

Opening Up With America's Best Friends

Hoda Kotb and Savannah Guthrie sit down to discuss everything from romantic getaways to squeezing into a size 10

On *Today*, it's Hoda Kotb and Savannah Guthrie's job to make you feel like you'd enjoy spending time with them. They're both co-anchors on the fifth-longest-running series in TV history, but do their jobs with flavors unique to them.

Kotb serves up stories throughout the show, but she's perhaps best-known for co-hosting *Today's* breezy fourth hour, formerly with Kathie Lee Gifford, now with presidential scion Jenna Bush Hager. Guthrie, on the other hand, is the grounding force of the show, using expertise gathered from her former career as an attorney to present political stories with enviable knowledge, all while maintaining a fun, approachable tone.

But they're far more than just likable talking heads. Both are best-selling authors. Guthrie hit number one with *Princesses Wear Pants*, a fairy tale with an empowering dash of feminism. Meanwhile, Kotb, also a children's author, has just released her first book for grown-ups, *I Really Needed This Today*, a collection of quotes sure to inspire. But some of their appeal has to be the smoke and mirrors of TV, right?

Nope. It turns out that the two women are exactly the kind of people you'd want as your closest pals. Both mothers to young children with ties to the DC area, it's hard not to want to sit down with them for a glass of wine to discuss their affection for travel, their dedication to volunteerism and their love of a splashy Halloween.

Luckily, we got to do just that. So grab a sip or two of chardonnay and read all the reasons we can't wait to catch up with them again.

They See the World

You're reading this in an airport, so chances are, you love seeing the world. Guthrie was born in Australia but grew up in Arizona. Law school brought her east to Georgetown University and she now resides in New York City. That alone is a lot of pins on a map, but Guthrie says that her favorite part of living where she does is the ease of travel.

"I love to go to London," she says. "When you live out East, it's actually a lot easier than you'd expect. You can sleep on the plane, hopefully, and then wake up and have a whole day, or you could really even do a long weekend there. So, that's one of my favorite things about it." She says that she and her husband, public relations consultant Michael Feldman, both experienced travelers, like to do the same thing in to Paris, just enjoying the City of Light for a quick romantic getaway.

Kotb and her financier boyfriend Joel Schiffman, together since 2013, also find romance abroad. "We've gone to the same place every year, twice a year, for the past I don't know how many years. It's kind of become our place for me and Joel, and it's a great little getaway," Kotb says of their favorite resort on Mexico's Riviera Maya. "It's amazing. It's for the soul, and it's become an important part of our lives," she adds. "But at the end of the day, if there's a beach, and there is sand, and there is sunshine, and there is Joel, I'm good."

However, all that soul-feeding beach time and fresh seafood wouldn't appeal to Kotb if it weren't for one key consideration of convenience: a direct flight. "I try not to take two planes, if I have a choice. I like to directly get somewhere," she admits.

Guthrie is pragmatic about her globe-hopping, too. As much as she loves being with her children, they usually stay at home. "Sometimes, we'll go places, and think it would be so fun to have the kids here," she says. "But when they're so little, two and five, it's not fun. Also, they don't really remember it, so I think we're saving our big family trips for when they're just a little bit older."

When they do come along, Guthrie says she adheres to "Pirate Rules," meaning restrictions about healthy food and limiting screen time go out the window "just to survive."

Where are the co-anchors headed next? It might be on a trip together. They agree that their bucket-list trip would be to Thailand. When Guthrie hears that Kotb shares the same goal, she excitedly blurts "Today Show Takes Thailand?" Hey, it could happen.

And not just because Kotb needs her beach time. She says that travel is important to her because of what it does to her world view. "I think that's the funny thing about travel. The more you do it, it's almost like the smaller the world gets. I feel like the world just gets smaller and smaller, the more you travel, because everything just seems so similar," she says.

They Love DC

However, Kotb says that growing up in the shadow of Washington, DC was just as much of a global education. "I feel like I had this kind of magical childhood," she reflects. The Egyptian-American grew up in Alexandria, which she says was just as diverse as the big city. "I mean, we used to call our streets the United Nations, because every single person on our street was from somewhere different in the world, and we didn't even realize it. We just were all together," she says.

Kotb graduated from the now-defunct Fort Hunt High School, but says that to this day, her mother says that they're from DC. "There's something about DC that's just the coolest," she agrees. "And it was just a cool place to grow up." She returns often to see her mother, who lives in Old Town, Alexandria, which Kotb calls "one of the most perfect places on Earth." She especially likes to head there on Saturdays for the farmers market, where she picks up a coffee, soaks up the sun and watches the ducks on the Potomac River.

Guthrie came to DC, later, for law school, but says that the city was just as formative for her. Like Kotb, Guthrie still frequently makes the trip back. She says that part of the appeal of the restaurant scene is that it's ever-changing and can't really pick a favorite. However, Off the Record Bar at the Hay-Adams Hotel and Quill, the bar at the Jefferson are standbys. "I end up there after work, meeting people," she says.

Often, it's meeting her Georgetown classmates that have stayed in town. Guthrie lived for years in the area between DuPont and Logan Circle and says she still has a soft spot for the neighborhood. Her favorite thing to do there? Run.

At the time, she was a serious runner and Guthrie still calls DC one of the world's greatest running cities. "In fact, if people are into running and they're just there for a couple of days, it's just so special to run

over to Memorial Bridge, or run around the monuments, run the Mall. It's flat, it's pretty, it's interesting," she shares.

They (Try To) Stay Healthy

As much as Guthrie once thrived on running, she admits that she's not always religious about it anymore. "I definitely feel like exercise is, for me, is always the first thing to go, it's the first thing to drop," she admits. "I'm not one of those people that loves to exercise, or even feels like, 'Oh, I have to exercise or I don't feel good.' I want to do it. I know I should do it. So, I do try to do it. But for example, I don't think I've done any actual real exercise in weeks, at this point." She says that her fitness level varies based on how busy things are with work and her kids. Sound familiar?

Besides running, she says there have been times that she's been passionate about dance cardio and aerobics, too. "But I'm like anybody, sometimes I'm into it and sometimes I'm not," she discloses.

Kotb agrees. She has it in her calendar to run every day at 4 p.m. with her daughters and their stroller, but admits that she's only done it once. "I feel like, sometimes you have to realize you can't be everything for everybody, and so you just do the best you can," she says. But if there's anyone for whom she wants to be everything, it's for the kids, who are both under age two.

She says that she used to work out for herself, to feel good but now she says it's because she wants to be there for her girls. "I'm not doing it just so 'Oh, can I fit into my stupid size 10 dress?' which is getting harder. I want to do it so that 10 years from now, I am on the floor still getting with those kids."

They Talk to the People Who Matter

There's no question that their kids are the most important people in their lives, but on a daily basis, Kotb and Guthrie meet luminaries who are changing the world. You would think that it would be old hat to them after years of delving into the deep questions with VIPs from politics, entertainment and current events. But Kotb says that's far from the case. "When you sit with a celebrity, sometimes you kind of feel like a little kid in a way" she reveals. "You feel weird. I do, at least. It's like you almost feel a little like a fangirl, as opposed to a grown woman interviewing a celebrity."

But that doesn't mean that their sit-down sessions with presidents and A-list actors leave a lasting impression. Kotb says that she's hard-pressed to remember a favorite interview and Guthrie agrees. "I would have to strain to tell you what was in the show this morning. Because I work really hard to get ready for it, and then as soon as it's over, I'm kind of onto the next phase," she says, adding that being up in the night with the kids might also contribute to her lack of short-term memory.

Whoever it is, Kotb says that the best interviews are the most honest ones. "I don't care if they're an A-list, or a B-list, or a C-list, or a D-list, or someone we've never heard of. It doesn't matter. But someone who speaks the truth, all of a sudden, life breaks through," she says.

What can viewers expect from the show this fall? The women agree that news will be on the forefront with the looming election year, but they're both stoked for the frivolity of Halloween, too. Last year Kotb was Elton John, while Guthrie was Cyndi Lauper. The previous year, they were surprisingly believable versions of Blake Shelton and Dolly Parton. They say there's been a meeting to discuss this year's costumes, but they can't disclose what they'll be, only saying it will be "epic."

They Make Time for Others

Despite schedules packed with work, parenting and travel, Kotb and Guthrie both find time to give back. Kotb is dedicated to a “tiny organization” in New York’s Spanish Harlem called Groove With Me. The charity teaches girls to dance from first grade through high school. “The graduation rates among the girls who are in this program is like 96%. In the school in general, the graduation rate, I think it's just over 50%,” she says. Seeing the girls’ lives change in real time brings Kotb great pleasure, she says.

Guthrie has two pet causes. Her uncle Pierce has Down syndrome, and she’s an ambassador for Best Buddies, but also has a Best Buddy herself, named Tara, who visits the show. Guthrie also works with the Dole Foundation, Elizabeth Dole’s charity for that helps military caregivers. “We always say, ‘If you're caring for the people that care for our veterans, then you are caring for our men and women in uniform,’” she says.

The fact that the women both work with charities that speak to them personally show that it’s no empty gesture. They truly care about the people around them. All the more reason to want to be their best friend.