

INTRO: This is part two of my interview with Mari Monsalve. If you have not yet listened to [part one](#), highly recommend you go back and do that first because it provides some really important context for this episode. If you have already heard [part one](#), then please enjoy the conclusion of my interview with Mari Monsalve.

Matt Bowles: I want to ask you now about another trip that I know was really special to you, that you did with your mother. She wanted to do a religious pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and that had been something she had really dreamt about for many years. You were eventually able to take her there, not only to the religious pilgrimage sites, but then of course in so doing to go into the occupied Palestinian West Bank, to go to Bethlehem, and to experience occupied Palestine as well as part of that. So, can you share a little bit about what that trip was like and then what your reflections on the experience were?

Mari Monsalve: Three years after I was diagnosed with cancer, I had another cancer scare. And so that was 2021. That year started off extremely rough for us. I very much thought that I was going to have to go through chemotherapy again. I ended up having to have another two sets of surgeries and it ended at that. But a few months later, I am traveling through Italy and my mom starts to have certain things happen to her. And while I was on what was supposed to be a three-month trip, rewriting my experience of Italy and visiting Albania, Montenegro, Kosovo, etc. I found out a month into the trip that my mom was diagnosed with a very rare cancer. Only 200 people in the history of humanity have had a case of this type of cancer documented. It's called bulimia duct carcinoma. And the probability of surviving it beyond the first year is tiny.

And I end up returning to the States and helping my mom through that process. And I seriously have doubts that my mom would get to her 70th birthday. So, I decided it's a good idea to fulfill her lifelong dream. She's never been to Europe, and in addition, I find a cruise that would go through the Mediterranean. But it was mostly focused on holy sites, including Jerusalem. And I saw that they had a lot of biblical stops on those tours. So, I said, this is perfect, and it was in Spanish. So, I was elated that my mom would have her lifetime dream fulfilled to visit Holy Land and Europe. On the itinerary, it just said the Church of the Nativity and it said Bethlehem. So, I didn't do any further research than that. But I very quickly realized once we were crossing the gates, some huge gates that look like they were the gates you would see at a prison in the US like a federal prison, so they have the watchtower.

And the IDF came onto the bus, asked the tour operator where we were going, where the majority of the people were coming from. They spot checked a few passports or IDs and kind of just making sure that people were from where they said they were. And then we crossed into Palestine. And I could immediately tell the difference between just a few blocks before that, seeing these beautiful homes, and then a few blocks in, you could immediately tell the disparity of wealth. You could tell that there was a lot more people in the streets. They looked different than what people look like before the gate. And then we stopped a few blocks away from the Church of the Nativity. We got off the bus and as we were walking to the church and then back, there were children and older people trying to sell us artisanal Nativity sets.

And there was so much desperation in their voice to try to get us to buy something from them. And there was one child that spoke English and he was telling me that he was trying to sell things so that he could pay for school. He only knew a few words, but I understood enough that he was selling these hand carved things that were Nativity sets for him to be able to pay for school for him and his brothers. And of course, I have seen situations of poverty in Colombia that are extremely impactful. But to see it also on that side of the world, I felt really shitty. And I felt like that was not the first time, but it's one of the many times that my

privileged position was in my face so bluntly. And I felt so shitty because I was there to enjoy an air-conditioned bus and then be paraded around this town. That was going through so much suffering, go to a hotel and enjoy a buffet style meal.

And then just a few blocks away, there was people literally begging us to buy things so that they could pay for something that was such a, like a basic need for children. I very quickly, even though I had read about the Israeli and Palestinian situation, I don't think you really fully grasp it until you're there or unless you have lived or experienced a situation where there's been colonization of people through forced means and how the colonized experience that. I don't think there's a full understanding of it unless you're in those shoes.

Matt Bowles: Yeah, I think that's a really important perspective in terms of what you're saying about colonized people understanding immediately. It was interesting because the first time that I went to Palestine, I was an undergrad and I went as part of a Peace and Conflict Resolution semester program that I was doing as part of my undergrad study abroad. And the year before I did that, I did another study abroad program where I was in Ireland and I studied abroad in Dublin for a year. And I'm Irish American, but have been in the US multiple generations. And so, for me to go back to Ireland, that was incredibly powerful, to reconnect not only with my Irish heritage in a general sense, but to really study the political history. And Ireland, of course, was Britain's very first colony. And there has been a decolonial struggle by the Irish against the British military presence there for hundreds of years.

And today the northeastern six counties of Ireland remain Britain's last colony. They're still occupied by the British, and that struggle continues. And so, I was there and I was studying that colonial history. And then my advisor in undergrad in the U.S. was Native American, so I had taken his native nations classes and I had studied the colonial processes over indigenous nations in the United States. So, I had that context, I had the Irish context. And then I went to Palestine and I was like, okay, got it. This is entirely clear what's happening here. And I think if you have that context, so you've studied other apartheid regimes, like what happened in South Africa. And then you go to Palestine, like, you just start to see how clear it is and what's happening there. So, I think that's all really, really important context and really important that you did it when you did, which was right before the genocide started.

Mari Monsalve: Right, we were there. I believe it was the last week of September, we only spent two days in Israel. But I very quickly understood and felt there was tension and I was very nervous that something might happen while we were there. The time that I spent in Colombia, there is a sense of tension that sometimes if you've been in situations of war, you can feel. I do not know how to explain this feeling when violence is about to erupt somewhere. And I felt it when I was in Palestine, and I felt it when I was in Israel. I even remember telling my mom, I'm glad you got this experience, but I don't know if we'll ever be able to come back and see this ever again, not even knowing what was to come. And I said, mom, I just wish we would have had more time to really understand. So, I'm college educated and I think my parents not having that, they missed out on a lot of the context of what's happening in the region.

And so, me being able to explain it to her and her seeing it, because it's not just us saying it's not right. It's, do you see it with your own eyes until you go and you see it and you experience it and you feel the tension and the disparity. Why is there so much disparity in this very resourcefully rich area of the world? And that happens in many other cultures, but when you realize that it's a colonized land, then you understand you have a better context of what's going on. And I think for a long time I had not wanted to form an opinion because I felt like I didn't really understand it until I saw it with my own eyes. And then when I saw it with

my own eyes, I fully understood the plight of the Palestinian people. And I do not believe in the genocide of children, especially anywhere in the world. So, it was extremely hard for me to see with my own eyes and then understand the context of what's happening there.

Matt Bowles: I appreciate you sharing those reflections. I also want to ask you about your 2023 trip to Guatemala. And speaking of the United States backing, arming and funding genocides, they also were involved with backing, arming and funding the genocide in Guatemala that happened in the 1980s. Israel also, by the way, was involved in the genocide in Guatemala. And if people are not familiar with that history, I would encourage people to definitely look into that. But Guatemala is a country that I have not yet been to, but I would love to hear about what your experience was like.

Mari Monsalve: The country itself is beautiful. I would definitely recommend more than the amount of time I spent there. I only spent there five days, and it is high on my bucket list to return and see Tikal. But Guatemala is such a big, fast, and culturally rich country that I feel like the five days I was there did not do it justice at all. So definitely recommend you to visit. But something happened to me in Guatemala that made me rethink my entire reason for solo travel. And it made me doubt myself. It is a hard topic to talk about, and it wasn't because of Guatemala. It was because of one man in Guatemala. I refuse to blame an entire country or culture for what happened to me there. But I checked into a hotel, and a hotel employee, I will not mention the hotel, they removed this person from their personnel and I feel like that was a sufficient conciliation of what happened.

But basically, when you say in Antigua, some of the hotels are situated like older colonial homes where there is a fountain in the center and then the rooms kind of surround that fountain. And some of the houses have multiple of these patios with these colonial fountains in the center of it. So, he assigned me a room in the back where very few people would be able to see or hear the entrance to my room. I didn't think anything of it. I ended up finding out that some friends of mine from Florida were also in Antigua. We didn't plan for it, so we were super happy that we happened to coincide in Antigua at the same time. And we went out to the Antigua Brewing Company and had a few beers, and then we went dancing somewhere else. But anyway, midnight rolls around. I'm tired. And I asked them, thinking that I was doing the most safe thing. I asked them to walk me to my hotel. And I'm thinking, once I am behind the door of my hotel, I am safer than ever.

So, I get in. It's pouring rain, and it's pouring so hard that you cannot hear any other sound except the rain. That's how hard it was raining. It was rainy season in Antigua. I'm walking towards my room, and as I'm putting the key into the door, I felt a presence behind me. So, I turn around, and I see the same guy that had checked me in earlier. He's standing there. So, I avoid putting the key in the lock to open the door. And I turn around and I'm like, hello. Like, can I help you? And he starts asking me dumb questions. Immediately, I knew something was off because it's midnight, and he's asking me about the laundry, if I wanted to do laundry. And that is not a normal question you get at midnight in any hotel around the world. So very quickly, the hair on my neck stood up and I realized that there was some other intention behind this. So, I said, I don't understand why you're asking me about laundry at this time. I can discuss this tomorrow with the front desk. And then he says, I saw that you checked in by yourself. And I was wondering if he wanted company for the night.

Most women will identify with this, But I held the key in a certain way that if he lunged at me, I was ready to poke his eyes out with my keys. And I've tried to assess the situation to see if I could overpower him if he attacked me or if he pushed his way into my room. I stood my ground and I was very direct. And I told him

basically that I was not interested and that he needed to leave before I started to scream. Obviously, I could not sleep that night because it was a hotel employee who I had no idea how many copies of keys he had. I had no idea if this particular room was set up to spy on me while I was in my room in any state of nakedness or showering or just existing. And I spent a horrible night not being able to sleep and just kind of expecting that at any point somebody could burst into my room. So, I pushed the furniture towards the door and spent a sleepless night trying to figure out what my next step would be. Also, this room did not have phone service, so I could not call the external world. And my phone did not have good signal in this particular room. So, I don't know if there was some sort of device kind of taking away from the signal or just the construction itself of the building prevented me from having good signals.

So, I spent a very treacherous night just kind of imagining a million and one situations and how I would get out of them. I did not let fear win, and I kind of created a plan. I said, you know, in the morning, I'm going to go out to the front desk, and by the time I leave, he's surely going to be gone. And I started showering with clothes on because I did not want this man to be able to see me if he had any cameras there. And I hear a knock at the door. It's like 7am and it was him. I was able to see through a window that this room had. And I'm very irate at this point. And I basically say, like, what the fuck do you want? Why don't want to talk to you? I don't want to hear from you. And he says, well, I'm sorry. I just came to apologize to you for my behavior last night. It shouldn't have happened. And I said, absolutely, it should not have happened. And I said, I don't want to have any further conversation with you. I get ready, it's now like eight something, and I'm leaving the hotel and his shift is still not over.

So, when I walk through the front desk, he's still the person at the front desk. And I leave. I spend the day outside of the hotel. I'm extremely irate at this point. At some point I'm able to make it back to the hotel. It's like three o' clock, different person. And I ask her very gently, is there any possibility that the person that was working the night shift is going to be working the night shift again that same night? She says, yes. And of course, fear then starts to set in because at this point, now I'm going to be in this situation again with this person that has access to keys. So, I say, look, I don't want to cause trouble, because of course, we're so taught to diminish our experiences. But I tell her I don't want to cause any trouble, but this is what happened to me. And so, I give her a timeline. She goes and she checks the cameras and she sees that he followed me to my room behind me, and I couldn't hear him because of how the rain was falling in these patios and the noise it was making. So, she was able to corroborate my story and she switches his shift.

And then panic really sets in for me because it is very obvious to me that he's going to figure out that something is up. It ends up being another sleepless night. I had asked to be moved to a different hotel, but the hotels in the area are all fully booked. I don't know what was going on in town. And I end up having to stay for another night in this hotel. Luckily, they had switched out his shift. But I'm still very frightful that he's going to connect the dots and figure out that I had complained and that's why they moved his shift. I left the hotel the next morning. I went to Lake Atitlan and I spent time there at a very famous hostel, which everybody spends the night there, or spend some time there, which is Hostel del Mundo. And a lot of people that travel the typical route in Guatemala end up at some point staying at that hotel or the surrounding hotels near that area. And that is finally when I feel safe and I start questioning myself if I'm wrong about solo travel, if what I'm doing should stop. Just so many questions going on, because as a solo women traveler.

We are exposed to a lot more things than men. We always have to think three steps ahead because we always live under this threat of rape or sexual assault. And it really frames the countries that you choose

that many women choose to travel to. It frames even the content I make. I'm very much recommend places with the safety of women in mind. And even then, there's so many layers to that. Like, I don't experience what black women experience. So even if I recommend going to Italy as a Latina, that may not be the best spot for somebody that is black. A black woman will probably be treated differently than I am as a Latina. And so there's so many layers to traveling solo as a woman that a lot of men never have to contemplate or think about or experience. And it never limits the way that men travel versus how women travel. And to be truthful, this situation and the way men feel, access to women's bodies and access to our time and access to so many of the dimensions of being a woman, that could have happened to me anywhere. It could have happened to me in Colombia. It could have happened to me in the States.

Matt Bowles: So, as you were processing that experience and you were rethinking through the solo travel stuff, where did you end up in that thought process?

Mari Monsalve: I refuse to let the fear of something stop me from living the experiences that I want to live. And there's many ways and many things I can do to make sure that I have a safe journey. Nobody's exempt from experiencing certain things, but nobody's exempt from experiencing those things at home either. For a lot of women, sadly, one of the most dangerous places is at home with their partner. And I know that because I've lived through that experience. So when I measured the risk of traveling the world solo and fulfilling my dreams versus the safety of my home, I much rather experience some level of risk and still be able to live my wildest dreams and have a life that I'm proud of. When I eventually depart from this dimension or leave this world. I would rather have a life that I am much more fulfilled through then. Than just feeling safe at home, where, again, many of us don't even feel safe at home.

Matt Bowles: How can men be better allies to solo female travelers?

Mari Monsalve: I actually wrote an entire blog post about this. I don't know if you saw it.

Matt Bowles: I did. I did see it. I read it. I thought it was really good. And that's what prompted the question.

Mari Monsalve: There's so many ways that men can help women feel safer on the road. Well, first of all, just because a woman is nice to you does not mean that there's any other intention beyond kindness, beyond maybe even a desire to connect as humans, but not in a sexual way. Not every interaction is going to have any sexual intention. And I feel like if we start there, it would solve so many problems. I feel like a lot of men that I've met traveling expect some sort of sexual interaction. And I'm going to talk specifically about Latino culture on this because there is this misconception that women that travel solo mostly do it for sexual exploration. Or there's this thought that maybe somebody else is funding your travels through sexual work.

And so, some people cannot grasp that there is a desire to travel for the joy of travel. The problem is in the assumption that all women that are traveling solo are looking for that type of interaction. And just off of that, I feel like if men stopped assuming that there is a sexual gratification at the end of an interaction, a lot of the issues would be solved. But further than that, I feel like believing us when we say, I didn't feel comfortable in this situation, obviously, please stop catcalling us in the streets. And I don't think a lot of men understand this. Sometimes we smile in those type of situations because we don't want to hurt somebody's ego and end up stabbed, shot, raped, dead. I don't think men understand how often it happens. I think the other most important thing men can do is call other men out for their bullshit. If you

see a friend that is overly aggressive and you recognize that behavior, if you see men talk about the women in their family in a respectful manner, that is a very high sign for a man that is aggressive towards women. If you see men that make stupid, shitty, non-funny jokes about women and about gay people, because that's the other thing the brunt of the joke is either women or LGBTQ is usually a good indicator that that man is usually aggressive in some form towards those parties.

So as a man calling out other men for their and standing up and saying, hey, that's not okay, I think that goes a long way because men are not listening to women. The amount of times that I have had to wear a fake ring, say that I'm married or I live with somebody or I have a boyfriend to stop a man from advancing on me is to the extent where a man will rather listen to a fake version of a man does not exist versus me telling them no. So, it is intense sometimes to experience that, but I think that's where men can help us feel safer when traveling is. I know for a fact that men in certain groups understand who is a potential abuser, who is more aggressive than others, who does not respect women. Because all that locker room talk really says a lot about men in groups. And they have to have an audience who is going to enjoy, in quotation marks, a joke if there's not an audience there.

And if somebody in that audience is like, hey, that's not funny, or that was shitty. If more men spoke up to their friends, I feel like that would make things a lot safer to begin with. But there's so many things. I think the blog post that I wrote does not even cover one tenth of what men could do to help women feel safer while traveling, especially in Latino culture. There's a phrase that I hate with a passion, and it says, which translates to, when you're quiet, you look prettier. The quieter you are, the prettier you look. And that boils my blood when somebody says that because you are shutting down a person. It's used in so many ways that has worked to oppress Latina women from traveling, from experiencing the world, from going for their own dreams. So many different layers of the harm that that phrase has done to Latina women.

Matt Bowles: Well, we are definitely going to link up your article in [the show notes](#). I want to encourage everyone to go read it. I think it is super, super important. And I want to use this as an opportunity to talk about what else you are writing on your blog [The Queen of Trips](#). Maybe just start with, with, why are you known as *The Queen of Trips*? And then what can people expect from your platform?

Mari Monsalve: Well, I am known as The Queen of Trips because my dad was the very typical Latino macho who was not originally okay with his daughter traveling around the world by herself. He didn't really have a choice in it because as I grew older and as I grew in my career, well, it's like if you're an IT auditor that's auditing different places around the States, it kind of comes with a job. And that is the job that I, you know, I didn't always want that job, but that's kind of how I fell into solo travel, was through work. So, at some point I was traveling so much. I was traveling every week. And at some point, he wasn't seeing a lot of me. So, he always mentioned that I was out and about. And Latino parents do not like their daughters to be out and about in the streets or anywhere. So, one day he says, excuse me, who do you think you are, in Spanish, he said, "La reina de los viajes, okay"?

In English, it means, do you think you're the queen of trips or what? And something that was very sarcastic ended up being the name for my platform. I did not start this platform with this name. Through my cancer journey, I negotiated in quotation marks with God. I'm a spiritual, but not a religious person. And so, I remember praying and doing meditation, and I would say, God, if you give me a chance at life again, I promise you I will see the beauty of this world and I will share that with people that cannot travel as much as I can. And it's profound and yet very superficial, but it gave me the drive to not squander whatever time I have left on this planet. So, then I started my platform as travel journal of a cancer fighter. It was way too

long. I also did not want to spend the rest of my life identifying with cancer, even though I'm not so away from that anymore, because I feel like cancer is not an experience that is talked about enough. And anybody can develop any type of cancer at any point in their lives. And it is a life altering situation that some of us never recover mentally from. I mean, I still deal with a lot of mental angst and even more PTSD.

I feel like sometimes my decision making is very impulsive because I feel like I have a gun to my back a lot because I don't know if there will be a relapse or et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. So, my decision making isn't always the most responsible because I've already lived through this experience. And at the end of the day, when I die, because we're all going to die at some point, I want to be so fucking proud of the life that I experienced and the fact that I did not let fear of traveling solo or any other situation detain me from seeing all of the beautiful places that this world has to see. That's how that platform got started. And that is kind of the basis of how I share my stories and share what I write. I want to empower women, especially Latinas, to travel the world by themselves if they so choose to do. And you should not let any type of relationship with your parents, your spouse, your boyfriend, your friends, your dias, dictate what you can or cannot do with your own fucking life. Because at the end of the day, nobody else supports you financially except yourself. I believe in women being able to do with their time and money as they please.

Matt Bowles: And you have a newsletter as well. Can you talk about that and how people can get on it and what they can expect from it.

Mari Monsalve: I have a bi weekly newsletter. I share personal travel stories. If I'm currently traveling, I will share something from the road. I also share travel opportunities that I vet myself. I share giveaways and contests like that that people can enter that are from reputable companies. I share tips and travel hacks. I share the stories of other Latinas that are solo traveling throughout the world, even if they are moms and or are in committed relationships. Because I want to normalize that the Latino community is still a community where you are told that you are selfish or a bad wife, bad girlfriend, bad daughter and all kinds of bad things because you want to travel the world solo or that you're looking like I mentioned earlier, there's context of we're either prostituting ourselves if we travel solo, either through sexual work to fund these travels or through finding men. You know, we're called loose women. Some women will travel in that sense and good for them if that's what they choose to do. But the assumption that it is every woman, I want to dispel that.

And I do that through my newsletter and through some of the stories that I share. Sometimes I get inspired and I'll share a cocktail from around the world if I want you to travel through cocktails because that also ties into my fourteen years of experience as some sort of brand ambassador slash specialist of marketing for spirits and wines. And if somebody was doing something really cool in the travel industry, I love to share that. I love to share my experience at travel conferences because I want more Latinas, Latinos in general, but I want more Latina women in travel conferences. I feel we are a segment of the travel industry that is long forgotten and not represented enough, not marketed to. And some people don't even believe that we have the disposable income to travel as much as we do. But Latinos are spending \$114 billion a year, U.S. Latinos alone, on leisure travel and we are not marketed to. So, I feel like a lot of places are missing out on a sleeping giant with enormous financial potential.

Matt Bowles: All right, well, we're definitely going to link up your newsletter and your blog and all of that stuff in [the show notes](#). Folks can just go to themaverickshow.com and go to [the show notes](#) for this episode and there you will find all of that. Let me ask you one more question, Mari, and then we'll wrap this up and move into the lightning round. When you think back about all the travel that you've done up to this

point in your life, how has all of that travel impacted you as a person? And why are you so passionate about continuing to travel? What does travel mean to you today?

Mari Monsalve: For a really long time, I thought travel was an escape from my life, but I realized that for me, actually, it's never an escape. I am building a life that involves travel. I'm building a life where travel is a priority. I think the millennial generation and forward, we are the generation where we start to think of being rich, as having time, location, independence. The generation before us, Gen X, was probably starting to feel that way, but it didn't really happen until millennials started joining the workforce and kind of questioning a lot of the things that were traditional. And then, of course, with the pandemic, that kind of fucking exploded, and people were really questioning what their lives were for or what we were basing our lives on.

So, for me, travel has always been always been much more than just a vacation for me. Travel is a way for me to connect with people that I probably would have never, ever connected in any other way before. It is a way for me to learn much more about this world and learn not just facts and textbook stuff, but learning about the economic and social, political situations of countries has built a lot of empathy in me to want to support people through some sort of sustainability that is not always this luxurious concept of sustainability that is typically talked about when we talk about eco lodges. And sustainability is also preserving people's local culture.

And the only way you can help people do that is by traveling and putting your tourism dollars into those pockets. Not just going to the Marriotts and Hiltons and Hyatts of the world, but also experiencing what a local stay is like, what a locally run tour situation is like, experiencing some of the local festivals, seeing how people live their everyday lives, but trying to find the best ways for you to positively impact places you visit is something that I've gained from all of this travel.

Matt Bowles: Well, I think that is the perfect place to end the main portion of this interview. And at this point, Mari, are you ready to move in to *The Lightning Round*?

Mari Monsalve: I think so.

Matt Bowles: Let's do it.

All right. What is one book that you would recommend that people should read?

Mari Monsalve: [The Kite Runner](#). I cried reading that book. It also gives some context into Kabul and life before and then life after. And then there's also a very specific situation that happened to the child in this book. And I feel like it is a book that helps you build empathy and especially for cultures that we, in a sense, have been taught to hate and not understand. The Kite Runner, I would have to say, is a very impactful book.

Matt Bowles: All right, who is one person currently alive today that you'd never met that you'd most love to have dinner with? Just you and that person for an evening of dinner and conversation?

Mari Monsalve: I would love to meet Michelle Obama. I admire her intellect and I think she's such a class like class the definition of class. She is such a smart woman, such a graceful woman, and I am in awe of her, especially the way she's handled the barrage of things that have been set against her for so long. I just think she's so very diplomatic in a very smart way. And I think that she would be a great person to have amazing dinner with, just have really great conversation about so many things about her experience in the

White House and even beyond that, just so many layers of Michelle Obama that I would love to meet her and talk about.

Matt Bowles: All right, what is one travel hack that you use that you can recommend to people?

Mari Monsalve: My family always thinks that I have magic discount fingers for finding flights. I don't. I tend to watch trends. Why? I don't know, I just, I like to watch price trends to places and I like to look up when the high season is, when the shoulder season is, and when the low season is and why it's low season. And would I be comfortable traveling to somewhere during rainy season. Like how scary does the rainy season get there? Because if it's in a monsoon area, I will probably not visit during monsoon season, but I might visit during the beginning or the end of rain season. And then the second thing I do is I always look for what the flight costs as a round trip using one airline and then what it costs as separate tickets. And sometimes I have saved hundreds of dollars booking a one-way flight out on one airline and then booking a one-way flight back on a different airline. And that has saved me multiple times hundreds of dollars.

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

Mari Monsalve: I would say to not put so much of the weight of the world on my own shoulders and to lift some of the stress that I felt and the sense of responsibility, I would say I cannot fix every situation and I cannot repair everything that happened to my family. It was not my responsibility to do that. Even though I felt as the oldest kid that I had somehow been given this responsibility it is not the responsibility of the eldest kid to carry the weight of their family. And I would have incorporated much more playtime. I did not have the typical college experience. And I wish I would have given myself or allowed myself some more time to experience things in a much more free way versus carrying weight and guilt and responsibilities that were not mine.

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

Mari Monsalve: Oh, okay. So, I would be remiss if I didn't say Colombia. Hello. For all of the cultural exploration you can do there. Colombia is known as the land of 10,000 different rhythms. So, if you want to do like musical exploration, definitely a great place. Afro Colombian culture, indigenous culture, environmental travel, hiking, all the things. A place in the United States that wowed me. Utah beyond any expectation I ever had. The different national parks there. I feel like I have to include a recommendation inside of the U.S. because there's a lot of people that may not be able to travel outside of the U.S. soon or different situations. Even if you're a foreigner coming eventually back to the U.S. to visit us after, who knows what happens in the next few years. But Utah is a beautiful place that should not be missed. The third spot, it's not an inexpensive, but it's still attainable, is Iceland. Iceland is also a very nature forward experience and I feel like the geographical topography and what the landscapes look like is something that you will probably not ever see again in your life unless you go to Alaska or Greenland or certain parts of Norway and northern Scandinavia or Russia. But you should not miss out on Iceland or Utah or Colombia.

Matt Bowles: All right, last question. What are your top three bucket list destinations? Places you have not yet been currently the highest on your list.

Mari Monsalve: Bhutan is the current highest on my list. It is a little bit expensive to get there because the government requires a certain minimum amount of spend per day that you're there. And then it's very

restricted as to how you can get into Bhutan. So very highly on my list, the next place would be Madagascar. If Colombia is the second most biodiverse area in the world, I would want to see number one and I believe that is Madagascar. And then the third one, I used to say Antarctica. But I'm starting to understand that our human impact on that land mass may affect us much more in the future. And so, I would have to say one of the stands. And I think that is a dream I will fulfill next year because I'm going to TBEX in Kazakhstan.

Matt Bowles: Amazing. All right Mari, I want you to let folks know how they can find you. Follow you on social media subscribe to your newsletter and check out your blog. How do you want people to come into your world?

Mari Monsalve: I am mostly active on my blog right now. I'm also finishing film school. So, my social media, which is *thequeenoftrips* everywhere, I'm the Queen Of trips on every platform. Bluesky, RedNote the more obscure ones but the more known ones, I'm *thequeenoftrips* on [Instagram](#) and [TikTok](#). Now I have not been very active on social media this past year because I work a 9 to 5. I'm going to film school and so you may not find a lot of content there or you might depend on when you see this. But my blog [thequeenoftrips.com](#) is definitely the best way to be in my circle and then a much more intimate setting is my newsletter which is called the [Globetrotters Gazette](#). I only message you biweekly so I will not spam your inbox. Please join and definitely support the community and I hope to see everybody join my newsletter. You can subscribe either on my website, [thequeenoftrips.com](#) there's a box there that will say subscribe to the newsletter or you can use a link which I will send to you and you will have it in [the show notes](#).

Matt Bowles: Absolutely. So, we are going to have direct links to everything we have discussed on this episode in one place including all of the ways to find, follow, connect with Mari. That's all going to be at [themaverickshow.com](#), just go to [the show notes](#) for this episode.

Mari, this was absolutely amazing. Super, super special conversation. Thank you so much for coming on the show.

Mari Monsalve: I appreciate you opening this platform to my story and to all of my 10,000 lives.

Matt Bowles: Well, let's definitely hang out again somewhere around the world very soon and good night, everybody.