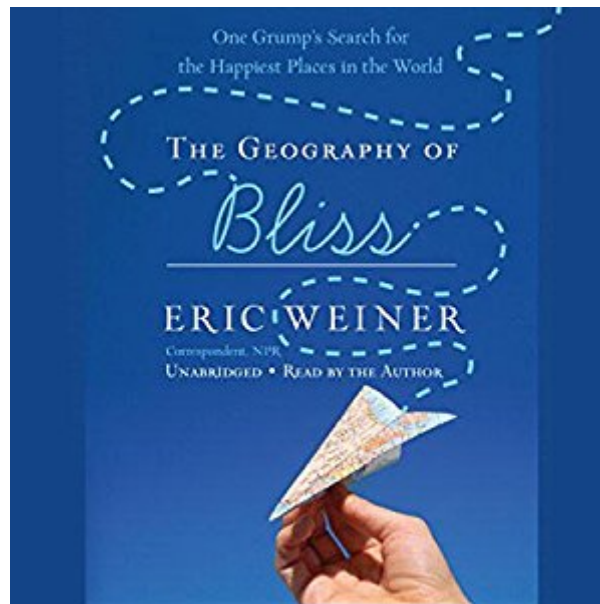


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# The Geography Of Bliss: One Grump's Search For The Happiest Places In The World



## Synopsis

"Laugh. Think. Repeat. Repeatedly. If someone told me this book was this good, I wouldn't have believed them."--Po Bronson, author of *What Should I Do With My Life?* "Think Don Quixote with a dark sense of humor and a taste for hashish and you begin to grasp Eric Weiner, the modern knight-errant of this mad, sad, wise, and witty quest across four continents. I won't spoil the fun by telling if his mission succeeds, except to say that happiness is reading a book as entertaining as this."--Tony Horwitz, author of *Confederates in the Attic* Part foreign affairs discourse, part humor, and part twisted self-help guide, *The Geography of Bliss* takes the listener from America to Iceland to India in search of happiness, or, in the crabby author's case, moments of "un-unhappiness." The book uses a beguiling mixture of travel, psychology, science and humor to investigate not what happiness is, but where it is. Are people in Switzerland happier because it is the most democratic country in the world? Do citizens of Qatar, awash in petrodollars, find joy in all that cash? Is the King of Bhutan a visionary for his initiative to calculate Gross National Happiness? Why is Asheville, North Carolina so damn happy? With engaging wit and surprising insights, Eric Weiner answers those questions and many others, offering travelers of all moods some interesting new ideas for sunnier destinations and dispositions. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Author, Eric Weiner, is mired in the bad-news business of journalism. As a correspondent for

National Public Radio he has reported from Miami, New Delhi, Jerusalem, Afghanistan, Tokyo, and Iraq. He has covered wars and conflicts. He has won awards for coverage of Islamic issues in Asia and the tobacco industry in the U.S. He has focused on a lot of bad stuff--which often seems the modern definition of news. It is no wonder that he openly cops to being unhappy. Weiner's quest here is to find a place and conditions that might cheer him up. He apparently considers only slightly the fact that any place he goes, he takes his unhappy self with him. The sub-title, *One Grump's Search for the Happiest Places in the World*, sets the stage. Can the conditions of place cause or at least contribute to happiness? My personal experience and letters from readers says yes. I confined my search to the contiguous 48 states; travelholic Weiner takes us to nine more countries. First to The Netherlands and the World Database of Happiness to learn what Ruut Veenhoven, "the godfather of happiness research" knows. On to Switzerland, where the natives feel more than contentment but less than joy. Thence to Bhutan, where the king has proclaimed Gross National Happiness; Qatar, where each new husband gets a \$7,000 monthly allowance, a building lot and a no-interest home loan; Iceland, where we learn that colder is happier; Moldova, "the least happy nation on the planet" according to Veenhoven's data; Thailand, where keeping the long view of life creates much joking and laughter; Great Britain, where culture hinders happiness; India, a destination happy place; and then back home to Miami, where all that sunshine leaves our author cold. We learn that money wealth gives but a small edge.

Eric Weiner is an NPR correspondent who has reported from more than 30 countries. To write this far-reaching tome he had to travel to far-flung lands, all connected (with one exception) by a single thread: these were places where, reputedly, the citizenry is happy. Two tiny countries offer a brilliant contrast in the principles that Weiner set out to examine. Qatar and Bhutan are relatively hard to reach. Both have inhospitable climates and a low population. Both have been altered greatly in very recent history, allowing for radical changes in the lifestyle of the citizenry. Qatar is a pile of sand somewhere in the Middle East that became an earthly Eden when oil and natural gas were discovered there in such vast plentitude as to make work, for its extended family of Arabic inhabitants, obsolete. A Qatari will be paid to attend school, paid to marry, given a house and allowed to carelessly wreck as many cars as he sees fit. Rules no longer apply to the people of Qatar, in a broad sense, as long as they obey the dictates of their Islamic religion and stay inside, living within the bizarre hierarchy that dictates their society --- indoors because it is not possible to live very long without air conditioning in Qatar, which is basically a series of connected malls and mansions, and hierarchical because, of course, Qataris cannot do their own work. For that they

import Indians, Nepalis and other lesser races. These strictures made it difficult for Weiner to do what a journalist must do: interview the natives of the country. He was told that his American passport and Jewish name would prevent him from meeting real Qataris. So to experience the country, he had to be content with talking to expatriates and buying one "Ridiculously Expensive Pen.

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