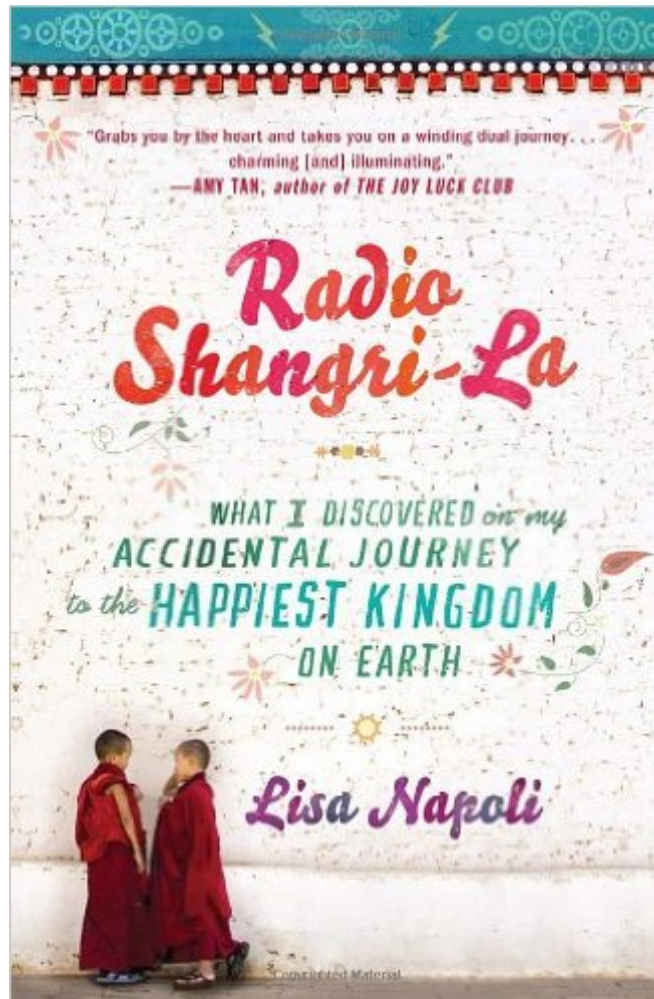


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Radio Shangri-La: What I Discovered On My Accidental Journey To The Happiest Kingdom On Earth



Synopsis

Lisa Napoli was in the grip of a crisis, dissatisfied with her life and her work as a radio journalist. When a chance encounter with a handsome stranger presented her with an opportunity to move halfway around the world, Lisa left behind cosmopolitan Los Angeles for a new adventure in the ancient Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan—said to be one of the happiest places on earth. Long isolated from industrialization and just beginning to open its doors to the modern world, Bhutan is a deeply spiritual place, devoted to environmental conservation and committed to the happiness of its people—in fact, Bhutan measures its success in Gross National Happiness rather than in GNP. In a country without a single traffic light, its citizens are believed to be among the most content in the world. To Lisa, it seemed to be a place that offered the opposite of her fast-paced life in the United States, where the noisy din of sound-bite news and cell phones dominate our days, and meaningful conversation is a rare commodity; where everyone is plugged in digitally, yet rarely connects with the people around them. Thousands of miles away from everything and everyone she knows, Lisa creates a new community for herself. As she helps to start Bhutan's first youth-oriented radio station, Kuzoo FM, she must come to terms with her conflicting feelings about the impact of the medium on a country that had been shielded from its effects. Immersing herself in Bhutan's rapidly changing culture, Lisa realizes that her own perspective on life is changing as well—and that she is discovering the sense of purpose and joy that she has been yearning for. In this smart, heartfelt, and beautifully written book, sure to please fans of transporting travel narratives and personal memoirs alike, Lisa Napoli discovers that the world is a beautiful and complicated place—and comes to appreciate her life for the adventure it is. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

I tend to enjoy travelogues that focus on weird things, like *French Dirt: The Story of a Garden in the South of France* or *A Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail*, and *Radio Shangri-La* was no exception. This was a book that was as entertaining as it was educational and inspirational and it convinced me to take a trip to Bhutan myself. The entire book is about the life and times of Lisa Napoli when she decided to leave her public radio job in Los Angeles and go work for a radio station in the tiny Asian kingdom of Bhutan. There she regales us with stories about the people there, gives us comparisons and contrasts with Bhutan and the Western World, shows us how the country is rapidly changing and becoming Westernized (for good and for bad) and most of all, we see her fall in love with this obscure, almost unknown country. You also get to see the madness that ensues when one of her Bhutanese friends comes to visit her and the drama that unfolds there. Overall, the entire book is one that is hard to put down. My only complaints is that Lisa Napoli starts to be really candid with aspects of her life such as being raped or hooking up with a guy, but then completely shuts the reader out regarding why a relationship ended. Twice she hooks up with someone that came into her life because of Bhutan and she spends a great deal of time talking about her attraction to them and the slow burn to actually becoming involved with them.

I really loved this book. I was a bit concerned at the start that it was going to be a bit too "New Age"...you know, maybe seeing this small, Buddhist kingdom thru rose-colored glasses as a cure for the modern world...but Ms. Napoli quickly put my fears to rest. (I think it's important that the book was written by someone in their mid-forties, who has lived a lot and who has gained some perspective.) To be honest, I don't know that Bhutan brought out anything in the author that wasn't already there. She is very bright and introspective and it seems to me she already knew what was important in life. She is outgoing and has many friends, and is warm and giving and not materialistic. Mainly, she was burned-out by her job and disillusioned about the news business. I think she really needed a bigtime change of scenery, but with her personality we aren't talking about a regular vacation where you go shopping and relax by the pool. She needed something more esoteric and spiritual, and that's what Bhutan provided. The thing I most enjoyed about this book was that it combined diary-like introspection with first-class reportage and humor. Ms. Napoli tells us about the awesome mountain vistas and wonderful, friendly people of Bhutan, but she also regales us with tales of greed (a Buddhist holy-man who is not averse to trying to squeeze a quick buck out of

foreigners) and dislocation, as Bhutan lurches, ever so gingerly, into the 21st century. We have a country that is trying to change from a kingdom into a parliamentary democracy, but where the elections can't be held until the monks determine what days will be most auspicious; a country that wants tourism, but that imposes a substantial fee so that only "the right sort of person" will show up.

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