



BUT ARE YOU *HAPPY?*

In Bhutan, gross national happiness more important than GDP

By ELLEN HALE
Associated Press

LAYA, Bhutan — Prayer flags whip in the wind, flying across steep valleys and roads. Buddhist temples, stupa shrines and majestic fortresses called zhongs dot the landscape. Giant water-powered prayer wheels spin from tumbling falls. Farmers tend yaks.

Never conquered, never colonized, tiny Bhutan retains much of its deep and ancient culture. But it’s attempting to chart a unique path in today’s world: Modernize and democratize without sacrificing independence, culture or its pristine mountains and forests.

It’s also taken a unique approach to tourism, promoting itself as an “exclusive” destination through “high value, low impact” tourism. Tourists can only visit by booking through licensed tour operators with packages that cost \$200 to \$250 a day, depending on the season. Some of that money is earmarked by the government for health care, free schools and infrastructure. Despite the high price tag,



Photos by Alexandra Reynolds via AP
Two women from the Laya nomadic ethnic group attend the Laya Royal Highlander Festival.

TOP PHOTO: A Layan highlander, in native dress, parades his pony, which won the horse race at the Laya Royal Highlander Festival, Oct. 23, in Bhutan.

Bhutan was listed by both *The New York Times* and *Afar* magazine on “where to go in 2018” lists.

Wedge between India and China, Bhutan is the last remaining Buddhist kingdom in the Himalayas. But the country has transitioned from absolute monarchy to a democratic, constitutional monarchy. Parliamentary elections were first held in 2008 despite resistance from Bhutanese who revered their royals.

The country’s fourth king, and father of today’s ruler,

introduced the concept of gross national happiness in the 1970s as more important than gross domestic product. The GNH measure, far from a bumper sticker slogan, embraces sustainable development, education and health, valuing societal good over economic growth. Cigarettes are banned, and Bhutan is the world’s only carbon-negative country, producing less carbon than its forests absorb.

The fifth and reigning king, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck (affectionately known as K-5, also the name



Trekkers crossing the glacier-fed Mo Chuu River, Oct. 21, on the hike from Gasa to the Laya Highlands for the second annual Royal Highlander festival.

of a local whiskey), created a festival two years ago to attract tourists to a poor region with an ethnic nomadic population. The Laya Royal Highlander Festival, held in October, includes events like yak judging, wrestling matches, pony races, native dancing and a contest for best mastiff dog.

Tourists heading to the highland festival face a 36-mile roundtrip trek from 6,000 feet to more than 12,500 feet in altitude mostly on rocky, precipitous trails also used by donkeys (laden with propane tanks, tents and other supplies). Rain can turn those trails into a slippery mess of mud and poop.

The challenging route didn’t stop the king from trekking up in a few hours last October. Nor did it stop a woman in native dress — handwoven duri (skirt), top and shamu la, a golden crown-like hat — from marching up in red pumps. Most tourists, though, take two days with constant pauses to catch their breath. The payoff: breathtaking views of the Himalayas above and roaring glacier-fed rivers below.

One festival highlight is the nyagay, or strongman race (strong woman, too). Six women in yak-wool skirts dragged massive planks of wood halfway across a field, then dropped the planks

and heaved 50-pound grain sacks onto the backs of their male partners. The women then climbed on the men’s backs, and the men retrieved the wood, then raced back to the starting line. All this in four minutes at an altitude of nearly 13,000 feet.

Yak-wool tents, impervious to the damp, ringed the festival field and provided protected seating. Booths offered instruction on sustainable products and practices, from animal husbandry (“use only inferior mares for mule production”) to the benefits of Bhutanese honey (bees here are healthy because there are few insecticides).

Ubiquitous Bhutanese dogs, unflappable and friendly, curled up on the field like commas and snoozed.

The Merak nomads wore their signature black beanies, which have dreadlock-like braids that divert raindrops away from the face. Vendors sold yak bells, yak wool hats and purses, yak cheese wrapped in leather (smelling like a good parmigiano) and vials of the pricey fungus, cordyceps, said to be powerfully healing.

The happiness quotient was as high as the sky.

How to conquer fear of missing out at SXSW

By PAUL J. WEBER
Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — Since it was founded in 1987, the annual South by Southwest festival in Austin, Texas, has grown from a little indie, grassroots event that locals barely noticed to a phenomenon that attracts 400,000 people and generates some \$300 million in spending. For attendees, it can all be a little overwhelming. How do you know what’s worth your time and where the buzz is going to be?

In the latest episode of the AP Travel podcast “Get Outta Here,” we offer some strategies for conquering FOMO (fear of missing out) at SXSW, along with some other tips for visiting Austin during

the March 9-18 festival or any other time.

WHY IS SXSW SUCH A BIG DEAL?

It’s a weeklong music, movie and tech juggernaut. It’s 2,000 bands. It’s film premieres and TED-like talks about the future of everything from virtual reality to politics to the economy. Participants have included Bruce Springsteen, the Obamas, Mark Zuckerberg. This year’s festival includes Bernie Sanders, the premiere of Wes Anderson’s new movie, “Isle of Dogs” and some type of actual town representing HBO’s “Westworld” series.

HOW HAS SXSW CHANGED?

It began as a very insider event

in a few clubs over a long weekend where recording labels could discover new and unsigned bands. It was so small in the early days that you could live in Austin and really have no idea it was taking place.

But over time the idea of getting “discovered” at SXSW crept into the culture and it got bigger and bigger, expanding far beyond music. It’s not just a venue for emerging artists anymore. And there’s a debate: Has it gotten too big? Has it lost its soul? It’s a fair argument to make. There’s a lot of marketing and product placement these days. At the same time, there are still 2,000 bands performing. If you can put aside red carpet premieres and megastars, what it was made for is still happening.

Austin has grown too in the last 25 years or so, from roughly a half-million people to a million. A favorite local pastime is complaining about how much better Austin was 20 years ago, and the sheer size of SXSW brings out the curmudgeon in locals. But others make a buck off of it. You can make good money renting your home or condo, though you might get the stink-eye from your neighbors.

HOW DO YOU FIGURE OUT WHAT TO DO AND SEE?

Fear of missing out is this boulder you lug around for the week. Social media amplifies that. You’re standing in line, hoping to get into one show, and all of a sudden on Twitter or Facebook, you’ll see some big name or maybe

someone is rumored to attend or people you weren’t expecting to come are playing. Drake famously showed up last-minute a few years ago.

One way to create some leeway in your schedule is to let the nostalgia acts go — the former big-name bands that use the festival to promote comebacks. Instead, pack your schedule with artists that are coming into their moment and have their best years ahead of them.

Also, you need a plan. You really can’t just wing it. That’s a lesson you’re going to learn fast given the lines to get into the better, buzzy shows. And it’s not just concerts: The lines are at premieres and keynote speeches too. Be ready for the lines. But have some backups.

The delicious, tangy flavor of citrus-marinated salmon

By KATIE WORKMAN
Associated Press

Salmon is my No. 1 favorite fish in the ocean, and I am not alone. The rich and sometimes slightly sweet flavor, the velvety texture, the appealing color, and the fact that it takes so well to all kinds of preparations and seasonings make it a go-to fish for many of us.

The bright flavors of lemon and orange are a nice complement to salmon’s richness, and they appear in both the marinade and the citrusy sauce that accompanies the fish in this recipe. It couldn’t be simpler, and if you don’t have the time to marinate the fish, it will still be delicious, although the flavors won’t penetrate so deeply.

You can choose skinless fillets or use pieces of fish with the skin still on. In the latter case, place the fillets skin side down on the oiled baking sheet when you cook

them under the broiler. When you remove the cooked fish to a plate, slide a spatula between the fish and the skin to separate it, leaving the skin on the baking sheet. If you love a crisp piece of skin with your fish, you might place the fish skin side up when you broil it. Watch carefully to make sure the skin doesn’t brown too much as the fish cooks, and if it starts to get too dark before the fish is cooked to your liking, change the oven from broil to 450 degrees F for the last few minutes of cooking.

Serve this dish with rice or potatoes, and some Brussels sprouts or green beans for a colorful and healthful meal. Another nice way to change up a vegetable side is to mix a green salad with some roasted vegetables, and maybe toss in some chickpeas (which also benefit from 15 minutes of roasting along with the vegetables of your choice.)

CITRUS MARINATED SALMON WITH TANGY SAUCE

Start to finish: 20 minutes, plus 1 hour of marinating time
Serves 4

- 1 lemon
- 1 orange
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
- 4 (6- to 8-ounce) salmon fillets
- ¼ cup mayonnaise

Zest and juice both the lemon and the orange. Mix together the two zests, then remove 1 teaspoon of the combined zest and set aside. In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil and the citrus juices with the remaining zest. Season the marinade with salt and pepper. Place the salmon fillets in a baking pan and pour the marinade over the fish, turning to coat evenly. Marinate in the refrigerator for 1 hour.

Meanwhile, combine the mayonnaise and the reserved teaspoon of zest, and season with salt and



Citrus-marinated salmon

pepper. Set aside.

Preheat the broiler. Transfer the salmon to an oiled, rimmed baking sheet, separating the pieces. Discard the marinade.

Broil the salmon for 8 to 10 minutes until it is just cooked through and remove from the oven (the fish will continue to cook a bit after it is removed from the oven, so take it out just before it’s done to your liking). Transfer to individual plates, and top each piece with a spoonful of the sauce.