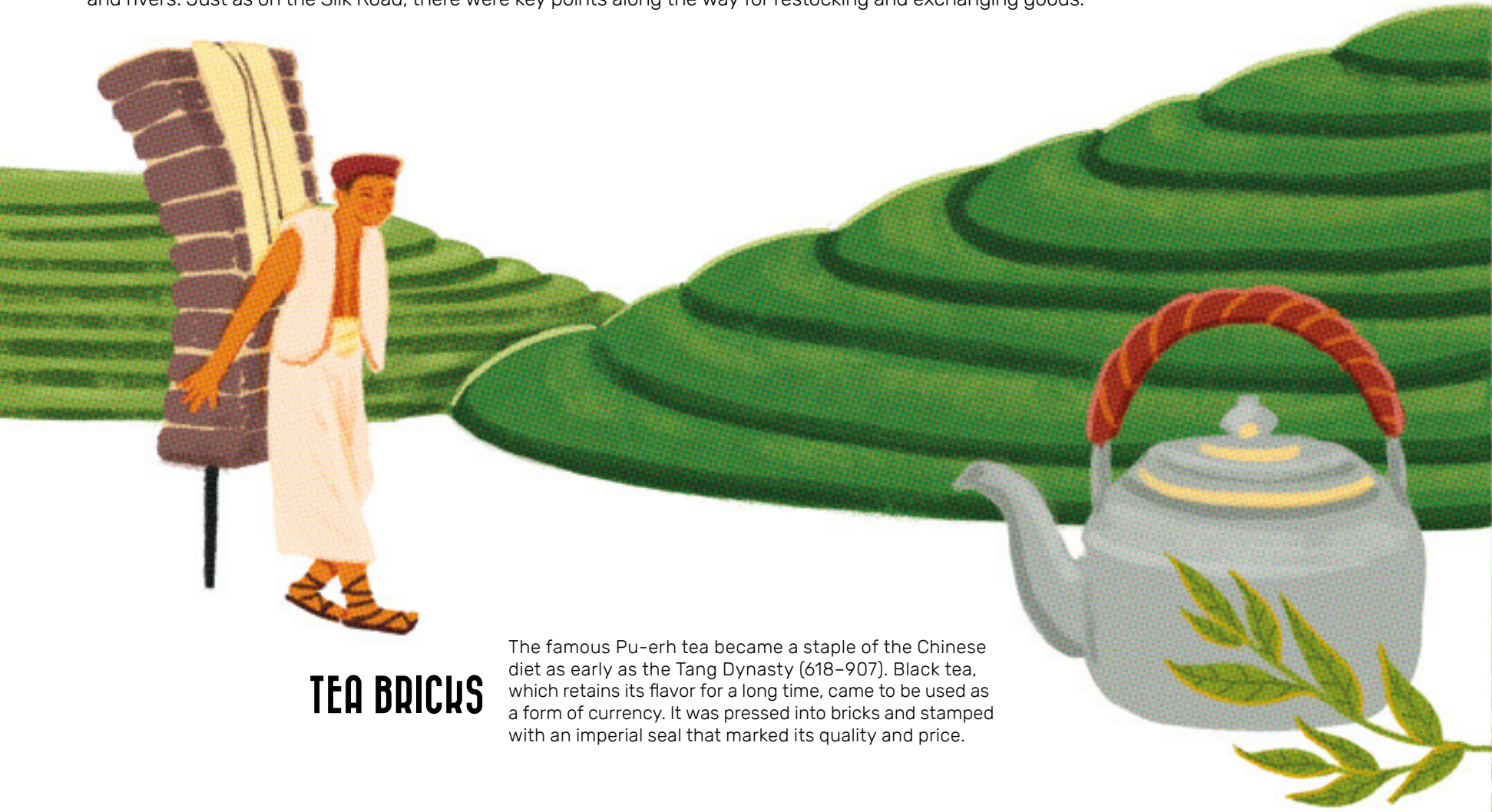


# THE TEA HORSE ROAD

The Tea Horse Road was a network of roads through Tibet, China, and India. Most traders set off with their mules loaded up with sacks of tea from Pu-erh, in southern Yunnan province, where the tea was grown, and then returned from Tibet with horses.

The journey was perilous, spanning about 1,400 miles (2,300 kilometers) across rugged mountains, cliffs, and rivers. Just as on the Silk Road, there were key points along the way for restocking and exchanging goods.

- ✦ **TYPE OF ROUTE** Commercial
- ✦ **MODE OF TRANSPORTATION** Mule, horse, or on foot
- ✦ **YEAR** 6th to 20th century
- ✦ **DISTANCE** 1,400 mi (2,300 km)
- ✦ **STARTING POINT** Yunnan, China
- ✦ **END POINT** Tibet



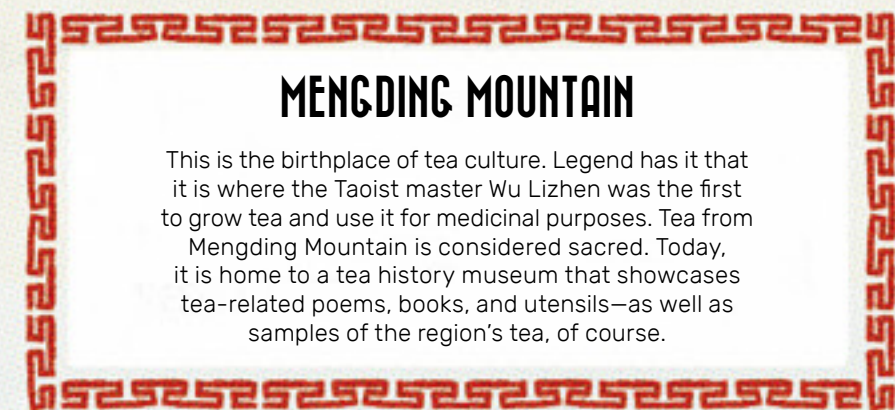
## TEA BRICKS

The famous Pu-erh tea became a staple of the Chinese diet as early as the Tang Dynasty (618–907). Black tea, which retains its flavor for a long time, came to be used as a form of currency. It was pressed into bricks and stamped with an imperial seal that marked its quality and price.



## POTALA PALACE, LHASA

Lhasa was the nerve center of the route. Merchants from China, Tibet, and India met there to exchange tea, horses, salt, and medicinal goods. The capital of Tibet, Lhasa grew and grew until, in the seventh century, the Potala Palace was built, an icon of Tibetan Buddhism and the residence of the Dalai Lamas until 1959. In 1994, it was named a Unesco World Heritage site.



## MENG DING MOUNTAIN

This is the birthplace of tea culture. Legend has it that it is where the Taoist master Wu Lizhen was the first to grow tea and use it for medicinal purposes. Tea from Mengding Mountain is considered sacred. Today, it is home to a tea history museum that showcases tea-related poems, books, and utensils—as well as samples of the region's tea, of course.

