



happy

# happy

SECRETS TO HAPPINESS  
FROM THE CULTURES OF THE WORLD



MELBOURNE | LONDON | OAKLAND

# THE SECRETS

---

**FOREWORD** 07

**INTRODUCTION** 08

**MIND** 10

Put down in words what you really want 13

Prioritise your mental well-being over your financial success 15

Let your resentments, worries and sadness go 17

Accept yourself (and others) for who you are 19

Have a goal and work towards achieving it 21

Accept and celebrate the transience of life 23

Learn to be self-sufficient in order to feel empowered 25

Forgive - don't let grudges poison you 27

Put your trust in others and be trusted in return 29

Take a long view rather than expecting instant gratification 31

Be grateful for what you have 33

Come to terms with your own mortality 35

Free yourself from self-induced, self-limiting inhibitions 37

Keep your mind stimulated 39

Consider your words before someone takes them to heart 415

Bring your mind back to real time 43

Draw on humour and new experiences to get on with your life 45

Spend some time alone to reconnect with your life's direction 47

Rid yourself of physical and mental clutter and get your life back under control 49

Acknowledge your influences 51

Accept that you aren't always in control and have faith 53

**INDEX** 127



---

## BODY

54

Exercise to produce endorphins, and get a physical and mental workout	57
Take the time to appreciate good food and drink	59
Take some time out to recharge your batteries	61
Learn to be comfortable with your body	63
Realise your connection to the natural world	65
Connect your whole being – mind, body and breath	67
Talk to your neighbours to reconnect with your community	69
Face your fears to overcome them	71
Allow yourself to luxuriate	73
Make some silent time to allow your head to clear	75
Get outside whenever possible	77
Express yourself physically	79
Go without to appreciate what you have	81
Dress yourself up to create beauty where you see none	83
Get things off your chest with like-minded others	85
Discover what's deep inside with a physical challenge	87

## SPIRIT

89

Shut down business as usual and go a bit wild	91
Take life less seriously	93
Realise your connection to place	95
Wash away the old and welcome the new	97
Spend time with family to understand your context	99
Embrace the painful past with a light heart	101
Refresh your perspective and seek the good in life	103
Embrace your heritage to better understand yourself	105
Discover the pleasures of generosity	107
Recognise and celebrate your accomplishments	109
Find the ultimate contentment in friends, family and a good book	111
Contribute, be a useful member of society, in order to feel part of something greater than yourself	113
Enjoy life now because you never know what's ahead	115
Appreciate the Gift of Family	117
Give away something you value to appreciate how lucky you are	119
Moderate your life and be flexible	121
Release your inner child and play	123
Realise your interconnectedness with others	125



# HAPPINESS & TRAVEL

Foreword by Maureen Wheeler, Lonely Planet Co-Founder

---

There is a famous 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 when they return home. The bluebird, 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 probably always doomed to failure, despite all those romantic movies which claim otherwise, because happiness comes in those moments when you are not consciously trying to be happy. The 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 understand and make sense of everything that is going on around you. The person you are at home, in your own environment, 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.

Travel takes you to places in the world that are heart-stoppingly beautiful, exposes you to

scenes of horrific deprivation and challenges you to accept and understand that the world is composed of both. But the moments that remain with you, when you look back and remember your wanderings, are those moments when you simply allowed time to unfold. Watching a sun set or rise, wandering around a ruined city or ancient temple, meeting someone who is as curious about you as you are about them, exchanging impressions with other travellers – these are all part of the everyday travel experience, and yet these everyday incidents will be the fragments that make up the whole journey, that stay with you and inform or change your perspective when you return to that other, ‘real’ life.

The opportunity to look at another culture, 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 routine 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 are learning a lot these days about the intersection between emotions and neuroscience. Everyone's level of happiness is about 50% genetically determined (what the experts call your 'happiness set point'), a further mere 10% comes from external factors, and the rest comes from how we perceive our circumstances. Yes, 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 now and then. Travellers take note: almost a dozen recent studies agree that experiences bring more long-term happiness than do possessions.

So, if we're so smart about happiness, why isn't everyone on the planet who has reached this level of security perfectly happy? Across the developed world, people have better medical care, fewer preventable diseases and longer life spans than ever before. In the United States, the pursuit of happiness is a constitutional right. But while many Western countries top the lists of overall happiest

countries, many also rank highest in individual rates of depression and other mental health disorders.

The same researchers who study happiness will tell us it's not the flashy car or the new shoes that will make us happy in the long run. In fact, those expectations do us a disservice. Instead, they've found that it's some of the most basic aspects of life found in every culture that bring us the most joy – connection, mindfulness, gratitude, play.

While this book offers a few specific examples, these experiences happen all over the world in billions of ways: devoting time to honour family ties (p99: Tsagaan Sar in Mongolia), being still with the present moment (p43: *zazen* meditation in Japan), giving thanks (p33: Thanksgiving in the USA), or just shaking our collective booties (p109: Crop Over festival, Barbados).

One of the unspoken gifts of travel is it allows us the chance to open our mind, eyes and soul to how different cultures invite happiness into their lives, whether those countries are some of the wealthiest in history (p111: *hygge* in Denmark), or are struggling to put food on the table (p000: dressing up in Mali).

