

INTRO: This is part two of my interview with Jessea Lu. If you have not yet listened to [part one](#), I would highly encourage you to go back and do that first because it provides some really important context for this episode. The first part was episode [#214](#). And just for context, Jessea and I are currently recording this in Nairobi, Kenya. We are on the [Remote Year](#) program together. This is actually Remote Year's first ever All Africa itinerary. If you listen to the show, you know that I first did a 12 month [Remote Year](#) program back in 2016. This is now my second one which is a four-month [Remote Year](#) program. And if you are new to the show and you don't know about [Remote Year](#), it's a company that puts together travel itineraries for location independent professionals to travel the world with a community. So, you can either select a 4 month or a 12-month itinerary and then you show up. You don't know anybody when you start, but you meet the rest of the remote professionals and then you travel the world together with them for the duration of that itinerary. You live in a different city every month and [Remote Year](#) takes care of all of your travel logistics, your flights, your accommodation, your co working space access with 24.7 Wi-Fi and they have full time local staff on the ground to facilitate your experience in each location as well as a program leader that travels with the group. So, my first one was back in 2016. We made 12 different cities across four continents over the course of the year. And then this one is an all-Africa itinerary and Jessea and I have experienced Cape Town South Africa together, then Arusha, Tanzania, and now we are in Nairobi, Kenya.

So please enjoy the conclusion of my interview with Jessea Lu. And if you're interested in learning more about a [Remote Year](#) program and seeing if it's right for you, I will put a link in [the show notes](#) so that you can get a \$100 credit off of your first [Remote Year](#) program. So please enjoy part two of my interview with Jessea Lu.

Matt Bowles: Now, I know that in addition to all of the modeling underwater stuff and all of that, your real true passion is to use the free diving to spend time with big underwater animals in their natural habitat. And you have had some of the most insane, remarkable experiences I've ever heard of doing that. I want to go through some of them. You have pictures of most of these as well, which is just completely incredible. Can you start maybe by talking about your experience in Tonga? Free diving with humpback whales and what that was like?

Jessea Lu: That was amazing. Humpback whales had been one of these dream animals for me to see. I remember when I was a scuba diver, the first time I saw dolphins on the water, my breath was taken away, and I couldn't believe how beautiful that looks. And then I hear stories about people seeing whales on the water, and it's like, when is this going to happen to me? And Tonga is actually one of the most predictable places where you can have a whale encounter, but you cannot do it with Scuba Tank. You have to go snorkeling or free diving. But being a snorkeler, you can only stay on the surface. So, if the whale is on the surface, you might have a nice encounter. But if the whale is on the water, you only see them from a distance.

So, I was lucky. I was already a freediver when I got there. So, I remember there were two encounters that were very, very profound. One time, I just heard whale singing underwater. And then we just start looking where they are and. And then I found two whales' kind of just sleeping at 30 meters. They're not moving anywhere. They're maybe singing that way in that position. And just kind of tail up a little bit, head down. And I swam in between them at the same depth, and I was just hovering between them. Just look at them at the same time while the whale is singing. The sound is so loud, so they kind of vibrate your chest.

The other time was a mom with a calf traveling on the surface. I really want to get closer to them. And I was on the surface. They were coming towards me. I was so excited. I was like, yes, come, baby. Closer, closer.

And then I suddenly realized they are about 2 meters away from me, right in front of me, traveling towards me. I am literally in their path and being face to face with this gigantic animal. Even the calf under the mom is way bigger than me. And I just suddenly didn't know what to do. I didn't know if I should move or not at this time would I scare them? The last thing I want is to disturb them or threaten them because one flip of fin I will be shattered. Right.

But I knew marine animals are usually gentle, whales are even gentler. So, I just kind of decided in that moment, even rationally knowing that they shouldn't hurt me. They normally wouldn't hurt people. It was still very frightening just being that close to a huge animal coming towards me. But I just didn't move. I just stayed on the surface. I just looked down and the mom and the baby just gently duck dived like about a meter. And they just glided under my belly and cross. It was so unbelievable.

Matt Bowles: That is amazing. And you have pictures of these experiences, and these whales are absolutely enormous. I mean, people need to understand how big these whales are. But one of the other things that you have done and in terms of safety and stuff like that, I was actually amazed that you did this. You went free diving with orcas, which are also known as killer whales in Norway. Can you explain and share a little bit about that experience?

Jesse Lu: That's a very sort of special trip. Only perhaps a small percentage of these very enthusiastic marine photographers or free divers would want it to go. It's the same as the humpback whale encounter. You cannot do it on scuba. It's. You have to be a snorkeler or free diver. And most divers are dressed up in dry suits with gloves and everything. It's really cold water almost at freezing temperature. And we were on a dinghy boat just on the surface searching for killer whales. I just really enjoy the natural kind of like face to face encounter with these animals. Being able to see the size of an animal and how they move through water, and you feel their energy is experience. It cannot be replaced by a story or seeing it on tv.

You have to be there and be next to the animal to really get through the true version, the real version. But perhaps a lot of people don't really know what is safe, what is not safe about marine animals. There's always some caution in how to approach animals and there's always some experience that we learn from people who previously have done it. But in general, humans are not their choice of prey. So marine animals don't like to attack humans unless there's some kind of mistake that they are making, or if the water is really murky and they think that you are something, or they didn't know what it was and they become too curious. But in general, as long as you follow the local guide's instructions, it is safe.

Matt Bowles: So that's even the case with orcas, because I think in pop culture at least, or mainstream representations, that the reason why they're called killer whales comes with sort of an ominous reputation that if you saw them in the wild, that might be something to be fearful of. But you actually intentionally went out and went in the water and went free diving and were swimming around with the orcas. So how was the experience with them? Were you just completely sort of comfortable with them and trusting that they would swim harmoniously with you?

Jesse Lu: So, the killer whales did not get close to me like the humpback whales did. I don't know what I would feel if they were that close to me. I would say normally the whales are kind of shy. They don't like to get too close to humans, especially like a blue whale. They are so shy. It's so hard to get close enough to see the details on their skin, even. And usually for divers who are photographers or doing videos or just animal enthusiasts, we just have one thought is just please come closer to us or we would try to swim to

position ourselves in their path of movement so there's no time to even think about safety issue. You just want to get closer to them. That's so hard to accomplish already.

Matt Bowles: Well, you mentioned a blue whale and you did actually get to swim with the blue whale in Sri Lanka. I have seen the picture. People need to understand, first of all, how enormous a blue whale is. It's almost difficult to explain. This is the largest animal on the planet of Earth by a big margin. It is absolutely enormous. I mean, if you don't know how big a blue whale is, definitely Google it because it's huge and you got to swim with one. I have seen the picture. Can you share a little bit about what that experience was like?

Jesse Lu: It was very hard to actually be next to a blue whale. We were in Sri Lanka. There is a very good location for whale encounters. We were out in the ocean for about eight hours, nine hours a day at a very fast speed, wooden boat, very small boat, very bumpy sea. And we have to go full speed in order to catch up with whales. You will see them come out to breathe for like about seven, eight times. And then they would dive for about 20, 30 minutes and you wouldn't see them for another half an hour. And then you suddenly see like a poof, another breath, like about half a kilometer away. And then you get to go full speed, full blast, just towards that direction. And hopefully you'll be able to catch up with them within that seven, eighth breath.

And then we were just told to jump while the boat engine is just shut off, while the boat is gliding at full speed. Just jump like right now. Because if we didn't, if we just hesitated for two seconds, we would have missed the position where the whale is traveling towards, and we wouldn't be able to see them. So, there's no time to even think about what I'm doing. So, we were just following the instructions of our captain as well as the local guide. As soon as we tumbled in the water, like, we flipped out of the side of the boat and then with that momentum, we were just tumbling through the water. As soon as your head pops out of the water, you just hear the captain start calling out, go left. And you don't even look. You can't see anything really on the boat. You can see some movement of the whale.

But as you know, when you're in the water, you literally just see nothing. You just see the surface of the waves and you see the blue water and you just follow the direction. You just start kicking really hard towards the left or holding your breath underwater. I felt like I was kicking my lungs out and my legs were so sore, and I still see nothing, nothing, nothing. Nothing is just blue. And out of 20, 30 tries, and one of those tries, you would see a shape started emerging from a distance and just got bigger and just can't believe. And most times they will just dive down and they're like, I don't like you guys. I know you're there. I'm not getting close. And they will dive down about 15 meters, 20 meters out. So, they are not getting close. Sometimes even further away, you just see this long shape, body like a snake almost.

The blue whales can be 30 meters long and they just go down and you just wish that they were closer. You can see their eyes or face. And then in that whole week, I got to see them twice on the surface where they did not dive down, they did not turn, they did not shy away. So, their whole head started emerging. And while I'm still kicking really hard and trying to align with them on the surface in that direction, I'm not just drifting around and waiting peacefully. I'm on full cardio exercise in the water, trying to get closer as well. And when their head passed my head and I followed their head, I saw the eye. I just turned my head around. I looked at their body past me. The body kept going, kept going, kept going. And I thought, oh, shit, the tail is going to come hit me from behind because the tail is five meters wide.

And as soon as I realized, I turned around, the tail was already right next to me. But the whale just did this very gentle lift of the tail and then put the tail back down over my head as if they knew exactly. You are a little vulnerable being right next to me. I'm not going to hurt you or kill you. I'm just going to lift my tail over your head.

Matt Bowles: Wow, that's so amazing. That is unbelievable. Well, it's also incredible that you do this at such an incredible level that you're able to have these professional underwater photographers there with you on a lot of these experiences. And so, in addition to you being in the moment, you're able to also capture it on film. But you don't have to be the one shooting the film, which is the best of all worlds. Because I feel like a nomad, it's like, do I want to experience this moment, or do I want to take a picture and take a video of it? And we're always doing that trade off.

And I feel like the way that you have done a lot of these experiences, you can 100% just be in the moment and just you and the whale and you have the full experience and someone else at the distance is professionally taking photographs of your encounters with these animals. So, you're able to have that and to capture that and to showcase that. So that is completely amazing. And we're definitely going to link this up in [the show notes](#) because I want people to go and look at some of these photos because they are truly the most extraordinary underwater photographs I have ever seen.

Jesse Lu: Thanks, Matt. Yeah, swimming with a big camera is even harder in those conditions. And I have full respect for those underwater photographers.

Matt Bowles: I want to ask you about another experience that you have had. You have got to go to Antarctica, which I have never been to, and you have got to have a number of amazing experiences there, including diving in Antarctica. Can you share a little bit about that trip?

Jesse Lu: Antarctica was the most otherworldly place I've been. Still. We actually didn't go there with a relatively easy option to go to Antarctica. You can fly or you can take a boat across one of these channels. So, the one we went was the famous Drake Passage. Dangerous, well known to flip over giant boats when there's huge swell. And the problem is with flying is you can take very little with you and where are you going to stay when you go right, you still have to have a support boat that carries all the stuff for the experience. So then therefore most people will take these large ships and then sail across Drake Passage as a big group. We on the other hand sailed across Drake in a 15 meter sailboat. The captain has done that trip three times before us, and he built that boat himself. He carved every single piece of wood.

Matt Bowles: Wow.

Jesse Lu: For that boat. And I don't know the details because I didn't plan to organize that trip. I got invited to join as the freediver model for that particular event. They wanted to do some freediving photo shoots in Antarctica and do some exploration. I think it was because all the larger boats were booked, and we just ended up with the least small boat that can get a permit to cross that channel possible. And I lived in a washing machine for six days and six nights for that crossing.

Matt Bowles: Wow.

Jesse Lu: Literally washing machine experience. I had not a single second where my body was straight up. It was either 45 degrees on the right side or 40 degrees on the left side. And that sailing trip was more memorable than the diving part in Antarctica. And then we survived. We made it. It was another moment of

surrender during that sailing. And then we felt it was hell to heaven transition when we came into the bay in Antarctica when the sea was finally calm and there were just endless fields of whiteness. An ocean around us with a slight shade of pink over the mountain.

And you hear only the animals. Cuz the boat is quiet. You hear the ocean, and you hear the breathing of whales next to you. The calling of the penguins. Annoyingly loud. Penguins over there. Too many penguins almost. And then you hear some seals sometimes breathing or snoring on the icebergs. And that's all. That's all. You hear no other noise. It's so unexploited animals that don't even notice that you are there, or they don't even care you're there. It's one of those places where there's no tension between animals and humans. You could get so close to a leopard seal that is the apex predator in Antarctica.

And leopard seal just opens one eye, looks at you and goes right into sleep. He doesn't care that there is a moving bigger, perhaps not heavier, but like a longer creature next to him and sometimes moving with a Giant machine with a camera lens facing towards his mouth. And leopard seal doesn't even care. He doesn't even move an inch. It is just hard to believe when you first saw it, you just knew how animals should be in their most natural state, that they are not aggressive towards people. They're not shy, they're not defensive either. They just do their thing. Nothing bothers them. That's how beautiful it is.

Matt Bowles: And then when you actually did the free diving in Antarctica, which first of all sounds incredibly cold, can you talk about that experience?

Jesse Lu: We had nine-millimeter wetsuits made, custom size, so it fits your body. It's like your second skin, like a glove fits on every inch of your skin. And when you put that wetsuit on, it's really, really cold. So, I was changing on the deck of the boat with no cover in minus 15-degree wind. And when the wind actually blows, it feels like minus 30. And I have to take off all my clothes and start putting on this rubber diving outfit that is also freezing cold. And that's the hardest part. But once you're in a wetsuit, then it's warm, and then you can play in the water for like almost an hour without feeling it's too cold.

The fingertips and maybe the lips are numb from the cold water, which is at minus 2, the freezing temperature of the salt water. But just a little bit of numbing and like a little bit of tingly pain, but that sensation will go away after about 10 minutes. Then you feel a little numb and it's not painful anymore. And then you can play. And then the icebergs, they are floating just like a playground and just like go dive underneath or can try to climb a small one and slide down back in the ocean and sleep on the iceberg next to a seal and just like snore together, chase penguins.

Matt Bowles: What were those animal encounters like when you were diving in Antarctica? What was that experience like? What kind of animals did you hang out with?

Jesse Lu: I wanted to hang out with penguins so much, right. I just like to try to get close to them next to their colony. You see them fight each other sometimes. And then the one bird will try to steal a rock from the other bird's nest, put it on in his nest, and the other bird will try to steal that back, like when the other bird is not paying attention. It's a lot of fun and just watch them going about doing their own thing. And when I try to see them underwater, they are so fast. They are like little torpedoes on the water. I just cannot really see how they actually swim where they are going because I cannot keep up with them. I was just staying like a little area and watching them entering the water.

As soon as they enter the water, they disappear. I just saw split second of their shape and then it's gone. Yeah, it was so fast. We definitely saw some whales as well, but we didn't get close to the whales during

that particular trip. I was very curious of how the iceberg looks underwater, and I tried to dive next to it a little bit. And it takes a lot of caution to go close to the iceberg because they can roll around. You know, if they roll around, they can push you under. So, I need extreme caution to do it. But I just really wanted to see how the shape and pattern is underwater. So, I was able to swim down and kind of put my hand along the iceberg and just feel the texture a little bit. That part was also really fun.

Matt Bowles: So, Jessea, how would you describe the difference between an underwater experience when your scuba diving and underwater experience when you're free diving? So, I've done some scuba diving, got my petty certification, and have done some really cool stuff. I got to scuba dive with the whale shark in Thailand and some really neat experiences, which for me were amazing. But I don't have any freediving experience to compare it to. And since you were first a scuba diver and had some of those experiences with the scuba gear, how would you compare it and how would you sort of describe to people that haven't done free diving what the difference is?

Jessea Lu: I would say scuba diving, you feel more like a tourist. You're seeing the environment. You're seeing what's happening in front of your eyes. And it's great for watching animal behavior because you can park in one location or follow an animal for a long time and know exactly what's going on. Like watching animals' mate, you know, I like watching squid, cuttlefish mate, sharks, mandarin fish. There's a very beautiful fish called mandarin fish. The mating season, when it happens, is a beautiful dive. You can literally just hover next to them for an hour and just see what's going on.

Freediving, on the other hand, you see inward more than outward. Most of the freedives, you have to go up and down a lot, right? So, you breathe and get rested, get ready on the surface, and during that whole time, being alert about the environment around you. But you're mostly just having a conscious conversation with yourself as well as while you're underwater, you are still paying attention to how you're feeling, what's going on and how you're enjoying and where you wanted to go next and just have small bandwidth of attention that's around you, putting it around you, and it's more of like a tour inside. But when there are animals around, then you can shift it a little bit, right. You can then shift your attention a little bit more outward, and you can look at that animal, but not for a long time.

Usually, you got to come up to breathe. You can cover a lot more distance, a lot more regions and are more likely to meet bigger animals and a lot more likely to get close to any animal. So, you can feel like you're just part of the ocean family and you just be there and the animals let you come closer. There's no noise as long as you approach them very gently, not aggressively. And animals don't like you sometimes, especially fish don't like it when you are staring at them and your kind of just casually go next to them, pretending you're doing your own thing and just peek at them. They let you come really close. Yeah. So, I have all my big animal encounters freediving.

Matt Bowles: That's so amazing. So, for people that are listening to this, and they think that that sounds amazing, that they would love to try to encounter some animals in a freediving capacity as opposed to a scuba diving capacity, perhaps, but maybe some of the stuff we're talking about, like six minute breath hold sound a little bit intimidating and some of this stuff. What would you advise for beginners in terms of where to start with trying to do some of the basic stuff like do some of the basic extended breath hold trainings, getting the right wetsuit, doing some of the things that are going to facilitate at least an entry level freediving experience that would be substantive in the ways that you're describing.

Jessea Lu: Yeah. Correct way of doing it, of course, is to follow it step by step with the instructor to get the right habit. Right. But that sounds really cliché. It is true. But also, people can start doing some experiments on their own just being on land. Never hold your breath alone in the water or in a place where you can potentially fall down and hurt yourself. So, I did try it out just lying on the couch at home. Just look at the watch, see what I can do. And then there are a few tips. You can probably even find a lot of things on YouTube now that will tell you, okay, what if you try this, do you think you can hold your breath a little bit longer and it's safe to do it just lying down on a soft couch or bed? And I would say, don't look at the watch, because that doesn't help you relax. You just look at the watch afterwards, right?

And people can start trying stuff like that to just to see how they feel. But like I said, if you do it with the instructor with the proper breath up, with the proper technique about how to breathe and how to get ready and how to relax it is going to help a long way. It's going to make it feel much easier. And the gear also matters. You definitely wanted to have gear that fits, right, that's comfortable. There are six major functions of a wetsuit, and I would usually never go into the ocean without a full body wetsuit unless there was photo shoot or special reason. And if I was diving, going to spend some decent time in the water, I want to have buoyancy from the wetsuit. I want warmth protection from wetsuit sunblock and also kind of prevents any kind of abrasion, like get cuts and scratches from corals, prevent yourself from jellyfish sting. That's a major one because when you get that, it's just feels so bad.

And there's one more thing, which is the wetsuit I use is smooth skin. So, it's kind of a metallic color. It doesn't have fabric on the surface. The metallic coating helps with warmth as well. But it is smooth skin, so it has less resistance. So when I'm in the water, more hydrodynamic, so I glide better. So, with the kick, I have less effort to go further. So, getting the right wetsuit is probably the number one gear for people who live in an area where they wanted to dive a little longer in the ocean, especially in colder regions where you need the warmth to actually even try to swim in the water. Out of all the gears, my first go to gear would be a wetsuit.

Matt Bowles: Okay. And I know at this point in your career, you're sponsored by, you're an ambassador for [Best Dive](#) west suits. So, we will put a link in [the show notes](#) so folks can get more information on the exact wetsuit that you use if they're interested in taking it to that level and trying to get into this.

Jessea, let me ask you this. Just sort of thinking back on all of your travels, what has been the impact of all of these travel experiences on you as a person, and why are you inspired to continue traveling? What does travel mean to you?

Jessea Lu: I like the stimulus from traveling, the change, also learning and the personal growth of encountering different people, different cultures. You already know I like animals and plants. I like to experience those different things. And I just think that stimulus from travel, right, all these new things that make you start thinking and reflecting or seeing things from different angles, different perspectives are very liberating in many ways. And while I'm in Kenya, I went to these few places where how people are living there seems to remind me of my childhood. I feel almost a sense of time travel too in that way and things that's in my memory. But if I don't revisit it, it kind of got forgotten, right. So being able to connect these distant dots, time wise or spatial wise, and just it creates a certain kind of new chemistry. And I feel life is more fun and interesting that way and more fulfilling.

Matt Bowles: That's amazing. When you think back about your life trajectory and your personal journey as well as your career path, you discovered freediving pretty late in life, let's say, right? I mean only 2015 or so.

You discovered this and it's now become, of course, your life passion. And you've found that you're amazing at it and you are putting so much effort into it and it's giving you so much joy and fulfillment out of life. When you think back, can you talk a little bit about how your life trajectory went and then what happened when you found freediving? Because I feel like there's a lot of people that were kind of on this life path and maybe we haven't even found our passion yet. And then all of a sudden something clicks, and it can change everything. Can you share a little bit about just sort of reflecting on your experience with that?

Jessea Lu: I had times where it was my normal day just had to stop. It was not even an option. Like I just hit a dead end. And that's a moment to gather thoughts and rethink what is most meaningful to me. And that was a window of opportunity that allowed me to explore and try new things. So, when it happens, of course in the moment it feels very bad. It could be a mix of all the emotions of feeling lost or feeling sad or feeling a little bit anxious about the future and all of that. But in hindsight, that could be just the universe gives you a chance to stop what you're doing now and reevaluate and think again and then pick a new direction. But I would say we know where our comfort zones are as adults, and we know exactly what we can do, and we can always do that.

I think it's really great to voluntarily not put those pauses, what we are doing. And we can always afford a small break from our routine and just try something that is very different, very unusual. That you normally wouldn't do and commit to it and then see how you feel. And if you don't like that thing, it might just give you some inspiration about yourself or about something not exactly that one, but similar that you might like and too then, you know, design your life slightly different. I think that's a very good experience that I had initially involuntarily, but I think it was lucky to have that chance. And now I am allowing myself to try more of the things that I've never tried before.

Matt Bowles: That's so amazing. I think you're amazing. I think you're inspiring. I think that's a good place to end the main portion of this interview. And at this point, Jessea, are you ready to move in to the lightning round?

Jessea Lu: Yes.

Matt Bowles: Let's do it.

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

Jessea Lu: This might be a less well-known book. It's called [The Glass Castle](#). There's a movie about it. I've never seen the movie. I came across this book just by accident. It was just on the boat I was sailing with, and I started reading it. It was a memoir of a girl and her entire childhood, and the conflicts and the tension had that there were in her family when she grew up and she basically made a living on her own and became an author in New York City. It's very vivid about a person's childhood growing up in a family. And it helped me a lot to resolve a lot of the baggage I had from my childhood.

And I think if anybody is interested in family conflict or has any kind of not interest, but maybe strong emotions from childhood associated with some family events. This book may give you a very profound perspective on what could happen to a child and what that child had to go through in her life and gives a different reference point to then think about my own life and my own childhood and my family members. So, yeah, I would recommend that [book](#).

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

Jessea Lu: I personally just don't like to travel in herds a lot. I like to have communities where I can reach out to socialize and have fun with. I really, really enjoy having my own itinerary and doing it at my own pace. Then my favorite ace is probably being a location like one accommodation for about three weeks before I move to the next one. I just find instead of rushing through a place, just kind of like doing the tourists see this. And then move on. I really like to settle in a place for a decent amount of time before I move to another location.

I'm not even a fan of weekend trips, honestly, those ones, you get to a place where you only do like, two, three days, and then you have to leave. It feels like overall, if you travel a lot, especially if you can pace it a little bit, you actually see different things about that place. I lived 10 years in Hawaii, and this is the one hack I always try to tell people who come to Hawaii. There are seven islands, and a lot of people wanted to hop islands and just do a lot in one vacation. I just say just stay on one island for a week or two weeks before you want to move to another island. You don't have to see all of Hawaii on one trip, and that is impossible unless you decide to move there. But you can choose one island, and each island is very unique, and it offers enough stuff to fill up that week or two weeks.

Matt Bowles: So, are you enjoying the [Remote Year](#) dynamic where you and I are now traveling? And we have a group of about 25 people, and we are staying in each place for about a month. And then you can choose how much you want to socialize with the other people versus how much you want to just go and do your own thing and chart your own course and have your alone time or spend time with animals or go do something by yourself. Are you liking that structure for what you're describing?

Jessea Lu: Yes. I think [Remote Year](#) have a very good backbone structure. It sort of sets the stage for people to decide what they wanted to do.

Matt Bowles: Right?

Jessea Lu: Yeah. I've only started two months ago, and this is my third month, and I'm still figuring out what is my most comfortable rhythm with a group. Because, you know, when you first meet a group of new people, you're very excited to know everybody, right. You try more effort to spend time together, but maybe that's not very sustainable for everybody. And then you wanted to eventually settle into your own pace and still have focus. I think two, three months of me trying everything, getting to know everybody, trying to expose myself to all different kinds of culture is great. It's good. It's needed. And then I think focus, like I said, is also really, really important in life. So, I think it will be for me to settle in one place a little longer, focus a little bit, and then jump back on these new adventures with new people.

Matt Bowles: All right, Jessea, if you could have dinner with anyone 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?

Jessea Lu: I would say the U.S. comedian, Ellen DeGeneres.

Matt Bowles: Nice. That would be an amazing dinner. What do you connect with about Ellen or why would you pick her? What would you ask her if you would have dinner with her?

Jessea Lu: I would ask her about her perspective on life choices and her journey of becoming a comedian and just anything that we can talk about because I think she just has such amazing energy, and I couldn't

imagine that any topic would be boring. I think everybody deserves to really have good conversations and happy vibes, you know, as much as you can.

Matt Bowles: Absolutely. Yeah, that would be an amazing dinner. Plus, she is also of course the voice of Dory from Finding Nemo. So yes, there is also that. All right, Jessea, 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 Jessea?

Jessea Lu: There are a lot I can say. I would say one thing is to cut your hair short, like really short. Just say shave it maybe earlier and see how you feel. And that speaks to a lot about appearance as well. I recently cut my hair really short last year, completely shaved it. That was my first time shaving that short. I had like decent girl short hairstyle before a couple times in my life, but most of the time I had really long hair. I was never even thinking of the shave part as an option. It was not considered for some reason, just stuck in my old habits. The reason I shaved it was because it was too hot in Florida in the summer.

And also, I was really tired of the long hair look. I didn't know what else I wanted to do with my hair. I was just doing something different. But I felt so liberated from that. I no longer worry about how my hair looks right now. It is very chaotic, is sticking out in one direction and I stopped fixing it and that distraction just disappeared in my life, and it just felt like a weight lifted from my head, literally and metaphorically. So, I just think that as 18-year-old girl especially I was putting too much emphasis on appearance as I would think probably a lot of women would agree. But still when you are age and that seems to be very important.

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

Jessea Lu: Places I have been to that I really like. But just speaking from the most memorable animal encounters that I've had would be Antarctic, the Galapagos Islands, and penguins in Cape Town.

Matt Bowles: I love it. Three different continents. That is an amazing pick. What was your favorite animal encounter or moment in the Galapagos?

Jessea Lu: In Galapagos, it has similar vibe to Antarctica. That island was very late, before humans had set foot on. And then the government did a really great job at keeping it as reserve area marine park, special licenses to do anything there. So, the animals there are also more or less like their natural unexploited version and they will hop around your foot, the birds will come over, peck your sleeves and just kind of be in harmony with them.

Matt Bowles: That's so awesome. I agree. I've been to the Galapagos as well and it is really extraordinary. It's a very special experience that I would encourage everyone to have as well. All right, last question. What are your top three bucket destinations, places you have not yet been highest on your list you would most love to see?

Jessea Lu: Lately, since I've been learning horse riding again in preparation for my horse safari, I'm almost obsessed with the horse trips and horse places. I would like to go to Iceland to see the Icelandic horse run down the Black Hills and just looking fabulous. I would like to gallop by the beach in Morocco. I follow this Instagram account that from Morocco it just looks so free to do that and maybe go to Madagascar, see some really different animal unique ones over there endemic to Madagascar. And yeah, I think that would be it.

Matt Bowles: Amazing. All right, Jessea, I want you to let folks know how they can find you, how they can follow you on social media, what website they can go to see some of these unbelievable pictures that I have seen of you with these underwater animals and also where people can learn about how to get a really great wetsuit and all that kind of stuff. So, what are some resources? How do you want people to come into your world and everything that you say we're going to link it up in [the show notes](#).

Jessea Lu: I'm really easy to find. *Jessea Lu*. My name is spelled J-E-S-S-E-A. So, [my website](#) is *Jessea Diving* and same as for the [Instagram](#) handle that, all my other links are on my website as well. For dive gear, I can't thank my sponsor enough. [Best Dive](#), I've been diving since 2016 with their products all over the world, from tropical regions to Antarctica to all my competitions. The wetsuit goes from 0.5 millimeters to 9-millimeter thick. They have 20 years of manufacturing experience before they launched their own brand. So, it's really, really solid. And they focus just on wetsuit, which is really rare and a very dedicated craftsmanship in the dive gear industry. They don't do the other dive gear, and their [Instagram](#) account is *bestdive_official* if you're interested in how to choose a wetsuit, what's the difference between materials and thickness and styles? There's an amazing international ambassador team for the [Best Dive](#). You'll see athletes from all over the world representing this brand and the place to shop would be [Best Dive](#) products (plural) products.com.

Matt Bowles: Amazing. So we are going to link all of this up in [the show notes](#) so just go to one place at [themaverickshow.com](#) just go to the show notes for this episode and there you will see all the ways to find and follow Jessea, all the ways to get an amazing wetsuit and learn more about that as well as everything else that she has recommended, her book recommendation, all the things we have talked about in this episode, it's all going to be linked up in one place at [themaverickshow.com](#).

Jessea, this was amazing. Thank you so much for coming to the show.

Jessea Lu: Thank you Matt. It's such a great conversation again as always.

Matt Bowles: We always have wonderful conversations. This is fantastic. I knew that I wanted to do this interview with you from our very first conversation at dinner in Cape Town. We were talking about so many amazing things and I started to understand the extent of your travel experiences and how unique they were and how different they were from mine they were and how much I could learn from you and all of that. And then we had a number of other conversations since then and I was so excited for this interview. So, I'm really, really glad you were finally able to come on the show.

Jessea Lu: Thank you for bringing such great energy.

Matt Bowles: All right, good night, everybody.