

# SIT DOWN WITH A SYCAMORE



## Meet Brooklyn Samm

**ISU Degree:** 2017 - Accounting

**Current Job:** CEO of Blue Water Rafting

**Hometown:** Jasonville, Indiana; resides in Maui, Hawaii

Aloha Sycamores. This Indiana State University alumna is an accountant turned entrepreneur who owns Blue Water Rafting, a company that takes locals and tourists on whale watching and snorkeling tours in the beautiful island of Hawaii. Her work in accounting combined with her love for adventure has taken this Sycamore to work and live all over the world, including New Zealand and Australia. Hear her incredible story and how she is currently "living the dream."



### What made you pick your field of study?

Numbers don't lie is a slang I like to use. I have always been interested in growing businesses, looking at the inside of a business, and reviewing the balance sheets and profit and loss statements. My brain is very analytical. With that being said, accounting was the perfect field of study to go hand in hand with my brain and personality.

### When you were choosing where to go to school, what stuck out most to you about ISU?

I enjoyed visiting the Scott College of Business. I remember going there the first time and I automatically knew that it was for me.

### Tell me about life after graduation.

My senior year I did a paid internship with a tax company called Indy Tax Service. It was interesting but I decided taxes weren't for me. There are a lot of options with accounting, not just taxes. After graduation, I was debating on a graduate program to get my master's in accounting, but I decided I wanted to explore more and had a voice inside my head to go travel. That is when I found HelpX and eventually obtained my visa and started doing some accounting work overseas with a company called Farmlands. The

work was mainly accounts payable related. When my visa was up, I had to come back to America. I decided to buy a one-way ticket to Kauai, Hawaii. In Kauai, I worked at a hotel called the Princeville resort on the accounting team. That hotel was bought by 1 Hotel Hanalei Bay. It was interesting to see the closing process of a hotel from the Accounting side. I moved to Maui towards the end of the pandemic as the hotels closed, and I ended up working at a company called Blue Water Rafting in Maui. I did all the accounting work including other work like payroll, bookkeeping and HR work for this company that consist of 13 employees.

### What is your current job and what do you do? Tell me about some projects, accomplishments, etc. that you're proud of.

I am an entrepreneur now.

I recently bought Blue Water Rafting, the company I worked for, in February of 2023. The company has been around since 1985. I am now the Chief Executive Officer of this company and own 100% of the shares. I oversee everything inside the company. The company offers whale-watching tours and snorkeling tours and the website is bluewaterrafting.com. I worked for almost a year getting my loan approved with the SBA. It took a while to get this approved since I have lower equity, still being in my 20s, and the sell

price of all the shares was around 1.4 million dollars.

I am most proud of what happened in February, being able to buy all the shares of Blue Water Rafting. I worked so hard going to different banks, loan agencies, etc., trying to convince someone to give me a loan. It was not easy, and there were many sleepless nights. It has been my greatest accomplishment thus far.

### This is a two-part question: What's life like in Hawaii compared to Terre Haute? And, I'm sure for so many people that dream about being able to live and work in Hawaii, do you think you're living the dream?

Life in Hawaii is much different than living in Terre Haute. I remember in Terre Haute, going to indoor gyms, freezing in the winter months and defrosting my car, seeing snow, and being extremely hot in the summer with all the dramatic seasons the Midwest brings. I will say Midwest hospitality is something you will always miss. I gained the best of friends at ISU.

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After work in Hawaii, I go to the beach and go out for sushi. I do believe I am living my dream here. Saturdays, I go to the Farmers Market. I have always wanted to be an entrepreneur, and I have always dreamed of living in Hawaii. Maui is truly amazing. All the whales migrate here from Alaska for about five months of the year. I currently live close to a national park called Haleakala National Park.

**How did Indiana State University prepare you for your career and ultimately life—whether that be through experiences in the classroom or outside of it?**

Indiana State University prepared me in many ways. I gained structure with myself. I gained professionalism from my professors. I was able to practice on my social skills with all of my colleagues. ISU helped me gain the knowledge I needed to follow my dreams.

**What are some of your favorite experiences or memories from college?**

I always think back on a class I had in the Scott College of Business where we, as students, ran the café and did a presentation at the end. I was in charge of the accounting for the café. It was so fun to see all of my colleagues working together in a real-life scenario running a café.

**If you could go back in time and give college you or any current student any advice, what would it be?**

Enjoy every moment of being in college! Live more in the moment and don't worry so much about the future or the past. That will strip away your happiness and your ability to excel in what you are currently doing. Give your brain a break. Make your vision board to remind yourself daily why you are going to class. Hang out with your colleagues more and build as many friendships as possible. Ask your professors questions about their real-life jobs and past jobs to learn about all of the different options you have inside your chosen career.



**Sit Down with a Sycamore proudly highlights Indiana State University alumni who lead their industries, transform their communities, and represent what it means to WEAR BLUE!** If you know someone positively impacting their industry, business, or community and proudly represents what it means to be a Sycamore, please email [ISU-UniversityCommun@indstate.edu](mailto:ISU-UniversityCommun@indstate.edu) to nominate that person for Sit Down with a Sycamore. *Produced by University Communication, 2023.*