

Matt Bowles: Hey, everybody. It's Matt Bowles. Welcome to The Maverick Show. My guest today is Amanda Gedney. She is a 25-year-old CEO and founder of Settle In Abroad, a relocation service that helps digital nomads and teachers move to Chiang Mai, Thailand. She founded Settle In Abroad in Chiang Mai at age 22 and has since partnered with a local Thai legal services company so she can help digital nomads navigate the legal and visa processes required to live long term in Thailand and legally start their own businesses as foreign nationals.

Settle In Abroad also offers short term travel programs, tours, and experiences in Thailand all of which are carefully vetted to ensure they are ethical and helping the Thai community prosper. Amanda primarily employs Thai women and supports them in improving their businesses and personal brands. As a socially conscious company, Settle In Abroad plants 12 trees per program purchased through its partnership with one tree planted and also works closely to support Warm Heart Children's House, which supports orphans and Hill Tribe children just outside of Chiang Mai. Amanda is also a hula hooper and fire spinner.

She teaches hula hoop dance workshops, manages the fire spinning performances at the Jai Thep Festival in Chiang Mai and produces a series of herself hula hooping around the world. And she's been to 35 countries. Amanda, welcome to the show.

Amanda Gedney: Thank you, Matt. I'm so lucky to be here.

Matt: I am so excited to have you here. We should set the context. You are actually in Chiang Mai today where you are based. And I am in the same country but not in the same city. I'm in Bangkok. So, just a stone's throw away. So, unfortunately, we are not in person having a bottle of wine today. We are doing this remotely but very, very close and in the same time zone.

Amanda: Well, **[Thai]**, Matt.

Matt: **[Thai]** to you as well. We should talk about how we met. You and I have known each other for about two years now. Do you want to share the story of how we initially met?

Amanda: Sure. Well, you were an amazing keynote speaker at the Nomad Summit. And I thought you were great. I was super interested in

your whole business and just your carry on lifestyle as well. And my friend, Jean, and I just approached you eating snacks and then, we just chatted along. And in both Jean and my natural ways, we're like you've never been to Chiang Mai before, let's take you to get pizza. So, then we took you to a local spot to get pizza, had some wine and got to know each other some more. And I've been following your travels throughout these two years.

Matt: Well, I was so impressed with you immediately when you approached me and started talking to me in terms of just your confidence and your charisma. And then, I was like you do what, and you run this business. I'm like how old are you and you were 23 at the time. And my head was spinning. And then, you're like, "I will take you to the best pizza place in Chiang Mai," because at this point, I was like really, is there really good pizza in Chiang Mai because good pizza in Asia is not the easiest thing to find all of the time. And you said, "I will take you to the best pizza place in Chiang Mai."

And sure enough, you did. And I have still been telling people about it to this day because it's outside of the main sort of Nimman area where most of the nomads stay.

Amanda: Yeah. And that's where I live right around the block from there. And many of the foreigner communities live there maybe a year after being in Chiang Mai realizing they can have bigger houses and be more surrounded by nature. So, we took you to a secret spot.

Matt: It is a secret spot. Do you want to announce the name of it on this podcast so that anybody going to Chiang Mai or living in Chiang Mai can experience it?

Amanda: Yeah. Shout out to Adderack Pizza.

Matt: It's so good. I didn't know what to expect. I was so impressed. It's definitely the best pizza I have had in Chiang Mai for sure. So, that's amazing. And then, I've been following your journey, your travels and your business journey, over the last two years and just super, super impressed with all of the stuff you're doing and I wanted to get you on the show for sure. Maybe we should just start off with, I think, one of the coolest things you do is this fire spinning stuff and the fire spinning at the Jai Thep Festival and

everything else.

So, maybe can you just talk about, for people that maybe have never seen a fire spinning performance, they don't even know what I'm talking about when I use that term, can you explain what fire spinning is, in general, and then what a choreographed fire spinning performance looks like?

Amanda: Sure. Yeah. So, fire spinning is – well, first, you can't just fire spin without knowing how to use these props when they're not on fire, of course. So, this is called flow arts is the most general term. So, that's hula hooping, poi, are like the balls on a string. And there are just many props that you can light on fire and the fire fans. So, I've been hula hooping for six years. And when I came to Chiang Mai three years ago, I'm originally from New York, I hadn't had a chance to light my hula hoop on fire because you can't just do that openly in New York City.

So, you have to have a special prop. So, I have a day hula hoop that's not on fire and then, I have my fire hoop. So, it has wicks at the end. So, you have to have kerosene and it's a specific type that you need. And yeah, you dip the wicks in kerosene and then, you light it on fire. And then, you hula hoop with it. You dance with the different props. And safety is, of course, so important and some fire spinners don't find it as important as others, which is a little concerning. But in my years of doing it now, I've kind of mastered the safety and the performance bit of it.

Matt: Yeah. I was going to say this sounds like the one thing that a parent would tell a child never to do.

Amanda: Yeah. Sorry, mom.

Matt: Don't light something on fire and then, spin it around and play with it. So, what are the safety aspects and the learning aspects of someone like once you're a hula hooper, like you said, you've kind of mastered the techniques of the props when they're not on fire? What is sort of that transition into learning how to light them on fire and perform with them?

Amanda: Yeah. Ideally, you just are with someone that is an advance fire spinner and cares about safety the first time you do it because, even though I've been hula hooping for years, hula hooping with

fire is almost like relearning how to hula hoop because you can put a different amount of wicks per hoop. But, generally, you have five wicks. So, in certain hula hoop tricks I do, like I stop it with my arm and things and grab it. But in doing that, you're, literally, going to grab flames.

So, I remember the first time I did it. I just had the hula hoop just around my waist and just got really dizzy and did it until it went out for like eight minutes that it lasts. But yeah, the safety, as it goes, you should have a bucket of water and absolutely a wet cloth that is cotton. Cotton is the least flammable material. So, that's really important to be wearing that. You never want to wear polyester. It's tough because I want to be wearing the most sparkly, sequined things but that's the most flammable thing you can wear.

So, cotton cloth is there to put the wicks out if you don't want to spin until the fire is gone or to be thrown on you if you light on fire. And then, the bucket of water is really there to just, literally, if you are on fire, someone will throw it on you. But that's very rare. The cloth is absolutely the most important thing you need. And at least one person but two is great because they can look from all angles. And it's also really important for crowd control as well because in these settings, usually, there is that one drunk guy that wants to go directly in front of you and take a video and be so oblivious. So, that's the hardest thing really.

Matt: So, can you talk a little bit about what the Jai Thep Festival is and then, what the fire spinning performance actually looks like when it's fully choreographed and being delivered there?

Amanda: Yeah. So, Jai Thep, this will be the fourth one that's happening in February. So, it's been put on by the amazing hippy foreigner community in Chiang Mai. So, luckily, I have attended every one. I'm so lucky when I first arrived in Chiang Mai, someone was like oh, there is this brand new festival. I think I paid \$12.00 to go to a day festival coming from New York. I was like are you kidding. Do you want me to buy like seven tickets just for me? And it was amazing. So, now they have camping. And they're amazing. It's a super ethical festival. They have such a limited amount of waste. They don't have plastic cups.

But anyway, they have at least three music stages and have

performing acts from all over the world. And the Thai community is really – there's a big spotlight on them as well. They get the first acts. And yeah, so this past year, I helped manage the fire space. And this was the first time we were really bringing in big safety measures because, at many festivals, fire spinners are kind of free to spin anywhere, which is great. But Jai Thep is a family friendly event. And as great as fire spinning is and as great as fire spinners think that everyone wants to watch it all of the time, there are the fumes that are happening all of the time.

So, we created one specific space for everyone to spin. And we had it only open a few hours a night. And it actually isn't really a choreographed routine. But about three people go on at a time usually with different props and kind of just like free flow. And that's kind of what fire spinners – it looks amazing when you have it choreographed. But we had people coming from all over the world. So, we didn't have time to choreograph it. But some duos and trios of people had their own thing. So, it was really just free for anyone to flow and spin however they pleased. And we got great feedback from the safety and the professionalism of it.

Matt: Amazing. Well, I definitely want to – is there a video available that we can link up in the show notes so people can see what this actually looks like?

Amanda: I'm sure there is. I'll look but yes, I'll definitely send you something to show what I'm talking about.

Matt: Cool. Yeah. I'd love to link it up so people can take a look. And then, your hula hooping, the non-fire hula hooping that you do, can you talk a little bit about that and the project that you do where you are hula hooping around the world? Because I've seen some incredible video of your hula hooping in places like Angkor Wat, which is an ancient temple complex in Cambodia. And you just go to these really epic legendary places. And then, you do these incredible hula hoop performances. Can you just talk about kind of how that started and what that means to you?

Amanda: Yeah, thanks. Hula hooping is really the best thing that I do for myself. So, the fire spinning is great and I love it. But if I had to choose between fire spinning and just hula hooping regularly, I would. And that took me a while to kind of figure out the relationship with it. But I love hula hooping because it's really

what I do to relieve stress and exercise and enjoy myself. So, when I just graduated high school going into my freshman year of college, my friend, Taylor, had joined the hula hoop club at her university. And being from Long Island, we just spent our summers on the beach.

And what else do you have to do besides hula hoop on the beach? So, she just started teaching me tricks and I was like this is amazing. So, then I started the hula hoop club at my college, FIT, the Fashion Institute of Technology. And it's amazing to learn tricks on your own. It takes so long because, basically, YouTube is your best friend when you're trying to learn the tricks. But then, of course, like anything else, the second you meet someone else that knows other tricks then, you learn much faster. So, I was by no means a professional hula hooper at that time. I knew a few tricks but I, of course, like to start things.

So, I just made a group and found other people that were like lost hula hoopers in New York City with nowhere to spin. So, then we had an amazing community and learned so many things. And then, it's also great going to music festivals. You always meet new people and learn from them as well. So, then my hula hooping around the world, I have a travel hoop, which I'm surprised many people don't have because there are many hula hoops that you can coil down and maybe put on the back of a backpack. But mine actually breaks into six pieces so it can actually fit in a very small backpack.

Every bag I have it can fit in. So, I can have it, literally, anywhere I go. When I studied abroad, I started bringing it around Europe. And it was always funny. New friends I was traveling with I was like, "Sorry, this is a thing that I do." And it was really cold in a lot of places. It's not the easiest thing to put together. And then, I'm like okay, here is my phone. Take my video. But yeah, I just wanted to come up with something to have as a memory per place that wasn't exactly a material good. And then, yeah, it's just come from there. I think I've probably hula hooped in 20 countries at this point.

Matt:

That's amazing. That's so awesome. Let's go back a little bit and kind of go through your journey. You mentioned New York. Can you talk a little bit about where in New York you grew up? And then, you also mentioned FIT. So, I'm super curious about how the

Fashion Institute of Technology eventually led you on the trajectory to move to Chiang Mai and start a business. So, can you kind of take us on that journey?

Amanda:

Yeah, sure. So, I grew up in West Islip, New York on Long Island. And I lived there up until I went to college in New York City. Yeah, I have an amazing family, very supportive. And they've always let me do what I want. My mom has said that forever. "Yeah, I'll tell Amanda to do something but she's going to do what she wants." But luckily, I was never really a rebel so she knew whatever I was doing was for the greater good. But yeah, I'd say starting when I was 12 and we had to start those home economics classes, I had been waiting for that forever.

I'm like I want to learn how to sew clothes. I want to do this. And I was awful at it I remember. We had to sew a pillow and gosh, I couldn't do it. And we had to sew shorts and I was like I think my life is over. I want to be a fashion designer. I can't do this. So, then at that time, I was kind of looking for like a summer camp or something to do. And even at age 13, I saw that FIT has this pre-college program but you have to be in high school to start it. So, I decided I don't like math. I don't like sewing. I really can't draw and have no interest in learning how to do it. So, I saw they had a fashion styling class.

So, I did it for four days a week with two friends. We were commuting into New York City and that's a big deal as a 14-year-old. And I didn't like the styling class that much. But then, two years later, I decided to do this pre-college again at FIT every Saturday of my junior year of high school, which is the hardest time when you're doing SAT's and college things. And I took a fashion merchandizing class. And I absolutely loved it and I really did stand out to that professor who wrote me an amazing letter of recommendation for FIT. I don't know who else could be that FIT obsessed.

I bought my first sweatpants in tenth grade and still have them now, my FIT college gear. But learning that there is a business side of fashion and I've always been interested in the history of fashion and thrift shopping. I realized that was my interest seeing how far one article of clothing could go and how related to history it is and how relevant it is to the world. So, then I decided to apply for the advertising marketing communications program at FIT. And at



FIT, that's pretty much one of the few colleges where you have to choose your major before arriving. And if you change it, you pretty much lose a year.

You have to add another year on. So, because of all of my time before at the pre-colleges, I was able to choose the right major, which is awesome for me. And even though it was at FIT, it wasn't completely fashion oriented. All of the professors had experience in the car industry and so many different industries. So, it was a really well rounded degree.

Matt: Amazing. And so, then did you say you did get to study abroad as part of your college program? And I'm curious about that and also where your love and passion for travel came from and how that evolved.

Amanda: Yeah. Even before I was going to FIT, for some reason, I found French movies. I love them. And I'm like okay, I'm going to go to FIT. I'm going to study French and then, I'm going to study abroad in Paris my junior year. I don't think as strategically as this anymore. I'm kind of amazed with myself. But yeah, I made that happen. So, coming into my sophomore year, I'm talking to the study abroad program. And they're like, "Yeah, we have a program in Paris." It's triple the cost of your state tuition at FIT. FIT is amazing because if you're a New York State resident, you get the SUNI tuition.

So, I'm going into the second best fashion show in the world at a SUNI state tuition. So, I was like there is no way I'm going to pay that much to study abroad. And I was like, "Has anyone else ever gone somewhere in Paris before?" And they're like, "Yeah, this one guy ten years ago went to this school. But we lost touch with the school." And I'm like, "Great. Give me the name of the school." In three weeks, I started a program there.

Matt: Amazing.

Amanda: So, I went by myself because no one else was going because it wasn't really a real program yet, which was the best thing just showing up. I remember that flight. Just showing up in Paris and meeting my roommate and I made some amazing friends. So, that is really where my love for travel has ignited. I didn't waste a second in those six months abroad. I didn't watch Netflix once.



Any time I wasn't doing schoolwork, and the schoolwork wasn't too difficult, I was at a museum, I was writing, sitting in a café by myself. Yeah. I just fell in love with traveling.

And because Paris is such a great hub, I was just looking at flights every weekend to go anywhere and to as many places as possible. So, every Wednesday, the group of friends that I made, we would drink some wine and just do the Sky Scanner search flights to anywhere. And we would just go to the cheapest place that showed up. So, we had a group of friends going to Amsterdam and I had been already. So, with one friend, I'm like, "Are you down to go anywhere?" And he's like, "Yeah, sure. Why not?" So, we found flights from Paris to Warsaw, Poland for 30 euros round trip. And I'm like all right, we're going there.

And, of course, the flight got in at 1:00 a.m. We didn't know what we're doing. Just funny things. And there is not so much to do there. So, then we took a bus to Krakow, Poland. And the person in the hostel bed above me was this wonderful guy. He was also from the US. We were chatting. We had a lot of things in common. And he said he was working on his online TEFL, so the Teach English as a Foreign Language certification. He was going to move to Thailand in a few months with his girlfriend. And this is halfway through my study abroad living my best life.

It's like wow, I can make this happen. So, I still had one year left of school and I really wanted to finish that. So, I just kept in touch with him, followed him on Facebook. He's like, "Yeah, Chiang Mai is great. You can get a job there." And I just said okay. So, my boyfriend and I bought one way tickets from New York to Chiang Mai right after graduating and we just went for it.

Matt:

Wow. Now, being in the fashion space and being in Paris in the fashion space and drinking wine and having all of that experience versus moving to Chiang Mai, Thailand to teach English, those seem to be two very different cultural experiences, career trajectories. They appear to be very disparate choices. Now, I actually love both Paris and Chiang Mai. So, I appreciate both of those experiences.

But at the time, if you were to go back and think about your thought process at the time between those two things and how you were sort of in the middle and considering both of those things,

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what was that thought process like and what, ultimately led you to feel that moving to teach English in Chiang Mai was the best next move for you?

Amanda:

Yeah. So, going to school at FIT – I know I’m like FIT, FIT. You’ve got to send them this podcast. It’s an amazing school to go to because I had a completely different experience than a lot of my friends going to school in Upstate New York or other rural places where all they do is just go to school and party. But at FIT, you were like a real person living in New York City. You lived in an apartment and you had internships. I did seven internships in my four years of college. And in that, I was also freelancing and doing some social media freelancing and other things. So, I took those four years very seriously.

So, I feel like I had such a good glimpse into my future. I interned at Calvin Klein for about two years and I loved it. And every other time I interned there, I was just starting to see the differences in myself between other people that I was interning with and other people I was working with because, in people’s free time, all they were doing was online shopping and looking at the next trend. And I was on travel blogs. And all they are talking about is the one trip they take a year for a week to go to Italy or even Florida and that was it.

And then, their daily conversations are just like what workout class they’re on and what diet they’re doing that I just couldn’t relate to at all. So, towards the end of my college experience, I was realizing my resume was stacked. Even in my second year at Calvin Klein, they were really asking me to quit school and start working for them because my manager had quit. So, I did her position for about three months. And yeah, they were really asking me to quit school. And that was approaching my junior year. So, if I had done that, I wouldn’t have had the chance to study abroad.

So, I thought about it. I was like well, I could have this amazing job or take night classes or something but I won’t be able to study abroad. And I’ve been thinking about this forever. So, basically, studying abroad changed everything for me. I realized how the fashion industry is very materialistic. And I really enjoyed the traveling. I definitely brought way too much stuff with me on my study abroad experience. But when I did these weekend trips, I had a little backpack and realized you don’t need this much stuff. And,

of course, seeing some poverty and seeing some things and realizing how important people are over material goods.

And in the fashion industry, a lot of the stereotypes are true. They're very, very catty and very competitive. So, my love for people just wasn't meshing in that environment.

Matt: Wow. And now, at this point in your life having been to over 35 countries, let me just ask you a macro question about what travel means to you. Why do you travel? What do you get out of it? What does travel mean to you?

Amanda: I'm just my absolute best self when I'm traveling. I think anything you do when you're traveling is better than sitting down or being in the same place that you've been living. You just open yourself up to so many opportunities that you wouldn't have if you didn't leave your hometown or environment. You really just never know what's going to happen when you travel, who you're going to meet, how is this going to change your life, how this place is going to make you feel. So, not only, of course, I love meeting the locals and learning the languages and trying the food.

It's just also meeting fellow travelers and fellow ex-pats living places and just understanding people's lifestyles and patterns of thinking. You're, basically, unlearning everything you've ever been taught. So, travel, I just love it so much and plan on doing it forever.

Matt: What is your current lifestyle design structure? How much are you traveling? How are you choosing the places that you travel? And what is sort of your travel cadence?

Amanda: So, I'm probably going to about four to – well, it depends. Of course, when I'm in Europe, I go to a lot of different countries. But I'm probably traveling four times a year. So, my home base is Chiang Mai. And I really do like having a home base. It makes me feel healthy and grounded and really get work done. And because Chiang Mai is so affordable like I have a three-bedroom house for \$300.00 a month. And just being from New York, it's like I can have a house. I live in a bigger place than most people I know in America and I could never have this big of a house. Yeah. So, there is that.

And I have a cat. And it's really nice to have a home base. When I travel, I have someone live in our house but it's kind of nice because I end up just meeting someone new who lives in our house and it's great. So, I do visit the US a lot. That's one thing. My family and my friends are really important to me. And that's a big factor in me sustaining this lifestyle. So, I see my family about two to three times a year. So, I make the trip to New York at least once or twice a year. And my parents are amazing and they're only becoming even more amazing. They're so open to travel. So, they'll meet me somewhere as well.

Last year, we met in Portugal for Christmas and then, I went home in July. I'm going home again in December. But every time I go to New York, I still try to go somewhere new along the way whether it's in the US or find a cheap flight out of the US somewhere else. But yeah, I'm probably traveling like four times a year. And I usually travel for like a month at a time. Occasional week trips here and there but if I'm going to buy the ticket out of Asia or something, I'm at least going to be traveling for a month.

Matt: Awesome. So, okay. Let's continue on your journey though. You bought one way tickets to Chiang Mai right after you graduated from college. And your approach there was to go and then, just teach English and live in Chiang Mai and experience that culture. Can you talk about what that was like just getting to Chiang Mai, acclimating? And I would love for you to talk a little bit now that you've lived there for a number of years as your base what that city is like. What do you love about Chiang Mai? How would you describe it to people who have never been?

Amanda: Yeah. It's funny because my boyfriend, Sean, and I bought our one way tickets. And we kind of just knew we were going to live in Chiang Mai. It's really crazy to choose you're going to live somewhere before you've actually been there. But for some reason, we were like let's just do it. I remember first going on Nimman, I was like okay, cool. This is where I'm going to eat. This is what I'm going to do. I didn't even give myself the question like oh if I don't like this, I'm going to leave. No, we're going to live here. We're going to make it work. So, I think going with that attitude like everything that happened was just a bonus.

That's actually really the mindset that has helped me with traveling. I almost have no expectation of anywhere I go so then,

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everything is really just a bonus. So, I'm never let down by anything ever. I'm definitely annoying to people sometimes like wow, this food is great. Yeah. Because I just assume that I just go in with this bland perspective and wowed by everything. So, yeah, that's how I was the first two months of Chiang Mai and I still am now. Yeah. First, we arrived in Bangkok but we, basically, were just jetlagged and didn't feel pressured to see anything because we were going to move there.

But we had taken the overnight train from Bangkok to Chiang Mai. And we didn't bring too much stuff with us. But it was funny. We had met a couple from California on the train and they're like, "Oh, how long are you going to be in Chiang Mai?" And we're like, "Oh, we're moving here," as we're taking this 12 hour train to Chiang Mai. And they're like, "Oh, have you ever been? Do you have any recommendations?" I'm like, "No, we're the same as you. We booked a hostel for about a week and we'll figure it out." And that hostel is so funny. So, we were broke also. We had just graduated from college.

So, I had a little bit of savings left. I had spent so much money abroad in Paris. I went to 15 countries because when I was studying broad in Paris, I traveled like I was never going to travel again. Even though I was getting this new perspective, I was like I'm never going to have this opportunity again. I'm going to be in a corporate job and never have this opportunity again. So, I went to 15 countries in 6 months at that time. So, then I slowly brought back a little bit of savings but we didn't have much to start at all in Chiang Mai. So, we're in a 12 bedroom dorm and we were waking up putting on teaching interview clothes.

My boyfriend is putting on slacks and nice shoes at this super backpacker hostel. They're like, "Where are you going?" And we're like, "To get a job." And the receptionist, they were so entertained by us. We'd come back from an interview and then, we'd be like, "Where should we live?" They're just showing us a laminated map of Chiang Mai. I hadn't even looked at a map of Chiang Mai. And they're like, "Well, maybe in this area." So, yeah, we found a real estate agent online. And she's like, "Oh, can you get to this location?" And we're like, "We don't know how. We don't know how to ride a motorbike or whatever."

She was entertained by us also. And at that point, of course, many

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foreigners are living in Chiang Mai. It wasn't that long ago. But still, Thailand has really blown up as a tourist hot spot in these past couple of years. So, she was amazing and picked us up in our car, took us to these places. And yeah, we just picked an apartment. We signed a three month lease. And then, we had seen an advertisement. We were just walking around looking for apartments. We saw this advertisement that we need a TEFL tutor for my students. And we're like all right. Let's call that. We should get some money like the first job.

We met with this lovely man the next day. And he was so entertained by us, too. He's like, great, of course, I want these people from America teaching my kids. He's like, "Oh, wow. You just got here three days ago." And we're like, "Yeah. We signed our apartment lease." And he's like, "How are you going to move in your stuff?" And we're like, "Well, we don't really have stuff." He's like, "How are you going to buy stuff?" And we're like, "A taxi, I don't know." He picked us up in his family SUV that night and took us to Tesco, which is like the Target of Southeast Asia and helped us buy all of the things we needed.

And he brought his student, Kanita, with him. And she helped us pick out the exact things we needed and not overpay for anything. So, that experience really set the idea for Settle In Abroad in my head because we were so lucky to be set up in the perfect way. We were trying to buy all of this ridiculous kitchen equipment and things because, in most of Thailand, apartments don't have kitchens or ovens. So, we didn't know what to do about that. So, Kanita just set the tone of how to live in Chiang Mai and really set up the experience for us.

Matt: So, how did your entrepreneurial journey begin? So, you went from studying fashion and then, you went into teaching English. And then, how did the entrepreneurial thing come about and how did that journey proceed?

Amanda: Yeah. Well, my whole life, I've always been starting things. I haven't really known – I hadn't labeled myself as an entrepreneur because I wasn't exactly making money off of the things that I was starting. I started the hula hoop club. I started the study abroad program. I just made things really difficult. And I, basically, would explain it like I'm never happy with what's out there so I just make my own and I don't really care if anyone else wants to do it. I'm

just going to do it for me. So, that's what I've been doing forever. So, teaching English was amazing. I did it for a year and a half.

And after that first year, I basically had the idea for Settle In Abroad after teaching for six months because what we did was such a risk and it worked out that I wanted to make it easier for people to do the same and have an even better experience than us because, of course, we had the help in picking out what to buy. But in the first three months, we just blew through money because coming from the US, Thailand is so cheap. Beer is \$1.00 or a meal is \$1.00. Everything is \$1.00. But somehow, those dollars go away quite fast. And ATM fees are high and things.

So, in the three months, we really were pretty broke and couldn't go out and were just relying on our salary. And then, finally, after a few months, we got settled again. So, then I was thinking yeah, that was fine that experience. We were totally okay. But people could do this and it could be much easier for them. So, when you're a teacher in Thailand or in Southeast Asia, it's definitely a lot easier than if you're a teacher in America or a western country because you usually teach only about three classes a day, which is about three hours but you're supposed to be in the teaching office from like 7:45 to 4:00.

So, you have a lot of time. You have a lot of free time. So, I was blogging. I've always liked to write. And so, I have the time to develop this business. So, I kind of just went for it. I made this website and it was actually first called Teach in Chiang Mai. And yeah, I set up a website and then, joined a lot of the Facebook groups about moving abroad, teaching abroad, all of these things. And I started just cold messaging people on Facebook and had a few people just pay me to get them a job. And this is while I'm still a teacher. And it was pretty funny because I had gotten a few teachers a job at the school I was at.

And I don't even know how I finagled all of that and profited from it. But it was like this school I'm working at is amazing so it's a win/win for everyone and it really was. So, that's kind of how it started. People just started paying me to get a teaching job.

Matt:

So, can you talk from there about how it evolved? Because now, I know you're also relocating digital nomads that have nothing to do with teaching to Chiang Mai. By the way, just to sort of clarify for



people that maybe are not familiar with Chiang Mai, this is really one of the, if not the No. 1, digital nomad hub in the world I would say where people want to go to start their digital nomad journey and their location independent entrepreneurial journey and all of that. And you and I met at the Nomad Summit, which attracts 400 plus people a year from around the world.

And I was just talking to all of these people that are like oh, I just made my way to Chiang Mai to sort of figure things out. And now, I'm here and I have this runway for myself and I'm, basically, just immersing myself in the community and all of the different entrepreneurial groups and all of that kind of stuff that is in Chiang Mai already to sort of get my business off the ground. And one of the reasons that people choose Chiang Mai is because the cost of living is so low, as you say, that it gives you just a much longer runway to be able to get your business set up and functioning.

And also, there are so many other people there that have skills and experiences. And it's so organized both socially and business wise that it really provides a lot of value for digital nomads to go there. And so, can you talk a little bit about how Settle In Abroad evolved to service digital nomads as well as teachers and also explain what is the relocation package that you offer for people that want to try to relocate to Chiang Mai?

Amanda:

Sure. So, yeah, Chiang Mai is amazing and I love the Nomad Summit because I just wake up and I go from my house. And people come from all over the world there. And I'm just like hey, this is my home. Thanks for coming. Thanks for making the trip, happy to see you. So, I realize it was important to get people teaching jobs. And then, realizing that apartments, there are so many condos in Chiang Mai but finding houses and things are less obvious. And also, setting up your internet and your phone plans, it's not as self-explanatory as you'd believe it would be.

And a lot of places, if you just show up to the internet provider, they're only going to let you do a one year lease, all of these things. So, I kind of have the caveat and background knowledge of different ways of doing things. So, yeah, basically, I wanted to make sure that people weren't overpaying for what they needed. So, I got good advice to not pay more than 10,000 baht for an apartment, which is \$300.00. I know the US dollar has dropped a bit. But at that time, it was \$300.00. And that was to split with my

boyfriend.

So, if you're living alone in Chiang Mai, you don't want to be paying more than like 6,000 to 8,000 baht a month because you can pay 10,000; 12,000; 15,000; 20,000 baht and you might get a pool or a slightly bigger place but the best part about Chiang Mai is that it's cheap. And because it's cheap, depending on what your lifestyle is, a lot of people I know don't work that much. There are different groups. The digital nomads, the hippy artists. But anyway, anyone coming to Chiang Mai is most likely trying to live their life in financial freedom, give themselves a flow state to get their work done.

So, I wanted to set up the packages, especially on a teaching salary you make about 30,000 baht a month. That's \$1,000.00, which is plenty to live here and still eat western food and go out and things. So, I wanted to make sure that teachers were paying the right amount for their apartment and not putting themselves in an uncomfortable situation. They come here for financial freedom and to not worry. So, then also, the same thing I thought about digital nomads. Not everyone wants to be a teacher and can't because they're very strict about being from a native English speaking country.

And just as my mindset goes, I want to help anyone no matter what country or race they're from. So, I thought about well, people want to work online and they want to live here and it's not as obvious either. So, the same thing. No matter if you're a digital nomad making so much money, you most likely want to save that money to travel and maybe have a home base here. So, I help digital nomads get their apartment. So, everything is set up for them before they arrive.

And now, I can also offer a visa. This is brand new as of last week. So, you can live in Chiang Mai for as long as you want. But my package is specifically for a year.

Matt:

Can you just go through the different pieces of the package? If somebody is like I'd like to relocate to Chiang Mai, what does Settle In Abroad offer to that person if they were to reach out and go to the website today? What will they get as part of that package?

Amanda: Yeah. So, they almost have to do nothing. So, they can just pay for my package. They can book their flight. I can book their flight for them, find them a good deal. Anyway, they arrive at the airport. I am personally there. I pick them up with my lovely driver. We take them directly to the apartment that I have already negotiated. Usually, I can negotiate apartments for much lower because I have my connections here. So, the apartment price is negotiated for the amount of time you want to be here. Your lease is already signed. I pay for the first month rent. So, that's included in the package. So, the package costs \$2,600.00.

And in that, your first month rent is included. Your wi-fi is already set up so the wi-fi set up fee and your first month wi-fi bill are included. And the internet is just ridiculously fast in Chiang Mai like speeds the US has never seen. So, you are set no matter what work you need to do. The next day or depending on where you land, I'll take you to the major mall, show you the banks, set up your SIM card. I'll get you unlimited data for the month, pay for that and then, show you how to refill it each month. There are also a few tourist attractions included. Yeah. And I, basically, show you how to set up perfectly.

What you get from using my program is what took me like seven months to figure out. And you don't waste any money. You arrive, you're sitting in your apartment that's all set up. You have your wi-fi. You don't have to do anything. And yet, you have to pay a program fee but I believe it saves people so much money because I show you what markets to go to, what you should be paying for fruit, what you should be paying for vegetables and things because there are many different ways you can just waste your money but still think it's cheap. There's a wonderful imported grocery store here but you should never buy vegetables there.

You're just going to waste your money. You can buy imported goods there. So, I take you to the local spots, how much you should be paying for Thai food, the good food and when it's worth splurging money on western food and things. So, I basically tell you how to use your money, explain what the baht is in comparison to your currency, and I set you up. And you can just get your job done and not worry about anything.

Matt: And then, other sorts of attributes like people want to join a gym, people want to rent a scooter, people want to kind of set up all of

these other aspects of their life as well, you guys help with that.

Amanda: Yes. If you are comfortable in starting a motorbike right away, that motorbike rental will be outside of your apartment. Here is the key. You have it for free for a month and you can rent for me for any longer. I also have bicycles, too, if you prefer that. And I'll also help you get a Thai driver's license because you really want to get that because if you don't have a Thai motorbike license, in most cases, your insurance won't cover an accident. So, that's what I've learned in a few years. That's not really written places. So, I just save you from so much on arrival.

Matt: Awesome. And then, in terms of visas and if people want to just make sure they're legally working in the country and all of that kind of stuff, can you talk about what you can offer on that front as well now?

Amanda: Yeah. So, now that I've partnered with MJ&Co, a legal service here, I can now help with visas, which is great because it's definitely getting more difficult to live here as a foreigner. The country is cracking down on some things. But there is the hand to hand combat visa, which sounds funny. You don't really have to do that much. You can take it as seriously as you want. There are a Muay Thai and the education visa. So, education visa you could be learning Thai or Chinese. Muay Thai, you can be learning exercise and art of Muay Thai. And hand to hand combat is kind of just a visa.

You're supposed to be learning like military tactics but yeah, I don't know how much you're really going to learn. But there are ways that you can get a visa for a whole year. And now, with the visa service that I provide, your one year visa is included in that \$2,600.00. So, you are set. I'll have you arrive on a two month tourist visa you can get from wherever you are in the world from a Thai embassy. And then, you'll have to take one visa run to Laos. And then, you don't have to leave Chiang Mai for a year if you didn't want to.

And every three months, you have to do this 90 day check in at immigration but I have a service that you don't even have to show up at immigration. So, you're literally set because a lot of people waste a lot of time deciding their visas. They'll do the tourist visa for a while. They'll have to keep going back to the same places

they don't want to go through throwing money and risking getting back in the country but you'll be set up with your visa right away and not even have to step foot in immigration.

Matt: Awesome. Cool. So, what we'll do then is we will put – what's the best way for people to learn more about Settle In Abroad if they're interested in kind of seeing all of the details of what's included in the relocation package and getting more info on that? We'll put a link in the show notes where they can go directly there and find that, yes?

Amanda: Yeah. Just my website, [www.settleinabroad.com](http://www.settleinabroad.com) but yeah, we'll link it up.

Matt: Cool, awesome. So, then now, you guys also, in addition to the relocation package, you also offer shorter term opportunities, tours, experiences of Thailand and all of that kind of stuff. Can you talk a little bit about what some of those shorter term experiences are that you offer?

Amanda: Yeah, sure. So, I offer a lot of things. So, I love travel planning. That's also a thing. I love traveling but I also love planning travel. And when I go places myself, I don't book like every tour or everything. But I like being organized and doing a lot of research. So, I realize that's an amazing thing I do. And I started planning trips for friends and things. And they're like that was the best holiday I've ever been on. And so, I'm like why not add this to my package. So, because Thailand has become so popular rightfully so I can plan people's itineraries. So, I have drivers.

Basically, you don't have to worry about a thing and have the most comfortable holiday you could ever have. And when people approach me, it's usually after they got quoted by a classic travel agent. These two girls that I went to high school with, they were like, "Yeah, we use my mom's travel agent. She quoted us \$7,000.00 for 8 days in Thailand." And I was like, "What?" No way. So, I just have an itinerary fee. It depends on how long you'll be there. And then, I just book everything for you. So, it's completely dependent on your budget and preferences.

So, I can book anything. If you're a solo backpacker traveler, you're a solo middle class, or you want to high roll it, which I suggest if you're coming to Thailand for a short time because

you'll be able to stay in the nicest places you've ever been for \$30.00 a night. So, basically, I just talk to you, figure out your preferences, and I set everything up for you. So, your hotels, your transportation, your tours and, basically, set it towards anything you're interested in.

Matt: Awesome. Now, can you talk about the concept of ethical tourism? I know that's super important to you and I know you vet all of the experiences that you offer for ethics. But can you start off with maybe just the large picture for travelers in general? How should people think about ethical travel, ethical tourism? What types of things should they be paying attention to? And then, how have you applied those to the experiences that you offer?

Amanda: Yeah. Absolutely. So, basically, ethical tourism is just thinking about humans and animals, of course, too, but humans. No matter where you are in the world, people are still humans. And yes, you might be coming to visit and see what they're doing but they're still humans. They're still the same as you no matter what socioeconomic class they're in. So, the things that really get me are Hill Tribe visits here and many places around the world where it's kind of like a human zoo. And I first heard that term associated with some Long Neck tribes in Thailand and some other places.

And in some situations, it's good. It's giving some money towards the villages. But if you don't vet it yourself, you don't know where that money is going. Every tour that I use is mostly individual Thai people having their own businesses and they don't know how to market it or don't have the money and things. So, I love helping individuals that aren't a part of larger organizations because I want them to have a bigger profit than they ever thought they could. So, I really work with smaller they're not even companies. I have this one woman and she's a driver and I just met her.

She picked me up from the airport and I saw that she had this list of tourist excursions she does. And I was like, "Well, I have a lot of people coming this year. Are you ready to make some money?" And she's like, "Yes." So, I just love helping people start their own businesses. I really don't get a part of larger organizations because, in Southeast Asia and other places, it's going to one person, kind of the big guy of the company. So, in both ways, ethical tourism, okay, humans. And then, of course, animals. The elephants in Thailand, specifically, forever people have on their bucket list to

ride an elephant.

And I didn't really get it before I came to Thailand as well because I saw the pictures of people riding an elephant with the awful seats on them. I'm like, okay. That's horrible. That doesn't make any sense. And then, there are these companies that offer this bareback riding. I'm like okay, we ride horses. This is kind of like that. And then, coming to Thailand, I got educated because I figured we're small humans on an elephant. But us riding the elephant, sure, it's not hurting them. But all of the training that they had to do to allow humans on them, they're brainwashed.

It's like breaking down a horse. Their trunks are tied for weeks on end. They walk in circles. They're brainwashed. They forget everything they ever learned. Because that's the hardest thing, I think, in Thailand and Cambodia and other countries are this whole elephant and animals and tigers. Don't do anything with tigers. Nothing ethical is happening with tigers. The pictures. I'm like I can't believe that people don't have common sense sometimes. Let's take a picture with this drugged tiger. Obviously, the tiger doesn't want to be doing that. Anyway, with the elephants, I have a specific elephant sanctuary that I work with.

Actually, the owners of the first hostel I went to, Hug Hostel, own this elephant sanctuary called Into the Wild and that's where I send anyone. And it's amazing. The elephants are completely free. They have this giant forest and they just let the elephants do whatever they want and you watch them. I've been to a few different elephant sanctuaries and I've never seen them happier. And you're able to bathe them in the mud but if they don't want to go in the water, the owners don't even bribe them with food or anything. So, just seeing situations like that like this is right. And it's hard because if you don't travel a lot, you don't know.

You just assume go to Thailand, ride an elephant, do this, do that. But using my experience, now I'm trying to make people think about doing things more than just booking that ticket, not doing any research before they come places.

Matt:

Right, right. And then, can you also talk a little bit about some of the experiences that you're offering? I know that you're doing this event around the Lantern Festival that's coming up. Can you share a little bit about what the Lantern Festival is and what you guys are



doing around that?

Amanda: Yeah. So, Loi Krathong or the Yi Peng Festival it's called but Loi Krathong is the main name that happens once a year in Thailand. And it's the best holiday. That was one of the reasons I came to Thailand, too. I came in July and then, I'm like I'm going to be here for Loi Krathong in November because I just love fairy lights. I don't know who doesn't love them but especially women. We love our fairy lights. So, it's so magical these lanterns in the sky. The whole sky is lit up. It's like a fairytale. It's amazing. And it's a part of the Buddhist religion.

So, there are the lanterns and then, there are the krathongs. And a krathong is made out of banana leaf, incense, banana trunk, and some tea lights and flowers. And you release some in the river to kind of rebirth, let go of things that happened in the past year, and welcome the new blessings. So, it's an amazing holiday because, yes, it brings many tourists but it is completely a part of the Thai tradition. And it's amazing. I love the holidays in Thailand because, yes, many tourists come to it but they haven't changed anything for the tourists. Of course, people make money off of it.

It's great but you rarely see the Thai families all together and the food that's involved in it. It's pretty amazing. So, because Loi Krathong is my favorite holiday, this year I've finally decided to come up with an event because there really aren't many events for it. Usually, you just go down to the Peng River. You watch the lanterns. It gets very crowded. But I was like let's see. People want to buy tickets for something. I want to give people the best experience possible if they're coming just to see Loi Krathong probably the only time in their life. So, I'm working with this restaurant called Riverside in Chiang Mai right along the Peng River.

So, I have a four hour experience. First, you start off making the Krathongs, which is amazing because most tourists don't make them. You must buy them off the street. But when I was teaching in the school, you make them with the students. So, I'm like this is amazing. I want to give tourists a real experience. So, you will be drinking and eating snacks and make your krathong. And then, you will go on this beautiful longtail boat on the river and have a three course meal. So, I have four different menus, Thai menus, western menus, all allergies, and free flowing beer, wine, and whisky is

included in this journey.

So, it's an hour and a half boat ride. And then, when you come back, we release lanterns and they're fully biodegradable lanterns because that is definitely one problem with the holiday. The lanterns are amazing and they are made out of paper and they land all over. They're mostly biodegradable. It's just they usually have a wire and this thick wax in it. It's been very difficult to find them but I have them. They're fully biodegradable. They're made out of bamboo and biodegradable paper. So, it definitely makes me feel better.

I wouldn't have had the event if I couldn't find fully biodegradable lanterns because I really can't support things that are hurting the environment more.

Matt: That's awesome. Well, I love that you have this multi-tiered aspect to your business whereby if people who have never been to Chiang Mai want to come and relocate there and make a permanent or a long term move there, you can help them. If people want to just come for a shorter term experience in Thailand first to check it out, you can help them organize a shorter term experience. And for that matter, people that already are based in Chiang Mai or are in Thailand, they can just participate in your events like this lantern festival and other cool stuff.

I know you organize a trip up to Chiang Rai, which is another amazing place and things like that. So, even people that are already in Thailand can come to you and participate in these events and know that there is going to be that ethical vetting that's already been done and that it's going to be a cool, fairly priced experience. So, I think that's awesome.

Amanda: Yeah, great. Thank you. It's my pleasure. I like making people happy and their lives easier.

Matt: That's awesome. So, let's talk a little bit now about the behind the scenes experience that you've had as an entrepreneur building Settle In Abroad. I'd love for you to kind of just reflect back on the last few years of your business building journey and just share a little bit maybe about what that was like building that business, scaling that business, hiring people, dealing with all of the things that business owners need to deal with. And I'd love to hear about

also challenges and setbacks and how you overcame those and what you learned from them.

Amanda: Yeah, sure. So, at the beginning of Settle In Abroad, I opened my website, got a few clients. And then, I actually joined what we called The Hatchery, which is like a business incubator. We met once a week for five weeks presenting our businesses to other foreigners living in Chiang Mai. And then, one friend was like, "Amanda, how do you expect to scale this business if it's not legal in Thailand?" It was like oh, wow. All right. So, then that week, I found a lawyer because that's what you need to start a business as a foreigner in Thailand. And I paid that lawyer all of my savings at that time, which was \$3,000.00.

That was my whole savings. But she was amazing and I also loved that she was a female lawyer. She was amazing. She let me pay in really small payments. I even tutored her employees in English and her daughter in English and per hour and subtracted the amount I owed her. And that's also when I was still teaching English. So, it seems easy now but I hustled for two years. And I bootstrapped my business completely independently.

So, that was definitely the hardest thing that first year of going to lawyer meetings in my breaks from teaching when you're not really supposed to leave and then, paying. And I was also teaching online to pay all of this, too. So, that first year was just hustling so much to even just enable my business to be legal in Thailand and get the visa that I needed. And it took like three times to get my first one year business visa because it's very hard. You need the right documents. Even if you have the right documents, you might not get the visa. But on the third time, I got the one year business visa.

And since then, it's been really easy. So, I say that first time getting that first year multiple entry business visa was the best thing that had happened. I really made this happen because it's really difficult to open a business as a foreigner in Thailand. It is amazing that Thailand keeps most jobs for the Thai people, which is one of the best things about Thailand because there has never been one specific country's influence. So, yes, there is western food and amazing things but there is not only one country's major influence. So, Thai culture is really strong.

So, if you want to start a business as a foreigner, there are a million

hoops that you need to jump through. But I found the right lawyer and I made it happen. So, that was definitely the biggest challenge that I faced in the beginning.

Matt: And then, as you grew your business, can you talk a little bit about how you actually built out the different aspects of your business and when you started to think about hiring and having other people that you're bringing in to work on it on the team? How did that whole process go for you?

Amanda: Yeah. It's basically trial and error. So, I did everything slowly with my business because what's great about being in Chiang Mai or starting a business somewhere where it's not too expensive is I give myself the time. I never wanted to rush it because I didn't have to and I knew that my creativity does not work if I am pushing a deadline. I am not a procrastinator. I'm ridiculously self-disciplined, which is exactly why I can own my own business. I would do my schoolwork weeks in advance because I felt so much stress when I'd procrastinate things. So, I've kind of run my business like this.

I've always been looking into the future and I just do things that make me feel really uncomfortable like this podcast. You gave me a few days' notice and I'm like all right, this is scary but I'm going to do it. Basically, everything that I've done for my business has been scary. And I just went for it because I'm really young to be starting a business as a foreigner in Thailand as well. I had never even spoken to a lawyer before. And I rolled up at age 21, at that point, and said, "I'm going to do this business." She's like, "All right. Sure, you can pay me. Good luck." I hadn't had one client at that point.

So, yeah, I'm always just pushing and hustling. So, and needing employees, basically, I've just needed them for the experience and the excursions. I try to be in the business as much as I can in the spots needed. But it's definitely been difficult to kind of release some roles to other people. But I just keep learning with time and just learning more about patience. Because I am so self-disciplined and goal oriented, I'm definitely hard on myself at times. But realizing that great things can't happen quickly, it takes months and months and months. So, patience and writing down my goals has really helped me be successful so far.

Matt: And how do you manage and oversee your staff and create quality control, the experiences, and everything else? How have you gone about doing that?

Amanda: Yeah. So, I guess how I have employees is interesting because yes, they are my employees but they also have their own businesses, too. They don't only work for me. They also get clients elsewhere and take them on different excursions. So, I basically always make sure that they're happy because if they're not happy then, they shouldn't be working with me. So, I overpay so much higher than the Thai salary so that it makes the employees feel super empowered and excited to do what they're great at doing.

And especially with Thai women, I love paying them five times the amount they would in their charging. I'll be like what would you charge to do this. They'll tell me a price. I'm like, "Okay, I'm going to pay you five times that." And they're amazed. I'm really excited because the positions they're doing, yeah, they're drivers and things, they are doing it on their own schedule. And they have a few set dates. So, they don't have to work a 9:00 to 5:00. So, I love helping other people get freedom as well in their job and make some money off one off gigs but not have to be tied down to a corporate job as well.

Matt: Awesome. And can you talk about also how you've integrated the socially conscious component into your business with your partnership with One Tree Planted and Warm Heart and some of that stuff that you're doing?

Amanda: Yeah. So, Warm Heart was definitely my first experience working with a nonprofit. That was the first thing my boyfriend and I did when we moved to Chiang Mai. Actually, Day 3 we got on a call with Evelyn, the owner of Warm Heart because Sean's family friend knows here. And we visited their children's home an hour and a half out of Chiang Mai. And we were so touched, we knew they were doing an amazing job. The kids were so well taken care of. So, we asked what's No. 1 on your list, what can we do. And she was like, "Well, we need a well because a storm knocked it out last year.

And we've had to keep having bottled water brought in and it's a major cost. And we haven't had running water." She's like, "We need to have a well built." We're like, "Okay, sure. How much

does that cost?" She's like, "It's \$2,500.00 US dollars." We're like, "Done." So, we raised that money in like six months and that was the first major thing I had been a part of and realizing it depends on what you want to donate to charities. You can donate your time or you can donate your funds. And because I love being business oriented and my time is very important, I realize me visiting this children's home is great.

I can play with the kids. I can do this. But it's not really what they need to get out of the situation they're in. They need the funds. So, I saw that from the well being built and it's there and finished. I'm like wow, this is so easy. And people donating \$10.00 here and there, people want to donate to things. And it's so good when you know exactly the direction it's going to and all of the profits are going to a specific project. So, throughout the three years, we've been helping them fundraise and do some events in Chiang Mai and connect it to the foreigner community. Now, Warm Heart is very connected with Jai Thep, which is cool.

We helped that. So, then I've been waiting to connect some things specifically to Settle In Abroad. And I've waited a while because I wanted to make sure it was sustainable. In the future, I really want to be paying Hill Tribe students' college educations and sponsoring children. And I really want to be fully integrated with that. But I only want to set that up if I can sustainably support it from now until as long as possible. So, the best thing I thought about right now was trees. I love the environment. And right now, especially, it's really important. Trees are everything. So, One Tree Planted is amazing.

And \$1.00 plants a tree and that even includes the credit card fee. They have it down to a science. So, I was like well, I'm not just going to plant one tree. I'm going to plant five. I'm like no, I'm not going to plant five, I'm going to plant twelve. So, 12 trees per each person that comes to the program for a holiday or moves to Thailand. And we've only been partnered for a few months. And it's amazing. I already see this whole forest. And One Tree Planted is awesome. They keep you updated and they only plant the trees in the specific rainy season of the place. They have it all down to the science that it is.

But it feels really good. Businesses have to be connected. They have to be doing good. There is no point in businesses that aren't

socially sustainable and ethical.

Matt: I agree 100 percent. When we founded Maverick Investor Group 12 years ago, from the very beginning before we even launched, we said we're going to have a component in our business where we're going to donate 10 percent of all of our net revenue before we take any money out of the company ourselves right off the top there and we're going to contribute that to causes that are important to us and are affecting positive change in the world and stuff like that. And that way, you're financially incentivized. As you're financially incentivized, as the company does better, so, too, then do all of the causes that you're supporting.

Amanda: Yeah. Amazing. I'm seeing that now. It's different thinking about the money. Now, I'm just thinking about all of these lovely little trees I'm planting. It's fun to have it in that direction. It feels like a game for the greater good.

Matt: For sure. And I know education you just sort of mentioned that briefly in terms of some of your aspirations and visions. I know that's been a super important part of your journey, as you've said. And I know that you're still involved in some of the tutoring and some of the education yourself in sort of a hands on way. Can you talk a little bit about what education means to you, why you feel it's so important, why you're so passionate about it?

Amanda: Yeah. Education is just so important. It allows people to have the choice to leave situations they're in. And not only education, learning English because, especially in Warm Heart's situation, a lot of kids in these Hill Tribe villages can't get to school. They don't even speak Thai and they live in Thailand. They have their specific Hill Tribe language. So, if they're not even learning Thai, they can't get a job out of being a farmer. So, just seeing that is unbelievable. So, let's get them in a school. Let's get them to learn Thai. And then, wow, maybe they can even learn English and have the ability to apply for a university elsewhere.

And not even if it's outside of Thailand but maybe in a different province. That just changes so many levels of their lives and for generations to come that they would have never had the opportunity to do so. So, being on this side of the world and seeing how easily it can change people's lives, I believe it's so important. And that's why I want people to come here and teach English. And



teaching might not be for everyone but I believe that everyone in the whole world should teach English or their specific language for one year.

You have no idea what opportunities it brings up. I wouldn't have started my business if I didn't teach English. So, it really just opens up your world.

Matt: That's awesome. Let me ask you this in terms of your advice for young people high school aged that are thinking about college or people that are in college. One of the things I appreciate about your journey and trajectory because it's similar to mine is that you have pivoted a number of times and changed courses number of times. And we talked about that. Fashion and then, to education and then, to entrepreneurship and then, you kind of keep pivoting and keep changing courses. And you're, obviously, following your heart and your passion and kind of this guiding compass.

But if someone were to look at the trajectory, they might be like wow, those are really, really different moves that you've made and turns that you've taken on this life path. And you're only 25. Who knows how many more turns your life might take? And so, it's interesting because I speak to a lot of kids, I'll say kids. I just spoke with a high school student this past week who follows me on Instagram and all of that. And she was saying I'm thinking about this college application process now. But I really am curious about what you're doing and how you travel the world so much and how you have all of these amazing life experiences.

And whatever I do with my college and post college stuff, I would really want to see if I could integrate that in some way and go in that direction. What should I be thinking about now? And I would be really curious about how you would answer that question and how you would respond to high school kids and college kids who want to really have a rich life experience. But, obviously, as we all grow up in sort of the conventional structure of society that pressures us to pick a career path, pick a major, go in this direction, do this thing, be a responsible human.

And often times, parents that advocate the same thing in social circles that peer pressure even to that and stuff like that. So, how do you respond to people that are at some of those junctures in life about how they should proceed?

Amanda: Yeah. It's so interesting being in high school or going into college now, especially seeing the young leaders showing up about the environment. It's so cool. Basically, saying that nothing is permanent so don't put too much pressure on decisions. Unfortunately, I believe it is very important to still get a bachelor's degree because even to teach English in Thailand, you have to have a bachelor's degree. And even to get a lot of these remote jobs – like another thing I help people with is actually teaching English online. You can teach English online from anywhere in the world to Chinese students.

And there are a lot of different programs. But that even requires having a bachelor's degree. It can be in any subject. So, for people who are looking and thinking about wanting to travel to study abroad, I don't know how I could pitch that anymore. It opens your world. And if there is a chance for you to study abroad for a year or two or three, it's like you're never going to regret that. You're just only going to be years ahead. I hear so many people regret not doing study abroad. But now, with amazing things like Remote Year, they can do that afterwards. But if you're already ready to get out, study abroad, get your degree.

And when people are really undecided about what degree to get, I really would have people consider getting a degree in education because if you do have a degree in education, you can teach English at international schools and make like four times the money. In Chiang Mai, if you have an education degree from any country that's native English speaking, you can make like \$4,000.00 a month. You're like rolling in money here. So, yeah, it's interesting and really what your degree is in doesn't fit in the trajectory of your life. Matt, you majored in sociology, right?

Matt: Right, 100 percent. That's what I'm saying. Your journey reminds me very much of mine. I went to college. I had no idea what I wanted to do when I went into college. And so, I said maybe I'll major in business because I started this mobile DJ business in high school. And I was like maybe I'll major in business. And then, I get into a sociology class and I was like wow, that's amazing. I'm really interested in that. And then, I just started taking classes I was interested in and they were like no, you've got to pick a major now. It's the end of your sophomore year. And I was like I don't want to pick a major.

I just want to take interesting classes. And they're like well, you have to. It's like okay, sociology. Then, I graduated from college with no idea what I wanted to do. So, then I did a Master's degree in international peace and conflict resolution. I worked in the nonprofit space for a while. And I just kept pivoting around as well. I, ultimately, got into real estate investment and entrepreneurship and all of this stuff. So, I think that's really, really good and thoughtful advice. It's just so interesting how much is changing now with the world and with the digital nomad global travel ecosystem and everything else in terms of the possibilities for remote work in so many different fields.

A lot of the people that I interview on this podcast have built location independent businesses in spaces that are really not traditionally virtual in any way. But they've figured out and they've reversed engineered business plans about how to do it. And it's amazing. So, it's really cool because I have a lot of young folks that are starting to listen to the podcast and get some perspective that's not offered in traditional American classroom settings in terms of what's actually possible to do as a career or even as an entrepreneur or a business owner or things like that.

And they're kind of getting access to some of these really, really innovative, inspiring people that are really doing cool stuff. And, hopefully, that's expanding people's minds in terms of what's possible and then, how they can apply some of those principles to their own lives.

Amanda:

Yeah. And I would also say get involved in things that you're interested in to also realize you're not interested in them. I'm so happy I did all of the internships I did to realize that's not what I wanted. That's the best thing you can do at a young age. You save so many years. And also, just being involved in clubs, even if it's not cool. I was the president of the marketing club. And it was tough getting people to those meetings. But I was able to bring in speakers from industries that I was interested in. And maybe only eight people showed up at the meetings but then, I made this amazing connection with this professional.

So, take the time and follow your passions. Yeah. Do things to figure out what you don't want to do.

Matt: Awesome. Really, really good advice. All right. Amanda, at this point, are you ready for the lightening round?

Amanda: Yes, I am.

Matt: Let's do it. All right. What is one book that has really influenced you a lot over the years that you'd recommend to people?

Amanda: I always say *I Will Teach You to be Rich* by Ramit Sethi because a lot of things I'm just learning. Like being an advertising and marketing major, I never took a finance class. I'm really lucky because my parents are very responsible with their finances. They've taught me how to save and things. But it's hard to learn some things. So, really what I got the most out of his book is credit card miles. So, getting specific credit cards for what you're doing. Have a credit card for cash back. Have a credit card for miles. And, of course, be responsible with them.

So, now it's so exciting that I have a travel credit card that's gotten me free flights to go back to the US. And, actually, shout out to Mile Method Trevor, he owns this business that he is basically your credit card advisor. So, he helps you open up travel credit cards every three months and close them. That only helps you boost your credit score. So, it kind of opens up the world even more. He's traveling the world for pennies. So, it's super exciting. So, that book led me to find him and then, think about the world in that way, too.

Matt: Awesome. That is a really good book. That's a good recommendation. What is one app or productivity tool that you're currently using that you'd recommend?

Amanda: So, I'm not using any apps. But, actually, Johnny FD said this in his podcast and I do the same thing. Turning off your notifications for social media and things. I do that. I don't have any notifications come up for Facebook messages. And I'm on Facebook a lot. That's how I get most of my clients. But I just have to enter it myself. And the same thing with Instagram. It's so important for my business and my personal life, too. But if I want to get the notifications, I'll go in. You do not need to get one for everyone. It wastes so much time taking off your computer screen to your phone.

Matt: Good advice. Who is one person that's currently alive today that you've never met that you would most like to have dinner with?

Amanda: I have a few but definitely Michelle Obama. She's the best. She's done such amazing things for the health of the US and women. I wish she was still in that office. And then, another one, I'm going to throw another one. Nako. He is the singer of Nako and messages to the people. It's very hippy music. But his music is just amazing like keeping your roots where you're from but being super openminded. And he talks a lot about the US political stance for indigenous people and just the importance of community. I went to his show in New Zealand and I cried the entire time.

Matt: Wow. I do not know him so I will check that out for sure.

Amanda: Have a listen. Yeah.

Matt: That's amazing. Awesome. All right. Amanda, if you could go back in time now and give one piece of advice to your 18-year-old self around that time when you were sort of graduating from high school and moving to the next phase of your life, knowing everything that you know now, what would you say to 18-year-old Amanda?

Amanda: I'd say I'm proud of you because you really did a good job. But I'd say relax, trust yourself, continue to own your power because not everyone feels as confident as you do. And you don't have to be perfect. And feedback is a good thing. Because I've always been doing things on my own and starting things on my own, when I've worked for other people in interning situations, getting feedback was hard. And especially if it's from managers that I particularly didn't love. And even in sports that I played, just getting feedback is fine. I definitely took things harder than necessary.

Matt: Awesome. What are your top three favorite travel destinations that you've ever been to?

Amanda: Such a hard question. Obviously, Chiang Mai and Paris. Do those have to count?

Matt: Do you want those to just kind of be the obvious ones? All right. That's fine. So, those are the obvious ones. And then, after Chiang Mai and Paris, go ahead and hit us with your next three. Go ahead.

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Amanda: New Zealand. New Zealand was nature that I just have never experienced before. I camper vanned pretty much the whole country and in a short time in only about three weeks. And yeah, I took a helicopter to the top of a glacier and snowshoed on that. That was one of the most amazing things I've ever done in my life. So, New Zealand, the whole country. I don't have a specific place, it's all great. Yeah. I loved Lisbon. I know you love Lisbon, too. I'd be super interested like who knows, maybe Settle In Abroad Lisbon one day. I'm saying that here first. Lisbon is amazing. I guess Australia.

I loved Australia as well. Australia and New Zealand were two places that I thought I'd never make it to and that's the first place I went my first year of traveling. So, it's pretty exciting. There are so many more places to go to.

Matt: Awesome. All right. The last question. At this point, Amanda, what are the top three bucket list destinations that are on your list, places you've never been that you would most love to go?

Amanda: So, No. 1, I would say Zimbabwe. I know South Africa is a different country, too. So, both of them, Zimbabwe and South Africa because one of my best friends here is from Zimbabwe and I just hear about her life. And I can never understand it until you take me there. So, I'll go whenever she wants to go home. I haven't been to Africa. So, definitely, as many places in Africa as I can get to. And then, I've also never been to South America and Central America so all of them. Costa Rica, No. 1, Nicaragua, Peru, there are so many. I still have so many places to go.

Matt: Awesome. All right. Amanda, I want you to tell folks a whole bunch of stuff. And, actually, let me just do this. I'm reading off of your website here. I just want to recap the relocation program and what's included in that for anybody that wants to relocate to Chiang Mai through Settle In Abroad. So, this program includes the studio apartment in a central location. So, it includes the first month's rent for that and has already been pre-negotiated, lease signed, and first month's rent included. It includes a one year visa and 90 day reporting service is included. Visa assistance and paperwork are included.

It includes the airport pick up. It includes one month membership

at a co-working space, one month membership at a gym, one month of the motorbike or bicycle rental. It includes the installation and first month of the wi-fi set up as well as the SIM card and the first month of the data phone plan. It also includes three tourist attractions of your choice, which could include the ethical elephant sanctuary that you mentioned or cooking classes or Muay Thai classes and that sort of thing. And then, of course, you plant the 12 trees with every single package that is purchased.

So, if people want to learn more about that and I understand you might be willing to give a discount to Maverick Show listeners as well. And so, if that's the case, how do they learn more and get that?

Amanda: Yeah. So, they can just go on my website, [www.settleinabroad.com](http://www.settleinabroad.com), go to check out and you'll see the digital nomad in Chiang Mai. And you can put a coupon code, Maverick Show, for \$200.00 off.

Matt: Amazing. And then, if people want to connect with you like follow you on social media or anything like that, is there any other place that they should go or a place that they should or a place that they should follow or connect with you besides the website?

Amanda: Yeah. Instagram, Settle In Abroad. Facebook is the same, Settle In Abroad. And then, my personal Instagram is just my name, Amanda L. Gedney. And then, email is [info@settleinabroad.com](mailto:info@settleinabroad.com). All Settle In Abroad.

Matt: Amazing. Awesome. Amanda, this was so much fun. Thank you for being on the show.

Amanda: No, thank you for having me. It's so nice catching up.

Matt: Awesome catching up with you. Hopefully, we can hang out very soon. We're in the same friggin' country. We need to make this happen.

Amanda: I know. We should have been doing this on the Thailand train or something. Next time.

Matt: The next one definitely. So, good to have you. All right. Good night, everybody.



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