

Matt Bowles: My guest today is Chantal Patton. She is a location-independent entrepreneur who has traveled to over 100 countries together with her husband and three daughters over the last eight years. They have a family goal to visit every country in the world together and are documenting their journey on their YouTube channel, [Growing Up Without Borders](#). Originally from Canada, the Patton family now world-schools their kids while sharing their adventures and showcasing the beauty of different countries and cultures. The three Patton girls have even created a series of online classes for other kids called Geography Made Fun, learning geography from a kid's perspective. And through it all, somehow Chantal is continually able to prioritize a healthy work-life and education-travel balance for her family. Chantal, welcome to the show.

Chantal Patton: Well, thanks for having me, Matt. This is going to be really fun.

Matt Bowles: I am so excited to have you here. You are doing amazing things. I am so inspired by your family's journey, your blog, and your YouTube channel, and I'm super excited to dive into this. But let's just start off by setting the scene and talking about where we are doing this interview from today. Unfortunately, we are not in person. I am actually in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Asheville, North Carolina, on the East Coast of the United States, and you are in a very different time zone. Where are you today?

Chantal Patton: I am currently in New Zealand, and it is morning time. It's absolutely amazing because, if you didn't know, we've been COVID-free here for over a year. So, it's been phenomenal to live in a country that is pandemic-independent from the rest of the world. You feel like you're living on some kind of isolated island with another 5 million people, you know what I mean?

Matt Bowles: That is completely amazing. And I have actually never been to New Zealand. I keep hearing amazing things. I have Kiwi friends. I keep running into travelers from New Zealand and people that have been there. But tell me, what has it been like for your family? What have been some of the highlights of New Zealand?

Chantal Patton: I think one of the biggest highlights is meeting the local people and building relationships. It's always about the people you meet, right, when you're traveling. It seems like just such a phenomenal thing to meet locals and get to know them, and then also just travel and discover this beautiful country. I mean, when we first arrived, we had no idea what to expect, and so it's just been phenomenal.

Matt Bowles: Well, let's start back from the beginning because I do want to pull out a little bit of your backstory. Can you just start off, Chantal, and talk a little bit about where you grew up? And as you were growing up, how did your interest in travel develop?

Chantal Patton: Okay, so I was born and raised in Canada, and I guess a lot of my travel inspiration came at quite a young age because I grew up with a dad who was from Switzerland, and so he would often take me on a trip. And so, I started—you know, you get that travel bug in you when you start discovering other countries and cultures. And I grew up with languages in our house, so both of my parents' mother tongues weren't English. My dad was Swiss German, and my mom was French Canadian. And I didn't speak any of those languages because the language at home was English. That's what they spoke to communicate with each other. And I couldn't speak with either set of grandparents. If you can imagine growing up and not being able to talk to your grandparents on either side. I mean, it was just whacked. And so, my mom was like, "You know what? You need to learn one of the languages, so you're going to go to school and learn French." And I absolutely hated it. But my parents said, "If you can learn this French language in one year,

Dad's going to take you to Switzerland, just you and him on a trip." And I was like, "Done!" Like, I'm learning it, and we're going to make this happen. And I went on this trip to Europe, and we were in Italy, and I discovered different types of bathrooms. I mean, they still had holes in the ground. And I was like, "What is this?" You know, all this stuff. But it gave me a bit of that little desire in me that, wow, there's a whole different world out there. And I think that's how the whole travel thing initially started, if you will, from that young age. And it just stuck with me. So, when I met my husband and we started a family, one of the things that he really wanted to do was travel. And he was already kind of living a little bit of a digital nomad lifestyle in the Caribbean. So, I was already like, "Oh, wait a second, this is one for me." Because at the time, I wasn't meeting anybody who was remotely thinking that way. And I was like, "That's what I want." So, it was just kind of a perfect match for the way we wanted everything to be set up. And we're both basically very goal-driven, which is good and very bad at the same time because we're both like that, which means we're just always like, "Go, go, go, go, go." And it's a little bit crazy, but at the same time, we both had that desire and ambition. We're like, "This is what we want, this is what we're going to do, and this is how we want our life to be." And so, every decision we made was based around what we wanted that lifestyle to look like. And so sometimes it's kind of like, "Come hell or high water, we're going to make it work," you know what I mean?

Matt Bowles: That's amazing. And can you talk a little bit? You mentioned he was already a digital nomad. I know you've been a location-independent entrepreneur for a really long time. Can you talk a little bit about how you generate location-independent income? Because that's obviously a core piece of making this whole thing work.

Chantal Patton: Yeah. Okay, so I'll back it all the way back to when my husband and I first met because he was already in the internet space, if you will, selling dial-up internet way back when that was a thing, and had a computer-type store. And he decided to go to the Caribbean, where he met some of the hotel owners, and they needed websites built. So, he's like, "Right, I'll stay for free, and I'll build your website." So, he already started this kind of way of doing things and trying to break the rules of having to pay for expensive rooms and all this kind of stuff and make it work for him. And so then, fast-forward, after we met and got married, we just built everything so that our business could sustain that type of lifestyle, so we could move and everything. And then, of course, technology started to get really good. I remember the first phone where we could check email on a phone. I mean, it was just like, "Wow, this is becoming a reality. Maybe we can start to leave, and people won't know we're gone." But we established a business from the ground up. I mean, we met with every single client, and we were wearing every hat in our company. It was all to do with online marketing and stuff like that. And that business was doing really well and basically allowed us enough income to be able to travel and manage it remotely. Now, all the logistics of managing your business while you're away and stuff have sometimes been an absolute nightmare and other times so rewarding. But again, the positives outweigh the negatives, and so you find ways to make it work, right?

Matt Bowles: A 100%. And so, then I think a lot of people have this mentality that, like, okay, we can travel when we're single, or okay, I got married and we can even travel as a couple and travel with the spouse. But when the kids come, then we're really going to have to settle down, and it'll be over, and all this kind of stuff. So, I'm curious if you can take us back. What was your mentality from the very beginning when you started having kids? What were your thoughts about travel and traveling with the kids in the early stages of that?

Chantal Patton: Okay, the first trade show when my daughter attended, she was weeks old because I got a call in the middle of the night, and one of our staff couldn't go. I was just like, "I guess I'm going with the baby," you know? And so, I just let the baby sleep in the little seat and fed her along the way. And when you're self-employed and running your own business, you don't take maternity leaves and stuff like that. So, you just kind of mix the kids in with everything you do. And coming from Canada, you get quite traumatized by those cold winters. I mean, it's just absolutely brutal. And so, we were like, "I don't care, we're going to Florida and trying to get a bit of a break, and we're just bringing our kids." At this time, we had three kids, so it was a four-year-old, a two-year-old, and a four-week-old, and we just drove to Florida. But I will say that traveling like that was easy because going to Florida, it's the same language, you know, the stores, you have access to all the medicine, you know, all those things are easy. Then, if you fast-forward and start really traveling overseas and stuff, everything changes. And I think, you know, when I first started, to be honest, it was quite easy. Like, my youngest daughter was five years old. That's an easy age. They can say if they're hungry, they can say if their belly is sore, you know, whatever. But it was still, in my mind, going to be hard because all I was envisioning was going to Europe, and we're going to sleep in this really ugly, old-furnished room, and we're going to have to eat out for dinner every night. Then the kids aren't going to like it, and they're going to be hungry an hour later. And I was like, "This doesn't sound like a fun vacation." Like, you know, when you have kids and you go to a restaurant, usually the husband will be like, "Oh, wasn't that nice, honey? It was so great. We had a wonderful meal." And then the mom's like, "No, that was awful," because all you do is go back and forth to the bathroom, and you're trying to keep your kids in order, you know what I mean? But anyway, our first long trip to Europe was a five-week trip. And I realized that there's a whole world out there of families who travel with kids. I thought nobody did this, but there are loads of people who do it. You just think that you're alone in the beginning because you think, "Who in the world would do that?" And then when you start doing it, you realize there's just different ways to travel. So, we started staying at these places called Eurocamp, which had really great setups, kids' camps, programs, and stuff like that. And you can make your own meals. So, we just traveled differently with the kids, and it was actually the most rewarding and most fun thing we've ever done. And then that really sparked and ignited the thought, "Oh my gosh, we can go all around the world doing this," you know what I mean? And now we're at a whole different level.

Matt Bowles: That is amazing. Well, I want to ask if you can talk about how you structure your lifestyle and your travel cadence with respect to having a home base, how often you travel, and how long you stay. And it may have evolved over time because I know you've been doing this now since 2013, but maybe just start from the beginning. Right after you did that European trip and everybody in the family loved it and was super excited about it, what were your next moves, and how did you structure your travel?

Chantal Patton: Okay. Yeah, we did kind of ease into it, I would say, because when we first started traveling and things kind of just lined up for us, it was just amazing. But we thought, all right, let's try it now. We did five weeks. Let's try three months and see. Let's put our girls in a local school. And then we were in Europe, and we could take them out of school, in and out, kind of. So, we would do these little trips. They would have longer holidays in their school year, so we would take two weeks, and it was great because you can hop around Europe and start doing that. Then we started saying, "Well, let's see if we can take them out for an extra month." So, we would get permission and take them out for a month, and then sometimes that one month would turn into four months, and we would just kind of keep extending. But then it became a situation where the director of the school was like, "This doesn't work for us anymore. You can't do this anymore," so we weren't allowed. And we were like, "I guess we're going to homeschool then." And so, this

is, I think, year four or five of homeschooling for us. In one sense, when our kids were in school, I guess we didn't really have a rigid structure, but we somewhat did. It was good because we had a good structure and everything, but it really limited us in terms of what we wanted to do and how we could manage work. You sometimes have to stay up late, which means you want to sleep in, depending on the country you're in. And so, really, having our kids in school was a nuisance to our lifestyle, right? In a sense. But there's a whole other level of responsibility as a parent when you're thinking, "Oh my gosh, now I'm in charge of their education," right? So that all changed, and a lot of pressure was on my shoulders. And then I just learned to give it up and be like, "You know what? They're going to be fine. They're absolutely going to be fine." And they're learning so much more when we're traveling. They're so independently learning now. They just really take to heart learning things, and they want to learn. And most kids in school don't even want to learn, you know? It's forced on them, and they don't have this excitement. And I see my kids differently, and I'm like, "Oh, it's actually a really good thing." And it really, like you said, did evolve, and it opened up the freedom for us to fully travel by homeschooling and having that lifestyle, to be fully location-independent.

Matt Bowles: So, for the first two or three years, you were based in Switzerland, and you had a home base. Your kids were in school, attending classes with the other kids, and all of that. You were just taking them out of school for somewhere between one and four months a year and doing those kinds of trips. But you had a home base, and they had a school, classmates, friends, and all that kind of stuff.

Chantal Patton: And technically, we still have a base over there, which has allowed our kids to feel like they still have somewhat of a home. And in a typical year, we would travel for maybe six to nine months or so, and then go home each summer, which is what we've been doing. And then, of course, with COVID, everything's changed. I mean, we had no idea we'd be gone this long. But maintaining that base has allowed us to utilize sites that we didn't know about beforehand, called [Home Exchange](#), which has just been phenomenal and revolutionized travel to a whole different level. So, yeah, we still have that base, if you will. We call it our closet.

Matt Bowles: Right. That's amazing. So, initially, you were spending about nine months of the year in Switzerland and three months traveling outside of there. And then you've now sort of swapped that, so you're spending about nine months traveling the world and coming back to Switzerland for about three months in the summer. That's kind of how you've designed it.

Chantal Patton: I mean, I like to think that. But sometimes we're only there for three days in a year. It's just ridiculous.

Matt Bowles: But yeah, okay, got it. You maintain the home base. Okay, so I definitely want to talk a little bit about homeschooling and your tips for that, because there are a number of different concepts and terminology out there, like homeschooling, world schooling, unschooling, and all of this. And I know you guys have really looked into this a lot, and there are now many options out there for folks who want to do this. I would love it if you could talk a little bit about your tips for that, where your family has landed in terms of how you do it and why you've decided to do it that way, and any resources you recommend for other folks who want to look into this.

Chantal Patton: Yeah, okay, 100%. So, I did look into it over the years, and then I attended a conference in Florida, which was absolutely amazing. I mean, they had, I don't know, like, two football fields full of booths of homeschool options. I had no idea it was so big. And the benefit of being English-speaking is that there are a lot of options. You know, when you're looking at French or Spanish, I don't know, maybe Spanish

would have a lot, but I haven't really found that much in the French language because our kids do speak French, and I wanted to keep that up for them and such. So, I thought, well, it'd be cool to have a French homeschool curriculum that they could follow, you know, because English is just easy on the side. But I haven't found it. So, first of all, when we first started traveling, when you talk about luggage, we tried to travel light. Well, I had all these books. We had heavy suitcases full of books from the schools and the teachers, and I was like, "Oh my gosh, this is ridiculous." You know how much extra we pay for luggage now? You know, when you try to fly cheap and all this stuff, I'm like, "This is crazy." So, our curriculum that we chose was going to be an online curriculum, which was challenging when we were in Africa because, as you know, the internet cuts out, the power cuts out, and that's when you learn to be like, "You know what? Let's just forget about school for another two months, and we'll just pick up later." Things like that happen, but it's just amazing. So, I do believe in structure and an actual curriculum. Like, I don't know how unschooling fully works. I don't fully understand that, but I do think it's good for kids when they're learning to have a good, solid base. You know, you want to give them a good foundation, and you want them to be able to fit in, right? So, we did choose a curriculum, but it's very flexible. I can assign lessons, and I can omit a whole subject if I want. And that's what I ended up doing. I didn't even put history or geography on there because our kids are learning that firsthand, and they're learning so much more than they can learn by reading text, right? And so that's what we use. We do have a curriculum called Monarch. It's GrowingUpWithoutBorders.com/homeschool, I think, is my link. You can get a free one-month trial to see how it works. But it's been phenomenal for us as a tool, and it's really taken the pressure off my shoulders because I don't have to grade a lot of the work either. So, it's auto-graded. Essentially, I'm like the principal of our school, if you will. I kind of just oversee what they're doing, and because our kids are at an age now where I don't have to physically push them to do it. You know, when they were younger, it was challenging. I was having to make sure they would do their lessons and all that. But now it's become pretty easy, I must say. And they're kind of self-taught.

Matt Bowles: Yeah. Well, I do want to get into that a little bit, in terms of just helping folks understand the ages of your daughters, right? Maybe you could even introduce them a little bit, in terms of what their names are and, at this point, what their interests and passions are. Tell us a little bit about your daughters.

Chantal Patton: Okay. Awesome. Yeah. So, when we first started traveling, Chloe, our youngest, was five. Angelique, our middle child, was seven at the time, and Julia was nine. And that was when we first started traveling. Then they did two years of school, and we were like, you know, pulling them out for months at a time, and then they started homeschooling. So technically, Julia would have been 11, Angelique 9, and Chloe 7 when we were full-time homeschooling. So, they were still quite young ages, you know, to learn to be independent learners and all those kinds of things. And now they've blossomed. So now they're 13, 15, and 17. Julia's fully, you know, wanting to go into management and hotel management schools, and she's really diving into that. She's reading books on law and civics. I'm like, "Oh, okay!" And things like that, and management books. So, she's really into that. And then our middle child, she's into fashion design. She wants to have her own clothing brand line, which is really cool. And that's also challenging because you can't travel around the world with a sewing machine unless, like you, Matt, her whole suitcase becomes her sewing kit. Like, she could, but... And then our youngest, she just loves to sing and act, and she's like, "That's what I want to be." I'm like, "Okay." You know, she's still 13.

Matt Bowles: Yeah, that's amazing. So, when you started this, they were young and at different grade levels. How did you, while organizing travel logistics and running your own business, jump into the role of

facilitating the entire educational experience for three kids at three different grade levels? What was the strategy for that?

Chantal Patton: It wasn't easy, let's just put it that way. But it wasn't easy because I put a lot of pressure on myself. As soon as I was like, "They'll be okay," all that pressure went away, and I was like, "They're going to be fine." I mean, if I was just at home in one country, I would really want to expose them to a lot of things and everything. But because we were traveling, on a daily basis, they were stimulated and learning from all the different things, whether it was languages, museums, meeting different people, or all these different scenarios that they've been through. And they had a world of knowledge and learning. Like, my daughter knows more about things than I knew when I was in my 20s. And I think that's just phenomenal. She knows more about languages, she knows more about capital cities, and the way food is prepared, or different types of trees. I didn't even know those things existed back then. So, yeah.

Matt Bowles: So, how does the customization of the curriculum work? In other words, how do you integrate the experiences you're having when you travel with their curriculum? So, the history of the place where you are, the language they speak, the geography of the area, the animals that live there, and all those types of things which, obviously, you want them to learn and experience when they're there. Are you able to customize your curriculum so that they're able to study information about that stuff as they're personally experiencing it?

Chantal Patton: Yes and no. So, the curriculum I use is pretty structured. It's from the United States, so it's very much American-based when it comes to some of the things they're learning. But on a side note, let's say we're going to a country like Cambodia. If I know the internet maybe won't be good, or we'll just be busy sightseeing and such, I can take days off their calendar and mark them as non-school days. Everything kind of gets adjusted for me and for them, and then they just pick up again when we're ready to start. The way it works for them is they read three or four pages and then go through a series of questions. Now, when we're out learning hands-on, it's not like I ask them to do an essay about certain things. I do sometimes ask them to help with some of the blog writing about what we've experienced, so they'll write down their thoughts or keep journals of everything they're doing. Stuff like that I get them to do. The best way to learn is when you have to teach others, right? And so, by doing that, it helps them. And because we started Geography Made Fun, it's allowing the girls to learn more about the countries they're visiting because now they know they have to teach somebody else.

Matt Bowles: That's so amazing that you did that. I mean I was so excited when I saw that. Can you share a little bit about what that is?

Chantal Patton: Yes. So it is totally from their perspective, which means it's really what they experienced when they were there. And in some countries, they know them really well because we spent a lot of time there. In other countries, we just kind of went through, but they're still having to go back and research some of the things to be able to share. They talk about the flag and the meaning of the flag, the currency they're using, the clothing that people wear there, the means of transportation, the general food they eat, what the landscape looks like, and what the capital city looks like. And then we have footage from our videos from when they're there. So, we're sharing that footage of their experiences while they're talking about them.

Matt Bowles: That's amazing. Well, I know you were in Asia right before the pandemic, before you went to New Zealand. You just mentioned Cambodia, and I know you've been to a number of other places there.

What were some of the highlights for the family, and especially for the girls? What really kind of stood out to them?

Chantal Patton: I think what stood out the most is honestly seeing how happy people in certain countries are, even though they've been through massive, massive turmoil. And I think, from the girls' perspective, having that appreciation when they see what people eat on a regular basis is important. Like, for example, I'll give you a story. We went out for pizza one night, and I mean, Friday night pizza and movie night is a thing around the world. Most countries, a lot of families do that. Well, if you take the country of Cambodia, there are a lot of people, I mean, the majority, who have never had pizza in their lives. I mean, think about that. And so, I think when the girls realized that, and they were talking to some of the people, because when we stay at places, we don't just not talk to the staff. We get to know all the staff, we get to talk to the locals, and we get to know the people. That's what interests us, right? And you say, like, "Oh, you know, we're having pizza," and they're like, "Oh, I've never had pizza before." And the girls hear that, and we hear that as well, and we're like, "Oh my gosh, you've never had that?" So, they're eating their rice and their noodles on a daily basis, and you realize their pay, and it's just a really good experience for the girls and for us to realize the differences and inequalities around the world. I think every single child, especially in the United States, Canada, and some of these privileged countries, should go and just live there for a month. Not with all the luxuries and everything, but actually live there. Then you come back, and I think it would solve a lot of problems, whether it's depression or other issues. And I'm not saying that's the only thing that would help, but a lot of it, I think, is when you start to realize these things and see the inequalities and injustices around the world, and that you're just born a certain way and are naturally privileged, like, it's just not fair. And I just think it's such a great eye-opener for a lot of people to see. So that would be a highlight. You know, it's not like some monument or anything.

Matt Bowles: That's amazing. And I know you've taken them to so many different cultures and immersed them in so many different languages and cultural experiences and all of that. You guys have done, I think, almost every country in South America and Central America. Can you talk a little bit about what that experience was like? Because that's completely different from Asia. How was that for them, and what was their experience like there?

Chantal Patton: Okay, well, first of all, we love all the Spanish-speaking countries. I mean, we just love the culture, we love the liveliness of it all, and we can relate and get by in Spanish. So, it makes it really fun and easy for us. The highlights? Oh man, it sounds so silly, but it was going to Nicaragua and staying put for a while. It was after we'd been moving around so much, and I think all of us just needed a bit of a break. It was such a shock to our system to think we were going to a country that we were only going to be in for three days because it was so dangerous. And then we got there, spent nine weeks in one spot, and we were like, "Ah, this is awesome!" The girls were surfing every day, and we were meeting other families who weren't the typical travelers, just different styles of travelers, including a family from New Zealand. And it was just awesome. So, I think that would be one of the highlights. Was that nice?

Matt Bowles: Yeah. Nicaragua is an amazing country. I've probably spent about a month or so there. Where were you guys at? Like, San Juan del Sur area, by the beach?

Chantal Patton: Yeah, totally there. Yeah. Oh, and the sunsets every night and. Oh, it was just amazing.

Matt Bowles: Yeah. And they got the floor at the Kanya Rum, and, you know, it's just—you get that flowing, and it's just like a magical sort of place. Yeah, I totally agree. I think it's such a special place and really

something that I've been telling people they should definitely visit as well. Well, I also want to ask you about Europe. I know you said you've traveled really extensively in Europe, and of course, if you have the base in Switzerland, that's super easy to do. I did want to ask you, though, about your Romania trip, for one reason: I know a lot of Romanians, and I still haven't been there yet. They've been telling me to come, and I need to go, but I still haven't been. So, it's super high on my list. But how was your experience in Romania?

Chantal Patton: Romania was amazing. Like, I absolutely loved our time there. If you've ever heard of Dracula, he was a real man, and he had this castle. You can go see it, and it is just amazing. The whole Transylvania area is beautiful. We stayed at this inn, and this is crazy. So oftentimes, my goal was always like, "Let's check in before dinner so that we have enough time with the kids and whatever." But it often wasn't the case, and this was one of those nights. It was maybe around 12 or 12:30 at night, and we're pulling into this beautiful place we're going to be staying at. We park the car, get all the luggage out, and start walking into the inn with our suitcases. I thought it was a little bit different because there were shoes at the front. And I thought, "Oh, you know, here in Romania, they must take off their shoes." Okay, so we start doing what we're supposed to. I guess your kind of just adapt. And I'm like, "Well, where's the front desk? This is different, you know?" And out comes this lady with a baby on her hip, looking at us like, "Hello, may I help you?" And we were like, "We're here to check in." And she's like, "This is my house." And at that point, yeah, I did exactly that. I almost peed myself laughing. I couldn't even move. I was holding the suitcases, laughing my head off. I'm like, "This is hilarious. We're in someone's house in the middle of the night!" She was really like, "Who are you guys?" It was hilarious. So anyway, she just kindly said, "It's further down the road."

Matt Bowles: That is amazing. Wow! And so then, how was Dracula's castle? How did the kids like that? That must have had a lot of contexts going in. How did it turn out?

Chantal Patton: It was really cool. So, he was a very brutal man, and he would kill a lot of the people that were against him. Just really brutal stuff. But it was a really cool thing because I always thought it was just a story. You think of all these stories, and they actually come from a lot of the 1800s or whatever years they were in. It's amazing when you travel and, like, you know, history comes to life. Also in Romania, though, we met this phenomenal couple that owned a ranch with all these horses. And we stayed at this place that felt like you were in Texas in the middle of Romania. It's just beautiful rolling hills. And, oh yeah, it was just amazing.

Matt Bowles: So awesome. It's so high on my list. I cannot wait to get there. I will definitely hit you up for recommendations when I start traveling again and planning that trip. I also want to ask you about your experience in Africa because I know you've been to a number of countries there. I've probably spent about two years on the continent, but you have been to a number of countries that I have not yet been to. I'm also super curious to see how the experience was for you and for the girls as a family and all of that. So, can you share a little bit about the countries that you went to and what that trip was like for you?

Chantal Patton: Yeah, it was amazing. So, we started in Tanzania, in Zanzibar, and it was phenomenal. We stayed at this beautiful place that was fully powered by the sun, which meant that if we didn't have sunshine, we couldn't power up anything. And we were eating fish from the sea and from their garden. It was just such a cool experience. And then discovering Stone Town and all that was just phenomenal. From there, we went over to Dar es Salaam, and then we flew over towards a different area of Tanzania to be able to cross down into Malawi. And then Malawi was a whole different ball game. I mean, it was just such a different Africa. You know, it's so diverse there, right? You have super wealthy and developed countries,

and then not-so-developed countries. And so, Malawi was one of those. Traveling there, I mean, you don't even rent a car. You just do the chicken bus experience, where you have everyone coming in with their fish or a chicken and babies, and everybody's squashed into this little vehicle. You stop every couple of minutes, and then people get out and people get in. I mean, it was just like, "Oh my gosh," you know? And no toilets. So, you've got a six-hour car ride, we've got three girls, and they expect everyone just to go behind a building and do their business. It was just such a crazy experience. It was amazing at the same time; you know what I mean? Not what every traveler wants to go through, but it's great to have those experiences and just live them. And then from there, we went over to Mozambique. Mozambique was amazing. We were in a beautiful beachside town right near the South African border. We met a couple there from the UK whom we then adopted as our grandparents and ended up traveling with in South Africa. So, like, crazy experiences, but it was beautiful. You know, you're walking on roads that aren't roads, just these big, massive sand roads that make you think, "How do cars drive on them?" But they do. It's just unbelievable. We did a ferry crossing in Maputo, the capital city, and it was just like we felt like refugees. Everyone was crammed together trying to get a ticket. It was just such an experience, I mean, something you would never ever experience in your life. And so, it was cool.

Matt Bowles: And then from there, where did you go next? Because you guys spent months on this trip. So, from Mozambique, where did you go next?

Chantal Patton: Then we did all of South Africa, so Richards Bay. Then we went to Jeffreys Bay for a while. Then we did the whole Garden Route to Cape Town. And then we went all the way up the west side and then into Namibia. We drove all the way through Namibia, went to Swakopmund, which is on the coast, and then we went up through and over into Botswana at the very top. And there's Etosha, which is a national game reserve with, like, three-hour drives through the reserve. I mean, it was just unbelievable. And then we went into Zambia and Zimbabwe to Victoria Falls, and then we did the whole thing back down through Botswana. We stayed at a place in these tents where you had to be inside by nine, right, or else the elephants might come or the lions. Like, it was just crazy. It was just amazing. And then we did the whole thing back down to Cape Town again, as you do.

Matt Bowles: That's amazing. Well, I want to hear about Botswana because I haven't been there either. I've been on a safari in Kenya. I went to the Maasai Mara, you know, and there you have the game reserve and all of that. Botswana, I understand, is quite different from that. Can you share what it's like there?

Chantal Patton: Botswana is different because they don't have their animals enclosed. So, in other countries, they have game reserves with enclosures and people guarding them. There in Botswana, the animals are free to roam anywhere, which makes it extremely unique and extremely dangerous at the same time. Because when we were driving, the one guy driving us was like, "Oh, that guy's risking his life by walking on the road." And I'm like, "Oh my gosh, that's crazy to think that he's risking his life." And, yeah, so I think it's different. It's also different in the sense that they haven't had as much trouble when it comes to racism and such. So, the people are very united. I don't know if it's because they have fewer tribes as well, you know, because when you think of racism in South Africa, for example, you think just white and Black, but there's also a whole different ball game when it comes to different tribes as well. And we don't really think of that stuff, right? But that does exist over there, you know, if they're Zulu or they're this or they're that. Anyway, I don't think Botswana has as much of that as a problem. So, the people are very united, and, yeah, it's just a really cool country.

Matt Bowles: That is so awesome. What were some of the highlights for your girls in terms of the Africa experience?

Chantal Patton: Oh, wow. Probably driving through the game reserves in a rental car, because most of the time, you go into the game reserves with a guide. And I strongly do suggest that, especially if you don't want to have PTSD from it, because it was terrifying. We were driving through the Etosha one, for example, and it was just after a massive rainfall. In certain countries, they have these big, huge potholes. Not little potholes, but potholes the size of your car. And when you add rain to it, I'm thinking, "We're going to get stuck." So, we're just giving it our all through these big, massive potholes. Water's coming up the sides, and our kids are in the back going, "Mom, don't get stuck!" You know, oh my gosh. And then I'm thinking, like, if we do get stuck, you can't get out of your car, or else the leopards or whatever they are going to eat you, you know? And I was just like, "Oh my gosh, this is crazy." And then, you know, when the sun goes down, they all come out, like the big, massive elephants, and they are huge. We were trying to get out. Now, this one was in South Africa, and you have to be out by seven, I think, or 6:30, somewhere around that time, or the gates close and you're stuck in the reserve, right? Anyway, we're trying to get out, so we're going a little bit faster than usual. And all of a sudden, this big, massive elephant goes in front of me. So, what you do is your kind of slowly back up, and you're supposed to keep calm and maybe even shut your car off. But then all of a sudden, there's one big one behind us, and I was like, "Oh my gosh!" I felt like my heart was going to fly out of my skin, and you're trying to keep calm for your kids' sake. You're like, "It's all good. They're not going to sit on the car or anything, are they?" Oh my gosh. So, I think that was a highlight for the kids. It was just unbelievable.

Matt Bowles: That's amazing. Well, let me ask you some general questions about how you structure your travel, particularly when you're traveling with younger kids. How do you design and plan activities for the kids in each of the places you visit? How do you make sure they're age-appropriate, engaging, and interesting? Because normally, right, if you're in one place, your kid plays on a sports team, or they have some extracurricular activity they do regularly. And so, when you're traveling to all these different places, how do you structure that as parents, particularly for the younger kids when you were just starting out?

Chantal Patton: So, we just kind of bring them along to everything that we would normally do. It's interesting, when they start traveling, there are no barriers based on age. So, they'll play with a 70-year-old man and a 2-year-old kid just the same and have just as much fun. Obviously, they're not into sports and teams and such like that as they would be if they were at home. Although, if we stay in one spot long enough, I right away immerse them in local events and local things going on. So, when we were in Spain, they did flamenco classes, which is really culturally cool because they learned the culture at the same time as the dance. Here in New Zealand, they're now doing contemporary dance. Chloe's singing, and they're doing all these different things. Angelique's going to be attending sewing classes at the local seamstress place, you know, so we really fully get them immersed if we can. But obviously, when you're traveling, you're spending a week here, a week there, so there's no time for any of that. But like I said, we just bring them along. I mean, we don't really look for age-appropriate things. We just do whatever is going on, and they come along with us. But of course, if there are cool things happening, that's where we go with the kids. They get exposed to quite a bit. The craziest thing, I think, we did—and any listener of yours who's been a digital nomad in Bali will know that group of digital nomads, you know, the yoga kind of people. We went to this Yoga Barn that was up above, and it was like being at a rave party or something. Everyone was talking—no, one was talking, and everyone was just dancing. The whole thing was pumping. Our kids were really little, and they were getting exposed to all these wacky things. I think everyone was just getting down

off whatever they were on the night before. And the kids were like, "Okay," and they were just like, "I know." So, I mean, I wouldn't necessarily say we do age-appropriate things. We just do whatever is going on, and they come along with us. But of course, if there are cool things happening, that's where we go with the kids. They get exposed to quite a bit, so...

Matt Bowles: And how do you structure your lifestyle on a daily or weekly basis? I know it changes probably from location to location, but as a general concept, when you're trying to balance being in a place where you want to go see the cool stuff, doing your schoolwork, running your business, and planning the travel logistics for how you're going to get to the next place, book transportation, accommodations, and all that, you're juggling all of these things. So, can you talk a little bit about how it works for you guys and how you're able to structure and balance everything in a way that's healthy, fulfilling, and works for you?

Chantal Patton: Yep. So, we put our priorities in place. We know certain things need to get done in a day, and obviously, you know, we're driven, so those things become a priority. But when you're traveling and moving around, a lot of things get pushed off, and we're like, "Okay, well, we can do this later. It doesn't really matter. It's not as urgent," you know what I mean? So, you just adapt. And the same goes for their schoolwork and everything within our business. We've also structured it so that we don't necessarily have to be as involved and can outsource some of the stuff to our team. You know, a lot of the time, like, for example, during my whole trip in Africa, I had a really good virtual assistant who was my right hand, and so she was able to do all those tasks. With shared email systems and stuff like that, I didn't have to be present and worry about, "Oh my gosh, did I miss an email from a client who urgently needed me?" You know, she was on it. And so just having those systems in place relieves all that pressure. But it is a lot. It is a lot of extra work when you have to plan where you're going to sleep, how you're going to get there, and what about this and that, you know, all those little things, let alone everything else. So, a lot of times, certain things get pushed aside and then done later. Other times, if we're in a place for a long time, like in Cambodia, I feel like I forget how long we were there, but we were there long enough that we started getting into a routine. We knew where the internet was good. It was at some backpacker's place, and we could drink smoothies all day and have some lunch there. We would literally just set up camp. So, we looked like this really weird family, with all our laptops out and everyone doing their work, and then we would just go have fun. So, yeah, it just depends on where we are.

Matt Bowles: Do you have stability, anchors, or some kind of structure that transitions as you go from one place to another, grounds your kids, and remains consistent from place to place? How do you establish stability?

Chantal Patton: It comes down to, I think—it sounds really funny, but it's the food we eat. Doesn't that sound strange? The stability and feeling of being home come from having certain meals that feel homey and sitting at the table and having a meal together. If they can have that, my kids, in every country we go to, have that sense of a homey feeling. We try to have things that are structurally the same every week because, as you know, when you travel, you kind of get blended, right? Your schedules and stuff. So, we usually do a crepe weekend, where we have crepes with maple syrup. We have Friday night movie night. We try to keep these little rituals everywhere we go, if we can. It just looks different, right, in different countries.

Matt Bowles: Yeah, absolutely. And then, are you ever able to go out on a date with your husband and have somebody else watch the kids? Or have some alone times to yourself, spend a day at the spa doing your own thing, or hang out with a girlfriend? How do those aspects come into play in this lifestyle?

Chantal Patton: Okay, let me try and back it up. When they're younger, it's different because now it's so easy. They're at the age where they're the ones going out and having fun, you know?

Matt Bowles: Right, that's true. Yeah. When they were younger, I guess, is the question. Yeah, exactly.

Chantal Patton: I'm trying to think, like, when they were really young, we would sometimes trust people to babysit the kids, and we would go out. So, we did have date nights. The best we ever found was phenomenal. This is one of the reasons we just loved it in Europe. They had the jazz festival happening, and so they had free daycare where our kids could go. And it was until 2 a.m. Imagine that! And so, it was just amazing. We would enroll them in this daycare, and we were out enjoying beautiful concerts. So, yeah, we did date night for, like, a full 21 days in a row, I feel like, during that one summer when they were still young. So again, it's so varied. And you'll meet people, like grandparents along the way who are traveling. They're just missing their grandbabies, so they'll be happy to take the kids for a little while. And then, what we did when we were traveling in the Eurocamp's, they had kids' programs, and so we would send the kids off. Sometimes our dates or fun were during the daytime hours, you know? So, it just varied a little bit in that way. But, yeah, I would say we were still able to manage quite a bit of that along the way.

Matt Bowles: That's amazing. And how do you and your husband divide the responsibilities that come with this lifestyle in terms of trip planning and logistics, education, overseeing the homeschool curriculum, running the business, and all the different things that have to function together coherently? How do you divide those responsibilities, and how does that work?

Chantal Patton: Okay, so over the years, we've actually become really good at just knowing that he's good at this and I'm good at that. So, he does all the planning, searching, researching, and finding out where to go and who to contact. He does all of that. I do all the communication. Every single communication with clients and our team goes through me. And then he oversees the production side of our YouTube channel, while I oversee the action of getting it all together and done. So, we just wear different hats. And I think the biggest key is not really trying to tell each other what to do. That's where explosions happen. So, we just let each other do what we do best, and that seems to work pretty well.

Matt Bowles: That's awesome. And what do you guys do in terms of healthcare and all that kind of stuff? You're traveling to a lot of different countries, and if a kid gets sick or something happens, how do you guys handle that?

Chantal Patton: Yep. So right now, depending on the countries that we go to, especially now with the pandemic, because there are a lot of places that aren't covered, we have digital nomad-type insurance that you can purchase along the way. In some countries, we just pay out of pocket if we have to go because it's so cheap that it really doesn't matter. So, it really depends on where we are and what we do. But yeah, there's some really cool health insurance that you can just buy even when you're out of the country, you know, even if you've been gone for so many days, which is different from how it was years back, when you couldn't have those options.

Matt Bowles: Yeah. Well, I also want to ask you about some of your travel hacks and affordability techniques. You mentioned at the beginning this concept of [Home Exchange](#), and I was wondering if you could share a little bit about that for folks who have never heard of it, how it works, and then any other hacks or techniques you've developed along the way to make this lifestyle reasonably affordable.

Chantal Patton: Yeah, [Home Exchange](#) has been one of the biggest key factors in making it affordable and providing the ability to have that home feeling, a home base, which, as a family, is a massive, massive advantage. Because, you know, if you're single and alone, it's one thing to be working in a hotel bedroom, but when there's five of you in a little bedroom, oh my gosh, it's just like... And we've done that. I mean, but it's not healthy, and it's not fun. You know, after a while, you're just like, "Okay, I want normalcy. I want my own space," and all those things. So having [Home Exchange](#) is great, and the way it works is something people probably don't fully understand, so let me quickly try and explain it. Basically, there are many platforms out there. There's one called [People Like Us](#), there's [Home Exchange](#), and there's Love Home Swap. I found the best one to be Home Exchange, just because of the fees. You don't have to pay a fee each time you exchange. It's just really good for searching and messaging people and all that, but [People Like Us](#) is actually becoming really cool as well. So, these are all sites where people list their homes. It's a sharing community, so people have the same type of mindset. Often, they're people who enjoy travel, so there's that common base of travel. Basically, you put up your home, and people can come and stay. They can swap with you directly, meaning you go to their house and they come to yours. Or they can swap for a different time, so they can come to your house and then you'll eventually go to theirs, you know, years down the road or whenever it is. There's also a points system, so they can pay you in points. You build up points that you can use in all the other countries around the world. So essentially, you get free travel because you're not paying out of your pocket. And when you're staying in these homes, they're fully set up with sometimes surfboards, paddleboards, kayaks, and even full movie theater rooms. I mean, it's just unbelievable, the number of homes we've stayed in that are just amazing. And in exchange, you get everything that you could possibly need, all your kitchen supplies and utensils. Because how many times have, we been to an Airbnb and you're like, "You can't cook in their kitchen"? They say it's equipped, but it's really not. Then you have to go buy your oil, vinegar, salt, pepper, and all the ingredients, and then you have to move. So, you're not going to carry all that with you, you know what I mean? And so [Home Exchange](#) has literally revolutionized the way we travel. I wish we had known about it before, when we first started, but, yeah.

Matt Bowles: The other major thing I want to ask you about is social life, friends, and social interaction, especially for kids, right? I mean, people ask me this question all the time as a nomad. But when kids are growing up, I think that question probably becomes even more profound. So, can you share a little bit about that and their social situation in this lifestyle?

Chantal Patton: Sure. Okay, so they are amazingly social. It's phenomenal. And through kids, you actually end up meeting so many people because they're always the ones who are out. Like, our first time when we were in Europe, on the very first day, they met these little kids, and the next thing you know, we had a full Spanish-speaking family. And we're very open, so we're like, "Hey, come on over for dinner," you know? And we had—it was hilarious. So, they didn't speak English, and we hardly spoke Spanish, and we had this family interaction. Then we went on, like, a whole journey with them anyway. It was hilarious. But your kids are often the ones who bring people in. And they're so social. Like I said, they'll play with anybody. So, they don't have the typical friendships where you meet someone who becomes your best friend and you see them every single day. They don't have that. But they do, especially now with technology, have ways to keep in touch with a lot of their friends they've met along the way. And one advantage, depending on what type of school you go to, is that you only have, like, a certain group of friends to choose from. When you travel, you get exposed to everybody. You can kind of choose who you really want to be friends with and keep in touch with those friends. But they've met amazing people all around the world. And when people

talk about socialization, I think that's a joke because they're so socialized, it's not even funny. And then what we do is, I usually try to find youth programs through the different communities now that they're older. A lot of times, when you're sending them to these programs, they're supervised, and they're getting exposed to all different types of kids, meeting people, and all that. So, yeah, it's pretty cool. We've even adopted kids along the way. We've, like, adopted a little boy from Estonia, and he was traveling with us and had all these sleepovers, you know? And, oh my gosh, this is hilarious. So, when we were in Malaysia, there was a little girl who was from New Zealand as well, and her parents were like, "Yeah, she can go with you." And so, we just bring kids with us as if we were at home. It's just crazy.

Matt Bowles: Like, yeah, that's amazing. So, how would you say that this lifestyle has impacted your family dynamic internally, in terms of how your daughters relate to each other and how your family is versus a family that is, you know, maybe in a more traditional situation?

Chantal Patton: Yeah. Or even the way I was brought up, for example, like, there's no way, you know, when you're in your teenage years, hanging out with your parents, I would have been like, "Oh my gosh, get me away." You know, I wanted to go do my own thing. But I think when you're traveling together as a unit, you become close in a different way. You know, you're spending a lot of time together, and so you end up becoming really good friends with your kids. And I don't know, like, we tend to really get along. I think the pandemic might have done this to a lot of families as well. People that are busy and don't even really sit down for meals together. They're here, they're there. This one's in sports, this one's working, you know, all of that stuff that goes along with it. I think with COVID and lockdowns, people have had to stay together and make it work and realize that there might be problems that you have to work on. And so, I think that's kind of what happened to us early on. Like, that's how we've been living. And so, you know, we're definitely not perfect. Like, we probably are the most just very dysfunctional type of people, in a sense, but we make it work, and then we actually enjoy spending that time together. You know what I mean? So, it's different. It's totally different. But, yeah, it's definitely brought us together 100%.

Matt Bowles: What would your girls say has been the impact of all these travel experiences on them, right? Being able to do this, see a hundred countries, see so much of the world, and experience all these things. How would they describe the impact that it's had on them?

Chantal Patton: It's so normal for them. I wonder if I should ask them those types of questions because, for them, it's just normal. It's their normal lifestyle. And I think only when they're speaking to other kids who have been like, you know, "I haven't even left my own state or my own area," do they realize, "Oh, wow!" Yeah, I think for them, it's just normal.

Matt Bowles: What do you see, then, as a parent? Like, when you see other kids in the same age group who went through the traditional thing and still live in the same town where they grew up, or whatever, versus your kids, what do you see as the impact of these many years of travel on their growth and development as human beings?

Chantal Patton: I think, well, big time. So, I think, for one, there's not as much judgment on people who maybe have or people who have not. You know, when I see my kids, we've been in countries where they're just playing with other kids who literally have nothing. And then there's a compassion that comes into play, along with an understanding. And there's also the whole waste thing. They see countries that just have all the waste sitting outside, and so they start thinking about, you know, where the waste goes in these other countries. And it's like, oh, it's just kind of hidden, you know, but it's still there. And then they don't want to

consume as much as others, maybe as much as what we grew up with. You know, it just changes them as human beings, for sure. They're open to trying new things and open to differences in the way people are. So, yeah, it's definitely changed the way they think, probably. And compared to the way I grew up, it's 100% different. Yeah, that's amazing.

Matt Bowles: I also want to ask you about your travel content creation and the entire family's involvement in it, which has been so amazing to see. You've now got over 50,000 subscribers on your YouTube channel, you've got your blog, and you've got your social media, with over 10,000 people on Instagram and everything else. So, you're developing quite the following. Your content is super substantive and interesting. I definitely want everybody to go check it out. But can you talk about the process of developing that and how the whole family has been involved in it?

Chantal Patton: I think it's been amazing because it actually puts more of a purpose behind everything we do, and we want to now share it with the world. The girls want to learn more about the area and then expose, you know, what's cool to see, what's cool to do, and some of the different things. And everyone's involved in a different way. So, I have Julia and Angelique right now who are fully Premiere Pro proficient. They can go in there and do all the edits and everything like that. We're working on learning transitions and such right now. Chloe is the one who pre-edits our geography classes, so she's even learning, you know, at the age of 13, how to function inside of Premiere Pro. And they're seeing all the business side of it. Like, we treat it like a business, and we have deadlines and production calendars and all these kinds of things that have to get done. And so, we work really strongly as a team unit together, which is really fun. So, yeah, we just love sharing what we're doing. And some are great videos that are, like, super informative, and others are just, like, our family having fun. So, it's a little bit of everything.

Matt Bowles: Yeah, I love your content. Can you tell folks how they can check it out, where you want them to go, and how they can find you, follow you, watch your videos, and all that good stuff?

Chantal Patton: Yeah, 100%. So, on YouTube and all social media platforms, we're under Growing Up Without Borders. Our website is GrowingUpWithoutBorders.com. If people want to subscribe to our newsletter, I put out a little video about what we're currently up to, so you can follow us and see what we're doing. And, yeah, everything on social media is under Growing Up Without Borders.

Matt Bowles: Awesome. All right, Chantel, at this point, are you ready to wrap this up and move in to the lightning round?

Chantal Patton: I am. Let's go.

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

Chantal Patton: I honestly don't have a full answer because there are so many good books out there, you know, if you say a book about this, a book about that. So, just out of the blue, and everyone's read this one already, but it's [The Four Hour Work Week](#). If people want to kind of get involved and start, and I know it kicked you off, and travel, and me as well. Yeah, there you go.

Matt Bowles: If you could have dinner with any one person who's currently alive today, someone you've never met, just you and that person for an evening of dinner and conversation, who would you pick?

Chantal Patton: It would be [Julia Roberts](#). I just love her as an actress. And, like, that's just one person. I mean, when you ask that question, I'm like, "Who in the world would it be?" But yeah, just for the fun of it, I'd like to go hang out with her.

Matt Bowles: That's a great answer. That would be a fun dinner. All right, if you could go back in time, knowing everything that you know now, and give one piece of advice to your 18-year-old self, what would you say to 18-year-old Chantal?

Chantal Patton: I would say when you're making decisions, take the time to decide. That's what I'd say.

Matt Bowles: Awesome. All right, of all the places you've now been to, which is over a hundred countries, what are your top three favorite destinations that you'd most recommend other people should definitely check out?

Chantal Patton: South Africa, New Zealand, Spain, Switzerland, and let's see, well, Nicaragua. Did I say Nicaragua? Nicaragua and Mexico. Oh my gosh, I have too many!

Matt Bowles: We'll give you five. Okay, all right. What are your top three bucket-list destinations? These are places you have not yet been, highest on your list, you most want to see.

Chantal Patton: The country of Georgia. I've just heard really cool things about it. And Pakistan. I'm really excited, and I can't wait to see what Iran is like. I'm so excited to go meet the people. I want to meet the people of these countries.

Matt Bowles: Good for you. Yeah, Iran is super tippy-top on my list. Pakistan, I was actually supposed to go in 2020. Before COVID, I was supposed to go to Lahore for a month and post up. I've been to the Indian side of Punjab. I've been to Amritsar, but the Pakistani side of Punjab, which is where the city of Lahore is, I have not been. And I was planning to go, and I had a trip scheduled, and then the COVID thing happened. So that's also super high on my list. And then Georgia, I spent probably about three weeks in Tbilisi.

Chantal Patton: Oh, wow.

Matt Bowles: Yeah, really recently, I mean it was like the last year of travel, which was. What was that? 2019 Or so.

Chantal Patton: So, should I be excited?

Matt Bowles: Yeah, it's a very cool place. It's a really, really cool place, and I'm happy to give you some tips when you guys are ready to plan your trip there. But that's a good one, good one to have on your list. So awesome. Yeah, that is awesome. Well, Chantal, I want to thank you so much for coming on The Maverick Show. This was a blast. Can you give out your information one more time? If people want to connect with you, contact you, or follow you on social media, how do you want people to come into your universe?

Chantal Patton: I want them to go to YouTube to subscribe to our channel and share our videos at [Growing Up Without Borders](#).

Matt Bowles: We are going to put that, along with all of your other contact information, in [the show notes](#). So, folks can just go to one place, [TheMaverickShow.com](#). Just go to [the show notes](#) for this episode, and there you will find everything that we discussed in this episode, including all of the resources that Chantal

recommended and all the ways to contact her and check out her amazing content. Chantal, thank you so much for being on the show. This was amazing.

Chantal Patton: Thank you so much for having me, Matt. Can't wait to connect with you again.

Matt Bowles: All right, good night, everybody.