

Matt Bowles: My guest today is Wazha Dube. He is an expat world traveler and the Africa collection manager at [Index Select](#), a marketing and representation firm for luxury travel and hospitality brands around the world. He has traveled and worked with brands across the globe and now concentrates on promoting his favorite African travel experiences. He currently also serves as the vice president of the Northeast association for Promotion of Tourism in Africa. Wazha is passionate about building a global community, sharing his expatriate background, impacting diversity and inclusion in travel, and amplifying BIPOC travel narratives. Originally from Botswana and the U.S. he was raised in six countries on four continents before the age of 18, and he has now traveled to over 45 countries and been on over 700 African safaris. He currently maintains a base in Do or Dive Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn, New York.

Wzha, welcome to the show.

Wazha Dube: What up? How you doing, man? Thank you for having me on, Matt. It's good to be here.

Matt Bowles: Good to see you, brother. So good to have you on the show. Let's just start off by setting the scene and talking about where we are recording this interview from today. Unfortunately, we are not in person. I am actually in Charlotte, North Carolina. And where are you?

Wazha Dube: Yes, just moved to my new apartment in Bed-Stuy in Brooklyn.

Matt Bowles: Well, let's kick this off just by going through a little bit of your background, man, because you have an incredible upbringing. Six countries on four continents before the age of 18. Can you take us through that journey, where you're from and what it was like for you as a kid to move and live in those different countries?

Wazha Dube: Yeah, man, like you said, I'm an expat or like to say third culture, kid. And my father is from Botswana, and my mom was from Philadelphia in the States. But I was actually born in Belgium when my dad was on Mission. He was a diplomat at the time. So, I was born on Mission and then, you know, moved from Belgium to Botswana, where I lived for about three years. Then from there I moved my way into Europe and spent my time in Sweden, about 4 years in England, and then she moved over to Beijing, China, for a couple years and then went back to England and then went back to China. And then from there got transferred again over to New York City, where I was living in New York, actually in the city and then in Westchester County before moving to Hawaii, actually, and doing university there before moving back to the States. So been around here and there over the past year.

Matt Bowles: Can you take us back there and share a little bit about how you think that that impacted you? What was it like as a kid when you're moving from Africa to Europe, from Europe to China, can you take us through some of those experiences and through the eyes of a kid? What was it like for you to experience those different cultures growing up?

Wazha Dube: Yeah, you know, it was pretty interesting because obviously when you're young, you don't really realize what's happening and all the culture switches and everything. To you, it's just a new place. So, you know, to me, I don't think I actually realized culturally that I was moving around and how it was affecting me until I probably got to about age 9 or 10 when I moved to Beijing. Before that, I'd already lived in multiple countries, as I just listed, and it was just kind of adding to my identity and my culture. What I assumed was my identity and culture at the time, I should probably say. And it was a blast. Every single move was a new place, completely new culture, completely new friends, school, languages, government system, you name. It was different. But I was very lucky, for the most part, to go into international schools.

So, you had that. You had kind of a central network and kind of a base for the most part in these areas. So that was always really amazing. But it was always this mentality that my dad, and thank God, he taught us early, was this mentality of like, look, we're here. This is not our home. We're here for a job, or I'm here for a job, you guys are with me. And we get the call tomorrow from the president, from the minister that we need to leave, then we go. And so, it was always that understanding that, like, you know, we could be in this place and it'd be the most favorite place in the world. And for me, one of my biggest times was probably living in London, just having this amazing group of friends and network and then literally coming home one day and my dad told us, we're moving to China. I knew where China was on a map. And that was kind of about it at the time, other than, you know, like movies and a couple of things. And we left within about five weeks of that. And so that's kind of how it was, you know, for the first 18 years of my life, is that understanding that you have your homes back in Botswana and in the States, but everything you are here, this is all temporary.

Matt Bowles: And how was the China experience for you? Because you learned Mandarin. I mean, that was a big part of your life and your upbringing. Like, how was that experience for you at the time? And how did that all impact your identity and stuff as you moved on into college and stuff?

Wazha Dube: Yeah. So, you know, before I moved to China, I really obviously lived in Sweden, I'd lived in Botswana, I lived in England and Belgium. But I'd never really had in my opinion, what I can say is more of a kind of embracing my international identity as well as my African and my American identities at the same time. And as weird as it sounds, China and Beijing in 1996 was a melting pot for international people. So, when I got there, that was actually probably the coolest place I could have lived at the time. Best move ever for me at that time. I had a group of friends, which I'm still friends with to this day. We speak almost every day from around the world. Different colors, creeds, genders, everything, you name it. Everyone was different religions, and it was this community that your kind of didn't have in the other places because it wasn't so much of an expat centric destination. Whereas here in China, everyone, unless you're Chinese, everyone's a foreigner. So, you had to quickly come to grasp with that and then also kind of find your lane, which made finding the community kind of very easy because you knew kind of where to look.

Matt Bowles: And then tell me a little bit about. Because I know that, as you mentioned, you had that really deep connection with your friends and stuff that you met there. And you guys, when you left China, you agreed that you were going to meet back up for a backpacking trip. Can you talk a little bit about that and how that dovetailed with the Olympics and what that was like for you?

Wazha Dube: Oh, man. Yeah, that was. So, to this day, obviously, I work in travel and I love to travel around the world. But to this day, that's easily my favorite trip I've ever done. Let me start off with that. So, it all started in 2002. We were in Beijing at going to high school at the time, and China was bidding for the Olympics. And so, the Olympic Committee had come to all the different cities around the world to see if their cities were suitable. And all that stuff that the Olympic Committee does. And what most people don't know, which I think is hilarious, it was winter. It was freaking freezing in the wintertime. And whoever's been to northern China in winter knows it's very much like New York. This is brick fucking cold.

And so, there's a lot of pollution in China. So, the government had actually decided they were going to shell the clouds or see the clouds. I think that's what they call it nowadays when you can actually make it snow. So, we were in school, and we heard these cannons going off in the background, like, because there's a military base kind of close to us. And you kept hearing these, like, explosions going off. And all of a sudden, a couple hours, it's snowing. Light snow, but it's snowing. So, Beijing essentially does this whole massive

performance, I guess you could say, to win the Olympic bid. And so, when they want it. We knew that that was the year that we were also going to be graduating college, 2008. So, a bunch of us. And I mean, when I say a bunch over, like, maybe of five grades, over maybe 200 kids, all of which were friends, you know, in different networks, whatever, said, you know, let's all come back to China in 2008. Rain, hail, sleet, or snow, we'll come back my grade.

Luckily enough, we were going to be graduated. It's going to be our first summer break before working. And so, we made a promise. A whole bunch of us made a promise to come back in 2008. So, we all go. You know, we leave schools, we go to our universities, we go on with our lives. And then that call came around maybe 2006. Facebook was out, thank God, and all of us were still talking. It was like, all right, guys, it's time to plan. Like, we got the Olympics to go to. And we're like, oh, that plan is still on. Hell, yeah, that plan is still on. We promised this to each other when we were, like, 16. So lo and behold, everyone's spending the last year in college, that last couple months, making plans to get back to China. Some of our friends still lived in China. Their parents might have still been working in China, but the vast majority of us had left. So, a whole crew of us get down from. My crew is probably maybe 30, 35 people that came down.

And about a week and a half before the Olympics, me and three other friends with no plan whatsoever met up at our friend's place, and we're like, you know what? Let's go backpack. Like, we've got a week and a half before the Olympics starts. Let's just go backpack as far south as we can with the limited funds and limited knowledge we have of backpacking through China, and let's just see what we can do. So, we took planes, trains, ferries, boats. I went to the Yangtze River. I went to Xi' An. We went to ancient cities. We went, you know, ferrying down the Yangtze River. We did all these things and made it from Beijing all the way down to Shanghai, and, you know, got lost in multiple ways. Took local ships and all these things. And, you know, thank God I spoke Mandarin at the time, and my friends and I all spoke Mandarin, because first off, we don't look Chinese. Not any of us, even me half Asian friend.

And we backpacked through the whole country and just loved it. It was the most amazing summer. And we got to see friends that took us in, and we made new friends along the way, and, you know, just really got to see the country in a way that we'd never seen it as kids, even though, you know, the school would take us out on these trips. So, you know, we made it all the way down to Shanghai, and we have about three days left to get it back to Beijing. And we literally make it back the morning of the opening ceremony, and lo and behold, we get back to my friend's house, where we actually made this plan to head back south. And everyone else has already arrived. So, the whole 35 people were all there, and there was a massive party for the opening ceremony, and that was the first two weeks of that trip of what would be six weeks in China traveling around.

Matt Bowles: Wow. So, what were some of the highlights of that? And let me also just preface this by saying that I have never been to mainland China. It is a massive, inexcusable void in my travel experiences. I've been to Hong Kong, I've been to Macau, and mainland China. I feel is just through this enormous place that deserves an incredible amount of my time and attention. And I just see so many amazing things from China. What would you recommend for folks to see, to visit? What were some of your personal highlights or favorite things that people should definitely do if they're going to spend some time in mainland China.

Wazha Dube: Well, first off, of course, the Great Wall. I've been going to the Great Wall. Well, I don't really go anymore, I should say. But when I was living there, we would literally go, you know, once a month to the Great Wall. So fun fact, there is a slide, kind of a toboggan slide on the back of the, of the, of the Beijing side of the Great Wall that you can take down to get back to the bottom. So, we'd go and go slide down the

Great Wall since I was like in 5th grade. Even did it on that trip when I went to the Olympics. Very fun. I did crash. Well, my friend crashed into me, I should say. And now my watch is still up on that hill in the Great Wall of China. Try to look for it. Never going to find it. But you know, like you said, China is massive. It borders 17 countries. There is so much of that country to explore. I mean, I got to see, obviously going to Xi'an, the first capital, learning about the Terracotta warriors, going down the Yangtze River, seeing the Three Gorges Dam and understanding that a small city in China can be like 2 million people is something that you really have to kind of get your, get your mind around.

So, you know, seeing these mega cities that were popping up at the time, you know, that was also 2008, when China, it was China's coming out party. So that was like a massive, just a really amazing, massive time to be there. I think one of the most amazing things for me was, you know, traveling from north to south. I never truly appreciated that I was taught Mandarin in a Beijing northern accent. I just thought, you know, we could use that anywhere we went. And the further south we went, people speak with southern accents. And so, you know, these northern Mandarin speaking foreigners would cut, you know, none of which look, Chinese are making their way down through China and speaking, interacting with everybody. And we're ordering the food just the way we do back home in Beijing and everything. And the people took us in like, like we were their children. It was amazing. People wanted to take photos with us. One story I will say I was in Xi'an with some friends.

And so, China has a great party scene too. You need to find your clubs and your restaurants and your bars and all that. Don't sleep on it. Beijing and Shanghai and many other cities are amazing. But I'll tell you this one story. When I was in Xi'an at some bar, some friends and the Bar wanted to kick us out because they wanted to close, but we wanted to keep on going. But, you know, we didn't really intend to just stay out that night or go out. So, we were really wearing what could only be described as basketball shorts and tees and athletic gear. And this bartender is like, yo, go to this club. It's like, just down the block. Go there. Go check it out. Tell them that I sent you. We're like, okay, well, go do that. And so, we get to the door, and the bouncer off the bat to me is like, this is all in Mandarin, mind you. It's like, whoa, whoa, what are you doing? You can't come in. And I told them that I was part of the American basketball team. And my friends were all Olympians. We were all pretty tall, and they were like, please, come on in.

And we made friends with the bar, with the whole crowd thought we were the Olympic team. I made the bartender feel like I was Yao Ming's best friend. It was amazing. And no one even asked why we spoke Chinese. No one had any questions. They just loved to hang out with foreigners and learn about where we were from and everything. So, of course, we all had to be from certain countries to stick with the lie. But it was just amazing. And everyone was just so fantastic. So, I think just coming through, learning the culture of, again, such a massive country. The food, the scenes, I mean, just what to do, the social experience you can have throughout China are just fantastic. And again, there's just so much of the country to see, and so much I still have never been to. It's endless. It's a country with endless possibilities in terms of exploration for those who want to do China.

Matt Bowles: That's amazing, man. Okay, so after that, so you graduate college, you do this backpacking trip. And then from there, can you talk a little bit about your professional journey, getting into the travel industry from the professional side, and maybe just start off with what you majored in in college, and then where did that take you from there?

Wazha Dube: So, this is actually a pretty funny story, because I had no intention to join tourism. I want to start off by saying that I went to school at Hawaii Pacific University in Honolulu, Hawaii. Go Sharks. And I

did, like, hospitality 101 as a kind of as an elective course. And it turned out I was really good at it. So, the one of the professors there, Dr. Grusa, who's still this, like, one of my mentors from professors, told me to switch programs and join him in hospitality program. And I did, because I really didn't know what I wanted to do. And it turned out that I loved it and just really, really enjoyed it and was really good at it. And, you know, I'm a talker, networker, and I was always a salesman. I thought I was going to do marketing and sales, and this was it for me.

So, I started doing the program, but with HPU, and it has a really amazing hospitality program, one of the best in the world. One of the requirements is that you take 500 hours of internship hours on top of your degree. So I went home to Botswana that summer and was hanging out with. With my dad and literally had been home for not even 12 hours. And he tells me that he'd signed me up to go work at a famous safari lodge in Botswana called Triple Game. And I was, at first, was pretty pissed off. Not going to lie to you, man. I had just been in Hawaii, the most isolated place on the planet. I was ready to party with my friends, my family, just have a good time, you know, but that was not to be the case. So, I was sent out to go work at a safari lodge for six weeks. And I was just like, what the hell? I've been to this place as a kid and this is actually the first place I'd ever gone on safari when I was about 8 years old.

And I thought it was amazing, but I didn't want to work there, you know, so my dad sends me out there and I spent six weeks and I met the most amazing safari guides. I learned about the hospitality industry and for the first time working in Botswana, which was amazing, but it was really my first time being out of Gaborone, where I'm from, in the south, and being with now many of my friends who call my friends now many of these amazing, amazing people up in the north working. So, I did that one summer, and I actually, side note, thought I was going to become a safari guide for that summer. I was like, you know what? The guides would take me out and teach me how to track animals and things like that. And I was like, you know what? I can do this. Absolutely. This is. This is cake. Fun fact, though, about five weeks in, I am sick of the bush. Get me out. I need cars, I need. I need sirens, I need New York City back.

So, I left and went back to the city and then, you know, spent the rest of the summer back in Botswana and then came back to Hawaii. I told a friend of mine the story about this, and she was like, do you think we can go back. She was going to graduate same year as me. And I said, yeah, let's, you know, let's see if we can do it. And so, we got another internship to go back. I did the same job and this is why it's so important. And I give the shout out to Chobe game launch. They had invited or my first company, Kern Downey had come to come visit the property and they pretty much gave them over to me to take care of them. And the owners of the company couldn't figure out, you know, really were kind of not flabbier aghast about this clearly Botswana guy with an American accent who lives in Hawaii, but also New York, but also Botswana, and speaks Mandarin and all these weird things.

And I asked him if I, if I could get a job. And, you know, I applied for a job. I did not think they were going to call me back. I think the owner knows the story very well, but I did not think I was going to get a call back. And they called me very soon after that trip and offered me a position to come back to New York. And I didn't really care where I was going to live. I was really looking at moving back to China, living in Botswana, wherever, wherever, expat, you know, it doesn't matter for me. So, I got the opportunity to come back to New York and take an amazing position, which at the time I really did not know what my position was, working for a tour operator. But that's really how it happened. Literally getting a job on safari in the middle on the Chobe River in Botswana is how I fell into this job.

Matt Bowles: That's amazing, man. And then I know your career has sort of evolved, evolved from there in the travel industry. And now you are with [Index Select](#). Can you talk a little bit about [Index Select](#), what they do and specifically the African collection that you have curated and are in charge of.

Wazha Dube: Yes, indeed. So, after leaving that first company, I joined another company, moved over to the representation side. And just to give you background representation, we essentially are the brand ambassadors and product managers for companies that don't have marketing and sales teams here in North America. So, we do all the work for them, sales calls, meetings, trainings, educationals, all the fun stuff. And so, I had been working for this company and then had left. And two of my very dear friends, Tyler and Danielle, had worked at a competing company. And it was always kind of a joke between us that if we ever left our companies that we would work together if ever we could. And they had left their company, their firm, a little while before that and started [Index Select](#).

So, at the time they were, you know, fresh out the gate. Two of the youngest people with the representation firm in the country, if not the world and killing it really had a really great selection of, of, of clients in their portfolio. So, I kind of reached out to them and you know, I was, you know, both in New York, both really good friends of mine, just kind of picking their brains and I really wanted to work, work back in the Africa space. I'd done representation for five years at the time, working all around the world and worked for an amazing company with amazing clients. But I felt like I was getting a bit too strained so I really wanted to go back to work in Africa specifically. So, I mentioned this to Tyler and Danielle and pretty sure it's because they didn't want me being their competitor and I think it worked out for the best for everybody. But they said, why don't you come and work with us? And I was like, for real working with you two, that would honestly be like a dream. So that's really how it started. So, you know, they were like, but you know, you have to find, go find your own clients.

So, I now made, it's like, okay, I'm just going to focus on Africa. That's all I'm going to do. Like no more Europe, no more Asia for me. I'm going to go there. If I go there, I go for vacation. That's it. So, I called the first person I knew I wanted to represent and his name is Beks Ndlovu. He owns African Bush Camps and he's always been like an inspiration to me. He's a friend and a mentor and one of the few black hospitality brand owners in the world at the luxury level. And also, he's from Zimbabwe so we moved from Botswana. It was a no brainer and I'd always wanted to work with him so I legit called him up and said, you know, yo, like I want to work with you, I want to represent you. I know you're probably better than most people out here already. And he took the chance on me and I'll, you know, I'll always be, you know, in his gratitude for that one. And that was really the big coup because everyone was really looking at ABC African Bush Camps, one of the up and comers.

And so, to have a Zimbabwean company run by, you know, owned by a Zimbabwean guy that is being represented by Botswana American in New York was, you know, a massive move. And then from there it was really about finding more and more companies that fit within, not just my Africa collection, but really with the [Index Select](#) mentality, which was companies that we really love to work with. Like, it's. It's not hard to do what I do, but because the companies and the brands we work with are amazing. And yes, it's demanding at times, but, you know, when I get to talk about some of the favorite places in the world in Africa, specifically for me that I get to go to and talk about, it just makes life much easier.

Matt Bowles: That's amazing. Let me ask for your tips for folks who might be listening to this. Cause we have a lot of world travelers that listen to this, a lot of nomads, a lot of aspiring nomads, people that are passionate about travel that are either doing it now, want to get into it, that kind of stuff. Stuff for people

that want to think about potentially becoming a professional in the travel industry itself. And going that route and pursuing their passion to actually get into the industry and make their money in the travel industry, as you did. And you've, you've worked in different parts of the travel industry, but what tips do you have for folks that would like to explore that and really try to succeed in that industry?

Wazha Dube: Yeah, I mean, the first thing I would say is this is a career path that has to be driven by passion more than anything else. The paychecks, they vary. So definitely come in this for the passion, not the paycheck. But there are so many different positions in this industry. You don't have to necessarily even to have a degree in travel. I'm one of the few people that I know that actually has a degree in travel and hospitality. You can come from marketing operations, come from finance. You can come from really anywhere. And there's so many different positions, whether it's sales, marketing, you know, even accounting, you can. Or you can start your own company, become a travel agent, a tour operator, work in hotels, and you can always transition. That's the biggest thing is just because you're doing one thing right now doesn't mean you have to stick in that particular job. You don't need to go to school for it. It does, in some places, help, but the biggest thing is passion.

And if you want to work on my side, which is of course, a bit more of the front of the house, then be adventurous, be passionate about the travels and telling your stories and your experiences and being able to share that with people and finding a way to find value in the unique experiences that exist out in the world. Now, if you're on the opposite side. If you're on the creative side, if you're in the back of the house, then it's all about finding the creative ways to show those messages, whether that's for. Well, for any different, varying type of client, whether that's the actual traveler or the industry itself, because you can work internally or externally. There are so many different ways to do this job, and there's so many different companies that are hungry for people that are especially nomads who can do this job from kind of anywhere, that can travel the world, that have no problem traveling, that also come from different backgrounds professionally and bring that and their travel expertise into the industry, then you're a gem.

Matt Bowles: So, what would be sort of the first steps? And I mean, maybe sort of frame a little bit about where the industry is today? Because when we think about, you know, 25 years ago. Right. And we think of a travel agent and the role that a Travel agent played 25 years ago, it's entirely different today with all of the, you know, the way that the travel landscape is and the, you know, different booking websites and all this kind of stuff. So, can you share a little bit about just kind of where the industry is today and where you see the opportunity for those folks? Like you said, they're passionate about travel, and if there's a way that they could monetize it and do it professionally, that they'd be passionate about that. What would be the first steps and where are the opportunities in the industry today, do you think, for those people?

Wazha Dube: Yeah, if we're talking about the people that want to become travel consultants, whether that's an agent or an operator, and there are some differences there. There are plenty of companies, both abroad, but here in the States that want to do that. What the difference is between what a travel consultant, what we think of as a travel agent, 25 years ago to now, and no knocking the amazing travel consultants I work with, who've been in the industry for over 50 years, but a lot of them were order takers. They didn't put in the special, unique experiences. And that's what makes the travel consultants of today so amazing. Whether that's the young ones or even the older ones, it is really finding a way to monetize unique experiences and to not just, you know, order out of a book. And that's the difference between a travel consultant and going online and book on Kayak or something like that on Expedia.

If you want to go to Italy and you want to book that and book a three-star hotel and just do that and walk around and just use your book and do all the research yourself, great, go do that. But if you want to go and you want to have someone, give you the best experience of reserving restaurants for you and giving you all the advice of everything that's customized for you personally or you or your group or your party, then that's what a travel consultant is for. And then of course you've got the other side. We've got the representation teams like what I do before. You didn't have this kind of brand ambassador that stood in between both sides of the industry that would speak on behalf of the brand. So, we are seen as pivotal to make sure that the messages of these brands and these companies who are abroad is being translated and being shown the best light to the market, to the travel market out here in the States and in North America.

So, there is no one way to go about joining the industry. I think it's first off finding if you can find a company and there's travel agencies and travel companies all throughout the country. First off, it's finding out what you want to do, whether do you want to work in hotels, do you want to work in F and B, which is food and beverage, do you want to work in travel, the traveling side, do you want to work in airlines, do you want to work in the marketing side? And then from there, where does your expertise lie in that? And if it's travel consulting and doing, you know, some of the things I just mentioned, then reach out to your closest travel agency, one that's, that's recognized and, and you know, has some awards or maybe focuses on luxury or four- or five-star travel and ask them to take you and ask them questions, see how if they can train you and if not, can they direct you in the right direction. And if you're listening to this and you're say, you know, someone's still in the higher learning process, then check out hospitality programs and universities. They've got really, really great programs. But again, that's only going to give you a certain amount of knowledge. It's only real-world knowledge once you get out. Unless you're going to work in hotels or cruise lines or airlines, everything else is you got to learn it in the street.

Matt Bowles: I feel you on that, man. Let's get into that too. I want to talk about Africa travel with you, brother. I'm so excited for this man. I have spent probably about two years total on the continent and have just been so enamored and I just try to go every year to go back and see new places and sometimes to revisit places that I love. I spent about five months on the continent in 2019 and then of course, Covid. So, I haven't been back since then. But, man I spent my birthday in Stellenbosch in 2019.

Wazha Dube: Yes, please.

Matt Bowles: It's amazing, man. But what I want to do, and I think the way I want to sort of approach this with you, so talk about some of the different regions of Africa maybe and kind of break it out like that. So, for example, North Africa, I spent probably, I lived in Cairo for about nine months in Egypt.

Wazha Dube: You've done more than me there, dude. I'm still trying to touch Egypt.

Matt Bowles: Yeah, man, I've been there a few times. And yeah, I was based in Cairo for most of it, but been to Alexandria and Luxor and down to Aswan and hung out with the Nubians. And then I've been to Morocco a couple of times as well. I've probably spent about a month or so in Morocco. But would love to hear from you a little bit about, you know, North Africa, both in terms of the [Index Select](#), you know, sort of experience offerings there, but also just from you personally in terms of, you know, your experiences or, you know, how you would sort of characterize it to folks and why they should go visit North Africa.

Wazha Dube: Yeah. Well, let me first off, start up just before we get into the regions, talking about Africa in general. Africa is a continent of 54 nations, all independent with. With multiple cultures, languages, colors,

ethnicities, and everything else in between. So, every single country is going to be completely different. So, let's start with the north, which of course, a lot of people, they think North Africa is an Africa. And I really hate that whole mentality. Just because they're not black, because many times they're more Arab looking. They're not Africans. Those are most definitely our brothers and sisters up in the north. With [IndexSelect](#), we represent a company in Morocco called Experience Morocco. And you know, Morocco to me, my God, that was my first time going to North Africa and I love it. I can spend time in Marrakech, going to Essaouira. So many different areas throughout Morocco, which can be done, which I've always found very interesting by road and that it's hard to fly around Morocco. But even if you do, you're missing the whole experience. You need to go and learn this history and touch it and drive it from the desert to the coasts to the major cities and even to places like Efran and Mulu Idris, you know, the one of the Muslim capitals.

And there's just so much to experience in Morocco, so much history that I really feel is not highlighted enough. And the history that is highlighted is a very Eurocentric history. For many of the tourists that go there. Morocco has layers and layers of history dating back before even the Arabs were there. You know, the black history, the nomadic history, and of course now the modern history. So, this is so much to experience there. And of course, it's been a melting pot as a country for centuries, more than centuries, even thousands of years. So, when you go there, I mean, you're going to learn so much about the different religions and cultures and all the history that's been there and how it's literally layered on top of each other.

Matt Bowles: Absolutely, man. Yeah, I couldn't agree more. North Africa is an amazing place with unbelievable history. So definitely recommend that. All right, let's talk a little bit about southern Africa and let's start off with the country of South Africa. I've probably spent about three months there, but I've spent it all in Cape Town, which is amazing on like a million levels. And as I mentioned Stellenbosch and the wine country and all this other stuff as well. I mean, it just blew me away. But I've not been to any other place in South Africa. And I've heard you talk about not only Kruger and the safari opportunities, but Johannesburg in particular. Can you share a little bit about what you love about South Africa and also why people should not just go to Cape Town, but should also go to Joburg?

Wazha Dube: Totally, totally. I mean, that's the first thing I'll say is when we're talking about especially southern Africa, one of the centers of safaris. Don't come to our regions just for safaris, come for the culture, come to learn about the cultures. And South Africa is a place of that, yes, there's Kruger. But you know, let's talk about the cities. First off is Cape Town is of course, you know, seen as the more European esque city. It of course is a bit more diverse and has more white people down there, which is why they call it that. But it's amazing city. There's so much to do. My thing I love about Cape Town is the fact that you can be in the winelands, you can be on the coast, you can be in a bustling city, you can be in the mountains in about 40 minutes. Either way, I'm still trying to find some time to move to Cape Town and live there. I just Love it. It's my little getaway. I love it so much.

I've got so many beautiful friends down there and just amazing souls. It really just isn't a collector of amazing people and people that really are just having very eclectic backgrounds and they just really want to share it. So, I think if you're going down there, there's just so much to see and do, especially for the adventurous person. Then you've got Joburg. And I actually like Joburg more than Cape Town. I'm a New Yorker. So like Joburg to me is New York. It's fast paced, it's moving, it's hustle, bustle. You've got really just go getter people up there that want to really move at a fast pace. But it's also, of course, well, first of close to my house. So, it's a four-hour drive from Joburg to Gaborone.

But to me, I mean, there's so many amazing young black professionals, especially in Joburg, doing amazing things. And not just black folk, but I mean South African, Southern Africans in general down there just doing amazing things. And I think when you think of all the new projects that are going on, creative the art scenes, the food scene, the Mabo Nang Precinct, for example, people like Becky Dube, who are doing the most amazing tours with curiosity. There's just so many amazing young people doing big things in Joburg that you can't sleep on it. That's a city that I just love to go to and spend time in. And literally it's like going from New York to African New York or Southern African New York.

Matt Bowles: That's amazing. I've also heard you mention the street art scene in Joburg. When I travel the world, one of the first things that I do is to see if there is a street art tour or how can I see the street art of this particular city? Because I love to see a city through the eyes of the street artists right there and how they see their own city and represent it. Can you share a little bit about what the street art scene is like in Joburg?

Wazha Dube: Yeah, absolutely. You know, I was very lucky to do a take a tour down there. And at the actually the advice of again, my friend Becky Dube, no relation to me, he hosts some of the most amazing street tours through Joburg and Cape Town and some of the Cities. But down there, I mean, you know, Joburg, I mean, just like Cape Town, they're revolutionary cities because of apartheid. And you have the freedom generation that's down there and you've got Art districts that have been repositioned after being gentrified, like Mabo Nang, the district there. And you'll go down there and see this amazing art by amazing young artists. Black, white, colored, Indian, everything in between. And it's so many different stories of the city, of the culture, of the people down there, and again of this freedom generation. And for anyone who doesn't know, the freedom generation were kids born after apartheid. And even of the kids who are the apartheid generations who are sending their messages on the walls, I mean, it's just so amazing. There are specific districts you can go to and just literally walk for a good two miles and just read all this different art messaging. It's amazing, an.

Matt Bowles: The other place, 2018, it was that I went to East Africa for the first time. And I posted up mostly in Nairobi in Kenya, but from there I went to Uganda. So I went to Kampala, and then I went out to Jinja, saw the source of the Nile River, and then went out to Tanzania, hung out in Dar es Salaam, and then went out to Zanzibar for a little bit. And it was just an unbelievable experience. What an incredible region. Can you share a little bit, though, about your [Index Select](#) so of offerings in the East Africa region there? And also, just your sort of take on that region and what you love about it?

Wazha Dube: Totally. Before I do that, actually, I do have to put in that plug. I did forget to mention the South Africa, going in the Winelands. I do have my guys down there, so I'd be remiss if I didn't talk about Lanzerac and experiencing, like, the wine culture down there. Everyone, you must do it if you're down in Cape Town. But for Nairobi and for Kenya, look, I think this is one of the most amazing regions on the continent. And you were doing a disservice if you go to one very much like Southern Africa. If you're just going to one country, you're doing a disservice. Each country has its own stories, own background, and the stories are long and it's exciting. I mean, I was just in Nairobi about two months ago, and, you know, even with COVID the city is bustling. They have had so many amazing COVID protocols put in place for you to actually go and enjoy the city still. So, this was actually probably my third or fourth time probably spending a lot more time, a lot better time in Nairobi with my friends and actually enjoy local life with some people from downtown Nairobi, all the way out to Karen, which is a bit of a suburb.

And again, Nairobi is a bustling city with a lot to experience, a lot to see. And one of the coolest things, which I'm actually kicking myself, I didn't get to do because it is pretty fun. Apparently, according to one of my friends, even go to the Nairobi national park. Because for those clients who can't make their way out to the bush. But if you can go to the bush, then of course, you know, and being from Botswana, I'll never say that Kenya is better, because that's just not going to happen. But if you go out to Kenya and you go out and you can see the safaris out there. And right now, of course, we're coming to the end of the migration period. You know, you're going to see some of the most amazing wildlife you'll see on the planet on the most amazing plains. So doing that in Kenya and Tanzania, of course, going to Zanzibar and experiencing the beaches there. Going to the, you know, going further inland to Uganda and Rwanda to do, you know, to learn about everything from the previous wars, the genocides. But of course, on the nature side, to learn about the guerrillas and the chimp trekking and to go into the hills there.

Even Ethiopia, to learn about the religious history and just all the history of Ethiopia, one of the, you know, the only countries in Africa that was never colonized. There's so much there. And to kind of bring it all full circle. When you bring East Africa and Southern Africa together and you actually start looking at the roots, the ancient trade routes, it is something that I really love about. So let me nerd on this a little bit, Matt. You know, there's all this history to take away from the animals and all that that people want to know about and see. And that's all great, and you should come and do that. But come and learn the history, these ancient trade routes and these ancient cities and kingdoms that date back before anything in Europe even existed that was in Africa. You know, you got the Manama topos all the way up to Kilwa Kisi and Zanzibar and great Zimbabwe and of course, all these amazing kingdoms. And I know we're going to talk about West Africa in a second, but, you know, a lot of people in east and Southern Africa who visit there don't know anything about that history. And it's there. So, there's just so much for you to see and do and experience. You know, it cannot be slept on from the culture to the animals to nature to the food. Everything between in east and south.

Matt Bowles: Well, I have done that safari in Maasai Mara and it was unbelievable. Got to hang out with the Maasai people in their village and you just had a really, really special experience there. It was incredible. And I was there during the great wildebeest migration and got to see that. And it was just such a special experience. You have been on 700 safaris, man. So, I got. I've been on one, you've been on 700. So let me just ask you this. I mean, while we're talking about east and southern Africa, right, which is the primary place where most of the safaris are, where people would go to do that. Can you share a little bit about. I want to give you a platform here also to represent the homeland as well, Botswana, were, by the way, I've never been. But everybody that I've talked to, the that has been to Botswana says you must go. If you're going to see animals and you're going on safari, you must go to Botswana. And I'm wondering if you can share a little bit also the other thing that people have told me, and I'm wondering if you can maybe explain this a little bit. They've said that one of the fundamental differences about going to Botswana is that they were saying that the animals are less restricted into game reserves than they are in the other countries where you would go on safari and stuff. So, can you share a little bit about that and just about why people should visit Botswana and what they'll experience there?

Wazha Dube: Yeah. So, there's a couple of different ways to do safari. And you know, in Botswana, and not just us, there's more countries that do it too, especially Zambia, Zimbabwe, even Kenya and Tanzania for a large part. But we don't have fences, which means the animals can cross the borders, they can roam free freely in massive parks without having the possibility of human wildlife conflicts, which is of course always going to be an issue in these rural areas where animals and people live together. But the beauty of that is

that they're not fenced in. They can roam, they feel more free, they feel more comfortable around people and it allows for more natural experience. And this is not to knock the parks and countries that, you know, that have more fenced in experiences. But it's more natural when you're out in Botswana.

And I know I can drive or wide walk or even take a boat and go for hours and drive around and, you know, I'm not going to see a fence at all. I'm not going to say anything. This is I'm in their kingdom. I'm actually the visitor. That makes it a much better experience than going to some certain other areas where you might feel like you're in a little bit of a zoo or a bit of Disneyland, like a great zoo, don't get me wrong, but still a zoo. So, when you come to Botswana, that's really what you're going to experience is, I mean, Botswana has. Since inception of tourism in Botswana, we've always had a concept of high cost, low volume. No, not all the countries have that. And that means for us that, you know, on average in Botswana, a safari can cost you a nice one, cost you about \$1,000 per person per night. You can find how higher, of course.

But what that means is that we will not have the numbers you will see in other countries of just tons of cars surrounded by one lion. It'll be you and your vehicle of no more than six people. Buy a sighting of lion, a leopard, wild dog, what have you. And it's more intimate. And that's really the big difference. You don't want to go all the way out to Kenya, Tanzania, Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, all these amazing wildlife areas and then hear someone else or see multiple vehicles around you and you can't even see the animal. So, it makes it more natural, makes it more intimate, makes it more worthwhile.

Matt Bowles: Can you share a little bit more about the African bush camps you mentioned earlier? Black owned luxury travel company that is offering experiences in Botswana and Zimbabwe and Zambia. Can you talk a little bit about what those experiences are if somebody was wanting to do that?

Wazha Dube: Yeah. So African bush camps, where the safari companies offer experiences in all different types of wildlife and cultural experiences, mostly focusing of course with the basis on wildlife. So, we have camps and lodges throughout Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe and areas like the Okavango Delta, the Mahari Hari Pans, the Linyanti Marshes, so all different ecosystems. And the Okavango Delta, for example, is the biggest in the delta only place like it in the world. Down to the flat salt flats in central Botswana, all the way out to say, Mana Pools in Zimbabwe. Everyone's going to give you a different experience, but we can do anything, say for example mokoros, which are dugout canoes and going down those in the waterways of the Okavango Delta to walking safaris, to game drives, of course, for, you know, two to three hours, four hours to also when you get up to places like Mana Pools in Zimbabwe, that's one of the few areas.

And also, the lower Zambezi in Zambia where we've also got camps with one of my other clients where you can canoe down the Zambezi River. And if you've never canoed down a river that's full of crocodiles and hippos and getting crossed over with elephants, you truly have not lived. I will say I've only been mock charged by one hippo eight times I've ever gone canoeing. I just came back from a canoeing trip like two months ago. Not even. I was canoeing in the Zambezi and, you know, had a nice little experience with some hippos. But it's those types of experiences that really you are in nature and you're with these amazing guides in these very, very small and intimate camps in the middle of nowhere. And these guides can look at a footprint and tell you if it's a male or female hyena, which way it's going, how many kids it's got, and that's the experience. The safaris are amazing, don't get me wrong, but it's actually the people that make you come back. I have some amazing guides that I work with and I mean, I tell their stories more than I tell the stories of the animals. Unless, of course, it's sort of the time I got mock charged.

Matt Bowles: That's amazing. All right, man, let's talk about West Africa.

Wazha Dube: Yes.

Matt Bowles: I will tell you that my East Africa trip inspired my West African trip. One of my homegirls is Ugandan and she's in Kampala. And she said, if you're coming to Nairobi, you better be coming to Kampala. You can come stay at my place. I'll take you out. Like I got to show you Uganda. I said, 100%. So, she was taking me out to all of these clubs in Uganda. Just unbelievable, the nightlife in Kampala, right? And they're playing all the most unbelievable Afro beats. And I'm shazaming all of these songs and I'm looking up all of these artists. And of course, the majority of them are from Nigeria, right? And of course, then Lagos is, you know, the center of the film scene with Nollywood. And it's where all of these Afrobeat artists are. And all of the music is coming from there. And I was like, I have got to go to Nigeria. Like this is happening, right?

So, I put a crew together of friends of mine and one of my homegirls for like the whole. We did a three-month trip through West Africa. [Agnes Nyamwange](#), who's actually been on the podcast, she's Kenyan and she's a full-time nomad as well, so she's one of my really tight homies. So, she and I went for a full three months and then other friends of ours joined for like a month at a time or whatever. And we, we did a month in Nigeria, in Lagos, we did a month in Accra in Ghana. We did a quick swing through the Ivory coast and then we did a month in Dakar in Senegal. Man, I will tell you, I think like my heart is still there. I mean, it was like, it just won me over in the most amazing ways. It was such a special and incredible trip. I mean, it was just, it was amazing. But I would love to hear, you know, from your perspective, how have your experiences been in West Africa? And you know, why in your opinion, should people definitely go there?

Wazha Dube: Oh, man. Well, you know, my experience is, is very funny. I was actually in South Africa. I just done a trip to like Zimbabwe and South Africa. I think my brother was living in Ghana at the time. He was working there. And so, I was like, yo, peep, I'm going to come through. Still never made it to Ghana. And I was so excited. And he was, he'd been there for like two years already and was like, I'm never going back to America. Like, I'm done. He's like, I'm never going to touch the States ever again. And I was like, okay, fine, I'll come make it. I'm going to come out there for like a week and a half after a massive conference and trip that I had led. And I needed a warning sign. I needed someone to tell me what I was getting into. I will say I had just done my DNA test a year before this on [Ancestry.com](#) or whatever. And I've always, you know, obviously on my Botswana side, I know I'm from Botswana, no questions there on where my dad's side is from. But my mother's side were actually North Carolina blacks.

So, if anyone doesn't know what North Carolina black is, when we think of the 1619 Project, you're thinking of us. So those are the first blacks to come to America as slaves, down to North Carolina and into the Carolinas. And so, I always knew about that history and I was really coming there with a lot of excitement and also, you know, a lot of curiosity to learn about my West African side and my heritage. My brother did not skimp on that. So pretty much the day I landed. And speaking of parties, the day I landed, we legit. I think I spent 10 minutes at the house, enough time to shower and change my clothes. And he's like, right, we're going out to the beach. We're going out to this beach party.

Matt Bowles: Was it the Sunday beach party on Labadi beach in Accra?

Wazha Dube: No, it was not. Labadi. That's exactly what I was hoping for. I had a client by Labadi and I was like, I know about this party.

Matt Bowles: Crazy.

Wazha Dube: I legit thought like, oh, my God, I'm going to go see, like, some, like, cultural night things. My brother was promised me culture every day and I was like, cool, cool, cool. Like some history, right? No, I mean, it was culture, I guess in another way. It was probably one of the biggest beach parties I've ever seen. I couldn't even tell you more than 2,000 people out there and just all these little bars on the beaches. And I'm like, okay, great, let's party it up. I figured we're going to do that and I'm going to go back home to bed. Little did I know, this is not how Ghana works. This was the pregame, three pregames before. So, you know, went back to that and then that night, and then we went back and, you know, changed. And that was my night to experience what a crowd really had to offer. And I mean, I'm sure, as you know, Matt, those parties do not stop.

Matt Bowles: They don't stop and they don't stop.

Wazha Dube: I legit. I had to look at people like, yo, when are we going to bed? Like, I was the party pooper. And you know, people who know me, I like to have my fun. And I was like, guys, it's time. It's 5:00AM Please go. They're like, no, there's one more party. Let's keep going. I'm like, who do you all work? Like, do you have jobs? I have a job and I'm on vacation. I want to go home. So, I mean, experience that party scene was amazing. And then, you know, I went to see as much of the history and culture, went to the slave castles and all that. And that was emotional in all different types of ways for me, as it is for most black Americans who are for the diaspora who go to Ghana and go to the slave castles and learn that history. Also learning about Kwame Nkrumah and learning that, you know, history of the liberation struggle of Ghana was absolutely amazing. But the funny story of all this was this was 2016. I was there during the Trump election, so I happened to do an absentee ballot that year, and I figured I was going to be there for the casting of the ballot. That was a good idea.

America was getting a little bit too hot for me, and I figured I didn't want to be here for the election. So, squid, let me go celebrate this in Ghana. And the whole time I'm in Africa, even when I was down in Southern Africa, everyone was asking me, do you think you guys are going to lose the election? I'm like, now we got this in the bag, bro. Don't even worry about this. Don't even stress. I'm just here for vacation, for some fun. And let me tell you, I was at this massive party for Americans and expats, hats and other Ghanaians in this amazing spot in Accra, watching the election. I mean, I don't even remember the results coming out. That's how much we were partying. I started waking up the next day and being told that Hillary didn't win. And I was like, wait, what now? And I was like, no, man, stop playing. I started calling my people in New York. They're like, yeah, dude, no. You might want to stay in Ghana for a little bit longer. And for about five minutes, I sat there that morning being like, I might need to change my work. This place is amazing. And I'll go back to that.

Matt Bowles: Exactly.

Wazha Dube: So, I had hoped to actually make it down to Togo, Benin and Senegal on that same trip. And I've got an amazing friend, Sarah Duff, who owns who's the creator and fashion designer of Tongoro. She does a lot of work with, like, Burna Boy and stuff. She also dressed Beyonce for Black is King. She is bugging me to come down there with a fellow nomadic friend of mine, Damaris Lewis, to head down there and see and visit Senegal. And so, there's so much of the of West Africa to visit and see. I'm saving it. Once the pandemic is kind of cleared up a little bit. I was hoping to go last year, so it's on the list probably for next year.

Matt Bowles: I love that, man.

Wazha Dube: Yeah.

Matt Bowles: Senegal is an absolutely magical place. It's so, so special, man. I really want to go back and spend more time there.

Wazha Dube: All right.

Matt Bowles: I also want to ask you about some of the African islands because you have experiences available through [Index Select](#) in places like the Seychelles and Mauritius and Madagascar.

Wazha Dube: That's right.

Matt Bowles: Can you share a little bit about the African island experiences?

Wazha Dube: Yes. I mean, first off, do not sleep on the Indian Ocean islands. You know, I think when everyone thinks of, like, a honeymoon, you think of, like, Seychelles or Mauritius or stuff like that. And I mean, hey, they are beautiful. But again, I mean, we talk about Madagascar, people only think of like the lemurs and you know, like the baobabs. But you know, hey, that is a country that of course is obviously quite poverty stricken, but it has an amazing amalgamation of cultures that now make up the Malagasy people. And I mean, for an adventurer, it's an amazing place to go. There are amazing activities to do, there's amazing culture, amazing food, but water activities to do. Adventuring, hiking, biking. I mean, if you like to, to get out and be outdoors, then Madagascar is for you. Seychelles, of course, it's world famous for its beaches and for a honeymoon destination which you can't go wrong in Mauritius, very similar.

Has a bit of your adventure and also has quite a bit of your outdoor water activities that you can really go exploring. I mean, especially big game fishing. Don't sleep on it. Out there in the Indian Ocean islands, they got a lot of it. But then we have Zanzibar. And Zanzibar is my jam right there. That spot is never to be slept on. If you're in East Africa and you want a beach destination and you want an island, then it's Zanzibar, right everyone? I mean, we'll talk about places like Lamu, which is world famous of course, in northern Kenya, or even, you know, been in Diani. But when you head out to Zanzibar, the white sand beaches, the culture, even going from Stone town in the capital and learning about all the history of Zanzibar again. It was actually one of the central kingdoms. For people that don't know this, it was one of the central kingdoms of trade back in the day in the ancient world. Because of course you could bring spices. It was of course known as a spice island.

And before gold was a thing, spices were the most expensive form of trade. And of course, gold came from the south and pottery and things came from Asia and from the Middle East. And of course, we had golden spices coming through central and eastern Africa. So, all of that came through Zanzibar. So, from your amazing beach destinations to your history, Zanzibar's really just got so much beauty experience and you can legit go lie on a beach and do nothing and then go spend one day and go party in Stone Town. And that's another place where the parties do not stop. The people are amazing. Actually, the biggest music festival I believe in Africa is actually in Zanzibar, which is a Swati Baraza festival. So, I mean, there's just so much to experience that people kind of sleep on because it's the culture of Africa and that is really a gumbo of cultures throughout a massive continent. And one of the places that you can really see that is Zanzibar.

Matt Bowles: Yeah, for sure. I have been to Zanzibar and it is everything that you describe totally endorse that. So let me ask you this now, I want to get your sort of assessment and also tips for folks that want,

want to travel to Africa, have some of these experiences, but to do it consciously and to do it responsibly, to support local businesses as much as possible in a local economy in the right way. Can you sort of, I guess maybe even just start with describing sort of the landscape in light of the history of colonialism and neocolonialism, you know, what is sort of the landscape of the political economy of travel and tourism in Africa right now and how should folks know, navigate that to make socially responsible travel decisions that are going to be supporting the local businesses in the right ways?

Wazha Dube: Yeah, you know, that's a very good question and there's a lot of answers there. I'll try to make this short and sweet though. You know, first of, I'd say that. Well, first off, the majority of businesses, the hospitality-based businesses in Africa are actually, especially when you think of hotels and things like that, are actually not owned by Africans. And if they are by Africans, they're not black Africans. But with that said, even our white African brothers and sisters have done for the most part, I think a very good job of trying to expose people to the culture of the different countries that they operate in. However, I know there is a massive disparity in ownership and equity in tourism Africa and who is benefiting from it. So that's of course the biggest question we get when people want to come and they want to know that their money is going to the right places.

Now, unlike a lot of other continents and a majority of African hospitality companies, whether we're talking about camps, lodges, tour companies, what have you do actually make sure that a fraction of their money does go to cause they support, which is really unlike a lot of other companies. They actually do try to put their money where their mouth is. And we are seeing more companies and more brands, more individuals who want to have a growth driven mindset about how to uplift the communities that they operate in. So, I think the biggest thing is to actually, if someone's traveling and they know the property that they're going to go to, go on the company's website, check out how they're giving back. Do they have a foundation? Do they have any CSR corporate social responsibility programs? What are they doing and how's that money being spent on the communities that they operate in?

And also, if you're out in cities and stuff like that, then don't be afraid to go out to local markets and things like that. Don't just stay in your little tourist bubble where your money pretty much stays, you know, with international brands and never leaves and you never actually get to see any of the culture, any of the real culture, any of the real experiences. And you don't actually get to speak to anyone who's really from there based and is hustling every day. If you want your money to go the furthest, go to a local vendor and buy your fruit from there rather than going to buying it in the hotel lobby for \$25 the price. There are all different ways to affect people directly and then also indirectly by making sure that you're supporting companies that have first off, a good brand that is supporting the communities that they operate in.

Matt Bowles: Good advice. I also want to ask you about your sort of tips for white folks in particular visiting Africa and maybe share a little bit about some of the sort of historical problems associated with a lot of white travel and tourism, including things like the White savior complex and other problematics of that nature. Can you share a little bit about maybe that in particular and then give some tips for how white folks can alternatively express their support and solidarity and visit Africa responsibly in an empowering and respectful way?

Wazha Dube: I mean, first off with that, with the white savior complex, I mean, I think that is typically the biggest problem that we find. And when a lot of folks are coming down to Africa, they want to go and like, you know, they want to go do their safaris and stuff like that. And then they also want to go to an orphanage and like play with the little orphan baby. Don't do any of that shit. Miss me on that. Don't go. If you want to

go and support an underprivileged community, then you can do it without going to take these children out of school so that you can. And these communities, you know, you have these communities where essentially tourist communities where these tourist buses will drop off these tourists so they can have a quote unquote cultural experience. And you're tipping these people that in this rural community that need to survive on tourism dollars because they are subsistent on it rather than actually doing their own jobs. So don't do any of that.

Don't Allow yourself to get roped into these types of programs. We see similar things in Asia as well. Don't go out. You know, if you want to support an orphanage and underprivileged children, then do it in constructive ways. Don't try to take them out of school. Don't be picking up little African babies and posting on your Instagram and you know, saying that you're doing the most, you love Africa. Miss me on all that bullshit. It is all counterproductive. If you want to come, then come with an actual appreciation not just for our animals, but also for our people, for our history. Ask questions, learn about the history and learn about South Africa before apartheid. Learn about, before colonialism, learn about Botswana, but you know, learn about the independent struggles that these countries had to go to find their freedom from their pre-colonial masters. Ask questions, learn to put your money into proper, constructive ways. I mean it's almost common sense. Like when you see a homeless person in the States, do you want to go and pick them up and pick up their kids? No. So don't do it.

When you come to Africa, you're not doing any help to any of us and you're not helping the communities. And if you want to invest in communities and in programs, whether that's female empowerment or education or whatever, you have it, then again, find organizations that do it in an impactful way. And if you want to get hands on, involved, then find ways to do that with companies that will allow you to do that without being a tourist coming for two days to, you know, make a bond with little child and the family, that you're never going to see them ever again. It's all bullshit, it's all pretense and it's all part of the white savior complex which we don't need and we don't want genuine support by allies and advocates is what we want on the continent. So, I think any non-Black traveler should be very aware of that anywhere through the continent whenever they come to visit.

Matt Bowles: I appreciate you sharing that, brother. Super important. Let me ask you one more question and then we'll move into *The Lightning Round* and wrap this up for you personally. Now, with all of this travel that you have done up to this point, 45 countries, all these different continents, all these different experiences, why do you continue to travel outside of work just on your own volition? Why do you continue to choose to travel the world at this point? What does travel mean to you?

Wazha Dube: I mean travel means everything to me. I was born on mission, I was on my first flight when I was probably six months old, and it's always been freedom to me. I've always been able to find my best escapes while I'm on the road and traveling, even whether that's for work or for my own enjoyment. But also, I mean, it's always constantly learning, right? You can never just stay stuck in the mud. It's always about learning about new experiences, new ways to better yourself through the places and the people that you meet when you're out abroad, getting out of your comfort zone, but also finding your comfort zone in places that you might not think again.

Living in places like China and traveling, backpacking through, you know, through the most random places in China, that was the most amazing experiences for me. You know, it's not going to even stuff here in New York. Finding the most unique things in my own backyard. To me, travel, it's everything. And I highly encourage anyone who doesn't travel enough to actually not make excuses, because you can always

travel. Even if you're not leaving the country, you can always travel. You can always find ways to learn more about your domestic area or your local area or also going internationally. So don't sleep on it. For me, it's mighty equalizer as well.

Matt Bowles: Amazing. All right, Waja, at this point, are you ready to move in to *The Lightning Round*?

Wazha Dube: All right, let's do it.

Matt Bowles: Let's do it. All right. What is one book that has significantly impacted you over the years you'd most recommend people check out?

Wazha Dube: Actually, it is [Dreams from My Father by Barack Obama](#). He also is an expat. He also lived a similar life to me living in Asia, in Hawaii. I've always, obviously just looked up to him for multiple of reasons. But, yeah, [Dreams of My Father by Barack](#).

Matt Bowles: Who is one person currently alive today that you've never met that you'd love to have dinner with, just you and that person for an evening of dinner and conversation.

Wazha Dube: That's again, going to go back to my man Barack O. Because I read the book that I have a lot of questions to ask him, and I want to sit there and I want to talk to him. What I'm talking to you right now. And I want to see who's going to have a better accent between me and him, you know, because that's the real question at the end of the day. So, yeah, Barack Obama, I think, would have to be my one right now.

Matt Bowles: All right, what is one piece of advice if you could go back in time now, knowing everything that you know up to this point in your life, and you could give one piece of advice to your 18-year-old self. What would you say to 18-year-old Wazha?

Wazha Dube: You know, it's funny, I've been thinking about this one and if you'll indulge me, I was actually going to say take languages a bit more seriously, but I actually think it is to be more financially literate.

Matt Bowles: Okay.

Wazha Dube: And how to spend your money and spend it well from a younger age, you can travel more.

Matt Bowles: Good advice. All right, of all the places that you've been up to this point in your life, what are the top three favorite travel destinations?

Wazha Dube: So, this is funny because obviously I can't put Botswana in there because I'm from there. So, I took Botswana out intentionally. Sorry, home, but Hawaii. Gotta represent Hawaii. Lived for four years. Absolutely amazing. Ghana. Jesus Christ I need to go back and do the all the stuff I didn't get to do. And of course, that means crossing some borders. And I'm sure either way, someone on the border is going to be mad at me for this one on either side. But Zimbabwe, I love Zimbabwe. I love going there just so much to see and do. So sorry, my friends in Zambia, I had to give it to one of you.

Matt Bowles: That's amazing. All right, what are your top three bucket list destinations, places you've never been that are the highest on your list you most want to see?

Wazha Dube: See, this is where you got me, man, because I wrote down like 10. And so, I'm going to have to like just do this on the fly right now. First off, I know it sounds ridiculous, but I've never been to Italy, so at least number one. I know people are listening. Like, what? Yeah, never been. Two would be to go to Sudan

specifically because I want to go see the Kushite pyramids. And three, this was very hard. I think it'd have to be Senegal.

Matt Bowles: Yes, bro. I love those picks, man. I endorse the Senegal one a million percent. And by the way, the Italy one I endorse as well. I'm going actually later this month I'm going to post up in Italy. I'm going to go to the Piedmont region for the White Truffle festival and eat truffles, drink Barolo and just post up there for a month, bro, if you want to come through, you're more than welcome.

Wazha Dube: That is the type of bougie stuff that I love to do. That is right up my alley. That is, it for me. Like with my little hat and glasses on, looking as bougie as possible. Yes, please. Truffle festival, yes, that's it, man, I.

Matt Bowles: Do the whole gamut, man. I do the whole range, the whole mix of travel experiences. And I haven't been out of the US since the start of COVID so figure I should do it big and make a splash, you know.

Wazha Dube: Hey, man, you got to do it. You got to. You know, I just came back from Corsica and I was having truffles and everything, so I envy you. You're going to enjoy it.

Matt Bowles: I feel that, man. I did Corsica in like 2018. We put a crew together, we went across the French wine country for like a month, and we ended up down in Corsica. And it was. Yeah, man, that's a special place. So. All right, Wazha, we have now come to the most important question of the interview.

Wazha Dube: I'm not ready for this one, man.

Matt Bowles: I am about to ask you your top five hip-hop emcees of all time. But before I do that, let me just ask you for you. What do you love about hip-hop music? Why is it so important to you, so significant to you? What does hip-hop mean to you?

Wazha Dube: Oh, man, hip-hop has been a part of my life. I'm very lucky. My older brother is eight years older than me, so he was born in the very golden age of hip-hop. And so, while I was definitely listening to music at the time that I should not have listened to because of the explicit lyric content, I cannot thank him enough for putting me on to rappers. When I was like seven and rapping. I was rapping Snoop at seven years old, man, it was so serious to me. I mean, it was like one of my first love languages and like one of my first loves. Anywhere I went, especially, you could find hip-hop. That was one of the biggest constants. And you could find people that loved hip-hop. It has always been a constant for me. Anywhere I've ever lived, there's been hip-hop, there's. And like, you know, I wanted to give you multiple lists, but I said I was going to give you five artists. But, you know, UK hip-hop, Southern African hip-hop, West African hip-hop, American hip-hop, anywhere I've gone, that's always been there. It's my love.

Matt Bowles: Can I just also, I have to interject this just since we've done so much discussion of Africa today, by the way, just for context, I was a hip-hop DJ in the 90s, in the golden era of hip-hop. So for me as well, I mean, that particular era, that particular music, I mean, you know, East Coast 90s, hip-hop is forever my heart and soul and one of the things, one of the many things about that West Africa chip that warmed my heart is what when I went to Lagos, I was expecting and I saw, as I expected, of course, all of the amazing Nigerian Afro beats, right, pulsing through the streets every day, in the clubs, in the lounges, all that kind of stuff. And it did have that and that was there. What I did not expect, that I also saw in Lagos, was the incredible ubiquity of 90s hip-hop music. I am talking about place after place after place DJs that

were probably 23, 24 years old, probably weren't even born when Biggie dropped, ready to die when all of that early 90s stuff was coming out. And they are playing the best of the best of 90s East coast hip-hop all across Lagos, man. And then in Accra, right? Certainly, the Afro beats at the club and all this kind of stuff. And then they would do a hip-hop set and then they would play and it would be good hip-hop, man. 90S East Coast, New York City stuff, man. And I was just like, I mean, just blew me away because I just totally wasn't expecting it, man.

Wazha Dube: Well, let me tell you, man, when I was growing up in Beijing, there was no drinking age or going out age. And when I was growing up there, so from a very early age, we used to go to the bars and the clubs and we had friends who were DJs and I'm talking like I was 13, 14 going to these clubs. And the hip-hop scene in Beijing in the 90s was, I don't know, people won't believe me, it was amazing. Mainly because of Japan being right there. But my gosh, you had all these amazing DJs would come through, especially people like DJ Honda and all these people, and we would just get all these amazing beats in the clubs, man. And so, you find all this international hip-hop, mainly American, but even French hip-hop, especially we had a lot of francophones out there. So, I brought French, African hip-hop over and all the stuff. So that probably was the period when I knew that like hip-hop was my first love.

Matt Bowles: Oh yeah, man. And the internationalization of it has been amazing. I mean, that's been one of the most incredible things as I've traveled around the world. I mean, Asia particularly, as you mentioned, I mean, I spent about five weeks in Seoul, Korea. Have you ever been to Seoul?

Wazha Dube: Not yet. I know they love the hip-hop, man.

Matt Bowles: It is probably the hip-hop capital of Asia, right? I mean, it's just unbelievable how just passionate and committed they are to the art form. I actually met a South African rapper from Durban who moved to Seoul to pursue his hip-hop career. Because there's that much love for hip-hop in Seoul. Yeah, man. The way that all of these international worlds and music just sort of converge is just incredible. So, I mean, I love that as I'm traveling around the world to just sort of pay attention to the hip-hop scene. And sometimes, man, I will just see stuff that I never expect.

Wazha Dube: Oh, yeah.

Matt Bowles: 2019, I went to Russia for a month. Right now. I don't know what your expectations would be about the hip-hop scene in St. Petersburg, Russia, but mine weren't very high. Going in, okay? My first weekend in St. Petersburg, Russia, Lord Finesse from The Bronx was DJing a party in St. Petersburg, bro, I couldn't believe. It was unbelievable. And the amazing thing is all of these Russian kids that came out, and he, of course, was playing all 90s New York City hip-hop stuff, right? All of these Russian kids, again, early 20s. I mean, couldn't have been, you know, could have been born when half this stuff was coming out. They know all of the lyrics in English and they're singing along, rapping the lyrics. They've got like New York jerseys on, like. I mean, it was just. Bro, it was unbelievable. I mean, you just see the way that hip-hop has taken.

Wazha Dube: Oh, yeah.

Matt Bowles: Over the world, and it's just amazingly.

Wazha Dube: Inspiring anywhere you go. And to actually, you know, I'll tell you really quick before we go on my list, that one of the most amazing experiences I had, which I never thought I'd ever have, was when I

was living in Hawaii and I saw a flyer for DJ Kool Herc performing in Honolulu, and no one knew who the hell I was talking about listening right now. Please go look up DJ Kool Her, the godfather and founder of hip-hop. And I got to meet him and listen to his DJ sets and I was like, I'm from New York. I never thought I was going to meet you here. And it was like an art gallery. And I was like, this is the best day of my life. Thank you so much. Is that cool, man? This means.

Matt Bowles: That's amazing, man. All right. With that context that you were trying to negotiate with me about this top five thing, man. You wanted the top five. And then you wanted kind of like an honorable mention five. So, I'll give you 10 if you want to drop 10 emcees, but I want you to drop the top five first and then you can do an honorable mention five if you want after that. All right, Wazha, who you top five?

Wazha Dube: Oh, man. Okay. Nas, Biggie, Jay, Kendrick and for my fifth. This is very hard. I'm still not happy with my decision because there's so many more people, but I think I got to put Lauryn Hill.

Matt Bowles: That's a good pick, man. Yeah, that's a good pick. I love that. Honorary mentions. Go ahead with the next five. Round out the top ten, bro. I got you five more. Go ahead.

Wazha Dube: Right, so first off, you got to give that Rakim, Jadakiss because you didn't let me put the locks in. Ghostface. Kanye. Oh, man. Okay, this one is a UK thing, so most people won't get it, but for me, Kano.

Matt Bowles: Okay, nice.

Wazha Dube: Kano out of London. Yes.

Matt Bowles: Nice. We are going to link all of those up, by the way, in [the show notes](#) so people can go and check out your top 10. So let me ask you this now, Wazha, I want folks to know how they can find you and follow you and contact you on social media. But I also want folks to know if they want to talk to you about some of these [Index Select](#) experiences that we've been chatting about today. What is sort of the process for that? What is the customer experience? How does somebody say, hey, I want to go experience African bush camps in Botswana, or I want to go and do one of these other things we talked about. What is the process for somebody to come and arrange one of those experiences with you?

Wazha Dube: Yeah, so we're actually a B2B company. So, we work directly with travel agents and travel operators. We actually don't work with the end user. So, if someone wants to go and check out any of my properties or the tour companies that we work with and represent, call your travel agent, tell them you want to go. And we operate in Asia, Africa, Europe, South America, and even South Pacific. So, check out our website, see indexselect.com, check out the destinations and properties that we have, and then call your travel consultant. If you don't have a travel consultant, then I guess you feel free to call me and then we can find you one. But if you don't have a travel consultant, we're happy to find you one. And then we'll get you to create your own customized trip.

Matt Bowles: I love that, brother. It's amazing. And then if people want to connect with you, follow you on social media, like, what's the best way to sort of come into your universe?

Wazha Dube: Yes, indeed. My [Instagram](#) is probably the best way to find me. That's *wdnomad* is my handle. And then of course there's [LinkedIn](#). I'm just *Waja Dube*. And if you want to reach out to me with any questions about travel or anything else like that, then my email is <mailto:waja@indexselect.com>.

Matt Bowles: Amazing. We are going to link all of that up in one place. Just go to [the show notes](#) at themaverickshow.com and go to [the show notes](#) for this episode. There you will see links to everything that we talked about today and all of the ways to contact Wazha and to check out some of the experiences that we discussed on this episode. Wazha, this was amazing, brother. Thank you so much for being on the show.

Wazha Dube: Thank you so much. This was such a fun time. I feel like we could have done at least another hour and a half. So, thank you for allowing me to put an extra five people and put some extra things in there. I know you wanted me to keep it tight but I couldn't. You know, I had to have to. Love to everybody.

Matt Bowles: I appreciate it, brother. Well, let's hang out together sometime soon, man. You're welcome to join in Italy. Otherwise maybe somewhere on the continent.

Wazha Dube: Yeah, let's go do some bougie truffle stuff.

Matt Bowles: Let's do it, man. All right, Good night, everybody.