

**Matt Bowles:** My guest today is Briona Lamback. She is an award-winning travel journalist, entrepreneur and poet who lets her love of history, food, human connection, and black culture guide her around the globe. Her writing has appeared in Conde Nast Traveler, Atlas Obscura, BBC Travel, Fodors Travel, and many others that you would know. Briona is on a mission to connect with the black diaspora globally through travel and storytelling. In 2017, she founded [Buoyant Travel](#), a boutique travel company that hosts group trips and events to help Black travelers connect with local black history and culture around the world. Briona has been featured in BBC Africa, Travel Noir, The Huffington Post, and the list goes on. She is also a featured speaker at the upcoming Black Travel Summit.

Briona, welcome to the show.

**Briona Lamback:** Hi Matt. Thanks for having me. So excited to be here and talk to you.

**Matt Bowles:** I am so excited to have you here. The number of people that we know in common is absolutely huge. So, I think it was only a matter of time until we put this interview together. But let's just start off by setting the scene. We are not in person tonight, but we have agreed to make this a virtual wine night.

So, let's talk about where we are and also what we are drinking. I am actually in the Blue Ridge mountains of Asheville, North Carolina this evening, and I have just opened up a Red Blend from the Maduro region of France. So, I will be drinking through that this evening. But where are you, Briona, and what are you drinking?

**Briona Lamback:** Yeah, so I'm in Baltimore, my hometown, and I'm also drinking some red wine. And it's Zinfandel. It's really good.

**Matt Bowles:** Listen, we got to start this off by talking about Baltimore because that is one of my favorite cities in the United States, and I feel like people sleep on it. They do not know about Baltimore. It was probably a couple of years ago that a friend of mine was having a destination birthday party, and we said, we will meet you in any city in the country that you want. You want to go to New Orleans, Miami, LA, whatever. She's like, I want to go to Baltimore for my birthday.

So, we all flew into Baltimore and had a destination birthday party. We've been talking about it ever since. It was amazing. And I also lived in DC for like seven years, so I was up in Baltimore a good bit. So, for people that do not know about Baltimore, can you share a little bit about what you love about Baltimore and what you would put people onto who want to come and experience the city?

**Briona Lamback:** I love that your friend came to Baltimore for a birthday. That's really cool, a destination birthday. Yeah, there are so many things to love about Baltimore, honestly, I got to start with the people.

Such a Black city, which is one of my favorite things about it. Growing up there, Black culture was all around you, specifically black Baltimore culture, black mid-Atlantic culture, very specific to us, and loved growing up there. And my family's been in Baltimore since the great migration, basically. So, a lot to love. Obviously, the food. Seafood is king. We know this crab is king. I've been cracking crabs open since I was a kid. The rite of passage and something that I love. But we also have just great food in general.

A lot of people try to say DC, but I think we got the food, honestly, I love the location of Baltimore, not to talk about places outside of it, but we're, like, in the perfect area of the country where you can get to a bunch of other cities within a few hours. And so, I'm always in DC. In other parts of Maryland, it's a quick

trip to New York. The airport is not far. And then what would I put people on, too, honestly, I'm going to bring it back to the food.

I think we have some of the best food in the country. People don't necessarily come to Baltimore for food, and if they do, it is seafood. But we have great brunch places. One of my favorites is called water for chocolate. There's a debate about if we invented the snowball or if New Orleans did. However, the snowball is a big deal. We just have great food all around.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, the other thing that you have, in my opinion, is one of the best street art scenes in the country. The graffiti art in Baltimore is absolutely incredible. One of the highlights of my trip was that I went on the bike and brunch tour. Big shout out to them, local black-owned business in Baltimore. And it was just an absolutely incredible experience, because whenever I go to a city anywhere around the world, one of the first things that I will look for is to see if a graffiti art tour is there.

Because one of the things that I love in terms of how to experience a city is to experience the city through the eyes of the street artists who are from that city. How do they represent their own city? What critiques do they have of some of the dynamics in their city, and so on and so forth? And so, I always look for that when I travel around the world. And Baltimore has a number of street art and graffiti tours I know, and it is an absolutely incredible scene. So, for me, in addition to the inner harbor and the food and the nightlife and all of that, the street art was top-notch.

**Briona Lamback:** And it's funny that you say that. Because I also. I guess I never really thought about it until now, but I do quite enjoy seeing street art, specifically graffiti, when I'm traveling around the world, too. And my first internship in college was actually at a place in Baltimore called Jubilee Arts.

It's still around. They do, like, community programming in the historic Sandtown Winchester neighborhood in west Baltimore. And one of the projects I worked on was a mural arts project, a youth mural arts project, and there's a really popular muralist named Ernest Shaw. And I spent the summer getting to know these kids and helping with the mural projects. I didn't pay anything. I'm not an artist in that regard, but it was fun. And, yeah, that just brought back a memory for me.

**Matt Bowles:** It was an incredible tour, because the portion of the tour we went through, West Baltimore, like, there were literally people sitting on their stoop. They knew the woman that was leading our tour, because she runs a company, she's local, right? Been there her whole life. And they went. Would go and get their bikes, the local folks, and then jump on the tour and ride with us.

So, like, when we were going through West Baltimore, Baltimore, probably half the tour was literally just local folks from the neighborhood that were just riding with us. I mean, it was such an incredible experience. And then we went to get a bite to eat, and they hung out and ate with us. And it was, like, really an incredible local cultural immersion. The same as if you travel around the world and you want to sort of immerse locally. This was an incredible way to do it domestically in the city of Baltimore and was really one of my fondest, I think, recent domestic travel experiences in the US. It was amazing.

**Briona Lamback:** Yeah, I love that so much.

**Matt Bowles:** So, let's talk a little bit about your story and your trajectory. Briona, can you share a little bit, when you think back, growing up in Baltimore, how did your initial early interest in world travel start to develop?

**Briona Lamback:** Honestly, the most travel that I did as a kid, like many African American folks, was familial travel and road trip travel. I spent summers with my family, me, my sisters, and my dad and my mom, going to places like Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Driving there, we spent a lot of time in, like, the Williamsburg, Virginia area, going to all the water parks. And then at one point in my teenage youth, I moved to another state. And so, we spent time traveling up and down the East Coast.

We had family in Brooklyn, so all the travel was by car. And one of my favorite things about that was my mom would always pack these lunches for us. If you've heard of shoebox lunches throughout history, back during Jim Crow times, when Black folks couldn't stop at a restaurant along the way, couldn't stop at a hotel, couldn't stop at a gas station, they would pack foods that are easy to carry, that don't go bad, right. And I don't know if my mom knew this when she was doing it, but we didn't put them in shoeboxes, but we were carrying some of those same things. Fried chicken.

You don't have to warm it up. Once it's cooked, it can be at room temperature. We would have some type of bread, maybe a cornbread or a roll, and then some type of, like, veggie or something. And that's what we ate on these road trips. And so that was really my travel experience as a kid.

And I didn't travel far where I needed to get on a plane until I was, like, 19, I believe. My best friend was living in Los Angeles, and we all went to go visit her, and that was the first time I got on a plane and went really far.

**Matt Bowles:** And how did the international part of your travel begin?

**Briona Lamback:** So, the first time I got on that plane internationally, I was 20. And first passport, going to London to study abroad. My study abroad story is also kind of, ooh, it just happened. I was in college, it was my sophomore year, and my mom chatting at work with her coworkers, and one of them mentioned how their child was going to study abroad, and she was just coming home, telling me, Briona, I think you should try this.

It sounds cool. Just go figure out what's going on at your school and if you could study abroad. You know, my mom didn't really. We grew up differently. I had a lot more privilege than she did. She grew up in East Baltimore in the projects, a single mother. Travel was not a part of her life until she was very much into her adulthood. And I was like, okay, I'm definitely doing this. And the only option was London, I think somewhere in Asia. I want to say China and maybe Australia, something like that. And I kind of was just like, well, London feels the most familiar. It's English speaking. I didn't know much about the black culture there, but I was like, it's a big city, so I knew it had to be somewhat diverse. So, I was like, let me just go there.

I just picked London. And, yeah, I went for a semester during my junior year of college. At the time, I could have chosen to go for a year. If I knew what I know now, I would have gone, but I went for one semester, the best time of my life, and I got the travel bug.

**Matt Bowles:** Let's talk about London. For people who do not know about London, can you share a little bit about your experience there, including what you found about the diversity of the various African diaspora communities that are such a prominent part of London?

**Briona Lamback:** Yeah, the time in London was beautiful. Honestly, the time went by so fast, but I just have such vivid memories of that time in my life. When I came back, I was definitely one of those annoying

people who was finding a reason to talk about London every 5 seconds for months. That's how much it impacted me. But, yeah, when I was there, my school, London Metropolitan University itself, was very diverse.

So, I think that's the first place I saw it. It's the first place I made friends. There were folks from all over, honestly, in my program, Black folks, but Black folks that weren't American, which was my first time meeting Black people. Besides, I have some extended family from the Caribbean, but for the first time really interacting with folks my age from the continent, so that was very cool. Folks from all over Europe, folks from locally in London, I met everyone.

So, I opened my eyes to the world, but also to black folks across the diaspora and what life looks like for us in these different pockets of the world. And so, because I was young, I'm still young in turn, but I was very much young in turn at the time. I was out all the time, nightlife, eating college events, meeting folks. And so, I really got to learn more about black London culture, which a lot of it is Caribbean culture, infused with that London identity. But you got folks from all over West Africa, west and Central Africa, too. East Africa even. I was everywhere, eating everything. If there were black events, I was there.

**Matt Bowles:** Can you talk a little bit about that west African culture in particular and the Afrobeat scene in London?

**Briona Lamback:** Yeah. So, when I was there, I think the first big Afrobeat song that I can remember being popular to me was 'Ye' by Burna Boy. Every party we went to 'Ye, ye, ye, ye, ye, ye uh huh. Ye, ye, ye...' and that was our anthem. If we went out and we didn't hear that, it was a problem.

And so that's my earliest memory of falling in love with afro beats. And that song really made it so no matter where you went, you would hear afro beats at a party. Often, we would go to parties. There's a website called Resident Advisor.

I don't know how popular it still is, but it was popular then. You could literally go in, type in the genre, type in the night and find the best events, find the Afrobeat's events, find the hip hop events. And that's when me and my friends did well.

**Matt Bowles:** You put together a London black nightlife and restaurant guide. Can you share any tips that you might have for folks that would like to go and experience London and particularly the black culture in London?

**Briona Lamback:** Because I'm a foodie, for me, everything starts with food. So, one of my favorite places to go and just eat your way through, not even just black London, but black culture while you're in London is called Black Eats LDN. They didn't have it when I was there, but I visited in more recent years and I'm not sure if it's monthly or. I think it's semi-regular, though you can plan a trip around it. They do it often enough.

And it's basically just a big market full of Black-owned restaurants popping up in different stalls. Amazing Ethiopian food, you can find Ghanaian food, of course, Nigerian food, there's Caribbean food from all these different countries. And even one time I went there was a soul food place. And so, you can find everything you want and eat your way through Black London. So Black Eats LDN.

Another food slash other shops place is Brixton village. You have got to go to Brixton, period. One of my favorite pubs there is the Prince of Peckham. It's a black owned bar and they just do like a good dance night

there. You can go on like a Saturday night and vibe out, but you can also go and eat. And they have good bar food.

And the last thing is called recess. It's an event that happens again semi regularly, especially in the summertime. Worth planning a trip around. It's just like a day party, but it's good vibes, good music, Black folks from all over, and highly recommend going.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, I know that you loved London so much you went back to do your master's degree in London. Can you share a little bit about what your master's degree was in? And then share a little bit about the short film that I watched that you did as part of your master's degree.

**Briona Lamback:** Oh, thanks for watching. I haven't watched it in a while. I need to. So, in 2018, I had been working for about a year and a half after graduation, and I was not ready to be an adult and I wanted to travel more, of course. So, I started looking into master's programs in London and I came across my study abroad alma mater, London Metropolitan University. They had a scholarship specifically for US students at the time. And I applied. I got it. It was a full ride, and I quit my job as soon as I found out and packed my bags.

And so, my master's program was in digital media. So that's what my master's is in. It was a great program. Loved it. It's useful in my career, obviously, as a journalist. But honestly, the highlight for me during that time wasn't really my degree. It was the people I met getting to live in London again and getting even more access to Europe to travel. And during that time, I went to the continent for the first time. I went to Morocco. And so, a part of my degree program, one of the classes was a TV and film class, and everyone had to make a documentary. I have never made a documentary in my life.

Very nervous and didn't want to do it. But I knew it would be cool in the end, something to really put my time into and be proud of, and I am. And so, I spent the semester well, first learning more about film and just going around the city and shooting things and getting used to the cameras. And when it came time to pitch what my story was going to be about, I knew it was going to be about Black folks. That's just me.

And I knew it was going to be about travel because now I had the travel bug. And at the time, I already. I'm sure we'll talk about it. But I had already started my travel company, and so that was always in the back of my mind, too. And so, yeah, I made a documentary called Free at Last, the Black Travel movement. It's on YouTube.

I interviewed a bunch of folks that I met while I was in London. There's a mix of folks, some African Americans, some West Africans, some Caribbean Americans, and my friend, who is French, and also from Cameroon, helped me film it. So, it was a great experience. I don't consider myself a filmmaker by any means, but I'm very proud of it, and I'm glad I got to do it.

**Matt Bowles:** Can you talk about the impact that your travels up to that point had on you, both in terms of the actual places where you were able to go and experience and spend time, but also the other travelers and including the Black folks that you interviewed as part of the film and meeting them and learning about their experiences? What impact did all of that have on you at that point in your life, and how did that shape your future trajectory?

**Briona Lamback:** I often am afraid to do things. I mean, we all are, but I'm a naturally shy person, a bit of an introvert, but I can be extroverted when I need to, doing the film, having to reach out to people, some of

them who I knew but didn't know that well, others who are my friends and explain my vision for the film, but also for Black folks and for the world at large. And having to convey my ideas to them and get folks to participate impacted me in a way and prepared me for my travel business and for my career in travel journalism. Didn't know that at the time. But in hindsight, yeah, it just helped me realize that much more.

How much a part of my, not even just professional mission in life, but a part of who I am is connecting Black folks globally. I think doing that film was very necessary and a part of my journey that I often forget about. So, thank you for reminding me of it.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, I also want to ask you about your journey traveling to the continent and spending time there and spending time in different places there. You mentioned you're very first time was the trip to Morocco. Can you take us back and share a little bit about what that trip was like and the impact that had on you going to the continent for the very first time?

**Briona Lamback:** Yeah. So, I went to Morocco with my friend, and I don't even know how to explain it, but I just felt I had finally made it. You know, as African Americans, we learn about Africa in so many different parts of our lives, whether it's from family, from movies and media, a little bit at school, but your entire life, you hear about this place that we call the motherland and that we know is a part of us but that we don't have a direct connection to. And so, getting to Morocco, one, it was easy from London. It was close.

I was like, oh, okay, I got to make this happen because it's right there. So glad that I did. I went to Marrakesh, spent all the time there, and got to stay in a traditional Riyadh for the first time. I was with my friend, who's half African American, half Nigerian, and she had never been to the continent at that point either. We were both having a moment of feeling reconnected, even though we're not Moroccan, but we're here on the continent. It was a big deal. And so, I look back on that trip very fondly as well. It got me started.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, I, of course, want to talk to you about Ghana, a country that you and I both have a huge love for. We've both been there multiple times. We were both there in 2019, although at different times during that year. Can you share a little bit about your very first time going to Ghana? And for folks that have never heard about the year of return, and they don't know about that context. Can you explain what that was in the context in which you first went to Ghana?

**Briona Lamback:** Yeah. So, leading up to 2019, the year before, all over social media, I had been seeing all these Black celebrities, outlets like Essence, Boris Kojo, the actor who's Ghanaian, and a bunch of other people were there, and they just kept talking about 2019. The year of return. Everybody's going to Ghana. They were really pushing it.

And at the time, I'd always been interested in black history, but I wasn't writing about black history professionally like I do now. And so, I'm just, what is this? What are they talking about? And I finally started clicking through and finding out. And 2019 marked 400 years since the first, at least recorded, first enslaved people left Accra, specifically the Jamestown area, the historic area, and ended up in Jamestown, Virginia.

So, the Ghanaian Tourism Board was inviting folks from all over the diaspora, whether you have direct lineage there or elsewhere, to come back and experience Ghana, learn about Ghana, and reconnect with that ancestral history. And I was ready from the beginning. I was, oh, I'm going in 2019. I don't know how



I'm getting there, or who I'm going with, but I'm going wildly enough. My first time in Ghana in 2019 was also my first group trip for my travel company.

**Matt Bowles:** So, can you talk about what your first experience in Ghana was like? When did you go, what time of year? And then in that special year of return, 2019 in particular, what was that experience like for you and for the group that you went with?

**Briona Lamback:** Yeah. So, I went during the iconic time known as [Detty December](#), and I went in 2019. Of course, I just kept hearing folks talk about coming in December, coming in December, and it was around the holidays, so it was perfect. Because I already had some time off work. And like I said, I was ready to do my first group trip.

I had started my company a few years prior, but I was just planning personal travel for folks that I knew and some folks that I didn't know, but never my first group trip. And that was always a part of the mission from the beginning. So, I saw it as an opportunity to start that leg of the business. Yeah, I went. I connected with a few folks online before I went.

My photographer, David, and my friend now shout out to him. He literally was going through the hashtags on Instagram, and I was hash-tagging everything to try to get people to come on this trip. He messaged me and asked if we needed a photographer. The last thing I needed to make this trip happen was a photographer, so I took it as a sign, and we've been rocking together ever since. And so, I connected with him before, and I did have some friends from London who were either Nigerian or Ghanaian and had been before, so they were kind of giving me advice.

So, I didn't feel completely oblivious going there. But it was a brand-new experience. And for me, I think about December 2019 so often. I've written poetry about it. I've written a few articles about it.

It's hard to put into words, but it's etched in my memory forever. When I got there, it sounded cliché to some folks, but there was an instant feeling of home. I was so happy to be there. And I've been to plenty of [Detty December](#), everyone since then. And something about 2019 just doesn't leave me.

It was a moment in time, and for the folks that were there, they knew we were a part of history. And I know for a fact that so many people were changed by that. Whether you felt that feeling of home like I did, so many people did. I know people on my trips who met a partner there, a boyfriend or a girlfriend and ended up in a relationship for me and for others, we met future people we would travel with. And so, the connections were just undeniable. The connection to the land and back to each other, which is what I care about most, was undeniable and definitely changed my life.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, I want you to explain to people what [Detty December](#) all is about. Because I was in Ghana in 2019. I was not there in December that year. I was there in like July. And I spent about a month in Accra. And it was unbelievable. I mean, it was absolutely lit. I was on Labadi Beach for the Sunday beach party where they have like 5000 people just show up. There are DJ's lining the beach. It is absolutely unbelievable.

And then people are like, yeah, you got to come back in December. I was, how can it be more lit than this? They're like, just come back in December. You'll see. So I went back in December, in 2022, turning into 2023, and I was there and did the whole [Detty December](#) and New Year's party.

But can you share for folks that have never been, what is it like? And what would they experience if they were to go to Ghana in December?

**Briona Lamback:** You're right. It is lit all year round. Accra, Ghana, everything is lit anytime. But December specifically is a period for years way before 2019 where folks with direct lineage to Ghana, usually their parents, maybe they're second-generation American or somewhere in Europe would come back home like most of us do. We travel to see our family during the holidays.

But for folks in the diaspora, they were traveling across oceans and continents to get back home. It was always a celebration and a homecoming. But people outside of the Ghanaian community didn't really know about it. But 2019 kind of put it on the map for the rest of us. [Detty December](#) is a beautiful time to be in Ghana.

It's that period. It's the entire December. But it's specifically that last week through the new year's that most people are there. And it's a lot of music. There's a music festival called Afro future. That is a beautiful time. Afro beats, artists, there's history. A lot of folks on my trips, I always take people to Cape Coast to visit the slave castles, but they're more like dungeons. So, there's that historical and culture element in the nightlife. Unmatched.

When people say in Ghana, you stay at the club until the sun comes up. It is not a lie. There just seems to be this buzz and energy in the air that everybody is bitten with. It's infectious. And it's a beautiful time.

**Matt Bowles:** It's really incredible. And it's amazing how many folks come from all over the world for like. It is just remarkable how diverse the African diaspora is at [Detty December](#). And the parties and the DJs, they know who's in the audience. So, like the DJs will play a song from Atlanta and they'll shout out Atlanta. Or they'll play a song from New York, and they'll shout out New York. Or they'll play a song from South Africa, and they'll shout out Johannesburg. Or they'll play a song from Nigeria, and they'll shout out Lagos. It's just people from all around the world, obviously London and all of these other places. And it was just an incredibly diverse group of folks.

And just this really incredible sort of cultural coming together of the diaspora. And then the parties are just insane. I mean, the Afro future goes till whatever 2:33, and then they go to the after party at Bloomberg or wherever it is, which goes till seven or so. And then there's. But it's around the clock and there's day parties. So whatever hours you personally want to keep, you can just do that. Cause it's 24/7.

**Briona Lamback:** Exactly. Pool, beach, day parties, boat parties, day trips to places outside of Accra are everything. And I love that you talked about the diversity of the diaspora. That's a present at [Detty December](#). It's really a beautiful thing to see. And every year, I'm a little bit more, not even shocked, but just, like, in awe of how many more people are learning about it.

And for a long time, you know, Ghana has always been a pillar when it comes to the diaspora, specifically Pan-Africanism. You have folks like Muhammad Ali and Maya Angelou going to Ghana back in the day to make those connections and realize the importance of us being connected globally. And so, I think we're just continuing that, expanding on that. And this year, I had folks for the first time join me for [Detty December](#) from Australia. One of the women was Nigerian, but Australian.



And when I saw her registration come through and I saw the address, I was like, what? It blew my mind. I knew Black people were everywhere, obviously, but I'm just like, people are quite literally coming from every corner of the world to this beautiful place during a great time.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, I also want to ask you about the Cape Coast, which you mentioned. I went there as well while I was in Ghana, and I just have been telling everybody how important it is to go there. I've read your article on it, in which you referred to it as, 'a harrowing but necessary experience'. And I'm wondering if you can share a little bit about your experience going to Cape Coast and why you. You feel it's really important.

**Briona Lamback:** Yeah, it's crucial for me, that first experience, much like [Detty December](#) itself, is hard to describe. Harrowing is one of the best ways I can describe it. As a descendant of enslaved Africans, there's no way I could step foot in Ghana and not go to Cape Coast Castle or Elmina. It's a part of the puzzle, and that's why I feel like it's necessary. You know, there's a notion out there, which I totally disagree with, that African Americans specifically don't have a culture.

You hear about it a lot throughout diaspora talks and stuff. We very much do have a culture. It's just so global and popular that oftentimes it doesn't get credited to us. It's just an American thing when really Black people invented it. Right?

So, I don't like the idea of saying that we don't have any culture. So that's why we need to go back to Africa to figure it out. No, we were stolen from these places and spread all over the Americas. And we, like everyone in the Caribbean and South America, in Central America, we created our own cultures. We adapted.

But to go back and get that piece of the puzzle is a very necessary thing. You literally get to walk through the dungeons and see where folks were enslaved, and it just takes you beyond the history books. And we know that the history that we're taught in schools, specifically in the US, is not accurate, and is not always honest. I think it's important for Black folks and everyone who goes to Ghana to make their way to Cape Coast and learn about that history for yourself.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, I know you are leading a trip to Ghana this December where people will be able to experience both that history and also all of the parties and music of [Detty December](#). Before we get into the specific details of that trip, though, I want to contextualize it and talk about your company, [Buoyant Travel](#), which is organizing and offering this trip. Can you just give us a little background, and context in terms of why you founded [Buoyant Travel](#) and then what's unique about it, what it offers, and who it serves?

**Briona Lamback:** I started Buoyant again while I was in college. I was a senior, and I had an entrepreneurship minor, and a part of the course, the Capstone course, was doing a shark tank style pitch competition again with the nerves, very nervous. Didn't want to do it, almost quit. But I knew I had to see it through. And so, the business that I pitched wasn't called Buoyant at the time.

It was called you, me, travel. But it was the idea of Buoyant, bringing Black people together, connecting the African diaspora globally through travel. I won second place in that competition, and I won \$600 in startup funds. So, it really put confidence in me, the battery in my back to make it happen. 2019.

I took the first group trip to Ghana in December, and we've been doing it ever since. What makes Buoyant different? There's a lot of travel companies out there. Love them. My friends own some of the black-owned ones.

But what really makes Buoyant different is from the beginning, it's been a part of my mission to take Black people to destinations rich in black history and culture. And we know Black folks are everywhere, so we have a lot of places to choose from. But I prioritize places like Ghana because I know that Black people want to connect with that history and that culture and love places like Bali. But you can go there with anyone. But especially when you come on a [Buoyant Travel](#) to Ghana or Brazil and other places that we go, I want.

**Matt Bowles:** To ask you if you can expand on a quote from your website that says, on the [Buoyant Travel](#) website, 'For us, travel is all about education and liberation. We see travel as a critical component of black freedom'. Can you talk more about that?

**Briona Lamback:** So, outside of my travel journalism work and the work that I do at Buoyant, I'm a professional black history writer. So black history and themes of black liberation always make their way into my travel writing, almost always. And like I said, Buoyant is built on that foundation of connecting with black history and culture. And so, yes, we're turning up like we do in [Detty December](#), but there's always some educational component, a history tour, a cooking class where we're learning about, you know, like in Brazil, where these Brazilian foods with African roots are coming from. And so, the education component is always going to be there.

For me, it's more than just turning up. We got to learn some of this black history when it comes to black liberation, it's just who I am. It's a part of my life's work, no matter what I'm doing. Writing poetry, history, travel, food, organizing trips, the mission is always for Black people to be free. And a lot of people think we're free because we have freedoms more than our ancestors did.

But globally, we are very much still not free. Black liberation, to me, and freedom is Black people being able to self-determine our lives in every way. Food, education, shelter. Right. And although travel is a privilege and a luxury, and I know that all people cannot do it, for the folks who can, the movers, the shakers, the thinkers who can, it's important for us to do it. We have to be connected in order to see ourselves as connected people on a similar path to liberation. And so, I think travel can help that.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, you mentioned Brazil, which is another place that I have got to talk to you about, one of my favorite countries on the planet of Earth. I keep going back. I keep going to different places in Brazil. It's so huge. It's, of course, 50% of the people in South America live in Brazil. It's a massive country. Just this past December, I spent almost a month in Salvador de Bahia, which I know is one of your favorite places for people, though, who have never been to Salvador. They've never been to Brazil. Can you share a little bit about your experience with Brazil and with Salvador?

**Briona Lamback:** Yes, I love Brazil as well, and I have so much more to see. So much more. But I first went a few years ago, I believe it was 20, 21? I got invited there to speak on a panel about Afro-tourism. And the Afro-tourism movement has been a thing in Brazil.

They kind of coined the term for a very long time, and there's a festival there called Salvador Capitol Afro festival. It's held every November in Salvador de Bahia Brazil. And if you don't know that city is considered

the blackest city outside of Africa. I didn't know that until I went until I started learning more about Afro-Brazilian history.

But more enslaved Africans ended up in Brazil than in the US. There are a lot of Black people in Brazil, and, like, you know, I travel for black history and culture. So, I first went to that festival, and I've been back since, added Rio to the list, been to Salvador a few times, and it's just a beautiful place. I mean, similar to Ghana. It's always lively.

You can have a good time any time of the year. You're going to get your fix of black history and culture. The food is amazing, literally Brazil's national cocktail, the Caipirinha, is, like, tied to black history, and it's amazing.

**Matt Bowles:** Can you explain that and give that background on the Caipirinha? Because that is one of my all-time favorite drinks. So, can you share that content text?

**Briona Lamback:** So good. Yeah. The Caipirinha is made with cachaça.

**Matt Bowles:** Cachaça, lime and sugar.

**Briona Lamback:** Exactly. Very similar to a margarita, but the Brazilian version, just for folks wondering what the taste is like, it's great. And, yeah, it has, like, much of black history around the world. In the Americas, enslaved Africans, at one point were the ones producing the Cachaça, and it had this foamy, frothy texture, and they described it as Cachaça, and it turned into the drink's name later on. So, they didn't know they were making the cocktail, but they were the ones producing the sugar and helping produce the liquor and consuming the liquor and sometimes against their will.

And now it is Brazil's national cocktail.

**Matt Bowles:** The national drink. Absolutely. And if you have a good one, it is an emotional experience. I mean, it is just magical. Now, I caveat this by saying that it is easy to have a bad one.

There are a lot of places where you can go and order a Caipirinha, and it's not going to be great. It's going to be too sweet; it's going to be too sour. It's not made perfectly well, but if you go to Brazil and you go to a place and that make you a perfect Caipirinha, it will move you emotionally. Like, you'll drink that, and you'll be like, what is even happening in my life right now? Like, it is an incredible experience.

**Briona Lamback:** It is. And the Casassa that they have there is different than what you can find in the US. So, it's kind of hard to replicate when you come home from what I've found. But I did get a bottle last time I was there, and I've been pinching at it. Because I don't want it to go away yet.

**Matt Bowles:** You got to be very careful, because whenever I am in the US, or for that matter, any country that is not Brazil, and I see a Caipirinha on the list of cocktails, I will ask, do you have Brazilian cachaças? Because that is the specific spirit that is required in order to make a Caipirinha. And sometimes places will be like, oh, no, we just use rum or like some other spirit. I was like, I will be ordering a different cocktail tonight. Thank you for clarifying. I appreciate that. That's why I asked the question.

But if you are in a serious cocktail place, and I know you are very appreciative of serious cocktail places, and they say we do have Brazilian Cachaça, so we do know how to make a real Caipirinha and so on. And I will order one where I can find them made properly. But I am telling you, if you have that one perfect Caipirinha, it can change you as a person.

**Briona Lamback:** Yeah, very much so. And like you said, I'm a cocktail lover. I learned how to bartend when I was living in London at a small little bar in east London in Dalston. At one time, I had a cocktail business too. Ever since I learned how to make cocktails, I really appreciate them. And when you have a good one, kind of like an espresso martini, if the next place doesn't do it right, it's not the same.

**Matt Bowles:** Alright, we're going to pause here and call that the end of part one. We are going to link up everything we have discussed in this episode in one place. Just go to [themaverickshow.com](http://themaverickshow.com) and go to the show notes for this episode. We are also going to include a special link. If you would like to join Briona on her [Buoyant Travel](#) trip to Ghana this December and experience [Detty December](#) with Briona and an amazing group of people, you can get a special Maverick show discount. And that is all going to be in [the show notes](#) along with everything else we've discussed in this episode. So just go to one place at [themaverickshow.com](http://themaverickshow.com). and go to [the show notes](#) for this episode. And remember to tune in to the next episode to hear the conclusion of my interview with Briona Lamback. Good night, everybody.