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Pigs and Cheerleaders: Bhutan

By **Ben B.**

Soft spoken Bhutanese who is comfortable in many cultures, Kelzang Wangchuk, known as Cheechay to his family, took part in an exchange program to the USA earlier this year and has been staying at Sarah Kohler's home in New Salem. Although he was born in the isolated capital of Bhutan, Thimphu, he has spent most of his childhood in India at an international school known as Woodstock.

"Woodstock is a prep school so it's much more difficult than schooling here." Kelzang explains. The adjustment from Woodstock to Mahar was not as stressful for Kelzang as other exchange students due to being exposed to a lot of American culture. "It's an American school, it's like here...most of the teachers are American... they serve American foods," Kelzang told us. Although his school was similar in many respects to Mahar he did note

some differences. He said that the difficulty of classes is less here and he had never seen or heard of cheerleaders.

However, the differences between Bhutanese and American teenage life do extend beyond cheerleaders. Outside of the home in Bhutan, the Bhutanese are expected to wear traditional Bhutanese clothes (Gho and Kira.) In fact, the king of Bhutan decreed this, and now it is a law that you must wear Bhutanese clothes in public. Although there is a law saying this, many other laws, they aren't enforced too well. Another example that Kelzang gave is the age restrictions on driving, drinking and smoking; there are age restrictions (18, 21, and 18 respectively) but they are not enforced.

About marijuana Kelzang said, "It's everywhere... I spoke to a friend in New York; he said that they feed it to the pigs." Marijuana can be found growing all over Bhutan; however it was not until recently, when Bhutan

opened its long-closed borders to the rest of the world that smoking marijuana became a popular pastime.

Other than traveling to Thailand on vacation with his family, Kelzang spends a lot of his free-time playing basketball and cricket with his friends, and he continues to play basketball here. After playing a game of cricket with his friends perhaps Kelzang has some *Ema Datshi*, a popular Bhutanese dish. *Ema Datshi*, a spicy chili and cheese stew, is one of the biggest things that Kelzang misses from Bhutan—its food.

When returning to India later this year, Kelzang plans to attend Woodstock for one more year. "It's a bigger deal (than Mahar) the senior year" he explained., Apparently, Kelzang has found the U.S. to be exactly where he wants to be, because after completing his senior year he has plans to return to the U.S. to attend college.



Kelzang Wangchuk, from Bhutan, is staying with Sarah Kohler in New Salem

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Bhutan: An Exotic Adventure Awaits

By **Mike M.**

If you've ever thought of traveling to a foreign country perhaps you should take a trip to Bhutan. Without much hassle you can receive a visa but the visa may not be cleared by the Bhutanese Tourism Authority for at least a month.

Though there are no limits to the number of people allowed to

visit the country, there are a few rules you must follow. Most importantly you have to use a pre-arranged itinerary and pay around \$165.00-\$200.00 a day, unless invited by a Bhutan inhabitant (depending on what time of year you go). There are, however, problems associated with tourism which, if not controlled, can have devastating impact on the local environment. Since Bhutan has had

centuries of isolationism, it has an ecosystem that is virtually unscathed. This ecosystem also plays host too many exotic animal and plant species.

Bhutan is a country of beauty. Its breathtaking scenery and religious temples alone are enough of a reason to visit the country. The best time to visit Bhutan would be during the



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