

CHINA
BHUTAN
INDIA

SIGNS OF WISDOM

Bhutan promotes safe driving with witty roadside reminders

By Julie L. Kessler | Illustration by Steven Salerno

The landlocked Buddhist nation of Bhutan has intrigued me ever since I learned that in 1972 King Jigme Singye Wangchuck had declared Gross National Happiness to be a more important measure of a nation's prosperity than Gross Domestic Product. So last year, I joined a group of five others for an eight-day guided journey through the 200-mile-wide and 100-mile-long land nestled in the Himalayas between India and China. I discovered that one of Bhutan's most endearing traits is its approach to driving. For example, Thimphu, the capital, has no stoplights. Uniformed, white-gloved policemen perched in elevated gazebo-like structures direct traffic here.

Driving in Bhutan requires a neurosurgeon's precision. Graffiti-painted cargo trucks bearing eyelashes artfully styled atop headlights execute hairpin turns along one-lane highways and through 10,320-foot-high Dochula Pass, where a foggy abyss lies on one side and cattle often roam on the other.

Signs, many in English, with Buddhist-inspired sentiments remind drivers to keep their roadside wits. Here are my favorites, along with a heartfelt *ka ding che la* (thank you) to our driver, an automotive rock star.

Julie L. Kessler authored the award-winning book *Fifty-Fifty, the Clarity of Hindsight*.



TIME IS MONEY,
BUT LIFE IS PRECIOUS

SAFETY ON THE ROAD
MEANS SAFE TEA AT HOME

LIVE FOR YOUR
TODAY, DRIVE FOR
YOUR TOMORROW

SPEED IS
A KNIFE THAT
CUTS LIFE

PEEP PEEP,
DON'T SLEEP

DRIVING AND
DRINKING,
A FATAL
COCKTAIL

KEEP YOUR NERVES
ON SHARP CURVES

LIFE IS SHORT,
DON'T MAKE
IT SHORTER

MOUNTAINS ARE A
PLEASURE, BUT ONLY IF
YOU DRIVE WITH LEISURE

