



The Essentials for  
Successful Strategies

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# An LGBT+ Travel Market Guide & Tourism Development Toolkit



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## About the CGLCC

Canada's LGBT+ Chamber of Commerce (CGLCC) is a trusted partner linking LGBT+ businesses in Canada to the wider business community. They foster economic growth by supporting and nurturing LGBT+ businesses, entrepreneurs, students and allies, and by helping Canada's corporate world connect with the LGBT+ business community. A leader in supplier diversity, CGLCC is also the certifying body in Canada for LGBT+ businesses.

As part of an Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED)-funded initiative, Tourism HR Canada (THRC) is working with its principle partner, CGLCC, to deliver a responsive, comprehensive and sustainable LGBT+ Tourism Market-Ready Program aimed at helping tourism businesses and communities develop a lucrative and fast-growing LGBT+ market. A series of inclusion workshops, Market-Ready seminars and Train the Trainer sessions are being delivered across Canada, along with a series of Resource Guides designed to support the project.

**For more information, please contact:** [tourism@cglcc.ca](mailto:tourism@cglcc.ca)  
[cglcc.ca/tourism](http://cglcc.ca/tourism)

## Partners/Special Thanks

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# Introduction

The North American Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Two Spirit and Queer travel market (referred to as the LGBT+ travel market going forward) spends:

- over \$70 billion USD on travel annually\*
- the global LGBT+ travel market is valued at \$200 billion USD per year\*
- Canadian LGBT+ travellers alone spend \$12 billion per year – a 43% increase since 2014\*

\*The global and North American statistics are sourced from World Travel Market and Out Now's research. The Canadian LGBT+ travel market data is reported from research commissioned by CGLCC and THRC and completed in 2020.

As the numbers suggest, the LGBT+ travel market provides a significant economic opportunity for the Canadian tourism industry, but it takes an understanding and preparation to welcome this market. Destinations and tourism businesses must learn how to adequately meet LGBT+ tourist expectations.

To grow market share, Canadian destinations and tourism businesses need to invest time and resources to prepare to be market-ready for these travellers, and to develop and deliver the right products to successfully promote themselves as preferred LGBT+ travel destinations and businesses.

This LGBT+ Travel Market Guide & Tourism Development Toolkit provides a roadmap to guide Canadian destinations and tourism businesses to welcome the LGBT+ market. It includes two main components:

1. LGBT+ Travel Market Guide
2. LGBT+ Tourism Development Toolkit

The LGBT+ Travel Market Guide provides an overview of market research and data to assist Canadian destinations, tourism businesses and stakeholders in understanding the value and opportunity found in targeting the LGBT+ market.

The LGBT+ Tourism Development Toolkit outlines the essential elements for destinations and tourism businesses to successfully prepare for, reach and serve the LGBT+ travel market.

By providing valuable market data, information and resources, the Guide and Toolkit will help destinations and tourism businesses become LGBT+ travel market-ready, tapping into a lucrative market that can help grow the success of their businesses.

Let's get started.

## A note on the impact of COVID-19

At the time of publication, the COVID-19 crisis presented unprecedented challenges and uncertainties for the tourism industry in Canada and globally. Many organizations and businesses are struggling and looking to pivot in response to the new landscape which will be impacting the sector for the foreseeable future.

While some market research included in this Guide was conducted before and during the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, we are confident much of the demographic and travel preference data will remain relevant beyond this current time period. As has been shown after previous industry shocks (including 9/11 and SARS), the LGBT+ traveller is generally among the first traveller segment to rebound. In mid-March 2020, CGLCC found that while over half of LGBT+ travellers will potentially reduce their travel in 2020, two-thirds will feel comfortable to travel by the end of the year.

In order to recover, tourism organizations and businesses will need to adapt to the new realities by overhauling business plans, marketing strategies, product development and delivery – all essential to sustaining business and growth.

As the LGBT+ travel market represents a lucrative business opportunity for the tourism sector in Canada, they should be targeted and included in marketing plans and destination and business recovery development.

PART I:

# LGBT+ Travel Market Guide

- Section 1: What is the LGBT+ Travel Market?
- Section 2: Why is the LGBT+ Travel Market Important to Canada?
- Section 3: What Have Other Destinations Done to Successfully Attract the LGBT+ Travel Market?
- Section 4: How Have Other Tourism Businesses Effectively Engaged with the LGBT+ Market?



SECTION 01:

# What is the LGBT+ Travel Market?

# What is the LGBT+ Travel Market?

Before starting to actively target the LGBT+ travel market, it is essential that destinations, tourism businesses and industry stakeholders have an understanding of the diversity of the LGBT+ travel market and their requirements and preferences. The following is an introduction to the LGBT+ travel market, and though not exhaustive, it provides key information and data that will provide destinations and tourism businesses with a richer understanding of the LGBT+ traveller.

The LGBT+ travel market remains relatively untapped by many of Canada's destinations and tourism-related businesses – and therefore represents a lucrative opportunity.

As more and more destinations outside of Canada begin to actively target this market, Canadian destinations and tourism businesses need to act now to ensure they capture, maintain and grow this market share.

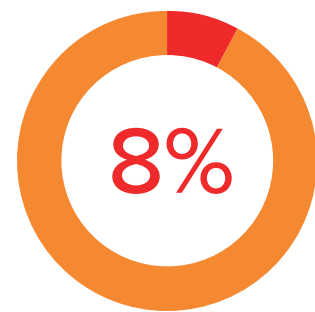
*A reminder: there is no one “gay market.”*

Too often, the term “gay market,” or even the “LGBT+ market,” is used without appropriate consideration of the diversity across these communities. It is essential to realize that there are numerous segments within the overall LGBT+ market and destinations must be aware of the differences.

*The LGBT+ market is not a homogeneous market, buying all of the same products, engaging in the same activities and travelling to the same destinations.*

If destinations and tourism businesses can appropriately recognize and identify segments within the larger LGBT+ market, they can target their products and services directly to the needs and expectations of those segments. Such market segments include, but are not limited to: gay, lesbian, trans, bisexual, senior, youth, sports clubs, married or family group travellers. Destinations and tourism businesses may also wish to target these communities based on overlapping activity preferences, like food and dining, outdoor adventures or LGBT+ event draws.

## Demographics and Travel Habits



Although the actual size of the population that identifies as LGBT+ is unknown, it is estimated that in North America, there are close to 30 million LGBT+ people (6-8% of the total population). The total value of spending by the North American LGBT+ consumer market is estimated at **\$750 billion** USD, with tourism spending estimated to be more than **\$70 billion** USD (according to research conducted in 2016 by World Travel Market and Out Now).

Overall, Canadian LGBT+ travellers have income levels that mirror that of the general population, but only 30% have one or more children living in their household, which generally results in higher discretionary income. On average, Canadian LGBT+ travellers spend **\$1,855** per trip compared to **\$265** per trip for the general travelling public – which is seven times higher.

## Some notes on commonalities:

A high number of LGBT+ travellers have attained higher education, with 45% having a Bachelor or Post-Graduate degree.

28% of LGBT+ travellers have a household income of more than **\$100,000**, and of those, close to half spend over **\$2,000** per leisure trip and travel 3-4 times per year. 35% of LGBT+ travellers have a household income of **\$50,000-\$100,000**.

45% of LGBT+ travellers identifying as lesbian take 3-4 short trips per year. 23% of LGBT+ travellers identifying as gay go on 2 medium-length leisure trips per year. While the preference for short trips has stayed fairly static over the last ten years, the average trip expenditure by LGBT+ travellers has increased by 54%. When travelling for leisure, 41% travel with their partners, 30% with their family and 14% travel with friends and on their own, respectively.

## Regional Highlights

LGBT+ travellers residing in British Columbia spend the most per trip (**\$1,980**) followed by Alberta (**\$1,975**) and Ontario (**\$1,826**) travellers. Over 30% of LGBT+ British Columbians and Albertans are most likely to travel for leisure at least two times per year.

Canadian destinations remain popular among LGBT+ travellers, with over 90% intending to travel within Canada in 2020 – however most popular destinations continue to be metropolitan and mid-sized Tier 2 cities.

LGBT+ travellers indicated the top provinces for leisure travel in Canada are Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia and Alberta. However, it's worth noting that the majority of survey respondents were from those provinces, indicating a broader opportunity for LGBT+ tourism development beyond the larger urban centres.

58% of Canadian LGBT+ travellers aged 26 to 35 travelled to Tier 2 mid-sized cities at least once in the last year. 55% of LGBT+ travellers identifying as gay travelled to rural areas at least once in 2019.

## Destination Motivators

When striving to attract the LGBT+ travel market, it is important to know what the market is looking for in a potential travel destination and to identify whether yours can meet these expectations. According to CGLCC's research, the top 10 motivators for Canadian LGBT+ travellers in selecting a destination are:

1. Safety
2. Cost/Value for Money
3. Climate
4. Political Climate
5. Bucket List Destination
6. Reputation for Diversity and Welcoming the LGBT+ Community
7. Friends and Family at the Destination
8. Recommended by Family and Friends
9. Proximity to Home
10. LGBT+ Culture and History

As the number one destination motivator, perceived and real safety is very important. LGBT+ travellers need to feel a reasonable level of comfort and acceptance. They need to know that if they visit your destination, they will be treated equally, be safe from harassment and, generally speaking, be welcomed within the community. This is also connected to the destination's political climate and reputation for diversity and welcoming the LGBT+ community.

According to a 2019 Airbnb LGBT+ Travel Trends Report, 86% of LGBT+ respondents say a vacation destination's policies toward the LGBT+ community are at least somewhat important when selecting where to travel, compared to nearly half (47%) of non-LGBT+ respondents.

## Choosing Accommodations

The most popular accommodation choices for LGBT+ leisure travellers are hotel chains, resorts and Airbnb. These results are evident of the successful efforts by larger corporations to engage, support and market to the LGBT+ community. When choosing accommodations, the top five criteria are:

1. Cost
2. Positive Reviews and Ratings
3. Accommodation Amenities
4. Proximity to Tourist Attractions
5. LGBT+ Friendly

Note, as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, health, safety and cleaning protocols at accommodations and other tourism sites are expected to rank high for the foreseeable future.

It is important for accommodations within a destination to keep these factors in mind as they position themselves within the market. Being "LGBT+ friendly" is an important aspect, which can be defined in several ways.

*Our research shows that being "LGBT+ friendly" largely means having an accommodation that makes the LGBT+ traveller feel welcome in a place where the traveller would not have to feel uncomfortable being LGBT+ at any of the touchpoints throughout their stay.*

## Tourism Activities

Motivators for choosing a destination can vary from the activities that travellers are looking for and what they actually engage in. CGLCC's research has identified the top 9 activities LGBT+ travellers take part in when visiting a destination:

1. Food and Dining
2. Popular Tourist Activities
3. Outdoor Activities
4. Arts and Culture
5. Visit Family and Friends
6. Shopping
7. Festivals and Events
8. Wellness Activities
9. Tie between: Attend LGBT+ Events, Attend Parties, Attend Sporting Events

This shows that LGBT+ travellers engage in similar activities and demand many of the same tourism products and experiences as the mainstream traveller. They simply require that the activity and environment be open, safe and accepting along the way.

It is important to note that while at a destination, LGBT+ travellers do engage in LGBT+-specific activities, however, when selecting a destination, these activities are not a key deciding factor. What this implies is that while it's nice to have LGBT+-specific activities and events, and LGBT+ travellers will experience them if they are available, they are not essential for attracting LGBT+ travellers to a destination.

## LGBT+ Traveller Niche Archetypes

Based on CGLCC's research, we have developed niche archetypes or profiles for common Canadian LGBT+ travellers and their preferences (encompassing activity preferences and some data regarding their demographics across LGBT+ communities).

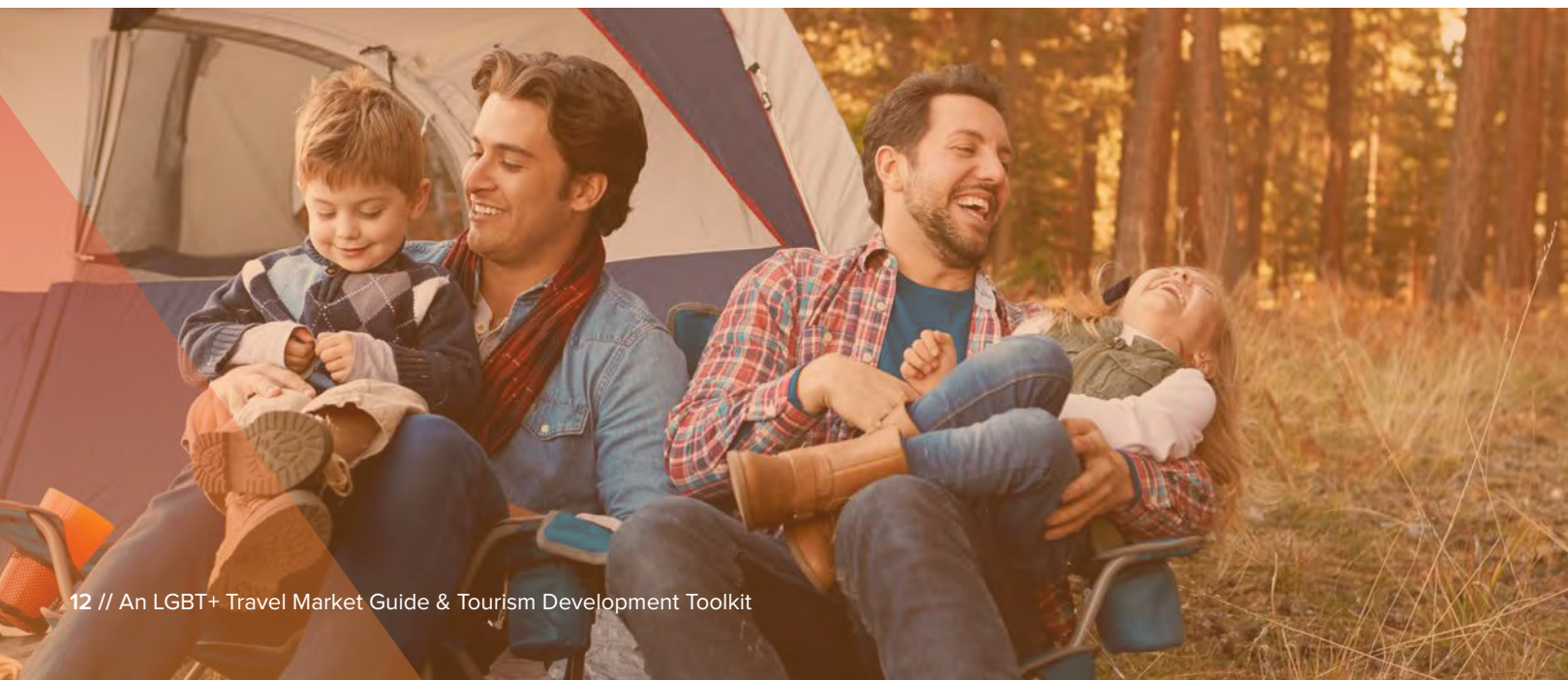


### Safety-Conscious Travellers

Safety is the most important factor for these individuals when choosing a travel destination.

Of these:

- 45% are women, whereas 38% are men.
- This is an important factor in determining travel plans for all sexual identities, with over 60% of bisexual, gay and lesbian travellers identifying safety as a very important factor.
- Safety is an important factor regardless of age, with at least 53% of each age bracket (from 18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, 56-65 and 65+) viewing safety as very important.
- 59% of the population view safety as a very important factor when choosing a travel destination, and 89% value safety when choosing a destination.





### Metropolitan Foodies

Food and dining-related activities are the most engaged with during leisure trips for this group.

These individuals:

- Prefer to plan trips to major metropolitan cities, with 82% planning at least one trip to a city annually and 19% planning three or more a year.
- 33% of this group spends more than **\$2,000** per leisure trip, 5% higher than the average LGBT+ traveller.
- 42% of those that view dining activities as very important are women, whereas 36% are men.
- 56% of travellers report engaging in food and dining-related activities during leisure trips.



### Practical Lodging Travellers

Cost and minimizing expenditure is the most important factor for these individuals when planning leisure trip accommodations.

- This group is more likely to consist of budget travellers, with 37% of this group spending less than **\$1,000** per trip.
- Women are more likely to view cost and minimizing expenditure as very important, with 46% of this group being women and 33% being men.
- 24% of this population will always stay at family or friend's homes during their leisure trips, and 20% always staying at hotel chains.
- 46% of individuals view cost and minimizing expenditure as a very important factor when choosing leisure travel accommodations.



### Frequent Travellers

These individuals are likely to travel regularly within Canada.

- 33% of the population went on 3 or more trips in Canada over the last year.
- A third use their car for leisure trips.
- 42% of this population spends less than **\$1,000** per trip, with 79% spending under **\$2,000** per trip.
- This archetype is driven by the 34% of the individuals that take three or more short leisure trips per year.



### Value Travellers

These individuals prefer booking leisure trips to destinations and choosing accommodations that offer good value for money rather than following recommendations from friends and family.

- 32% of millennial travellers (aged 26-35) value going on trips that do not require large budgets.
- 53% of the population maximizes long-term savings by staying at specific hotel chains for loyalty membership points rather than local accommodations or Airbnb.
- 33% spend less than **\$1,000** per trip.
- 46% of travellers view cost minimizing as a very important factor when choosing a leisure travel destination.



### Cultural Explorers

These individuals prefer planning trips to explore different locations and cultures rather than to destress and relax. They have a strong preference toward exploring destinations with LGBT+ history and culture.

- This archetype aligns with individuals that engage in arts & culture activities and attend festivals or LGBT+ events at their travel destinations.
- 34% of these individuals find LGBT+ history and culture important when choosing a leisure travel destination.



### Influencer-Driven Travellers

These individuals refer to travel forums, blogs or Instagram influencers when planning a leisure trip.

- Prefer to plan a trip six months in advance rather than starting to plan a trip two weeks prior.
- 37% of the population view reviews and ratings as very important when booking leisure accommodations.
- 11% consider reviews on LGBT+ travel sites as very important when planning.
- 26% of these individuals take cues from LGBT+ specific influencers/resources when planning a trip.





SECTION 02:

# Why is the LGBT+ Travel Market Important to Canada?



# Why is the LGBT+ Travel Market Important to Canada?

Canada is well-positioned to grow the LGBT+ travel market and to be recognized as a leading destination worldwide. The nation consistently ranks as having one of the best qualities of life and as being one of the best places to live globally. As one of the first countries in the world to legalize same-sex marriage, Canada is well-known internationally as a progressive, inclusive and safe LGBT+ destination. Its tourism destinations and offerings are as vast and diverse as the country itself, including being home to a wide range of cities, towns, rural and wilderness areas and LGBT+, Indigenous, multicultural, culinary, heritage, active and outdoor experiences.

LGBT+ festivals large and small are held across the country, including Toronto's Pride Festival, which is one of the world's largest Pride celebrations, generating an estimated \$319 million to the region's GDP in 2019. Increasingly, event organizers are expanding their LGBT+ programming year-round, offering more opportunities for destinations and tourism businesses to collaborate and support product and partnership development within the community.

These events provide a powerful opportunity for Canada to prove itself as a leader in the LGBT+ travel market and to showcase the vast array of tourism products and destinations available to the LGBT+ traveller. In order to accomplish this, Canadian destinations and the tourism industry need to first ensure that they are completely market-ready.

To build on its positive global reputation and market development opportunities, the federal government has launched a strategy to diversify experiences and to support inclusive tourism, including for the LGBT+ travel market. The objective is to help the tourism industry increase the market-readiness capacity of LGBT+ and allied organizations and businesses across the country.

Tourism organizations and businesses across Canada are also increasingly working to attract LGBT+ travellers through industry partnerships, inclusion training and targeted marketing campaigns.

Major cities such as Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and Halifax serve as the main LGBT+ tourism centres and gateways to broader regions. Each has sizable LGBT+ communities, large LGBT+ events, diverse bars and restaurants, active nightlife and targeted marketing campaigns. However, there are many opportunities for smaller destinations to develop products and programming to cater to the LGBT+ travel market.

As more destinations and businesses work to understand, prepare for and market to the LGBT+ traveller, Canada will see an increase in inbound and domestic LGBT+ travellers, lengths of stay and ultimately in tourism revenues across the country. *This will place Canada in a stronger position to benefit from LGBT+ travel and will further showcase Canada as a global leader within the LGBT+ market.*

## U.S. LGBT+ Travel Market

As Canada's southern neighbour and most important trading partner, the U.S. has a vast and diverse LGBT+ travel market, and a proximity and relationship that provides a strategic advantage over other competing destinations. Research conducted by Destination Canada found that Americans view our country as very progressive, safe and LGBT+ friendly – especially if they have visited before.

Their research points to the interest of U.S. LGBT+ travellers in attending LGBT+ events, which can be a way to motivate those looking to explore a new and welcoming destination. LGBT+ events can also help drive visitation by younger participants, in particular. Supporting this, about a third of U.S. LGBT+ travellers have taken a vacation in the past five years where the main purpose was to attend an LGBT+ event (higher for gay/bi+ men and younger participants). Of those interested in events, Pride was by far the most popular option, with ski and outdoor events having more limited appeal.

### Other highlights from Destination Canada's LGBT+ travel market research include:

- 26% of U.S. LGBT+ travellers have visited Canada for vacation in the past three years.
- Results indicate that gay and bi+ men are more likely to visit Canada, but lesbian and bi+ women travel is still strong. Transgender/non-binary travel is weaker, but there are many economic, age and identity barriers for transgender international travellers.
- Travel to Canada by age is relatively stable, with some weakness for ages 25 to 34. Travel lags for People of Colour, too. These two findings may be related with shifts in United States population demographics.
- U.S. LGBT+ visitors are most likely to visit Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec. The Atlantic Provinces have reasonable visitation, while other regions lag. Frequency of visits and selection of a province within Canada is heavily influenced by the state of residence of the U.S. traveller. LGBT+ community members are much more likely to choose the Canadian province closest to their home.
- May to October are by far the most popular months for a future visit. LGBT+ travellers ages 25 to 34 were somewhat more flexible in their month preferences, but still firmly prefer late spring to early fall.
- 39% of the U.S. LGBT+ travellers indicated they are definitely or very likely to visit Canada in the next two years.

## U.S. LGBT+ Traveller Preferences

According to Destination Canada research, the urban attributes that were most attractive to the U.S. LGBT+ traveller were a city's food experiences (69%), exploring historical neighbourhoods/attractions (60%), quirky/unusual attractions (59%), exploring LGBT+ neighbourhoods (58%), visiting museums (54%), exploring a city like a local (54%), checking out the top attractions (54%) and exploring progressive neighborhoods (50%).

For outdoor attributes, participants were most interested in viewing the Northern Lights (71%), seeing natural attractions in coastal regions (59%), visiting national parks (57%), hiking or walking in nature (54%), train journeys (52%), seeing natural attractions in mountain regions (52%), viewing wildlife or marine life (51%) and viewing fall colours (50%).



U.S. LGBT+ travellers seem to want to visit more than just the big cities in Canada, with most seeing themselves picking one city and making day trips from there. Combining a city experience and an outdoor experience was the second-most popular option, with lesbian and bi+ women being more open to experiencing outdoor destinations.

For more information on Destination Canada's LGBT+ travel market research and initiatives, visit [destinationcanada.com](https://www.destinationcanada.com).

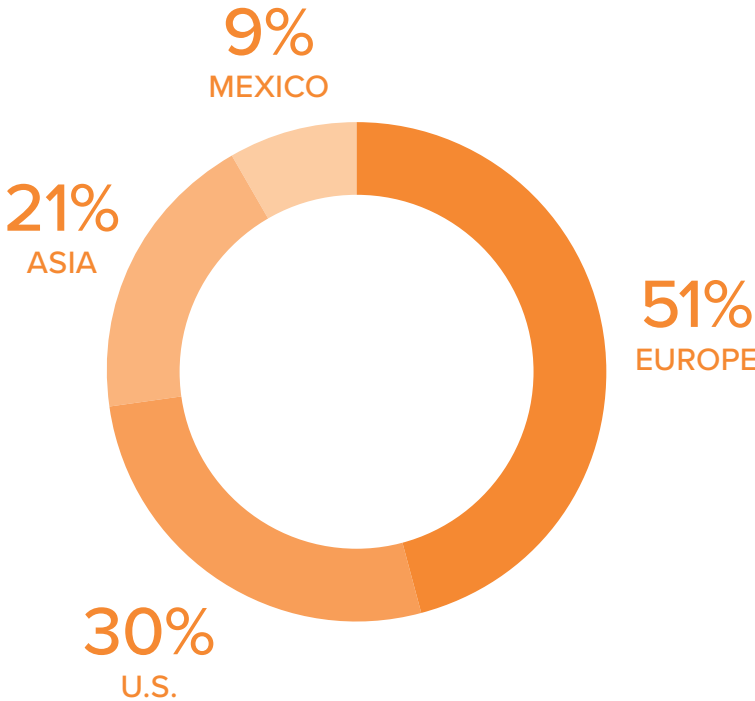
### International Competition

Given the potential tourism revenue-generating opportunities, many countries and destinations around the world have been targeting the LGBT+ travel market, especially in the last decade.

*It's useful to know what places are on the radar of LGBT+ travellers to understand Canada's competition in this market segment.*

For Canadian LGBT+ travellers who only intend to travel outside of Canada in 2020, Europe is the preferred international destination.

Canadian LGBT+ travellers who plan to travel outside Canada in 2020 listed Europe as the top preferred international destination (51%), followed by the U.S. (30%), Southeast Asia (21%) and Mexico (9%). It is notable that cost is a key factor hindering travel by Canadians within Canada. For US LGBT+ travellers, beyond Canada and the U.S., Mexico, Great Britain, France and Germany were top destinations they would likely visit in the next two years.



The International LGBTQ+ Travel Association (IGLTA) provides extensive information and resources for the LGBT+ international travel market. For more information, visit [iglta.org](https://www.iglta.org).

## SECTION 03:

# What Have Other Destinations Done to Attract the LGBT+ Travel Market?

# 03

# What Have Other Destinations Done to Attract the LGBT+ Travel Market?

A growing number of tourism destinations are developing strategies and products to attract the LGBT+ travel market. The following case studies show how five North American and international destinations have developed and implemented successful LGBT+ travel market initiatives, including *Montreal, Whistler, Oklahoma City, Bristol (UK) and Iceland*.

## MONTREAL, QC

### Destination Overview

**Regional Population:** 4 million (Canada's 2<sup>nd</sup> largest city)

**Destination Marketing Organization:** Tourisme Montréal [mtl.org/lgbt](http://mtl.org/lgbt)

**Lead LGBT+ Tourism Organization:** Fierté Montréal [fiertemtl.com](http://fiertemtl.com)

**Memberships:** IGLTA – International LGBT+ Travel Association

Montreal has a very long history of LGBT+ acceptance. For many, Montreal has been regarded as a queer mecca, and citizens have fought tirelessly to transform the city into the queer destination it is today. The first North American gay establishment ever recorded was born in Montreal in 1896. It was an “apples and cake shop” where men could gather.

The Province of Quebec is known for its openness and joie de vivre. LGBT+ tourists from around the world enjoy feeling free and safe in the province, especially in Montreal. In 1969, homosexuality was decriminalized and removed from the Criminal Code of Canada. A pioneer for equal rights, Quebec was one of the world's first jurisdictions to prohibit all forms of discrimination based on sexual orientation in their Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.

In June 2002, the National Assembly of Quebec unanimously passed a law recognizing civil unions between same-sex couples. This new law also gave same-sex couples the legal freedom to adopt children or seek assisted reproduction.

Montreal, the world's second-largest French-speaking city, boasts a large gay district called the Gay Village. Montreal celebrates Pride annually in August, where almost a million spectators come to watch the carnivalesque festivities. Tourisme Montréal currently focuses on all-year-round LGBT+ events and initiatives.

### Entering the LGBT+ Travel Marketplace

Montreal's first Pride, led by 52 marchers, was held in 1979 to commemorate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Stonewall riots in New York which spawned the world's first Pride march. Since then, Pride has grown to over two million participants in Montreal in 2018. LGBT+ travellers visit Montreal for its inclusive Gay Village, nightlife, restaurants and cultural richness.

Montreal's Gay Village is ranked as the second most popular LGBT+ neighbourhood worldwide – just behind San Francisco's Castro District. LGBT+ travellers to the Village say the top motivators to return were:

- Its location near the downtown area, which is easily accessible by Metro. The Village is also pedestrian-friendly, with its main street (12 blocks long) now pedestrian-only during summertime.
- The Village features over 65 restaurants and 23 LGBT+ bars and nightclubs.
- Its redesigned streetscape features over 60 outdoor eating and drinking terraces.

Montreal has done a great job of creating safe spaces for the LGBT+ community and instilling inclusivity and diversity in their local culture. In fact, 75% of Americans and 72% of Canadian LGBT+ visitors have ranked Montreal's gay village positively.

### Community Engagement

A large LGBT+ population and strong community in Montreal laid the grounds for a diversity strategy. Many of the LGBT+ events in the city are created by locals with support from Tourisme Montréal. It's important to the city's tourism to promote diversity and to support their local LGBT+ community.

### Product Development

**Fierté Montréal** – the Montreal Pride Festival is the largest LGBT+ festival in Canada and the largest LGBT+ gathering in the Francophone world. Active year-round, Fierté Montréal supports local communities and advocates on behalf of LGBT+ people living in countries hostile toward LGBT+ rights. The annual Montreal Pride Festival attracts more than 2.5 million local and international visitors for 11 days of community and cultural and festive activities including free shows, panels, a Community Day and the Parade.



#### Other LGBT+ festivals and tourism initiatives that put Montreal on the map include:

- **Image+Nation** – This Montreal LGBT+ Film Festival is Canada’s first and oldest LGBT+ film festival. Each year, the festival screens the best of queer cinema from around the world at various Montreal venues.
- **Black & Blue Festival** (October) – An inclusive festival celebrating the gay community with a series of raves, concluding with the legendary Black & Blue party. It is the world’s largest gay-benefit dance festival, attracting thousands of tourists to Montreal and raising funds for HIV/AIDS and the gay community.
- **World Outgames** – In 2006, the first World Outgames took place in Montreal, showcasing the cross-section between sports and LGBT+ culture and advocating for LGBT+ human rights. The World Outgames Human Rights Conference ratified the Montreal Declaration – a revolutionary agreement on LGBT+ rights. Outgames is a separate organization from Gay Games.
- **Pink Balls/Rainbow Balls Art Installation** – In 2011, the Montreal Gay Village was decorated with 180,000 plastic “pink balls” for a one-kilometre stretch. In 2017, the installation switched to “rainbow balls.” The installation by landscape architect Claude Cormier is entitled “18 shades of gay” and is the hallmark feature of the Village and pedestrian-only walkway.
- **Divers/Cité** – This LGBT+ multidisciplinary arts and music festival was active between 1993-2014. It began as a response to the Sex Garage raid of 1990 (“Montreal’s Stonewall”).

- **The International LGBT+ Travel Association (IGLTA)** – Montreal was host city for IGLTA conferences in 1998 and 2007. Tourisme Montréal remains a partner, alongside several local businesses.
- **Fierté Canada Pride (FCP)** – Fierté Montréal is a member of FCP. Montreal hosted the inaugural Fierté Canada Pride, the first pan-Canadian Pride celebration welcoming 96 Pride organizations from across Canada. The first Canada Pride in Montreal drew the city record numbers of 2.7 million visitors.

#### Marketing Initiatives:

The destination has a strong marketing strategy, including leveraging influencers and editorial coverage. They host LGBT+ media year-round, not just during Pride. Montreal’s geographic target market includes Ontario, British Columbia, the U.S.’s East coast, France, Belgium and others.

Montreal is bold in their messaging, promoting the city as both a proudly open and safe destination for the LGBT+ community. A quote from their official tourism website reads: “The big idea here is that travellers — who happen to be LGBT+QIP2SAA — can pick and choose a variety of experiences, all while feeling entirely welcomed.” Tourisme Montréal regularly shares LGBT+-related content on their blog and social media channels.

#### Partnership Development

In the 1990s, Tourisme Montréal partnered with Montreal Pride to expand the festival. Fierté Montréal took over in 2007 to continue its success. Currently, Tourisme Montréal supports Montreal Pride’s presence in Boston, New York, Washington and Toronto. For its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Tourisme Montréal manned their own float in Montreal’s Pride parade, as Montrealers of all stripes celebrated the 41<sup>st</sup> year of Pride in their city. Tourisme Montréal was a key partner in the host city bid for the 2023 World Pride, but they lost the bid to Sydney, Australia.

#### Key Findings: Successes and Measurements

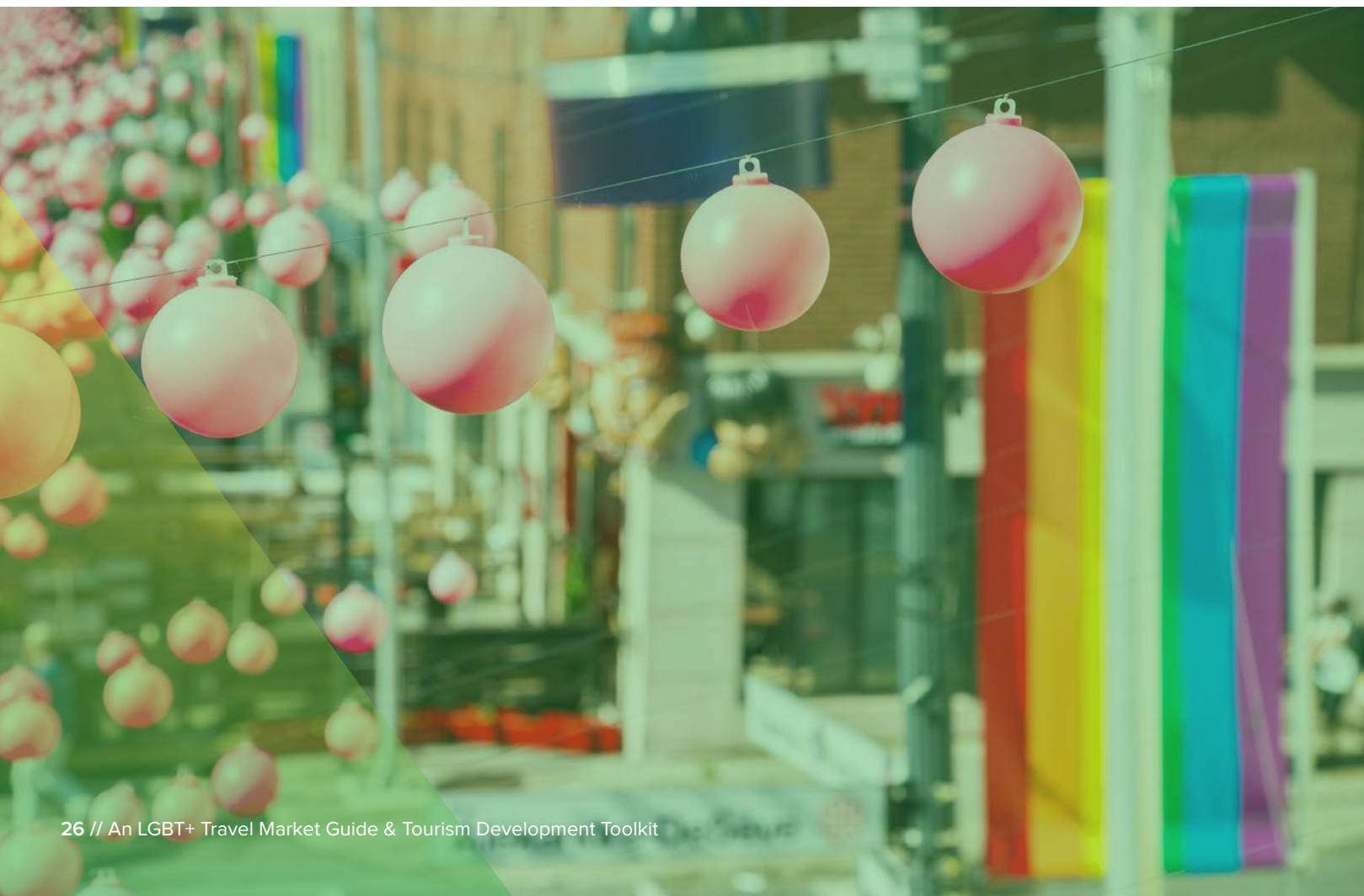
Charles Lapointe was the President/CEO of Tourisme Montréal from 1989 to 2013 and was a longstanding advocate for gay tourism in Montreal. Having someone in charge with the right mindset to support LGBT+ tourism was a key factor in their success. Montreal has become one of the world’s leading LGBT+ travel destinations. It is a pioneer in the LGBT+ tourism world, popular with many North American queer consumers, and today it has to compete with other American destinations entering the market. In addition, there is a dedicated Montreal Gay Village website for LGBT+ visitors planning their visit. Room nights, festival attendance and social media engagement are all key measurements.

#### Overall Learnings

Montreal uses their authentic voice to share their culture of diversity and inclusion. They are proud of their long history of acceptance. The charm and vibrancy of the city overall, combined with the Gay Village’s reputation, is their primary driving force in the LGBT+ market.

Montreal confidently uses edgy and bold marketing to promote their accepting and safe culture, while highlighting key signature events.

Strategic partnerships are critical to their success. More recently, it has relied on established LGBT+ organizations such as Fierté Montréal to help promote their LGBT+ story both organically and commercially.



## WHISTLER, BC

### Destination Overview

**Population:** 11,854

**Destination Marketing Organization:** Tourism Whistler [whistler.com/lgbt](http://whistler.com/lgbt)

**Lead LGBT+ Tourism Organization:** Whistler Pride + Ski Festival [whistlerpride.com](http://whistlerpride.com)

### Memberships:

TAG® – Approved lodging based on recognized LGBT+-friendly standards and criteria

IGLTA – International LGBT+ Travel Association

Whistler is a stunning alpine town and world-renowned ski resort located 90 minutes north of Vancouver. A year-round vacation destination and hotspot for adventure-seeking LGBT+ travellers, Whistler is proudly considered by many to be “the largest gay-friendly mountain resort in North America,” where diversity is celebrated as a way of life.

The resort town is within driving distance from two major LGBT+ urban centres: Vancouver, BC and Seattle, WA. Both destinations are international gateways (via air and sea) and provide an easy entry and travel route to the mountain resort. This gives Whistler easy access to a combined population of five million people, with an estimated 500,000 (10%) who are LGBT+.

### Entering the LGBT+ Travel Marketplace

Whistler began its LGBT+ journey in 1990, helping local sports groups organize for the Vancouver Gay Games, and it was the second resort in the world to host LGBT+ skiers and snowboarders. Since then, the resort town has organically gained notoriety for being LGBT+-friendly. In 1992, when Whistler hosted gay ski week, the LGBT+ community experienced an increased level of acceptance at the destination.

In earlier years, LGBT+ communities were simply tolerated in Whistler; however, in 1995, the community was finally recognized as a consumer force when organizers of Whistler Pride (Altitude 4) rallied festival guests to place pink dots on their money and credit card receipts, demonstrating to resort merchants the enormous value LGBT+ communities brought to their destination.

Through educational initiatives and awareness campaigns, the perceived value of LGBT+ communities began to expand. By 2009, the resort was considered a leader, further solidifying this reputation as host of the Olympics Winter Games.

Whistler was thrust into the international spotlight when they debuted the first ever LGBT+-dedicated Olympic pavilion, Pride House. Whistler Resort continues to champion authenticity in gender and sexual diversity with the adoption of Alphabet Soup – a community-based LGBT+ youth program supported by the Resort Municipality of Whistler.

The resort community and its large seasonal employee base have developed resources to ensure the mountain values are upheld. Programs include Whistler Spirit Program (Whistler Chamber of Commerce), annual resort-wide employee training (gender and sexual diversity training), Vancouver Coastal Health Safe Sex Clinic and Whistler RCMP’s Safe Places program which helps identify businesses trained to respond to issues threatening LGBT+ public safety.

In the last ten years, Tourism Whistler (DMO/CVB) has shown active support by hosting queer media, enabling opportunities for the LGBT+ communities to share their stories and providing some limited marketing and promotions support. Tourism Whistler and the Resort Municipality invested in two economic impact studies, as well as providing support in post-festival (exit) surveys to help better understand the LGBT+ consumer.

### Community Engagement

Whistler itself has a small but active LGBT+ community. It also attracts a large LGBT+ workforce from cities all over the globe. This is primarily due to its reputation for gender and sexual diversity and a mandatory annual Spirit Program that includes sensitivity training for staff of the resort.

It was the local LGBT+ community that initiated the LGBT+ welcome, particularly Out on the Slopes’ Altitude Gay Ski Week and Whistler Pride. Further encouragement led Tourism Whistler, Whistler Blackcomb Ski Resort and the Resort Municipality of Whistler into becoming leaders in this space.

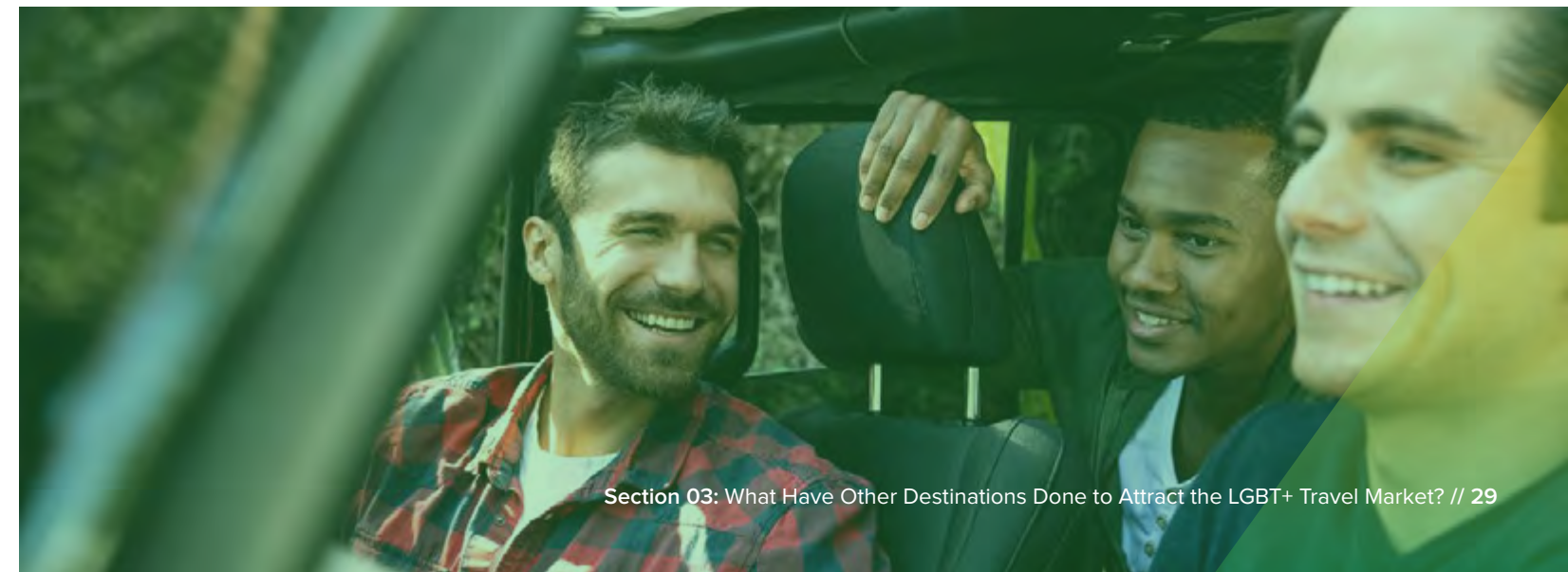
When developing Whistler’s LGBT+ initiative, the aim was to engage with a wider global queer community and its media partners to support and drive awareness of the destination. It was also critical for the local businesses and stakeholders to buy into the concept of embracing gender and sexual diversity. This was achieved through community open houses, educational workshops, trade booth participation at local community events to promote awareness of the annual Pride festival, as well as gender and sexual diversity training.

These initiatives included participation at events including: *World Ski & Snowboard Festival (WSSF)*, *Whistler Film Festival (WFF)*, *Annual Spirit Day*, *Cornucopia*, *Whistler 50 Relay & Ultra (marathon)* and other special events.

### Product Development

The first product offered was the annual gay ski week (Whistler Pride). Throughout the year, Tourism Whistler markets both the annual Pride festival, as well as the resort’s mainstream attractions that are LGBT+-friendly.

Whistler was successful in creating a safe, welcoming environment for everyone authentically as well as visibly (flying rainbow flags and displaying Pride welcome signs and Pride/rainbow stickers), celebrating diversity throughout the year. During Pride Week, Whistler became one of the first mountain communities to fly the rainbow flag at City Hall, demonstrating their commitment to the LGBT+ community.



Alpenglow Productions leveraged their relationship with local Vancouver/Whistler LGBT+ outdoor club, skiOUT (a queer ski group that expanded into an outdoor sports club), helping turn Whistler into a year-round LGBT+-friendly destination. After successfully applying for special funding through the municipality's Festival, Events and Animation funding (part of Whistler's hotel tax program), they were able to help secure headline talent to help grow the Pride festival's mid-week programming to drive longer stays and more room nights.

Alpenglow Productions has lobbied both the tourism bureau and the resort's stakeholders to participate at various LGBT+ conferences and events to get a better understanding of the market. However, very few have participated and instead rely on Alpenglow to represent and share their knowledge.

In cooperation with many of the resort's merchants, Alpenglow Productions has supported countless LGBT+ organizations and non-profits with prizes from live and silent auctions, raffles and other contesting opportunities.

Other notable LGBT+ clubs include *Vancouver Fronrunners*, *Vancouver Men In Leather*, *Vancouver Men's Chorus*, *Whistler Ski/Snowboard Buddies* and *OutRyders*.

### Marketing Initiatives

Throughout the year, sector lead Alpenglow Productions and its resort partners utilize various marketing channels and tools to promote Whistler as an LGBT+-friendly travel destination. This includes using LGBT+ imagery and messaging on social networks, featured content promoting awareness of notable dates and causes (i.e. World AIDS Day, International Transgender Day of Visibility, Pink Shirt Day (an anti-bullying initiative), Whistler Pride Summer, etc.) and providing editorial content for the local papers on various LGBT+ issues at home and around the world. The group lobbied the Regional Municipality of Whistler to install a rainbow crosswalk for year-round visibility.

Targeted print, online, social media and social dating site ads have run in major North American and global markets including Vancouver, Seattle, San Francisco, New York City, Australia and New Zealand. Event sponsorships have also broadened the marketing reach. Editorial content supported by Tourism Whistler and/or Whistler Blackcomb Ski Resort has been featured in both LGBT+ and mainstream media.

### Partnership Development

Partnerships have been extremely important marketing and business development tactics for elevating Whistler into a premier LGBT+ mountain destination. Successful partnerships with the local LGBT+ community, as well as with local Whistler merchants and the Resort Municipality of Whistler, helped to ensure that LGBT+ visitors who came to Whistler felt welcomed and embraced. Examples of LGBT+ partnership outreach outside of Whistler include: hosting Mr. Gay World (an international competition) and co-hosting the first North American Outgames.

Capitalizing on Whistler's proximity to the greater Vancouver film industry, some of the most successful partnerships were with the film and entertainment industry. Tourism Whistler and the Municipality made it easy for the film and commercial industry to produce work in the area while gaining valuable exposure. Productions include: *The L Word*, *Beyond Gay: The Politics of Pride*, *House of Venus Show*, *OUTlook TV*, *BUMP TV* and *Favourite Places*.

### Key Findings: Successes and Measurements

Overall, Whistler has had a very successful campaign of showcasing the resort as an authentic, warm and welcoming destination for everyone. Its primary measure of success is measured in room nights, average lengths of stay and engagement on social media. Room nights and average lengths of stay is measured through the annual Whistler Pride festival survey, as well as through designated online booking portals that gather analytics.

### Whistlers' Big Wins:

- The Pink Dot Campaign – the initiative made local merchants aware of the economic power of the LGBT+ community. You need to have a critical mass of LGBT+ consumers that are willing to participate in order for such a strategy to work.
- Powerful media partnerships – leverage strategic partnerships with key influencers and/or media to help tell the story and get your LGBT+-inclusive message out. One of the most effective partnerships has been with **OUTlook TV**, which airs a 30-minute show each year on the festival. This gives Whistler Pride access to great video content and ensures year-round promotion through rebroadcasts.
- Education and Training – annual employee training on the destination's products, services and core values ensures consistency in the LGBT+ visitors' experience. Sensitivity training is critical among a seasonal employee group.

### Overall Learnings

Whistler's success as a destination can be attributed to the fact that it employed an evolving strategy that leveraged media, business and tourism partnerships in powerful ways, while offering educational training that allowed an inclusive culture to emerge.





## OKLAHOMA CITY, OK, USA

### Destination Overview

**Regional Population:** 1.3 million

**Destination Marketing Organization:** Visit Oklahoma City [visitokc.com/LGBT](https://visitokc.com/LGBT)

**Lead LGBT+ Tourism Organization:** None (the visitor bureau)

**Memberships:** IGLTA – International LGBT+ Tourism Association

Oklahoma City (OKC) is an example of radical transformation in motion as it works toward eliminating discrimination on the grounds of race, gender and sexual orientation. The city is home to the largest gay population in the state. It is also the cultural, political and legislative centre.

Located in the heart of the Bible Belt, OKC has a long history of repression. However, the city is the main change driver for progressive change in a state where LGBT+ communities are not protected by law.

LGBT+ rights are improving in Oklahoma City as a result of the progressive leadership of elected officials. Currently, six out of nine of its city councillors holding seats are 40 and under. OKC provides city staff with additional legal anti-discrimination protections covering the gap in the state laws. A Citizen taskforce with LGBT+ representatives is currently being assembled as the city's key LGBT+ neighbourhood undergoes transformation.

2019 marked the first time a mayor of OKC celebrated Pride and formally declared Pride Week. Mayor David Holt marched in the Pride parade alongside openly gay city councillor, James Cooper, affirming the city's commitment to supporting diversity.

The official VisitOKC.com website has a new LGBT+ welcome page, demonstrating change in progress – however LGBT+ residents and visitors are cautioned it is still not safe everywhere.

The identity of Oklahoma City is changing. The Bible Belt, Cowboy-Indian history, oil fields, racism and homophobia are being recognized as realities of the past. Today's focus is on building a city for the coming generations, one of welcome and acceptance. Young folk are responding well, making downtown neighbourhoods their own. A young mayor and council, strong human rights activist groups and their first biracial and openly gay councillor are signs of hope that a new era is approaching. It is time for the people of OKC to share their stories, learn, grow and focus on building a progressive and inclusive future.

### Entering the LGBT+ Travel Marketplace

The Oklahoma City-wide Metropolitan Area Projects (MAPS) initiative began in 1993. Its foundation is a "1-cent sales tax," channeled specifically into redeveloping the city after being hit by an economic depression triggered by the fall of the oil industry. Now entering phase four, the plan is set to implement a rejuvenation strategy that aims to improve the LGBT+ neighbourhood. MAPS 4 is scheduled to commence April 2020 through to 2028.

The 39<sup>th</sup> Street District (gay village/LGBT+ neighbourhood) carries a harrowing history of discrimination, homophobia and community push back. Home to many freedom fighters, it is currently receiving infrastructural improvements to its streets, adding sidewalks, lighting, parking, trees, as well as developing daytime neighbourhood amenities.

MAPS 3 pledged **\$288 million** to the development of a new convention centre for OKC. The state-of-the-art facility is scheduled for completion in late 2020. The new VisitOKC website and its dedicated

LGBT+ webpage ([visitokc.com/LGBT](https://visitokc.com/LGBT)) serves as an important welcome platform for many visitors attending conferences and events at the convention centre.

### Community Engagement

Visit OKC engaged external LGBT+-focused media to assist in spreading the word and write about their experiences. Visit OKC seeks further community participation in creating authentic links to LGBT+ clubs, bars and the neighbourhood currently under renovation and transition.

Community groups fighting for state-wide changes to archaic laws are raising their concerns regarding the lack of rights at the state level. These advocates serve on city advisory boards and push for citizen and visitor safety throughout the city and state.

Two Pride parades are planned for 2020. The first will take place in the 39<sup>th</sup> District; the second official city parade (with mayor and council) will run through the newly renovated downtown core. This vision is being realized and is still a work-in-progress. However, there is a clear commitment by the city, young council and community at large to rectify the injustices of the past for all minorities and downtrodden groups.

“It takes too much energy to hate, let people do their thing as long as they're not hurting others.”

- James Cooper, Oklahoma City councillor

He says it's important to understand OKC's LGBT+ history and to help folks share their personal stories connected to these challenging times.

### Product Development

OKC has a history of repression, racism and homophobia connected to the Bible Belt culture and slave trade roots. State legislation has made it difficult to offer true freedom within the city. Without full legal protection, people are at risk, however, OKC has made reformative strides as a result of their MAPS project to revitalize the city.

MAPS is Oklahoma City's visionary capital improvement program for new and upgraded sports, recreation, entertainment, cultural and convention facilities initiated in 1993.

The transformation of OKC offers so much to LGBT+ visitors, including vibrant restaurant districts and the gay neighbourhood which is seeing its first-ever investment, a **\$2 million** facelift, begin in 2020. This neighbourhood will never have looked or felt so good.

The young, vibrant city is beginning to shake off the reputation of its past, with council members and the LGBT+ community advocating for change and full of hope.

## Marketing Initiatives

Visit OKC's communications team reached out to LGBT+ media, hosting a visit that showcased their renewed city and its transformed parks, museums, walking trails, water features and distinct neighbourhoods – including the 39<sup>th</sup> District LGBT+ village.

These published pieces celebrate the transformation and welcome. When questioning journalists about their safety, the response was clear: “we felt safe.” It wasn't an issue or concern.

**“Let me be the first to tell you this is a destination that will not only surprise you but beckon you to return. The people of Oklahoma City welcome everyone with open arms.”**

- Food Travelist

“Oklahoma City has much to offer for every visitor but here in our opinion are the top ten reasons that you should book a trip today,” writes the Food Travelist.

Additionally, Visit OKC's website offers a clear and colourful LGBT+ welcome. Some work is still needed in linking these pages to their LGBT+ community and a listing of LGBT+-friendly establishments, community services and events. Visit OKC staff need community partnerships to be successful in this as their LGBT+ staff members work in other roles.

City Councillor James Cooper is working toward creating more opportunities for the LGBT+ community to share their stories and history. He believes communication and developing greater understanding of the city's LGBT+ history will be a key driver in Oklahoma's socio-cultural development.

LGBT+ community groups are also advocating for change amid concern over the state's legislation falling short of protecting LGBT+ folks, especially Trans folk, from homophobic or even violent reactions. Bigoted reactions still occur.

These concerns are also being raised by the visitor bureau as the new convention centre nears its opening.

As one community leader, Allie Shinn of Freedom Oklahoma, says: “much remains to be done to fully protect LGBT+ residents and visitors to OKC. We look forward to working with Mayor Holt and Council to enact meaningful legal protection that allows LGBT+ tourists and residents to know they are fully welcome and safe.”

The hope is that Oklahoma state laws will catch up as Visit OKC develops into a comprehensive service platform with links to LGBT+ events, history, tips, venues and allies. All this will help OKC authentically and effectively communicate to visitors that they are entering a vibrant and welcoming community.

## Partnership Development

The visitor bureau sales team has an LGBT+ focus, good LGBT+ media relations, and it offers a clear welcome on its website. The LGBT+ media has responded well to hosted visits and FAM tours. The visitor bureau also recognizes the need for a stronger connection to the community undergoing change.

LGBT+ community organizations and activists serve on OKC's Citizen Advisory Boards. There is no one queer organization leading the charge, which makes it hard for Visit OKC to navigate. The Mayor and Council speak up for inclusion and protect LGBT+ city staff. The mayor declared Pride Week and marches in the Parade. He also spoke to inequity at the annual state of the city address to the Chamber of Commerce and included the challenges facing the LGBT+ community.

With the 39<sup>th</sup> District renovations expected to be complete by Pride 2021, a revitalized welcome and more livable neighbourhood will emerge. The neighbourhood is long overdue for receiving recognition for its role as a “safe haven” for the LGBT+. Its history of civil protest in the face of oppression will stand as an inspiring symbol to OKC's cultural progress as well as its continuing work.

## Key Findings: Successes and Measurements

Travellers to OKC can feel safe, however, awareness of their only recent transformation warrants caution. Public displays of affection are mostly welcome, yet travellers should be mindful that old-school mindsets and deep-rooted historical hatred still exist.

For the most part, LGBT+ folks can be themselves and enjoy an amazingly transformed and welcoming city. Most frontline hospitality and service providers will have you falling for their southern Midwest charm and authentic welcome. There is so much to do in this young vibrant city as it crafts a new future and offers an inclusive welcome to all.



## Overall Learnings

- OKC's LGBT+ welcome is built on a foundation of recognizing human rights commissions and correcting the ignorant errors of the past for people of colour and the LGBT+ communities.
- A clear vision and plan can make anything possible (as OKC nears round 4 of its MAPS initiative).
- With a young council leading the way, the young city is embracing change, breeding new thinking to welcome the world, locals, visitors and guests with genuine hospitality and friendly service.
- OKC's history is important, and they are sharing the key chapters that sparked change and the personal perspectives of their LGBT+ community, fostering trust in embracing this change.
- OKC is an island of hope in a historically bigoted state. The 39th District is a bubble on the island of hope, a living example of positive change for other hesitant or resistant communities.
- MAPS has been pivotal in renewing the city's downtown neighbourhoods and reclaiming the city for next generations, led by and for the young. Maybe it's these young storytellers who will help enable the community to share key chapters in LGBT+ history and learn from their fight.

## BRISTOL, U.K.

### Destination Overview

**Regional Population:** 454,200 (the U.K.'s 10<sup>th</sup> largest city)

**Destination Marketing Organization:** Visit Bristol [visitbristol.co.uk/lgbt](https://visitbristol.co.uk/lgbt)

**Lead LGBT+ Tourism Organization:** Bristol Pride [bristolpride.co.uk](https://bristolpride.co.uk)

**Memberships:** IGLTA – International LGBT+ Travel Association

Bristol is a regional city in the southwest of England. Historically, it was a port city and home to the first steam ships, slave trade and related industries with canal, road and rail networks.

Today, it exists as a revitalized, vibrant and welcoming city while recognizing the inequities of the past. Bristol offers everything from old docks, annual Pride festivities and many music, film and art events. It is easily accessible by train or car from London, as well as from flights from throughout most of the U.K. and Europe. The Bristol airport also has many affordable connections to Europe's most popular destinations and is a potential departure point if one wants to avoid the congestion of London.

It is understood as a diverse, young city – over 91 languages are spoken here, and it is home to a fusion of cultures. Bristol contains two major universities, language schools, beautiful Georgian architecture, distinct neighbourhoods and history museums. It also has a strong restaurant, bar and nightlife scene.

### Entering the LGBT+ Travel Marketplace

In 2014-15, Visit Bristol undertook a review of its key target markets including families, the U.S. and the LGBT+ travel markets.

Bristol enjoys two gay neighbourhoods called Frogmore Street and Old Market – the former is in the downtown core and the latter is in a more affordable neighbourhood that has risen up to be a desirable location.

Having access to a large and vibrant LGBT+ community allowed Visit Bristol to gather community feedback which revealed a large gap in their diversity strategy: lack of high-quality digital content. They approached this problem by forming partnerships with a diverse range of LGBT+ community leaders. It was important to ensure they had an authentic cross-section of the community rather than one voice and perspective.

They worked closely with Bristol Pride organizers to ensure their tone would resonate with audiences, focusing more on showcasing genuine experiences in their welcoming local community versus creating LGBT+ products for commercial gain.

The strategy for entering the market was based on a strategic circulation of User-Generated Content (UGC), focusing on the existing LGBT+ businesses, nightlife and events.

As a small regional city with limited staff and budget, community engagement was the strategy employed to improve its digital content. The LGBT+ community was quick to point out the poor quality of content and stepped up as partners in creating today's extremely comprehensive online platform populated with UGC.



## Community Engagement

# Bristol has a healthy and vibrant LGBT+ community, two distinct gay districts and is a friendly city overall. Many LGBT+ events occur in mainstream bars and Drag storytelling takes place in libraries.

In their 2014-15 review, acknowledging the gap in digital content, the community stepped up to create listings of businesses, year-round events and festivals including Pride, LGBT+ History Month, Trans Pride South West, Bristol Bear Fiesta, the Crosstown Drag Race (a race between the two gay neighbourhoods) and Mr. Leather UK.

Visit Bristol's LGBT+ web content is not only colourful, but easy to find, and contains an abundance of external links connecting to the LGBT+ community at large.

## Product Development

Bristol Pride 2020 will be 11 this year. Postponed until September 2020 due to COVID-19, it is one of the U.K.'s largest Pride Festivals, spanning two weeks of events including an award-winning film festival, theatre performances, comedy shows, a circus night and a massive music festival. It attracts over 40,000 folks from all over the U.K. and overseas.

As an in-kind partner to Pride, Visit Bristol's site connects Pride to both the local community and tourists with dedicated LGBT+ events pages and calendars. It leverages local grassroots businesses to provide content and to promote the destination as well as their own businesses. This is organic content with strong community participation at work.

## Marketing Initiatives

Bristol relies heavily on the community and its digital channels, including the comprehensive Visit Bristol website. Strong images capture the city's vibrant story highlighting its culture, nightlife, events and target market interests.

Bristol proudly showcases its LGBT+ community with dedicated tabs on a number of mainstream pages. The LGBT+-exclusive page includes Events & Festivals, Insider Tips, Nightlife and Featured content for Pride, LGBT+ History Month and more.

Bristol has lobbied hard to be included in the UK National (Visit Great Britain) LGBT+ welcome pages, securing a listing under its "Love Is Great" campaign alongside London, Brighton, Edinburgh, Manchester and Glasgow. Frankly, Bristol's LGBT+ content is much easier to find than Visit Great Britain's main page, where a dedicated search is required to find any LGBT+ content (the links are obscure).

Visit Bristol uses web, social media, blogs, influencers and traditional editorials as their primary (and only) marketing vehicles. They find digital is more efficient, affordable and measurable. Less than 5% of their annual marketing budget is dedicated to the LGBT+ market.

## Partnership Development

The Visit Bristol team does not have a dedicated LGBT+ specialist or agency arm, so partnerships are vital as it expands its efforts. As a rule, staff promote the inclusive welcome for all including the LGBT+ audience. This lean organization leverages many community partnerships including queer business owners and Bristol Pride, expanding the LGBT+ welcome year-round.

The redevelopment of Visit Bristol's website led to community partnership opportunities that engaged the queer community and neighbourhoods. The 2014-15 review identified the DMO was falling short in promoting LGBT+ stories and content. Since then, it has produced remarkable results and strong bonds that tell a wonderful story of welcome to anyone visiting the site.

By expanding these local partnerships into the national arena (Visit Great Britain's [#LoveIsGreat](#)) and internationally, with membership in the IGLTA, Visit Bristol is joining the inclusion and equality efforts of the worldwide community.

The organization has plans to attend the annual IGLTA convention with a focus on learning from the best. Future plans to create an LGBT+ tourism working group will further develop this niche to ensure the destination stays relevant and current. Google "Gay Bristol," and you'll find many third-party sites making mention of Bristol as an LGBT+ destination – a sign of enormous progress in visibility.

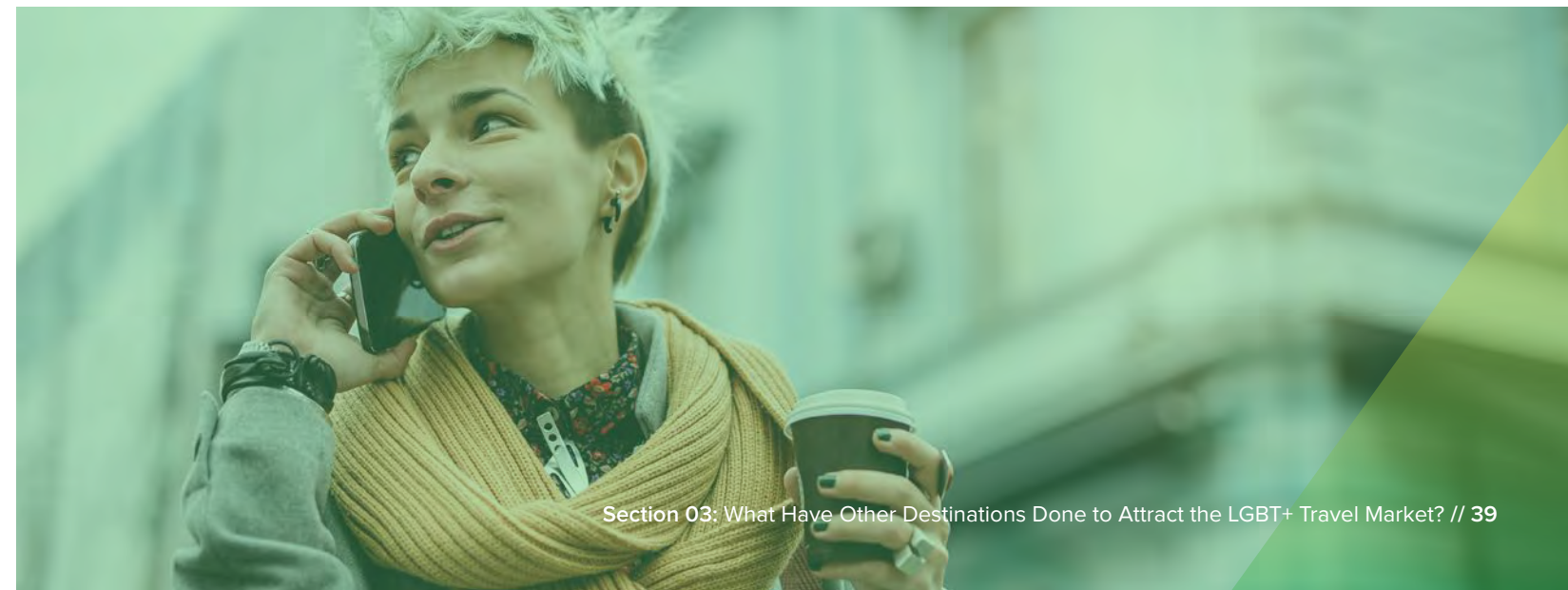
## Key Findings: Successes and Measurements

LGBT+ travellers to Bristol are welcome to engage with the community and locals. They are one of several target markets Visit Bristol addresses on the website's "Things to do" welcome page, with clear links to festivals both mainstream and LGBT+. This is a friendly regional city with a proud LGBT+ community. While not an overtly queer city, it is an inclusive one.

Because of a limited budget and small team, Visit Bristol turned to the LGBT+ community for partnership and content. This is their winning strategy and most effective welcome thus far, connecting the tourism frontline to the LGBT+ community within a few easy clicks.

## Overall Learnings

Visit Bristol recognizes that simply by encouraging the authentic voices within the city to emerge, its program was made a success. Working with limited budget and time resources forced them to engage in an outreach program that leveraged strategic partnerships within the LGBT+ community in an impactful way. These relationships will be critical in reaching future goals.



## ICELAND

**Population:** 364,260

**Capital City Reykjavik:** 122,853

**Destination Marketing Organization:** Visit Iceland [visiticeland.com](https://www.visiticeland.com)

**Lead LGBT+ Tourism Organization:** Pink Iceland [pinkiceland.is](https://pinkiceland.is)

**Memberships:** IGLTA – International LGBT+ Travel Association

In Iceland, queer couples walk hand-in-hand and the atmosphere is very queer-friendly. Occasionally, one may encounter a stare, but it's usually just an expression of curiosity. Equality in Iceland is a core value, with many placing them at the top of the global rating for gender equality.

LGBT+ people stand equal to heterosexual cis-gender people in the eyes of Icelandic law. In 2019, Iceland's human rights code was updated to include protections for gender-diverse and non-binary folks with the adoption of the Gender Autonomy Act. Icelanders are proud of their LGBT+ family; queer leaders are valued and visible – in fact, the first legal gay marriage was a government leader. You can feel safe kissing, holding hands and showing affection as it is accepted behaviour throughout the country. As a small community that speaks its mind, citizens and media often call each other out if ever negligent or careless, with laws in place to protect all people.

Tourism in Iceland is a growth industry, welcoming tourists from around the planet. Its official tourism website offers instructions on “how to be a good tourist” with a national zero tolerance attitude toward any failure to embrace Icelandic values. Its main tourism office also welcomes queer travellers as part of its authentic and inclusive strategy.

Pink Iceland (established in 2011) is the premier queer-owned and operated special events and travel business in Iceland. Pink Iceland founders have delivered tours and events for ten years, offering free training for tourism partners, associated industries and communities wishing to up their queer-friendly welcome.

The queer visitor experience and welcome is obvious, a shining example of genuine national pride. A few businesses shine as leaders in the queer market. It is very normal here, queer or not, to just be yourself.

### Entering the LGBT+ Travel Marketplace

It was a natural evolution for queer enterprise to welcome queer travellers and educate the broader tourism community. Pink Iceland (PI) had a five-year plan to get queer tourism off the ground. Using its core values as guiding principles, Pink Iceland gathered research, experiences and learnings from its customers and target audience. It was by listening to and responding to customers that a path to solid business growth emerged.

Iceland has not always been queer-friendly. Local queer enterprise PI created an honest, service-based model producing events, including weddings and a winter Pride festival. These leaders became champions for educating its partners in providing an LGBT+ welcome.

Queer is the preferred term for Iceland as a nation. Pink Iceland's growth has been both organic and steady, going from 2 to 120 weddings a year, and from one wedding planner to six professionals over the last 10 years. Their success and inclusive reputation have expanded beyond queer couples.

Founder of Pink Iceland, Eva Maria, joined several community and tourism boards as an educator and influencer, offering free LGBT+ training to business partners. This enabled her to build trust and an assured quality experience for welcoming the queer audience and visitors. By listening to its guests, PI was able to create authentic packages that positioned it as Iceland's queer travel and event leaders, building upon an already solid reputation.

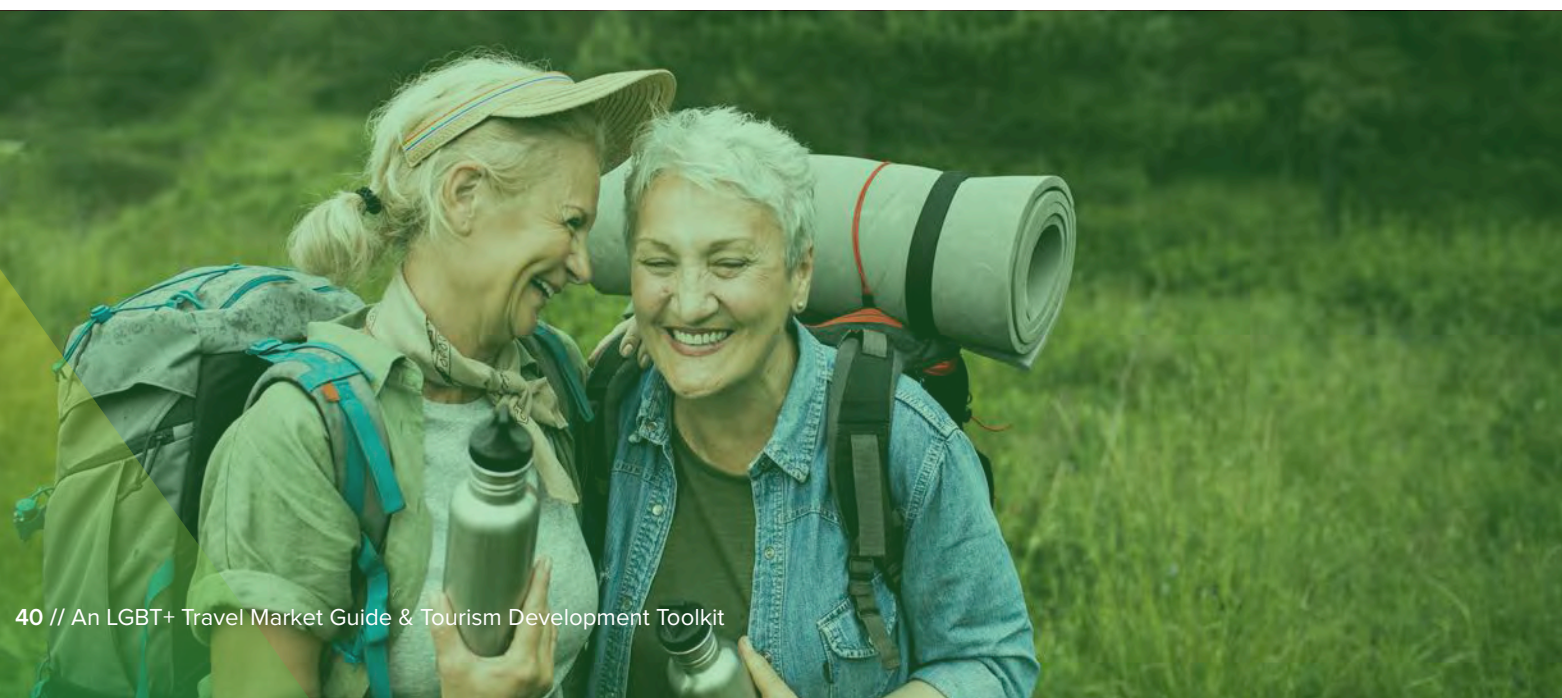
Being a close-knit island nation means information is shared quickly and efficiently. Iceland's tourism industry is founded on mutual respect of all people, its love of eco-tourism and world-renowned natural wonders. PI created custom queer tours utilizing mainstream tourism activity partners and Iceland's natural draws.

### Community Engagement

Iceland has a strong LGBT+ community which was an important consideration for PI when entering into the market. Having a strong visible community gave PI the confidence to develop products and services previously absent from the marketplace.

Iceland's queer community led the way by creating community events, opening the first gay dance club and sports club, and by creating the new annual winter Pride festival. Queer entrepreneurs came together, founding Pink Iceland, in 2011 with two weddings and a travel planning service, including self-drive tours. They educated tourism partners on how to deliver a queer-friendly welcome and joined the national tourism board to ensure this LGBT+ welcome was supported nationwide.

Focusing on queer travel and queer weddings built on PI's solid reputation for kindness, honesty and service excellence. Now tourism partners approach them for help in welcoming this expanding LGBT+ audience.



# “The strategy of offering free training to partners has paid dividends for PI: We know we can trust people we’ve trained.”

- Eva Maria, Founder of Pink Iceland

The result has been thousands of referrals and bookings each year as travellers are confidently assured of a safe and respectful welcome.

## Product Development

Iceland’s official tourist office presents a clear welcome to all people, including LGBT+ travellers. Natural wonders are Iceland’s key assets along with authenticity and an inclusive welcome strategy.

Pink Iceland has devised creative ways for the queer community to come together and enjoy these activities and experiences. It built products based on queer vision, responding to queer needs and its own values of genuine service. In relationship with local tourism partners that it helped educate for the LGBT+ marketplace, PI leveraged local assets to create remarkable experiences.

Pink Iceland was the first tour/travel company to offer LGBT+-specific travel and travel-related solutions in Iceland. It started with small group tours and services for independent travellers. Many younger folks today travel freely and safely based on Pink Iceland’s listed tours, services, partners and travel tips, not feeling the need to engage their specialized service.

Based on values of honesty and kindness, Pink Iceland listened and identified the queer travellers’ needs and requirements, developing training tools and building partnerships with government agencies and frontline service providers.

The development of a winter Pride festival was instrumental in providing unique public relations opportunities to showcase Iceland’s queer culture and raise awareness of the destination with local and international press sharing its journey and story.

Pink Iceland is a member of the IGLTA and supports Reykjavik Pride, Samtökin ‘78 (National Queer Association), DragSúgur (Drag Collective), Q félag hinsegin stúdenta (Queer Student Association) and others with monetary donations, volunteer work, consulting and graphic design services.

## Marketing Initiatives

As a small nation, Iceland has seen a rapid growth in tourism. The goal was to attract a certain kind of tourist, respectful of nature and people.

Pink Iceland’s limited marketing budget meant that it needed to focus on social media and hosted media visits for targeted editorial coverage. This was important as it also aligned with its value of speaking with an honest voice and in having visitors find Iceland organically versus “being forced on people” (through paid campaigns).

This strategy, coupled with search engine optimization (SEO), helped visitors find them organically. The primary market is affluent North American gay men, but Pink Iceland’s aim is to stay authentically committed to a wider queer audience.

Equality and diversity are strong foundations for the work of Pink Iceland. It welcomes everyone, focusing on those that embrace its shared values of respect for one another and respect for the environment. This will naturally filter out visitors that are contrary to the nation’s honest values.

Visit Iceland showcases attractions right alongside its key message: “how to be a good tourist.” These tips are delivered with humour, focusing on respect for the land and locals.

Tourism Iceland has opted to ensure its entire website and marketing collateral showcases diversity of all people. Therefore, having a dedicated LGBT+ microsite is contrary to its beliefs and values of equality and inclusion. Instead, it features both summer and winter Pride events with direct links to Pink Iceland. Google “queer” or “LGBT+ Iceland,” and it brings you to Pink Iceland, an overtly gay-owned and operated queer travel specialist offering mainstream travel with a queer flair, along with directions and packages to LGBT+-friendly venues, services and events.

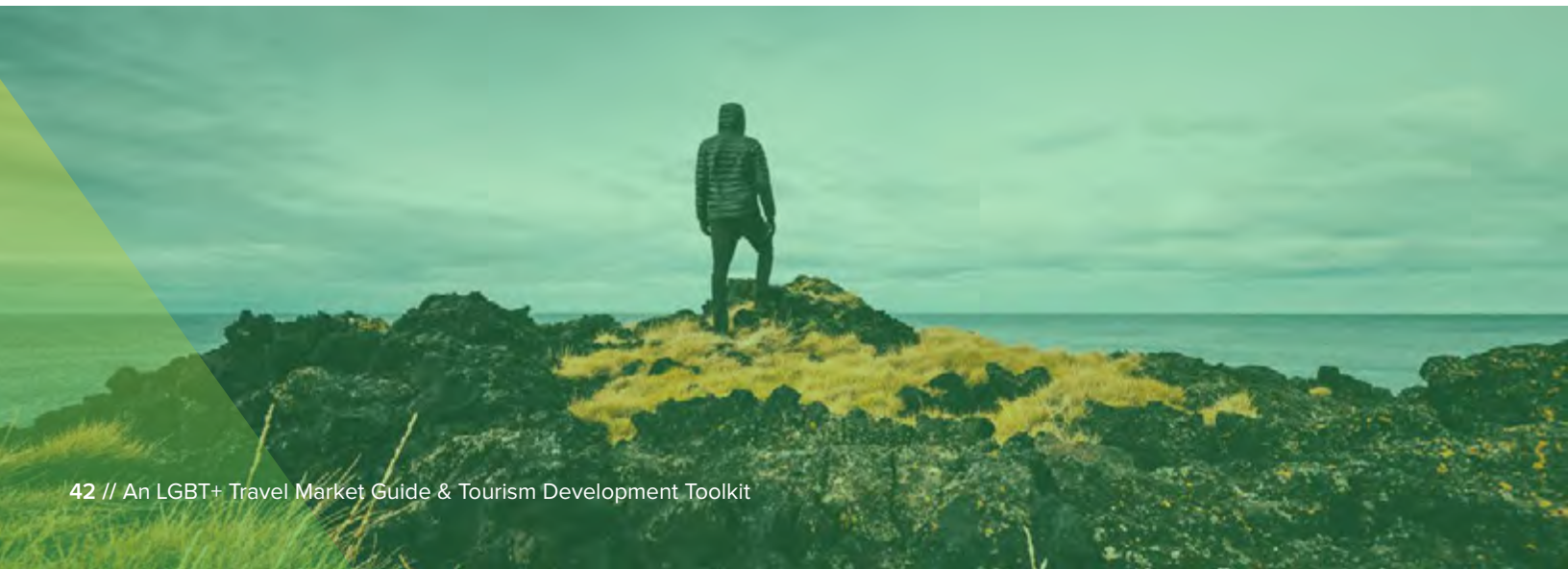
The prime consideration here is the people who are clearly enthusiastic, honest and authentically welcoming. It’s moving to experience such a barrier-free welcome with clear leadership in the queer travel market. Iceland has built strong community with wide partnerships. It is a nation where it is good to be queer.

Pink Iceland does a great job in keeping diversity relevant throughout the year with social posts year-round for key LGBT+ dates that include: International Day Against Homophobia, National Coming Out Day, Pink Day, International Transgender Day of Visibility, Pride and World AIDS Day to name a few.

## Partnership Development

Partnerships are very important and have emerged organically over time. Pink Iceland is focused on making sure they “walk the walk and talk the talk,” leading by example. Being visible and being assertive on why LGBT+ travel services are needed, they work with industry peers through continual community engagement and education.

Pink Iceland has developed preferred partners and amazing products for self-guided travel, custom and third-party tours and weddings and events – all in breathtaking locations. Ten years of honest connections has built a trusted network effectively matching visitors’ needs to the service providers that have completed sensitivity training and embraced the shared values of equality and respect for all.





### Key Findings: Successes and Measurements

Iceland recognizes that the LGBT+ community is as diverse as our world. There is no one LGBT+ demographic, they are each unique, with different experiences. Iceland's attitude is to lead with its own original voice. It approaches the market as individuals, tailoring the experience to each person with equality and respect.

Iceland expects the same in return from all visitors regardless of where they identify on the spectrum of gender and sexuality. Natural beauty and a small population mean they care for each other and their land.

This national attitude of equality and respect for one another is a key pillar of Iceland's mutual tourism strategy. Highlighting the tourist's code of ethics for visiting the destination helps to ensure everyone is on the same page. They promote this with humour but are firm in their stance that if you have issues with these core values, then another destination may be more suited for you.

By engaging with various tourism boards and organizations and assuming key roles, Pink Iceland educates and ensures the queer voice is at the table, positioning the destination as one of the most inclusive and safe destinations for the global LGBT+ community. It is important to note that though Iceland may have an appearance of a queer utopia, and it certainly may be for white, middle-aged cis-gender men, it is not the case for many queer people – especially trans and non-binary folks. The LGBT+ community is protected by law, but it still faces some of the abuse that was common 20+ years ago.

Iceland wins by being authentic in who they are and asking visitors to come as they are and share Iceland's beauty, alongside mutual respect. They can fearlessly address the LGBT+ market since they genuinely embrace and celebrate gender and sexual diversity – while protecting these identities by law.

### Overall Learnings

Iceland has progressed very quickly on its journey for LGBT+ equality and respect from the late 1990s to current day.

Iceland has limited LGBT+-only spaces, and most spaces have a good cross-section of people regardless of sexuality and/or identity. Everyone is equal in LGBT+-focused or mainstream spaces, bars and nightclubs. It's safe to be yourself everywhere.

Shared values of honesty, respect and kindness make this a safe and welcoming place for a range of LGBT+ people.

Perhaps Iceland is a model for what the future world will look like, where gender and sexuality no longer define us or our identity.

“**If queer were a nation, we'd be the third largest nation on earth.**

- Eva Maria, founder of Pink Iceland

SECTION 04:

How Have Other  
Tourism Businesses  
Successfully  
Engaged with  
the LGBT+  
Travel Market?



# How Have Other Tourism Businesses Successfully Engaged with the LGBT+ Travel Market?

The LGBT+ travel market is lucrative for business, and there are many tourism industry businesses and corporations that have successfully engaged with the LGBT+ travel community. Here are five best-practice case studies of a range of tourism businesses and key learnings on targeting, marketing to and serving the LGBT+ travel market from *40 Knots Winery, Celebrity Cruises, Delta Air Lines, Kingfisher Oceanside Hotel & Spa and Hilton Hotels & Resorts.*

## 40 Knots Winery (Comox, BC)

[40knotswinery.com](http://40knotswinery.com)

Located on 24 stunning acres, 40 Knots is the largest grape winery in the Comox Valley and one of the largest on Vancouver Island. With striking views of land and sea and a capacity for seating 150 guests, 40 Knots is the perfect destination for business conferences, weddings, parties or celebrations.

### Entering the LGBT+ Travel Marketplace

Vancouver Island's 40 Knots Winery (established in 2014) entered the LGBT+ scene with the creation of its sparkling Soleil Rosé wine. Soleil Rosé was named after a pink sun rising because it was the winery's belief that society was rising to accept people regardless of who they loved. Someone commented, "Pink bubbles, how gay," and the owners thought, "Yes, indeed, how wonderfully gay." It was their hope that this wine would be celebrated among LGBT+ communities for the message it carried.

At first, the winery's owners had concerns on how some might react to taking such a public position in support of LGBT+ communities. But they remained courageous and aligned with their beliefs, knowing that if they lost customers in the process, it was a matter of values and an indication that those who raised objections were a market they did not want to service.

The 40 Knots senior leadership took the lead on ensuring a culture of gender and sexual diversity was embraced. All employees, including the graphic designer, the creator of the heart on the Soleil Rosé label and someone who is LGBT+, were very supportive.

The winery's team discovered other like-minded businesses in their expanding network and ended up taking an inclusion training workshop. It was during this half-day workshop that the employees began to understand how important it was to ensure their business was understood as a safe place for the LGBT+ community.

40 Knots Winery produced a product (Soleil Rosé) celebrating LGBT+ communities and began partnering with local queer businesses, including Razzle Dazzle Productions, the producers of the Queer Cultures White Party Brunch and hosts of the annual International Women's Day in Comox Valley, and sponsoring the annual Vancouver Island Pride at Mount Washington. As a result of its vocal advocacy, the winery soon started to see more people from the LGBT+ community visit the estate.

### Community Engagement

There is a fragmented LGBT+ community in the Comox Valley, and the winery tries to keep a neutral stance in support of its diversity. The winery's audience resides mostly in Comox Valley, Vancouver Island, Vancouver Lower Mainland Region, Alberta and Washington state.

40 Knots Winery acknowledges the importance of engaging the local queer market as an important basis for the success of its strategy. However, the winery's team did point out that the LGBT+ communities appear to be fragmented, and they are resistant to getting caught up in the politics of Pride.

### Product Development

40 Knots Winery created a pink sparkling wine (Soleil Rosé), discovering in the process its natural fit with the LGBT+ community and related advocacy.

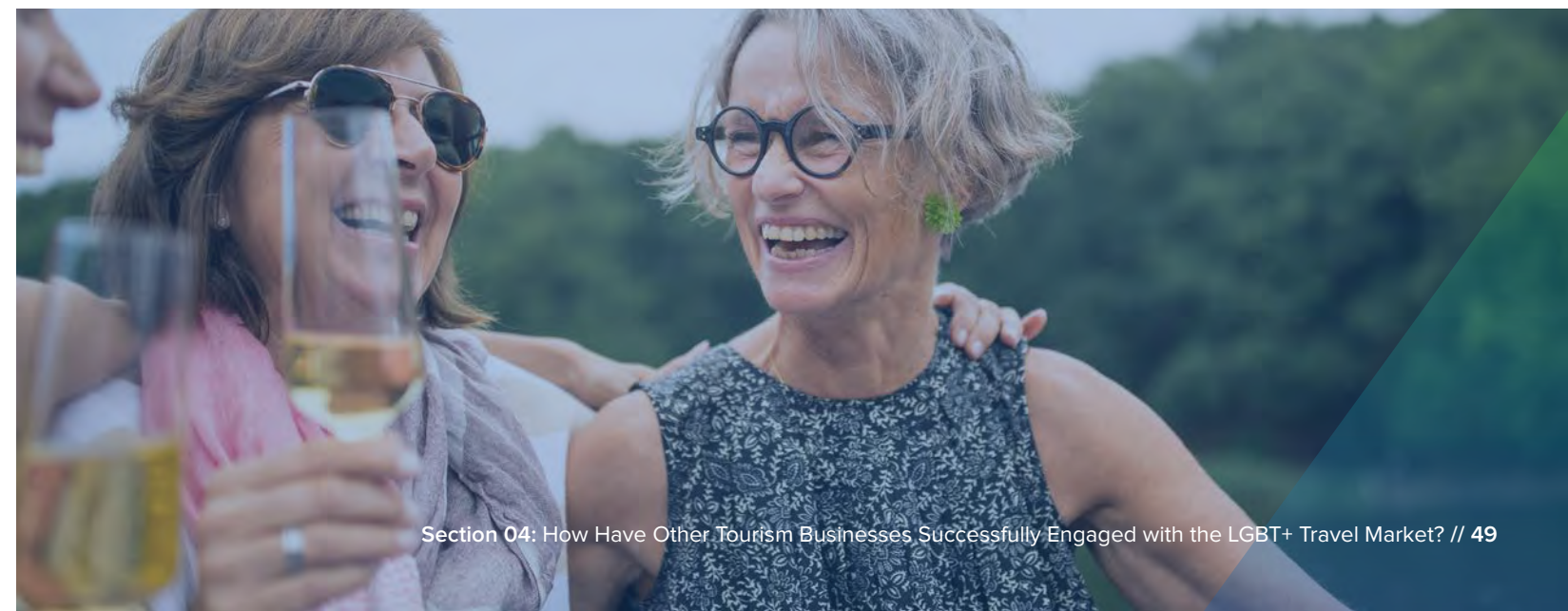
When the winery entered this scene, only one LGBT+ event existed in its region. There was some natural synergy in working with Razzle Dazzle, and the winery provided the venue for the production company's annual Queer Cultures festival, White Party Brunch.

As part of the winery's ongoing development and understanding of the LGBT+ market, the owners participated in an LGBT+ inclusion training workshop and later shared the learnings with their employees. The winery also became a member of an LGBT+ tourism organization and included the affiliation logo on the Soleil Rosé label.

Currently, 40 Knots Winery supports two LGBT+ community events: Razzle Dazzle's White Party and Vancouver Island Pride's ski week at Mount Washington.

### Marketing Initiatives

40 Knots Winery leads with its company message on online platforms: "We welcome everyone by creating a safe and supportive environment to be oneself." Naturally, the winery is popular with foodies, wine lovers and as a wedding venue.



The marketing vehicles the winery uses include:

- Social media
- Print media (limited)
- Sponsorship (limited)

The winery's team admits their social media outreach is targeted to a more general audience. In order to reach the LGBT+ community, they would need to review and strategically focus their messaging.

### Partnership Development

LGBT+ partnerships are important to the winery as it provides the opportunity for the employees to demonstrate their support of diversity – and they believe it's the right thing to do. It shows an authentic interest in the community rather than just asking for business from this community.

### Key Findings: Successes and Measurements

40 Knots Winery does not have any available marketing metrics; however, it has seen an increase in wedding business (as a venue). Already, two weddings this year are booked, and more LGBT+ weddings are being booked all the time.

The winery's team recognizes they could be doing more to reach the LGBT+ community, but it comes down to limited resources and prioritizing. Promoting a welcoming message and being authentic in that welcome is core to who they are.

40 Knots Winery indicated that it would recommend all companies invest in taking an LGBT+ inclusion training workshop. It was invaluable and opened the employees' eyes to the possibilities and importance of language.

## Celebrity Cruises

[celebritycruises.com](http://celebritycruises.com)

Celebrity Cruises (established in Miami in 1988) became part of the Royal Caribbean International family in 1997. The cruise line is positioned as an innovative "modern luxury" ship fleet with forward-thinking design and stunning spaces. It boasts award-winning epicurean experiences with chefs revered by James Beard House. It was the first cruise line to cook at the esteemed industry incubator in New York City. Celebrity was also the first cruise line to appoint a female captain in 2015, Captain Kate McCue, evidence of a paradigm shift taking place within the cruise industry.

### Entering the LGBT+ Travel Marketplace

Celebrity Cruises' emphasis on LGBT+ inclusion feels authentic – you can sense that the cruise line is making an earnest effort.

Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) Peter Giorgi said in an interview with *Cruise Critic*, "(Inclusion) has always been at the heart of what we do, and it's one of the first things we did when I joined, which is uncovering our brand purpose – who are we, what do we do. We're not manufacturing it – it's more about how do we bring it to surface more. We're this global community that travels the world, and our offerings have always transcended strict views of what constructs a family or couple. So, we just peeled back the layers and brought to the surface values that weren't as overt, historically."

One way in which Celebrity practises what it preaches is by recruiting talent that is in alignment with the company's values. For example, when celebrity designer Nate Berkus, also openly gay, was hired as the brand's design ambassador, Celebrity's President and CEO, Lisa Lutoff-Perlo, told *Cruise Week* that the company didn't choose Berkus "just because his design credentials are superb. It was also because he represents a community that we care about. He was aligned with our values."

In 2016, Royal Caribbean (Celebrity's parent company) appointed Grant Van Ulbrich as Director of Diversity and Inclusion, a newly created position within the company. An entire team is now devoted to diversity and inclusion, ensuring the cruise line engages travellers of all backgrounds and takes the lead on sponsorship opportunities like Miami Beach Pride Parade.

Celebrity's marketing efforts aim to create a strong sense of inclusivity. "Right now, there's no single LGBT+ initiative," says Giorgi. "It's a holistic relooking at imagery and language – who is in the marketing and what we say about them, the casting and photography."

**Inclusiveness is shown in the company and by the people we work for every day – you can't help but have it on your mind; the fabric of who we are is reflected in what we do.**

- Peter Giorgi, Chief Marketing Officer



There are no secret meetups under the guise of “Friends of Dorothy” on Celebrity. Instead, get-togethers for the LGBT+ crowd are listed on the daily program explicitly as LGBT+ social hours. In addition to this demographic of cruisers being recognized publicly, social gatherings are scheduled almost nightly. “I think of our ships as a community of people from different backgrounds and places, and they should be celebrated for that (diversity),” says Giorgi. “We want them to have their best week or two weeks all year onboard.”

Cruise onboard crews hail from countries all across the world. The rich blend of nationalities – somewhere between 50 to 60 on Celebrity alone – create a diverse company culture but also present challenges on how to address differing perspectives on sexuality and gender. Celebrity requires that all staff, both shoreside and onboard, undergo special cultural sensitivity training so that they are equipped to treat all passengers with respect and dignity. Celebrity also offers an unconscious bias training, so staff are cognizant of biases they may be carrying.

### Community Engagement

Celebrity Cruises partners with many land-based organizations supporting LGBT+ rights. The company sponsored the Gay Pride Festival in Miami Beach, where the company is also headquartered. In 2017, Celebrity won best float.

In an interview with *Cruise Critic*, Giorgi stated: “We will continue to sponsor the Pride Parade in our own backyard. I believe the LGBT+ community in Miami is underserved, and the parade should be on the map in a big way. Talking about what we could do to bring the experience onboard, we thought people should still have a chance to celebrate, even at sea, so we decided to host a global Pride party.”

**“There was a Pride event held at the same time across nine ships, and it’s something I think we will continue into the future.”**

- Peter Giorgi, Chief Marketing Officer

Haute on Hudson is another Celebrity-sponsored event in partnership with *OUT Magazine*. Proceeds from the ticket sales went to an LGBT+ community centre in New York City called The Centre. More corporate sponsorships and LGBT+ initiatives are on the horizon, with the potential for diversity summits at sea.

An ally is considered anyone who is open, accepting and supportive of the LGBT+ community. *Cruise Critic* interviewed Michael and Jim, a couple who had been celebrating their 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary aboard Celebrity. The crew honoured them with an anniversary cake and champagne while surrounding tables cheered and clapped. The welcoming atmosphere created by hosting daily LGBT+ gatherings and employees’ training demonstrates a culture of acceptance for guests to replicate.

### Product Development

Celebrity strives to ensure its guests feel enormously welcome, and the cruise line values the importance of diversity among its guests and crew. Perhaps this is why it was awarded LGBT+ Friendly Travel Company of the year in 2016 at the TTG Travel Awards and has won Best Large Ship Cruise Line for LGBT+ Passengers at the Cruizie Awards for four years running.

Celebrity is proud that the same-sex marriages carried out onboard and officiated by its captain beginning in 2017 are now legally recognized. It came down to a transformative vote in Malta, where a majority of the Celebrity fleet was registered. The motion was passed by the country’s parliament, making it officially legal to sanction weddings onboard.

In a historic ceremony hosted in January 2018 onboard Celebrity Equinox, Francisco Vargas and Benjamin Gray became the first same-sex couple to be legally married at sea on a major cruise line.

Celebrity’s popular LGBT+ welcome parties are open to guests fleet-wide, taking place on the first night of every cruise. This event is a great icebreaker and an opportunity for people to connect. In addition to the Welcome Party, Celebrity also hosts various onboard LGBT+ events and social hours.

Whether guests join the company onboard for their vacation, honeymoon or wedding, they will see why Celebrity is a welcoming cruise line for all LGBT+ guests.

### Marketing Initiatives

Celebrity considers its marketing platforms an important vehicle to promote and celebrate diversity. In its mainstream marketing and social channels, you will see images and stories of LGBT+ guests and examples of gender and sexual diversity throughout the year.

“Our social media channels have been more inclusive, and we feel it’s important that it’s year-round, not just in June (for Pride Month). Around Valentine’s Day, we ran a Sweethearts at Sea album on Facebook, and one of the photos was of a same-sex couple. The response was overwhelming. Couples of all kinds were sharing their own stories and commenting. It was touching.” - Peter Giorgi, CMO, Celebrity Cruises

Celebrity utilizes a multi-channel strategy, including web, print, TV, social media, a blog, influencers and editorial marketing. Celebrity offers special marketing templates for its travel agents and partners that include LGBT+ web banners and other collateral.

Promotional videos for the cruise line promote the ethnic, age, gender and sexual diversity of its guests and crew as integral to its identity.

Celebrity leverages star power to promote diversity and inclusion. U.S. Olympian Adam Rippon is one of their spokespeople: “I’m honoured to be an ambassador for Celebrity Cruises’ second annual Pride Party at Sea! It’s great to collaborate with a brand like Celebrity that is so dedicated to the LGBT+ community,” says Rippon.

### Partnership Development

Tie The Knot is a non-profit organization founded by TV show *Modern Family*’s Jesse Tyler Ferguson and his husband, Justin Mikita. Through the sale of limited-edition bow ties and fashion accessories, Tie The Knot has raised over \$1 million to support LGBT+ equality and human rights initiatives around the globe. Celebrity first partnered with the non-profit in June 2017 when Mikita served as the ambassador for Celebrity’s first Pride Party at Sea. Later that year, Celebrity proudly sponsored Tie The Knot’s fifth anniversary party and donated \$50,000 to the Human Rights Campaign, the largest LGBT+ organization in the U.S.

Celebrity has been a major sponsor for Miami Beach Gay Pride for two years in a row. It has hosted onsite festival events, themed giveaways and performances, including special appearances by Savannah Smith and Ashlee Amber, and had its own parade float. Over 400 employees marched in the parade in 2018.

Set onboard Celebrity Edge, a new episode of the show *Trailblazers* will be screened daily on the cruise line’s LGBT+ social media channels from September 30 to October 4, 2020. Each episode will aim to “shine a light on queer travel” and follow an ethnically diverse set of representatives from the LGBT+ community as they dock in some of Europe’s most famous ports. Produced by TTG Media, destinations will include Barcelona, Valencia, Ibiza, Nice and Rome. The series will conclude with the third annual Pride at Sea onboard the Celebrity Edge.

Jo Rzymowska, Celebrity’s managing director for the U.K., Ireland and Asia, says: “We were thrilled to welcome the cast of *Trailblazers* onboard Celebrity Edge, which we hope has positively shaped their perception of travelling as members of the LGBT+ community.

“We want everyone onboard our ships to feel appreciated and welcome, whoever they are, and am therefore delighted to launch this industry-leading content in partnership with *Gay Times*.”

*Gay Times* chief executive Tag Warner added: “Through our trailblazing partnership with Celebrity Cruises, we’re thrilled to share our exploration of the queer travel experience onboard Celebrity Edge.

“This industry-leading collaboration has set the scene for a unique LGBT+ travel experience – an onboard community of like-minded people, thriving in a young, free and dynamic environment – a safe space for self-expression set against the perfect Mediterranean backdrop.”

Travel consultants can log on to [Celebritycentral.co.uk](http://Celebritycentral.co.uk) to access the updated LGBT+ toolkit collection with images, flyers and logos. Celebrity is a proud member of the IGLTA.

### Key Findings: Successes and Measurements

Celebrity Cruises is a shining example of diversity and inclusion done well. The cruise line’s success rests on its values-driven company culture as well as its company-wide inclusion and sensitivity training. It creates opportunities for LGBT+ community-building on its ships and takes risks – being vocal supporters of marriage equality (same-sex weddings) demonstrates a bold commitment. Celebrity has received countless awards for its progressive work and is understood as the “#1 LGBT+ friendly fleet.”

### Overall Learnings

Celebrity’s culture is upheld by recruiting talent that is in alignment with the company’s values. Celebrity’s team is crystal clear in what their brand purpose is, who they are and what they do. This allows them to be fiercely authentic and proud of the inclusive environment they have created.

Celebrity Cruises sets its team up for success and is helping to shatter the glass ceiling of gender diversity in senior leadership roles. The comprehensive sensitivity and unconscious bias training for a team of over 50 different nationalities is what really sets this cruise line apart.

Transparency is a hallmark for this cruise line. Including imagery of diverse people throughout all of its marketing, as well as openly sharing LGBT+ events in the ships’ daily program, allows for a culture of openness. Diversity is a Celebrity credo, and fellow passengers subscribe.

## Delta Air Lines

[delta.com](http://delta.com)

Delta Air Lines is one of the largest airlines based in the United States. The airline, along with its subsidiaries and regional affiliates, operates over 5,400 flights daily and serves 325 destinations in 52 countries on 6 continents. Delta is also a founding member of the SkyTeam Airline Alliance.

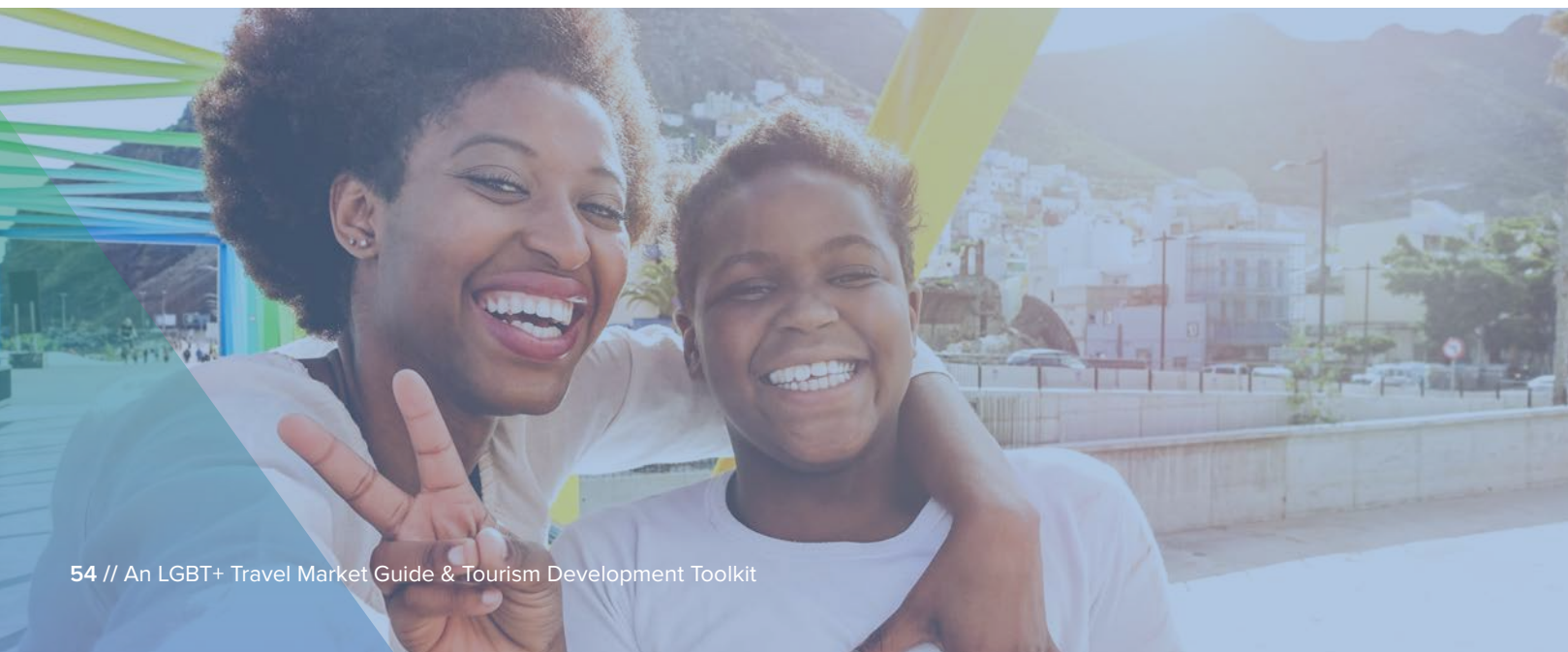
### Entering the LGBT+ Travel Marketplace

Atlanta-based Delta Air Lines first entered the LGBT+ market in 2008. This was around the time when American Airlines switched its focus to other niche markets allowing for a new airline to move in and own the LGBT+ space.

Driven from within, Delta’s employee resources (Delta Employee Equality Network, or DEEN) took a leadership role in the LGBT+ space as marriage equality and LGBT+ rights in the U.S. and around the world became front and centre.

### Community Engagement

Delta had a strong LGBT+ community within the organization as well as significant potential to serve LGBT+ consumers. Atlanta, GA, is the airline’s hub with over 103.9 million passengers annually. The city also has a strong and thriving LGBT+ community.



Marriage equality in the U.S. became a hot topic, and Delta Air Lines joined the cause, showing its support for equality and inclusion. Corneel Koster, Delta's Senior Vice President Europe, Middle East, Africa and India, spoke on the company's position:

Our theme for this year is non-stop equality, which is pretty fitting because at Delta and Virgin (Atlantic) we are unstoppable. We are always pushing boundaries.

**“We live in parts of the world where we can express ourselves and be ourselves freely, and unfortunately that's not the case for other parts of the world. This is why it's important that we stand shoulder to shoulder to support Pride and inclusivity.”**

#### Product Development

Community engagement was an important strategy for equality with internal and external initiatives. Delta sponsors Pride events around the world, including its hometown Atlanta Pride. The airline supports Pride events in other key regions, including London (with Virgin Atlantic), Boston, LA, Seattle, Utah, Cincinnati, NYC, Detroit, Minneapolis and Whistler.

“Events like this give employees an opportunity to show their pride in the community in which they work and live. The excitement and energy was remarkable. We've got the support of both companies and are developing lasting relationships, meeting people from other departments and growing together,” says flight attendant and EQUAL president Ashton Therrel.

Delta and its partner Virgin Atlantic not only support human rights groups and LGBT+-related events globally, making them leading supporters in world equality, but also promote an exceptional corporate culture:

“I'm fortunate to work for Delta... I think having a perfect CEI (Corporate Equality Index) is a very powerful thing for the company to accomplish. It solidifies the corporate message of being truly inclusive. I'm proud of DEEN for raising awareness and of Delta for making it happen,” says Billie Ashton, the Transgender Advocacy Chair on the Delta Employee Equality Network (DEEN) Steering Committee and an MSP-based ramp agent, who recently celebrated 32 years with the company. The index measurement comes from the Human Rights Campaign annual corporate report card in 2017 and 2018.

**Striving for the perfect score in equal benefits means falling short at times. Delta's score in 2019 was 85 out of 100, with these following gaps to close:**

- Equivalency in same-sex and different sex domestic partner medical and soft benefits (allowing employees in same-sex relationships to obtain health, dental and life insurance, pension and flight benefits for domestic partners where they may not be covered at a state or national level.
- Equal health coverage for transgender individuals without exclusion for medically necessary care.

**Examples of how Delta supports the LGBT+ community include:**

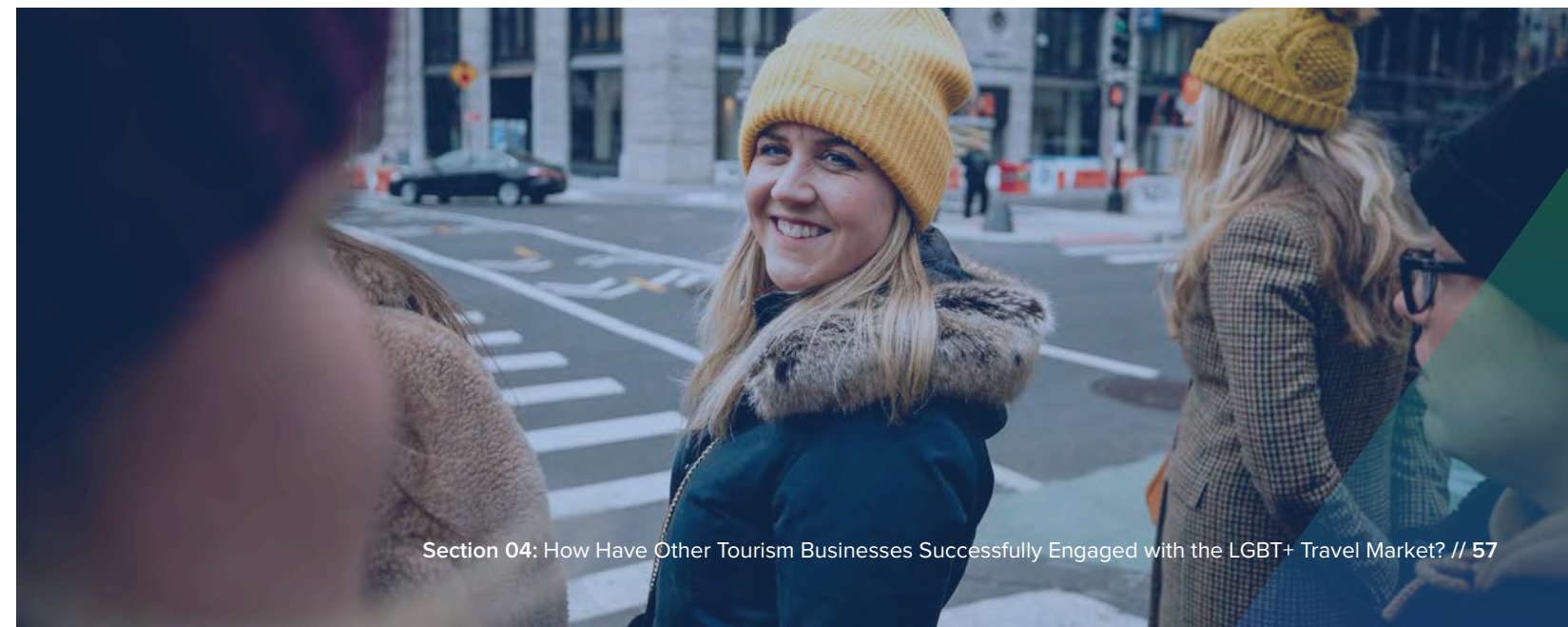
- Delta supports diversity training for all staff.
- Delta's LGBT+ employee group fosters understanding and compassion, formed in the aftermath of the Pulse Nightclub shooting.
- Delta celebrated 10 years of support to Gnetwork360, Argentina's annual gay travel business symposium.
- Delta is a proud partner of the IGLTA, NGLCC and GLAAD Media Awards, to name a few.
- Delta updated its policies to cover any federal or state income or payroll tax burden associated with its coverage for LGBT+ employees, becoming the first major airline to implement such a policy.

#### Marketing Initiatives

Delta is known for delivering innovative marketing campaigns. They have received various industry awards as a result, including Best Airline LGBT+ Marketing Campaign in 2017.

Delta has developed its authentic voice by leveraging relationships with influencers and its DEEN network [#PrideInFlight](#).

Delta responded to criticism of LGBT+ in-flight movies being censored by updating its process for managing content. “We are immediately putting a new process in place for managing content available through Delta's in-flight entertainment... and now realize content well within our guidelines was unnecessarily excluded from films.”



Delta boldly depicts both heterosexual and LGBT+ couples in its marketing campaigns, posters and web and video ads.

#### Development of Partnerships

Delta partners with and sponsors groups who are leading the fight. It's one of the reasons Delta was recognized as a Best Workplace for Diversity by *Fortune* for three years in a row.

Groups they support include:

- The Human Rights Campaign
- GLAAD
- The National Gay Pilots Association
- IGLTA
- CHRIS 180
- Gnetwork360 in Argentina
- The Brazilian Association for GLS Tourism

The company has also been recognized for its help bringing attention to the Gay Men's Health Crisis through tireless efforts spanning more than a decade.

Delta carefully leverages its partnerships to ensure that its brand is front and centre.

#### Key Findings: Successes and Measurements

Diversity and inclusion is a core value at Delta. It has been very successful at reflecting this value in its business practices and community support initiatives. The company is in it for the long game.

Some notable activities and recognitions:

- Delta provides annual support for Pride around the world. For example, in 2017, 1,100 employees walked in Pride parades in support of local LGBT+ communities; 400 employees participated in the NYC Pride Festival carrying a 100-foot-long flag.

- Five Pride initiatives were supported by Delta and Virgin Atlantic this year, including those in Atlanta, Boston, New York, Seattle and London. In addition, there were 16 Pride initiatives supported by just Delta across cities in the U.S., Canada and the U.K.
- Delta ranked #15 on *Fortune*'s Best Workplace for Diversity
- For the second year in a row, Delta was named one of the 100 Best Companies to Work For according to global research and consulting firm Great Place to Work and *Fortune*.

#### Key Learnings

Delta takes diversity and inclusion seriously, driven from both the top down and from the front lines up. Having the DEEN (Delta Employee Equality Network) has enabled Delta to meet and maintain its human resources goals and set an equality standard within the tourism industry that others can emulate.

Delta leverages its partnerships to help tell the company's story of inclusion, leading by example. It is active in many industry events and active sponsors of many Prides and other LGBT+ organizations and special events.

The airline uses diverse imagery (race, gender and sexuality) throughout its marketing efforts and editorial content.

When Delta misses the mark on being a leader in diversity, as in its censorship of LGBT+ content on its in-flight movies, the airline quickly responds and takes action to resolve the issue.

### Kingfisher Oceanside Resort & Spa (Vancouver Island, BC)

[kingfisherspa.com/travel-gay-canada](http://kingfisherspa.com/travel-gay-canada)

The Kingfisher Oceanside Resort & Spa is nestled in a coastal forest on the eastern shore of Vancouver Island (eight kilometres south of Courtenay). It offers breathtaking ocean and mountain views, a relaxing sea-spa, a serene yoga studio and contemporary West Coast cuisine.

#### Entering the LGBT+ Travel Marketplace

Initially, Kingfisher targeted the LGBT+ market through Facebook advertising, magazine ads and sponsorship opportunities, committing to developing a long-term relationship with the LGBT+ market. Later, it sought advice from LGBT+ tourism expert Dean Nelson, which led the resort's team to take an inclusion training workshop. The leadership team and owner now possess a great foundation of knowledge and insight on how to respectfully approach the LGBT+ community.

Following its participation in an LGBT+ inclusion training workshop, Kingfisher:

- Became a member of a national LGBT+ tourism organization.
- Committed marketing funds to target the LGBT+ market.
- Updated its employee training manual to reflect the resort's learnings.
- Created new SOPs (standard operating procedures) for the resort. For example: establishing a gender-neutral spa change room, which may be requested by the transgender/non-binary market.



- Held a photoshoot to produce images that would resonate with the LGBT+ market.
- Held a second diversity training workshop and invited its tourism community partners, knowing the importance of creating an LGBT+ tourism-friendly destination beyond the beautiful resort. Some visitors stay in the resort “spa bubble,” but many want to explore the region. Kingfisher wanted to ensure partners had the educational tools needed to make Comox Valley a rainbow-proud destination.

### Community Engagement

There is a small but strong LGBT+ community on Vancouver Island. Kingfisher knew it was important to develop relationships with established LGBT+ groups within its own community as well as to collaborate with tourism partners. Community involvement and investment is crucial to developing an LGBT+-friendly culture on the island.

### Product Development

Kingfisher Oceanside Resort & Spa created brand awareness ads with inclusive and welcoming LGBT+ messaging. It highlighted the steps it took as a resort to better connect and serve the community, including the diversity training workshop and charitable LGBT+ sponsorships.

Working together with tourism and local business partners, the resort’s team is currently building community-wide readiness and has emerged as community leaders in this mission.

In the past, community events did exist for the LGBT+ community; however, they were not tourism-focused. To address this gap, Mount Washington, a Comox Valley ski resort, created a ski festival called Vancouver Island Pride (VIP). Kingfisher Resort jumped on board as a marketing partner for the event. In 2021, VIP will enter its third year of existence, still enjoying Kingfisher’s support.

Kingfisher has not changed product offerings in response to a growing LGBT+ market. Its offering remains a serene and relaxing spa resort experience, including an incredible culinary dining experience in a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Local partner products such as tour activities (biking, kayaking, culinary tours, etc.) were previously developed.

The owner also gets personally involved in the resort’s LGBT+ initiatives. He was invited to attend further workshops at Whistler Pride and Ski Festival, and he took the opportunity to learn and demonstrate his support of the LGBT+ event.

Kingfisher Resort supports the local Comox Valley Pride events and proudly sponsors several LGBT+ charities, including:

- The Vancouver Queer Film Festival and its Out in Schools programs.
- Vancouver Frontrunners Pride Run & Walk, supporting its bursary program.
- Whistler Pride & Ski Festival, supporting Rainbow Foundation of Hope.

In addition, the resort pledged an in-kind donation that could be used as a prize for the annual Mount Washington VIP Winter Pride. This year, the sponsorship was to the Wachiay Friendship Centre Qumcommunity Connections.

It is currently looking into becoming members of IGLTA and CGLCC.

### Marketing Initiatives

Kingfisher Resort’s marketing includes Facebook advertising, ads in the *Georgia Straight* annual Pride issue, ads in festival guides, sponsorships, influencer stays and editorial pieces. Facebook advertising is preferred because of its low cost, engagement potential and measurable return on investment (ROI).

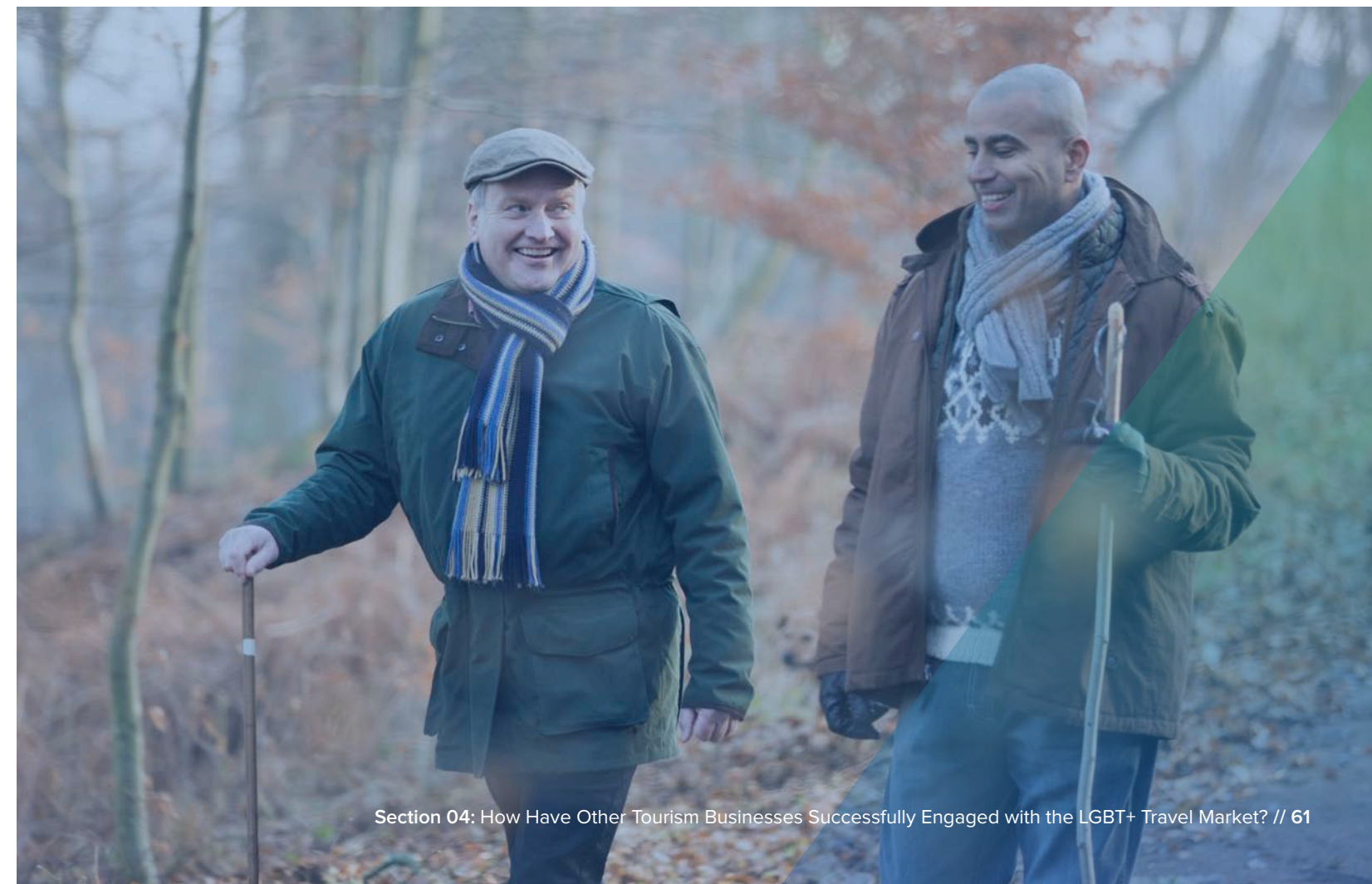
Kingfisher Resort’s prime markets are British Columbia and Alberta. Its key demographics are women and LGBT+ folks from 35-65 years. The resort’s marketing budget is quite low, and the LGBT+ market is currently a new niche market. However, it looks for new ideas to complement its social media strategy by acknowledging key LGBT+ dates, events and anniversaries.

### Partnership Development

Kingfisher was successful in developing its partnerships with some of the local LGBT+ community groups while taking a leadership role in the conversation around gender and sexual diversity with its industry partners and local chamber of commerce members.

The resort is seeing success in its effort to engage the LGBT+ market due in part to tangential initiatives, including the city of Courtenay’s downtown rainbow crosswalk and the business association’s own movement to create more LGBT+ events and programming. It appears the community is moving forward together.

Kingfisher Oceanside Resort & Spa takes the lead on its own LGBT+ program as well as in the wider community. As of yet, there is no local LGBT+ tourism committee.



## Key Learnings

- Understanding target market needs has proven critical to welcoming LGBT+ guests more effectively.
- Investing in inclusion training has paid dividends in helping shape a more inclusive and safe work environment for Kingfisher's team, in addition to ensuring the LGBT+ community feels welcome.
- Kingfisher was a frontrunner in leading diversity training for the region by inviting some of its key partners to participate and learn more about the LGBT+ community and how to be ready to welcome them.
- Kingfisher was able to review its core values and ensure its values were in alignment to create a safe and welcoming space for everyone regardless of where one identifies on the gender and sexual diversity spectrum.
- Better understanding of the impact of language, especially pronouns and assumptions around gender, was critical to implementing changes like a gender-neutral washroom.

## Hilton Hotels and Resorts

[hilton.com](https://www.hilton.com)

Hilton Hotels and Resorts is one of the world's largest multinational hotel companies. Founded by Conrad Hilton in 1919 with his first property Mobley Hotel in Cisco, Texas, the company has grown to include 18 world-class brands with 6,100 properties containing 971,000 rooms in 119 countries and territories across the globe.

Matthew W. Schuyler, Hilton's chief human resources officer says, "As a business of people serving people, diversity and inclusion have been embedded in our culture since our founding more than 100 years ago. We look forward to continuing to champion equality for team members, guests and owners alike."

### Entering the LGBT+ Marketplace

Hilton takes a lead on LGBT+ outreach, supporting the LGBT+ community both within the company and in the greater community. It offers a wide range of diversity and inclusion resources for team members and executives. Through its Executive Inclusion Council and LGBT+ and Friends Team Member Resource Group, Hilton is clearly committed to being recognized as a leading employer, offering comprehensive family, leave and adoption assistance program benefits for all. Hilton is proud to have scored 100% in the annual Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Corporate Equality Index for the past seven years (from 2013 to 2020).

Hilton offers both funding and expertise with several LGBT+ organizations, including:

- HRC (Human Rights Campaign)
- GLAAD (formerly the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation)
- IGLTA (International LGBT+ Travel Association)
- NGLCC (National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce)
- National LGBT+ Task Force
- Out & Equal Workplace Advocates and Point Foundation

It is common for Hilton's senior leadership and team members to volunteer their time to these organizations.

Hilton has been a proud member of the HRC Corporate Coalition Against Anti-LGBT+ Legislation and the HRC Business Coalition for Equality in support of the Equality Act. Last year, Hilton was the first hospitality company to join the Global Equality Fund, an initiative of the U.S. State Department that advances and protects the human rights of LGBT+ persons around the world.

In 2012, Hilton launched a number of Team Member Resource Groups (TMRGs) at its corporate offices. Members are invited to collaborate with each other to promote professional growth through networking and knowledge sharing. The LGBT+ & Friends TMRG actively supports Hilton's marketing efforts, including Pride events at its respective corporate sites.

Hilton works closely with the National LGBT+ Chamber of Commerce and its supplier diversity teams to ensure the company is effectively supporting LGBT+-owned businesses.

Hilton offers diversity training to all staff – both at the corporate and property level – and are currently piloting an enhanced version to ensure it continues to meet its high cultural sensitivity standards.

Being good stewards of the LGBT+ community is a top priority for Hilton. As leaders, Hilton is always looking for new ways to authentically connect with LGBT+ travellers, from sponsoring LGBT+ festivals to developing the LGBT+-specific microsite, "Stay Hilton. Go Out."

### Community Engagement

Hilton volunteers and collaborates with a number of the LGBT+ community's most influential organizations on leadership, advocacy and sponsorship.





At a property level, Hilton hosts a variety of events, including HRC's Time to THRIVE Conference and the Matthew Shepard Foundation's Bear to Make a Difference Gala. Hilton was the proud host of the 36<sup>th</sup> annual International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association Global Convention at the Hilton New York Midtown, where attendees also celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Stonewall uprising in New York. Hilton also provides select organizations with complimentary room nights to support their fundraising efforts.

Hilton's senior director of global diversity and inclusion, Jon Muñoz, serves as vice chair of the International LGBT+ Travel Association (IGLTA) Board of Directors, an association that works tirelessly to promote and attract LGBT+ trade and tourism. Muñoz also co-chairs the National LGBT+ Chamber of Commerce Corporate Advisory Council, with more than 140 corporate partners.

### Product Development

Hilton has consistently shown an authentic commitment to serving and supporting the LGBT+ community. Since the company's founding more than 100 years ago, diversity and inclusion has remained a strong tenet of its corporate culture. When it opened hotels in countries and territories where human rights were not equal to the standards of the United States, Hilton continued to champion equality for team members, guests and owners alike.

Hilton's successful LGBT+ culture and resulting marketing materials stemmed from corporate values of authenticity, caring and support for its local LGBT+ communities (in addition to other marginalized communities).

### Marketing Initiatives

In 2012, Hilton launched "Stay Hilton. Go Out." – its first major marketing campaign targeting leisure business from LGBT+ travellers and improving its corporate reputation in the community. The aim was to engage LGBT+ travellers by celebrating the rich history, culture and nightlife of top gay destinations around the world.

Hilton built out the landing page with information about LGBT+ travel, an LGBT+ events calendar, interviews and travel packages. Popular destinations booked through the site included San Francisco; New York City; Washington, D.C.; Pasadena and Key West.

According to the LGBT+ Travel Survey conducted by Community Marketing and Insights Inc., the campaign was an overwhelming success with consumers naming the hotel brand as the #1 hotel chain in its outreach to the LGBT+ community. In that same year, Hilton saw its Corporate Equality Index score with the HRC jump 30 points from 2011 to 2012. In Europe, Hilton was shortlisted for Brand of the Year at the *Out in the City* magazine readers' choice awards.

The "Stay Hilton. Go Out." campaign also saw huge dividends in editorial coverage and mentions in leading LGBT+ magazines, websites and blogs. Media outlets covering the campaign included *USA Today*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Toronto Star*, *The Globe and Mail*, *TravelAge West*, *Out Magazine*, *Out Traveler*, *Instinct Magazine*, *Xtra Magazine* and *Passport Magazine*, to name a few.

Hilton also invested in 65 paid placements in print publications and electronic banner ads with a total reach of nearly 90 million impressions. The campaign was designed to demonstrate to the world that Hilton valued the LGBT+ market.

In Hilton's first year of the campaign, it started with 53 participating hotels; by the end of that year, the company had more than tripled the hotels participating in the program. It was reported that the campaign had generated more than **\$200,000** in revenue and approximately 830 room nights. Hilton was also able to generate 3,484 "opt-ins" to the HHonors LGBT+ email database.

### Partnership Development

Hilton connects and partners with the LGBT+ community in authentic ways, finding the touchpoints that matter most. A leading sponsor of the D.C., NYC and Boston Pride parades, Hilton partners with leading LGBT+ organizations to help celebrate the community and raise awareness of its missions.

In 2015, Hilton was one of 379 companies that signed on to an amicus brief in support of marriage equality before the U.S. Supreme Court.

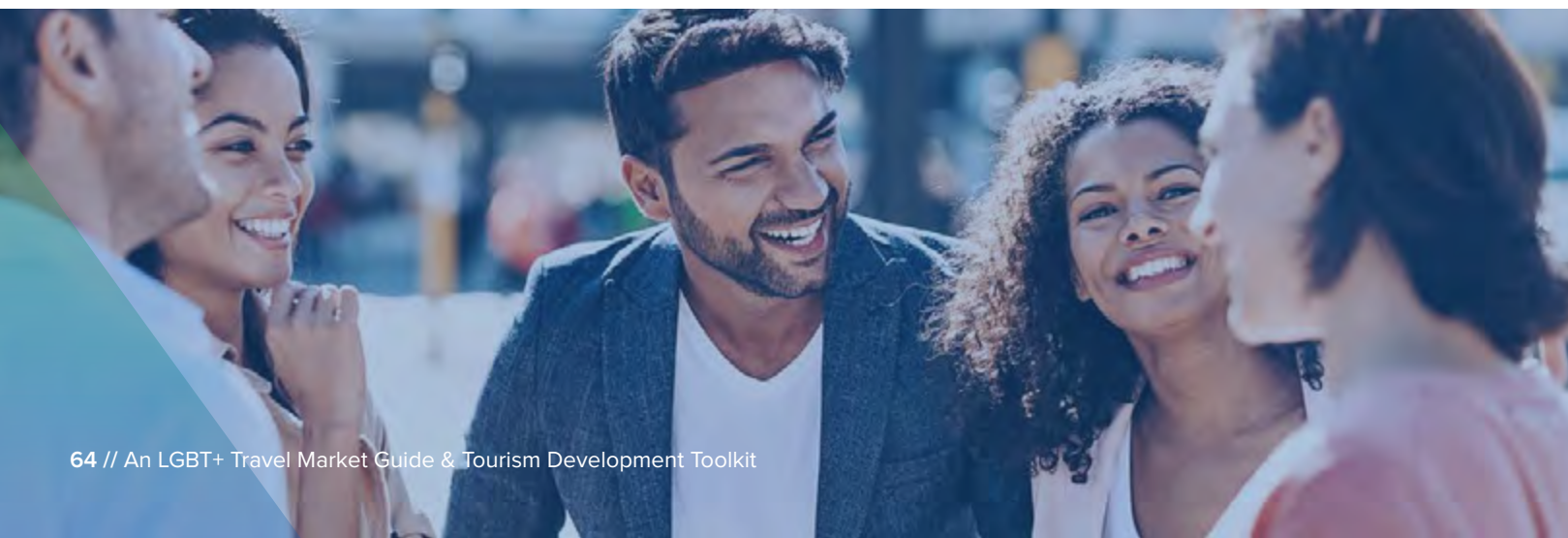
### Key Findings: Successes and Measurements

Hilton uses various matrixes to determine its success, which helps it evolve and adapt with changing times. Some of the measures include:

- Room nights and revenue generated through a specific portal such as "Stay Hilton. Go Out." and tracking HHonor profiles that have "opted in" for LGBT+ content.
- Conversion rates from paid electronic ads and sponsored social media posts.
- Clickthrough rates for paid electronic ads and sponsored social media posts.
- Monitoring social media interactions with consumers.
- Media coverage on Hilton's LGBT+ initiatives and support.
- Internal Employee Surveys in reference to gender and sexual diversity.
- Tracking of Hilton team members' volunteer hours working with the LGBT+ communities and the quality work they are able to assist those organizations with.
- Tracking of its supplier diversity spend, ensuring it is hitting its goals of buying goods and services from LGBT+-owned and operated businesses.
- HRC's Corporate Equality Index report card, consistently maintaining a perfect score.

### Overall Learnings

Hilton's successful approach to supporting gender and sexual diversity is multilayered. Diversity and inclusion is an authentic expression of its company culture and a core value promoted in all activities. By engaging in the work of regional LGBT+ communities and sharing its specialized expertise with various organizations, the company supports its missions both financially and through empowering knowledge. Hilton invests in the LGBT+ community by reflecting its values in its marketing as well as engaging in supplier diversity – buying goods and services from LGBT+-owned and operated businesses.



PART II:

# LGBT+ Tourism Development Toolkit

Section 05: Essential Elements for Successful LGBT+  
Tourism Development and Marketing Strategies

Section 06: Partnership Development and Community Outreach

Section 07: LGBT+ Inclusion Training for the Tourism Industry

Section 08: Additional LGBT+ Market-Ready Tools & Resources

Section 09: LGBT+ Tourism Product Development

Section 10: Marketing: Building the Strategy

Section 11: Measurement Tools

Section 12: LGBT+ Organizations and Media



SECTION 05:

Essential Elements  
for Successful LGBT+  
Tourism Development  
and Marketing Strategies



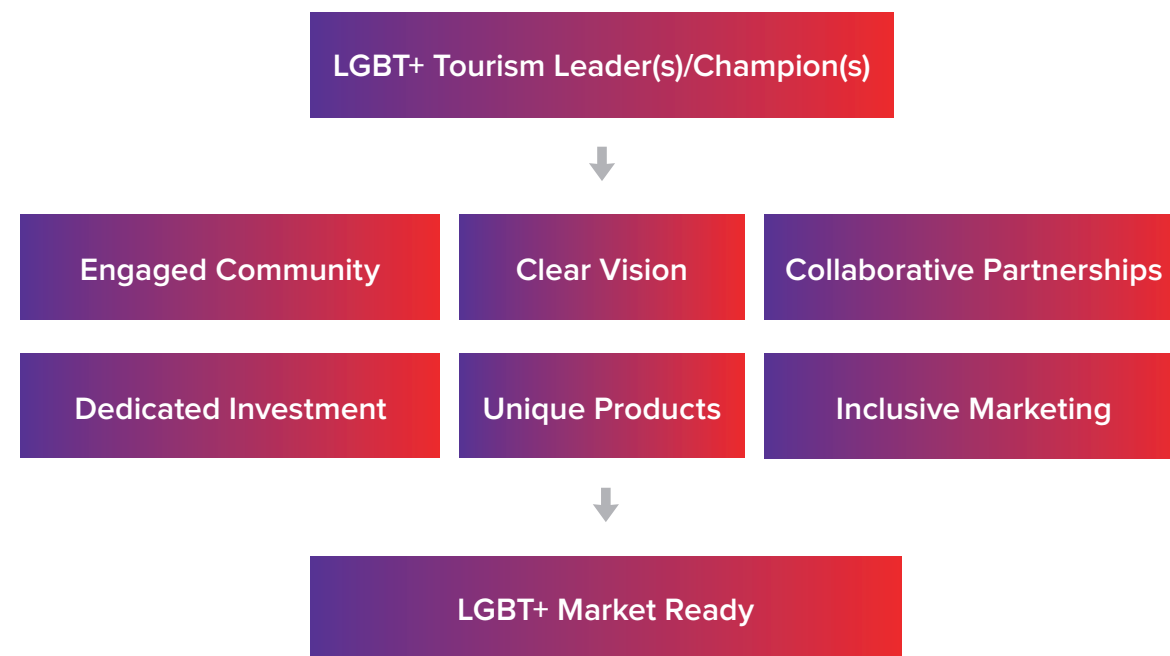
# Essential Elements for Successful LGBT+ Tourism Development and Marketing Strategies

There are six essential elements for destinations and tourism businesses to become LGBT+ travel market-ready. These elements have been identified through the best-practice case studies of destinations and tourism businesses that have successfully entered and served the LGBT+ travel market.

*Make sure you're engaging with the community before getting started.*

The first and most important factor to consider when developing your LGBT+ travel market strategy is to identify and empower one or more local leaders or champions from the LGBT+ community and/or your tourism business. This individual should help lead or co-lead the LGBT+ tourism and marketing strategy development and any related committees. Having one or more senior leadership representatives from the LGBT+ community is vital to help guide the process, ensure authenticity, maintain community engagement, provide long-term leadership and program sustainability and achieve successful results.

By seeking their support, input and participation, you will tap into their local expertise and leverage community networks and understanding of the LGBT+ history, cultural landscape and collaboration opportunities. This may be a community member, marketing partner or someone within your own company.



Once you have one or more LGBT+ tourism leaders on board, together you can work toward the six essential elements for success. Below are highlights of the important steps and actions to consider:

## 1. Have an engaged and visible local community:

- Engage LGBT+ community leaders, tourism industry champions and the community at large to guide and provide input in LGBT+ tourism development and marketing strategies;
- Provide opportunities for the local LGBT+ community to participate in LGBT+ tourism planning meetings, strategy development, product and program delivery and events;
- Celebrate an “out” LGBT+ community and sharing its history, culture, people and stories;
- Invite multi-sector LGBT+ and allied businesses and organizations to take active roles in the initiative (i.e. health care, social services, educational sectors).

## 2. Establish clear values, a vision and plan:

- Work with the LGBT+ tourism leaders, community members and industry stakeholders, establish clear values and a vision and plan for the LGBT+ tourism development and marketing strategies;
- Share plans, strategies and progress updates with the LGBT+ community, industry stakeholders and tourism partners;
- Regularly review LGBT+ traveller and community feedback, and evaluate results to adopt improvements and ensure the long-term sustainability of programs.

## 3. Build collaborative local, regional and broader partnerships:

- Partner with LGBT+ and allied organizations and tourism businesses to develop, support and deliver LGBT+ tourism products, events, experiences and programs;
- Establish a local/regional partnership group to assess current and new LGBT+ tourism development trends, marketing channels and collaboration opportunities;
- Develop/build on partnerships with neighbouring cities and regions to offer day-trip and multi-destination LGBT+ packages and experiences.

## 4. Provide dedicated investment and support:

- Offer ongoing LGBT+ inclusion training to tourism stakeholders and businesses (including senior management and frontline staff);
- Ensure employee benefits and supports extend to all LGBT+-identified employees;
- Fund or sponsor LGBT+ tourism initiatives and community groups;
- Implement inclusive procurement policies to buy products and services from LGBT+-certified businesses and other diverse suppliers.



#### 5. Offer unique products and experiences:

- Showcase tourism product offerings with unique packages and authentic programs and experiences targeted to the LGBT+ travel market;
- Develop and support LGBT+ community events and festivals;
- Mentor and assist local LGBT+ community members, tourism businesses and allied organizations to develop their own LGBT+ tourism programs, experiences and products;
- Foster links between LGBT+ and allied tourism businesses and organizations to encourage LGBT+ travel package collaborations.

#### 6. Implement inclusive marketing strategies and promotional activities:

- Demonstrate authenticity in all marketing and communications by featuring LGBT+ people, stories and imagery in both general and targeted campaigns on all platforms;
- Encourage affiliations with local, national and/or international LGBT+ tourism organizations who offer additional resources, support and marketing tools;
- Feature LGBT+ information, imagery, package details and relevant web links in general marketing and promotional campaigns and platforms;
- For targeted campaigns, create LGBT+ tourism microsites and web pages to provide a fuller picture of LGBT+ tourism information, partnerships, packages and support services.

SECTION 06:

# Partnership Development and Community Outreach





## Partnership Development and Community Outreach

As outlined above, the active involvement and participation from both the local LGBT+ community and industry stakeholders is critical to a successful LGBT+ marketing strategy. It is essential to foster collaborative, cross-sector partnerships to engage the community at large in welcoming the LGBT+ travel market.

Within the community, there are several people/groups who should be engaged:

- Local government and government agencies/departments, which could include the mayor; councillors; and public health, safety and emergency services;
- The allied business community at large, which could include local BIAs and tourism-related businesses (such as retailers, restaurants, hotels, attractions and tour operators);
- Residents/resident groups (who play an important role in the actual experience that LGBT+ visitors have in any destination);
- The local LGBT+ community, which could include LGBT+ organizations (i.e. Pflag, Pride and business networking groups), LGBT+ charitable organizations (i.e. social service organizations) and LGBT+ social groups (i.e. sports groups, church groups, choirs).

### Engagement can be achieved in several ways:

**Communication** – Keeping the community and industry informed of any LGBT+ tourism activities not only ensures they are aware of what is happening, but it also allows for a much greater appreciation of the investment and commitment that is being made.

**Input** – Actively seeking input from the community and industry helps to ensure destinations have support and buy-in and enables the destination to see where there are opportunities for improvement.

**Involvement** – Fully engaging all stakeholders through participation on committees or meetings allows teams to obtain valuable insight and guidance while indicating a vision of sincere partnerships.

It is recommended that an LGBT+ tourism committee be established with members from the LGBT+ and allied community to develop the plan, vision and strategies. This committee, either coordinated or independent of the local DMO, can help to support and direct the LGBT+ tourism development activities. Having this input and guidance from external participants helps to ensure that the strategies implemented by the DMO are on-target and are appropriate for the destination, while indicating the commitment being made to the LGBT+ community.

SECTION 07:

# LGBT+ Inclusion Training for the Tourism Industry





# LGBT+ Inclusion Training for the Tourism Industry

Providing customer satisfaction goes beyond ensuring that a destination offers products of value. Destinations also have to ensure that LGBT+ customers feel welcome and accepted and are served in a way that meets their expectations.

From a business perspective, LGBT+ consumers are critically aware of where they spend their tourism dollars. They tend to buy from businesses that demonstrate progressive policies toward LGBT+ customers and employees. By providing LGBT+ inclusion training, businesses are not only demonstrating their commitment to the LGBT+ market, but they are also creating a positive and inviting environment for all staff.

*LGBT+ inclusion training programs are critical in building the awareness and customer service excellence required to be fully LGBT+ travel market-ready. Tourism industry senior management and frontline staff should both be encouraged or required to participate. Workshop curriculum generally includes:*

- Significance of LGBT+ issues within the context of broader diversity issues;
- “LGBT+ 101” training to define the diversity of LGBT+ communities and provide an opportunity to ask questions;
- Distinguishing facts and stereotypes about LGBT+ people;
- The impact of homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism in the workplace;
- Why safe space is important and what it looks like;
- Reviewing the bottom line, specifically the internal and external benefits of an LGBT+-positive space;
- Gaining a better understanding of the impact of language, especially pronouns and assumptions around gender;
- Applying new strategies, especially when interacting with LGBT+ employees and customers;
- Providing an opportunity to work on the concepts and put the teaching into practice, such as practice scenarios;
- Giving staff an opportunity to brainstorm ways to make an LGBT+-positive space both proactively and reactively;
- Linking training to provincial and federal policies and legislation (such as human rights codes). LGBT+ training should support the generation of both a personal and organizational action plan to “walk the inclusion talk.”

Training is especially important for senior representatives of a destination or tourism business who need to make a commitment to support an LGBT+-positive environment. What will management do if there is an issue or a complaint from existing guests because of a same-sex couple holding hands on the premises? The commitment must be clear, defined and supported throughout the entire organization.

Canada’s LGBT+ Chamber of Commerce (CGLCC) offers a complete LGBT+ diversity and inclusion training program specifically for the tourism industry. This half-day facilitated workshop helps businesses learn about diversity and how to effectively understand, value and serve LGBT+ employees and customers.

For more information go to [cglcc.ca/tourism](http://cglcc.ca/tourism).

## Case Study: The Importance of LGBT+ Diversity and Inclusion Training

### Background

A gay male couple from Canada decided to get married at a popular international LGBT+ resort destination. They contacted a large hotel chain at the destination to book a wedding package with over 40 guests expected to stay at the property. As requested, they filled in all of the paperwork online and waited for a callback. The groom reviewed the details with the hotel’s group wedding coordinator, and when it came time to select the wedding bouquet and boutonniere, the groom requested two boutonnieres. This was the moment when things started to fall apart.

The wedding coordinator’s response was both bizarre and homophobic. She stated that the hotel didn’t specialize in same-sex weddings, so they would need to decline the business of hosting the service and reception. In a follow-up email, the refusal was further reinforced, claiming that hotel staff were “not specialized to carry out” same-sex weddings and recommended the couple book another resort.

In this case, the only identifiable difference between heterosexual and same-sex wedding preparations was the request of two boutonnieres instead of a wedding bouquet. The couple had their own officiant, booked their own entertainment and arranged the place settings and menu. Nothing – as is often the case with same-sex weddings – was exceptional.

### Fallout – the ramifications

The hotel immediately lost an estimated 280 room nights (40 rooms x 7 nights) plus the associated food and beverage revenue from the wedding.

The hotel generated negative attention worldwide and alienated one of the highest-grossing travel demographics (the LGBT+ communities) and their allies. The incident also provided the perfect opportunity for another hotel chain with a location in the destination to garner free, positive publicity at the expense of the other. While the hotel’s corporate head office attempted to rectify the situation and contacted the couple directly, the damage was done.

## Being inclusive is the right thing to do, and it’s good for business

The second hotel was quick to respond to their competitor’s misstep, seizing an opportunity to show it values inclusivity and diversity by offering to host the couple’s wedding and their 40 guests for free. Its travel partners, including a major airline, also stepped up and offered free flights and other services.

The second hotel received an incredible amount of positive publicity from its response to this story, and it further positioned them as the LGBT+ hotel brand of choice, not only in that destination but also around the world.

SECTION 08:

# Additional LGBT+ Market-Ready Tools & Resources

# 08





## Additional LGBT+ Market-Ready Tools & Resources

Market-readiness is the ability to offer products and experiences to a specific target group in such a way that will lead to customer satisfaction and positive experiences.

CGLCC's Destination Audits program helps destinations and tourism businesses identify and assess the current or planned LGBT+ products, programs, partnerships and community networks that will form the foundation of an LGBT+ travel market strategy. **The assessment includes destination and business-focused checklists or an audit of:**

- Current or planned LGBT+ products/business
- Critical market information knowledge and skill sets (i.e. HR resources and inclusion training)
- LGBT+-targeted services and programs
- Existing or prospective community networks, partnerships and events

**The information gathered from the assessment can be used to carry out a complete audit of the destination or tourism business. The audits will be used to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses and will provide:**

- Recommendations for improvement
- Potential resources and next steps in making improvements or changes
- Identifying a local network of valuable resources and contacts
- A resource tool to monitor progress and performance

**CGLCC provides a number of additional LGBT+ market-ready tools and resources to help destinations and businesses build on their investment in becoming ready to successfully attract, welcome and serve LGBT+ travellers, including:**

- LGBT+ Glossary of Terms
- Resource Guide for Implementing Inclusive Procurement Practices
- Building Community Engagement
- Marketing to the LGBT+ Consumer
- Trans and Non-Binary Inclusion
- Hosting Inclusive and Accessible Events
- Developing LGBT+ Products/Tours
- Resource Guide for Diversity & Inclusion Policies and Practices
- Becoming an Ally

Resources planned for future development include LGBT+ PR and Setting Up An Employee Resource Group guides. For more information about CGLCC's Destination Audits program and the full catalogue of guides and tools available, visit the Resources section of your CGLCC training portal.

SECTION 09:

# LGBT+ Tourism Product Development

# LGBT+ Tourism Product Development

In general, the LGBT+ traveller is looking for the same products and services as any other traveller. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't try to find ways to adjust your products or experiences to speak specifically to the LGBT+ traveller. Some examples include car rental companies waiving additional driver fees for same-sex partners or hotels offering his and his robes. In doing so, you are making your offering relevant to LGBT+ travellers as opposed to just selling them the same products you sell to everyone else.

The primary feature that the market does look for is safety. Safety is an important factor when LGBT+ travellers choose where to visit; they want to be sure that they are going to be comfortable and welcome.

This goes beyond the walls of your hotel or destination. Are your attractions, restaurants, bars and taxis able to ensure that level of comfort for the LGBT+ traveller?

It is important that all businesses and the community at large are aware and engaged in your strategy. Every interaction the LGBT+ traveller has with one of your businesses or residents makes an impression and impacts the overall experience.

When it comes to selling your destination, you undoubtedly have a wide variety of products and services. When first targeting your defined LGBT+ market segment, you need to focus on those products that differentiate your destination from the others. Identify and promote the products that are unique to your destination and that can provide a truly exceptional experience for the LGBT+ traveller.

**Examples of products and experiences that can be developed for LGBT+ communities and that would appeal to LGBT+ travellers include:**

- LGBT+ festivals and events (i.e. Pride, ski and snowboard, culinary and film festivals, etc.)
- LGBT+-focused experiences with local and authentic storytellers from the community
- LGBT+-focused group tours (i.e. walking, cycling, boat, bus and wine tours, etc.)
- LGBT+-focused outdoor adventures/activities (i.e. group kayaking, SUP, ziplining, glamping, etc.)
- Mainstream festivals, events or experiences that incorporate and offer LGBT+ targeted programming (i.e. Family Travel Expo with a "Proud Parents" area featuring LGBT+ tours and packages)

Those who are able to offer a differentiated product/experience that is relevant to the LGBT+ traveller will have the greatest success. Keep in mind that these can and should be developed and planned for offer year-round, not just during the traditional summer Pride months. This will build your calendar of offerings and help your destination and tourism business stand out among the competition.

SECTION 10:

# Marketing: Building the Strategy



# Marketing: Building the Strategy

To be successful within the LGBT+ travel market, it is essential to have a strategy in place. The following information identifies important considerations when developing an LGBT+ marketing plan, plus the various tools and resources available and how to effectively work with them to maximize returns.

As you begin to put together your strategy, it is important to identify your goals and what you want to achieve. You need to be able to answer two questions: “What do we want to get out of this?” and “Why are we doing this?”

## 1. Marketing Considerations

Perhaps the most important aspect when marketing to the LGBT+ market is segmentation. As highlighted in the LGBT+ travel market overview, there is not one market but several segments within LGBT+ communities. When completing a destination or business assessment, you will determine what products and strengths you have. Then, you need to identify what segment of the broader LGBT+ market is the best match for those products. You may choose to focus on the broader LGBT+ market, but it is recommended that you narrow the market down to some commonalities; for example, millennial gay men, older and active lesbians, LGBT+ families, etc. The more targeted you are, the better able you will be to focus your marketing efforts and deliver an experience that is a perfect fit.

## 2. Price

Although the LGBT+ travel market has, on average, a greater discretionary income, they need to see value in what they are spending their money on. When pricing your products or packages for your LGBT+ consumer segment, they need to be priced competitively compared to your other offerings. Your pricing strategy needs to align with your brand positioning while considering significant differentiation for the market. Unless there is a distinguishable added value to the product, LGBT+ consumers will not buy it at a premium just because you are speaking directly to them. The LGBT+ consumer is loyal and supportive of companies and destinations that support them, but they are also aware of those companies that are just after the “pink dollar.”

## 3. Packaging

Today, travel is all about authentic experiences. Destinations and tourism businesses need to be able to create an experience with value that differentiates them from the competition. What truly makes an experience unique? Anyone can call an overnight stay a “Pride Package” and include breakfast, but what separates you from other hotels? How have the local LGBT+ community and tourism businesses been engaged in the development, planning and delivery?

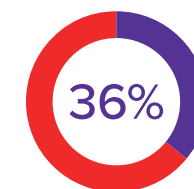
Here are some ways you can differentiate:

- Focus on what makes your destination or business unique;
- Feature authentic local LGBT+ stories, history and people;
- Identify the secret, hard-to-find places;
- Offer something that is targeted specifically to LGBT+ travellers but that can be open to others;
- Engage the LGBT+ communities, give them a role and make them an active participant in the experience itself;
- Offer “surprises and delights” and opportunities to interact;
- Create products, packages and experiences that can be offered in shoulder seasons and year-round.

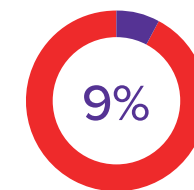
Identify your package components (i.e. accommodation, transportation and activities), and where possible, use suppliers that actively support the LGBT+ market (such as those businesses that are members of LGBT+ organizations or certified LGBT+ or otherwise diverse suppliers). Keep in mind what activities may be of interest to the market and be sure that all components of the package offer the level of safety and comfort the traveller is looking for.

This is where you can bring in your strengths that are identified in an assessment program. Engage your stakeholders, consult your committee, and bring in their suggestions and ideas. Leverage the input and support of the LGBT+ tourism committee to bring forward packages that are unique and reflective of the destination or business.

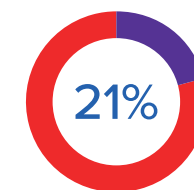
## 4. Distribution



Research has shown that 36% of Canadian LGBT+ travellers always book directly with travel providers like airlines and hotels through company websites or by telephone. What this means is that you need to ensure that any packages or products that you have targeted to the LGBT+ market are included and bookable on your site. There are also opportunities to work with tour operators and travel agents (including online travel agents) that specialize in the LGBT+ market.



Research shows that 9% of Canadian LGBT+ travellers always book directly with an LGBT+ tour operator or travel agent. Get to know who those influencers are and begin working with them. The more they know about you, the more the market is going to hear about you. One way to begin connecting is through the International LGBT+ Travel Association (IGLTA). With thousands of members around the world, they work with agents and operators to assist in building a strong LGBT+ product offering.



Like mainstream travellers, LGBT+ travellers book frequently through mainstream Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) like Expedia or KAYAK (21% always use OTAs). Some OTAs offer a selection of LGBT+-recommended accommodations. It is worth looking into how your properties can be included on these lists.

## 5. Promotion

### Advertising

There are numerous advertising channels available when looking to reach the LGBT+ consumer. As when deciding any advertising mix, it is important to know exactly where your chosen segment seeks their travel information.

From CGLCC's research, the following are the top seven sources for leisure travel information for Canadian LGBT+ travellers:

1. Friends
2. Family
3. Official tourism destination websites
4. Hotel/airline brand websites
5. Travel blogs
6. Travel forums
7. Other vacation rental websites

Of those who use LGBT+-specific resources when planning leisure travel trips, the top three sources are LGBT+ influencers, LGBT+ apps with LGBT+ travel forums and LGBT+ media (print, TV and radio) tied for third. Importantly, a majority (76%) would travel to a destination if they know the destination has an LGBT+-friendly reputation. What are the most effective ways you can communicate that? Friends and family recommendations are at the top, however you can also integrate messaging in your other communication and promotional platforms.

This information provides you with a better understanding of where the LGBT+ traveller is turning for information and where you can successfully reach them. Our final section, Section 12, provides a list of Canadian LGBT+ media. This is not an exhaustive list, but it's meant to provide a starting point to offer a sense of variety and options.

### Social Media and Influencers

Social media and influencers play an important role in both the planning phase and during the LGBT+ travel experience. This means that it is critical to play an active role in this channel, not only through advertising but also by engaging and participating. Using social media tools and channels to promote your product and services directly to the LGBT+ consumer is a great way to stay “top of mind” and show your continued support of the market.

Not all content needs to be LGBT+-specific; they want to know about your mainstream events just as much as everyone else does. But by making your content relevant to LGBT+ travellers, you will ensure that you get their attention. Use channels that are specific to your target segment and, if possible, tailor your message.

For example, if there is a music festival taking place in your destination, try highlighting an artist who is well-known within the LGBT+ community. Although it may not be LGBT+-specific content, it is content that is relevant to LGBT+ travellers.

According to Destination Canada's research, Instagram was a top influencer for those under 45. Social media is a way in which friends and family influence each other, which, as you know, was the top-ranked method.

### Website

Research indicates that approximately 77% of Canadian LGBT+ travellers consult destination websites when researching their travel plans. Is your website speaking to them? Is there content on your site that is specifically targeted to the LGBT+ traveller? By incorporating LGBT+ content and imagery into your site, you are demonstrating your commitment and inclusiveness. You are actively welcoming LGBT+ travellers to your destination by showcasing the product offerings that meet their needs.

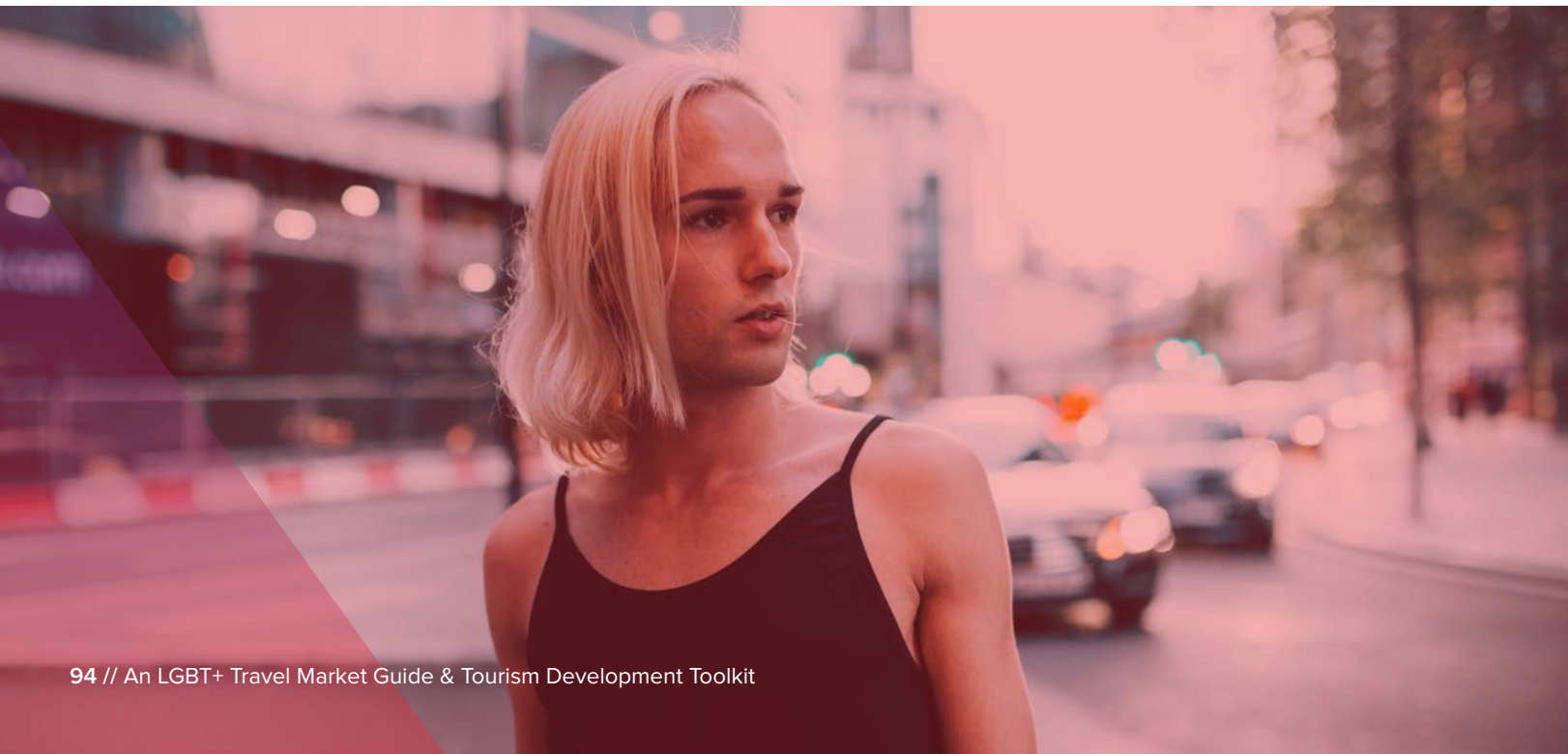
Content can be as subtle as having a rainbow icon or a logo from an LGBT+ affiliation on your site. It could be a page that is dedicated to interesting and relevant information (such as listings of events or LGBT+-owned or allied businesses that are actively targeting the market). Or, it might go beyond a dedicated page with an integrated approach using content and imagery throughout to indicate your support of the LGBT+ market and community. Whatever the strategy, it is important to show your commitment to the LGBT+ community in some way, and to show that your destination or tourism business is truly welcoming.

### Imagery

Authentic and enticing images of LGBT+ leaders, business owners, community members and travellers are powerful promotional tools and should be used across marketing platforms and collateral. They can communicate your destination or tourism business's commitment to the LGBT+ community and desire to welcome and serve the LGBT+ travel market. As with any market, the choice of images can have a huge impact on the effectiveness of your promotional activities and create lasting impressions of your company or destination in the minds of the LGBT+ traveller.

When promoting to the market, there are several considerations you should make with regard to choosing your imagery. One of the most important is to ensure that you are speaking to your target segment by showcasing them in your materials.

***They want to see themselves represented.*** If you are going to show a lesbian couple, then make sure it is a lesbian couple who you are using and not two straight women pretending to be lesbians. That doesn't mean you have to use images of only LGBT+ people, but rather the images need to be reflective of who your audience is, so that the audience is able to relate to them.





**Showcase diversity.** Just as there is no one market of LGBT+ travellers, there is no one person who represents each segment. So use imagery that reflects the entire population of the segment you're targeting, not just the white gay male.

As always, you need to be sure that your imagery reflects your brand and what you are offering. If you don't have beaches at your destination, then don't show images of beaches in your materials. Highlight the assets you have while being true to your brand.

**Overall, be authentic.** Be true to what your destination or business offers, and be honest about what the LGBT+ traveller will experience. You not only want to attract them, but you also want them to come back. The LGBT+ travel consumer is not just looking for authenticity – they expect it.

### Consumer Shows

LGBT+-targeted consumer shows are a great way to reach the LGBT+ travel market. There are several shows or events that provide this opportunity for you to get your brand in front of the consumer. From LGBT+-travel specific expos, to LGBT+ lifestyle events (such as same-sex wedding shows), to larger festivals and events (such as local Pride events), LGBT+ consumer shows provide you with a unique opportunity to speak directly with your consumer and to create additional awareness.

When choosing what shows to attend, ensure that there is a fit between the target market of the show and your target market (psychographically, geographically, etc.). For instance, if you are focusing on couples, then a same-sex wedding show might be a great place to participate.

When activating your space, make sure you offer a reason for people to stop and inquire about your destination or business. Consideration must be given to the following to ensure you have the best results:

- **Imagery** – Using appropriate, authentic and enticing imagery is important.
- **Collateral** – Make sure you have something that people can take away with them that speaks directly to them and encourages them to follow up or engage with you. Your mainstream brochure with a straight couple on the front will not cut it.
- **Staffing** – The people working the event need to be knowledgeable about the LGBT+ community and activities available in your destination or tourism business. These staff could be the first contact the traveller has with your destination or company, so it is important that they are completely welcoming and inviting. It is recommended that all frontline staff partake in an LGBT+ inclusion training workshop prior.

### Sponsorships & Partnerships

As mentioned already, active participation within the community is a great way to reach the consumer. There are numerous LGBT+-specific activities, events and causes available and looking for support. Find one that aligns with your brand and/or your LGBT+ strategy, and see how you can get involved.

To find some of these opportunities, work with your local LGBT+ community leaders to see what is available, or incorporate an LGBT+ component into your larger corporate program. For example, if your company supports programs for youth, then include support for LGBT+ youth.

**Engage your employees.** By seeking their input and participation, you are showing employees within the company how committed you are to the market. Including employees in these activities helps to ensure that your sponsorship and partnership activities are authentic experiences, while furthering employee engagement within the company.

Sponsorships and partnerships with LGBT+ groups and organizations not only provide a promotional opportunity for your destination or company but also truly support the LGBT+ community and showcase your commitment to this market.

## 6. Media Relations

Media plays an integral role in the purchase decision and travel planning process. As previously indicated, LGBT+ travellers consult both mainstream and LGBT+ media for information on where to go and what to do at a destination. These media outlets and their writers are travel influencers, and, by actively engaging them, they will help you to attract more LGBT+ travellers to your business or destination.

If you have a media relations team, ensure that they start including LGBT+ media and LGBT+ writers in their contact lists. Encourage your team to work with the local LGBT+ community to find stories of interest to the traveller, such as an upcoming LGBT+ event.

Incorporating LGBT+ content into all of your media kits will showcase how inclusive your destination or tourism business is, and it can garner extensive coverage. The key is to tell your LGBT+ story to not only the LGBT+ press and writers but also all media. It is not only the LGBT+-specific writer or media outlet that will find your upcoming Pride event article-worthy, so make sure your mainstream media contacts also receive the press release.

Familiarization tours are a great way to bring select LGBT+ media and writers to your destination or business and to provide them with an opportunity to experience what you have to offer the LGBT+ traveller. For these to be successful, you need to engage the local LGBT+ community and make sure they are part of the experience and story.

*For a comprehensive list of LGBT+ journalists, visit [The Association of LGBT+ Journalists at nlja.org](http://The Association of LGBT+ Journalists at nlja.org).*

### Overall Marketing Recommendations

The ideal goal you should strive for is to fully integrate your LGBT+ strategy within your overall marketing strategy. By incorporating LGBT+ imagery, messaging and content into your regular marketing activities, you are showing your commitment to the LGBT+ market. By integrating, rather than speaking separately to this market, you are demonstrating that you have a vested interest in LGBT+ communities and that you see them as an integral part of your business.



SECTION 11:

# Measurement Tools





## Measurement Tools

Measuring the impact and success of your LGBT+ strategy is not always easy. As with any market, many of the tactics and activities cannot be specifically tracked. However, it is important to be able to put some context behind your activities and to have some measurement tools to assist you in evaluating your strategy.

The following are several performance measurement tools you can employ:

- **Website Traffic** – If you have specific LGBT+ content pages on your site, you can easily track how many visitors are going to that page. By driving the consumer to that page in all of your activities, you can get a sense of the impact of certain marketing activities. Likewise, you can also track where they are finding you on the web.
- **Likes & Tweets** – Simply tracking the number of Facebook “likes” or Twitter followers you have allows you to measure your social media success.
- **Reviews and Re-tweets** – You can easily see who’s talking about you and what they’re saying through social media channels and reviews.
- **Bookings/Sales** – If you have LGBT+ packages on offer, then the number of sales can be a useful measure. Both mainstream travellers and LGBT+ consumers are becoming savvier about booking packages and can often separate out the components. So, unless the package is truly unique and differentiated, the number of packages sold may not be a true reflection of the impact your activities are having on the market.
- **Media Hits** – Tracking the number of media mentions is a great measurement tool to gauge the success of your LGBT+ strategy.
- **Contest Engagement** – Promotional contests or prize giveaways provide an effective marketing and engagement tool that allows for LGBT+ traveller data and contact information to be collected and analyzed.
- **Partnerships** – The number of active and engaged partners in your LGBT+ tourism strategy and programs are a strong indicator of interest and potential for success. Collaborations with the LGBT+ community at large is also another strong measurement factor.

The travel industry and travel preferences are constantly evolving, so incorporating regular evaluations into your plans and sharing the results with the LGBT+ community and tourism industry will drive improvements, innovations and success.

SECTION 12:

# LGBT+ Organizations and Media



# LGBT+ Organizations and Media

There are a number of LGBT+ organizations and media companies across Canada that serve the LGBT+ community and that can provide more in-depth knowledge and resources within your region. When developing an LGBT+ tourism strategy, we highly encourage you to reach out to one of these groups and to discuss opportunities to partner and collaborate.

## Canadian LGBT+ Chambers of Commerce

### Canada

[cglcc.ca](http://cglcc.ca)

### B.C.

LOUD Business

[loudbusiness.com](http://loudbusiness.com)

### Alberta

Alberta LGBTQ+ Chamber of Commerce

[ab-lgbt.com](http://ab-lgbt.com)

### Manitoba

Manitoba LGBT\* Chamber of Commerce

[mb-lgbt.biz](http://mb-lgbt.biz)

### Ontario

Ontario Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce

[oglc.com](http://oglc.com)

### Quebec

Chambre de commerce LGBT du Québec

[cclgbtq.org](http://cclgbtq.org)

## Canadian LGBT+ Community Organizations

### EGALE Canada [egale.ca](http://egale.ca)

EGALE Canada is a national organization that advances equality and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-identified people and their families across Canada.

### Fierté Canada Pride (FCP) [fiertecanadapride.org](http://fiertecanadapride.org)

FCP is the national association of Canadian Pride organizations.

### PFLAG Canada [pflagcanada.ca](http://pflagcanada.ca)

Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays is a nation-wide organization that deals with sexual orientation and gender identity issues from a family perspective, providing support, education and resources.

### Pride at Work/Fierté au travail Canada [prideatwork.ca](http://prideatwork.ca)

Through dialogue, education and thought leadership, Pride at Work Canada/Fierté au travail Canada empowers Canadian employers to build workplaces that celebrate all employees regardless of gender expression, gender identity and sexual orientation.

## International LGBT+ Tourism Organizations

### International LGBT+ Travel Association (IGLTA) [iglta.org](http://iglta.org)

IGLTA is the world's only global organization connecting and educating businesses in LGBT+ tourism.

### TAG Approved®/Community Marketing & Insights [tagapproved.com](http://tagapproved.com) / [cmi.info](http://cmi.info)

TAG Approved® helps accommodations effectively reach and sensitively serve the LGBT+ community.

## Canadian LGBT+ Media

### IN Magazine [inmagazine.ca](http://inmagazine.ca)

### Fugues [fugues.com](http://fugues.com)

### Gay Calgary Magazine [gaycalgary.com](http://gaycalgary.com)

### OUTtv [outtv.ca](http://outtv.ca)

### Outwords [outwords.ca](http://outwords.ca)

### Proud FM [proudfm.com](http://proudfm.com)

### Wayves [wayves.ca](http://wayves.ca)

### Xtra [dailyxtra.ca](http://dailyxtra.ca)

Thank you for your interest in the LGBT+ travel market. As we have outlined, there is a significant community engagement and business case in pursuing this traveller segment, with global destinations joining in the competition. CGLCC is committed to supporting destinations and tourism businesses across Canada to become LGBT+ travel market-ready. We offer programs and guides such as this one to provide information and tools and resources, along with LGBT+ inclusion training workshops, LGBT+ travel market seminars, destination audit and assessment programs and others all geared toward Canada's tourism industry.

For more information, please visit [cglcc.ca/tourism](http://cglcc.ca/tourism) or follow us on social media.

 [facebook.com/theCGLCC](https://facebook.com/theCGLCC)

 [@thecglcc](https://twitter.com/thecglcc)

 [@thecglcc](https://www.instagram.com/thecglcc)

 [linkedin.com/company/cglcc](https://linkedin.com/company/cglcc)

SECTION 13:

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Interview: Hannes Palsson, Co-owner, Pink Iceland

Interview: James Cooper, Elected City Councilman, OKC

Interview: Kathryn Davis, Head of Tourism, Visit Bristol

Interview: Joey Amato, LGBT+ Writer/Blogger PrideJourneys.com

Interview: Tabbi Burwell, Senior Manager Destination Communications, VisitOKC

Research Team: Dean Nelson, John Hewson, Ryan Thomas Woods and Kat Krampol

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Bristol Pride [bristolpride.co.uk](http://bristolpride.co.uk)

Celebrity Cruises | [LGBT+ Gay Cruise Vacations Site](http://LGBT+ Gay Cruise Vacations Site)

Freedom Oklahoma [freedomoklahoma.org](http://freedomoklahoma.org)

Gay Iceland [gayiceland.is](http://gayiceland.is)

Hilton's Honeymoon Microsite [hilton.ourperfecthoneymoon.com](http://hilton.ourperfecthoneymoon.com)

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OKC Pride [prideon39th.com](http://prideon39th.com)

Oklahoma City Convention and Visitors Bureau [visitokc.com/lgbt](http://visitokc.com/lgbt)

Oklahomans for Equality [okeq.org](http://okeq.org)

Out Bristol [outbristol.co.uk](http://outbristol.co.uk)

The City of Oklahoma City [okc.gov](http://okc.gov)

39<sup>th</sup> Street District [39thstreetdistrict.com](http://39thstreetdistrict.com)

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