

Indian and Sri Lankan Tea: The Complete Map

From the Teas.co.uk wiki

Indian and Sri Lankan tea, in summary: Indian and Sri Lankan tea is several distinct characters, not one: malty Assam, delicate Darjeeling, bright Nilgiri, brisk Ceylon. Choose by character.

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for Indian and Sri Lankan Tea: The Complete Map. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/indian-and-sri-lankan-tea/>*

Most of what Britain actually drinks traces back to two countries: India and Sri Lanka. Three names do most of the work, Assam, Darjeeling and Ceylon, and once you can taste the difference between them you can read any tea packet and predict the cup. This hub connects every guide.

Last reviewed by the teas.co.uk team in May 2026.

The three pillars

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The three pillars, Indian and Sri Lankan Tea: The Complete Map. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/indian-and-sri-lankan-tea/>*

Start with the side by side: [Darjeeling vs Assam vs Ceylon](#), the fastest way to understand the whole region. Then the individual guides: [Assam](#) (the strong, malty, milk-friendly powerhouse), [Darjeeling](#) (the light, floral, milkless one), and [Ceylon](#) (the bright, versatile all-rounder).

Going deep on Darjeeling

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Going deep on Darjeeling, Indian and Sri Lankan Tea: The Complete Map. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/indian-and-sri-lankan-tea/>*

Darjeeling rewards depth because it is really four teas, not one. Read [the four flushes of Darjeeling](#) to understand why the season on the label matters as much as the estate, and [Darjeeling muscatel explained](#) for the single most misunderstood word in tea, and the strange insect story behind it.

The wider picture

To see where these sit among the world's black teas, including the Chinese and African ones that fill most teabags, read [black tea by origin](#) and the foundational [black tea guide](#). For the everyday blends built on Assam and Ceylon, see [English vs Irish breakfast](#).

Indian and Sri Lankan tea, at a glance

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| Region | Character |
|--------------------|--|
| Assam (India) | Strong, malty, brisk; the classic milk-and-builder's base |
| Darjeeling (India) | Light, floral, "muscatel"; the delicate, often-no-milk one |
| Nilgiri (India) | Bright, fragrant, smooth; good hot and iced |
| Ceylon (Sri Lanka) | Bright, brisk, citrus-edged; versatile single-origin |

The regions in a little more depth

Source: [Teas.co.uk](#). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The regions in a little more depth, Indian and Sri Lankan Tea: The Complete Map. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/indian-and-sri-lankan-tea/>*

Each region rewards going deeper because each has real internal variety that a single country, or even a single region name, hides. Darjeeling is the clearest case: its flushes differ enough to be almost separate teas, first flush the lightest and most floral, second flush rounder with the prized muscatel note, autumnal flush deeper still, which is why the season on the label matters as much as the estate. Assam has its own grades and a distinct second-flush season; Ceylon is split by elevation into low, medium and high grown, each brighter and more delicate as you climb; Nilgiri has its bright, fragrant frost-tea character. The upshot is the same across all of them: the regional label tells you the broad character, but the flush, grade or elevation tells you the actual cup, which is exactly why each has its own deep guide rather than a single line here.

How to use this hub

Source: [Teas.co.uk](#). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for How to use this hub, Indian and Sri Lankan Tea: The Complete Map. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/indian-and-sri-lankan-tea/>*

Want one strong daily cuppa with milk: Assam, or a breakfast blend. Want range and brightness, iced included: Ceylon. Want to slow down and taste something nuanced without milk: Darjeeling, bought by flush. All four brew as robust blacks: a full rolling boil and a three-to-four-minute steep, milk natural with Assam and Ceylon and optional with a fine Darjeeling, which many drink clean. The links above take you from this overview to the full detail on each; the [comparison](#) is the best single starting point.

Reference noted

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- [EFSA Scientific Opinion on the Safety of Caffeine \(2015\)](#)

FROM THE CURATOR teas · Per-cup price is the only price that matters. Loose leaf usually wins; supermarket bags sometimes do too.

Tea reading

- [Assam tea](#)
- [Darjeeling tea](#)
- [Ceylon tea](#)
- [Black tea](#)

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