



EDITORS' CHOICE Apr 24, 2018

Editors' Choice Awards: 10 Best LGBTQI-Friendly Destinations of 2018



THE EDITORS



When planning a vacation, travelers read, research, and process lots of information before making a final decision on a destination. Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender travelers have to consider an additional layer: acceptance. In a world where it's still illegal in many countries to be gay, LGBTQI persons consider safety factors at a whole different level than their straight counterparts.

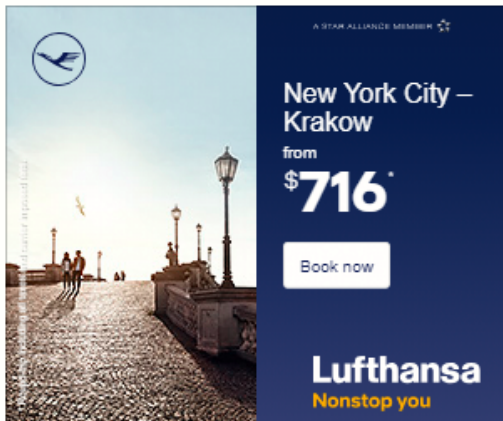
With that in mind, we've rounded up the best destinations for LGBTQI travelers to consider in 2018.

Best LGBTQI-Friendly Destinations 2018: The Methodology

Factors for inclusion on this list include consideration for places that have an active gay community, destination marketing organizations that work to appeal to LGBTQI travelers, and, finally, countries that have passed marriage equality laws. While someone might not be traveling for a destination wedding, having a law on the books that recognizes a foundational human right of marriage is a telling sign that gay travelers are more likely to find acceptance.

Editors' Choice Winner: Sydney, Australia





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The image is a promotional advertisement for a Lufthansa flight route. It features a dark blue background on the right side with white and yellow text. On the left, there is a photograph of a cobblestone street with street lamps and a person walking in the distance. The Lufthansa logo is in the top left corner.

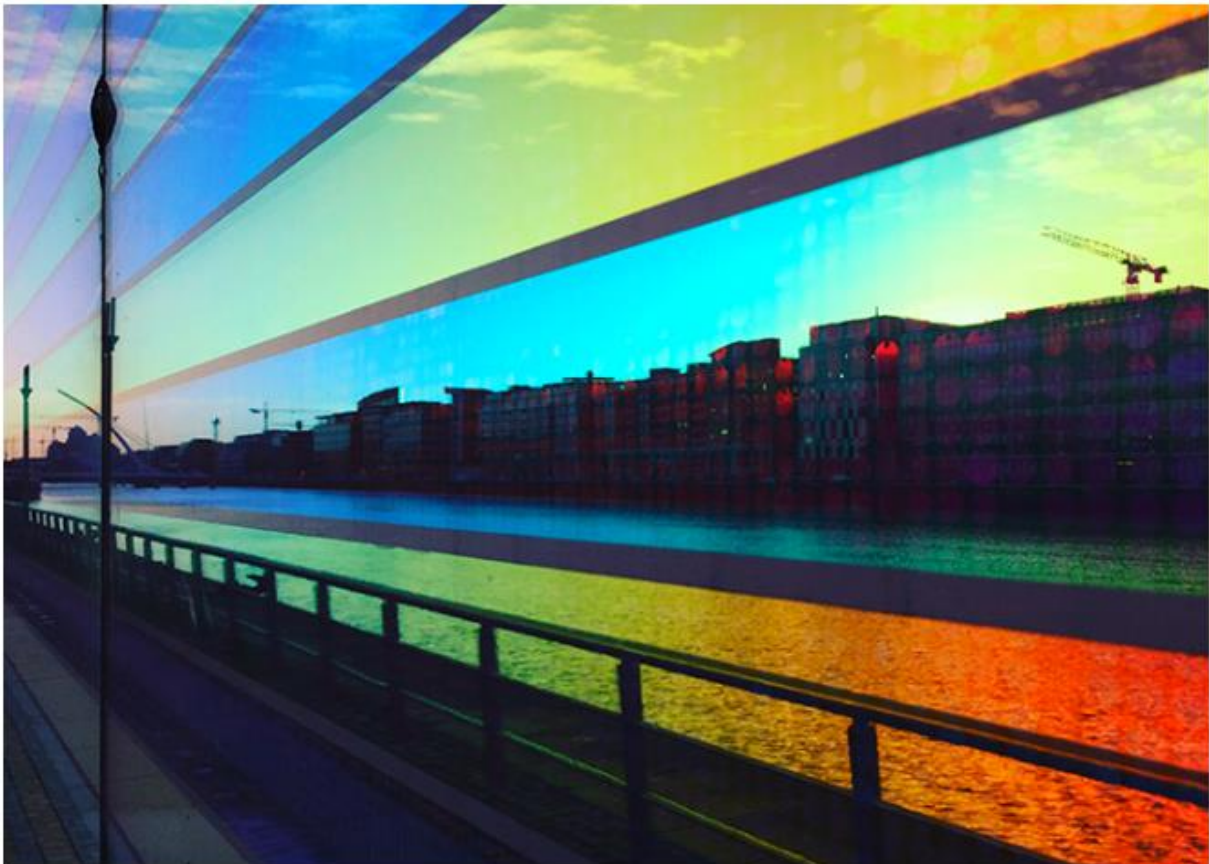
This year's winner is Sydney, home of the one of the world's best—if not *the* best—Pride events, the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, held annually in February. Even better, Australia finally passed marriage equality legislation on November 15, 2017, defeating a well-orchestrated and decades-long campaign to deny LGBTQI citizens their rights. Well done, Australia. Well done.

Editors' Choice Finalist: West Hollywood, Los Angeles, California



Southern California's gay culture has an HQ in queer-friendly West Hollywood, a neighborhood known for posh boutiques, high-energy clubs, and its world famous gay bar and restaurant, The Abbey. LA Pride is anchored here, and WeHo makes a great spot for travelers to brunch while keeping one eye open for celebrity sightings.

Editors' Choice Finalist: Dublin, Ireland



Dublin is the gay heart of Ireland. The Irish celebrated the recognition of marriage equality in late 2015, due to a concerted effort of LGBTQI folks and their allies, especially Rory O'Neill, who fiercely rallied supporters as her drag alter ego, Panti Bliss. True to Irish tradition, the stage holds a place of importance, so consider visiting during May when the 15th annual [International Dublin Gay Theatre Festival](#) takes place.

Semi-Finalist: Amsterdam, Netherlands

The Netherlands was the first country to pass marriage equality in 2000, and the Dutch have a long record of tolerance to the disenfranchised. More than half a million people turn out for one of Europe's largest pride events where the parade takes place on the Prinsengracht, one of the main canals, in late July and early August.

Semi-Finalist: Barcelona, Spain

Spain's vibrant Catalonia region spearheaded the movement for greater LGBTQI rights as early as 1978 when homosexuality between consenting adults was made legal. Barcelona's *Gaixample* (a neologism combining "gay" and "Eixample") neighborhood is the place to be. The city is also close (about 22 miles) to the oceanside town of Sitges, where gay travelers can enjoy a beachy Mediterranean getaway.

Semi-Finalist: Cape Town, South Africa

As the most openly gay city on the entire African continent, Cape Town provides a safe enclave in a region that isn't exactly known for tolerance. South Africa's constitution, adopted in 1996, afforded civil rights protections to LGBTQI citizens. Marriage equality came a decade later, making South Africa only the fifth country at the time to recognize same-sex unions. For those reasons alone, Cape Town has remained one of the top gay travel destinations in the world.

Semi-Finalist: Montreal, Canada

Canada's second-largest city is home to Gay Village. How's that for being LGBTQI-friendly? Spend time along the main drag Rue Sainte-Catherine, chockablock with antique shops, boutiques, cafes, and gay bars. Montreal's Pride got an international boost in 2017 when gay-ally Prime Minister Justin Trudeau joined the parade alongside openly-gay Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar.

Semi-Finalist: Montevideo, Uruguay

In largely Catholic South America, Uruguay stands out as the most secular of nations: only 60 percent of citizens consider themselves religious. There's no surprise, then, that capital city Montevideo is also a popular gay travel spot—homosexuality was decriminalized in 1934, allowing acceptance to flourish for decades. In addition to a spate of LGBTQI bars, restaurants, and hotels, travelers might want to consider taking [queer tango lessons](#) while in country.

Semi-Finalist: New Orleans, Louisiana

It's no surprise that NOLA makes the list, as it's home to a series of gay and gay-adjacent celebrations throughout the year. The city holds a unique place in American history as a melting pot of freed slaves, French, Caribbean, and Spanish people—it's less a Southern city than a place wholly its own, accepting of all. Everyone knows Mardi Gras is rife with gay sensibilities, but for a more cerebral time, consider exploring the Saints and Sinners, a gay literary festival that takes place each May.

Semi-Finalist: Puerto Vallarta, Mexico

Nestled on the Bay of Banderas in western Mexico, Puerto Vallarta has been gay-friendly since the early 1980s when expat Americans and Canadians began resettling in the Old Town district. Today there are gay restaurants, bars, hotels (especially the famous Blue Chairs), and even an officially designated gay beach, Playa de los Muertos. The seaside village also hosts the annual Pink and Proud Women's Party, and nearby Sayulita is gaining a reputation as a popular surfing spot for lesbians.

— Original research and reporting by David Lytle