

The Tea Mountains of Yunnan



Map of Yunnan (Source: www.pratyeka.org)

Yunnan is located in southwest China and is renowned for its specialty: Pu-erh tea. The province is characterized by its special topography. To the north of Yunnan borders on the Tibetan plateau and rises up to a elevation of 6740m. In the south, however, it descends to only 76.4m above sea level into the infamous Golden Triangle.

The different topography affects especially the climate which can be, depending on the location, between a tropical monsoon climate and a dry mountain air. These different growing conditions have the consequence that the character of the teas vary extremely depending on the growing area.

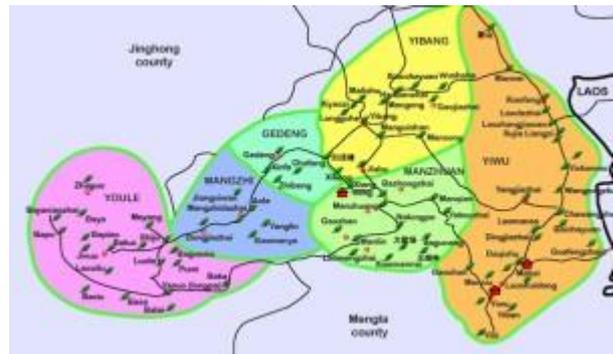
The particular topography is also reflected in a very high biodiversity. Due to natural barriers many endemic species can be found in Yunnan. Among other things, its own permanent tea varietal: *Camellia sinensis* var *thaliensis* which was named after local Dai (Thai) minority.



Wuliangshan while cherries are blooming. (Source: www.en.gmw.cn)

The *Six Famous Tea Mountains*

Although tea and particularly pu-erh tea is grown and produced throughout whole Yunnan, it's primarily the tea mountains that made the province famous. Well known are the old Six Famous Tea Mountains which are located in Xishuangbanna prefecture of southern Yunnan. These are the old Six Famous Mountains:



Six Famous Tea Mountains (www.teadb.org)

- Gedeng Shan
- Mangzhi Shan
- Mansa Shan
- Manzhuan Shan
- Yibang Shan
- Youle Shan

The Six Famous Tea Mountains were redefined over the years again and again. Some areas or mountains were added but often only the name but not the area itself. Currently, the following areas are considered as the Six Famous Tea Mountains:

- Bulang Shan
- Jingmai Shan
- Menghai Shan
- Nannuo Shan
- Yiwu Shan
- Youle Shan

Beside these Six Famous Mountains there are also other famous areas. Lao Bangzhan for example is currently totally hip and maybe one day it will be considered as one of the Six Famous Tea Mountains.

Tea Plantations Of Xishuangbanna

In the autonomous prefecture Xishuangbanna (in Thai Sipsongpanna, สิบสองปันนา) are the majority and also the most famous and tea plantations located. Some are considered as the Six Famous Tea Mountains and maybe already mentioned above. But, for completeness, they are listed here again:

- Bada Shan
- Bulang Shan
- Hekai Shan
- Lao Banzhang
- Menghai Shan
- Mengson Shan
- Yiwu Shan
- Youle Shan



Xishuangbanna (www.travelchinaguide.com)

Tea Plantations Of Puer

The city Puer (formerly Simao) including the surrounding villages form the commercial center of Pu-erh trade. This is particularly because of its central location within the tea plantations and because of the nearby Mekong River as waterway. But the whole Puer prefecture also contain some famous tea estates and was last but not least also the origin of the name of Pu-erh tea. The tea plantations in Puer prefecture include:

- Bangwei Shan
- Jiangcheng
- Jingdong
- Jinggu
- Jingmai Shan
- Kunlu Shan
- Wuliang Shan
- Zhenyuan



Map of Pu'er

Tea Plantations Of Lincang

In Lincang are some of the worldwide oldest tea trees located. The presumably oldest tea tree is in Fengqing and estimated over 3200 years old. This is certainly attributable to the remoteness of the area. In densely populated areas, however, fire is often used for forest clearance by various ethnic groups to get agricultural land for rice cultivation.

The famous tea plantations in Lincang are:

- Bangwei
- Daxue Shan
- Fengqing
- Menggu
- Yongde



Map of Lincang (Source: teadb.org)

This is only an overview of the many tea mountains of Yunnan. On the special features of each region will be discussed in later blog posts.