



**10 Year Anniversary
and
National Hot Tea Month
January 2026**

The White Heron Tea & Gifts

6228 Grand Boulevard, New Port Richey, Florida 34652

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Dear Friends and Tea Lovers,

If someone would have told me, ten years ago, that our tearoom and my dream for our beloved downtown New Port Richey would not only be here, but thriving, I probably would have doubted their sanity. It's not that our downtown and surrounding community wouldn't thrive, but the picture of our town ten years ago was very different than what we know today.

I remember leaving my position as Executive Director of Chasco Fiesta in the summer of 2015, and thinking that all I wanted to do was to have that quintessential downtown that we have grown to love and desire from some of our favorite movies. I wasn't sure how to get us there, but I knew I wanted to be part of the transformation.

When I first decided to open a tearoom, I know that many of my friends, and even family, doubted that a tearoom would make it in downtown. Not just because it was a tearoom, a concept that a lot of people aren't familiar with, but also, why New Port Richey when the area was struggling and the downtown was all but desolate.

I had a dream of what our town, the town I was born and grew up in, could become. But we had to do something that would attract visitors. A tearoom seemed like the only option to me.

Ten years later, as I reflect on our journey, from concept with 3 tables and 12 seats, to 32 seats and a full house most days, I am forever grateful to those who have supported me and my team on this journey. Not only did you make my dream a reality and keep it thriving through some really hard times, but you helped the dream for New Port Richey to become a reality.

Today, New Port Richey is home to over twenty retail establishments, dozens of unique dining options, a beautiful historic hotel, fun nightlife, events, and so much more.

In addition to celebrating the 10 year anniversary of The White Heron, this January we are equally excited to celebrate National Hot Tea Month.

Tea has a unique history as the world's second most consumed beverage behind water. It has been a part of cultures around the world for thousands of years, and continues to bring people together over its unique rituals.

We are excited to share in the growing popularity of this beautiful beverage, not just for its history and culture, but for health and wellness.

Throughout this month and beyond, if you have any questions about tea, you want to learn more about it, or you just want to share a cup of tea and friendly conversation, I invite you to reach out to me. I would love the opportunity to meet and visit with you over a "cuppa" tea.

I hope you take time this National Hot Tea Month, to take a break, take a sip, and truly enjoy this beautiful beverage.

Yours Truly,



Kelly M. Hackman, Author, Entrepreneur, and Tea Sommelier

The White Heron Tea & Gifts

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PS. To keep up to date with all of our happenings at The White Heron, be sure to check out our newsletter, The Tearoom Times, on our website at www.thewhiteheronfl.com and follow us on our Facebook page.

Celebrating 10 Years of The White Heron Tea & Gifts

Celebrating 10 Years Serving Tea and Changing a Town

The Landscape has Changed but the Dream Remains the Same.

New Port Richey, Florida – When Kelly Hackman dreamed of opening a business in historic downtown New Port Richey in 2015, she never dreamed that her ten year anniversary would come so quickly.

“If someone would have told me back before I opened that our tearoom would not only be here, but be thriving, I might not have believed them,” says Hackman, author, tea sommelier, and owner of The White Heron Tea & Gifts. “I remember a lot of my friends and family not having faith that a tearoom would make it in downtown New Port Richey. They had faith in me, but not as much in my business choice or location,” she recalls.

Prior to opening The White Heron in January 2016, downtown New Port Richey was struggling. Many buildings had vacancies, the historic hotel was shuttered, and foot traffic was mostly non-existent. Enter the dreamer.

Hackman’s vision for the town she was born and raised in seemed like a dream, but that’s where all good stories start, she believes.

“I remember wanting our town to be a place of commerce, where visitors can come and explore, where locals are proud to show off where they live,” she recalls. “I looked at all types of businesses to open but settled on a tearoom because, after some research, I learned that guests will travel up to an hour and a half to have teatime.” And that was the goal, to get visitors to make their way to New Port Richey and discover how quaint and cute it is.

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Ten Year Anniversary cont.

Over the years, The White Heron's mission has been to create a unique experience that guests will travel to enjoy. "It's important that visitors enjoy their time with us, as well as our local community that call our area home," Hackman says.

Showcasing her hometown's beauty and showing people around the Tampa Bay area and beyond about New Port Richey was one of her top goals. "I wanted to make a positive impact and show how special downtown New Port Richey really is," Hackman said. "The redevelopment process was just really starting when we opened the tearoom, and we were excited to be one of the catalysts that helped contribute to the transition of our town."

"For the past ten years, the tearoom has helped to shape Downtown New Port Richey into what it is today," said Debbie L. Manns, New Port Richey's City Manager. "By offering such a unique experience, they continue to welcome residents and visitors alike, which strengthens our local economy and our sense of community."

In addition to her tearoom, Hackman has made a name for herself in the tea industry, as an award-winning tea blender. Her first recognition came when her *Luscious Loquat* green tea blend, a blend created for New Port Richey Farmnet's annual Loquat Festival (held each spring in New Port Richey) received a Silver Medal for flavored green tea in the 2019 Global Tea Championship. Her second recognition was when her *Lavender Vanilla White Tea* received the "Highly Commended" recommendation for the Leafy Awards from the UK Tea Academy in 2023.

Since opening in 2016, The White Heron has been profiled in Tea Time Magazine, and Hackman has contributed to countless articles on tea and tearooms,

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Ten Year Anniversary cont.

including articles for Plate Magazine, and World Tea News.

The White Heron continues to receive recognition for “Best Tearoom” in the Tampa Bay area, an honor that Hackman feels deeply appreciative for. “When we opened the tearoom in January 2016, I just wanted to bring people to our town and show them how beautiful it was, and give them a place to relax and unwind,” Hackman says. “Being recognized for our accomplishments is nice and we appreciate all of it, but being a place our community loves and talks highly about is what is most important to us.”

As a part of celebrating their 10 year anniversary in 2026, Hackman has captured a collection of stories that have made her tearoom unique, and will be releasing her book, “Steeping a Dream: From Vision to Teacup, A Tale of a Tearoom in February 2026. The book, consisting of over twenty short stories, is a reflection of The White Heron’s journey from concept to today.

This January, and throughout 2026, The White Heron invites you to come and experience tea time at their award-winning tearoom, and to explore all that historic downtown New Port Richey has to offer.

“I promise, if you haven’t been here in a while, you are going to be pleasantly surprised at how our little town has changed,” Hackman says with enthusiasm. “I mean, ten years ago who would have thought a tearoom would be celebrating it’s 10 year anniversary someday, yet here we are.”

The White Heron Tea & Gifts is located at 6228 Grand Boulevard in Historic downtown New Port Richey and is open Wednesday – Sunday. They serve tea by reservation only at 12 pm and 2 pm Wednesday through Saturday, and at 12 pm on Sunday. For more information about The White Heron, visit their website at www.thewhiteheronfl.com

Ten Years at a Glance

Over the past ten years, The White Heron Tea & Gifts have hosted countless tea times, including traditional tea time, baby and bridal showers, birthday parties, and special occasions. It has been our pleasure to be a part of so many memorable and special events in our guest's lives.

From 2016 – 2025, The White Heron has served a total of 41,459 guests in their tearoom and tea parlour. Over 31, 348 guests have enjoyed Afternoon Tea.

The White Heron has served approximately 62,189 pots of tea, and guests have enjoyed nearly 83,000 scones.

National Hot Tea Month

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: January 5, 2026

Celebrating National Hot Tea Month

As Cooler Weather Creeps in, Drinking Hot Tea is on the Rise.

New Port Richey, Florida - As cooler weather arrives in even the warmest of places, drinking warm beverages increases. “Where iced tea reigns supreme as the way majority of people consume tea in the United States, it’s during these cooler months that we see an increase of hot tea being consumed,” states Kelly Hackman, owner of The White Heron Tea & Gifts and Driftwood Tea Company.

National Hot Tea Month, each year in January (usually the coldest month of the year), highlights the health benefits of drinking tea, as well as the history of tea, and the unique cultures and customs that exist for drinking tea from around the world.

The legend behind the founding of tea is as unique as the plant itself. And it’s only fitting that the first tea ever drank, was hot. We have Emperor Shen Nung to thank for this drink we enjoy so much. For, legend has it that in 2732 B.C., the Emperor was boiling his water under a tree when several leaves fell into his pot. Rather than removing the, he let them sit, and then tried the water. It says he was pleasantly surprised at the aroma and taste of the resulting brew.

In early days, tea bricks were traded as currency. Empires have been created, and wars fought, all in the name of tea.

“It’s fun to think about all of the ways tea has influenced our lives today and of those of the past,” states Hackman. “From Mr. Fortune’s mission to take tea from China and give England the opportunity to grow it in India, to the Boston Tea Party, tea has had its share of unique influences on history.”

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Hot Tea Month cont.

There are many ways to celebrate National Hot Tea Month. Here are a few ways to enjoy tea this month.

- Share your favorite cup of tea with a friend. Do you have a favorite blend or brand of tea? Send some to your friend to enjoy.
- Have a Virtual Tea Party. Invite your friends to a virtual tea party and enjoy a chat over a delicious cup of tea. With so many different online platforms to gather, it's the perfect time to join your friends over a cuppa and catch up on the latest happenings with each of you. If you live near a tea shop that offers Afternoon Tea To Go (The White Heron does), you can order all of your tea-fare and enjoy a distanced Afternoon Tea with your friend.
- Schedule a daily tea break, for the entire month of January. It seems like a daunting task, taking time out of your afternoon, every day, to enjoy a nice cup of tea. Trust us, your mind and body will thank you for it later. It's true, we all need a break, and even the 10-15 minutes it takes to enjoy a cup of tea can make all the difference in how the rest of your day goes. And you may never know, you may just want to continue your daily tea breaks all year long.

**Upcoming Events for National Hot Tea Month and 10
Year Anniversary - January**

January 2026

Tuesday, January 6, 2026 at 6 pm

Proclamation from the City of New Port Richey for National Hot Tea Month and 10 Year Anniversary of The White Heron Tea & Gifts

Join The White Heron team at the New Port Richey City Council Meeting, where we will receive two proclamations. The first proclamation is in recognition of 10 years in downtown New Port Richey and our contributions to the city's revitalization efforts, and the second is to celebrate National Hot Tea Month.

We will have a tea and mini-scone sample in the lobby for guests to enjoy.

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Thursday, January 15, 2026 at 6 pm

Tea After Dark – Proclamation for National Hot Tea Month – 6 pm

Join us as we celebrate 10 years of The White Heron with our Tea After Dark. This evening will be filled with delicious tea treats, as well as Kelly, our owner, sharing stories about the tearoom from her upcoming book, "Steeping a Dream: From Vision to Teacup, the Story of a Tearoom.", being released in February 2026.

Come join us for a relaxing and delightful evening in our beautiful tearoom. \$40 per person (plus tax and gratuity). Advance reservation required. Call (727) 203-3504.

Saturday, January 17, 2026 at 10 am

Tea 101 with Kelly

Join Kelly to learn about tea, and why we love this beautiful leaf so much, and enjoy samples of three original teas as we talk about proper steeping and the benefits of drinking tea. Class is \$20 per person. Call to reserve your space today at (727) 203-3504

Thursday, January 24, 2026 at 6 pm

Paint and Sip with Coastal Creations and The White Heron Tea & Gifts

Art and Tea? We are looking forward to celebrating this month with the White Heron Tea & Gifts as they celebrate their 10-year anniversary! We decided simple but elegant fit the theme, so we will be painting a single flower on a canvas using acrylic paints in this workshop. The White Heron Tea will be serving up delightfully delicious tea & snacks to enjoy throughout the workshop. \$45 per person includes all supplies, instructions, and tea. Visit www.coastalcreationsNPR.com or call Coastal Creations at 727-843-1642 to register.

Friday, January 23, 2026 – Tea Leaf Reading with Dawne – 4 pm – 7 pm

What are the tea leaves trying to tell you? Join our tea leaf reader, Dawne, as she looks into your destiny and answers your burning questions, by reading your tea leaves. 15-minute one-on-one session, guests should arrive 15 minutes prior to their scheduled reading time. \$25 per person. Your tea leaf reading time will be provided to you when you register. Call (727) 203-3504.

About Kelly Hackman and The White Heron Tea & Gifts



About Kelly Hackman and The White Heron Tea & Gifts

Kelly Hackman, WTA Certified Tea Sommelier and Tea Specialist and a Certified Tea Etiquette Consultant, is the owner of The White Heron Tea & Gifts in historic downtown New Port Richey. Hackman entered the tea industry in 2016 when she designed a unique and refreshing tearoom in her town's historic downtown district as a part of her mission to draw guest to the downtown and help spark redevelopment efforts and helping her town begin to thrive after years of struggle. Breaking away from the traditional tearoom atmosphere of Victorian-era influences, Hackman chose to use her Florida location to create a destination reminiscent of a "tropical spa-like" resort. Since opening her tearoom, Hackman has carved out a unique place in her town's landscape, drawing guests throughout the Southeastern United States and beyond.

The White Heron Tea & Gifts has been featured on Daytime, ABC Action News, Bay News 9, and featured in Tea Time Magazine, The Boston Globe, Plate Magazine, Tampa Bay Magazine, Tampa Bay Times, Naturecoaster, Tampa Bay Business Journal, and the Suncoast News. Her tearoom was in a featured episode on HGTV House Hunters (2022), is often photographed for local area promotions, and often hosts social media and travel influencers.

Additionally, The White Heron has been recognized as the "Best of the Best of Tampa Bay" Best Tearoom by the Tampa Bay Times (2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025). "Best Tea Room in Tampa Bay" by Tampa Bay Magazine (2018, 2019, 2020, 2021).

In addition to the success of The White Heron Tea & Gifts, Hackman has continued to focus on providing the highest quality tea from around the world.

Through her private-label tea brand, *Driftwood Tea Company*, Hackman works with tea growers and brokers around the world to seek out unique and flavorful teas that her guests will enjoy. Several of her personal tea blends have been recognized by various tea industry leaders as some of the best teas currently available. Most recently, her blend, *Lavender Vanilla White Tea* received a highly commended recommendation for the UK Tea Academy Leafy Awards (the only US tea recognized by the UK Tea Academy in the entire competition in 2023), and her *Luscious Loquat Green Tea* was the recipient of a Silver Medal in the 2019 Global Tea Championships. Currently, *Driftwood Tea Company* teas are available at The White Heron Tea & Gifts, as well as online through the brand's website.

Hackman is a member of Tea Mastermind, a group of leading tea industry professionals who work together to advance the knowledge of tea and foster young tea entrepreneurs. Additionally, in 2024, her tea room was one of five-hundred businesses nationally to be awarded the "Backing Small Business Grant" from Main Street America and American Express.

Hackman is also the owner of Cotee River Brewing Company with her husband, Bryan. She is a current member of Pasco County Tourist Development Council, and was recently named the 2025 Ambassador of Tourism for Florida Sports Coast.

When she isn't running her businesses or participating in tea activities, she loves to write. She published her first book, *Her Story: Kelly's Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times (2020)*, where she light-heartedly shares about running her tearoom and overcoming obstacles during the closures in 2020.

For more information on Kelly Hackman, The White Heron Tea & Gifts, and Driftwood Tea Company, visit www.thewhiteheronfl.com and www.kellymhackman.com

All About Tea

Tea Profiles



White Tea:

- Plucked, withered and dried.
- White tea is the most pure, non-processed form of tea.
- Leaves are naturally dried in the sun.
- These leaves are green or grey in color. If they are reddish, they were withered too hot. If they are black, they are withered too cold.
- White tea oxidizes during withering where in green tea the oxidation process is stopped early in the tea making process by steaming or pan firing.

Benefits:

- In addition to its anticancer properties, tea has a calming and detoxifying effect on the skin. White tea is especially potent in that it has three times as many anti-oxidant polyphenols as green or black tea and has been shown to be 100% more effective in mopping up free radicals that cause the skin to sag. That is why some of the top cosmetic companies are interested in using white tea in their skin creams

Brewing:

- Best brewed at 165-175 and should be consumed without milk or sweetener.



Green Tea:

- Green tea is the oldest of all of the tea families and is the second least processed tea.
- Once withered, the tea is steamed or pan-fired in a wok. Cooking kills the enzymes to prohibit oxidation. This process of heating the leaves enough to “kill the green” flavor is called de-enzyming and is the defining process of green tea. It removes the bitter taste of tea by cooking it enough to chemically alter the bitter tasting compounds.

- By cooking it, it negates the leaves' ability to promote oxidation (which is needed for black tea), and preserves the green color of the leaf.
- The leaves are either rolled by hand or machine and dried. Since it's not bruised or oxidized, the leaf retains its natural dark olive green color and its vegetative aroma and taste.

Benefits:

- Green tea is an excellent source of antioxidants and polyphenols.
- A cup of tea without milk or sugar or other additives contains no calories.
- One Japanese study concluded that women who drank 10 Japanese size (about 3 ounces) cups of green tea per day were likely to live cancer free for 7.3 years longer than those that drank less quantities of green tea.
- Instead of drinking green tea, some people apply green tea bags to their skin to soothe sunburn and prevent skin cancer due to sun exposure. Green tea bags are also used to decrease puffiness under the eyes, as a compress for tired eyes or headaches, and to stop gums from bleeding after a tooth is pulled.
- Green tea is also used in an attempt to minimize the effects of Chron's disease, Parkinson's disease, diseases of the heart and blood vessels, diabetes, low blood pressure, chronic fatigue syndrome, dental cavities, kidney stones, and skin damage.

Brewing:

- Best brewed at 175-190. No additional milk or sweetener



Oolong Tea:

- Oolong tea goes through an additional process during the wither. The edges of the leaves are slightly bruised (usually by rolling the tea in baskets during the wither). The reason for this is that the leaves are lightly bruised to start the oxidation process.
- Withered in the direct sun and then shaken in tubular bamboo baskets to bruise the leaf edges.
- The bruising is what makes the edges oxidize faster than the center. After 15-25 minutes (depending upon ambient temperature and humidity levels) the tea is fired, locking in the special flavor profile.

- Semi-fermentation gives the tea a little bit more body than green but less body than black.

**Ti Kuan Yin is the best known Chinese oolong, is aromatic and elegant, and comes from the Fujian province. The slightly twisted leaves unfurl as a mixture of red-brown and dark green colors that release a honey-colored liquor with a delicately sweet floral flavor.*

- Flavor profile – sweet and fragrant and has no bitter notes.
- Tasting Notes: Distinctive light cup with hints of orchid-like flavor.
Infusion: Pale green yellow liquor, tending slightly amber

Brewing:

- Best brewed at 190 degrees and should be consumed without the addition of milk, lemon, or sweetener. This tea can be steeped multiple times.



Black:

- Black tea is withered like white and green, then rolled to create bruising, which allows the oxidation process to start. Hard withering is when the leaf is dried harshly. Soft wither is when the leaf is slowly withered, making it more ply-able.
- This chemical breakdown helps turn the leaves brown and is often accomplished by rolling and applying pressure, secreting liquid out of the leaf.
- After oxidation, the tea is fired and sorted into classes.

Benefits:

- May improve heart health
- May lower “bad” LDL Cholesterol
- Reduce Blood Pressure and Risk of Stroke
- Reduce Blood Sugar

Brewing:

- Best brewed using 212 degree water, for 3-5 minutes (no more than 5 minutes). This tea holds milk and sweeteners well, as well as lemon, though it’s not necessary to enjoy this tea.



Dark (Puerh):

- Dark teas are a unique type of tea, where the leaves are allowed or encouraged to ferment in the true sense of the word, in order to develop their characteristic flavors, dark colored liquor and unique aromas.
- After being plucked, withered and de-enzymed. Leaves go through rolling and shaping and is repeated after a second heating. Then leaves are set out to dry.
- It is set in storage to age and ferment naturally. Or may be piled, moistened and the covered to go through a carefully monitored process of accelerated fermentation. This process may last several months.

Benefits:

- Increased energy, promotes healthy heart (lower risk of heart disease), cleanses toxins and free radicals, prevent cancer (prevents the growth of cancer cells), protects bone health (polyphenols develop higher bone mass), aids in weight loss, reduces stress, prevents illness (high in antioxidants and vitamin C).

Brewing:

- Best brewed at 212 degrees for 4-5 minutes. This tea can be steeped multiple times. Enjoy plain or with milk and sweetener.

Original Press Release Announcing Tearoom
January 8, 2016

Kelly M. Hackman, Owner
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TEA ROOM OPENS IN DOWNTOWN NEW PORT RICHEY

Owner Create a Place of Solitude where Visitors can Relax and Visit

New Port Richey, Florida – When Kelly Hackman left her position as Executive Director of Chasco Fiesta in June 2015, she wasn't quite sure what she wanted to do. She had always dreamed of so many different things, including opening and owning a business. "I always knew that if I opened any business, I would I want it to be in the heart of downtown New Port Richey," Hackman says. "I grew up in this area and have always enjoyed the quaintness of our downtown area."

It was shortly after she left her position, on a trip to Tampa with her husband, Bryan, when Hackman figured out what she wanted to do. "My husband works in Tampa and one day he drove by this little tea room and sent me a picture and told me that was what we needed in our downtown," Hackman said. A few days later she was on her way to check it out. "The minute I walked into the store and tea room I knew it was exactly what I wanted to do. I loved the quaintness and beauty of the entire place. It was so peaceful."

A few days later she made reservations to have afternoon tea with her mom. "I remember walking in to have tea that day with my mom and thinking how nice it was, how relaxing, and quaint." Hackman, who spends a lot of time with her mom was pleasantly surprised at how just sitting and relaxing and talking to each other was so different than all of the other times they spent together. "How many times do you go out to eat and visit and people have their cell phones on the table, and are distracted by so many other things than visiting," Hackman recalls thinking.

A week later she took her two best friends to afternoon tea and they fell in love with it

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Downtown Tea Room cont.

too. That's when she knew what she had to do.

Looking for a space in downtown where the tea room could be housed proved difficult. Hackman talked with several building owners with no success in locating a permeant house for her dream. That's when a conversation with local businesswoman, Karen LeGault, of Karen's Gifts, changed everything. "Karen's store has always had three storefronts and after talking with her, she suggested that I consider taking the third unit and she would downsize," Hackman recalled. "I was so grateful that she believed in what I was doing and for her generosity to welcome me. It truly was a dream come true to be in that building, it was the perfect location." Hackman is excited to be a part of the downtown business community and looks forward to her business being a part of all of the positive economic changes that are taking place in the area.

Construction started on the unit housed in the ninety year old Pasco Building on Grand Boulevard in October and after just two months, the unit was ready. "We had a lot of work because of the age of the building, and the overall atmosphere we were trying to create," recalled Hackman. "At some points in time I kept asking myself if it would ever get done. I know it's not a long time for this type of project but when you are excited, you want it done yesterday."

Now that it's done, Hackman hopes that visitors can come and relax and get away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life, even if it's just for an hour and a half (the average time for afternoon tea). The tea room seats parties at 12 p.m., 2 p.m., and 4 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday. Parties are seated at the same time to avoid disruption of guests coming in and out of the tea room at different times. Hackman has also adopted a no cell phone rule in the tea room. "The whole purpose of our tea room is to provide an oasis to truly spend time with someone. The worst thing when you are having a

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Downtown Tea Room cont.

conversation with someone is the person at the next table talking on a cell phone, or even the person you are with being distracted by their phone or some other device.” Hackman believes that with the world so busy these days, people don’t take time out enough to truly just relax and enjoy a nice meal and conversation without those distractions.

The tea room, complete with its relaxing beach resort color scheme of teals and grays, is open to visitors who would like to enjoy afternoon tea, or just some tea sandwiches and scones. The tea room is small in size (only 3 tables, 12 seats), to provide a more intimate experience, therefore reservations are required for the tea room and can be made by calling The White Heron at 727-203-3504.

In addition to tea being served in the tea room, The White Heron also provides Tea To Go. Each day they feature one iced tea and several loose leaf hot teas that can be purchased in to go cups and taken on your adventure. “After a lot of searching, we were able to find a “to go” lid that has a small mesh filter that allows us to brew any of our loose leaf teas in a to go cup, and when visitors drink the tea, the tea comes through but the loose leaf stays in the cup,” Hackman explains. “People are always so fascinated when we show them. It allows them the ability to pick any of our loose leaf teas and not be limited to tea bags anymore.”

The White Heron Tea & Gifts is open Tuesday through Saturday. The gift shop is open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., and the tea room is open for reservations each day at 12 p.m., 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. A complete menu is available online at www.thewhiteheronfl.com or by stopping in The White Heron Tea & Gifts at 6228 Grand Boulevard, in historic downtown New Port Richey.

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