



PHOTO CREDIT: CHANTAL SPIEARD

MARCIA KIMPTON

FINDING JOY THROUGH TRAVEL, FILMMAKING, AND MINDFUL LIVING

Marcia Kimpton is a multi-talented filmmaker, author, and world traveler who has turned personal challenges into a source of inspiration for others. As the daughter of Bill Kimpton, the legendary founder of Kimpton Hotels, Marcia grew up immersed in a dynamic, sometimes complex family environment. Despite these challenges, she found solace in storytelling, yoga, and the transformative power of travel—tools that have helped her heal and live a life full of joy and purpose.

Your father, Bill Kimpton, had a profound influence on your life. What lessons or memories from him resonate with you the most, especially regarding his spirituality and love for travel?

My father was always traveling to Europe for vacation, and it was profound to hear his vision when he risked everything financially to make Kimpton Hotels. He left Wall Street to pursue his dream of making hotel rooms beautiful and affordable. I have risked everything for my dreams and like him, nothing was too big in creating a vision for a more beautiful world. He was an atheist until I was 30 years old and then he found Buddhism. He is the one that introduced me to yoga and meditation. Interestingly enough, I had always believed in God since I remember and studied all different religions my entire life, so he wasn't the one that showed me spirituality but he was the one that helped me begin a daily practice to connect to my higher self.

You've spoken about overcoming pain and finding inner peace. Can you share what that process looked like for you and how travel, yoga, and meditation contributed to your healing?

I believe everyone has serious obstacles in their life, and it's difficult finding inner peace. For me, the first step is finding your connection to your higher self and/or God. After that, it is about no longer being a victim to your circumstances but a victor. It took me years to figure this out, because as Hollywood kept on rejecting me I found it was affecting my peace of mind since I knew I was a talented, creative person. Once I began my yoga practice 3-4 times a week

at 32 years old (and most recently 6 days a week) everything in my life changed. I could really find my soul with yoga and meditation, and through this I learned the soul never dies nor changes, we just evolve with it when we bring more of the light of our soul into our body. It's up to us to find gratitude and peace with everything we do and not wait for the outside world to validate ourselves. Once I understood, this then real healing began and I learned to control my emotions and to not always react to the world's circumstances. Plus I learned to not live in fear anymore.

Your childhood was a mix of dysfunction and love. How did those contrasting dynamics shape your outlook on life and your storytelling as a filmmaker and author?

Great question. Everyday I listen to different spiritual masters and they all say the same thing in different ways: that until you have really felt unloved in the deepest painful places (for example childhood trauma), that is when you learn to unconditionally love the parts that are the dark shadows or that hidden trauma. My parents, which includes my stepfather, were all really good people and there was tons of love in both households. The problem is that all my parents grew up in dysfunction, so it was the same patterns playing out in raising children. Although better than my grandparents, it was dysfunctional. I think if it hadn't been that difficult growing up then I wouldn't have spent a lifetime trying to find peace. Many don't make finding happiness their number one objective, and I was determined to heal everything I went through, which was a lot of trauma. Now that I feel I am healed, all I want is to tell stories that bring joy and laughter or have a purpose to the story to help others. This was the goal with my movie "Bardo Blues." My brother was my best friend and a great artist who suffered from mental health issues. I was fortunate to escape mental illness because I started having meditation replace alcohol. I am here today because I found yoga and meditation, but my brother did not, and his condition was much more serious. I wrote the film "Bardo Blues" about his problems, and it was a way



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to combine my spirituality into a mystery film that took place in Thailand. Thailand is a place I loved traveling to that embodied the story of light vs dark, or heaven vs hell. I wrote the film to prevent his suicide. He did not see the movie unfortunately, but a portion of the profits go to helping those with mental illness. Finding a cure is something I dream of before I die, and if I can make an impact with a movie, a book, or a retreat, well then I feel very satisfied.

As someone who has explored more than 40 countries, what is it about experiencing new cultures that feels so transformative for you? Are there any specific moments that stand out?

I think if you are fortunate to travel the world you realize how many good people there are, and how many people are just grateful with so much less than most Americans. I love exploring the art, the culture, the food and of course the boutique hotels in each country because they are all so different and interesting. Most importantly, they are inspiring to my writing. There are so many moments that stand out, but one most specifically is when I visited Uganda. I was filming my travel show in Uganda and we filmed the stunning, majestic gorillas in the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest. After that we flew to near the Kibale National Park to see the ferocious chimpanzees where we stayed at the outstanding Kyaninga Lodge. This lodge had the best local people hired, gourmet food, luxurious rooms, and a glorious view (for a great price!) What made it so special was interviewing the UK owner who had moved to Uganda because he loved the country. He explained how he personally built every inch of this hotel. His wife gave birth there with a child with disabilities and realized the country did not have wheelchairs so he started a foundation. He got more locals hired to build bamboo wheelchairs that are now distributed throughout the entire country. I have to include the link to this wonderful, unique and very safe adventurous place to travel: kyaningalodge.com

I try to make a donation every time I go to a new country, so it felt wonderful to contribute back to this lodge.

In *Escaping the Hollywood Bardo*, you encourage readers to define success on their own terms. What advice would you give to someone struggling to break free from societal expectations?

I was forced to redefine success because I was not successful in Hollywood terms, but I certainly feel successful in finding happiness, creating movies, writing a book, and developing an app to find better travel and films. For a long time I believed success meant “making it” in Hollywood and making money, but real success is finding daily joy in just living. So many people are not happy and they have what is considered career success. I think the only way you can break free from societal expectations is to find your unique soul imprint that you brought to this earth to make an impact in your unique way. One of my best friends is a school teacher, and I frankly believe this is one of the most important jobs ever. While she was teaching 2nd graders for the last 20 years she realized she could write a book in her free time that helped the kids learn about how to save our environment in a cool, fun way. It’s called *Mimic Makers*. She found her talents of writing for children, then paired herself with a great illustrator and the next thing you know her book is published and is being put in schools. So find your joy, create more joy with your joy, and then you contribute your unique joy back to the world. It’s simple but very hard to do. Oh and stop caring about what others or society thinks because you’ll never find your “real voice” and then you’ll find real inner joy.

Your app, Kimpton Travels and Films, combines filmmaking and travel—your two greatest passions. What do you hope users take away from this platform, and how does it reflect your own journey? The creation of this app came out of the hours of me looking for good independent films and having everyone text me on a regular basis asking me what they should watch. I was called the walking “TV guide” as a child because I loved TV so much I memorized the schedule. Because I am an artist and I want the world to enjoy all the artists I love, I developed an app with my favorite movies. I bet half of them you have not heard of, and the goal is to upload 2-3 more new movies weekly. Another goal is to have a movie from each country that I suggest traveling to that you can watch and learn from the movie on your travels. Right now my travel app just lists my favorite places, restaurants, hotels, and artists, but it will soon expand to having cool roving reporters list their curated suggestions for traveling.

Yoga and meditation are central to your daily life. Can you describe how these practices have deepened your connection to joy and creativity?

I have been doing yoga and meditation for 30 years, so all I can say is each year gets better, lighter, and happier. Even if there are difficult periods that can last for months, I never give up my practice because it keeps me connected to God. 30 years ago and even 20 years ago I didn’t live with this kind of joy and nonstop creativity, but now I do. I believe that God/your higher self keeps building light into your body, and the more your soul comes in, that leads exponentially to more joy.

From your upcoming retreats to Bhutan and Hawaii, to your travel show *Bright Lights Late Nights*, your work seems to blend self-discovery with adventure. How do you maintain balance while pursuing such an ambitious, multifaceted career?

It always seems pretty easy because I love what I do so I am always in alignment. However, I got out of sync when I went to 8 countries in 5 months and produced 7 shows. On this particular trip I didn't have the time to do yoga, but I did always do a workout at the hotel gym and also did a quick meditation. In the end it was simply too much traveling. I knew I had pushed myself too far to accomplish too much in a quick time. I knew I could have health consequences, like a heart attack, if I didn't stop. When I start using alcohol on a daily basis to relax like I did in the past, then I know I am slipping. I am capable in my mind of pulling off a lot in one day, but it has to be in sync with the body, so I will never do that again. I am lucky that I am always on a new adventure because I get bored quickly, but this adventure can be a bit slower!

You describe finding solace in movies as a child. How has that early love of cinema influenced your work as a filmmaker and storyteller today?

My dad always picked a movie that the family could watch. He loved Steve Martin so we watched "The Jerk" a lot. He also loved taking us to the movie theater to see Charlie Chaplin movies, which rarely played at the theaters when we were really young. I also remember at 12 years old going for sleepovers and watching a lot of black and white classic movies with the amazing Katherine Hepburn. I know all of this had an impact on me. I never thought I could be a filmmaker until I reached my late forties, because women often don't get the opportunities to be directors nor are they told they can do it. I was always aiming to be a late night host, which I achieved at 38 years old, but when the show was taken off the air I realized that the one other thing I want to do is to make movies. I had gone to a 6 week course on filmmaking at NYU, but I taught myself everything by watching movies. I learned how to produce, write, and direct this way. In regards to acting, I took years of acting classes in NYC, so I thought if no one is casting me I will write a story and cast myself as the lead. Now I have 4 films completed and I am launching my film "AN AMERICAN ABROAD" this summer!

What's one story, person, or place you've encountered during your travels that profoundly changed the way you see the world, and why?

Well just this last October I wanted my daughter to see the gorillas because she couldn't see them when I was in Uganda, so I thought let's go to Rwanda since I hadn't been there. We arrived at 3 AM to the most amazing guide and driver, Patrick Ganza, whose smile was contagious. He gave us the history of his country and the unfortunate genocide and he asked us if we had seen the gorillas before. I explained that I was lucky to see them two days in a row two years before in Uganda, but wanted to see his beautiful country and experience this life-changing experience with my daughter. He explained he was saving his money to go to Uganda because it was

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half the price. I woke up the next morning and both my daughter and I had the same thought: I'll give my park pass to Patrick to go with my daughter. Well, transferring a government pass is not easy the day before and rarely allowed because there are so many rules and regulations. but we did it by the end of the day. We called him on FaceTime while he was getting a haircut to say he was going. He cried and couldn't understand why I wasn't going when we only had one day in the park. I explained it was better to give than to receive and now every time you drive your guests from Kigali to the Volcanoes National Park, Patrick could talk about the gorillas as an expert. Normally you just go with the guides associated with the park, but this time it was Patrick going. I felt so lucky I was fortunate enough to be able to give that gift. I changed Patrick's life because everyone's life changes when they see the stunning gorillas. I have to say Rwanda was so safe, so clean, with such incredible sustainable lodges, and the people were wonderful. I love Uganda too, but Rwanda rebuilt its country to sustain so many tourists and that is what they do very well.

Retreats and Future Projects

Looking ahead, Marcia has exciting plans for group wellness retreats in stunning destinations like Hawaii, Lake Tahoe, and Bhutan. These retreats combine yoga, massage, acupuncture, and nature experiences, offering participants an opportunity to recharge and reconnect. In addition, she continues to work on new film projects, further cementing her legacy as a storyteller and global citizen.

Marcia Kimpton's life is a testament to the healing power of creativity, travel, and mindfulness. Whether through her films, writing, or retreats, she inspires others to embrace their passions and live with purpose.

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