



25TH ANNIVERSARY

Can you believe 2025 marks my 25th anniversary in the travel industry?! Over the last 25 years, I have been at the helm of 14 different series and even more specials. This means I've helped create

260 HOURS of travel television from grand hotels to night safaris... And I'm still going! While working on my 8th season of "Places to Love," I wanted to take a moment to look back at having one of the best jobs in the world. Come with me as I take a stroll down memory lane!



SAMANTHA BROWN'S PLACES TO LOVE

Samantha's 25th Anniversary Special

Season 8 Episode 803 | 27m 45s



PLACES AND STORIES TO LOVE



HOW DID I GET THIS JOB?

One of the questions I'm asked the most is "How exactly did you get this job anyway?"

Short answer: I auditioned.

Long answer: I grew up participating in theater and wound up graduating from Syracuse University with a degree in musical theater. As most acting hopefuls do, I moved to New York City and spent 8 years auditioning for roles while waiting countless tables. My big break came when I got a national commercial for a cable company in the role of Wendy Wire. A writer for that commercial was friends with a producer at the Travel Channel who just so happened to be creating a new show.

That show? "Great Vacation Homes."

FUN FACT

Get my [behind-the-scenes](#) on getting to my Travel Channel audition [here!](#)



THE FIRST JOB: GREAT VACATION HOMES

My very first job for “Great Vacation Homes” was in beautiful [Santa Fe, New Mexico](#), and to this day, that destination has a special place in my heart. I was 29 and thrilled to be traveling around the United States and peaking into these extravagant homes. One in the [Florida Keys](#) even included a 25,000-gallon indoor swim tank! And while I thought it would be six months of filming and then back to a life of waitressing and auditioning, Travel Channel and PineRidge Film and Television thankfully had other plans.

WHEN I VISIT SANTA FE

I always go to the Aspen Vista Trail for a moment to recalibrate and talk to the trees – just like I did when filming that very first episode.



WHEN I BECAME “THAT HOTEL GIRL”

While people enjoyed “Great Vacation Homes,” there was one big issue. They were all privately owned and not open to the public. So instead, we pivoted to places viewers could actually stay, and “Great Hotels” was born! For 3 seasons and 90 episodes, I visited the type of

5-star hotels and boutique resorts I'd never dreamed of staying in growing up. People started recognizing me on the street, and I became known as "That hotel girl."

ONE OF MY FAVORITE HOTELS

I get asked my favorite hotel a lot, and one of them has to be the stunning Inn of Five Graces in Santa Fe, New Mexico. It's probably the only hotel entirely homemade in the US!



THE SERIES THAT PUT ME ON THE MAP

The series that really catapulted my career was "Passport to Europe." For two years and 42 episodes, I traveled to 21 countries. It was during this show that I realized people were following what I did and where I went. At the time, it hadn't even occurred to me that people would watch for travel advice. I just thought I was entertainment!

THE EXACT MOMENT

I can pinpoint exactly when this shift happened. In Prague at this place where the guy sells strudel outside his home window. Believe it or not, he's still there now!



WHERE I LEARNED THE MOST VALUABLE TRAVEL LESSON

Shifting from Europe, I then spent a year traveling through Central and South America to film "Passport to Latin America." It was here that my entire perspective on travel shifted. While in Europe, it was all about checking off a list and sticking to an itinerary. Travel was all about keeping you in the past. But Latin America was completely different. There's no intense itinerary of must-sees, and as a result I could relax and spend more time in the culture as it

was today. I've truly never been the same traveler since.

MY MOTTO IN LATIN AMERICA

Embrace the idea of letting things happen instead of trying to make them happen.



A MOMENT FOR MY CREW

One of the things I wish you could all see is behind the camera and the camaraderie of my crew. We're a team and a family and have always looked out for each other. Often we'd be away for 22 days at a time with 14 hours work days – rain or shine! As my camera man, Stan Murphy, would say, "This is a marathon, Samantha, not a race."

FUN FACT

I *still* work with the same producer and editor I worked with on that Prague episode that changed my career.



THE BIRTH OF “PLACES TO LOVE” AND SAMANTHA BROWN MEDIA

After “Passport to Latin America,” I made many other shows and specials for the Travel Channel. When it came to an end after 15 years, I was sad, but I realized I had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I no longer had just to be hired talent for a network... I could own my work. The only problem? I knew I wanted to travel and host, but I had no idea what that would look like. That was until I was a keynote speaker at an Oregon tourism event and met [Kara](#)

Wilson. We hit it off the moment she took my twins on a joyride in her wheelchair, and I learned all about her life, including the bed and breakfast she runs from her family's old ranch.

Meeting her is when a bulb went off – I wanted to create a show where people like me could know people like her exist. It would be a show not just focused on destinations but on the people who make those destinations worth visiting.

MISSION OF PLACES TO LOVE

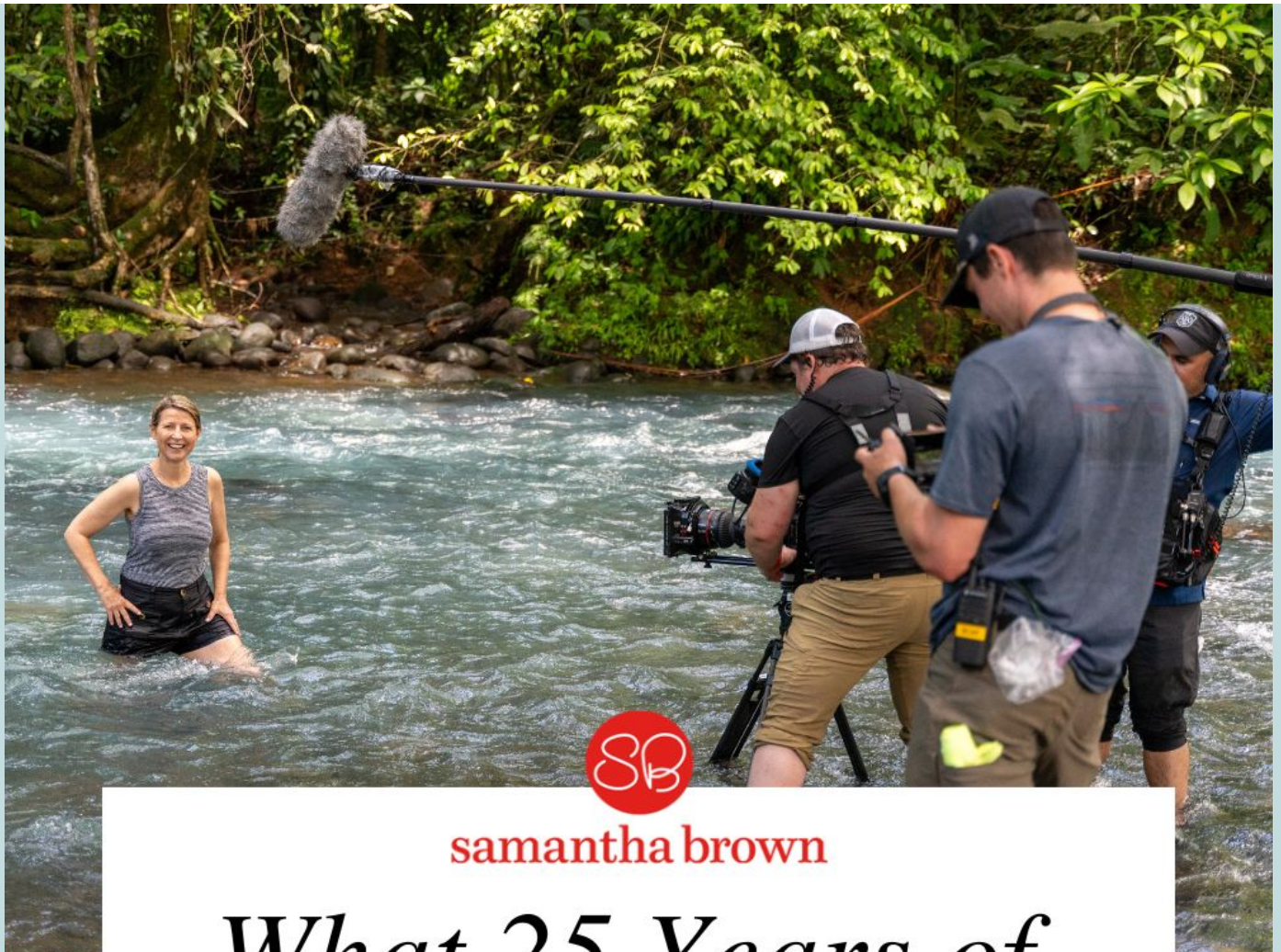
Keep being curious about the world through each other.



HOW HAS MY JOB CHANGED?

The question I get a lot these days is how has my job changed? For me it's how travel has changed overall. I once thought travel was all about seeing things – the exclamation points of a trip. These days, I really love the commas of travel. The moments where you slow down, allow yourself to just wander, and chat with people you otherwise would never have a chance to meet.

Like this post? Pin for later!



samantha brown

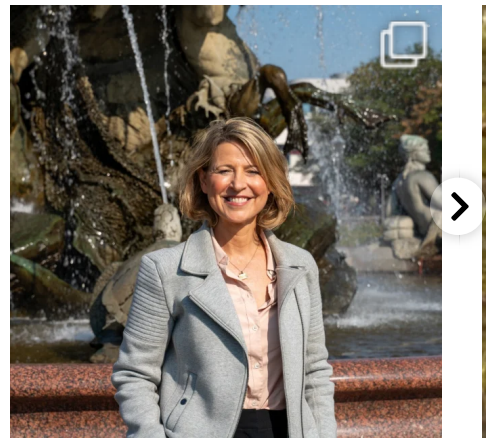
What 25 Years of Travel Looks Like



MY BIGGEST TIP

The next time you travel, don't just list must-dos. Focus on how you want to feel at the end of your trip and go from there.

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