

Matt Bowles: My guest today is Alexandra Jimenez. She is the founder of [Travel Fashion Girl](#), a seven-figure company with almost 1 million monthly website visitors that has helped over 30 million women pack efficiently and fashionably since 2012. She is also the owner of [Compass Rose](#) travel accessories and most recently acquired the Women's Travel Fest, a conference focused on empowering female travelers. Originally from Los Angeles, Alex worked in the fashion industry for seven years before a life changing experience in India in 2008 inspired her to quit the corporate world, reimagine her entire path, and explore the world permanently. She travels the world with carry-on luggage only without sacrificing fashion and style and teaches other women how to do the same and has now been to over 50 countries. Alex is a sought-after keynote speaker on topics including entrepreneurship, leadership, and growing a business from the ground up. She has been featured in the New York Times, Cosmopolitan, Oprah, Forbes and USA Today.

Alex, welcome to the show.

Alex Jimenez: Wow, Matt, I'm super excited to be here today. And now with an intro like that, totally pumped up for the conversation. Thank you.

Matt Bowles: I am super excited to have you here. Let's just start off by talking about where we are recording this from today. We are not in person. Unfortunately, if we were, we'd be sharing a bottle of wine. I am sure I am actually on the West coast of Africa today. I am in Luanda, Angola. And where are you?

Alex Jimenez: I am in my home in Playa del Carmen, Mexico. That's a very special place to me. And I've been coming here on and off since 2011. So, it's a very special thing to actually get to be here today.

Matt Bowles: I love it. I was in Playa last year. I spent about a month there. I spoke at the nomad base conference and hung out with a whole bunch of folks that happened to be in town, had an absolute blast. So super fun place to be. You have been moving around a lot recently though, making appearances at conferences and doing all sorts of stuff. I've been following you on social media. I want to actually, ask if you can share a little bit about your recent experience at the Latino travel Fest and what that conference was all about and a little bit about your experience there.

Alex Jimenez: This was the first annual Latino Travel Fest, and it was absolutely phenomenal. I can't even say how special it was to be surrounded by a community of travel leaders, content creators, and all being Latino, looking around and just having these conversations with people that understood my history and getting a chance to share my story and for everyone to be able to share their experiences with each other. It was very empowering in a very unique way.

Matt Bowles: Can you share a little bit about your story and maybe before you even talk about your story, if you can share a little bit about your parents' story and your cultural background and where you came up.

Alex Jimenez: My mom is from El Salvador. My mom and stepdad are from El Salvador, and they came to the U.S. in the late 70s, early 80s. And obviously the history with the war in El Salvador during that time, so they came to the U.S. And basically, went from having a very comfortable life in El Salvador to then coming to this foreign country where they didn't know the language, didn't really have anything at a very young age.

I think my mom was like 13 or 14 years old, so it was quite a journey for her. So, mom came to the U.S. had me and basically spent the rest of her adult life up to, I don't know, maybe 10 years ago, just working hard

and sacrificing everything to give me a better life. And she did. And really in seeing her work and seeing how she went and really chased after the American dream.

I really admire her because as a teenager, being able to have a child, I'm her only child and then coming, not knowing the country and then being able to go from having nothing to then having the four-bedroom, three-bathroom, suburb white picket fence house and getting that dream that really inspired me with everything that I do to see her do that.

And because she's working really hard. It's not like we had a lot of vacations or work for her was her life and taking time off, especially in the U.S. You know, that's not an option and I think a lot of people in the service industry and Latinos Maybe non-Latinos as well feel like if I take vacation if I take time off, I'm going to lose my job So that was never an option so we didn't actually get a chance to travel together until I was 21 and my mom and I took a one week vacation to Hawaii.

Matt Bowles: Well, I actually lived in L.A. for about seven years. So first of all, big up and much love to Los Angeles. And I had the incredible privilege of visiting El Salvador last year for my very first time. I spent about a month in San Salvador. It was absolutely an incredible place. I've been talking about it and recommend it to people, spend some time on the beach, but also spend most of the time in the city.

It was just fantastic. I mean, the people are amazing. And then of course, obviously there's a pretty substantial Salvadoran community in Los Angeles as well. And I'm curious for you, like, as you were coming up, how did you sort of navigate some of those immigrant identity dynamics between the Salvadoran identity and then the American identity and sort of being that first generation born in the U.S.?

Alex Jimenez: It's kind of like being in the middle of two worlds. And you think that you're one and associate with the other, but you never really quite fit in, and you never really quite belong. I think it's a really challenging place to navigate. And in Los Angeles, it's a whole other world in L.A. as well. So even if you're growing up and don't have a lot of money, you're still surrounded by the glitz and glamor of Hollywood and the fashion industry and all the wow.

So, growing up in Los Angeles, I think it's kind of a weird place to be in a couple of different worlds. So, I think it's quite psychological thing that a lot of first-generation Americans really have to navigate. And there are a lot of challenges with that, but in this case, it's one of the things that really was a moment in my life that was very transformative because it's trying to navigate your parents, American dream.

And your own dreams and how do you try to accomplish your own goals without disappointing your parents? So, I think that's one of the things that a lot of people have to deal with and something that I personally also had to deal with when I decided to travel.

Matt Bowles: Can you talk about your early interest in fashion and how that developed and how your initial experience was entering the fashion industry?

Alex Jimenez: Oh my God. Fashion was my life. If you knew me as a 13-year-old and then ran into me 10 years later, you would have asked me, hey, how's your fashion business going? Did you open up your store? And everyone from when I was 13 to 20 and from any middle to high school to college, everybody thought I was going to build my store because I'd been talking about it for so many years.

I had a business plan. It was just a love for the industry and the idea of participating in that world in business. I've always loved business. Kind of a very young entrepreneur since I, once I started this journey with [Travel Fashion Girl](#), it caused me to look back and see the roots of my entrepreneurship.

And literally I was, I had my own little business in my first grade as well. But at the end of the day, I always knew what I wanted. I was always hustling to accomplish my goals with fashion and with anything else. So being able to have [Travel Fashion Girl](#), it kind of became the perfect marriage, not quite as glamorous fashion as I was looking at before, but it actually was something that I've never shared with anybody before was that my idea for a store was actually geared originally towards the Latino audience in Los Angeles.

Matt Bowles: Well, I want to definitely talk about your travel journey and how transformative that has been and how it dovetailed with your entrepreneurial journey, of course, and maybe a good place to start would be that trip that you mentioned to Hawaii with your mother when you finally made that happen. How was that trip and what came out of it?

Alex Jimenez: So, the trip to Hawaii was the first of many serendipitous events in my journey. I, looking back at that, everything really that I have now roots from that moment. My mom and I went on this vacation again. It was one of her first real vacations that she'd really gone on. And on the last day of the trip, I left the hotel before we checked out.

And I went and wandered around. I walked down the street, and it was my first time being really kind of alone, but I went, I did. And it was almost that first moment of being present in a foreign location. And. As I was there, I was just thinking to myself, if I ever leave my job, I'm going to take three whole months off to travel.

And that was a promise I made to myself as I walked down the street in Hawaii by myself. But then something else happened. Something shocking. There was a woman that was running right past me, and she turned around and looked at me and said, Alex? And it ended up being the VP of the company that I worked for, someone who I looked up to and she knew who I was first of all, and that was, wow, I know this person knows who I am.

And then she said, she said hi. She was really nice. Well, little did I know that at that moment, one, I made a promise to myself that would then actually come true in a few years and would completely change my life. And also running into the VP of the company from a career standpoint was game changing in itself because she ended up hiring me and moved me into the department where I would work as a sponsorship and events account executive.

And learn so much about what I know today and things that I've been able to implement into my business. So, it was game changing from a career, from a life standpoint. It was really something that I could never imagine that that one short walk on my own in Hawaii would result in.

Matt Bowles: Well, I also want to ask you a little bit about your transition out of the corporate world. I know that the India trip in 2008 had a big pivotal role in that. Can you share a little bit about your experience in India and then a little bit about that transition?

Alex Jimenez: Well, at the end of 2007, the U.S. was slowly going into a recession, and as part of what was going on, the company I worked for, and I'd worked there for almost six years, and I always like to make sure that everybody knows how much I loved my job.

I had an incredible corporate job in my early twenties, and I didn't want to leave the company, but I ended up leaving because I felt like they pushed me out, and that was really heartbreaking because I loved what I did. So, I ended up giving my notice in January of 2008 and did exactly what I'd said in Hawaii, which is I took three months off to travel.

Well, nobody really wanted to travel with me. I didn't know that you could travel alone. I didn't know that you could backpack. So, after a couple of quick trips, I realized that it was March and April, and my three-month period was almost over. So, I went online, I found this Canadian spirituality and yoga tour to India. And I booked it within 24 hours because I wanted to go somewhere, and I wanted to go somewhere that was completely different from what I knew. And I did. And on that journey, people that were a part of the tour, the people that I met locally, inspired me in so many different ways.

And I thought to myself, what am I doing with myself? What am I doing with my life? Why are the kids at best by kicking their parents for not kicking them that Xbox game. It was just like all these random things. I don't want to be a part of that. How can I exist? And I did. Before I left that trip, it was a 17-day trip 24 hours before I departed to the airport, I sent a message to my landlord and let them know I was giving them my 30-day notice for my apartment. I posted on Facebook that I was going to be leaving for some time and wanted to rent my car if anybody wanted to rent it from me, which somebody did.

And I told the job that I had lined up to start working with them. I said I was no longer going to be able to work with them. So, I put all the things in motion and again, that was another serendipitous moment for me between Hawaii and then India. Just such pivotal points in my journey and I look back at them and just see them with such wonder and really appreciate them. There's just such a special looking back at those moments. I feel so grateful that I was able to have them.

Matt Bowles: Well, you have been to a lot of places, and you have traveled for many years. You've been to over 50 countries now. One of the experiences that I want to ask you about is your time in Africa. I have been on the continent for the last seven months.

And I've probably spent about two and a half years or so on my travel journey on this continent. I think the particular experience I want to ask you about though, is that you did an overland trip from Zimbabwe to Cape Town. I have not yet been to Zimbabwe actually. So, I would love to hear from you a little bit about it. What Zimbabwe was like, what you're up to there, and then how that particular experience was.

Alex Jimenez: Well, after I went to India, as part of my journey, I went to Africa. I went on an overland tour from I think it was Johannesburg to Zimbabwe. And that was mind blowing. So, I didn't get a chance to actually spend as much time in Zimbabwe or in particular, Victoria Falls, where I was.

So, I said to myself that I wanted to come back, which I did two years later as part of my round-the-world trip. And I did an overland tour from Kenya down to Zimbabwe. So, I accomplished my goal. Well, that was the end of a trip around the world. So, I was literally on my last 500 bucks that I had, and I don't even think I had a flight home.

So, I needed to get from Zimbabwe to Johannesburg or Cape town on a budget. So, I had researched online that some tour trucks, like the overland trucks, if they were repositioning and they didn't have any passengers, that you might be able to offer them some money to go back to where they came from.

And in this case, I did. I found an overland truck driver that I asked if he would take me back to Cape Town if I could just join him. He thought it was really weird, but I did it. And another girl actually came with me on the trip, which was probably good. I was probably very lucky that that it wasn't just me. I look, I mean, I look back at this and I'm like, I would never do this right now. I don't know what I was thinking, but I did so much of that. That's just one of the many random things led to in 2010 or as part of my journey, I paid him 50 bucks to go on his empty truck from Victoria Falls to Cape Town. And that's what you got to do when you're a budget backpacker, which I was at that point.

Matt Bowles: That's amazing. I was just in Cape town last month. I've been a number of times, absolutely incredible city. So, let's talk a little bit from there about how both your travel and your entrepreneurial journey progressed. Another place that I've spent a bunch of time in is Southeast Asia, but I have never been to Borneo. I know you went to Borneo around 2012 or so, and I would love to hear about your experience there. And then also what came out of that particular trip.

Alex Jimenez: So, I mentioned I was a budget backpacker and as part of how I saved money to travel was that I would participate in work exchanges. So, I use this website called workaway. info and you could sign up for different. Work opportunities where you would work for someone for free for 20 hours a week, and they would give you free accommodation and usually free food as well. So, as part of that, I went to work in Kota Kinabalu in the rain forest in Borneo at a camp that ended up being a horrible experience.

I'd done that previously working in the rain forest in Rio Dulce in Guatemala. And that was amazing. It was one of the best moments I've ever had traveling. So, I tried to replicate that in Borneo. Big mistake. It was a horrible camp, and I ended up leaving there shortly after. And after having this plan and then it's kind of throws you off. Well, I found myself in Sandakan in Borneo one morning and I woke up and I'm, I have this idea for this website. I've been working on this idea, the content for a year. I am so horrible with technology. I don't know how to start this website, but all I know is that I have to do it right now. How will I do this?

I thought to myself, well, I can't go back to Los Angeles. It would be a fortune for me to live there. I have to get a job. I wouldn't be able to focus on the website. What if I went to work away? And I searched to see if there were any local opportunities in Southeast Asia, where I might be able to stay for a month and work a little bit, but I wouldn't have to really spend money to be there. So, I could just focus on my website.

Within two hours, I'd found those perfect work exchange where again, this is one of those moments where the universe kind of brought to me is another serendipitous moment where I found a digital marketing agency that brought on travelers to write articles for them for free 20 hours a week in exchange for accommodation. So, I thought, wow, I don't know what digital marketing is, but maybe somebody there can help me launch my website.

So literally I booked a flight, went there, and this journey ended up being what kicked off [Travel Fashion Girl](#). And at this shared accommodation, I was in this house co living and co working with these people, and there was a, I was a professional social media manager in 2012 and there was a web developer, and these two people helped me launch my website.

I mean, what are the chances that I would find the perfect thing? And also, this digital marketing thing ended up being SEO. I learned how to do keywords, learned about keywords, and learned about SEO from day one when I was building my blog. So, whether I did it perfectly or not perfectly, I started implementing SEO from day one from what I learned in this work exchange in Koh Samui, Thailand. And that led me to

reach over 1 million monthly visitors in 2019. So now obviously 2020 kind of put a dent into that traffic. And in 2022, we hit almost a million monthly visitors again. So that was a very exciting journey. So that actually spawned off from that moment in Borneo, which let me cause a movie to launch my website and being there taught me what I needed to know to get to those 1 million visitors with the business that I have. So that's a whole loop of things that ended up working out as wow, in a magical, miraculous way.

Matt Bowles: Can you talk about what the [Travel Fashion Girl](#) brand is today? Just for folks that have never heard of it, this is their first time hearing about it. What brand is today? What does the website offer? And then share a little bit behind the scenes of how you built it to this level from that time in Borneo.

Alex Jimenez: Well, I mentioned that in 2012, I had this idea. I wanted to launch this website based on my experience traveling almost full time for the five years prior. So, unlike today. Where people, hey, I want to go travel. I'm going to work remotely. I'm going to be a digital nomad that didn't exist before. So, I literally just did what old school travelers would do. We work, save money and travel and just budget backpack and do figure out how to make it work. And I did.

So, I took all my experiences. And I found out that there was a lot of women were experiencing some of the same issues that I was. It all had to do with packing. And this became really important because I said I was traveling for five years. I didn't want to carry this giant backpack with me any longer. I was tired of dragging around this backpack, going to hostels and guest houses every other night, packing and packing. And I would see these guys who just had this tiny backpack, jumping on a motorbike, looking so free, running through the train station. And I wanted that. So, I was determined to go on this search about to research how to travel lighter.

And as I did, I interviewed other women that I met traveling and learned about their tips, learned about what worked, learned about what didn't work. And I wanted to put it all together because I realized this is an issue that I have to solve, and I have to stop other female travelers from having the same problem.

So, I launched [Travel Fashion Girl](#) with the intention of helping other female travelers learn how to pack lighter, learn how to pack what they needed, learn how to leave at home what they didn't need so they could pack efficiently, wouldn't have to be stressed out and make all my packing mistakes. So, the purpose of [Travel Fashion Girl](#) and my 32nd elevator pitch is we teach women how to travel carry on only for any destination in the world. And that's it.

Matt Bowles: I love that. And I love that for so many reasons, including the fact that my experience is very similar, I left L.A. That was the last base that I had before I started nomading. I've now been traveling the world for 10 years with no base.

But when I started off, I had an unbelievable amount of luggage. It was crazy. And I was lugging it to Argentina and lugging it to Egypt. And I was just like, there has to be a better way. And so, I also started studying minimalist packing and particularly stylish minimalism, because I think one of the points that's really important that you just made is it's not difficult to just travel around to beach locations and wear the same bathing suit and flip flops every day and just travel around with not a lot of luggage.

The key is, how do you do it without sacrificing fashion and style? And so, for me, that was the big thing. And I also do workshops at Nomad conferences on stylish minimalist packing. Because I travel the world with carry-on luggage only. And my carry-on luggage includes a three-piece suit and Farragamo shoes and

multiple ties and an espresso maker and a wine aerator and all of these other things that fit into my carry-on luggage.

And one of the things that I love about [Travel Fashion Girl](#) when I started going through your website is the extent to which you have done this so comprehensively and you have things broken out by destination and broken out by all of these different categories. And it's totally amazing. So, I want to ask them maybe if you can just distill it down, because one of the things that happens when I do a presentation on minimalist packing, and I'm mostly doing it about, here's what I bring in.

Here's kind of the audit of my luggage and here's how I do this and this and this. And sometimes there will be women in the audience that might raise an objection and say, oh, well, you're a guy, so it's easier for you to travel with carry-on luggage, it would be harder for me. And so, I want to ask for your sort of response to that. And if you can share some specific tips for women on how to downsize to carry-on luggage, without sacrificing the fashion and the style.

Alex Jimenez: Okay. I think my entire mission on my website is to find solutions for any objection. If someone says, well, I can't pack lighter because of this. If I can't pack lighter for this.

I've got an article for it. There are over 2000 articles with solutions for things that people don't even know about it. I think it shocks people how much information we have. I think somebody joked that they could research how to pack for a camel ride, and there would be an article about that on [Travel Fashion Girl](#).

Literally, we tell you exactly where, how to do it, what you wear for every destination and then general, like what are the best travel pants? Here's 10 of the best options. What are the best jackets? What's the best carry-on suitcase? How to do it. We don't cover Ferragamo shoes, unfortunately, but we do try to provide as much information as possible.

And the really cool thing about what we do is that it's all firsthand knowledge, either for me or for my community. Everything is original and everything is really bringing together back from what I was originally doing, interviewing people about how to do it. Like I would have gone up to you and asked you, how do you do it?

How are you traveling carry on only? How are you doing it with a suit? And then I would take your information and put it together. Well, now with my Facebook group community of 85, 000 people, that's what we do and we put together the content based on that and if anybody has an objection, I promise you there is an article on [Travel Fashion Girl](#) giving you a solution for that.

Matt Bowles: That's so amazing and I totally agree because sometimes they'll see the stuff that I bring and a bunch of the stuff I say you don't need to pack this and this in this category of thing and there's somebody who'll raise their hand and say I need to bring this thing whatever it may be right a special hair dryer for my particular hair and I need this and it has to come with me I'd be like great. Do you need a professional podcasting studio? And they're like, No. And I'm like, great, we'll just put the hair dryer where the podcast studio goes and you're good. Right.

So, it's like, figure out what your essential items are, even if they're not mainstream things. Like I travel with a portable espresso maker. For me, that's imperative. I use it four times a day. Like I'm not traveling without that. So, I'm just going to figure out how to put that in and then pack the other stuff around it. Right. I need a

podcast studio. Like that has to happen. It has to be professional grade. I need all this stuff that I'm using now. So that's going in next.

And then I'm figuring out how to pack the rest of the stuff around it. Right. And so, you can really customize these things. And what I love about your website is exactly what you said. It is like the most comprehensive minimalist packing resource that I have ever seen. It's like every scenario, every location, every climate, every place, every possible thing you could imagine. Just go to your site, search, buy it, and you'll explain to them how to overcome that objection and how to do it. It's amazing.

Alex Jimenez: And you are the perfect example because you're so extreme, who needs to pack a three-piece suit, who needs to pack a podcast studio who needs to pack an espresso maker so if you can do it with packing all these things that somebody else wouldn't need to pack, then they can do it too. And I will just clarify a couple of things, carry on only in fashion. So, with carry on only, I think the goal for me was to travel, carry on only.

And it still is. And on the website now, as it's evolved, a lot of people, maybe don't want to travel, carry on only, and that's okay, we're an equal opportunity website. So as long as you're taking the principles from packing and implementing them into your own style, maybe you just don't have two check bags. Maybe you have one. So that's important to know. And from a fashion perspective as well, I didn't start it because I wanted to trade, just go around the world and heels and all this designer clothing.

I just wanted to be prepared. So, I've always created the website in a way where it's not really about me. I've tried to get things that are neutral because that way everybody can customize it for themselves because style is really unique. So, it's important for someone to be able to go and implement the fashion into whatever that interpretation may be because fashion might be important to me and style, but for somebody else, their interpretation of fashion style might be different and that's okay.

Just coming in, taking the principles and doing it. Minimalist packing is possible. Even if you've got a 10, the 10 step Korean skincare routine, trust me, I've met women and I'm like, okay. Let me see what you've done. Show me your skincare routine. Now let me tell you how to downsize it. I've got a solution for everything.

Matt Bowles: Yeah, I think that's super important, right? Because that's one of the first things I say. I'm like, listen, I carry the things that I carry because they're the things that I want to have with me. I carry a suit because I just like to rock that in certain cities and to roll like that. I don't need that for business purposes.

And if you're not the type of person that would want to have that, then by all means, definitely don't pack that. And instead pack things that are going to be more aligned with your fashion and style sense. And so that's the whole point is being able to customize it for you. And one of the other things that I do is I travel the world full time with no base, and I travel to multiple climates.

So, my carry-on luggage is what I take to go skiing. It's what I take to go to the beaches. It's what I take to go to a really posh rooftop lounge in Tokyo. It takes me everywhere. And so sometimes it's very easy for people if they're not full-time travelers. Cause it's like, oh, I'm just packing for a trip. I just have to go for like one month and I'm going to go to like the same climate. That's super easy. And then it starts getting more advanced techniques. If you're like, okay. All of the material items that I own are going to fit into carryon luggage and that's going to take me to every single climate in the world.

And now you start getting into other types of techniques about how to do that. But it's really customizable to what are your needs, what is your travel style, what is your personal fashion. And then how do you want to do this in a way that's going to allow you to be minimalist but also maintain your sense of style and also be prepared for whatever climates you're going into.

Alex Jimenez: And that was exactly my issue. I'd realized I'm never going back home. I've been traveling for five years. I'm not going back to Los Angeles. I don't even have a home. I have no closet. I'm living out of a carry-on suitcase. How do I make that happen? I don't know where I'm going to be in the next couple of months.

But I'm not going to be home to figure it out and I'm not going to buy a whole new wardrobe because I'm saving all my money to travel. So that was a really big part of my mission is how am I prepared for all the climates, all the activities. And if I could travel carry on only as a full-time traveler that had no idea where I was going to end up. Then you should be able to do it on a seven-day vacation or even on a one-month trip. There's a way the whole point is you don't need everything. You can customize it to your own needs. And we show extreme examples. You might not need to carry all your key scuba diving equipment. I don't have podcast gear.

Like you said, you need that hairdryer. I don't need the hairdryer, but I need my dive mask and my dive watch. That's important. So, everybody kind of replaces it because not everybody's like, I need all my beauty products, and I need my hairdryer, and I need my podcast, and I need all the things. Everybody has their thing prioritized and then fills in the blanks after.

Matt Bowles: The other thing that I have found that is super amazing about doing this is that when you buy fewer things, you can buy nicer things. So, if I only own one pair of dress shoes, I can justify having that be a pair of Ferragamo dress shoes.

If I only own one pair and similar with everything else that I own, if everything that I own fits into carry-on luggage and I only own a small number of things far fewer than other people would, then with the same budget, that other people have a whole closet full of stuff I can have really nice stuff. And that is a very fun, I think, and nice benefit of minimalist packing.

Alex Jimenez: Okay. And that brings up two points, one is people spend a lot of money on things because they're good enough. They were cheap. Why not? I had a friend who had a closet full of clothes but always wore the same things. And she'd come back from Walmart with five new pairs of leggings because they were like five bucks.

And I thought to myself, you know, that if you just didn't buy 50 leggings that were three bucks or five bucks each, you could just get a couple of really good quality leggings that you could rewear all the time. And it's not, again, not about designer, but the quality. Let's say travel pants. That was a big one for me because pants are the thing where you could have one, two, three pairs, and they can be so versatile. You don't need to have like a hundred and they could be the right things, whether you're at home or whether you're traveling. And this brings up another point that a capsule wardrobe, we'd walk into our closets all the time and we still look and say, I have nothing to wear.

So that brings up a whole other topic, which is about what makes you feel good? And when people are saying I have nothing to wear, they're really saying I have nothing to wear out of the thousands of items that are in my closet that makes me feel good. So, if you wouldn't have spent all the money on the thousand

items in that closet, you decided to get the one pair of shoes. And in your case, there were the Ferragamo's. You would have just the 10, 15, 20 pieces of things that are perfect for you that make you feel good that you can always go into your closet and be like, I always know what I want to wear. And it's, I don't even have to look in the mirror because these things are so perfect.

They're so me that I don't have to worry about anything else. And these principles, they've changed the way I see things from a fashion perspective. I've seen minimalism from the way that individuals spend money and how I want to spend my money. And it's been life altering from travel and just in general life as well.

Matt Bowles: A hundred percent. One of the top benefits, maybe the single number one benefit that I have found for me personally of doing this, is how psychologically liberating it has been. When you condense your physical material items that you own down to carry-on luggage, you are basically imposing a physical restriction on yourself from participating in materialist consumption.

I can't go shopping. and buy stuff because I have nowhere to put it. I would have to replace something and get rid of something in my bag if I was to buy something new. So going shopping, "and just having this as a regular materialist consumptive part of life", you physically restrict yourself from participating in it.

And when you remove yourself from this hyper capitalist materialist accumulation that we're all socialized into, especially in the United States, all of a sudden, now you are able to really refocus your priorities, your time, your money on experiences and relationships with people. And I have found that to be the single most valuable part of this entire experiment.

Alex Jimenez: It is very liberating. I stumbled upon this. I mean, I didn't do it on purpose. Like, oh, I'm not going to participate in capitalism and materialism. I literally had to let go of everything I own in order to travel. I literally sold all my clothes might ended up leaving. Selling my car, my furniture, everything is because I couldn't be attached to anything.

And after making those final changes, like 2012 and 2013, I didn't really have anything to lose. I didn't really have anything holding me back. I've actually met someone with a corporate job who really wanted to travel, and they couldn't leave their house. They said, you know, I have a mortgage payment. I said, well, write to your house, but what if my 3, 000 dining room table gets damaged?

And then now that table is keeping this person from traveling. So, as an example of our things holding us back, traveling is possible. It's just about prioritizing.

Matt Bowles: A hundred percent. And I think about your point, the way that we socialize and marketed to and all of that, both in terms of what shows that we have more status and stuff like that, as well as just the constant barrage of consumerist marketing to us. It's like, oh, I want to buy this thing and this more expensive thing, whether it's a nicer car or it's a bigger house or it's a this or it's a that. And then all of those things increase our geographic restriction, to your point, and it moves us further and further away from location independence, which for you and I is the most incredibly liberating freedom that I would not trade my location independence for anything. And so that's sort of the irony is that the bigger the house and the more expensive the car and the, this and that, and the more stuff you accumulate, the less location independent you typically become.

And so, I think the other thing too, is that when you stop spending money on more material things, you can reallocate that to more incredible experiences. Even if you want those to be expensive experiences. I can

remember, I went to my first ever three Michelin star restaurant. It was five years ago, and it was in the Basque country in Donostia, which the Spanish call San Sebastian. And I went there with a friend of mine, and it was a seven-hour dinner, and it was a wine pairing and everything. And I ended up paying like \$450 for this dinner. And I told people and people have never been to a three Michelin star restaurant or whatever.

They might say, that's insane. Why would you pay \$450 for a meal? And I said, I said, well, I don't pay 450 for a lot of other stuff that most people would pay \$450 for. And instead, I reallocated to this. And the reason I would do that is because five years later, I'm still talking about it right now on this podcast.

I vividly remember that experience. It was an unbelievable multisensory experience. It was one of the most incredible evenings that I can recall having in the last five years. And so, creating those types of memories and those types of fundamentally unique experiences that normally you'd be like, oh, that's too expensive.

I wouldn't spend money on that but yet you would spend it on something else. And so, you have this ability to reallocate those resources and those funds into extraordinary experiences with incredible people and make these unbelievable memories and then have stories to tell about it. So, for me, that's exactly the direction I've gone. And that's really been one of the things I've discovered along this journey that has been the most rewarding.

Alex Jimenez: And you can never really take back an experience, you'll forget about that piece of clothing or that pan bag that you bought, but the experiences are things that you can look back on, you know, in 20,30 years, is that bag still going to be sitting there next to you? Are you going to be embracing it? Or are you going to be real living that moment in India that changed your life? Floating down the Ganges, being in Kota Kinabalu, living in a random camp in the rainforest, or having that beautiful dinner that you're still talking about, because it's not just any dinner. It's a special dinner in a very unique location and something that will always. It's bringing joy to a whole other level that you will be able to look back on for many years from now.

Matt Bowles: Well, I want to ask you now a little bit about your entrepreneurial business building journey and get some tips that you have just when you think back on everything from 2012 till now. What were some of the biggest leverage points in getting your blog to 1 million visitors and then getting your business to a seven-figure revenue level? What tips do you have for entrepreneurs based on your lessons?

Alex Jimenez: I think the underlying theme is really setting your priorities very clearly. Also, something I find that a lot of people don't do is they want to start new. They want to start completely fresh. One of the reasons why I was able to be successful is because I took my knowledge. The knowledge that I had from a professional standpoint in the fashion industry. The knowledge I had from traveling five years before I started my business, marrying them together. It was being able to share my unique knowledge.

So, if you're starting a business, if you want to be an entrepreneur, what makes you uniquely different? What do you know? So acutely well that other people don't know in the same way, or maybe they're sharing information, but how do you niche it down? I have a website about packing and not just about packing, packing for women. Double niche. And then not just packing for men, how to pack carry on only. That's a triple niche. I mean, how specific can you get, and I make sure to keep it crystal clear. I don't publish general travel tip articles. I don't publish all these other things. And I've been able to do that in a very authentic way.

The audience that I've built because they've seen this comprehensive information. They believe in the product that I have. They know that I'm experienced. They know that I, what I'm telling them is unique. They're in my best interest. So, they trust what I have to sell. They trust my information. So those lessons would be, what are your unique skills? What is a niche? How can you sell something in a way that feels authentic to you and where people can know, like, and trust you and have that loyalty. I've had people tell me, Alex, honestly, you could tell me to buy whatever, and I'd buy it for you because I trust you. I trust that you wouldn't be selling me something that I wouldn't need. So maybe a tip about that would be a little bit of integrity with what you're offering and selling.

Matt Bowles: Can you share a little bit more specifically about the revenue model of your business, how it works and the different streams of income that you've created?

Alex Jimenez: So, my revenue model came about really authentically. Or organically would be the word because I didn't know in 2012, like who made money on a blog. So, I was just like, I don't know if this is going to make money, but it'd be cool if it did. Maybe like a couple hundred bucks a week where it can keep my backpacking budget going. And I was publishing about clothing, and I was publishing about products.

And people started messaging me and saying, can I have a link? Where did you get these pants? Can I have a link? And I thought, okay, here he goes. I had people even annoyed with me saying, it would really appreciate if you would link to these products instead of just post them, so I'd know where to get them.

I'm like, okay, I'm sorry. I didn't realize that when you put links on, there could be. An affiliate, like I didn't know what affiliates were. So, for me, the main source of my revenue is affiliate income. And it was my audience member that told me what they wanted for me. It was my audience that told me, this is how you're going to make revenue. So that is the majority of my income right now. My revenue. In addition to that, I also launched the line [Compass Rose](#) travel accessories.

So, I also have my own product line. It's been a couple of years. I'm actually just relaunching it right now with my thousand person waiting list for my packing cubes. Even this weekend at the Latino travel fast, I gave some away and people love them. They really are good. So that is a part of my income. Some specialized eBooks on what to wear in ad revenue. Ad revenue is something I never wanted to put on my website, and I held off on many years but actually putting it on with my traffic.

Was the game changing. I was able to take my business to a whole other level with that revenue that the ad traffic came and offered me. But even now I'm still very clear and specific about having my ad revenue. I don't want it to be ads everywhere. I'm very specific. I'm very protective of my brand. So that is one of the key things for me.

Matt Bowles: And can you talk specifically about building a remote company and managing a fully distributed team and building company culture? In a fully remote company and those types of things as you scaled up, what lessons or tips do you have on the remote business side?

Alex Jimenez: I think when you start working online, the first thing people tell you is that you need a VA. I guess that does have to do with my virtual company culture because I'm not seeing my team as VAs. I'm seeing them as people. They are my team, and nobody works full time for me as a salaried employee. Everybody's a freelancer. However, I don't treat them like just a VA. That's an impersonal word for me that I hear used and thrown around a lot.

And I don't treat them just as freelancers. I bring them together. We have conversations. We have team meetings. I asked them what they think about what we should do. They incorporate their own ideas. They share their input, and I've even brought them together for retreats. And that actually was a very game-changing moment to bring people together.

But virtually there's a lot of trust. There's a lot of resources now, especially those that didn't exist when I started. So, I use Hubstaff. It's absolutely incredible. I can't recommend it enough. I started off by hiring people on Upwork and in many cases, that's still where I could look for new team members and then move them on to Hub staff. Hubstaff have a very low fee for what you get. And basically, everybody downloads this sort of payroll thing onto their phone or their laptop. So, they just clock in when they work. And every Monday they get paid automatically. I don't have to go and approve everything.

I don't have to do any accounting. They know they're going to be getting their paycheck. It's a really great system. And it also protects you and them because Hub staff takes screenshots of someone's screen while they're logged into work every few minutes. And I've always been very transparent when I hire someone. This is what we do. This is how we use it. I don't have time to micromanage you. I'm not going to go look at your screen. However, if I see something off, this is my way of going to verify what's happening just to see, are you working?

Maybe something was just delayed, and it protects you because you don't have to validate yourself and your work to me, but it also protects me to ensure that you're not watching the bachelor on my time like someone did when I hired them to be my social media manager several years ago, which was one of the first and only times I've had to let someone go because of that. But the majority of people are trustworthy. It's a very rare occurrence and I've worked with tons of people over the years.

Matt Bowles: Well, we will link that up in [the show notes](#). I also want to ask you about your acquisition of the Women's Travel Fest. For folks that have not even heard of the Women's Travel Fest, can you talk about what it is and then now that you are the owner, what is your vision for the future of the brand and the event?

Alex Jimenez: Women's Travel Fest is a conference that brings together women all over, usually the U.S. I'm coming internationally and really as a celebration of travel as a celebration of our love for seeing the world and also as a sense of empowerment. Not only are people learning about travel skills through industry leaders, but they're also being uplifted to be able to accomplish the things that maybe they don't know are possible, or they haven't been learned about the new aspirations that they might have.

I attended this conference for the very first time in 2019, and it was life changing. Even though I'd already traveled to over 50 countries, I had a successful travel business, it was something different and very unique. The community that Kelly Lewis, the original founder, had put together was so warm and welcoming.

And I've been to many conferences, but that one was truly special when I found out that she was selling it, I knew that I needed to be a part of it. It was something that I wanted to do, not just to continue her community, not just to continue her conference, but also for me as a Latina, as an entrepreneur, as a traveler, it was also important for me to be able to give other women of color, someone to look up to, someone that they could see in more of a public position and more of a leadership position and know, hey, travel, maybe it's for me too. I see someone, she's a woman of color, she's succeeding in the travel industry. And I really wanted to step up for my community. And this is my opportunity to do that.

Matt Bowles: That's so amazing. All right, Alex, I want to ask you one more question and then we'll wrap this up and move into the lightning round.

When you think back now about all of the trips that you've done and places you've been and experiences that you've had, what impact has all of that had on you as a person? And why do you continue to travel? Why are you still so passionate about it? What does travel mean to you?

Alex Jimenez: Now it's a chance to renew, to refresh, to really energize my soul. It gives that to me and something that I do that I really encourage other people to do when they're traveling is to disconnect, take all your pictures in that destination, get all of them.

Don't spend five hours on that beach in Tulum, taking pictures, knock those beautiful Insta pictures out within 30 to 60 minutes, then hang out for four hours and be present at that beach and look at where you are and feel. Let magic happen because those moments for me being around the world just existing have been absolutely transformative.

Matt Bowles: Amazing. I think that's an amazing place to end the main portion of this interview. And at this point, Alex, are you ready to move in to the lightning round?

Alex Jimenez: Let's do it, Matt.

Matt Bowles: Let's do it.

All right. What is one book that has impacted you over the years you'd most recommend other people check out?

Alex Jimenez: [The Celestine Prophecy](#). I don't know if you've heard about it. It's sort of a travel journey that has some underlying spirituality themes, and I started reading it on that trip in India in 2008. So, it resonated with me, and it felt so aligned with where I was and what my journey is, so I continue to reread it over the years whenever I want to bring myself back to that moment.

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

Alex Jimenez: Carry on size packing cubes, obviously, no packing cubes were the key ingredient that helped me reach my goals of traveling carry on only.

Matt Bowles: Well, we're definitely going to link that up in [the show notes](#). So, folks can go check out your travel cubes and all of the other amazing stuff that you have to offer.

Alex, if you could have dinner with one person who's currently alive today that you've never met, just you and that person for an evening of dinner and conversation, who would you pick?

Alex Jimenez: It's Madonna because this is somebody that from the very beginning, I would probably as a little girl, you're not supposed to be looking at Madonna, right? She was everything bad that everyone shouldn't be. I even got in trouble at school for wanting to perform one of her songs. It's like the talent show. But it was the first person who I saw kind of breaking the mold, breaking the rules, doing whatever she wants, something different, and just being so non apologetic about it.

And however she's evolved over the years, I really don't follow her anymore. But just seeing that this was sort of an icon that really kind of influenced me in a little bit of that fashion from that beginning. Yeah, that's who I'd have dinner with.

Matt Bowles: Alright, if you could go back in time knowing everything that you know now and give one piece of advice to your 18-year-old self, what would you say to 18-year-old Alex?

Alex Jimenez: I've got three things. I'll make them quick. One, invest in stocks. That's something that you can totally comprehend on your own and ignore your friend's brother who told you that it was too late to invest in some stock that you wanted to invest in when you were like 19.

Number two is signing up for credit cards. Obviously don't go into debt but pay all of your credit cards off with a reward earning mile earning points. So, you never have to pay for a flight ever again. And there, you always have time to make for the people that matter to you. You can always take those flights. You have nothing to stop you from taking those flights to go see and spend time with that special person because they might not always be there.

Matt Bowles: All right, Alex, of all the places you have now traveled to, what are your top three favorite destinations you would most recommend other people should definitely check out?

Alex Jimenez: Bonaire, if you're a scuba diver. I love scuba diving. That's everything, more so than travel. Thailand, if you just want to have a great time in a beautiful destination that's not going to cost you too much. But really, I think Thailand's almost like the country of possibilities. The third one would be Guatemala because it's one of the most underrated countries and it's so beautiful. I feel like nobody knows about it and it's this hidden treasure that's so close to the U.S. Like Guatemala is amazing. One of my top five countries in the world.

Matt Bowles: Amazing. All right, last question, Alex. What are your top three bucket list destinations? These are places you have not yet been. Highest on your list you would most love to see.

Alex Jimenez: I would like to go to Palau. Cause obviously scuba diving destination. I would like to go to Lembah in Indonesia. Also, another scuba diving destination. And third, I guess at some point I stopped collecting passport stamps and I just wanted to go back to all the places that I've been. I went to Greece and Croatia the first time last year and I'm like, ah, I need to go back. I want to go back to Bonaire all the time. I want to go back to Thailand. I love coming back to Playa del Carmen. I don't know. I almost don't really want to go anywhere new. I'm happy to go do that. And obviously it's something I'm always excited to do, but I don't need to add countries to my list. I just want to go to places that make me feel so happy. I want to go back to my happy places.

Matt Bowles: Awesome. All right, Alex, I want you to let folks know at this point, how they can find you, follow you on social media, check out your unbelievably comprehensive website, all your packing resources, your products, and everything else. How do you want people to come into your world?

Alex Jimenez: Head over to travelfashiongirl.com where you can check out the world's most comprehensive resource on packing. And also, you can follow me on *Travel Fashion Girl* at [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/travelfashiongirl). To learn more about my [Compass Rose](#) travel accessories, you can also learn more about those on *Travel Fashion Girl*, or head over to Amazon and search for [Compass Rose](#) travel accessories, packing cubes, and you will find them there. And lastly, *Women's Travel Fest*. If you're interested in learning more about that conference, it's um, womenstravelfest.com. And also, you can follow Women's Travel Fest on [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/womenstravelfest).

Matt Bowles: All right. We are going to link all of that up in one place in [the show notes](#). So, if you didn't get all of that, you can just go to themaverickshow.com and go to [the show notes](#) for this episode. And there

we will have all of that listed in one place. You can just click on the links from there. Alex, this was amazing. Thank you so much for coming to the show.

Alex Jimenez: Thank you, Matt, for having me a lot of fun. So, thank you for giving me a chance to share my journey with your audience.

Matt Bowles: All right. Good night, everybody.