

**Matt Bowles:** Hey everybody, it's Matt Bowles. Welcome to *The Maverick Show*. My guest today is Janessa Klatt. She is a remote podcast manager and full-time digital nomad who has been traveling the world solo since 2019. Originally from Winnipeg, Canada, she quit her job for an adult gap year and never returned to a conventional life. While working as a deckhand on a private yacht, she started listening to *The Maverick Show* which helped inspire her to become a full-time digital nomad today. She has produced over 700 podcast episodes for her clients while traveling the world and is the co-host for the [Remote Roundup](#) series on the Zero to Travel podcast.

Janessa, welcome to the show.

**Janessa Klatt:** Thank you, Matt. I'm excited to finally be here.

**Matt Bowles:** I am so excited to have you here. This is such a beautiful and wonderful full circle moment. You and I, of course, have known each other for years and it is super exciting to finally have this conversation with you. But before we get into that, let's just set the scene and talk about where we are recording from today. I am actually in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Asheville, North Carolina today. And where are you?

**Janessa Klatt:** I am actually taking a little break from traveling and visiting my family. So, I am in my hometown of Winnipeg, Canada.

**Matt Bowles:** And we also need to let folks know that we have decided in classic Maverick Show fashion to make this a wine night. So, let's talk about what we are drinking. I have just opened a bottle of Italian red wine, this is a Nebbiolo. So, I'm going to be drinking through that this evening. But what are you drinking, Janessa?

**Janessa Klatt:** I am drinking a Cabernet Merlot from the Okanagan Valley in British Columbia. So, there's been a huge push this past year to support local here in Canada. So, I had to pick A Canadian wine. I've actually never tried it. I hope it's good.

**Matt Bowles:** I am super excited to talk to you about Canada. But before we even get into your story, can you share a little bit about your family's story, where your grandparents grew up and their experience immigrating to Canada?

**Janessa Klatt:** So, on my mom's side of the family, my family has been in Canada for many generations, but on my dad's side of the family, we are much more recent immigrants. As you mentioned, my grandparents immigrated to Canada. It was in the 1960s, and they were both originally from Berlin, Germany, which later became a larger part of my story. And they originally moved here in 1961, which was right before the Berlin Wall went up and east and West Germany started to be more divided. And they came to Canada hoping to start a better life. They had a lot of challenges when they first moved here, with learning the language, with getting jobs, with being far away from their families. They had some friends that had moved here ahead of them and invited them to come stay with them in Winnipeg when they first got settled, which is why we ended up here in the middle of country.

And so, they came here for a few years and because of the struggles, they actually went back to Germany about four or five years later. And at that point the situation had become worse in Germany. They found it very difficult to find somewhere to live to get jobs. So, they actually went back to Canada a second time

and decided they just had to make it work. And around that time, I don't know if they had realized yet, but they were actually pregnant with my dad. And so, he was born in Canada shortly after.

So, they packed up all of their belongings for a second time, sent it across the ocean on a ship while they took a flight. And that ship went across the Atlantic. It was supposed to go up the St. Lawrence River, then be transferred to a train and eventually meet them in Winnipeg, which geographically is right in the center of the continent. Unfortunately, that ship collided in the St. Lawrence River and it sank. And so, they had to start their new life in Canada with very little, just the small suitcase that they had with them. And eventually they did form a life here. And that's where the rest of my family came from.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, I want to ask about your experience growing up in Winnipeg. I have actually never been to Winnipeg, although I have been to Canada quite a bit because I went to high school in Buffalo, New York, which is right on the border there with Niagara Falls. And all of you folks in Canada had that 19-year-old drinking age, whereas in the U.S. we had the a 21 year old drinking age so we could just cross the border and all of a sudden go into the nightclubs and everything else that we were not allowed to go into in the United States. So, when I was younger, I spent a lot of time in Toronto. I have since been a couple times to Montreal. Just recently this year I was back in Montreal, which is a spectacular city. I have not yet been to Winnipeg though, and for others like me that haven't been. Can you share a little bit just what is it like in Winnipeg? And then specifically can you talk about your upbringing there in Winnipeg? I know sports was a major part of your life growing up and if you can share a little bit about that and your upbringing.

**Janessa Klatt:** So, Winnipeg as I mentioned is right dead center of the country. So many people have only visited it if they have driven across the entire length of Canada. So, I'm not surprised you have not yet been. It is very cold in the winter, which is partly why I do not live there permanently anymore. I have done enough winters. I can't stand it anymore. We got minus 30, minus 40 degrees. People ask me if that's Celsius or Fahrenheit at that point it doesn't matter. It's all the same. It's just very cold. But the summers are beautiful.

We have lovely temperatures, very sunny. We have a lot of lakes nearby, so we are not close to any mountains, but we have the forests, we have very large lakes. I grew up spending weekends in the summer going to family cabin that my German grandparents eventually built as a second home. And they were able to host their whole family out there in the summers. So that's a really nice time to come to Winnipeg and check it out and experience the nature here. Winnipeg is actually a very diverse city. We have the largest urban indigenous population in all of Canada. We have a very large Filipino population here. We have a large Ukrainian population. So, there is a lot of multiculturalism here.

Although I did grow up in a bit of a homogenous bubble of other people who had similar heritage of mine. My school actually offered German as a second language because of the family history that many students had. And I unfortunately learned very little German growing up because I wasn't really encouraged to and had the option to learn French. So, I as listeners may know French is our second language in Canada. I thought that would be a lot more useful. So, I grew up learning French here instead of German, although that was an option. And as you mentioned, sports did become a very big part of my life, particularly the sport of triathlon. So that is swimming, cycling and running.

Many people know the Ironman distance, which is a very long race. I competed in a distance called sprint, which is exactly half of the distance they do in the Olympics. So, it's very fast paced. This race is completed anywhere from just under an hour for the fastest men to just over an hour. And I started at a very

young age because my dad got me into it. It was a passion of his. And as I became a teenager, I joined a competitive team. I was training every single day like it was my job. I think I was training about 25 hours a week when I was in high school for this sport, swimming every morning before school, even when it was minus 40 degrees outside and my hair would freeze after I left the pool.

And eventually that led to a lot of cool opportunities to travel around the country, competing for my province of Manitoba and even internationally for team Canada a handful of times, which was kind of my first exposure to meeting people from all kinds of different countries. We hung out with the team from the U.S. quite a lot. We met the athletes from Mexico, from South America, and it allowed me to explore a lot of my own country because until I was about 15 years old and started traveling for sports, I had not been on a plane very often.

**Matt Bowles:** So, let's give some love to your country of Canada, which is an amazing place. I have so many wonderful memories and so many dear Canadian friends. It is a massive country. It is one of the most beautiful countries, landscape wise, for sure. Can you make some recommendations since you have traveled the country pretty extensively at this point for people that would love to experience the best of Canada? What are some highlights of some things you would put people onto?

**Janessa Klatt:** I have at this point been coast to coast, not all in one trip, but as a combination of several road trips. I think that British Columbia and Alberta gets a lot of love already because of the mountains there. Banff, Jasper, Whistler, these famous places are very beautiful. But I would like to give some love to the east coast because I did have a period of living in Halifax, Nova Scotia. And when I moved there, it was almost a bit of a culture shock. I thought Canadians were nice, but East Coast Canadians are even more nice and I had such a great time there. It is a beautiful province. Highly recommend exploring the city of Halifax and the surrounding area, doing a road trip around Cape Breton on the Cabot Trail. It is incredibly beautiful.

There is even a wine region out there, the Annapolis Valley, where you can go wine tasting and cider tasting. And you can combine that with a road trip to Prince Edward Island, our smallest province in Canada. And at one point, I did a road trip with my mom, driving all around the island. It was so beautiful. And again, the people there are so nice. You'll see these little stands on the side of the road where people are selling potatoes. And it's just honor system where you put the money and you take the potatoes because that's what they're like out there. I have not yet been to Newfoundland, but I love the people from there. So that is very high on my list to get out to the final province I've not yet visited. And I've heard amazing things about it. It looks incredible.

**Matt Bowles:** What ultimately made you interested in the world and seeing the world outside of North America and wanting to travel and eventually deciding to study abroad. What was that path like for you?

**Janessa Klatt:** So, growing up, as I mentioned, as a teenager, I was flying all over the U.S. And Canada, but before that, we were a road trip family. We drove, like I said, coast to coast in Canada and to all corners of the U.S. as well. So, I feel very fortunate that I was able to explore a lot of my country and the neighboring country before going abroad. I think people are often excited to just go further away. And I did have that desire as well. I always wanted to go further. And I wanted to get away for university. I wanted to go out west. But ultimately, I actually decided to stay at home in Winnipeg and go to my home university that I was already familiar with and compete on the track and field team here. But my compromise to myself was that I would take the money that I saved from staying at home and take it to go study abroad.

So, I have a bachelor degree in kinesiology, and there are very limited places in the world, at least at that time, that you could study exercise science in English at universities around the world. So, I think I had three options of where to go study, and they were all in Australia, which was great because I've always wanted to go to Australia anyways. So that was not a hard sell for me at all. So, I ended up studying abroad for one semester in Melbourne, Australia.

**Matt Bowles:** We've got to talk about Melbourne, because I went there, as you know, and I was completely enamored with this city. But before we get into Melbourne, I understand that on your way to Melbourne, you decided to do a solo backpacking trip in New Zealand. Can you talk about your decision to do that and then what that trip was like, your first solo backpacking trip.

**Janessa Klatt:** A lot of people seem to talk about this fear or nervousness before that first solo trip, I actually don't remember experiencing that at all. I was so excited and ready to get out there. I think it helps that New Zealand and Australia are very beginner friendly destinations. They are easy to navigate, everyone speaks English, they are so friendly and kind. So, it's a very easy transition into solo travel. And I had a few weeks before the semester started in Australia. So New Zealand was a natural choice to go explore. And I had my backpack for the first time. I actually still have that backpack years later. And I did the most rapid fire north to south trip and back again in three weeks. I wish I had spent longer. I cannot wait to go back and explore in more depth.

But I had so much energy at that point as a student, zipping to a new place every single day, soaking up as much as I could, meeting people from all over the world, meeting people who were traveling long term. That got me thinking of what I could do in the future. Maybe a working holiday visa. These people that were just hanging out in these beach towns or working at hostels or backpacker bars or in the tourism industry. And I said, I'm going to come back to Australia or New Zealand. I'm going to do a working holiday visa. So that got me inspired for more world travel in addition to then meeting people who were from all over the world, traveling in New Zealand and studying with me in Australia and asking them about where they were from. And the list of places just kept growing.

**Matt Bowles:** All right, so let's talk about Melbourne. You and I, Janessa, I feel like have a lot of the same favorite cities and favorite places in the world that we have been to. And it's been really nice to connect with you on that level. Well, let's start with Melbourne because you've spent a lot more time than I have there. What was it like for you? I guess specifically at that age, but also, what did you love about Melbourne?

**Janessa Klatt:** Melbourne is such a fun city. So, this was quite a long time ago at this point. I was a student. I was on a student budget. I was living on student housing in an eastern suburb. So, I was a little bit away from the hustle and bustle, but I was able to take a tram into the CBD and explore. That's where I first fell in love with coffee. I used to hate coffee. And then I got absolutely hooked on a good flat white. I loved exploring all the hidden laneways and the street art. It's just such a fun city. I would love to go back now in a different phase of life, actually.

**Matt Bowles:** It is amazing. And the street art is one of the things that really wins my heart about a city that has an epic street art scene and Melbourne has an epic street art scene. Neighborhoods like Brunswick in the northern part of the city. Amazing. And the amount of love, this is what surprised me the most and took me aback. The amount of love that that city has for 1990s East Coast New York City hip-hop won my heart completely. As you know, Janessa, I used to be a hip-hop DJ in 1990s East Coast. Hip-hop is my love

language. And so, I was in Melbourne and I am seeing not just murals to the really internationally iconic figures like Tupac and Biggie, but there's murals to Tribe Called Quest, Boogie Down Productions, Rakim performing at the Apollo, Pete Rock and CL Smooth. I mean, it was amazing.

And so that stuff won my heart, 1990s hip hop shop was playing all over the place and places that I went. And I was just so enamored with the street art scene. I was like, I got to take a street art tour and go and really immerse in this stuff. And I'm looking it up and they have all of these different street art tours because there's all of these different places within the city that each have an amazing street art scene. So, I ended up going on multiple street art tours in Melbourne. I mean, the whole thing was just amazing. And so, I left to Melbourne. I. My heart was so full and I was so surprised and a. It was just an unexpected delight. In addition to all of the stuff that you said, I mean the coffee shops and the food and the beaches and I mean it has all of those things as well. But yeah, it had a swagger to it that I was very impressed with and enamored by. So, I'm excited to go back to Melbourne as well.

**Janessa Klatt:** Yeah, that's a good way to put it. A swagger to it. It definitely does.

**Matt Bowles:** So, while you were in Australia, you also were able to do some traveling around the country. And I did the same thing because I studied abroad in Ireland and it was like every weekend, we were like going to a different place and seeing a different part of the country. And it was so cool to be able to do that. You decided to get your open water scuba certification at the Great Barrier Reef, Janessa. I have never been scuba diving at the Great Barrier Reef. It is widely regarded as the most epic place in the world to go scuba diving. Can you talk about what that experience was like?

**Janessa Klatt:** Yeah, I'm not sure why I decided that I would love scuba diving because I had zero experience with it. I'm a very comfortable open water swimmer from the triathlon part, but I grew up as far away from the ocean as you can get on the continent and I knew that that would be something I would love. And so, I decided to not just do a fun dive, but take the full open water course. I did all the theory on land and then the final part of the course, I did an add on to go on a liveaboard boat for three days where I finished my training and then was able to continue diving for the next couple days. So, I was out on this boat on the Great Barrier Reef and diving multiple times a day, seeing all the wildlife, all the coral, and I completely fell in love with it. And that also got me thinking about travel jobs that exist of somebody is being paid to be on this live aboard boat, whether they are an instructor or a dive master, or even the cook on board. And I think that also just helped open my eyes to all of the possibilities that are out there. And it was just such an epic place to start my diving journey.

**Matt Bowles:** So, after your Australia experience, you have this unbelievable travel, living abroad, doing all this epic stuff experience, you go back to Canada and you get on a professional career trajectory and that does not last very long. So, can you talk about your professional career trajectory and then what prompted and inspired you to take care of ultimately what was an adult gap year?

**Janessa Klatt:** So, if you had asked me when I was younger what I wanted to do when I grow up, I had no idea. I just said I did not want a boring office job because that's what I saw my parents had. So, spoiler alert. I do work from offices all over the world now called co working spaces, but I've never had a boring office job. So, I chose to study sports science and kinesiology and I became a certified strength and conditioning coach so that I could work with athletes and train them in private gym settings. So that is what I had been working towards throughout my whole degree. I had even done an internship while in Australia.

This was what I thought would be the dream job. And I really did love training people and working with athletes.

But I very quickly became disenchanted with the lifestyle that goes with that. A lot of early mornings and split shifts and late evenings and weekends not taking time off. It also wasn't that well paid. So, I was very paycheck to paycheck, hardly even able to go see my family, let alone travel abroad. And I realized that this was not a forever job for me. So, I was actually in the process of applying for a much better job that was in that field. That would have been a lot more money and benefits and pension, the whole thing. But it absolutely would have been the golden handcuffs at that point. So that's when I think the fear kicked in. Not of quitting and going abroad, but of getting stuck in that job. If I had gotten that job, who knows if I still would have been in it? It would have been much harder to leave as opposed to one that I was not that keen on.

So, I started making a plan. And I hadn't gone on a gap year after high school or after university. And so, I decided this is my time to do an adult gap year is what I called it. And I said, I'm going to go do a working holiday visa for up to a year, and then I will come home, do a master's degree, carry on with my career, and instead of going to Australia or New Zealand like I originally planned as a Canadian, I'm fortunate. I had a lot of options in Europe. And I picked Germany, which we mentioned, my family history. That was actually not the reason I chose Germany at all. I chose it based on being centrally located in Europe to be able to travel more and more, to hopefully get a job, mostly speaking English. That was my rationale of why I was going to move there. And anything else that came later was an added bonus.

**Matt Bowles:** And you chose Berlin, another amazing street art city, among other things. I actually just went there for my first time in December. It had been on my list for so long for all of the reasons it should be on everyone's list, to go to Berlin. And I finally went in December and I was like, first thing, I'm scheduling my street art tours and I'm going to see the graffiti scene there because it's amazing. And then of course, just the food and the coffee shop culture and just, you know, the list goes on for all of the things about Berlin that will blow you away if you haven't been. So, you pick Berlin, you move there. And this is before you're a digital nomad, right? So, you're working local jobs and things like that, and actually being a resident of the city. What was that experience like for you?

**Janessa Klatt:** Initially, my plan would be to get this visa in Berlin, maybe stay there for a few months, and then travel around the country and get jobs in different places. And I just completely fell in love with Berlin. So, I stayed in Berlin for much longer than I originally planned. I did not have a lot of savings because as I mentioned, the job I previously had didn't allow me to save that much. So, the money I had was from selling all of my furniture and I'd been working a side job before leaving and I had a very little buffer after buying that plane ticket and paying my first month rent and deposit. So, I needed to get a job asap.

And luckily, I got in with a craft beer bar in the center of Berlin that was very international. In all of the staff that worked there, they didn't mind that I didn't speak much German. And I met a lot of people there that are still some of my closest friends. And it was a very popular spot for foreigners to come in. So, it's a very international scene, very busy, a lot of fun. It was very different from the jobs I'd worked in the past because I had been so focused on this sports science career that I wasn't going to take a job at a bar when I was in university. I didn't think that would look good on my resume.

So, this is one of those things people always wish they had done right, like just get a job as a bartender. And there was actually quite a bit of freedom in that that. When I was done at the end of my shift, the rest of my

time was mine to explore as I wanted. I was never expected to answer emails and as you mentioned, I was not yet a digital nomad. I only worked in person jobs up until this point. So, it was a very fun chapter that allowed me to explore a lot of Europe while I was based there.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, I also want to ask you about your exploring of your German heritage and your connection with your German heritage. You mentioned that wasn't the primary impetus initially for going there, but once you were there, what, what was that experience like reconnecting with the place where your grandparents came from?

**Janessa Klatt:** Growing up, I didn't really know much about my grandparent's upbringing. They were born in 1939, so they were very young when the war ended. It was obviously not a great time to be in Germany. They had very little resources and they didn't talk much about that period of their lives until they came to Canada. And this really just opened up the conversation a little bit more to finally learn some of those things about what they had done as young adults for work before they had moved, what neighborhoods they had lived in. And I found out that we still had all of this family in Berlin. I think I hadn't even really comprehended that they were in Berlin. They referenced Germany or the old country and never really talked about the city itself or what it was like growing up there.

And I found out that I still had family members there. So, I was picked up at the airport by my dad's cousin and he brought me to dinner with my own brother. And he was kind of the translator in between, because the older generation did not speak English. I didn't speak German yet at that point. But it was very interesting to connect with them and then hear his perspective of he continued to grow up there. So, he had a very different upbringing than my dad had in Canada. He remembered the Wall being there and the day that it went down, and what the atmosphere in the city was like that day of everyone on their way to work was like, what is happening? This is crazy. This is crazy. And everyone trying to get their money out of the banks and how there is this optimism and uncertainty. And I've actually been very fascinated by the impact that the Wall has had in Berlin. And as I would ride my bike to work every day, I crisscrossed the markings on the ground where the Wall had been. So just to think, this is my normal commute now, but then that my family members would not have been able to cross this line for many, many years.

**Matt Bowles:** And as you were living in Berlin and you had that as your base, you mentioned you were able to travel other places around Europe. I want to ask you about that. When I lived in Dublin, when I was studying abroad, one of the things I quickly found is that that was an amazing base for traveling to other places in Europe. And so, I was able to take the winter break that we had from college and Euro rail all through these different countries in Europe. And that was just one of the most incredibly powerful and transformative months of my life because I was able to just go through and see so much of Europe and all of these different things. And so, I can imagine being based in Berlin, you just have such easy access to all of these other parts of Europe relatively inexpensively to get there. So how did you take advantage of that? And what was your travel life while you were based in Berlin?

**Janessa Klatt:** So, I never did a longer-term trip. I was working right away, but I made an effort to really fit in small trips because they were very accessible. So, I made it my goal that first year to go somewhere new every single month. Sometimes I would be having so much fun in Berlin, I'd get to the end of the month and go, wait a second, I haven't gone somewhere. And we'd go somewhere much closer. I remember one day I finished working at the bar. It was probably 2:30 in the morning. As I locked up, I connected with some friends that were still out for the evening. They said, come on down and join us. Had a beer down by the river and we decided to stay and watch the sunrise.

And at that point I realized I had three days until anyone expected me to be working again. And I said I should go somewhere. Where should I go? So, I start looking things up on my phone and this was probably about 5am at this point. I said, hey, does anyone want to go to Prague? And they said, yeah, sure. When I was like, in like two hours. And is that. Are you serious? You're going to go right now before you sleep? And I was like, well, yeah, I might as well take advantage of these few days I have off.

So, one friend was crazy enough to join me. I said, great, go home, get your passport, whatever you need. I'll meet you at the bus station in an hour and let's go to Prague for a few days. And then booked a hostel on the way there. Actually, he did miss the bus. I got on the bus without him and he followed me a few hours later. But just having that freedom to explore and see what was available for a low cost. And I had only been to Europe once before this, so I hadn't done some large trip. And this was just a new opportunity for me to explore so many new countries that were neighboring to Germany and a little bit further.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, I know that also one of the countries that you've now been to multiple times is Poland, which is a country I have been meaning to get to, Janessa. It's so high on my list. My business partner is from Poland. I watch the Polska football matches and I root for them. And I have so many friends from Poland and I haven't been there yet. I know you've been multiple times. I want to ask about your experience in Poland and I know also while you were there you were able to go to visit the Auschwitz concentration immigration camp and immerse in that history as well, connecting back with all of the German history that you had been looking into in Berlin. And so, I'm curious as well what that experience was like for you.

**Janessa Klatt:** I've been to Poland multiple times now, but on that occasion, I'd gone for a few days with a friend to Krakow and so naturally that is close to Auschwitz and that's something that people should definitely check out if they're able to. It's. It's One thing to learn about this history in school, but it's completely different to see it in person, see the locations, the buildings people often talk about, the shoes that were left behind from the children there. It's just a very humbling and powerful experience to walk through where all of this horrific history happened and to reflect on that and see what things are happening in the world today. And it was a very interesting experience then going back to the city of Krakow after this very dark and very sad experience, and then you're in the hustle and bustle of a city again. And it's kind of, how do you make that adjustment from what you've just seen back to a normal life, back to a tourist mindset of being in a city? So, there's many locations in the world that are like this, that you've been to many of them as well, that give you kind of this perspective beyond just being a tourist in a city, but really getting up close to the history that happened there.

**Matt Bowles:** Yeah. And I think it's so important to seek that out whenever you're in a place that has that as part of their history. And so, of course, I talk a lot about on this podcast different places in the world where I've been, where genocides have happened, or other horrific events like Hiroshima in, in Japan, where the United States dropped an atomic bomb on the civilian population of that city, or things like that, where these egregious, horrific crimes have been committed. I think it's really important to go and spend time learning about that and reckoning with that and then spending time to your point, processing that, right. Because it's like, yeah, this isn't just something where you're going to go and have some tourist experience. This is something where you're going to go and be. Be completely emotionally consumed with this.

And then when I'm going to go to something like that, a genocide memorial or something, I just block the whole rest of the day for emotional processing time at this point. Like, I just feel that I really need to think about that and reflect on that and reckon with that and so forth. But I think it is really important to go to

those places, right. Like, I can remember the very. The first place that I went was the Dachau concentration camp, which is right outside of Munich, Germany. And I did that as part of my traveling around Europe during my study abroad year. And it was a similar experience to what you're describing. I mean, it was just completely emotionally all-consuming and really, really, really powerful.

And you just need time to think, process that and reflect on that and give yourself time to do that. But it's really important to. To go and to learn about that. And learning about that genocide then really inspired me to go and learn about other genocides and go to those places in Bosnia and in Cambodia and in Rwanda and in these other places around the world. And so, I appreciate your priorities in doing that throughout your travels as well. I want to ask you now about your post Germany experience. After the time that you spent in Germany, you went down to the south of France to start working on private yachts. Can you describe what prompted this and what that transition was like in your journey?

**Janessa Klatt:** So that part of the journey was actually born out of the pandemic. So, as I mentioned, I completely fell in love with Berlin. I had a life there that I loved. I even renewed visa for a second year right before the visa office closed for Covid. So, I was fortunate to stay there the better part of a second year. And at that point, I started looking at what was next. And I was still not ready to end this adult gap year and return to Canada, especially when everything was completely shut. So, I found what seemed to be a loophole, that I could get a job on a private yacht and didn't need the same visa for living in Europe because I was stamped out and I was at sea even when I was very, very close to land. And all of the flights between Berlin and Nice at that point were canceled.

So, I took a train all the way down and was delayed, and it took me two days to get there. And I'd done a bunch of research in what it would take to get a job on a yacht and had connected with a few other people who'd done this, particularly women that were deckhands, because on a yacht, the work on the exterior of the boat, so all of the cleaning and maintenance and driving and watch keeping is done by deckhands, which is a traditionally more male role. Whereas the interior of the vessel, all of the service and housekeeping, there are a lot more women doing that. So, I looked at these two roles and went, well, I want to be outside. I want to be doing the physical labor part of the job. And I didn't see that many women doing it.

So, I really had to seek them out. And I did my basic training course. It took five days of training to do basic safety at sea. That included first aid, it included firefighting. And then I got a powerboat license in two days. I had never driven a boat before this. Remember that I am from the Prairies of Canada. I am about as far away from the ocean as you can get. And this was something I just decided I wanted to do. I had no idea if I got seasick or not. Luckily, I do not. And I took my first job as a deckhand because of the fact, as I mentioned, of being a woman in that position. Took the first one that came along that let me do completely that and not a hybrid role. It was unfortunately not a great role. But I learned a lot. And that boat took me throughout the south of France and Monaco. We went to Greece and sailed around the islands. It was just the most beautiful office in the world.

And after about six months I had outlasted many of my coworkers since again this is a problematic boat. But I decided to take a few months off and told them that I would return in the new year. And they had a bit of a slow season so they allowed me to go take some extra leave. And I was hoping in the meantime I could gain some more skills and get a better job. And I did on a different yacht that had a different owner. It was a different region of the world. And part of that journey went back to my scuba diving and that I decided I

wanted to take this time. I didn't know when else I would have enough time off work to go get some more scuba dive certificates.

So instead of going from an open water to an advanced open water, which is the normal step that people would take, I went all the way from open water through the next three certificates to dive master and just did this full on immersive 5-week training in Tenerife and came out of that as a dive master with 40 or 50 dives under my belt at that point. And also I. I'd not dive that much in between the Great Barrier Reef and this experience. So partly it was personal interest. I just always wanted to go back and learn more about scuba diving. Partly I hoped it would maybe get me into a better job. Either way, it was so much fun.

**Matt Bowles:** And how did you like Tenerife in the Canary Islands? Because I have been there a couple times and have had an absolute blast. Really good wine there, gorgeous scenery. What was your experience like?

**Janessa Klatt:** It was so much fun. It was almost like a study abroad again because we were in this tiny village on the east coast a little bit more towards the south. It was called Abades Bay. A very, very small population and there was a dive school there. So, there was a group of us international dive students that were living in a house together, studying the materials, going diving three, four times a day together. And we. We were able to do shore diving. So, we put our equipment on, would walk straight into the water, swim out maybe 50 meters, and then there was already wildlife and coral to be seen.

There was a ton of turtles in the area. And my favorite were these angel sharks, which are very rare. They almost look more like a stingray in that they have these flat bodies and these spots, and they bury themselves in the sand on the bottom of the ocean floor. They'll just kind of flap their fins, and then they're completely hidden and. And it's very difficult to spot them. And there are very few left in the world. And so, I was very fortunate. I saw one during the day, and then I also saw one at night during a night dive, which was just an otherworldly experience. To be in this dark ocean, hanging out with these sharks

**Matt Bowles:** That's so amazing. So, you have this experience, you get the dive master cert, all that, and then you go back and work on a different yacht as a deckhand again, and you begin plotting your path to becoming a location independent digital nomad who can travel the world. And you start listening to *The Maverick Show* podcast. Can you talk about that and any memories that you have of listening to *The Maverick Show* and how it impacted you at that moment in your life.

**Janessa Klatt:** To rewind a little bit, actually, I'd started listening to podcasts during the pandemic, when there wasn't much else to do. I searched travel into a podcast app for the very first time because I just missed traveling and I didn't know what else people listen to podcasts about. Now I know that there's this whole world out there. I'm obsessed with podcasts. I work in the industry, but I started looking for travel podcasts to kind of travel vicariously through this audio format. And as I was working on that first boat, I started listening to more and more. By the time I got to the second one, I think I'd listened to enough to realize that this other life path was possible. That even though I never had a job that could be done online or remotely in any way, that maybe that would be possible for me.

So, I started playing around with different options of career paths, of what I might want to do. I was learning a lot through these different podcasts. And at some point, you were a guest on our friend Jason Moore's podcast, *Zero to Travel*. And I listened to your interview and thought, okay, this guy sounds interesting. He has a podcast. Let me check it out. And I remember the day that I first hit play on one of your episodes, the

boat was hanging out in Portland, Maine. We were going up the east coast of the U.S. and Canada. And I was able to go for a walk after work and just really have it in my ear when I wasn't working. And I listened to one of your guest interviews and I was hooked. Since then, I've listened to every episode that you've released, and I love hearing the stories from all of your guests about the different ways that they live these unconventional lives, these careers that they've built. It was very inspiring. So, it was a good addition to my roster to help me learn all of the options that were out there and how I might be able to do this for myself.

**Matt Bowles:** That's so amazing. And I also love that you've been listening to *The Maverick Show* every week for years because you found it when you were in a particular moment in your life and you were looking to transition into the digital nomad lifestyle and looking for perhaps inspiration of people that have done that or how to information and advice for how to actually do that successfully and so on. But now that you've been a digital nomad for years, traveling the world and location independent and doing your thing, the fact that you're still listening to it is also really meaningful to me. Can you talk about what you were getting out of it initially when you were in that pre digital nomad period, and now that you've been a digital nomad for years, why you still listen to it?

**Janessa Klatt:** Like you said, some podcasts you listen to get the actionable how-to advice. So, I listen to ones on how to start a business, how to figure out your tax situation, all of these things. But your guests that you have on all just have such unique and compelling stories. You do mix in destinations that I may not have been to yet; I may not have heard much about yet. But in a very unique way, they all kind of have their own lens of exploring these places. And I think your interviews are just very timeless that you can go back through the archives and there's just so much good stuff there. And like I said, I've been listening every week since that point, and it's less about how to do the lifestyle now and more just continuing to hear the cool things that people are up to. They have such amazing projects and passions, and it's cool that you share that with all of us.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, it means a lot to me that you listen. And you and I of course, have been very good friends now for a couple of years, which has been super, super fun. I want to ask you if you can share a little bit about your personal transition and how you got off those boats and working a location dependent job and were able to build this path to location independence and the itinerant world traveling, digital nomad lifestyle that you live now.

**Janessa Klatt:** Yeah, I would also like to give a shout out to the location indie community which has now transitioned to a community led group called the *Indie Life Collective*. The founders have now both stepped down, but I remember talking to them back in April of that year and considering joining this community of other location independent individuals or people who are trying to transition to the lifestyle. And I said, okay, I will quit this job within one year. That's my goal. One more year of this, I'll save up enough money, I'll learn as much as I can about how to start something. I think I hadn't even fully settled on podcasts yet at that point.

And he said to me, well, why a full year? What if you didn't have to spend your Christmas working on a yacht? What if you could go back and visit your family? And. And that kind of got me thinking. And six months later I went back to him and said, you know what? I did you one better. I've quit. I've taken the leap. So, part of that preparation was dialing in exactly what I wanted to do, which was podcast management. I listened to tons of podcasts, I think over a hundred on how to become a podcast manager, everything about the podcast industry. And I realized that this is something that I was passionate enough to learn. I

wasn't really able to start it as a side hustle because of working on a boat. I was living in a very small cabin with a cabin mate. Wi-Fi situation was not reliable. I was working sometimes 15-hour days.

So instead, I saved up as much of a safety net as I could to be able to take that leap. So, the number I'd gotten to was about \$20,000 when I quit that job. I love when people are transparent about these things, about what, what it actually takes. That was a number that I felt was good enough to last me as a safety net, a buffer for up to a year of trying to make this work. I know that sounds like ultra-budget. I was ultra-budget in the beginning. I was spending less than \$500 a month on accommodation when I first became a nomad. But I said, okay, if in a year I can make an income out of this podcasting thing, I'll continue. If not, time to figure out something else. And I figured that that amount of money would be enough for me to take that leap to just one day quit and the next start looking for those first podcast clients.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, first of all, big shout out to Travis Sherry, who has been on *The Maverick Show*, good friend of mine, and a bunch of other Maverick show guests have spoken at his Camp Indie events and been influenced by them and all of that. So big shout out to that community and awesome to hear what an impact that had on you. I want actually maybe to transition from that into talking about this concept of community and the importance of community and what the dynamics of community are for someone in an itinerant world traveling nomadic lifestyle. I know you really prioritize both online virtual community and in person community around the world. And I'm wondering if you can just sort of give an overview about for you, having been now multiple years in the digital nomad lifestyle, how you structure and maintain a meaningful, fulfilling community both virtually and in-person in your life?

**Janessa Klatt:** Community is huge for me. I think that's part of what makes this lifestyle sustainable for longer than a year or two is feeling like you have those very close friends all around the world, even if you don't live in one place. So, as we mentioned, the location indie community founded by Trav and Jason was a huge part of that. I still talk to many people from that group on a regular basis. They were so supportive as I was transitioning into this lifestyle and all of the challenges that came with that. That and I also had a podcast manager community online that I could troubleshoot things with that if things came up with clients, I could kick it out to the group. And I had a whole group behind me that gave me the confidence to position myself as an expert in this industry even when I maybe wasn't at the beginning. And in person communities as well have been really important.

So, I started out with staying in co living spaces which I do still really enjoy. I'm headed back to one of my favorite ones shortly. So, one more shout out to Co.404 is my favorite co-living. They have two locations in Mexico and one location in Medellin, Colombia now. So, I am dying to go to that one next. But I had first gone to the one in San Cristobal, Chiapas, Mexico, which is one of your favorite places as well. And they just have a great in person community there. I still stay in touch with many of the people I met during that first stay and I'm about to return for the second time to their Oaxaca city location, which is also an incredible place to work and live and experience the culture of Oaxaca.

And, I have kept in touch with many people from this group and even had reunions all over the world as a very active alumni community. So, for example, I was in Buenos Aires at one point and we had a Co.404 reunion. And by reunion it meant we were all in this group chat of alumni that had stayed there at some point over the last few years. Some of us knew one or two other individuals, but for the most part, out of a dozen of us, no one knew everybody. This was the only thing we had binding us together and we had an amazing dinner together because of this thing we had in common. So that's one of the communities that I've leaned on heavily throughout my travels.

Now I have friends from other nomad hotspots that I stay in touch with. I've spent a lot of time in Bansko, Bulgaria. I also love Cape Town, South Africa and, and I think it's just really cool to keep running into the same people in two, three, four places in the world and to keep in touch even when you're apart. And I think at this point it would be really rare to show up in a place and not know anybody. So, I almost feel like I'm never alone even though I'm solo traveling for the most part, 100%.

**Matt Bowles:** And I think that's really important to explain it that way for folks that might be thinking about getting into this lifestyle and having never done it before. And maybe there's people listening to this that don't know anybody that does this lifestyle and this sounds totally different, but they're interested in it. And how does that work? If you start solo traveling the world? The term solo travel kind of sounds sort of lonely. So how do you make meaningful communities so that you're consistently surrounded by, by amazing, supportive, wonderful, inspiring people and just have incredible community in each place that you go. And so, I think that's really important, right. So, one is the co-working space option, which is a situation where people are all going there with the interest of meeting and connecting and interacting and spending time with and building friendships with, with other people that are in those co living slash co working spaces, right. And so, I think you can intentionally choose to go to some of those places and connect with people.

And then the other one is that I have done these international work travel programs going all over the world with companies like *Remote Year*, companies like *Hacker Paradise*. I've patronized the number of these companies at this point. But for me, that's also been an incredible way to connect with people and to your point, to connect with alumni of the program that I didn't know because they weren't on my group, they weren't in my cohort, but they somehow at some point did a version of the program. And because we both did a version of the program, now all of a sudden, this alumni network, I'm meeting up with people that did *Remote Year* or that did this other program.

*Remote Year* is not even in business anymore, but people that did it back in the day. I traveled the world for a year with them in 2016, and people that traveled the world for a year with *Remote Year* back then, we all immediately, if I've never met you before, we immediately have something very unique in common, because who does that? Who travels the world for a year with a community of people that they didn't know to start off the year with? And so, we're able to immediately meet up and just have this incredible connection. Exactly what you're describing with your meetups from folks from that cohort, living Space. So, this is a really nice thing. And you just sort of get into that, or you meet people at events and conferences and then people that have gone there, and there's alumni networks and slack channels and WhatsApp groups and all that kind of stuff.

And you can just land in a place and there's WhatsApp groups you can plug into, and there's 82 things going on, and you can just go out to one of them and have an immediate friend group on the first night you get there if you want to do that. And so, I think it's really important to paint that picture of how solo travel, is “actually a really easy way” to just mean that you are immersing in all of these different communities and then carrying your membership in those communities with you around the world so that you know people wherever you go.

**Janessa Klatt:** Yeah, exactly. And I think some of the other practical ways that I've figured that out, to kind of get into those communities, maybe you haven't done one of these programs yet, is I think the old way you see Facebook groups now, I think they're not often as good or as active. The WhatsApp groups is where it's at. So, if you know someone who has been to a place, ask them if they know about the WhatsApp group, because obviously you can't search for them. But I'll have friends text me and say, hey, I remember

you went to Buenos Aires. I'm going there. Is there a WhatsApp group? And go. Here's a list of 20 WhatsApp groups for every special interest. If you want to go salsa dancing, you want to go hiking, you want a silent book club, I've got all of the groups for you.

So that is one way that I store all that information and then can help other travelers that maybe don't have as many connections yet. I have even hosted a meetup through the Nomad List site. I don't know if that's as active anymore. And the latest one I've been using is an app called Pangea where I've added all my friends on it and I can see where they are in the world. I could see who I'm going to overlap with. Because the other thing is I often don't post where I am in real time online. So, we may be connected on Instagram, but most women especially, I know, are not posted in the locations that they are actually in in real time. So, there's been a lot of times I've missed people of. What do you mean? We were in the same city for a week and we didn't connect. So that's one way to see with people that you know in real time that you will be in the same place. You can avoid missing each other and you can see which places have other solo travelers in it, which are hotspots, and then you can meet people that way.

**Matt Bowles:** Yeah. And shout out to Matt Gray, founder of the Pangea app, a personal friend of both of ours that we have both hung out with around the world. Matt was actually on a remote year program in Cape Town, South Africa, and he and I overlapped in Cape Town. And again, exactly what we're talking about through that network of people that have been on different programs and then they find themselves in the same city and you're going to meet up. And so, Matt and I were hanging out and having drinks in Cape Town, and that's where we met. And you met him, I think in the same city, but at a different point in time. And so, all of these networks overlap.

All right, we're going to pause here and call that the end of the part one for direct links to everything we have discussed in this episode, including all the ways to find, follow and connect with Janessa. That is all going to be in one place. Just go to the show notes at [themaverickshow.com](http://themaverickshow.com) and go to [the show notes](#) for this episode. There you will find it. And be sure to tune in to the next episode to hear the conclusion of my interview with Janessa Klatt. Goodnight, everybody.