



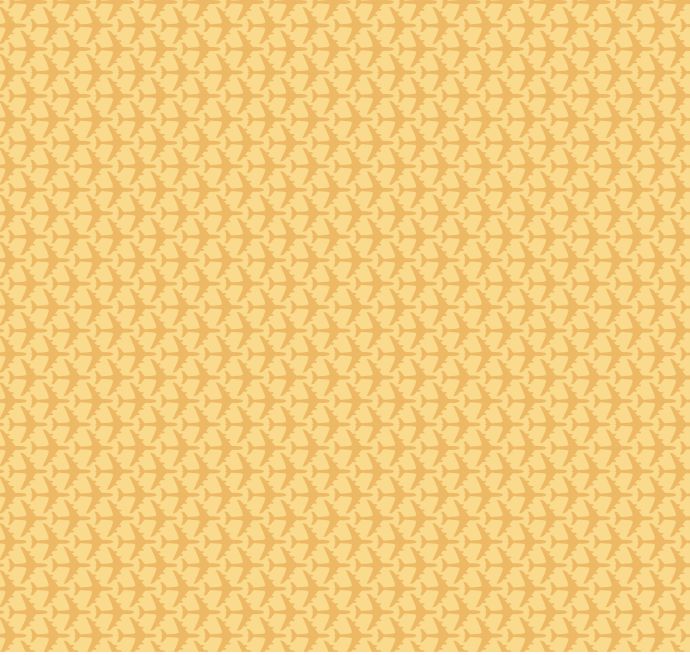
happy

happy

secrets to happiness
from the cultures of the world



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THE SECRETS

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Foreword by Maureen Wheeler, Lonely Planet Co-Founder

HAPPINESS & TRAVEL

There is a story about two children who set out to find a bluebird; they travel all over the world only to find it in their own backyard. The bird, of course, represents happiness and the moral of the story is that happiness is found when you stop looking for it. Travelling to find happiness is doomed to failure, because happiness comes in those moments when you are not consciously trying to be happy. Moments of sheer joy come when you forget yourself and focus on something other than your own feelings or desires or goals.

When you travel to another country where everything is unfamiliar, your awareness is heightened, you notice every little detail because you are trying to make sense of everything going on around you. The person you are at home becomes less important, less central to this new story; you are an observer and this sense of being an outsider intensifies your responses and emotions.

The opportunity to see the world from another viewpoint, to see yourself as someone foreign, is the adventure of travel. The freedom, the sense of possibilities, the absence of the mundanity of normal life, is the excitement of travel. But happiness in travel comes from the moments when you are aware how lucky you are to be in that place, at that time, and how wonderful the world is.

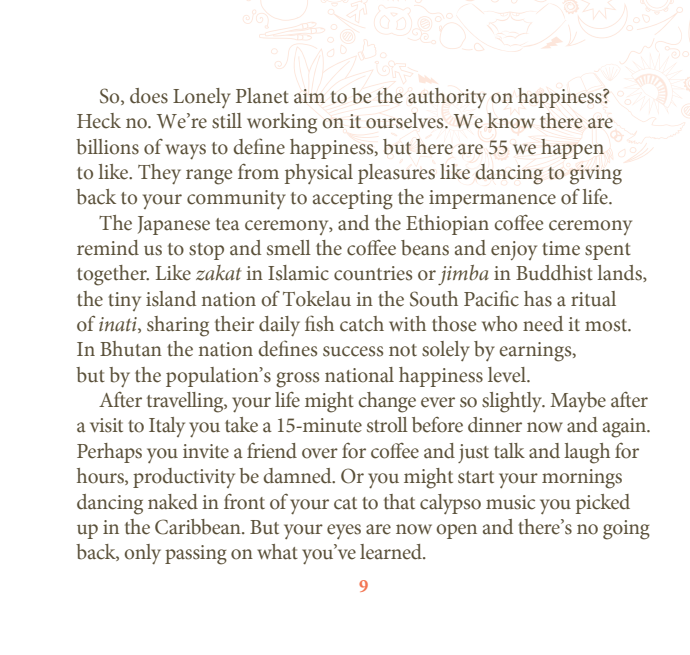
INTRODUCTION

Happiness. One word, nine letters, roughly seven billion definitions, one for each person on the planet.

Researchers into emotions and neuroscience say that everyone's level of happiness is about 50% genetically determined, 10% comes from external factors, and the rest comes from how we perceive our circumstances. Money buys us some happiness, they say, but only to the point where we have security – a roof over our heads, a doctor when we're sick, a bit of entertainment.

So why isn't everyone who has reached this level of security perfectly happy? Across the developed world, people have better medical care and longer life spans than ever before. But while many Western countries top the lists of overall happiest countries, many also rank highest in individual rates of depression.

Researchers who study happiness will tell us it's not the flashy car or new shoes that make us happy in the long run. Instead, the most basic aspects of life found in every culture bring us the most joy – connection, mindfulness, gratitude, play. One of the gifts of travel is that it allows us the chance to see how different cultures invite happiness into their lives, whether those countries are rich or poor.



So, does Lonely Planet aim to be the authority on happiness? Heck no. We're still working on it ourselves. We know there are billions of ways to define happiness, but here are 55 we happen to like. They range from physical pleasures like dancing to giving back to your community to accepting the impermanence of life.

The Japanese tea ceremony, and the Ethiopian coffee ceremony remind us to stop and smell the coffee beans and enjoy time spent together. Like *zakat* in Islamic countries or *jimba* in Buddhist lands, the tiny island nation of Tokelau in the South Pacific has a ritual of *inati*, sharing their daily fish catch with those who need it most. In Bhutan the nation defines success not solely by earnings, but by the population's gross national happiness level.

After travelling, your life might change ever so slightly. Maybe after a visit to Italy you take a 15-minute stroll before dinner now and again. Perhaps you invite a friend over for coffee and just talk and laugh for hours, productivity be damned. Or you might start your mornings dancing naked in front of your cat to that calypso music you picked up in the Caribbean. But your eyes are now open and there's no going back, only passing on what you've learned.





MIND





Secret Put down in words what you really want
Tradition Shinto *ema* (votive plaques)
Celebrated in Japan

