendly practices and producing the best-quality teas for their clients, Pussimbing Tea Estate became a 100% bio-organic tea estate in 1994. The processing unit is located nearby, along the Balasun river, with modern machinery and amenities. The plant uses hydroelectric power to reduce its carbon footprint and minimize pollution.

The teas manufactured by this garden are certified 100% organic by IMO Control, Switzerland. The estate also has a Fair Trade Certification that was awarded to them by FLO-CERT, GmbH, Bonn, Germany.





## Sungma Tea Garden

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Facing the serene and misty Mirik valley is the Sungma Tea Garden. The Sungma tea garden is spread across two villages, comprising of the Sangmaru Tea Garden (Sungma) and the Turzum Tea Garden located in the Jorebunglow Sukhiapokhri region of the Darjeeling Sadar subdivision, 30 kms. from the Darjeeling town.

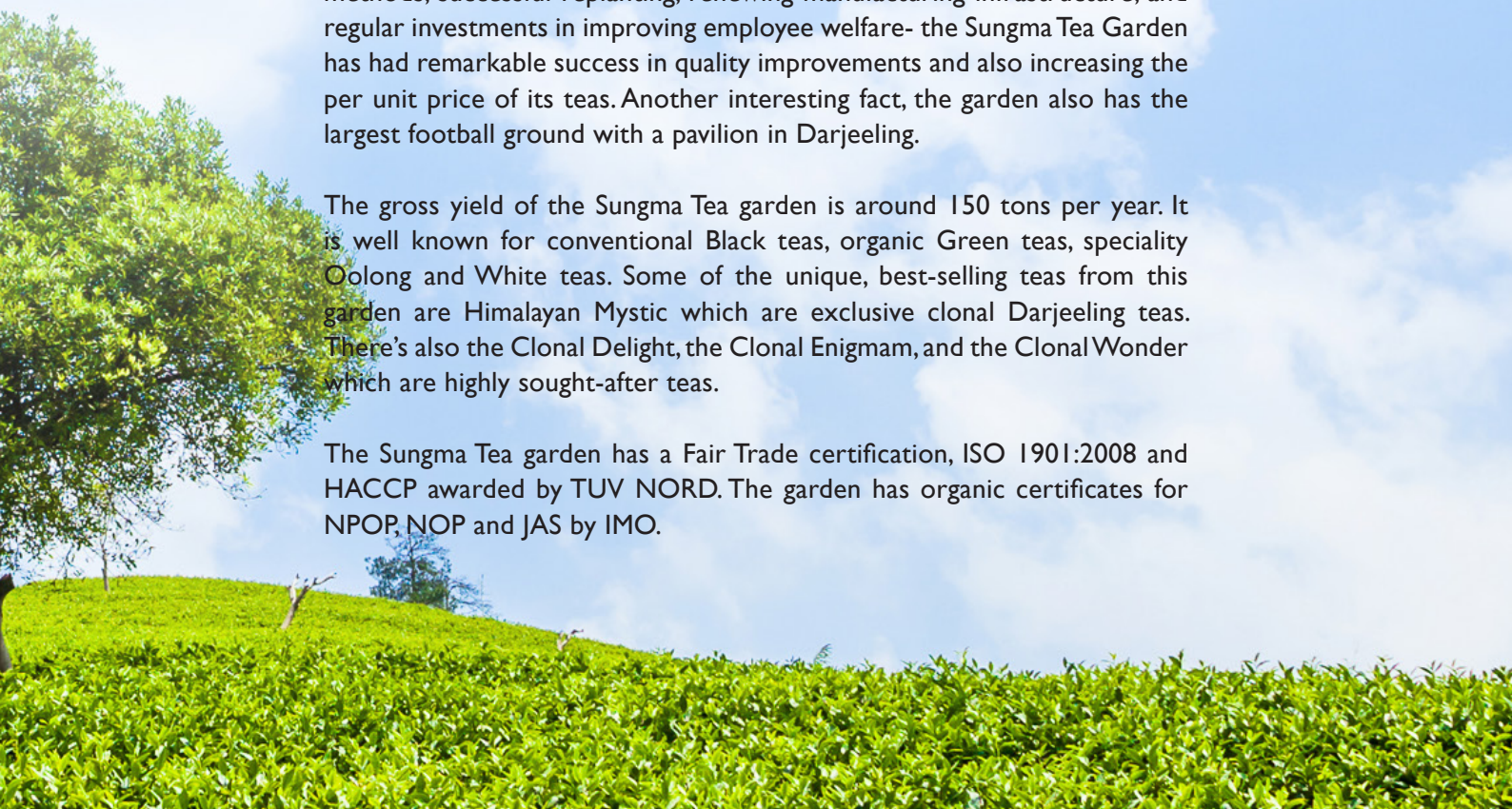
The Sungma garden was established by British planters between 1863 and 1868, whereas the Turzum garden was established in the 1860s. The two gardens were merged after a massive earthquake destroyed the Sungma tea factory in 1934. Following this, the manufacturing operations were shifted to the adjacent Turzum tea estate.

Located in the gorgeous Rung Bong valley, this garden boasts of producing some exclusive quality teas. This is owing to the cool climate and the ample annual rainfall that the garden receives between 2500-3000mm from July to September. The temperatures range from 3°C in winter to 28°C in the summer months. With an elevation that ranges between 1100 metres to 1700 metres, the cultivation area covers 281.95 hectares, out of which 25 hectares have been dedicated to irrigation. The Sungma tea garden also has a beautiful reserve forest consisting of more than 3000 mature pine trees. The garden is truly a sight to behold with the Cymbidium variety of orchids and other high-altitude flora in abundance here.

In the year 1933, the garden was taken over by the popular Jay Shree Tea Group under the prestigious Birla empire. With innovation in growing methods, successful replanting, renewing manufacturing infrastructure, and regular investments in improving employee welfare- the Sungma Tea Garden has had remarkable success in quality improvements and also increasing the per unit price of its teas. Another interesting fact, the garden also has the largest football ground with a pavilion in Darjeeling.

The gross yield of the Sungma Tea garden is around 150 tons per year. It is well known for conventional Black teas, organic Green teas, speciality Oolong and White teas. Some of the unique, best-selling teas from this garden are Himalayan Mystic which are exclusive clonal Darjeeling teas. There's also the Clonal Delight, the Clonal Enigmam, and the Clonal Wonder which are highly sought-after teas.

The Sungma Tea garden has a Fair Trade certification, ISO 1901:2008 and HACCP awarded by TUV NORD. The garden has organic certificates for NPOP, NOP and JAS by IMO.



## Singbulli Tea Estate

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With stunning vistas and the rejuvenating mist of the Mirik Valley, the beautiful Singbulli Tea Estate is spread across 9 rolling hills, covering an area of 22 kms. One can easily reach the Singbulli tea garden by road from the town of Siliguri as the garden is 50 kms. away from the Bagdogra airport in Siliguri.

Established in the year 1924 by British planters, this garden was finally taken over in 1993 by the Jay Shree Tea group, under the Birla empire. With four divisions, the Singbulli Division, the Manja Division, the Tingling Division, and the Murmah Division - the Singbulli Tea garden has a plantation area of 473.95 hectares and an irrigated area of 106.57 hectares. The Singbulli tea estate has an elevation that ranges from 370 metres and 1250 metres above mean sea level.

With an active interest in ecological upgradation and preserving the precious biodiversity of the region, the management has initiated dedicated programmes for soil conservation and environmental protection. Various species of grass, leguminous crops, and short height shrubs, and tall trees have been planted in vacant patches of the garden and along the perimeter as well.

The Singbulli Tea Estate has a gross yield of 245 tons per year and is world-renowned for its Clonal teas, the First Flush, Second Flush and Autumnal Flush Teas. Some of the exquisite offerings are the exclusive teas like the SFTGFOPI RUBY, the Clonal Flowery, and the Clonal Superb Tea.

The Singbulli tea estate has a Fair Trade certification, DUTCH HACCP by SGS, and is 100% organic certified by IMO Control.







## Soom Tea Garden

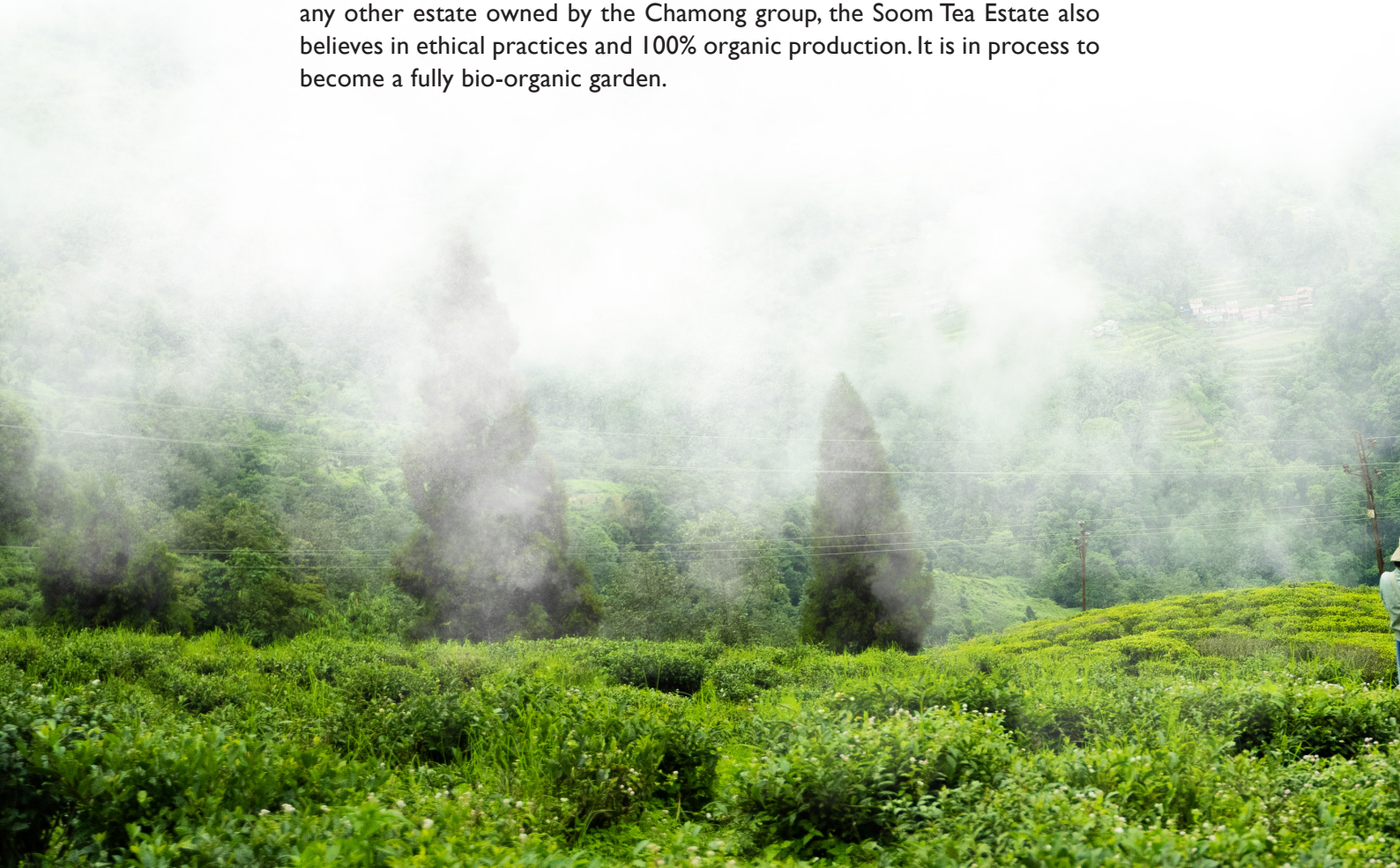
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One of the earliest gardens when the process of planting tea has just began in Darjeeling, the Soom Tea Garden is located on the North-western side of the Darjeeling district in the Pulbazar region. Located 18 kms. from the Darjeeling town, the Soom Tea Garden is flanked by the North Tukvar Tea estate in the North ; the Phoobsering Tea Estate in the East ; and the Singtom Tea Estate in the South. The beautiful river Rangeet flows through the Northern valley of the garden.

The word 'Soom' comes from the local Lepcha dialect, which translates to 'triangle', as the Soom Tea garden is triangular in shape. The garden has an elevation of 1615 metres above mean sea level and has a cultivation area of 237 hectares. This is a high-elevation tea garden and the bushes are pure Chinary tea bushes, which are more than 130 years old, which have a characteristic taste that only gets better with time.

The unique Darjeeling Teas from the Soom Tea Estate are mostly from the China cultivar and are exported to Germany and other European countries. The orthodox First Flush Darjeeling Teas and the Second Flush Darjeeling Teas from this garden are in high-demand in tea circles.

Currently, the renowned Chamong group owns and runs the Soom Tea Estate. It was taken over from Williamson Magor in the year 2001. Just like any other estate owned by the Chamong group, the Soom Tea Estate also believes in ethical practices and 100% organic production. It is in process to become a fully bio-organic garden.







## Singtam Tea Estate

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Also spelled as 'Singtom', the Singtam Tea Estate is the second oldest tea garden in Darjeeling. Established in the year 1852, this beautiful garden, with stunning views of the Kanchenjunga mountain range, is only 6 kms. away from the Darjeeling town.

Some sources say that the garden was established in the year 1854, but a fact that remains disputed is that the Singtom Tea Estate was started by Joachim Stoelke, a German priest. Fondly known as 'Father Stoelke', he is also the one who planted Darjeeling's first tea garden - the Steinthal Tea estate in 1952. Consequently, he came to be called 'Father Steinthal' by many.

The history of the region is fondly recalled by many who say that Father Steinthal discovered that the forest that covered the Singtam area was inhabited by lions. He used to frequently hike from Darjeeling to Singtam to spot these majestic creatures, and that is when he planted the first bushes at Singtam. Hence the locals named the area 'Singtam', a word of the Lepcha dialect, which translates into 'Abode of the Lions'.

It is said that Father Steinthal planted both the tea estates adjacent to each other because he loved the picturesque views of the Kanchenjunga range. His co-ownership of the Singtam Tea Estate and the Steinthal Tea Estate made them sister gardens. From 1854 onwards, the estate's ownership went through several hands, but finally has been with the Chirimar family under the Camellia Tea Group Limited. The Chirimar family is one of India's oldest tea planting families, who have lovingly nurtured this garden till date.

The Singtam tea estate spans across 263 hectares and has an average elevation ranging from 1371 metres to 1798 metres, and goes to 640 metres along the mountain slopes. The garden is known to produce some of the finest organic black, green, and white teas. The garden also boasts of having the world's oldest tea resort - the Singtom Tea Resort which was built in 1854, hosting thousands of tourists every year.



## Nagri Farm Tea Estate

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By now, you would be wondering as to what does a farm have to do with a tea estate, well then you aren't alone! Welcome to the Nagri Farm Tea Estate which was not a tea garden in its initial years of establishment, instead it was a Dairy farm which was started by a certain Mr. Greenhill in the year 1857. Later by 1883, this farm was converted into a tea estate, but the 'farm' tagged along in its name. The locals call this estate 'Makurjung'.

A 130-year old Tea estate, the Nagri Farm Tea garden is located South-West of Darjeeling Town in the scenic Rong Bong valley. Sprawling across a total area of 571.37 hectares, out of which 256 hectares is under cultivation. The Nagri Farm Tea Estate has gentle slopes with an elevation that ranges between 760 metres to 1950 metres.

The garden produces exquisite First Flush and Second Flush Darjeeling Teas from the China cultivar. These wholesome teas have a soothing flowery flavour that is unique to this garden.

Currently owned by the Chamong group, the first thing that they did was to make the Nagri Farm Tea estate 100% bio-organic. It received its bio-organic certification in 2004. The garden also got its fair-trade certification in 2009. The estate was also fortified with modern machinery to improve production, as a result of which the Nagri Farm Tea Estate produces 200 million tonnes of tea every year and has an incredible standing with foreign buyers.





## Phuguri Tea Estate

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Overlooking the misty Mirik valley, the scenic and serene Phuguri Tea Estate is located 7kms. from Mirik and is 62 kms. away from Darjeeling town. Flanked by the Thurbo Tea Estate in the North and the Sourenee Tea Estate in the East, the Phuguri Tea Estate is one of the largest tea producing regions in Darjeeling hills.

In the year 1841, when Dr. Campbell, a civil surgeon living in Darjeeling brought China seeds from Kumaon and planted them in his garden. Following his success, the government wanted to set up commercial tea gardens. One of the major hurdles that Dr. Campbell faced was that he needed to bring in settlers in these desolate areas. So he tasked a Nepali Nobleman, Dakman Rai, who brought a thousand immigrants from Nepal to these lands. To appreciate his good work, Dakman Rai was given the grant of free-hold of three estates, the Sourenee Tea Estate, the Samripani Tea Estate, and the Phuguri Tea Estate. Hence Phuguri Tea garden was set up in the year 1880.


The Phuguri Tea Estate has an elevation that ranges from 1100 metres to 1800 metres above mean sea level and the plantation area sprawls across 432.87 hectares. The high altitude coupled with a largest tea processing facility, the Phuguri Tea Estate produces exceptional teas from both Chinari and Clonal cultivars.

The garden produces one of the finest Clonal teas in Darjeeling district, known as 'Tippy Clonal'. In the month of April, the bushes flush with juicy young leaves and the magic unfolds with the nimble fingers of the women who pluck the quintessential "two leaves and a bud" with great care and precision. Such is the invigorating aroma of this Tippy Darjeeling tea, that it lingers on long after a sip. Now, the Tippy Clonal Tea is renowned around the globe. The Phuguri Tea Estate has an annual production of 1,50,000 kgs.

The Phuguri Tea Estate is owned by the Bagaria group. All Darjeeling teas produced by this garden are 100% bio-organic. The garden has a certification from HACCP. It also has certifications from Rainforest Alliance, UTZ, ETP, and Naturland Fair Trade certification from Germany.







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Darjeeling Teas are undisputedly the crown jewel of the empire of teas. From the delicate floral spring teas to the fruity serenade of summers teas; from the elusive muscatel experience to the elegant autumn teas- each season in Darjeeling brings forth a unique and prized gift of Nature.

In our second curated edition of the ebook, VAHDAM® India's tea experts lovingly showcase 25 more such tea estates of Darjeeling, transporting you to the ethereal, misty gardens that not only bring you this elixir of life, but also hold yesterday's fond tales. Lucidly written and lovingly conceptualised, let this book be your ticket to a splendid, memorable Darjeeling affair.

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