



Orange County

# Westways

MARCH/APRIL 2011

THE MAGAZINE FOR AUTO CLUB MEMBERS

# Smoke on the Water

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park heats up the Islands

Southland tea houses back in vogue

Custom car legend  
**Dean Jeffries**

BonAppétit: **Cheap eats**

DayTrip: **Santa Monica**



# It's Tea Time

Fans of the leaf can indulge their tastebuds at these local tea lounges

BY BETH FHANER

Next to water, tea is the most-consumed beverage in the world, and it's often lauded for its extensive health benefits and natural soothing properties. So it's no surprise that tea is catching on in a big way in Southern California. There are plenty of tea lounges around the Southland now, and they provide a good alternative to coffeehouses. Here are a few of our favorites.



## CULVER CITY Royal/T

8910 Washington Boulevard  
(310) 559-6300; royal-t.org

With waitresses dressed in French maid costumes, Japanese pop art on the walls, and a distinct SoCal vibe, Royal/T is definitely not your grandmother's teahouse. Prepare for sensory overload at this fantastical, kid-friendly place that combines a café, art space, and retail shop. Enjoy lunch or afternoon tea while viewing the current art exhibit. Afterward, shop the assortment of interesting home decor at the gift store. Royal/T also hosts private events, fashion shows, and film screenings.

**TEA TOTALERS:** Artists, hipsters, tea ritualists, families

**AMBIENCE:** Playful, quirky, contemporary industrial space influenced by Japanese subculture

**SPECIAL BREWS:** Royal Matcha Milk Tea; Darling Darjeeling

**SWEET TREATS:** Japanese-inspired dishes, sandwiches, salads, cupcakes, muffins, croissants, and cheesecake

## PASADENA

### Chado Tea Room

79 N. Raymond Avenue  
(626) 431-2832; chadotea.com

Seeking a more traditional approach to tea? Head to Chado Tea Room in Old Town Pasadena. It offers more than 300 tea varieties, delicious food, a full afternoon-tea service, and an extensive gift store, and it's a favorite spot for shoppers taking a break and women celebrating birthdays or baby showers. Efficient servers really know their tea, too. Chado has other locations in Los Angeles, Hollywood, and the Japanese American National Museum in Little Tokyo.

**TEA TOTALERS:** Mostly women, tea ritualists, couples

**AMBIENCE:** Quiet, elegant tea room with an English look and white tablecloths

**SPECIAL BREWS:** Mauritius (black tea); St. Marc (flavored tea); or Gyokuro (green tea)

**SWEET TREATS:** Delicate sandwiches, salads, soups, scones, cakes, and other pastries



## SAN DIEGO

# Halcyon Tea

3009 Beech Street  
(619) 450-4224; halcyontea.com

Located in San Diego's historic South Park neighborhood, Halcyon Tea features 60 varieties of high-quality tea, tea accessories, in-store events, and tastings. The shop focuses on sustainability and fair trade and organic teas, so the staff will gladly offer information on a tea's origin and how it is produced, as well as suggestions on how to select a tea for time of day or season. Regular events include 5:00 Friday, which brings tea lovers together for free tastings, and Tea & Chocolate evenings. Cofounder James Bowman also writes a fantastic blog (blog.halcyontea.com).

**TEA TOTALERS:** Locals, tea ritualists, visitors to San Diego

**AMBIENCE:** A cozy, inviting place that incorporates Japanese design elements into its California modernism aesthetic

**SPECIAL BREWS:** Masala Chai for the morning;  
Restful Calm for the evening

**SWEET TREATS:** Nothing to nosh on here—just tea



## FULLERTON

# Tranquil Tea Lounge

106 W. Wilshire Avenue  
(714) 869-3577; tranquiltealounge.com

Siblings Michelle Phelps and Jonathan Munsayac's hip, urban tea lounge in downtown Fullerton features more than 95 varieties of loose-leaf tea, plus a friendly waitstaff, scrumptious food, and a retail shop. In addition to hosting special events, Tranquil serves as a showcase for local artists (with artwork rotating monthly and available for purchase). For something different, try one of the tea smoothies or tea floats. Take-out is available, too.

**TEA TOTALERS:** Businesspeople who work nearby, students, couples

**AMBIENCE:** Streamlined, contemporary decor in gray and soothing green tones with an illuminated bar, several tables, and a lounge area with couches, plus an event room that seats 12

**SPECIAL BREWS:** Road to Hana (black tea), Geisha's Kiss (green tea)

**SWEET TREATS:** Sandwiches, salads, scones, cakes, French macarons, mini cream puffs, mochi





#### SAN CLEMENTE

### Lavender Lounge Tea Company

104 N. El Camino Real, Suite B  
(949) 218-3103  
lavenderlounge.com

**L**avender Lounge Tea Company's mission is "to provide a unique place that blends the tradition of tea with Southern California cool." With an ultrarelaxing environment, free Wi-Fi, knowledgeable staff, and a "Wall of Tea" that offers tea lovers a choice of more than 100 loose-leaf teas, it has greatly succeeded. There are daily tea tastings, as well as free refills of three featured teas each day.

**TEA TOTALERS:** A mix of locals, business folks, and travelers from nearby resort hotels

**AMBIENCE:** A small modern lounge decorated in shades of lavender, with a seating area that features a handful of tables, located on the second floor. Outdoor patio seating is also available.

**SPECIAL BREWS:** The Beach Blendz line of teas named after famous surf breaks, including Rincon's Breeze and Witches Rock

**SWEET TREATS:** Organic vegan cupcakes, cookies, scones, and lemon bars **W**

*Beth Phaner is a freelance writer based in Huntington Beach.*

## More Hot Spots

From San Diego County to Santa Barbara, here are some other tea places worth a visit.

#### LA JOLLA

##### Infusions of Tea

8750 Genesee Avenue, Suite 258  
(858) 450-6500; infusionsoftea.com

With an emphasis on promoting healthful lifestyles and celebrating the ritual of tea, this store features premium tea, tea accessories, and weekend tea tastings.

#### ORANGE

##### Paris in a Cup Tea Salon & Café

119 S. Glassell Street  
(714) 538-9411; parisinacupteasalon.com

Located in historic Old Towne Orange, this charming French-themed tea room was inspired by old movies, especially Parisian films of the 1940s and '50s.

#### BEVERLY HILLS

##### American Tea Room

401 N. Canon Drive  
(310) 271-7922; americantearoom.com

This beautiful high-end tea room and retail space offers quality tea and teaware and also frequently hosts tea events, including tastings and pairings.

#### SANTA BARBARA

##### Vices & Spices From Around the World

3558 State Street  
(805) 687-7196; vicesnspices.com

Known as the oldest coffee shop in town, this cozy family-owned store also boasts the best tea selection in the area, offering more than 50 kinds of bulk tea.



LEFT TO RIGHT: PHIL WARR/STYLING; VANESSA STUMP