



Samantha Brown '92 » TRAVEL STAR

A mainstay on the Travel Channel for years, today the globetrotting host is in the Dallas Convention Center as part of a travel expo—addressing fans about her favorite spots in Europe, the friendly people in Rio de Janeiro, and throwing in a few plugs about her new projects for the network. How does she gear up for a big trip? For Brown, word of mouth and exploration can lead to that great dining or cultural experience. “I do a lot of research, but mostly it’s boots on the ground,” she says.

Getting to this point in her career was a long time in coming. Brown, who was born in Dallas and grew up in New Hampshire, majored in musical theater and worked on theater productions in what she calls a “very intense” program in the Department of Drama at the College of Visual and Performing Arts. A week after graduation, she was off to New York City for her career in theater—or so she thought. It would take eight years of auditions, off-off-off Broadway productions, an occasional cable TV appearance, and lots of waiting tables before her big break in 1999. Brown lucked out when she landed a role in a national campaign of commercials. “The writer for those commercials was friends with the head of the production company that was hired by the Travel Channel,” she says. “He told them, ‘You need to check her out. She’s very funny and into improv,’ and they were trying to cast a host for a show called *Great Vacation Homes*.”

Brown headed to Florida for an audition, and the gig was hers. Numerous shows followed as she became the face of the network from *Girl Meets Hawaii* to *Samantha Brown’s Great Weekends*

SAMANTHA BROWN poses for picture after picture as fans wait eagerly for a brief moment with the TV star.

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to *Passport to Latin America*, and her success is certainly a testament to tenacity and perseverance. Since that first show, Brown has been on the road filming as much as 230 days a year. Her outgoing personality, perky smile, and love for adventurous places connect with viewers. For those considering travel options, Brown always advises doing plenty of research and immersing yourself in the culture and “human” aspects of travel while on the road. “Talk to locals,” she says. “You will have a much more meaningful experience that is unique to you.”

After spending two years off the air when she and her husband had twins, Brown returned to the channel this year with three new projects. The first, *The Trip: 2015*, debuted in January. In the show, the Travel Channel selects a hot destination with several hosts highlighting some of the great places at that location—from the best places to eat to the best beaches. This year’s destination is Hawaii. “We create an itinerary that we then give away so that someone can have this trip of a lifetime,” she says.

The other two projects are *50/50* and *Track Down Samantha Brown* and will also debut this year. *Track Down* is basically a travel series, but viewers have to guess where she is located. “I give you different clues along the way,” she says. “We discover different aspects of the culture that maybe aren’t really talked about, that are hidden but are fun.” For *50/50*, Brown and co-host Chris Grundy ask unsuspecting people on the street where they would go for an extreme getaway for 50 hours, worth \$50,000. The catch? They must leave immediately.

Looking back, would she give up her job for a career on a Broadway stage after so many years of waiting tables? “No, I like my gig now,” she says with that trademark smile. “I’m very happy. I wouldn’t want to go back.” Envious travel fans would certainly understand why.

—Sean Chaffin

GLOBETROTTING WITH SAMANTHA BROWN

» **Friendliest city:**
“Rio de Janeiro. People come up to you from everywhere. You’ve got best friends right from the start.”

» **Favorite place in the United States:**
“The Grand Canyon. In general, our national parks take your breath away.”

» **Place she’d live outside the United States:**
“London. It’s a great hub to so many other great travel opportunities in Europe and Asia.”