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Tea in Peru?

Five reasons to ditch Mother England for afternoon tea in the Andes

September 18, 2015 | 07:01 PM By [Pam Grout](#), Special Contributor

Pam Grout

A traditional Peruvian tea service.

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RECIPE OF THE DAY

The gilded teapots, white-gloved waiters, scones and clotted cream are nice – if you like that kind of thing.

But here's why I prefer the **oh-so British tradition of afternoon tea** in **Peru's** Sacred Valley.

The scenery's a whole lot prettier.

London has its perks. I go there every chance I get. But at **Inkaterra Hacienda Urubamba** in Peru's Sacred Valley, you get afternoon tea, the mini-sandwiches, the cute little cakes. AND you get to look out floor-to-ceiling windows at the rugged beauty of the Andes. Big Ben kinda pales in comparison.

It's local.

I'm a card-carrying locavore which means I prefer locally-grown and ascribe to the definition coined by Jessica Prentice in 2005. The best tasting, most nutritious food (or tea) comes from within 100 miles. At Inkaterra Hacienda Urubamba, the tea leaves come from about 100 yards away. In fact, you can see the bushes if you look out the



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window. The tea leaves are grown onsite in the hotel's ecological gardens.

Distance between London and Darjeeling? 6,219 miles.

Like the other four properties in the Inkaterra lineup, this newest player on their gameboard is dedicated to local sourcing. The produce it doesn't grow itself comes from the Andean Farm project, community-supported agriculture grown by local Quechuas.

Inkaterra just opened this gorgeous boutique hotel (along with a school and on-site gardens) so visitors could rest for awhile, catch up with the altitude before heading on to Machu Picchu.

It's included in the price.

Far be it from me to dis afternoon tea at London's Fortnum and Mason. I enjoyed myself there immensely last October. But by the time all was said and done, the price tag for "tea for two" at this famous London tea room was well over \$100.

At Inkaterra Hacienda Urubamba, it's served every afternoon for free. On beautiful china. With all the accouterments.

Also included in the price for any of the 36 rooms is night-time hikes to view the constellations that guided the Incas, an ooh-la-la breakfast buffet and free Pisco Sours at check-in.

Etiquette not required.

When you're hanging out in the Andes, hiking along Incan trails, visiting local craft villages and tromping around medicinal gardens, all excursions offer by the boutique hotel, you don't really want to rush back and dress for tea. You also don't want to worry whether or not the teapot spout faces the hostess or if you happen to clink your cup while stirring, all no-no's in the presence of the queen. At this afternoon tea, the one and only rule has two words: Relax! Enjoy!

Drinking tea makes the world a better place.

The thing about Inkaterra is that all of its five properties are dedicated to saving the world. All room stays are carbon neutral and every business decision is based on the best strategy to save the culture and ecosystem that draws people to Peru in the first place.

I love the idea of my vacation dollars going to preserve rainforest (Inkaterra has saved 42,000 acres so far), fund scientific expeditions and build schools for the local Quechuas people. Inkaterra regularly sponsors scientific inventories and expeditions and has catalogued and identified 21 new species including orchids, amphibians and butterflies.

Inkaterra's high-count sheets, Peruvian antiques, custom-made crafts and quinoa pancakes are almost beside the point.

So, yes, gather all the hotel points you want, but, as for me, I want to clink my tea cup at a place that betters the planet.

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