

Matt Bowles: My guest today is Darren Chew, better known simply as Chew. He is the co-founder of [ChewsToExplore](#), a platform dedicated to showing travelers how to 'Save the World and Save a Dollar'. He and his wife have traveled to over 60 countries by using points, miles, travel deals and smart planning and now teach others how to have unforgettable experiences without overspending. Their YouTube channel has nearly 100,000 subscribers and almost 10 million views. He's partnered with brands ranging from Priceline to Wyndham hotels to the tourism board of Puerto Rico.

Chew, welcome to the show.

Darren Chew: Thank you for picking me up and making me sound so good. I appreciate it.

Matt Bowles: Man, I am so excited to have you here, brother. We have so many people, friends in common and I am super excited to dive into this conversation. Let's just start off though by setting the scene and talking about where we are recording from today. I am actually in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Asheville, North Carolina tonight. And where are you?

Darren Chew: I'm in Long Island, New York, where I'm from.

Matt Bowles: Strong Island, represent. Well, I know you are from that area. But before we even get into your story, can you share a little bit about your family heritage and where your mother and father are from and tell a little bit about their story?

Darren Chew: Yeah. So, a lot of people can't tell by looking at me, but I am of Jamaican and Chinese ancestry. So, I am first generation American. Both of my parents immigrated to America before I was born. My father is Chinese, but he grew up in Jamaica. And my mother is Jamaican from St Elizabeth. That's the parish that she's from. Shout out to Jamaica. That's my favorite place I've been. It is unfortunately in the midst of tragedy, Hurricane Melissa right now. So, my father is Chinese. His father is from China. My father was born in Jamaica, but his father moved to Jamaica because after slavery was abolished in Jamaica, there was a need for people to work on the plantations. So, there was a lot of Chinese and Indian immigrants who came over. At the time, Hong Kong and India were both colonies of the British. So, a lot of the British workers came over to Jamaica to work.

From there, if you guys know anything about the Caribbean, there's a good amount of Indian and Chinese population. They are very hard workers and very business savvy. So a lot of Chinese came as indentured servants or for work, and then they own a lot of the things across the Caribbean. So my father is of Chinese ancestry, but culturally he identifies as a Jamaican. He went to Chinese school, but I have never heard my father say one word in Chinese. So, he identifies as a Jamaican more than anything else. Now, my mother is Jamaican, but she comes from Saint Elizabeth, and she's kind of on the opposite side of the spectrum as my father. While my father's family came to work after slavery was abolished, my mother's family actually grew up on Appleton Estates, which is one of the biggest rum distilleries in Jamaica in the parish of St. Elizabeth.

So, slavery directly affected my family on both sides because sugar cane working. My family house is actually right behind the Appleton Estates rum distillery. So, my parents met when my mother actually was a lawyer in Jamaica. She was one of the youngest, especially being a woman was one of the youngest lawyers at her time. And my father was an accountant in Jamaica. My father is about, I would say 12, 13 years older than my mother, but my father was a distinguished banker. They both moved to America for a better life. At the time, my father had papers and my mother did not. So, my mother went from being a

lawyer and being one of the biggest established lawyers in Jamaica to coming to America and working odd jobs. And for about five years, until she got her paperwork, was working like living aid jobs for opportunities in the United States. And because of their sacrifices, I'm able to bear the fruits of their sacrifices.

Matt Bowles: So, I'm curious about your experience coming up in New York, and how did the cultural backgrounds and identities of your parents and coming from an immigrant home, how did that impact you as you were coming up in New York?

Darren Chew: I feel like immigrants really have two different routes in terms of how they raise their children. I feel like they want you to know your culture, identify with it, and know every part of it, and basically have your identity in that immigrant nature. And then I also see a lot of immigrants who they want you to assimilate to American culture. They want you to identify as American, because a lot of the issues that they face as being immigrants in the country, they don't want their children to face. I definitely feel like my parents wanted to Americanize us as much as possible.

Even though I am of Jamaican heritage, of Chinese heritage, I identify a lot as being not just an American, but as a New Yorker. But New York is a unique place because of the diversity that it has. It's like nowhere else in the world because of the hot pot of people, of food, of culture, and that's uniquely New York culture. So, I definitely would identify more as a New Yorker than anything else. And that bleeds through in a lot of things that I do, whether it's sports, whether it's music, whether it's dance, it's parties. New York is its own identity. So even when people ask me, where I'm from is New York.

Matt Bowles: Absolutely. So, when you went back to Jamaica as a kid, as you were coming up, what impact did that have on your identity and your connection with your Jamaican heritage?

Darren Chew: When we were young, my mother actually sent us back to Jamaica. I was raised my first couple years in Jamaica because in order for my mother to make money and do things, she had to do living jobs. My father was going through school at the time and also working, so she couldn't have really raised us the way that she needed to. So, my mother sent us to live with my grandmother at the time. So, we were raised in a very strict Jamaican household back in Jamaica. And then when we came back, it was completely different. So, we would go to Jamaica frequently.

I really started traveling as an adult. Prior to that, I didn't really see travel as even a fun thing. Travel was like, for me, going to my grandmother's. I love my grandmother, but my grandparents, my family is from the country. We're in the mountains. Jamaica, I know is not the Jamaica most people know. I'm in the mountains. We're picking mango trees where cooking ackee. We have goats grazing the property. It's a country. It's the bush. So, my identity of Jamaica was, honestly, as an adult, I appreciated a lot more than I did as a child because Jamaica was a great time because the weather was warm and it was beautiful. But it was going to my grandmother's house. It wasn't a vacation.

Matt Bowles: And what aspects of Chinese culture were you exposed to coming up? I know you said your dad identified very much as a Jamaican, but I'm curious if there were aspect of Chinese culture that made their way into your household and through your dad that you were exposed to.

Darren Chew: The real interesting thing with a lot of people is a lot of people that I know that have Chinese and another heritage. It's mostly the mother who is of Asian descent. My father being the first male. A lot of that, especially in Chinese culture, should be passed down onto the first son. When I talk to my father about it, I joke with him a lot that he is not Jamaican, that he is Chinese. And here in New York, when

there's a big Latin experience, a big Latin population, he goes to places and a lot of people confuse him as being Latino in Spanish. So, a lot of people come to him and speak Spanish to him. But honestly, I don't know much about China from my father. My father's history is a big mystery to me that I'm trying to dig into now as an adult. I have an aunt who lives in Paris who is a historian, and a lot of the information that I'm searching for, I need to have a long conversation with my aunt to get because she knows a lot about that Chinese side that I have not explored enough about.

Matt Bowles: Well, I wanted to talk to you also about your experience coming up in the New York City area and playing basketball, man. Can you share a little bit about the role of basketball in your life, how that shaped you as a person? And also, for people that are not familiar, just describe some of the New York City basketball culture, because I know you have played in the Rucker Tournament and some of the most iconic New York City pickup games and streetball, all that stuff, man. So, can you just sort of describe the culture and then talk about what basketball has meant to you in your life?

Darren Chew: For sure. Basketball was my first savior. Basketball did so many amazing things for my life that I'm so grateful for, especially being in New York, everybody just plays. You just roll out a ball and you're there from sun up to sundown. And just playing basketball for me has instilled so many different things into me, such as being able to relate to other people, knowing how to work hard and work to a goal, how to communicate with others effectively, and also instill the work ethic that I have that I feel helps me to any aspect of my life.

But it's a uniquely delusional perspective that we have in New York because every year we think that the Knicks are going to win a championship and maybe this is our year, right? But it's always the Garden and New York basketball, you go anywhere you can play. But it's an amazing experience growing up here. And even now, while you mentioned a lot of people know me for my travel stuff and notoriety around it, when I'm in New York, a lot of people know me, but not because of that. It's because of my basketball stuff, which is amazing.

Matt Bowles: Since you started traveling around the world, have you gotten into pickup games around the world and sought out basketball specific experiences in different places?

Darren Chew: Whenever I see people play, I'm going to play even if I don't have the right. I really am a minimalist traveler. So, a lot of times I don't even have the shoes. A lot of times I don't even have the shorts. I'm just playing in jeans and hiking boots. But there's places I've been such as, like Philippines, where basketball is everything. Basketball is for a lot of people. Soccer in a lot of these places, but Philippines is amazing experience. I played basketball every day when I was in the Philippines. Actually, I was in Puerto Rico, and I ended up playing with a couple of people who play professionally in Puerto Rico. This was when I was just out of college, so I was a lot better and more active than I am now. But it runs deep.

Matt Bowles: I interviewed a guy on the podcast named Simone Vincenzi, who's Italian, as you can probably guess by the name, but he played semi-pro in Europe and he's now a world traveler and him and his wife travel all around. And one of the things that he does as an intentional cultural immersion experience in each of the places that he goes is he seeks out a pickup game. And there is an app that he put my listeners onto that you can download called Courts of the World. And anywhere in the world you go, it will rank the best pickup games in that city you can go. And so, he will go and try to join in to the best

pickup games. And he has experiences all over the world, from Asia to South America, all these other places playing pickup. And that allows him a very local, immersive way to connect with local people.

Oftentimes they don't speak the same language or any of that. But obviously, as you know, if you're on the basketball court, there's a level of connection there. And by the time you're done playing half a day of pickup hoops with people, everybody's tight, and you're all going out together somewhere. And that's like, his way to immerse in these cultures. So, it's a cool thing. But I know that you played in college, and then after college, I would love to hear a little bit more about the beginning of your world travels, because I know that started with you going to visit teammates that were playing around the world, right.

Darren Chew: Basically, as I said, travel for me, prior to graduating college was not something that I even thought was possible. It wasn't even a dream or anything. It was just traveling. I just looked at it as such an expensive thing to do, and it's just something that they didn't even think was fun. But I had a teammate who's from Germany, Tim, who, after we graduated, his visa was going to expire. So, he said, you want to go to San Diego? I said, okay, I'll go with you. And it was one of my closest teammates. So, it was just me and him. And this is my first time traveling as an adult. I had two big suitcases, a book bag, and we didn't plan nothing. That's how a lot of guys travel. So, we didn't plan nothing. We just were like, all right, let's go. Bought our ticket. And then I realized I was getting out of my comfort zone.

My first time ever staying in a hospital, meeting people from all over the world, and it really just opened my mind from there having these experiences. A lot of my friends went on to play professional in different areas, and I just started, okay, well, if I could find a flight to go over there, I can know I could stay with them and going places and just being immersed in the new places. And it just kind of really opened my mind where at the time, right after college, I was working in a restaurant, and I ended up getting fired from three different restaurant jobs because I kept just taking time off. My lifestyle started becoming obsessed from that moment.

Matt Bowles: So, what were some of those places where you went and you visited a teammate, crashed on the couch, and had a local experience? I mean, any particular ones that stick out or highlights that really impacted you.

Darren Chew: I went to Amsterdam. I was in Germany, I was in Stockholm, Sweden. I was all over in Europe. A lot of them went over and playing Europe, and it just was crazy to me, these experiences that I was able to have. I wasn't really spending no money. I was spending less money traveling with them, crashing on my couch than I was back home. It was mind boggling to me. So just kind of opened my mind.

Matt Bowles: Well, you definitely pursued the travel, and I want to go on that journey a little bit with you. So, after you're staying in all of these amazing cities in Europe and having these experiences, and all of a sudden you realize, oh, I can do this a lot less expensively than I thought. I want to ask you about your first trip to the continent of Africa, because I understand that was also to go and meet a friend there. Can you say that story and where you went and what your very first impression of the continent of Africa was.

Darren Chew: At that time, I did a lot of European travel, and while it definitely did get me out of my comfort zone, a lot of things were very similar from what it was in the United States. But being in Africa was the first time that I really opened my eyes to things, being so things that you can't comprehend being different, that are different. I had a friend that I went to college with, Christine, who was one of my really

good friends, still is one of my really good friends. And she was doing Peace Corps in Zambia. And I remember my senior year, her telling me that she was going to Zambia, and I never even heard of Zambia.

So, I was just like, okay, have fun in Zambia. She said she was on an assignment for three years. And then once I started traveling different places, I said to her that I'm going to come visit her. She didn't have any friends that came visit her. So, I said, you know what? I'll really go. So, I looked in. I found a relatively affordable flight at the time to go to Zambia. Would have stopped in Kenya. So, I went and visited her. My first time on a continent is going to be in Kenya. I had a 20-hour layover. So, I said, all right, I'm going to get out the airport, I'm going to explore. I didn't know I needed a visa at the time I got a visa process. What they also told me is that I needed to have a yellow fever shot. I didn't have a yellow fever shot.

So, my first experience in Africa, they gave me a yellow fever shot. It's supposed to be backdated 10 days. The staff said if you want me to back date in 10 days, just buy me a Coke. So I bought her a Coke, and she gave me a yellow fever shot. I paid maybe six or eight dollars for the yellow fever shot. When I went back home, I realized that to get a yellow fever shot in the United States is like 3, \$400, and they don't even carry it in most clinics. So, I came out amazing. And also, the yellow fever shot is also good for life where I got it. So, it was amazing. So, when I was in Kenya, I had a quick itinerary of things that I wanted to see in my 20 hours.

On my way there, I stopped and asked the person where the giraffe center is. So, I asked the person. He said, you want to pay to go see giraffes? I said, yes. I've never seen giraffes. He goes, you are African and never seen a giraffe. And that really opened my eyes because at that time, I looked at myself as an American person. I never really saw myself as an African outside of that. And I told him that I'm from New York and I've never seen a draft. So, he said, you never seen a giraffe? Come with me. So, he ended up taking me. We still went to Giraffe Center. He told me, don't say a word, and he went there. He gave me the local rate. I think it was like \$10 or \$20 for a foreigner, but it was \$1 for a local. He paid well. I paid for him and myself to go, and we just had an amazing experience.

He ended up taking me back to where he lives in Kenya. He lived in one of the. What they call a slum. He didn't have electricity, running water, and it was just a really humbling experience for myself. But I also saw the beauty in it and how everybody in the community really cares for each other in a way that we don't do in America. There aren't a lot of, I say, homeless people there because people look out for each other. If you're hungry, somebody brings you food. Somebody will house you. Even though there isn't a ton of wealth. I would say comparative. The way that everybody looks out for each other is remarkable. So, it just really opened my eyes to the communal aspect of how people live.

Matt Bowles: Kenya is such a special place, and Nairobi is one of my very favorite cities in the world. I've been back a couple times. I've spent probably two months just living in Nairobi. And it's interesting because I tell people the only Place outside of Nairobi that I've been in Kenya is. I did do a safari in Masai Mara, but other than that, I literally haven't even been outside of Nairobi because I love the city so much. When I get there, I just want to live there and be an urban resident in Nairobi and soak it in every day. I'm sure the coast of Kenya is gorgeous. I'm sure all these places that people go and they tell me about, you should go here and go there. I'm like, yeah, I will eventually, at some point, go there. But when I land in Nairobi, I'm like, I just want to live here and stay here and be here. And so I just spend all of my time in that city because it's so special. But I have actually not been to Zambia or Zimbabwe. Can you talk about the rest of that journey when you actually got to go and meet your friend?

Darren Chew: I landed in Zambia and she met me at the airport. We landed in Livingstone and we went there because that's a very big tourist area, being in Zambia. Over there, we saw Mosi-oa-Tunya, which is the biggest waterfall in the world. It's so amazing. It's a view of something that I've never seen before. We saw lines. We did a lot of the real tourist things, which was great. It was what my idea of African vacation was. But from there, we left to her village. So, Christine's lived in the bush, I called Jamaica the bush. Where she was at was the bush. We ended up taking four buses. We hitchhiked; we rode bikes. To get to where she was a journey in itself. But when we got there, I stayed with her. It was outhouse, which I was used to at the time because in Jamaica, we also had outhouses, but there was no running electricity. It was just a unique and amazing experience.

That time really gave me appreciation of the way that people live and how the communal aspect. Christine at the time was working as I believe, an English teacher or doing some things with business in the community. But during the time, I actually helped make a. I want to say they were pigs, and I made a pig pen. We were digging in the gravel, and I thought at the time I was a pretty fit person. I was just coming out of college basketball, but I was working with a guy who. He was wearing a LeBron James jersey. He didn't even know who LeBron James was. And I kept calling him LeBron, and he had no idea who I was talking about. But seeing how hard he worked and the sun being so hot, it was an amazing experience, life changing.

Matt Bowles: Well, I also want to ask about your experience on the other side of the continent in West Africa. Another one of my very favorite cities in the world is Dakar, Senegal. And I want to ask what your experience was like traveling to Senegal.

Darren Chew: Senegal is an amazing place. I actually traveled with a bunch of my friends, and one of my friends that I went with is a local from Senegal. So, I got a real local experience, and it was one of the most amazing experiences that we had. He drove us around. Prior to that, I went to Egypt and I saw crazy driving, but Senegal was actually also very crazy and aggressive in the way that they're driving. And that's coming from a New Yorker where I'm used to crazy driving. But Senegal, Dakar is an amazing place. It has so much diversity. The food is amazing, the people are amazing. Luckily, I had a friend who speaks the language, so he really navigated and made it a lot easier for me. He spoke wild off as well as French because I could imagine being a foreigner and just having a difficult time getting through there. But it's such an amazing place there, seeing the culture, seeing the heritage. They have deserts here, they have water. The city is amazing. It's beautiful. And they fly directly from New York, so that was even better.

Matt Bowles: Yeah, I've gone back to Dakar three times. I've spent probably a total of three months there, and I've just had such unbelievable experiences every time. I was actually there in December of 2022, when Morocco was making their run in the World cup and the whole continent was just going wild. And it was amazing because in Dakar, as you just mentioned, it's diverse, and there's immigrants there from elsewhere around the continent. And so, there's a Moroccan immigrant community that lives in Senegal. And so of course, we find the place where the Moroccan immigrant community is going to watch the World cup games, which was at this amazing Lebanese restaurant in Dakar.

We would go there to watch all these games with them, and then we'd come out and they'd win, and then the streets would just be wild and it would just be going crazy, and it's just so amazing. But there's so many incredible aspects of Dakar. I mean, it's right on the ocean, and you have all the Senegalese surfers coming out at dusk, and the sun sets every night, and it's just so beautiful and the people are so delightful. And I'm really glad that you got to have that local, immersive experience there for sure. So, you also mentioned that

you spent some time in Egypt. As you know, Chew, I lived in Cairo for nine months, man. So, I am always super interested to hear people's Egypt stories, their Egypt impressions, because it is a wild place, man. So, tell me about your experience in Egypt.

Darren Chew: So, Egypt is a unique, crazy, hectic place, which I love. At the time that I went, my roommate was actually Egyptian. And because of that, he helped me navigate. But I've also been to Egypt solo as well as another time, most recently with my wife. Now, Egypt is hectic and I got to say, I respect the hustle of Egyptians. A lot of people give Egypt a negative rep because of the hustle culture. But I love it, especially as a New Yorker, I love it. So, my first time there, I took public transportation, walked everywhere. And my biggest takeaway from this trip to Egypt really was how everybody loves Jamaicans. You know what's crazy to me is Jamaica being such a small country in the Caribbean. Everybody, when they see me, they call me Rasta, they say Bob Marley. They show me love everywhere I go. And it could be that they want me to buy something, but they really show me love. But I had one of the craziest experiences.

I took public transportation through Egypt and this was the first place that I went to where I was like, wow, it's affordable here. Really, really affordable. I took a train from Cairo to Aswan, which is a 10-to-12-hour train ride. It was amazing. I got to ride right next to the Nile River. The allure of the Nile River, hearing about it growing up was amazing. Seeing the sunrise over the Nile. But one thing that I also realized is that when you go to certain places, you should not drink the water. So, I had an issue where my friend told me not to drink the water. So, I was really careful about it. But one thing that you don't realize is that a lot of people wash cups and plates with the tap water. So, I had a sugarcane smoothie and I went on a train. And I was in Aswan, heading to Luxor, which should be about a three-hour train ride.

And what I didn't know is that okay, in the United States, a lot of trains will have first class, second class, third class, whatever it is all on one train. To my understanding at the time that I went, Egypt was all first-class trains, all sleeper trains, all second class or third class. So, if you go to a specific train time, it may be all sleeper trains or all second class or all third class. My way from Cairo to Aswan, I took a second class and I was like, this is pretty good. I believe my ticket was \$5, maybe \$7 for that 10-hour train ride, which was crazy to me. So, I got to the train going from Aswan to Luxor and I said the only train left for the night was a third-class train. So, in my head I'm thinking second class was pretty good. How bad can third class be? Especially if I wanted to go. Especially if I wanted to make my trip to boy tonight. Well, listen, I took the third class and this was the worst thing I think I have ever experienced.

Everybody smoking cigarettes, everybody standing, you know, like where you put your bags up top. There are people sleeping up there. There were no seats. It was the filthiest, dirtiest, nastiest train ride. There were no lights. So, I got a seat, I put my bag on my lap and I'm like, all right, I got to keep my bag on my lap because I don't want to leave it anywhere because I know somebody's going to steal my bag. But that sugarcane smoothie, it got me. So, I'm in the train and I'm looking for a bathroom. I'm on a third-class train, I'm looking for a bathroom. There's no lights and I'm asking people, where's the bathroom? Third class train. What? I realized that a lot of people don't speak English because a lot of them are locals. So, the guy keeps telling me it's over here, but I can't find it. I turn to find out the bathroom is a hole in the ground. It's like somebody took a pitchfork and just kind of put a hole in the ground. And that is the restroom.

Now that sugarcane smoothie got to me and I had the runs. I only had a bottle of water and there was no sink, there was no toilet paper, there was no nothing. And I had the runs and it was running right through me. I ran out of water, out of my 2-liter bottle of water after I used the bottle of water as my bidet and the last thing that I had was a mango box drink. So, the mango box drink ended up having to be my bidet while I

was on the train. It was just a nasty, horrible three-hour ride. I remember checking in, it was like three o'clock in the morning when I got there. And I was so happy to actually see a hotel with toilet paper and an actual hand bidet. And it was definitely a humbling, interesting experience. And I laugh it off now, but it was not funny at the time.

Matt Bowles: Well, I know you have been to Nubia a couple times. You just mentioned coming from Aswan. And for people that have never been to Nubia, which is part in Egypt and part in Sudan, I have been as well down to Aswan and. And stayed in the Nubian village with the Nubians. Some of the kindest human beings I have ever met in my entire life. I had such an amazing experience in Aswan. But for you, after spending time in Cairo and Luxor and so forth, when you got down there to Aswan, what was Nubia like? What was your experience like with the Nubian people?

Darren Chew: It's so interesting to me because going to Nubian Village and exploring Aswan was so amazing because they looked at me, they came to me speaking their language. They were so excited to have us there and calling me my brother. And it was a warm welcome, I would say. I mean, they're still haggling. They're still trying to get you to buy things, but it was such, like, a homecoming. It just was like a warm place to be. It was bright. It was colorful. They were so kind. In Egypt, I feel like a lot of people generally will do things because they want you to tip them or they want something from. But in Aswan has people just super excited to show you the beauty of where they're from. I mean, it was just so amazing, especially being a black person, going to Nubia and learning about their heritage, their culture, and them also embracing you, there was just an amazing experience.

Matt Bowles: Well, you mentioned Jamaicans getting a lot of love on the continent. Have you been to Ghana or Nigeria yet?

Darren Chew: I have not. Those are two places that I know I need to get over there, actually. Interesting thing about slavery, differences between Jamaica as well as in the United States. One thing that was a tactic in the United States to diminish uprising and things to separate the black household. So, you have a lot of people who do not know where they come from in the United States because they were separated from their families. And the storytelling and all these things were not able to be passed down because generation to generation did not exist through slavery in America. But in Jamaica, a lot of families were kept together.

So, when 23andMe and Ancestry.com, when all of these things came out, I wanted to do one of those for my mother, but my mother says it's a waste of time. Why would you do that? Because I know where I'm from. She says that she knew that her grandmother's grandmother remembers being in Ghana present day, being taken from there and brought to Jamaica. So, she says it was a waste of time. And very well, we had one of those tests and it was correct. So there definitely is a tie to Ghana. And I know a lot of black Americans as well as Caribbeans are from that Nigerian area as well.

Matt Bowles: Yeah, it's really interesting when you go there also to see some of the cultural dialectics. For example, are you familiar with the Dancehall music coming out of Ghana and Nigeria?

Darren Chew: I am not. You're putting me on to something now.

Matt Bowles: I am going to put you on to some stuff right now. Because that was one of the things. I'm a huge fan of Afro beats. My main motivation for going to Lagos, where I went and just lived in Lagos for a month, was the Afro beats, right? I mean, I was just like, I got to go. And then I went to Accra in Ghana for

about a month right after that. And that was actually my first time in Senegal as well. So, I went on a three-month trip through West Africa with a very dear friend of mine, Agnes, who I've also interviewed on The Maverick Show. And she is Kenyan and it was actually really amazing because she has locks. And so, people were giving her love, like thinking she might be Jamaican, right? I mean, she's Kenyan, but she was like getting this love anyways. But so, we're there.

And so of course they have all the Afro beats that everyone probably knows, Burna Boy and Wizkid and all of these artists. But then what I didn't know or hadn't been exposed to before I went there, there is a whole dance hall scene of Nigerian artists and Ghanaian artists producing dance hall music from the continent. And this is some of the most prominent popular stuff. So, for example, I went to Detty December in Accra in December of 2022. All of the A list Afrobeat artists are there, Burna Boy is there. All of these people are performing there, okay? And it's two nights. The event was Afro Future is what it's called, the musical event there. It's two nights. Burna Boy headlined one of the nights, okay. Who is going to headline the second night? Remember, the entire slate of all the A list Afrobeat artists that you've heard of are all performing. Who gets the second night headline?

A Ghanaian dance hall artist named Stonebwoy. Now Stonebwoy I had heard of and I knew his music and I thought it was absolutely apropos that he gets this in Ghana because the way and the way that I had heard his music was I told you, I spent the month in Lagos in Nigeria, right? So, I'm there for the month and I'm Shazamming every song that I hear in the Uber in the mall, walking down the street in the restaurant, I'm Shazaming every song. By the time I leave Lagos, I have the playlist. So, then I go to Accra and I go out to the club in Accra and I'm like, we're going to know every song. We just spent a month in Lagos. We didn't know a single song, but all the songs are completely lit and people are going wild. And so, I started Shazaming those songs and I start looking up these artists. And of course, they're all Ghanaian Afrobeat artists and they're playing all this stuff in Ghana. And so, as I'm watching the crowd in the club react to the songs that they're playing, a DJ throws on some song. And again, I had not heard any of these songs, but the DJ would throw on a song. And for the songs where the crowd goes wild, the song comes on and the crowd just goes nuts. It's like, what song is that, right? And you Shazam it. And then I look it up. And that night the DJ probably played five different songs by Stonebwoy.

And every time he played one of his songs, the crowd just goes wild. So, I looked this dude up. So, then I started going through his whole catalog at this point. Stonebwoy has done collabs with Beenie Man, he's done collabs with Sean Paul. He's that level where the Jamaican folks are collabing with him and stuff. And so now there's this really incredible cultural and musical dialectic between the continent and Jamaica, which is just amazing. And then Stonebwoy was the headline. Him and Burna boy were the two headlines at Detty December in 2022. And it was just amazing to see how much love that genre of music got. It was super special.

Darren Chew: I could only imagine. I have a lot of friends that went to Detty December, AfroFuture, all of these events and just seeing how the party doesn't start till 2 o' clock in the morning and their whole trip is party, non-stop. I couldn't even imagine what it is. So that's definitely an experience that I need to have.

Matt Bowles: Yeah, it's wild, man. It's a super incredible and special experience. I want to ask you also about some other regions of the world that you've traveled to. I know Central America is a place that I have heard you talk about a lot. Places like Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador. Can you talk a little bit about the time that you spent there and the impression that that region made on you. And maybe some highlights, some of the memories you have from going and spending time in Central America.

Darren Chew: Latin America, particularly Central America, is an amazing place. It's one of my favorite places in the world. It's close by from United States. It's super affordable, comparatively. There are so many different things to do. The culture is amazing and it really helps me with my Spanish. A fun fact about me that a lot of people don't know is that I'm pretty good in my Spanish. When I go to a lot of Latin American places, I pretty much speak Spanish the entire time that I'm there, which helps. And that's one of the reasons why I keep going back now. Guatemala, I love, because a lot of the indigenous from Guatemala are from that area. So, you see a lot of people in traditional wear and a lot of the cuisine is traditional cuisine. And it's just beautiful in that sense.

One thing that I went to with my wife, I think this is the first trip that we went to internationally was Guatemala. It was after she graduated pharmacy school and we went to Guatemala. And a place that I love is Semuc Champey, which is deep in the mountains. It's a greenish turquoise ish running waterfall. Everything around it is misty. It's a really cool, unique experience that we had. And we did it before a lot of people were doing it. So before social media was really hyping everything up. It was so amazing. Nicaragua, as you said, is probably my favorite country in that region because the diversity of the country relatively to the other countries in that region, it's a huge country. We volcano boarded down there where we literally hiked up a mountain, got on a surfboard. Not a surfboard.

Matt Bowles: Volcano board.

Darren Chew: Yes, a volcano board. And we literally went right down the mountain. And it was an amazing experience. To my knowledge, that's the only place in the world that you can do that. It has great beaches, the volcanoes, the lakes. It's an amazing experience. We had ATVs through there. And I definitely recommend people going to Nicaragua. And El Salvador was a great place too, because in New York, actually a good amount of people here is from El Salvador. And it's amazing. One thing that in my line of work, I'm a physical therapist and a lot of the patients that I work with, it's so great to tell them that I've been to their country and can relate to them about them. The places that I've been to because a lot of them left their country for whatever reasons and have not been back to their country. And one place that is like that is El Salvador. El Salvador gets a lot of rep because of their history with gangs and gun violence and the way that the country has transformed itself to being one of the safest places that caters to tourism is amazing. Salvador. The food is great. It has amazing surfing places. It's affordable and they use Bitcoin as currency.

Matt Bowles: That's so interesting, man, yeah, I went down there. I was in San Salvador for about a month in 2022, just posted up, rented an Airbnb for a month. And you're using Bitcoin to pay for coffees at the coffee shop and stuff at the restaurant. I mean, just like a regular currency from your phone, it's literally quicker than using a credit card. Totally wild.

Darren Chew: I was doing it just by because I could for the experience. So, yeah, it's such an amazing experience and the way that people embrace each other and show love and love. Seeing you in the region, though, what I would say is especially my experiences of being a black person, a lot of people obviously look at me and know that I am not from there, but in Latin America, they really embraced me, especially because I did speak the language as well, which really helped me tie deeper to the people in the culture and have a deeper experience.

Matt Bowles: Well, Chew, you and I are about to hang out in person in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. We're going to be at the Black Travel Summit. Big shout out to Anita Moreau, shout out to Romie Robertson, shout out

to Martinique Lewis. The amazing team that puts that on, puts it together. I know it's not your first time in Rio either. You have been before and you probably, I think, love it as much as I do. So, let's start off with maybe Black Travel Summit if you want to talk a little bit about your connection with that amazing community. But then also, man, talk about Rio. For people that haven't been to Rio de Janeiro, why is it so special to you?

Darren Chew: Black Travel Summit is an amazing platform where they really highlight not only black experiences, but black history and help navigate places in. It's just an all thing, one thing shop for black experiences through traveling as well. So, I'm blessed to actually be one of the speakers at the conference. My wife and I are actually nominated for creator of the year on that platform as well. So, we're super excited for that experience. To link with a lot of people who we haven't met before, like yourself is going to be an amazing experience and the funny thing about traveling is even though we're so far and people are always so around the world in places, it's really only one flight away to get to people and see people. So that's what I love about our niche of networking and people is that you just meet up like, oh, let's go meet up in Rio. You know what I mean?

Matt Bowles: That's it, man. Yeah. Talk about Rio. For people that have never been. The first time you went to Rio, what was the impression of the experience like?

Darren Chew: So, let me preface this by prior to going to Rio, I probably been to about 50 countries before going to Brazil. And a lot of people told me, I know you travel to a lot of places, but just be aware of where you're going to with Rio de Janeiro, they were telling me a lot about crime, a lot about poverty, and a lot about things. And I don't want to undermine that, but I do want to say that the city is so much more than that. The city has everything that you can imagine. It has the best sunrises and sunsets in the world. The mountains there, the ocean there, the people, the liveliness. It just has an overall liveliness to it, the city. You walk around in the streets and you can see how vibrant the people are, the amazing food that's there. There are so many different things to do. Waterfalls, Christ the redeemer taking a helicopter. There are so many crazy, amazing things that's there. And I'm so happy to go back. I said that that was my favorite city in the world, and I still think that it is my favorite city in the world. And I can't wait to get back.

Matt Bowles: Bro, I'll tell you this, man. I went there. My very first time was about a decade ago 2015, and I went for two months in Rio, and I did not leave Rio to see any other part of Brazil because I was like, I don't believe that it is possible for anything to be more amazing than this. I don't want 59 days. If I can have 60, I'm taking every one of them. Bro, I was appreciative of every single day that I had in Rio, even though I was living there for two months. So, then I left. People was like, oh, did you travel around Brazil? Did you see this? Like, nope. I spent all my time in Rio, man. And then it was only later, as I was traveling around, where I started talking to people, and I'm like, what's your favorite city in the world? And they're like, Sao Paulo, Brazil. I was like Sao Paulo. I said, you've been to Rio? They're like, yeah, yeah, I've been to Rio. And you've been to Tokyo and Istanbul. They're like, yeah, yeah. And so, then I was like, oh, okay, I got to go back and see Sao Paulo. So, then I went back and saw Sao Paulo. I was like, okay, got it. All right. And then I went back and saw some of the northern beach towns, and then I went back and saw Salvador de Bahia and those kinds of spots which are all amazing and they're all special. And Brazil is so huge.

Darren Chew: Yeah.

Matt Bowles: I think it's important for people to understand that 50% of the human beings that live in South America live in Brazil. Like, that's like half the continent. The place is absolutely massive and has all

of these really, really special places. But I am so excited to get back to Rio. And I was like, okay, I'm going for Black Travel Summit. And if I'm going to Rio, I'm staying for at least five weeks. So, I am in Rio for five weeks. So, if anybody wants to come to Rio between now and the end of the year, I will be there.

Darren Chew: I'm so jealous of you for that. I mean, when we created our video in Rio, I think it is our video that did the best in terms of our platform, in terms of views and people. I said that it was my favorite city in the world in the video. And there's a lot of Brazilians who are appreciative of the video about how I showed from a different perspective than they're used to seeing. And what a lot of people told me in that same vein is that there's no way that this can't be the best city in the world. It's not even the best city in Brazil. So, all these people were telling me, I need to go here, I need to go there. And on this trip, when we are going, we're actually visiting other regions. We're going to Iguazu, we're going to Salvador Bahia. We're spending some time in Sao Paulo so we can have a little more diverse perspective on it. Last time we went, we only had five days and we were blown away by just Rio. So, we're more excited to explore more regions and see more. And one of the best things, too is a lot of people are bummed that now Americans have to have a visa. But I was super excited when I found out that it's a ten-year visa.

Matt Bowles: Ten-year visa, bro.

Darren Chew: I'm like, all right, so I guess I got to make use of this 10-year visa my wife and I were planning every year for 10 years to go back!

Matt Bowles: I am so excited for you to see those other places. And I almost don't want to tell you anything about them. I just want you to go and experience them. And then we have to have a debrief conversation afterwards because I was saying the same thing. Like, I'd only been to Rio and that's what I'm saying. I was like, Sao Paulo is your favorite city in the world. I'm like, and you've been to Rio? Like, explain that to me. And they're like, well, imagine if you'd been to LA or Miami. And you're like, oh, these cities are, are completely epic. And then you're like, why would I go to New York City? Doesn't have the beaches, it doesn't have the stuff. And you go to New York. Oh, got it. I see what's going on here, right? Yeah. Sao Paulo, man. Oh, the street art.

One of the main reasons I went there was for the street art. It has some of the best, and as a New Yorker, you'll appreciate it has one of the best graffiti art scenes in the world anywhere. I literally booked an all-day private graffiti art tour because the city is massive. I mean, it is significantly bigger than New York City. It was like 20 million people in Sao Paulo. And so, all of these different sections of the city you can go to. And so, I was just, all right, I'm taking a full day tour in a car with a private graffiti expert and they're going to take me around and show me this stuff. And it was amazing because they were able to, to take me to these spots where you cannot get to. They would drive up in the car and we're coming around the curve and they're like, all right, I'm going to slow down. You jump out, jump over the railing, and then you can stand over there and take these pictures and stuff. I'll loop back around and then you come jump back in the car. I was like, okay, done.

I was all over Sao Paulo, man, looking at that. And the culinary scene is just completely bonkers. And I know you've been to Japan and if you, you go to Sao Paulo, you will see there are massive communities from places like Italy, from places like Japan. It's like all the best culinary countries in the world literally just brought their food to Sao Paulo. And so, it's one of the most incredible, if you are into food at all. This is one of the best culinary scenes anywhere in the world that you will see. And then the nightlife is just next level. So, when you start spending time there, you're like, okay, got it. This city is completely electric and epic on

all these levels. And then of course, Salvador and on and on. I mean, they all have the really special, really significant, really amazing things about them.

And so, I'm really glad you guys will get to see that. We'll definitely debrief afterwards, my man, because I want to hear your impressions. I'll be watching your videos now that we have this connect. I'll get the behind the scenes take on this stuff in advance for sure. I'm looking forward to it. So, you have the Caribbean heritage from Jamaica. I know you've also spent time traveling around the Caribbean and going to a lot of the different other islands. I want to ask you about your trip to St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I've actually been there and it is a lot less touristy than so many of the Caribbean islands. And I just remember being insanely beautiful. I think they shot some of the Pirates of the Caribbean and film scenes there. But it was a very short trip and it was a while ago. But I would love to hear what was your impression of St. Vincent?

Darren Chew: Honestly, this is the thing about being in New York. Do you have people, especially Caribbeans, like you have a lot of Caribbeans from all over. So, I have heard of the island of St. Vincent and the Grenadines because there's a lot of vincy people here in New York, but it's a very under touristy country. So, I literally just went there because I saw a cheap flight with JetBlue. So, I bought the ticket and after doing some research and looking into it, I really blew me away. And I was wondering why more people don't go here. We went there and at all the different tourist places to go, it was literally just my wife and I, it was just great. But the people there, the food there, the adventures is just amazing. But we went to a beach called Wallilabou which as you said, Pirates of the Caribbean was actually filmed.

There's a Pirates of the Caribbean rock that's right around corner there. The things that I do for you guys and YouTube getting great videos. I ended up flying my drone around because I couldn't see the rock from the beach. I flew over there and every time I went around the corner to the rock, my drone cut off. I couldn't see the screen, but I knew the shots that I was taking. Basically, I'm Flying a drone. And then my wife is watching the drone, and it literally just starts streamlining straight down into the ocean. We're in the middle of the ocean. My first reaction, I had my Ray Ban meta glasses. So, I threw my glasses off because I didn't want to get those. What? I threw the controller down, and my wife and I just start swimming. I don't know how, where the drone is. I don't know anything. My wife says she saw it over there. So, I just start swimming. And then after I realized that I can't even see because it's salt water, and my eyes, I can't open my eyes. I'm like, all right, let me come back and let me start coming up with a strategy.

I start looking on the beach, and my wife and I. And one person just sleeping on a beach. So, I'm there sleeping. I see the guy sleeping on the beach. I see two boats here. I'm like, maybe one of these boats is this guy. Maybe he can help me look, Look. So, I'm trying to shake the guy. I look at the guy. He's kind of intimidating looking. He's full of tattoos. He got a teardrop tattoo. I'm like, oh, man. I'm about to try to wake this guy up from asleep. I shake him up, and he's kind of like. So, I finally get him say, like, hey, do you have a boat? He tells me, yes, I got a boat. So, he's like, no, I can't help you. I don't know what you're saying. But he's still in his sleep. I finally get him to start answering questions, and he tells me, yes, he has a boat and that he'll help me, me. So, I'm like, all right, he's going to help me. We're going to go on a boat. I don't know which boat it is. I look at the two boats there. Neither one of them is his. He has a blowup boat with a little motor on the back.

So, I'm like, all right, if that's what he got, that's what he got. I grabbed a snorkel. My wife points at where it is. We start looking around there, and we're just swimming way further out. And I'm just still like, oh, are there animals here? Are there sharks out there? What kind of marine life is there? All looking for this drone.

Now, let me say, I need the drone. Really, because the footage that I have there, it's not the drone itself. It's the actual contents of the memory card. That is a million-dollar memory card. My wife doesn't want to get on a boat, which I understand. We start looking after looking for about an hour, we don't find it. I asked my wife, my wife says, okay, I'll get on a boat. She gets on a boat; she points an area. I look on the drone, it says the last area found is exactly right where she says. So, I look down, I jump off the boat, I look down and I said, I hope to God this is not where the drone is. Because the water was so deep, I could barely see the bottom. I said, if the drone is here and it's the bottom of the ocean, I don't think I can find the drone.

I looked down and sure, the drone is there. And I said to myself, I don't want to die to get this drone. But I said, the worst thing that could happen to me is I see the drone and I don't get it. I'm talking to myself, there's no way I could be that much of a punk to not get my drone. I see it and I just leave it, you know, so. So, I started swimming down there and I swear I was going to pass out, but I keep swimming, I keep swimming. I grabbed the drone, I put two feet on the ground, push up, and I got the drone back. So, I got the drone and basically the guy, his name is Mark, gives me the most amazing experience I've probably ever had. Traveling where my first impressions of him, just looking at him, it was not a person that I would have engaged into, especially with my wife. And he ended up being so kind. He ended up showing us, went to the Pirates of the Caribbean Rock. He had had fresh fruits that he had on his boat. He ended up showing us the views from the water. And one of the most amazing experiences in St. Vincent, culturally, in one of the cities, there's a place called Barley where they do blackfish hunting.

I didn't know what blackfish were, but my Vincy friends from New York told me, go to this place and try to learn about blackfish hunting. I went there earlier in the morning and they were not trying to give me information like, who is this guy? Why is he asking about blackfish? But. But the guy Mark that I met actually is from the area where they go blackfish hunting. So, he actually caught a blackfish. I found out that blackfish is a pilot whale. They caught one that day. They just brought it on the shore. The whole community gets involved in it. It's more than just a shark that they caught. It's actually a whole experience. There are people that are barbecuing, the women are going there, taking out the lard, and then they're draining it. It's a whole cultural experience that I got to have that I wouldn't have had unless my drone crashed. And my preconceived notions about people and about doing things was totally blown out the water when I had this. And it wouldn't happen without my drone crashing.

Matt Bowles: All right, we're going to pause here and call that the end of part one. For direct links to everything we've discussed in this episode, including all the ways to find, follow, and connect with Chew. That is all going to be in [the show notes](#). So just go to one place at themaverickshow.com and go to [the show notes](#) for this episode. And be sure to tune in to the next episode to hear the conclusion of my interview with Chew. Good night, everybody.