

THE VIP LOUNGE

For David Howse, ice cream and a massage are vacation musts. And don't forget a good book.

We talk travel with the new vice president of the Emerson College Office of the Arts, who still appreciates his aunts' acts of kindness

By **Juliet Pennington** Globe correspondent, Updated September 24, 2020, 12:00 p.m.



David Howse in Capestang, France. HANDOUT

David Howse, who has been named the new vice president of the Emerson College Office of the Arts, is a glass-half-full kind of guy. The veteran arts executive, who will transition into his new role on Jan. 1, while continuing in his position as executive director of ArtsEmerson, said that with the challenges live theater is facing comes “incredible promise.” There is an opportunity, he said, “to reimagine our roles as they relate to students, audiences, and to our community.” Howse added, “There is also a racial reckoning that is calling us into being in a new and promising way.” The Murfreesboro, Tenn., native said he is looking forward to his new role, as it will “put me closer and more at the center of the operations of the college.” We caught up with Howse, 45, who lives in Milton with his wife, Charisse, their two children, ages 17 and 12, and the family’s rescue dog, Pluto, to talk about all things travel.

Favorite destination?

I had the privilege of visiting Japan several years ago, and to say that I loved the experience – the food, the culture and the people – is an understatement. While there, I lived with a host family, and I will never forget the way that they made me feel. When I arrived at their home, my host mother, Yuko, said to me, “You call me Yuko-momma.” That felt like both an invitation into the family and into the culture; and in that moment, I knew that I belonged. My favorite places are the places where I feel like I belong, which includes France, Cambodia, and Jordan.

Favorite food or drink while vacationing?

My go-to drink while vacationing — or even when here at home — is a gimlet: Tito’s — yes, vodka, and not gin — up, with a little extra simple (syrup). Some people think of it as a summer drink, and maybe it is, but I enjoy it all year round. And as far as food is concerned, I love eating where the locals eat; and as a pescatarian, I seek out all things fish. Nothing beats a good tuna tartare!

Where would you like to travel but haven't?

I've never been to the continent of Africa, and my ancestral instincts seem to be calling me to that place. I will get there one day, and will perhaps visit one of the home countries of my friends: Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana, Rwanda [and] Uganda. One day.

One item you can't leave home without when traveling?

There are many things that I can't leave home without: my watch, a good pair of walking shoes — a necessity for folks like me with bad feet — a hat to cover the bald head, [as it's] good protection from the wind, the rain, the sun, and the bugs, and my Filson backpack to hold the many things that I collect along a day's journey. But if forced to name one thing, it would definitely be a hard copy book — or any good reading material for that matter. I can't imagine being without a book.

Aisle or window?

Aisle. As much as possible, I like to shape my own experiences. I like the freedom of moving around on my own terms: going to the loo without burdening anyone, stretching my legs as needed. . . . But more importantly, the aisle provides me a better view to observe the passersby. I am fascinated by human behavior and the many varied ways that we navigate and take up space; I am so curious to observe the ways that we honor or dishonor each other in our interactions. The aisle, more so than the window, provides me a better opportunity to see.

Favorite childhood memory?

One of my favorite childhood memories happened leading up to my fifth grade class's trip to Washington, D.C. My childhood was full of rich experiences complete with a large, loving, close-knit family — but we lived modestly. So while my mother had paid for the trip, she didn't have much to give in the way of spending money for the trip. So unbeknownst to my mother and to each other, her sisters secretly slipped money in my hand so that I wouldn't be without. I don't remember how much they gave me — that's not so important — but what sticks with me is the lesson that I learned about love and quiet generosity.

Guilty pleasure when traveling?

Truth be told . . . the first thing that I do when I arrive at my destination is to search the following, and in this order: ice cream near me; spa near me. I love my sweets — especially ice cream — or the local equivalent — and I totally make time for a massage when I am traveling.

Best travel tip.

Make plans. And when you do, be sure to make space for spontaneity. So much of life happens outside of the plans that we set for ourselves, so my tip is to allow the journey to be your guide.

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