

Capital Coffee – The Howdah Tea and Coffee Company

Stockbridge is something of a mecca for those tracking down boutique charity shops, posh bakeries – and good coffee.

The Howdah Tea and Coffee Company on Deanhaugh Street manifests this quite starkly. It's a coffee shop in a location that was previously home to a charity shop. It also sits beside another busy place, Söderberg, a "posh" bakery that serves coffee!

Howdah has an interesting position in the local coffee "ecosystem", offering something a bit different from the specialty coffee places nearby (such as Fortitude, just round the corner, and Artisan Roast) but also distinct from the big chains. It's something of a throwback to an earlier generation of coffee and tea places, though presented in a contemporary manner.

The shop itself is particularly smart with a warm old-fashioned feel. The racing green paintwork adds to that traditional feel. Howdah has manifested an encouraging aspect of the spread of coffee in the UK. This is the creative reuse of old shops and buildings. Howdah have transformed the shop unit that was previously home to a Hospices of Hope charity shop (they still have three other locations in Edinburgh).



Here the utilitarian shop-fittings have been removed, revealing lovely panelled woodwork and beautiful tiles. The interior has been restored with real skill and thought. Along with the classy vintage furniture, this all adds to the pleasure of sitting in Howdah. Though relatively narrow, good use is made of the space. The large single pane window at the front and to a sense of airiness and freshness.

A destination

The customer service is brisk and cheery – they often have to deal with sudden influxes. Those who complain that there are too many cafes in the area need to accept that most of them are consistently busy. This is especially the case at weekends and in particular on Sundays when Stockbridge Market attracts many to the area. This reflects Stockbridge's identity as a real destination area of the city these days, full of Instagrammable spots, such as Circus Lane and St Bernard's

Well.

Howdah is just a few yards away from one of the most bucolic sections of the Water of Leith Walkway – the portion accessed via the steps next to Franco Manca pizza. This section takes you through a gentle winding section of the river. At one point, you can step out onto a peddle beach area, with the water flowing vigorously just a few inches away. A peaceful spot to visit with a good coffee in hand.



A dual identity

Howdah has, [like Little Havana Coffee Store in Leith](#), a dual identity. It's both a spot to grab a coffee or tea, but also a place to buy high grade coffee beans, leaf teas, and tisanes (herbal infusions). The wide range of beans and teas available are arrayed across the shelves behind the counter in traditional glass jars. Some of the names are evocative and

enticing, including Rose Petal, Bengal Fire, Kenya Peaberry, Datterra Sunrise.

The staff show great enthusiasm when explaining the subtle differences between the different coffees and teas. They encourage customers to have a whiff to gauge if it's likely to be that to their tastes. The staff are happy to grind the beans for whatever brewing method you use at home: French press, stovetop (moka) AeroPress etc.

Though Howdah, is a relative newcomer to Stockbridge, the business was already well established in North Berwick when husband and wife team Alex and Paul Farquhar purchased it in 2014. The business then relocated to Stockbridge 2020.



They clearly know what they are doing and this is evident in the carefully made drinks. The house beans they use are towards the more traditional end of this spectrum; on the darker roast side but with a nutty and smooth rather than overpowering flavour. It sums up a place with a traditional

but fresh feel.

[The Howdah Tea and Coffee Company](#)

5 Deanhaugh Street, Edinburgh EH4 1LU