

Matt Bowles: My guest today is Nicole Green. She is a digital nomad, traveling pet sitter, cat lover and activist who has spent the past three years traveling full-time around the world through pet sitting. What started as a way to afford travel turned into a lifestyle built around her love of cats and adventure that has provided her free accommodations around the world and taken her from penthouse apartments in Montreal to mountain homes in the Alps. And she has likely saved \$100,000 on accommodations over the last three years. She is the creator behind [Traveling Catsitter](#), where she shares her unconventional cat filled travels and helps others travel more affordably by pet sitting. She is also the creator of [Nomadic Activist](#), which shows digital nomads how to blend travel and civic engagement. She used her location independence to travel across swing states in the U.S. helping to mobilize voters in the lead up to the 2024 election and to work on progressive campaigns for candidates on the ground ranging from Cori Bush in St. Louis to Zoran Mamdani in New York City.

Nicole, welcome to the show.

Nicole Green: Oh my gosh. Thank you so much for having me. I'm excited to be here.

Matt Bowles: I am so excited to have you here and I am super excited that we are doing this interview in person in Asheville, North Carolina, which actually has some significance for you in your cat sitting journey. You are here doing a cat sit, but can you share a little bit why this is a full circle moment for you and what the significance of Asheville is for you?

Nicole Green: It's funny. So, I'm here cat sitting in Asheville, but my first sit ever because I've been doing this for probably over four years. My first sit ever was also in Asheville, North Carolina. We are really just bringing it all back full circle and I'm excited to be back.

Matt Bowles: It's amazing to have you here. You and I have been in touch for about two years, I feel like pretty regularly because when you were working on these campaigns for Cori Bush, for Zohran, I was texting with you in some cases on a pretty regular basis. It's been really amazing to follow your journey and see all of the things that you've done. And I've been wanting to have this conversation for a while and I figured why not in person in Asheville? And how about over a bottle of wine? We've just opened a bottle of Rosé. So, we're going to be drinking through that. But for people that may not be familiar with the concept of cat sitting and pet sitting and what that's all about, you have done some of the most epic cat sits that I have ever seen in some really extraordinary places that would otherwise be very expensive to stay. And I'm wondering if you could just share some of the highlight reel of some of the most over the top amazing places that you've been able to stay for free because you're pet sitting.

Nicole Green: There's a lot of great stuff. So, one in particular was I did a pet sit on Lake Geneva in Switzerland. The house was essentially overlooking the lake. And then you had the view of the French Alps in the back. It was a pinch me moment. That was my first crazy amazing sit. And I sat there over a month in July. That was really great. I also did a sit in a penthouse in Montreal watching a cat. I also spent Christmas and New Year's in New York City. I did a sit in the Caribbean in the country of Grenada that was also really incredible. I had place like a pool overlooking the ocean. I also did a five-bedroom house in Aspen, which God knows how much that would have costed otherwise.

Matt Bowles: Well, some of the ski destinations you mentioned Aspen, which is normally a very expensive place to go. You also weren't you in the French Alps and didn't you ski chimney while you were doing a cat sit?

Nicole Green: Actually, I was watching two cats and a dog and we were in Chamonix and this beautiful chalet. It was incredible.

Matt Bowles: That is so amazing because you and I both grew up in the northeastern part of the United States and we both learned to ski in places like Buffalo, New York and Pennsylvania. And I feel like when you start all of a sudden, then for the first time going out to Colorado, let alone, going to the Alps. For me, anyways, that was a night and day, mind blowing experience. I know you've also been to Hokkaido in Japan, skiing out there, and some of the most amazing ski spots in the world. What for you is a particular moment on any of these ski trips that still sticks with you, that stands out in your mind where you're just skiing, you're like, I can't even believe this.

Nicole Green: One moment that sticks out was I was skiing in Verbier and it was just these insane views of the Swiss Alps. And I remember the clouds came up to a point where it looked like we were on top of the world. All the clouds are below you and you're like, is this heaven? So that was definitely a moment that really sticks out to me.

Matt Bowles: Well, let's rewind the tape a little bit to give people some context on how you got to this point in your life where you're doing all of these amazing things and usually not paying for any accommodations at all. Can you talk about where you grew up in Pennsylvania? And as you were growing up, how did your initial interest in travel start to develop?

Nicole Green: I grew up in good old Pennsylvania, outside of Philadelphia, in a city called Reading. Grew up there, born and raised. We didn't really travel much growing up, unlike a lot of people who've basically traveled the world. As a child, every summer we would go to the Jersey Shore. Now every six years, we would go on a bigger trip. So, I remember when I was six, we went to Mexico, and then a few years later, we did a cruise to the Caribbean. And then when I graduated high school, we went to Puta Cana. But it was never really any cultural or immersion. So, I always kind of really wanted travel. And I think because I didn't get too much of that international travel experience, I was kind of yearning for it. Really wanted to do more travel. When I was looking to go to colleges, universities, I didn't really know what I wanted to study or one up. I knew I wanted to study abroad, so that was like a big thing.

Matt Bowles: So where did you decide to study abroad and what was that experience like for you?

Nicole Green: I decided to study abroad in Gold Coast, Australia. It's out of sight of Brisbane. That was back in fall of 2019, so got really lucky with the whole pre-Covid thing. It wasn't necessarily like I wanted to go to Australia. I just wanted to go somewhere I would never be able to go to ever in my life. When you think of growing up, you'll get what, a week vacation as an American? That's a week or two. Can't take a week trip to Australia or somewhere in Asia. So, I was like, let's go to Australia. It was an interesting time. I accidentally became a D1 water polo player.

Matt Bowles: What? Wait, tell me this story. I've not heard this. How did that happen?

Nicole Green: Essentially, this study abroad program was transferring as a student at this other university called Bonn for a semester. So, I started following Bon University on Instagram. By the way, for context, I wouldn't consider myself an athletic person. I remember they posted something, hey, we need a female water polo goalie needed for this fall for something. And I was like, if they really need one. So, I did briefly play water polo in high school. They just started a team and I joined. It was kind of a joke. Honestly, I wasn't good and I was a goalie. So, you know what, maybe this sounds like a good way to meet Australians and

not end up in a bubble full of Americans. So, I emailed them, if you really need a water polo, go late. I can do it. I never said I was good. And so, I ended up playing for them and I was bad and they were bad. So, it was kind of a joke.

Matt Bowles: I can remember when I studied abroad in college, I went to Ireland and lived there in Dublin and went to Trinity College for the year. And just living outside the country on my own at that age was just a complete game changer for me. What was that Australia experience like for you? And were there moments of that trip that were particular highlights that impacted you?

Nicole Green: I would say Australia as a whole didn't impact me, but when I decided to take a solo trip to Vietnam, that was really a game changer in my life.

Matt Bowles: What happened in Vietnam? What was it like?

Nicole Green: So, I went to Vietnam on a solo trip and like, before I went, I'd never been on a solo trip before. I'm going to go to Vietnam. I wanted to go to Asia and I wanted to do a soul trip. So, I did it all at once. And when I told people, they were like, oh my God, you're going to die. That's so dangerous. You're going to get kidnapped, all these things. And I was like, no, I did the research. It's a pretty safe country. But of course, you know, Americans are still stuck in this, still think about the Vietnam War and stuff. Oh my God, that happened decades ago. We're past that. But I go there and it was just one of those really mind blowing. I love the country so much; I love the food. But not even just that, but it was the people I met, everything I learned while there and I learned about myself as a traveler. And you always hear like, oh, aren't you lonely when you solo travel? Honestly, that was least lonely. I felt that entire semester was being there and like meeting all these people as you do when you solo travel, it's easier to meet people.

Matt Bowles: So where were you in Vietnam? And when you were meeting these people, do you remember a particular conversation or interaction with one of these folks that really impacted you?

Nicole Green: I planned everything out about this trip. I started in Hanoi, I went to Ha Long Bay, went up to Sa Pa, just northern Vietnam, and then I went down to Saigon. I remember going there, like a little nervous, and I was meeting all these people who were like, oh, you're only here for a week. They were like, oh, we're here backpacking Southeast Asia for like two months. I've been spending months out in Southeast Asia. Oh, I'm spending a month in Vietnam. And I was like, wait, you can do that? I didn't think that was even a thing. It was such a mind-blowing realizing there are people who take these gap years that just go travel. And I was like, wait, I didn't know you could do that. I want to do that. But then I also kind of fell into this, well, how am I going to do that? Because I'm going to be drowning in student loan debt once I graduate college. If I'm lucky, might get two weeks' vacation. And that's kind of where I started looking up things about digital nomadism and stuff.

Matt Bowles: So, let's talk about that transition and what ultimately the unlock was for you, because you all of a sudden realized, wait, there's people that just slow travel the world long term. That would be really amazing to do. But then of course there's the question that everyone has, which is, how would I go about making that a reality for myself? So, when you were in that conundrum, trying to figure it out, once you got back to the U.S. how did you proceed from there and what ultimately was the unlock?

Nicole Green: It was my junior year of college when I went to Australia. So, when I came back, I was, well, how can I do this? And I started looking up things. I was like, should I take a college gap year and maybe go? But then soon after Covid happened, you know, I came back from Australia. It was pretty soon after, so we

were all hunkered down. I was at risk, so I didn't do anything. Like, there was no travel. There's a lot of time to plan for travel. How can I, like, do this once Covid's passed and stuff? And of course, I'm in my senior year and applying to jobs and getting jobs. And then I was like, oh, well, if I get a remote job, working remote became a thing during COVID Oh my gosh. Well, let me get a remote job and then that will be what helps unlock it. So, I was lucky enough to land a remote job after graduating. And with that remote job, it was still Covid when I first started working there. But then after a little bit, I was like, well, how can I do this once Covid's over? I'm paying rent where I'm staying. How do I also do that and pay wherever I'm going to stay? Because that's still going to be expensive and I still have student loan debt. And then one day I came across pet sitting.

Matt Bowles: Okay, and then what was the move that then got you the very first pet sit in Asheville? How did you go about applying for it, landing it, and what was that first pet sit like?

Nicole Green: At the time, I was living in eastern North Carolina and I was just looking for sits anywhere in North Carolina, anything I could do. And so, the way it works is this app is called TrustedHousesitters. It's like Airbnb but for house sitting and pet sitting. So you go on the app, you can look at listings and apply to the ones you're interested in. I came across this Asheville one. I applied to it. I applied to a bunch of other ones and I got that one. And they were also new to the app. So that kind of helped, I guess, land, because it's always hard getting the first sit because you have no reviews and stuff, because it's a review-based system. So, I got there, I think it was two dogs and a cat. It was nice. It was a good little experience where I got to bring my remote job over there.

Matt Bowles: So, you start doing this in North Carolina, the same state that you were based in. What ultimately led you to think about, oh, this could be my ticket to traveling the world.

Nicole Green: Honestly, when I first discovered it, I was like, oh, well, once I get some sits under my belt, I get some experience and reviews. I could go abroad. But it's hard in the beginning to get sits abroad or far away when you're not there. Once I get enough sits, I'll start doing that. And what kind of propelled traveling full time then was? Well, so I was living with my partner at the time. Things weren't working out. So, when I left, I was like, you know what, let's just see how many pets sits I can do. Let's see how long I can travel with it. And we still are.

Matt Bowles: And you just kept going. So, let's go from the very beginning of your international pet sitting journey, I think you told me that when you started out, you were initially trying to literally plan out consecutive pet sits around the world for the entire year so you could just move through the world for a year paying no rent. Is that right?

Nicole Green: Yeah.

Matt Bowles: And how did that go your first year?

Nicole Green: It was great. I ended up booking my entire year out. It's kind of crazy. And I don't do that anymore because that's a lot. Essentially my entire year was just, all right, these are all the sets you're going and you can't really back out of them. So now I'm more on like a month or two out. I'll look for sits like, cuz I don't want to block myself in too much without having any wiggle room to do things like, let's say like someone has a wedding or things that pop up. So, I'm more flexible and kinder of last minute, I guess, now that I've gone through the ropes of traveling and stuff.

Matt Bowles: Okay, so let's talk about the actual logistics of doing this. If someone is listening to this right now and they're like, that sounds amazing. I would love to travel the world, pay for no accommodations and stay in bonkers epic places the entire year. All over the world and I get to pick where I want to go. So, what are the actual tactics of how this platform works and your recommendations for beginners that may have never done a pet sit before? They're new to the platform. How does it work and what tips do you have for people starting out?

Nicole Green: It's like Airbnb but for pet sitting. So, you also make a profile and then people who also have pets list their sits where they need pet sitters. They also create a profile where they have pictures of their house, their kitchen, their pets. Basically, it becomes your resume. What is your experience with animals, your travel experience? That's I think something a lot of people miss. They don't put their travel experience in their bio. But I think that is important, especially when you want to do international sits. You want to show that you can travel and you're not going to be dealing with how do I do the wash or where's the dryer when you're in Europe, because it's not a thing. So, you make a profile and you start applying a sit. So, you send a little application. Send it as long or as short as you want. I usually send like a little three paragraphs of hey, I'm interested in your sit. I make it personalized. That's a big tip I have. You can't send a generic template to every sit because they're like, you didn't read my listing kind of thing.

So, I always make sure it's personalized. I'm like, hey, your cat looked really cute in that one photo. You know, like, oh, I'm happy to do this specific responsibility or instruction they had, you know, so make it really personable. And you usually have like a video call with them before you decide, which I always recommend doing that because I think if you don't, there's probably some red flags and things they don't want to talk about. Because not every sit is perfect. You know, you got to make sure you vet the homeowners. You do. And then as a homeowner, they should be vetting the sitters, you know, staying in the house, of course.

Matt Bowles: All right, so you talked about some completely over the top, epic cat sits that you have done for people that are thinking, how would I potentially land a cat sit in a ski chalet in the French Alps, A penthouse in Montreal, one of these really over the top places. What are some of the advanced tips that you might have? Because I assume that those are very competitive and a lot of people are trying to land those. You have successfully landed a lot of them. So, what are some of the advanced tips for how someone could have a good shot at landing some of the more competitive, amazing pet set opportunities?

Nicole Green: One of the biggest pieces of advice, especially when people get started, I always tell them, start local, start small. Because if you start applying to those mansions in Europe and stuff with no reviews, you're not going to get it. So, you should really focus on doing the smaller sits wherever you live in your city or region or places. Maybe less people apply because you're going to need to build up your reviews. So that is something I always say, like, do that first and then once you have a few reviews under your belt, start doing the bigger sits or the places and farther. You know, if you're in the U.S. like somewhere in Europe.

So, making sure you have good reviews and you make sure you are a good review pet sitter and making sure you personalize that application. I don't talk about this as much, but they changed the system. Where it used to be everyone would apply, as many people could apply to sit, but now they've limited it to five people, so only five applications can go. And so a lot of it is get your application as soon as you can. I've gotten rejected from Sits because they were like, oh, we just went with the first person. Okay, that's crazy.

So sometimes just being quick and checking the app, having saved sits that you want to do, so it'll give you a notification when they put up listings. Like, that's kind of a big thing.

Matt Bowles: And for people that are serious about learning more about this and going deeper, I understand you have a free pet sitting guide that you have put together. How can people get a hold of that?

Nicole Green: I have it on my Instagram. You can check it out. You just sign up and I'll send you a guide. It's essentially just pet sitting, one on one. Like how Trusted Housesitters works, creating your profile and applying this stuff.

Matt Bowles: Well, in addition to your cat sitting for the free accommodations, you are also a cat situation lover and you travel to have cat experiences outside of the pet sitting that you are doing. I think the first one that I want to ask you about is the tree house in northern Thailand that you stayed in that was also a cat sanctuary. What was that like?

Nicole Green: I was doing a Thailand trip and I was looking for a cat thing and I came across this Airbnb, this beautiful bamboo treehouse, and that was essentially just in a big jungle cat sanctuary. Like 60 cats. It's like a big thing, like enclosed. They just roamed around and they could come cuddle with you and stuff. It was just this incredible, beautiful thing. I was like, oh, my God, I'm staying in this beautiful place and there's cats. Why doesn't more people know about this? So, I posted about it and people were like, oh, my God, this is amazing. And I was like, I know, right? It's incredible.

Matt Bowles: And that started your [Traveling Catsitter](#) brand. Can you talk about how you realized that that was then going to be something that people were interested in.

Nicole Green: For a very long time I've been posting about my cat sitting adventures traveling digital nomad. And for like two years, it didn't gain any traction. I was just kind of posting my pet sits and stuff and then I tweaked it because I was basically doing just cat sits. Instead of talking about pet sitting, I'm basically only doing cats. Let's just change the wording a bit to being like, yeah, I'm the cat sitter. Like, change my profile name and everything. And that is kind of when it blew up. There was always the advice of niche down if you want to be successful on social media.

And it is unfortunately true, because I know a lot of people don't want to niche down and stuff, but it worked and it's very still true to myself. I love cats and I'm cat sitting and then I'm also trying to find all these cat travel things. So, everyone's just really loving when I post things about Turkey in Istanbul, which I really love. Just a place full cats or like this cat sanctuary, Bamboo treehouse, Airbnb. People also love that. You know, the Internet's full of cat videos. Everyone loves cat videos. That's been since the dawn of the Internet. But no one specializes in this niche of travel for cat lovers is kind of what I'm calling it. So, I've kind of just started leaning into that too. And just not just for the brand, but I also love it. But they also love it too. So, I'm like finding my people.

Matt Bowles: Well, I have been, of course, following your account for years now, and you have gone to stock some super interesting places. Can you talk about the cat island in Japan that you went to and posted about and explain what that place is and then what it was like to be there?

Nicole Green: There's a few Cat islands in Japan and I went to the one, I guess main one or the one that, you know, goes viral. It was at Tashirojima. It was outside of Sendai, essentially. So, I was in Japan on ski trip with some friends and I was like, I really want to go to this cat island because there's cats there. It's an

island full of cats. You don't need to tell me anything else. I'll go. So, I literally flew down from Hokkaido to Sendai to go to this island and it was incredible. It was beautiful. There were more cats than people and people do take care of them and all that stuff. And it was just like a really beautiful, like thing that I was like, this is great.

Matt Bowles: Well, and also in Japan, in Tokyo, you went to a cat temple. What was that like?

Nicole Green: Yeah, there's a temple in Tokyo. It has just all these little cat figurines. Gotokuji Temple. So, I went there. I think it's outside of Kyoto. There's a cat museum. I stayed in a hostel in Osaka that has two cats finding the cat things.

Matt Bowles: Yes, indeed, you sure are. I know you go to cat cafes all around the world and then you found a cat garden in Kotor, Montenegro. What was that like?

Nicole Green: I have a list of all these cat places and Kotor, it was one of them. So, I went there a year or so ago and I heard that they just have a bunch of cats laying around. And they have. Specifically in Old Couture, the town, they have this little part where there's a garden full of these cats and they feed them and take care of them, and they're just kind of hanging around. I was like, this is great. I spent literally hours just hanging out in this garden with cats. I had, like two cats sitting on my lap at one point. This is heaven. I don't need anything else.

Matt Bowles: Well, I want to ask about how you have blown up your Following. I think you're now over 60,000 people that are following you. You mentioned that you niche down from pet sitting to cat sitting particularly. And you post about your cat sits that you do. You also post about this cat tourism that you do and the places that you go. And all of a sudden, all these people are following you and are interested in this. And you are now at the point where you're starting to organize cat travel opportunities for your followers. Can you talk about that?

Nicole Green: I'm so excited. It's still in the works. You know, how you see creators run trips. I was like, well, what if I did something like that? But a place, a group of cat lovers to a destination full of cats. I was like, hey, would you guys be interested in going on a trip together where we just like, pedal the cat, where we just, like, you know, bond over our love for cats? People were like, like, yeah, that sounds great. So, like, I started looking into different companies and different tours and stuff. Everyone was like, Greece, Turkey, Morocco are the top ones. So right now, it's looking like it's going to be a turkey trip. And I'm so excited.

We're like, customizing the itinerary to have all these cat stops volunteering because we also want to make a good impact. Don't want to just, like, look at the cats and we can help them and work with local organizations and stuff. So, we're working on that and launching that. And I'm so excited because I think it really could be a thing. Everyone's like, oh, I want to go to Cat Island too. And I was like, like, I'll go back getting people who have expertise in planning things like that, because I'm also a very busy person working a remote job and then doing content and stuff. So, it's something I definitely want to look into and expand more because I think it could be a lot of fun.

Matt Bowles: Definitely. I want to encourage People to follow you on Instagram at [Traveling Catsitter](#) if they are remotely interested in either the cat sitting or the cat tourism stuff. Because you post some super interesting stuff that I have never seen anywhere else. And I learned about all this stuff from your content, so I appreciate that. The other thing, of course, that we have to talk about is your other brand, [Nomadic](#)

[Activist](#), which is how you and I initially connected years ago. And there were points when you were working on some of these political campaigns where I feel like you and I were texting, like, every day.

Nicole Green: You're like, how's the Cori Bush campaign? You're like, how she. What's it looking?

Matt Bowles: I totally was. I was texting you, like, every day on the Cori Bush campaign. So, we definitely have to talk about [Nomadic Activist](#). I would love, though, to start and roll the tape back a little bit. Can you talk about your own political journey in developing your worldview prior to the start of your travels?

Nicole Green: So, growing up completely apolitical. My parents weren't political. It wasn't really talked about. I wasn't interested in it. It wasn't until I was taking a government civics class in high school. It was also in 2016, when I was taken. So, it was an interesting time to be learning about government and politics and campaigns. And I had a really close friend of mine who was like a big Bernie supporter, big advocate. She really just opened my eyes and inspired me into being interested in politics and following all the things. And she went on to study government politics. I also kind of started in college studying some politics. I didn't end up majoring in it, but I definitely was very involved and did a lot of policy research and had been very interested in the political sphere, but I hadn't gotten involved physically or any of that.

A few years ago, she unfortunately passed away in a car accident. And it was really devastating because she was someone I thought, you know, but change the world and all that stuff. I think a lot of what got me involved in it was when Roe v. Wade was overturned, I was like, oh, my God, Like, I have to do something. And I would think about her. And I was like, well, what would she do? Okay, well, she would be doing all these things. And I kind of wanted to embody that spirit and continue that legacy and get involved. When I was living in eastern North Carolina at the time I started volunteering, I don't want to talk to strangers at doors. But I knew that this was bigger than that. I was willing to have these uncomfortable moments for these causes and for my rights. So, I kind of dove in that way.

Matt Bowles: Did your travel experiences change, impact, or expand your political worldview? And if so, how?

Nicole Green: Yeah, I think so, definitely. When I went to Australia, long story short, I always had breathing problems growing up, and doctors never quite diagnosed it. It was like asthma, but not quite. Then it got to a point where my parents were like, we can't afford fancy doctors and stuff, so we just never did any of that. I remember when I was in Australia, I went to the doctor and they were like, wow, Tru wheezing like crazy. What the heck? And I was like, oh, just. And I wasn't even there for that. And I was like, oh, just ignore it. It's fine. They're like, oh, you never got this diagnosis? I was like, no. I was like, too expensive. And I remember they looked at me, oh, my God. Because, like, that's not a problem in Australia. People don't go to the doctor because it's too expensive. Like, that's just because how healthcare is in the US. Just also meeting people as a nomad, because I have a lot of student loan debt, and that's unheard of outside of the U.S. no one else has student loan debt. That's a huge thing. And I think also travel and climate change is a big one. I was in Australia during the great wildfires. You know, that was very vivid. I was actually worried I was going to have to evacuate at one point. We didn't.

Matt Bowles: So, once you solidify your commitment to progressive political causes, at what point did you realize that your location independence could actually become a tool that you could use for activism and political campaigning?

Nicole Green: It took a while to get there because I remember I was at a point where I was doing all this political campaigning and organizing in eastern North Carolina. I felt very passionate. I had a purpose, and I was starting to make friends and stuff around that time. I was also like, I'm about to start traveling the world, which is my dream and goal. But then I was like, well, how do I do both? Because the whole point of getting involved is grassroots organizing, being in that community. And when you're a nomad, traveling everywhere, how do you do that? You know, I was trying to look up who else is a nomad that does political stuff. I couldn't really figure it out until in 2022, there was a runoff election in Georgia. And I remember they needed volunteers in Georgia. Well, I work remotely. I'll just go work remotely there and volunteer. I was like, okay.

Everyone was pouring money into Georgia, like, I got money to get an Airbnb to house people. And I was also volunteering with Vote Save America and stuff. And I remember being there, like, it dawned on me. I was like, wait, that's how I could do this. I could bring my travels and remote work to the places where they need help. This was, hey, we need people on the ground here. And I was like, oh, that's something I could do as a nomad. I could bring myself my laptop and just go to swing states and volunteer in the places where they need people or competitive districts or primaries that are important. So that's kind of where the birth of the [Nomadic Activists](#) came, where I was like, well, I want to use my location independence for good and for furthering these causes.

Matt Bowles: I think it's amazing. I have interviewed a lot of activists and politically conscious folks on this podcast, but I think you are the first one I have ever interviewed that has used their location independence to move around and work on the ground doing grassroots political organizing for very specific political campaigns, which I think is amazing. And I want to dive in a little bit more to that and ask you about two campaigns in particular. The first one is the Cori Bush congressional re-election campaign. For people that are not familiar with Cori Bush, can you just share a little bit about who she is and why she resonated so much with you, why that campaign was so important that you wanted to fly in and knock doors and do the grassroots organizing on the ground there?

Nicole Green: So that year I was doing a lot of travel to swing states and competitive districts to help knock on doors for different candidates. And I know Cori Bush's primary was coming up and it was going to be a very contentious primary. Now, for context, she is a progressive U.S. house representative representing St. Louis. At the time, she was a part of the squad, which is like the progressive members like AOC and Rashida. And she was really known for her work with Black Lives Matter and helped organizing Ferguson and also being pro-Palestine. And unfortunately, because she was pro Palestine, she had AIPAC coming after her, which is this big lobbying organization, and they were pouring millions of dollars to unseat her. So, I really wanted to help make sure we kept her seat because she's a fighter. She's a really important progressive member of our Congress at the time. So, I really wanted to be there to help make sure these billionaires didn't unseat this amazing person.

Matt Bowles: And what was it like on the ground working on that campaign? Can you share a story or a campaign trail moment that stayed with you?

Nicole Green: So, I had a friend working on the campaign, so he was able to hook me up with volunteer housing. So, like, I stayed with some people who were there, and there were also a lot of other young people. They were college students, and they were also traveling to go knock doors and campus there. Like, there was this organization, and a lot of them actually came from, I think the Jamal Bowman campaign was before it. And a lot of them had basically helped on that campaign and then went down to

St. Louis to help on there. So, it was really cool to, like, meet this group of people who were also very passionate about this and wanted to, you know, help her keep her seat. And it was just like a lot of very hot evenings, hot there, just knocking doors and talking to people. And it was just also really hard because they were pouring so much, so much money in these attack ads that were kind of very misleading, you know, as they usually are. And a lot of that was getting into people's heads. And I knew it was going to be a really close race, and it was. And she unfortunately lost. And that was like a really huge loss for the community and in the space.

Matt Bowles: What did you learn about the role of the Israel Lobby in the course of working on that campaign? And just also for context, you mentioned a lot of the Jamaal Bowman volunteers came over as well, which. The campaign to unseat Jamaal Bowman in the Democratic primary was the most expensive primary campaign, I believe, in American history. And it was heavily funded by the Israel Lobby to unseat him because of his Palestine views. And then you mentioned a bunch of those volunteers came over as well. And so, in interacting with those volunteers, as well as just observing what was happening with the opposition to Cori Bush and how it was funded so heavily by the Israel Lobby, what did you learn about the way that all of those functions from being there on the ground?

Nicole Green: Big money and politics sucks. It was really bad. They were really just pummeling everyone with these attack ads. There were millions of dollars being poured, like, for every. If you're on YouTube, every ad would have been an ad against Cori Bush. It was just totally, just really sad how this one organization that's basically a foreign organization who's technically not supposed to meddle in U.S. Politics, was able to influence this election so much over this one stance of hers. I mean, it was really disheartening at the time. Like, I just hate big money in politics in general, any big lobbying. And it's all just, you know, it's gross. It's, you know, not good.

Matt Bowles: And what was it like emotionally to be in the room? You mentioned she lost the campaign, but when she came in to give her speech, it ended up going viral because it was so politically resilient and defiant. And for people that have never heard it, she obviously got unseated from Congress as part of this campaign, but committed that she was not just going to disappear. And she gave this amazing defiant speech where she said specifically to AIPAC, I am going to tear your kingdom down. And the place went wild and the video went viral. And sure enough, she has been continuing to organize politically. She is running again. She is still in the mix and all of that. But you were in the room for that speech. What was that moment like?

Nicole Green: So beforehand it was really sad because we knew it's over. It got really close, but it was over. But I remember when she came in, she just started swinging and I was like, yeah, like it's what we all know needed. And she just brought in all this amazing energy. It was honestly really inspiring because it was like, look, I'm not going to like just take this defeat. No. She's like, no, this is just the beginning, you know, like, this is just the beginning of battle, you know, it was very inspiring.

Matt Bowles: Well, you also went to New York City to work on the Zohran Mamdani mayoral campaign. Can you talk about from your own perspective how you first learned about Zoran and why you found his candidacy so inspiring and compelling to you personally?

Nicole Green: Yeah, I don't even know when I first came across him because he really wasn't a big name in the beginning. But I remember I started seeing some things on social media here and there. Let's make buses free, let's make government funded grocery store. And like he was just like this very passionate,

progressive voice. He talks and he's inspiring. He was just something that we haven't seen once in a million politician. And I was like, I really want to help this guy win because, like, I kind of took a break from doing some political stuff. And then he was doing that race and I had some time in my schedule. I was like, you know, maybe I'll find a cat, sit in New York City and go knock on some doors. It was a long shot. There were so many people in the race. It was ranked choice voting. And then they had Andrew Cuomo, who's a big name even though he's a bad person. But I believe in this campaign. I believe in his vision; I believe in these values. I want to go help. I knew if he wanted to be historic. It would be huge. Could really set the blueprint for other, you know, progressive candidates.

Matt Bowles: And what was it like working on that campaign? Is there a story or a moment that you think back and remember?

Nicole Green: It was really exciting because there were a lot of other people who were also getting energized from this campaign. I would go to like this canvassing session and it would have like 50 people there. And it was actually before the general election. It was his primary because the primary was the biggest hurdle. He just needed to get the nomination. And talking to people, people were very receptive because a lot of people didn't like Cuomo was like the biggest thing. And I think it was the biggest field operation they had. It was insane, and I definitely felt it.

Matt Bowles: Well, he certainly had the Democratic establishment against him, the MAGA Republicans against him, the Israel lobby certainly against him. He was a longtime Palestine solidarity activist, very outspoken in support of the boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign against Israeli apartheid. Ran on that, did not compromise on that, mobilized around that and had all of these different, incredibly powerful political entities organizing against him. And he won. What lessons do you think we can learn from how and why that particular campaign succeeded?

Nicole Green: Appeals to people like, he was such a working-class champion and just common, freezing the rent. Things are becoming so unaffordable. I think a lot of politicians are very scared to say certain things or over promise things. But like he was so unapologetically, this is what I want to do. Now he's doing it, which is so insane. Oh, my God. He's actually like doing a great job. A lot of people were like, I don't think he's going to be able to do any of these things. And I think it's just like being a progressive champion also, him being a great communicator and being able to inspire all the people, including myself, to help volunteer our time to knock on some doors in New York City.

Matt Bowles: Well, you were at one of the victory parties in New York City on the night that he won. And your video of that moment went viral around the world. I saw it on all of these different places around the world, coming from different continents. People were posting your video with you in it that you shot. Can you take us to that moment? What was it like? What did it feel like emotionally to be part of that moment? Because you mentioned you had already worked on the Cori Bush campaign and unfortunately, she did not win her campaign. Then you come and you work on the Zohran campaign and Zohran wins and you're in the room what does that moment feel like?

Nicole Green: Oh, my God, it was so insane. Now, for context, this whole campaign was really a long shot campaign. He really went from like nobody knowing his name to like trailing horse Cuomo and stuff. So, we were there as the polling came in and all the, you know, the votes were coming in. Also, for context, we given how New York's electoral voting counting thing works, we thought we weren't going to hear results for like a few days. There was no expectation that night that we would know that he would win or anyone

would win. You know, it was probably going to be Cuomo. But then as the votes were coming in and Zohran was leading Cuomo. I'm in the room recording this guy who's making an announcement and then he says, Cuomo just conceded. Zohran won. And I caught out on video and I was like, what? I feel like a lot of the campaigns I've worked on; I've lost or they've been losing campaigns. So, I've been so disappointed many times. I was so, like shocked. I mean, everyone was so excited because like, we all really came together and made this happen. Going from basically a name no one knew to literally bidding Andrew Cuomo to the point where he conceded. And of course, he did end up running as like an independent, but beat him again. So, it was such a ray of hope. Like, it filled my heart with hope.

Matt Bowles: So, what tips do you have for remote workers, digital nomads, people who are location independent that would like to use their location independence to get involved in upcoming campaigns? Where does someone start with that and what maybe tips or advice after doing this a number of times do you have for folks?

Nicole Green: So, a big one, especially if you want to do like volunteering, knocking doors and going to events. There's this website called Mobilize Us. It's basically where people post, hey, there's going to be a canvassing thing or a watch party. But it's all for like democratic causes. And back in 2024, when I was doing a lot of electoral stuff ahead of the presidential election, I created all of these maps and stuff. Here's some states you can go to, or here's some areas where there's competitive house districts that are really important that we need to send people to. I think I'm probably going to create some more for this year, staying on top of things. I joined the Vote Save America community back when I started doing this stuff. And they also have a lot of helping connect people to important races and volunteering because you don't have to physically be in the place to volunteer for them. You can also phone bank, join a text bank where you help send out the text messages and I think all that's important. So, you can find all those on Mobilize Us. Pet sitting also helps give you free housing if you. Because I know a lot of people were like, I would go to the U.S. but it's expensive. And I'm like, I know it is something that I try to create. I didn't quite get there. But there are campaigns that have volunteer supporter housing. Something you could do is you can connect to those campaigns. Hey, do you guys have volunteer housing? I will travel to you. But also, just being like a good human being and volunteering even if you're abroad cleaning UPS and just do good leave no trace.

Matt Bowles: Yeah, and you post a lot of really important stuff on [Nomadic Activist](#), the Instagram handle. So, we'll link that up in [the show notes](#) as well and people can follow you there. And I'm sure in all these other countries as well, you were talking mostly about American elections. I'm sure a lot of these other countries, if people are from different countries and they vote in other countries that there are similar opportunities there. Do you find or have you noticed at all in the digital nomad lifestyle any tension between personal freedom and collective responsibility? And how do you navigate that?

Nicole Green: I mean, yeah, there's a lot of tension there. I mean, for one thing, I know like there's the issue of digital nomads going to these nomad hubs driving up prices and you know one great way to get around that pet sitting. That is another reason, one of the non-pets and like free housing related reasons. I do like to pet sit. You're not jacking up prices in that sense. You're just staying in someone's home. I would like to see more nomads do more, be more thoughtful in their truck travels. It's easy to kind of be in this bubble of, well, I can go wherever I want and I don't care what it does to the local people. I would love to see more nomads be more conscious of the impact we're making places.

Matt Bowles: Has pet sitting around the world changed your relationship to ownership and material possessions?

Nicole Green: Oh yeah. I mean, I don't need things anymore because things are heavy. You know, like when you live out a suitcase and you add more things to the suitcase. I guess I'm really happy. I don't need things like I'm not like chasing the newest this or the fancy car I'm like, no, I just need. I travel my little suitcase. I got like seven outfits on repeat. Like, I don't need much. So, yeah, I would say I'm much less materialistic as a traveler now.

Matt Bowles: Well, I think it's a really interesting point about how pet sitting is a way to travel more sustainably and reduce your contribution to those transnational gentrification dynamics that are going on in all of these cities. I'm also curious, have you found that temporarily inhabiting different people's homes in these different countries gives you a different insight into cultures versus staying at a hotel?

Nicole Green: Oh, yeah. You get such a better cultural immersion when you're living in someone's house. When you have a dog and you go walk, walk a dog and meet the neighbors because they're like, why are you walking fluffy? Like, where's the owner? You know? And I'm like, oh, I'm the pet sir. And like, and then I've made friends in the neighborhood and they show you where the cool places are. I've made a lot of, like, really good friends, even, like, through the homeowners that I watch. They're like, oh, here's some cool people you can meet or go out to dinner before they leave. And then I meet people and we stay connected and it's just great. And you just do really get immersed. Unlike if you're at a hotel, you're very disconnected from everyday life. But when you live in the city where people actually live, it's definitely a much better insight.

Matt Bowles: So, you've been doing this now for years, traveling the world and living in other people's homes. At this point, what does the concept of home mean to you?

Nicole Green: Home is where the cat is. No, I'm kidding. I mean, it's totally changed. Home is where you live, and when you don't live anywhere, you're like, ah, home is everywhere. You know, you're like, home is where you want it to be or whoever you feel most belonging in.

Matt Bowles: So how do you build and maintain community in an itinerant lifestyle of world travel?

Nicole Green: It's pretty hard, but I have managed to make lots of friends along the way. I do look, especially if I'm in certain cities, I will find meetups. [Meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) great resource. Nobody really uses it, but there are meetups you can find. Like in Nashville, I just went to a meetup. It's not going to work in, like, less populated, more rural areas, but I did a month in Milan two years ago. I made so many friends There were all these meetups where you could go meet people and like play board games and like I made lots of wonderful people and that was an of repeat sit. I did go back there six months to do the same cat sit over Christmas. Still had some friends and I made some more friends. That's really nice. And then also going to a number nomad hub.

So, I did go to Bansko, Bulgaria, which is a big nomad hub. Two winters ago. I was cat sitting, but I also was like, I heard there's nomads here and I'm one of those and I want to meet them, you know, because normally nomads, I feel like hanging out in those nomad hubs. As a cat sitter, I just kind of go to random places. I did make a lot of friends there. I really loved being there. I was there over the winter, so it was really nice, like having community there. So, I did go back to Bansko the next winter and I also spent two months there, like skiing and with my nomad casino. When you're traveling and like being someone who travels full time while working remotely, most average people don't understand or can relate to it. So, it is

really nice having people that totally understand that lifestyle. And so, I'm still connected to a lot of them. And we've gone on other trips. This past Japan trip I was with some people, went to Georgia.

Matt Bowles: What would you like to see change within digital nomad culture over the next decade?

Nicole Green: I think being more thoughtful and sustainable. I also think there could be other places. Why is it just Bali? Why are all the nomads in Bali like, there's got to be some other places. Let's expand out a bit. I think nomads could do a lot of good. And I would like to see more nomads taking action and maybe, you know, maybe not volunteering for a political campaign. It's a lot and it's very politically charged. But like even just volunteering for like a beach cleanup or just do some good in the area you're in.

Matt Bowles: Well, I think you are providing some great examples of how people can be more involved for meaningful causes and use their location independence to volunteer and be politically active and all of those things. So definitely want to encourage people to follow a [Nomadic Activist](#) because I think you're doing some really important stuff. Thank you. I'm curious, Nicole, when you think all the way back to, to 2019 and when you went to Australia and everything since then, how has all of this world travel impacted you as a person?

Nicole Green: I'm definitely more fearless because, like, for a bit, when I did that initial Vietnam solo trip, I kind of was like, if I could do this, I could do anything. Nothing can stop me. Like, very powerful in that sense. Also found that passion for trying to make. Make a difference, trying to leave a positive impact. And also, content creation is another weird thing. So, a lot of I was never one of those. I never made videos and stuff. But a lot of what drove those decisions were like, well, this pet sitting thing has changed my life. Maybe if I post about this, I can help change someone else's. Or someone else can also learn about this amazing hack because I feel like not enough people do know about it. And a lot of the nomadic activists' content, content stuff, it wasn't like, oh, I want to post things. It was like, well, I care about this and someone needs to be posting about this. That's going to be me. A lot of just being fearless and not caring what other people think, I think is a big one. I definitely care what people think before that. But I very much stopped caring what a lot of people think of me.

Matt Bowles: And why are you so passionate about continuing to travel and see more of the world? What does travel mean to you today?

Nicole Green: I think it's a freedom thing. I think I love this idea of being free to go wherever I want, being able to experience all these new places, and I don't see myself living in one place for the rest of my life. That would make me antsy. I'd be like, let's go to the next place. I've never seen myself with the white picket fence kind of future. So, I always just want to be in new, challenging environments and meet new people because I love meeting people and especially like different cultures and stuff. And food's great around the world. I got to eat all the food. Oh, here's the other thing. I got to pet all the cats. That's my other goal is I got to. I'm not trying to travel the world. I'm trying to pet all the cats in the world. So that's the joke, but I love it.

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

Nicole Green: Yes.

Matt Bowles: Let's do it. All right, what is one book you would recommend for people to read?

Nicole Green: I read this book called [Bowling Alone by Robert Putnam](#). It's basically about how the decline in social capital, how people and relationships in the US has led to the decline in people getting involved in like civic engagement. It's just something I always think about.

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

Nicole Green: I think I'd like to chat with Zohran Mamdani.

Matt Bowles: Because you never got to meet him on the campaign.

Nicole Green: I didn't, because I've met a lot of politicians along the campaign trail and I always am like, don't meet your heroes because they'll disappoint you. And I've met a lot of people where I'm like, yeah, nah, I kind of wish I didn't meet them. I actually do feel like I would love to have a chat with Zohran Mamdani.

Matt Bowles: I would love to have that chat as well. Because the amazing thing also about him is that there are so many things you could talk to him about. I would talk to him about hip-hop.

Nicole Green: Oh my God, his like rap career. Yes. And his wife is also a cat lover and now he's going through, there's like shots you can take because he's allergic to cats. So, he's taking all these shots so him and his wife can get a cat. Like that's so beautiful to my like cat lover ass.

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

Nicole Green: I think genuinely the one piece of advice would be like go to college abroad because going to school in the U.S. is really expensive. I knew about study abroad, but I didn't know you could literally just enroll in a university in Europe. That would have saved me a lot of money.

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

Nicole Green: So, I think Vietnam, I feel like holds a special place in my heart. Just 'coz it really was the jump starter to my traveling and life. If I didn't go on that trip, I don't think I'd be where I am today. I don't think I would have become a nomad. I think Vietnam, I definitely really love northern Vietnam. I like the south by our region. There's really interesting stuff. I'm also a mountain person. Number two, I would say Japan. I love Japan. In all the sense, I love the food I love, the culture, the people. They also love cats. It's great. Three I would say I really like northern Italy. I've spent a lot of time in Milan, which I know is a city most Americans don't like because when they go, it's usually like go to Venice. I spent like a good two months just living in Milan. It's a great place to live. Northern Italy, in a sense of you got the Alps. I love having easy access to the mountains and I love Italian food.

Matt Bowles: Those are amazing picks. I completely endorse all three of those. All right, Nicole, last question, what are your top three bucket list destinations? These are places you have not yet been, highest on your list and you'd most love to see.

Nicole Green: Oh my gosh, there's so many. But I haven't been to Argentina. I really want to go to Buenos Aires and Patagonia. So high on my list. I want to go to Prague. That's also high on my list. I am looking out

for some cats sits over there and my other one is Banff in Canada. I've been looking for sits there. I have seen sits in that area, but they're never the right timing for me.

Matt Bowles: Awesome picks. I've been to Prague a couple of times. I've spent probably six months in Argentina. So as a skier, of course you need to go and ski the Andes. I skied Bariloche, the lakes region, which was truly spectacular. And I've spent many, many months living in Buenos Aires. So, when you're ready to plan those trips, definitely hit me up. Nicole, at this point I want you to let people know how they can find you, follow you on social media, both the [Traveling Catsitter](#) as well as [Nomadic Activist](#) and learn more about everything you're up to. Remind people again how they can get your cat sitting guy and if they're interested in that upcoming trip to Istanbul and all that good stuff. How do you want people to come into your world?

Nicole Green: If you are interested in my travels and pet sitting and cats, definitely check me out on [Traveling Catsitter](#). I post on traveling cats that are on [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), [TikTok](#). I'm mostly active on [Instagram](#) so definitely check me out there. My [Free Pet Sitting guide](#), you can also find my [link in bio](#) there. And then my link that you can use to make a pet sitting account. And then with my [Nomadic Activist](#) is up, I am *nomadic.activist* on [Instagram](#) post about my political stuff there. I'm planning to put some new stuff upcoming with the new midterm elections coming up.

Matt Bowles: Awesome. We are going to link all of that up in [the show notes](#) so folks can just go to one place at [themaverickshow.com](#), go to [the show notes](#) for this episode. There you'll find direct links to everything we have discussed on this episode, including all the ways to find, follow and connect with Nicole. This was such an amazing and long overdue conversation and so special to have it in person in Asheville over a bottle of wine. Thank you for coming on the show, Nicole.

Nicole Green: Oh my gosh. And thank you so much for having me.

Matt Bowles: All right, good night, everybody.