

Matt Bowles: My guest today is Cepee Tabibian. She is a remote entrepreneur, world traveler, TEDx speaker, and the founder of [She Hit Refresh](#), a community and resource platform that helps women over 30 transform their lives by moving abroad. In 2015, at the age of 35, Cepee upended her entire life by selling her belongings and moving from the U.S. To Europe and has never looked back. Since then, she's been on a mission to help other women do the same. Through her [Move Abroad After 30 Masterclass](#) and [The Refresher's Lounge](#) membership community, she has helped thousands of women tackle the practical, emotional and logistical challenges of moving abroad. Cepee is also the author of [I'm Outta Here, An American's Ultimate Visa Guide to Living in Europe](#), which was featured in Forbes. As the daughter of Colombian and Iranian immigrant parents, Cepee grew up in Houston, Texas, before becoming an immigrant herself in Spain, where she is currently based. Through her work, she's proven that it's never too late to hit refresh on your life.

Cepee, welcome to the show.

Cepee Tabibian: Ooh, thank you for that lovely intro. Hi, Matt. Thank you for having me on as well.

Matt Bowles: I am so excited to have you on. You and I know a whole bunch of people in common. Hannah Dixon, who Maverick show listeners know because she, of course, has been a podcast guest, is the one that actually put us together and helped to set up this interview. But we've got a lot of people in common in our ecosystem. And I'm so glad that we are finally recording this conversation because you are up to some really amazing stuff.

But before we get into that, let's just set the scene and start off by talking about where we are recording this interview from today. We are not in person. I am actually in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Asheville, North Carolina today. And where are you, Cepee?

Cepee Tabibian: I am in southern Spain, in Malaga, Spain, to be exact.

Matt Bowles: Such a cool town. I have been to Malaga a couple times. Spain is one of my very favorite countries. I try to go through at least once a year if I can but really love Spain and I want to dive into all of the things that brought you there and what you love about it. But I feel like a really good place to start would just be to give some people some background information before we do that. And I would love to start all the way back.

Before we even talk about your experience growing up, can you share a little bit about your parents' story, where they're from, their experience growing up in their homelands and eventually immigrating to the United States?

Cepee Tabibian: Oh yeah, we're going to take it way, way back then. So, like you said in my intro, my dad is from Iran and my mom is from Colombia, so both immigrants to the U.S. my father grew up in the capital of Iran, so Tehran. My parents have since passed, so there are some gaps of information that I would love to have that I need to ask their siblings about.

But my father came to the U.S. for college, so he got a scholarship and went to West Virginia as some of his other brothers did as well. My grandfather sent his kids to the U.S. with the hopes of them getting education and returning to Iran. But that didn't happen because the Iranian revolution happened around the time my dad was graduating, so he ended up staying.

My mother, on the other hand, she is from Barranquilla, Colombia, where Shakira is from. People may have heard of that city. And she actually moved to the U.S. when she was quite young. She was the oldest of five and she was five years old when her family moved to the U.S. So, it was her and her two younger sisters were born by that time, and my grandfather was a doctor and was able to come to the U.S. to work while she grew up in the U.S. she grew up very Colombian. She would always tell me she didn't need friends. She didn't have friends because she had her sisters. And so, she really was kind of isolated in that sense of like growing up very much with her Colombian culture while she lived in the U.S. can.

Matt Bowles: You also then talk about your experience growing up in Houston, but growing up in an immigrant home? What was that like for you? Were you learning Spanish at home? Were you learning Farsi at home? How was that experience for you as a kid in Houston?

Cepee Tabibian: Yes. Oh, I love this question because it takes me back to a very frustrating time of my life. So, yeah, I grew up in the 80s in Houston, Texas, in the suburbs. My parents, their common language was English. So that's what we spoke at home. And it's so unfortunate that my mother did not teach me Spanish, my father did not teach me Farsi, although they didn't speak to me and teach me their languages. I grew up with languages.

They were very close with their siblings and their siblings, you know, some of them lived in Houston at the time where they came visit. And I just always remember when I was around family, they were speaking their languages, and I was kind of there just listening and soaking in some of that. But no one spoke to me. But I grew up in a very multicultural home. I had my father listening to his Persian music, my mom listening to Latin music. A lot of their friends were immigrants, whether they were Iranian, Colombian or just from other parts of the world.

Immigrants and people from other places were very much a part of my upbringing. But I would say myself, and especially when I was much younger, kindergarten for sure, and primary school, you don't want to be different. And so even just my name is different, you know, the teacher would always pronounce that incorrectly on the first day. So, I just wanted to be like my friend Sarah or Stephanie. Right. I didn't want to be different. And so, I really kind of rejected that beautiful culture that I grew up with from a young age.

Matt Bowles: Well, I'm curious to talk about your journey in terms of how your identity and your connection with those two cultures evolved over time. And maybe a good place to start. I would love to ask you about your first trip back to Iran, the very first time you went. Can you talk about how old you were, the context and what the experience was like connecting with that part of your heritage?

Cepee Tabibian: Yes. I will mention something that will lead to this as well. I had mentioned when we were talking about me growing up in immigrant household and that being frustrating. I didn't explain why. Mainly because my father was old school, Iranian, old school, bringing those old school principals to the U.S. and really was controlling and I wasn't allowed to do a lot of things as I got to a teenager. Spending the night at friends' houses, that was a no, no. They let me do it here and there. But there were just a lot of rules. And I became very rebellious. Me and my parents didn't have the best relationship when I was a teenager.

So, if we fast forward to 2006, that's when I took my first trip to Iran. I went with my father and my siblings, who are much younger than me. My siblings had been before with my father, but for me, this was the first time my mother didn't come because she's Colombian. She does not like to cover up, and she's like, I'm not dealing with those rules. You guys go have fun.

But in terms of the trip, it was just such a beautiful trip. One, you know, I got to see my father in a different light. We had that difficult relationship. I would say, you know, since I was a teenager and butting heads to seeing him, I wouldn't say in his element, because he came to the U.S. So young, he was very Americanized. But just to see him and where he came from and to see him interacting with his siblings who still live there that I had never met and seeing those relatives and my grandmother and all of them in their elements and just discovering parts of my roots for myself.

So that was just a very pivotal trip, transformative trip, and really one of the highlights of my life so far. If I look back at the years that are experiences that I will remember forever, that was really one of them.

Matt Bowles: Amazing. Well, I also want to ask about your experience going back to Colombia and connecting with that side of your heritage.

Cepee Tabibian: I went when I was very young, so I don't remember that. And then I didn't ever go again until 2010. And I was 30 at the time. So, when I went to Iran, I was 26. So now Colombia, I am 30. And initially I was supposed to go on that trip with my sister, but she backed out at the last minute. She has some flying phobia. So, I ended up going by myself to Colombia, and my grandmother was living there. She moved back from the U.S. to there.

So that was an incredible trip. Ideally, or in my mind, I thought I was going to do this travel trip with my grandmother. We were going to bond and see Colombia together. But when I got there, she wasn't feeling the travel bug. She's kind of a homebody. So, I ended up traveling to Colombia by myself for about three weeks, which wasn't the original plan. And I have to say my grandmother and all her siblings, so my great aunts and uncles who I had met for the first time, which was incredible. They were all terrified of me traveling by myself through Colombia.

But it was an incredible trip. It really showed me that Colombia isn't the danger zone that everyone thought it was or had said it was. And I just got to, again, discover parts of my roots in a different way and get to know this country where my mother grew up. And, you know, that was a big part of my, not just my mother, but my family's identity on that side.

So that was great. But then I went again the following year, and that was much different. I went that year a few months after my mother's passing. So, I never got to go to Colombia as an adult with my mother, which is such a shame. But I went the Christmas after she passed with my siblings and one of my mother's sisters, my aunt. And it may sound like that's like a downer trip, but it actually was such a joyful trip to just kind of, you know, it was just like celebrating her and being together and traveling and seeing the country together as a family. That was another really special trip of my life.

Matt Bowles: So, reflecting back now, how would you say that your Colombian and Iranian identities have evolved as you've gotten older, as you've spent time and connected with those countries? And what role have they played in your life and how do you think about them now?

Cepee Tabibian: Well, like I said, when I was much younger, I really rejected those things that made me different. But of course, as I got older, I learned to appreciate that I love my name now I'd rather be Cepee than Stephanie or Sarah any day. And I just came to appreciate how special it was to grow up in that kind of environment with the three different cultures, with my parents' cultures, and growing up in the U.S. and just started feeling much more connected to those parts of my identity, even though I didn't speak the language.

And language is so tied to culture, you can really feel like you don't belong when you don't speak the language. But I still feel very much connected to both sides. So, I think the roles that they've played in my life when I was younger, they made me feel very othered. But at the same time, as I've grown up, I think this identity, in a way, has been a type of superpower just to have that privilege. It really gave me an understanding of the world that I think people who grew up with one culture don't have, or maybe they discover that later in life when they spend time in other places.

And it's also just allowed me to feel really connected to a lot of people and places. And from an early age, even though I felt othered, I still felt connected to people who were different like me. And I think it's helped me just be really adaptable. Like there's no one way, right way to do this. Like, we can appreciate the different ways that people do things.

Matt Bowles: Well, I'm also curious, when you think back, how your initial interest in world travel started to develop to places other than Iran and Colombia, where you had direct familial connections. How did your interest in the world and traveling the world and seeing other places, how did that start to develop when you think back?

Cepee Tabibian: Yeah, so this started at 17. And you would think, yeah, growing up with these other cultures, I would have been really interested in traveling to those places. Like I said, I didn't go to those places until I was in my twenties. But really the travel bug bit me when I went to the Netherlands when I was 17. And I should say for the audience, I'm very transparent with my age. I'm 44 now.

So, when I was 17, I had a best friend in high school who was from the Netherlands who had moved back. And for my 17th birthday, I begged my parents to send me there to the Netherlands to visit her. And so that trip really was an eye opener. Even though I grew up with diversity in my household, I hadn't really experienced that abroad, and especially not in Europe.

And just seeing, you know, in my mind, I think I thought the Netherlands was going to be the U.S. Just they speak Dutch and to go there and just see a completely different world, really, I left that trip feeling like, wow, I don't want to leave, I want to stay here. And after that trip, basically every year after that, I just picked a different country and went on my own. Yeah, it's been like that ever since.

Matt Bowles: Amazing. Well, I also want to talk about the career path that you were on. One of the things, as I've been going through your content that I connected with very much was this concept of hitting reset and pivoting in your 30s. Because for me as well, I was working in an office job in the United States up until the age of 30, at which point I did a complete pivot in terms of, you know, doing something totally different with my life and then eventually becoming location independent and traveling and becoming a nomad and all that kind of stuff.

And so, I resonated with so much of what you had to say. But I want to just give folks the background and the context. Can you share a little bit about your traditional career path that you were on up through your mid-30s?

Cepee Tabibian: Okay, so you're my people then. For me, I mean, I say this a lot. I was a serial job hopper, got a degree in marketing, and started working in sales. My first job out of college. But I was not built for the office and a nine to five- and two-weeks' vacation. And back then when I was starting to work, that was the 2000s, digital nomad, remote work. That was not a thing. It wasn't even an option. And so, I just thought I had to resign to that. But it didn't work.

I mean, as I mentioned, ever Since I was 17, I was traveling to different countries. So, what I would do, because I did have the pressure of my family to get a job and adult, I would work for nine months and then I would quit and use the money I saved to go travel in the summer. With that rhythm, I had a lot of gaps in my resume. And I really didn't build a career because I was constantly quitting jobs to go do what I really love, which was travel.

But I would say when I got to 30, I was like, okay, we're going to be adults now. We have to think about some real responsibilities. And that's when I tried to stick with a job. But the longest job I had in my 30s was two and a half years, and I quit that to move.

Matt Bowles: Well, I want to talk a little bit about your career and life transition in 2015. I know that was a really, really big one. So, can you share what led up to that and then talk through that transition?

Cepee Tabibian: Yes. So, in 2015, I was 35, and that's when I decided I wanted to move to Spain to try again. I had tried a few times in my 20s. It didn't work, and I thought, let me try again. And when I moved to Spain, I had to teach English because that was the easiest way to get my foot in the door. It wasn't what I wanted to do. That was always my blocker before. So, the only way to stay in Spain was to teach English.

So, at 35, I thought, I really need to focus on my career. I need to figure out what I'm going to do for money and support myself. But I want to move to Spain. And so, I did that, moved to Spain, taught English for a year with the intention of hustling to figure out what I was going to do after, but I had no idea. But luckily after a year, I got a work visa, sponsorship, to work for a startup in Spain in social media marketing. Something I was actually pretty new at.

And so, I started from there. That's where my career started to pivot or maybe that's where I really started to build a career. It's just in my free time I had started a food blog about vegetarian food in Madrid and an [Instagram](#) to showcase my blog. That was just for fun. But those are the skills that helped me. That portfolio helped me get this work visa sponsorship at this job. And then it was just kind of a snowball from there. I quit that job. No surprise, because I'm not built for the office, and that was an office job. So, after six months, I quit. But with those skills that I had learned of social media, that's where I got my first remote job after that.

Matt Bowles: Can you talk about your remote job? And then what you did with that location, independence and connecting the work and the travel and all of that.

Cepee Tabibian: So, I quit that Spanish job, and I was applying everywhere for something remote. Well, I thought, you know, 2017, remote work is not what it is like now, right? It still seemed very unachievable, like you had to be a programmer to do it. But I thought, you know what? I have social media skills. I applied and I got a job working in sales and marketing for this American Italian company. And really, it took me, I would say, three months to get that job of searching and applying. And three months doesn't sound long, but it felt like a long time at the time.

So, when I got the yes, like, they want to hire me, my mind was blown. I was like, oh, my gosh, my life has changed. Like, what? I'm going to work remotely. And so literally, I got that job. And like, a week later, I was like, I'm taking this job on the road. So, I was already living in Europe, but I thought, let me go travel for five weeks and see what this is about.

And I don't even think I knew the term digital nomad, so I didn't even have that concept of I'm going to be a digital nomad for five weeks. I just thought, I can work from anywhere, so let's travel. And that's what I did. I mean, it was fun, but it was also very stressful. Chasing Wi-Fi and trying to get on ferries to go from Croatia to here to there and try to also be available for working hours of 9 to 5. So, it was a learning curve, but it was a really cool experience. And really, it was that freedom that I think I had been chasing since I got my first job many years before.

Matt Bowles: Well, I also want to ask about your transition into entrepreneurship, and I want you to think back a little bit, because you've mentioned now a couple times in this conversation that you were not built for a traditional office job. And I'm curious, when you say that, like, thinking back at the time, did you know you were an entrepreneur and that you were just in the wrong place? Like, did that concept occur to you that this was really what you wanted to do? Or how did you discover that you were an entrepreneur and then take that entrepreneurial leap?

Cepee Tabibian: This is an interesting question. You know, my parents were entrepreneurs in the U.S. So they had business. And I remember my mom telling me, like, we want to give this to you when you're old enough. And I was always like, no, I do not want that business. Because for me, entrepreneur meant, like, you're stuck somewhere, right? You got to run this business in this place, in a warehouse, and you have inventory.

So, I never wanted to be an entrepreneur. That seemed like there were too many strings with that. So really, it's something that I discovered in Spain. I never had ideas or thought I was entrepreneurial. Really moving to Spain was the impetus to this new path that I've been on.

Matt Bowles: Well, I think that's actually a really important distinction, right, because there's entrepreneurship and just running a traditional local business, which is totally geographically restrictive, and you show up and you're there every day doing the business, just like a traditional job. You go into the office, and every day you're there and you're doing your job in the office, and then there's a remote job where you're doing a traditional job and you're working your nine to five and your employee, but you have the location independent piece of the puzzle to travel around the world while you're doing that. And I know plenty of people that do that.

And then there's this other category where you're a remote entrepreneur and you've built a business that you can run virtually, and you're exercising your location independence there to travel around the world while running your own business. And so that is what I'm curious about, how you eventually wound up and decided that that box was the best for you. And I'm wondering if you can share a little bit about your journey from the time you had the remote job. And you're like, okay, now I have location independence and I'm able to travel. And this is really cool and amazing to then move into the entrepreneurial direction that you are now.

Cepee Tabibian: Yes. I love this question. Because I feel like I'm an accidental entrepreneur. So, I love talking about this. Yeah. So, with that remote job, I mean, I had a few different remote jobs. Then I started freelancing for various clients. And through all that experience, I was living in Madrid, having a great life, meeting people, and I just had this urge, it's like a creative urge to create community.

And it really started when I started blogging and doing social media. I just wanted to meet other people who were doing something similar, and there wasn't a meetup for those people. So, I thought, let me just

start a meetup and we can learn from each other. Never had led, never done meetups, never organized. And then that same year that I started that, I started another group, a Facebook group for women over 30 who want to move abroad. So basically, what I did, and that just came from a lot of friends and peers asking me how I did it. And also, just meeting incredible women in Madrid who had moved abroad at my age or older.

And I just thought, well, let's put them in a Facebook group and we can help each other. No business idea behind any of this. This is why I say I'm accidental. But within a year of starting that Facebook group called [She Hit Refresh](#), which is now my business. Within a year of starting that Facebook group of just like having women talk about Moving abroad after 30, we had 4,000 women by word of mouth in that Facebook group. And that was where I had an aha moment of, oh, okay, there's a niche in the market. I mean, backgrounds in marketing. So, there's a niche in the market here that's not being served. And these women were asking us for things. They asked for the blog, they're asking for a retreat, and they were asking for things. And I thought, well, I can help them. I know how to do this stuff. And that's where the light bulb went off.

Matt Bowles: Can you share then from there what that light bulb was and then what that led to and how you built your business?

Cepee Tabibian: So, it was throwing a lot of spaghetti at the wall. I mean, I had never run a business before, but as I mentioned, the retreat, our first offer, we kind of did things backwards. Within a year, year and a half of having that Facebook group, people had asked, you know, had we ever thought of doing a retreat. And so, within a year and a half, we sold out a retreat and ran a retreat. I mean, women that didn't know me gave me thousands of dollars to take them to Morocco and meet each other. And that was another aha moment. Of like, okay, these women need support and let's see how we can best do that.

So, I have tried different things over the years, retreats, one on one, different workshops. But I've been doing [She Hit Refresh](#) since 2017. But I will say in the last two years is when it really became a business and of many things that I tried. We're at the point now where we know what works and what works for us now is you know; we do a four-day training course and we, in terms of what works from a business standpoint, have a lot of free products for people.

But from a business standpoint what works for us is the four-day training we have and paid membership. But I'll tell you like, you know, I'm in year seven of this business and really just the last two years count, and it was a lot of trial and error for a long time, and I had a full-time job while I had [She Hit Refresh](#) for five of the seven years.

Matt Bowles: Well, I want to ask a little bit about the impact of moving Spain, moving abroad and starting this business abroad in Spain. Instead of trying to do this in the United States or something like that. What was it about being able to live in Spain and being able to move abroad that really helped to facilitate your transition and ultimately success in business, do you think?

Cepee Tabibian: Yes. Interesting, because I don't think I could have done what I've done here in Spain in the United States. I mean one, I wouldn't have the idea right let me have help women move abroad. But also, I think there were so many things about being in Spain, being abroad that made this so possible. And I talked about this in a TED Talk of mine.

I think one part of it is that Spain gave me the freedom to really explore my interests. That was a big thing. In the U.S. there were a lot of expectations about what the path of success is and I was trying to fit into that

box. Even though you can be an entrepreneur in the U.S. like it's one of the most entrepreneurial countries that was just not even in my realm of possibilities for myself. But by being in Spain I had those expectations removed of what I was supposed to be doing with my life. You know, the societal, family, community, friends, even my own. I think when you move abroad you can be someone else somewhere else. And so that just lets me delve into new interests. And those interests were creating that vegetarian food blog.

I don't think I would have done that in the U.S. would have been too like worried about what people think like, oh, she's a blogger. Like, what is that? But nobody knew me in Spain, so I could blog, I could be on [Instagram](#). And so doing those things for fun, I was building skills and really learning about what I was interested in and creating those communities for fun. Those are things that just having the freedom to explore my interests. But not only that, I think there's two other things that helped. Another one is just like, the lower cost of living in Spain gave me, you know, the opportunity to take more risks. I could be riskier and just do things. I could be a freelancer. Right? I could do that. Because if it didn't work out, well, I have some savings. It's not that expensive here. But in the U.S. I had a lot more to lose.

And I think another reason why living in Spain helped is, you know, I just had more free time. So, I had more free time to delve into those interests. I had less work obligations, less obligations in life. And with that free time, I really could just breathe, reflect, and take some time to think about what I really wanted to do. And I think I'll add one more thing. I think having that space also removed a lot of the noise that was happening in the U.S. Just from all the expectations and the stress. And I think just having that space in Spain, I just became so creative. I never saw myself as a creative person in the U.S. and in Spain. I think having that space allowed ideas to really flow because they had the space to do that.

Matt Bowles: Well, you mentioned your [TEDx talk](#), which is outstanding. I have watched it twice because I watched it once. I was really inspired and impressed with it. And then I watched it a second time to really make sure that I absorbed all of it. And we're going to link it up directly in [the show notes](#) because I want people to go and watch the full [TEDx talk](#). But I would love it if you can extrapolate on a couple more themes from that [TEDx talk](#).

And I want to ask you about. About this concept of adopting an immigrant mindset. And if you can share a little bit about that. You proudly refer to yourself as an immigrant when you moved from the U.S. To Spain. Other people may be hesitant to use that terminology or may even have negative associations with that terminology. And I'm wondering if you can share a little bit about the concept, the terminology, and then what that means and why it's so important and valuable to adopt an immigrant mindset.

Cepee Tabibian: Yes, that TED talk was really special. It's called [What Immigrants can Teach us About Identity](#). So, you know, immigrant mindset. I mean, I think immigrants, they are kind of self-selecting in the sense like those that choose to move abroad are different than the ones who didn't. So, I think immigrants, they are risk takers. They're tenacious and they're scrappy, meaning they can make something out of nothing. These people know how to get things done and they're great at creating their own opportunities.

But like I say in my TED Talk, they're not just this, they're not just scrappy, they're not just the underdogs. Immigrants are so much more than that. And they have this mindset that I think this is why they can succeed abroad. And this is why we see immigrants being some of the most successful people in countries, is that they are bold visionaries. You know, if you really think about that, they had that vision that they can do this, right? They can go to another country and start from scratch and be successful. And so, they're able to envision themselves and see more for themselves.

And I think that's what this immigrant mindset really is. And then I'll touch on it. Yeah, the terminology of immigrant. So, I am a proud immigrant here in Spain. And I know there's a lot of debate of this immigrant expat terminology also. Like, I don't mind being called an expat. I know that can be very offensive for some people. But to be honest, I guess this is my hot take. Like, I think it's a silly debate, actually, the immigrant expat. And I'll explain a little bit. Hopefully there's some people out there who will understand where I'm coming from. But I'm an immigrant here in Spain. But definitely when I reflect on my parents or like my mom's parents, I'm not an immigrant in the same way that they were.

I moved to Spain in a very privileged position. I have a U.S. passport; I had money in the bank. When I could come and make this move very easily, I could basically, like spin the globe and be like, I could choose where I want to go. Right. There were a lot of visas that I could qualify for because of my situation. And I think that's very different than my family who went to the U.S. right. They came to the for-work opportunities. I did not come to Spain for that. I came here because I wanted to, because I like living in this country.

When I think of the term immigrant and expat, I almost in some ways don't feel like I've earned the stripes to be called an immigrant. I know there's many different types of immigrants, and not everyone moves abroad in hardship, but I think a lot of immigrants sacrifice a lot when they move, and there's a lot of hardships included in that. And I see myself very privileged and maybe not in the same light as some immigrants who have had it so much harder than me.

Matt Bowles: I want to ask if you can expand a little bit on this concept of how leaving our home country can help to free us from imposed identities and provide the ability to see ourselves differently and choose some of our own identities and reinvent ourselves in different ways. So, for people that are listening to this now that haven't done that or experienced that yet, I'm curious if you can expand a little bit on that and reflect on that.

Cepee Tabibian: I think when you move abroad, you really do remove yourself from those external expectations, and that allows you to choose who you want to be, really, in a way where you can do that without the fear of judgment. And that example that I gave of starting a blog abroad, no one really knew me, so didn't have to worry about what people are going to think, right? Because no one really knows you, and it allows you again, to choose to be somewhere else, and it gives you that fresh start. I pulled here one of the quotes from my TED Talk, because I just love it so much.

Neuroscientist Maya Shankar said, *'by giving ourselves that fresh start, it can serve as a break from the past and provide the motivation and impetus to reset and take on a new identity'*. And I really think for myself, when I look at who I was before I moved to Spain and who I am now, I mean, yes, at the core, I'm the same person, but there is a part of my identity that is very different and forever changed from being here and being abroad and allowing myself to choose who I wanted to be in a different way. And I think when you move abroad, you have a chance, a chance to see yourself differently. And when you see yourself differently, you can imagine more for yourself. You're free to do that, and you can imagine different things for yourself. You start making different choices and there's different outcomes, and you can really create a whole different life for yourself when you're abroad.

Matt Bowles: Can you talk a little bit about the community that you have created? [She Hit Refresh](#), who it is for and what it offers today.

Cepee Tabibian: [She Hit Refresh](#), we're a community for women aged 30 and over who want to transform their lives by moving abroad. And generally, that is women in the U.S., in Canada, the U.K, who want to move to Europe. I mean, we have women from all over the world who want to move to different places. But I would say at the core, that's the majority of who we're working with, and we help them with through coaching classes and our community of over 15,000 women worldwide.

Matt Bowles: Can you share a little bit about your [Move Abroad After 30 Masterclass](#), who that is for and what people will learn through that?

Cepee Tabibian: Yes. So that's also for women over 30 who want to move abroad. And this is for the women out there who want to move abroad but don't know what to do. There are so many people out there who just don't even know where to start. And so, this is what this master class covers. We cover what I think are the four essential steps to moving abroad. Like, if you don't figure these four things out, you can't move forward. And so, we help you get clarity on what a move abroad means to you. Like, what does that look like for you? And we talked about visas. What are your visa options for your situation? What are you going to do for work? I feel like that's most people's blockers and then mindset, because sometimes, even if you know what you need to do, you can get in your own way. You can be the obstacle that's holding you back.

Matt Bowles: Okay. And then I also have to ask you about this guide that you wrote entitled [I'm Outta Here! An American's Ultimate Visa Guide to Living in Europe](#). Can you share a little bit about what that contains and how folks can get a copy of that?

Cepee Tabibian: Yes. So, this is my visa guide that I wrote during COVID. This is what I was doing during COVID, and it is a guide to the 18 easiest countries in Europe to move to, with a detailed information on over 50 viable visa options. So, this is for someone who wants to move to Europe. This is for anyone. This isn't just for women. Anyone who wants to move to Europe but doesn't know, like, what visa they can find that will work for them. You'll find over 50 of them here. And we're actually updating it. So, it's now going to be 19 different countries. And it's a digital book. And it's digital because we update it every year with new visa information and add countries, delete visas that are no longer in existence. And when you purchase this, you do get access to lifetime updates.

Matt Bowles: Awesome. Well, Cepee, I want to ask you about some reflections now about all the stuff that we've talked about in terms of a lot of the different cumulative impact of the travel experiences that you've had over your life. When you think back both in terms of the heritage trips that you did, as well as all of those trips you did coming up through your 20s and 30s, and then now the living abroad and everything else, when you think back about all that, how has all of this travel impacted you as a person?

Cepee Tabibian: Well, I mean, I think it sounds cheesy, but I do feel much more like a citizen of the world, I think, you know, I just feel much more connected to people in different places. And I say that, you know, sometimes when I go back to Texas, where I'm from, and I'll speak to friends from high school that have never been abroad can definitely see the difference in how we perceive things or just their understanding of the world in a certain way. So, it just expanded my view of the world, which I'm very grateful for.

Matt Bowles: And we've been talking a lot about the evolution of identity, both in terms of connecting with heritage, but also in terms of reinventing and developing and creating your own identities in different ways. So today, how do you think about and conceptualize your identity now?

Cepee Tabibian: I think there's two parts. One, I think I'm much more aware now of how fluid my identity is. Right. When I look back at how much I've changed since moving to Spain, so much more so than the 20 years before in the U.S. I think I'm just capable of so much more. And my identity can be achieved and changed in ways that I can't even conceptualize right now. So, I think that's one part of it.

But I think also, I mean, this maybe just comes with age. As I mentioned, I'm 44. I think in some ways there's parts of my identity that are just fixed and molded, and that's a little bit of my wiring sometimes, you know, being abroad and being around foreigners, I can see, like, the American parts of myself that are really hard to beat out of you. Right. You're just wired that way. And some parts are just preferences. This is who I am, take it or leave it also. So, I think there's a part of my identity that's very fluid and that part of it that is a bit rigid.

Matt Bowles: Well, I also want to ask for some reflections on your entrepreneurial journey. We have a lot of entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs that listen to the podcast. And when you think back over the course of your entrepreneurial journey, just in terms of the business side of building everything that you've built, what tips or advice do you have for folks that are at the earlier stage of their entrepreneurial journey. Knowing what you know now in terms of some of the best practices, the highest leverage points and tips that you would have for people that are starting that journey.

Cepee Tabibian: Yes, I think they've probably heard this before, but I think network is everything. And I think definitely, I think my number one is going to conferences. Conferences, summits that are related to the work that you're doing or aspiring to do. I just think back, and I started a blog and didn't go to blogger conferences early on because I thought I was too green. And that's for real bloggers. And now I go to those conferences, and it has really revolutionized my business. My business is not just blogging, but I just meet people that I've learned from that have businesses and different conferences. I go to the digital Nomad conferences. I meet so many interesting people there and learn there and make connections and partnerships there.

So, I think conferences is number one and I will give one more. For people who are maybe a little bit in the middle stages, or maybe even if you're in the early stages, this makes sense. Invest in your business. Invest in people who can help you get to where you need to get faster. That's what has really skyrocketed my business in the last two years, I think, is investing in coaches, mentors, people who have information that I need to move the business forward.

Matt Bowles: I'm also curious if you have any reflections now, just as a business owner, on things like time management, day structure, effective morning routines, and also how you manage stress. Everyone that has ever run a business knows about the entrepreneurial roller coaster, that our businesses go up and they go down. And so, when that entrepreneurial roller coaster takes a downswing and it's highly stressful, how do you manage that? And so on and so forth. Any of those kinds of tips that you have?

Cepee Tabibian: I feel like I'm still trying to figure this out myself. So, I think, number one, I mean, what has helped me a lot is just having a business bestie. So, I have, we call it our mastermind. I meet with a friend every other week. We talk out what's going on in our business and give each other advice. But it's just a space where you can really share with someone who gets you. Like, I do share things with my partner, but he's not an entrepreneur. And half the time he doesn't know what I'm talking about and can't always give the support, like meaningful support that makes sense for what I'm doing so I think having someone to talk it out with. But as I said, I'm learning by myself.

So, I think this year is actually a year where I'm really prioritizing me time. And I know a lot of entrepreneurs talk about that, but not all of us do it. So just like time to go to the gym, trying not to work 12 hours a day and really starting to outsource a lot of things. So, there's more to life than our businesses.

Matt Bowles: Well, I also want to ask in terms of your lifestyle design with regard to travel, you had mentioned as you were coming up through your 20s and 30s, you were really prioritizing trips to different countries every year and having those new experiences and stuff like that. And now that you're based in Spain, I'm curious what you have settled on as sort of the ideal lifestyle design and how you incorporate travel into your life today.

Cepee Tabibian: Yeah, I will say it's changed. I now live in Malaga. I lived in Madrid for five years before this. And so, in Madrid, it really was like my life was in Madrid and I would take maybe a 1, 2 weeks trip a few times a year. But in Malaga, I'll say especially last year, I went from having a more stable lifestyle and, you know, the sense that I spent most of my time in Spain and did a few trips to last year I really embraced the digital nomad lifestyle. I've just felt the itch to spend more time outside of Spain and this year is looking to be quite similar. So last year I spent maybe five to six months in Spain throughout the year and had longer trips to different places in between. And I really like that style of life right now. It's working for me.

Matt Bowles: Awesome. Well, I have to ask, of course, because you and I both have a very deep love for the country of Spain. For people that have not spent time in Spain, can you share a little bit about what you love about Spain and also give folks a little bit of a sense of the different parts of Spain where you have spent time and what some of your favorite things are about Spain?

Cepee Tabibian: Well, I think what I love and whatever everyone loves about Spain are the people. There are warm, friendly, vibrant people here. So Spanish people are going to make you feel alive. They're very sociable, and very welcoming. And so, I love that about Spain. You just feel the energy in the streets and life has lived on the streets also. It's a sunny country in most parts of it, warm. So, the weather you can't beat.

And I know people love Spanish food. I'm actually Not a fan, so I can't rave about that. But I do love the wine here. And I think, you know, as you mentioned, the different parts of Spain, I think Spain is so fascinating because there are very different cultures in different parts of the country. There's different languages, different traditions and history. And so, I love that too. There's just so much to explore in Spain.

For me, as I mentioned, I lived in Madrid for five years, which is in the center of the country is the capital. I've been living in Malaga for four years, which is in the south, and it's a coastal city. Both beautiful cities and both people love these cities. If you're a beach person, I think Malaga is a great fit if you want to still have an international feel. It's quite international, but still very Spanish, which I love. But I think my heart is in Madrid. I'm a big city girl.

And so, if you love a big city that I think is a city that never sleeps, Madrid is that place for you and it's great. What I love about Madrid, I want to add, I moved there at 35, single, childfree, and it's a city where you go out and you are not going to be an only. You're going to go out to the clubs, to bars. There are people in their 30s, 40s, 50s, out and about. And I just love that, to see people of all ages, like, live in their best lives.

Matt Bowles: Totally agree. Madrid is an absolutely epic city and there are so many amazing places in Spain. And I really appreciate what you said about the different cultures, natural regions, because a lot of the time when I will go to Spain, I will try to spend at least a month at a time in one place. And I've selected a lot of different regions. So, I'll go to Barcelona and spend a month in Catalonia, and then a different time

I'll go to Bilbao for a month, and I'll spend a month in the Basque country. And then at a different time I'll go to Andalusia or at a different time I'll go spend a month in Valencia. And so, I keep going to these different regions of, of Spain. And they're all so culturally rich and also quite different. But yet to your point, the wine is consistently amazing across the whole country. So, if you are a wine enthusiast, you will be in good shape in Spain.

Cepee Tabibian: Totally 100% agree.

Matt Bowles: Cepee, let me ask you one more question and then we'll wrap this up and move into the lightning round. You talked about how you are still really passionate about traveling. And even at this point in your life, starting to travel more and be more into that digital nomad kind of vibe. Why is that? What does travel mean to you today at this point in your life?

Cepee Tabibian: Yes, I think, you know, for me, for being in Spain for so long, for nine years now, I think in a way, my world was starting to feel a little bit small. And so, travel for me makes me feel very connected to the world. I love just hearing different languages, seeing how different people live. I love having new experiences. Right. Because it gives you that childlike wonder of life. It makes you feel very alive. For me, that's what travel gives to me. I think Spain is always going to be my home base. Moving forward, I don't see myself moving back to the U.S. or moving anywhere else long term. But in a way, for me, Spain can feel small. And so, travel does give me that dose of the world that I need sometimes.

Matt Bowles: Well, I think that is a great place to end the main portion of this interview. And at this point, Cepee, are you ready to move in to the lightning round?

Cepee Tabibian: Yeah, let's do it.

Matt Bowles: Let's do it. All right. What is one book that you would recommend that people should read?

Cepee Tabibian: Ooh, [How to Survive a Plague](#). It's about the AIDS crisis in the 1980s, and I think people should read it. I had read that ages ago, and then when Covid happened, I was like, oh, my God, we are reliving this. So, it's a very fascinating book to read.

Matt Bowles: What is one travel hack that you use that you can recommend to people?

Cepee Tabibian: Oh, my gosh. It's not so original, but it's like my favorite thing. Packing cubes. I was so resistant to them because I thought they were just dumb. And I've been using them for the last four or five years. I'm like, revolutionary.

Matt Bowles: That is a great tip. Same with me. I initially didn't use them, and then I started using them. Totally agree with that.

All right, Cepee, who is one person that's currently alive today that you've never met that you'd most love to have dinner with, just you and that person for an evening of dinner and conversation?

Cepee Tabibian: Wow, this is a hard one. I'm going to have to say the first one that comes to mind is Sir Paul McCartney. He's just a legend, a walking legend. Love to talk to him.

Matt Bowles: Knowing everything that you know now, if you could go back and give one piece of advice to your 18-year-old self, what would you say to 18-year-old CEPEE, take more risks.

Cepee Tabibian: And I took a lot. I was living a risky life in terms of doing what I wanted to do, but I would say do even more, take more risks.

Matt Bowles: All right, of all the places you've now traveled, what are three of your favorite destinations you'd most recommend? Other people should definitely check out.

Cepee Tabibian: I mean, there's so many. But my top one, Jerusalem. Favorite city. I'm not religious, not for religious reasons, but it's just like a fascinating city. And then the other two are countries, not so much cities because there's so much to explore there that I love. So, I would say South Africa and Thailand. I love Thailand.

Matt Bowles: All right, Sepi, what are your top three bucket list destinations? Places you have not yet been highest on your list you'd most love to see.

Cepee Tabibian: Oh, my gosh. Lebanon is the top. Vietnam and Hong Kong.

Matt Bowles: Amazing. I have been to all three of those. So, when you're ready to plan those trips, hit me up. Cepee, I got you.

Cepee Tabibian: Will do.

Matt Bowles: All right, Cepee, I want you to let people know at this point how they can find you, follow you on social media, connect with you and also how they can learn more about your community and your programs and all of that. How do you want people to come into your world?

Cepee Tabibian: Yes. Well, come to our website shehitrefresh.com you're going to find everything you need to there. You can find out about [my masterclass](#). We also have a paid membership so you can learn about that if you just want bite sized tips on how to move abroad, follow us on [Instagram](#) at *shehitrefresh* and if you're interested in the visa guide, you can go to our website, it's shehitrefresh.com/visaguide.

Matt Bowles: All right, we are going to link all of that up in [the show notes](#). So, you can just go to one place at themaverickshow.com. Go to the show notes for this episode and there you go to find direct links to everything that Cepee just mentioned as well as all the other things we have discussed on this episode.

Cepee, this was amazing. Thank you so much for coming on the show.

Cepee Tabibian: Thank you so much, Matt. I had a great time, and I love your questions. This was just so much fun. I got to talk about so many different aspects, so I loved it.

Matt Bowles: Awesome. Good night, everybody.