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Date _____



The Tea Horse Road

See, after water,

Tea is the most widely consumed drink in the world.

Let's take a look and see.

The history of tea

Dates way back to ancient China—

First used for purposes medicinally.

And tea wasn't a popular drink

Until 618 CE—

The beginning of the Tang dynasty.

And as tea culture gained popularity,

China opened trade routes that would carry tea

And other goods around the world.

One important route was the Tea Horse Road.

It connected China and Tibet.

Compared to southern China's warm and humid climate

That was perfect for tea cultivation,

Tibet's high altitude and rocky terrain

Were not ideal for growing tea.

Still, tea became a staple.

Tibetans relied on trade to import

Tea leaves whenever they were able.

In exchange for tea,

Tibetans traded horses that the Chinese dynasty

Needed to expand their army.

The Tea Horse Road was divided

Into two major routes:

One from Sichuan, the other from Yunnan.

Both routes led to Lhasa in Tibet.
And the tea was typically pressed into bricks,
Making them easier to stack.
Mules and people and yaks
Would carry anywhere between 130 and 200
Pounds of tea on their backs.
The journey took about six months or more.
And as caravans traveled, they endured
Harsh climates and rugged regions.
They crossed large rivers and climbed over mountains.
Many died here on this journey.
Some settled on the trail and spent their time serving
Other travelers along the route.
And from Lhasa, porters dispersed tea throughout the Himalayan plateau.
China's need for horses declined, though.
But other goods like salt, medicinal products,
And any commodity that had value were traded instead.
Trading along the Tea Horse Road went on until the 1950s.
Today, most of the original trade route is gone,
But its impact on tea culture and history
Still remains on.