



Out around the world

LGBTQIA+ travel guide

 **Intrepid**



**One of the things
I love about group
travel is the chance
to build a community
where you can
feel supported and
welcome no matter
where you are in
the world.**

-Intrepid Traveler

Introduction

Travel is a powerful thing.

It opens minds, shifts perspectives and connects us with people from all walks of life. But for LGBTQIA+ travelers, it can also bring a unique set of questions – and complications – that others may never have to consider.

There's no one way to travel in the LGBTQIA+ community. You can plan trips around Pride festivals or find quiet moments of connection in nature. Choice is everything, though it's often shaped by a country's customs, laws and attitudes.

We understand that not every destination offers the same level of safety or comfort for LGBTQIA+ travelers. That's why we've put this guide together: full of tips, stories and advice from travelers around the world.

The world is a big and beautiful place when you can experience it as your full self. 🌈



Exploring the world through queer literature

WRITTEN BY CHANTEL LOURA



Chantel, a self-proclaimed book nerd and lover of LGBTQIA+ literature, shares a selection of acclaimed books featuring queer stories to inspire your next read (and adventure).

Love in the Big City BY SANG YOUNG PARK

Hit the streets of South Korea in *Love in the Big City*, a portrayal of millennial alienation intertwined with the vibrant joys of queer living. You'll follow Young as he moves through his 20s and 30s and navigates life as a young gay man living in Seoul.

In Memoriam BY ALICE WINN

It's 1914, and the harsh realities of WWI seem far away for Gaunt and Ellwood at their picturesque school in the English countryside. That is, until Gaunt's family

convinces him to enlist, and he is sent to the frontlines. This story chronicles the devastating horrors of war and the love that defies its chaos.

Gender Theory BY MADELINE DOCHERTY

This short yet powerful novel explores friendship, sexuality and self-discovery while addressing the reality of living with a chronic illness. It traces a journey from unrequited love for a friend, through the pain of a toxic first girlfriend, to seeking comfort in heteronormative relationships – with poignancy and emotional depth.

The Song of Achilles BY MADELINE MILLER

Set in the Greek Heroic Age, this novel follows Achilles – deemed ‘the best of all the Greeks’ – and his deepening bond with Patroclus, an exiled young prince. Miller’s poetic prose shines in this novel, enticing readers to visit Greece to see the ancient landscapes that inspired her words.

We Have Always Been Here: A Queer Muslim Memoir BY SAMRA HABIB

Habib recalls their struggle to find safety and identity as an Ahmadi Muslim in Pakistan and, later, as a refugee in Canada. Facing threats from extremists, racism and an arranged marriage, Samra seeks a place to be themselves. This book is a triumphant exploration of queer identity and self-exploration.

On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous BY OCEAN VUONG

Little Dog writes a heartfelt letter to his mother, who can’t read. Approaching his late twenties, he begins to unravel their family’s history, which

traces back to Vietnam. The letter is more than just a retelling of events; it reveals aspects of his life that have remained hidden from his mother. The narrative is both a confession and a revelation, offering a glimpse into his struggles and desires.

Bellies BY NICOLA DINAN

From the streets of London to Kuala Lumpur, *Bellies* follows Tom and Ming as their relationship and social circles shift following Ming’s transition. Dinan delivers a complex tale of queer relationships today, written in prose that’s both brutally honest and achingly tender. You’ll come away moved and desperate to explore the cities woven throughout their story.

Queer Africa: Selected Stories

BY KAREN MARTIN, MAKHOSAZANA XABA, ALISTAIR MACKAY

This anthology features short stories from Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, South Africa, Botswana, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe. Each narrative highlights the diverse experiences and fluidity of queer life across Africa.



Meet Sasha,

Intrepid's first transgender trip leader in Thailand



WRITTEN BY EMILY KRATZMANN

The first thing that strikes me about Sasha is her enormous smile.

I meet her virtually – she's in her apartment in Bangkok while I'm dialing in from Melbourne. She's just finished leading a trip and is making the most of her few days off by having her air conditioner fixed. I hear the repair person banging around in the background as Sasha tells me about how she came to work with Intrepid.

"I've been working for Intrepid since 2011; I got a job with another travel company after I finished studying English and tourism at university, but my friend told me I should apply for a role at Intrepid. I went to the interview and got the job! I really enjoy what I do; it's nice, it's fun, and I love my colleagues

and the people in the office so much." Sasha is one of Intrepid's transgender local leaders. Over the past eight years, she's led small group adventures in Thailand and neighboring Cambodia.

"When I meet my groups at the start of the trips, I don't tell them I'm a Miss, not a Mister, or that I'm transgender. I just present myself as who I am: Sasha!"

"People don't really ask me what I am; they just enjoy what I do, and what I show them in my country. Sometimes people ask me about my life – 'Are you married? Do you have babies?' – and I say 'No, still single!'"

"Sometimes I meet a gay or a lesbian couple and, after talking to them, I can see they're

thinking ‘Are you...?’ and then we talk about it and they’re happy! I think it makes a positive difference for some travelers to have me as their leader.”

“I thought one couple were just friends. After a while, though, I realized this wasn’t the case. So, I sat down with them and reintroduced myself as transgender. I think it put them much more at ease. They were worried about holding hands when they were walking around, so I told them Thailand is very open and respectful towards same-sex couples.”

“I’ve been working with Intrepid for eight years and I’ve never met anyone who wasn’t comfortable traveling with me.”

Hearing Sasha’s stories about her life in Thailand makes me think about how members of the LGBTQIA+ community are treated in other parts of the world, particularly in my home country of



Australia. Same-sex marriage was only legalized in 2017, and prejudice towards members of the LGBTQIA+ community is still pretty rife. Admittedly, I went into this conversation expecting that Sasha would likely face numerous challenges from people who didn’t understand her way of life. I was so happy to be proved wrong.

The message in Sasha’s Skype profile consists of four short words that sum up everything I know about her from today’s conversation: be a good person. Speaking to Sasha, it seems that this is a key part of what she believes, and what is most important in life; the amount of money you make or the car you drive doesn’t matter. What does matter is being kind, welcoming and open.

“We are all different!”, Sasha exclaims, her smile beaming across her face. “Man, woman, gay, lesbian, transgender – we all have different characters, and different things make us happy. If people respect each other, there are fewer judgments. I think that’s important. Just to be a good person.” 🙏

I think it makes a positive difference to some travelers having me as their leader.

Pair your Pride all over the world



WRITTEN BY SAHAR AMAN

Joining Pride parades in cities other than your own lets you celebrate LGBTQIA+ culture while seeing another part of the world.

Pride – a declaration of love and inclusivity – is an important time of year celebrated throughout hundreds of cities. Pairing an Intrepid group trip with Pride sparks joyful cultural exchange, contributing to global solidarity and understanding the kaleidoscope of identities of LGBTQIA+ communities worldwide.

BERLIN ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Intrepid trip: Paris to Berlin

Every July, Berlin's annual Pride march attracts close to one million people and is called Berlin CSD, short for Berlin Christopher Street Day, which pays homage to the New York street where the Stonewall Riots began. On Intrepid's Paris to Berlin adventure, you can visit LGBTQIA+-friendly cities like Paris and Amsterdam before arriving at your final destination, Berlin, to participate in rallies, open-air festivities and celebrations across the city on land and water.





TAIPEI ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Intrepid trip: Explore Taiwan

Taiwan's LGBTQIA+ history is marked by its longstanding reputation as a haven for the community and the first country in Asia to legalize gay marriage in 2019. It has one of the largest Pride celebrations in the continent (and the biggest in East Asia), which takes place in Taipei annually on the last Saturday of October.

Intrepid's Explore Taiwan trip starts and ends in the city, giving you plenty of room on either side of your trip to participate in the parade and various community events. Learn more about LGBTQIA+ culture in Asia, explore historic sites and savor Taipei's culinary delights.

RIO DE JANEIRO ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Intrepid trip: Best of Brazil

Spend some time in Rio de Janeiro, exploring the city's neighborhoods and beaches before joining the annual November Pride celebration, one of the most significant events after Carnival.

The city's first Pride parade in 1995 marked a crucial moment for LGBTQIA+ visibility and strength. Since then, it has grown a lot, bringing together people from all over the world.

REYKJAVIK ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Intrepid trip: Iceland Express

Pride in Iceland traces its roots back to 1999, when the parade was first organized, marking the beginning of an annual celebration of the LGBTQIA+ community. The juxtaposition of the country's awe-inspiring natural beauty and the atmosphere of the Pride celebration makes for a beautiful experience.





SAN FRANCISCO ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

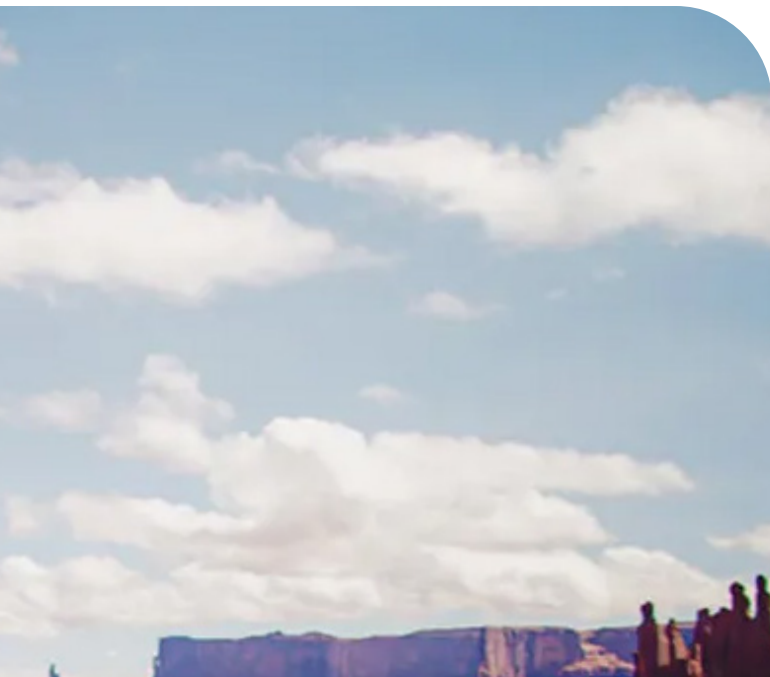
Intrepid trip: Best of Western USA

Visit a city with deep, historic LGBTQIA+ roots. Home to one of the oldest and largest marches, San Francisco's inclusive culture and landmarks make for a vibrant annual Pride celebration. The event has been run by volunteers since 1970. Today nearly one million people come to the city to stand alongside the LGBTQIA+ community during Pride in June.

MADRID ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Intrepid trip: Best of Spain

Spain was the third country in the world to legalize gay marriage in 2005. Madrid's annual July Pride celebration is the largest in Europe. A whopping two million people attend the week-long festivities that generally take place in the neighborhood of Chueca, although you'll find events all over the city.



TOKYO ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Intrepid trip: Classic Japan

The annual Pride parade in Tokyo and various activities and festivities occur in late April. The history of this celebration is fairly recent. The first parade only took place in 2012, thanks to efforts from activists and supporters on a grassroots level. From there, it became a symbolic event reflecting a commitment to raising awareness and celebrating gay people.

LONDON ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Intrepid trip: Highlights of South-West England

Held annually in June or July, Pride in London brings together a diverse and inclusive community and allies to march through the city's heart in a colorful and joyous parade. The event dates back to the 1970s, beginning as a protest for equal rights and has evolved into one of the largest Pride festivals globally, with 30,000 participants and 1.5 million visitors.

LGBTQIA+ hotspots: Must-see destinations for your next adventure



WRITTEN BY CHANTEL LOURA

When it comes to LGBTQIA+ travel, popular destinations like Rio, Paris, Provincetown and Mykonos often come to mind. But with more countries embracing LGBTQIA+ travelers, the list of must-visit spots is growing.

In 2022, I spent 15 days country-hopping through the Balkans on my first Intrepid trip. I was thrilled to learn that most of my group were LGBTQIA+ travelers. Can you believe it? Here's to exploring and celebrating the beauty of our diverse world!

By visiting these inclusive locations, you not only enrich your own life but also contribute to a global culture of acceptance and understanding.

VALLETTA, MALTA

Landing number two on the Spartacus Gay Travel Index of 2024, Malta is one of the most LGBTQIA+ friendly destinations in the world. Take a step back in time and discover Malta's history while also enjoying hikes along the coastline, sunbathing at one of its beaches, wine tasting at local wineries and LGBTQIA+ events all year long.



COPENHAGEN, DENMARK

Attend MIX COPENHAGEN, one of the oldest LGBTQIA+ film festivals in the world, celebrating queerness, genders, sexualities and diversity since 1986. Copenhagen is also home to one of Europe's oldest gay bars. Established in 1917, Centralhjørne openly became a gay bar in the 1950s. Now, you can find loads of LGBTQIA+ establishments in the Latin Quarter and just off Radhuspladsen in the city center.

LISBON, PORTUGAL

In 2010, Portugal became the eighth country worldwide to legalize same-sex marriage, marking a significant step forward in its commitment to LGBTQIA+ equality. Since moving to Lisbon, I've been amazed by how the LGBTQIA+ scene thrives in every neighborhood, with no single area claiming the title of gay district. Instead, the entire city feels like a celebration, from bookstores stocked with LGBTQIA+ literature to queer dance parties that keep you moving all night long.





BOGOTA, COLOMBIA

You can't think of Bogota's LGBTQIA+ scene without thinking of Theatron, one of the largest gay clubs in the world. Dance the night away or cheer on the local drag queens as they give their all onstage. In the neighborhood of Chapinero, you can find LGBTQIA+ locals and travelers alike celebrating themselves unapologetically.

BANGKOK, THAILAND

In Thailand, sexual preference is respected. Thai people, known for their sweet, friendly and polite disposition, make the country an inviting place for everyone, especially LGBTQIA+ visitors.

Silom is often cited as the epicenter of Bangkok's gay nightlife, with Soi 2 featuring energetic dance clubs and Soi 4 offering a more relaxed setting with bars and restaurants.

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

Five minutes from Sydney's city center, Darlinghurst bursts with life, offering some of the most well-known queer venues in town. Similarly, Newtown, also five minutes away, is a beloved LGBTQIA+ enclave, where residents come to live, shop and connect. Together, these neighborhoods form the heart of Sydney's queer community. Then, each February, Sydney transforms for a month-long festival known as Sydney's Mardi Gras, with more than 100 events around the city celebrating LGBTQIA+ culture and activism.

TAIPEI, TAIWAN

In Taiwan, workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation is outlawed, and Taipei's annual Gay Pride in October draws



over 50,000 participants. The Pride event is a testament to the city's inclusive values and thriving LGBTQIA+ community. It's a celebration that continues to grow in size and significance.

SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA

Costa Rica has evolved into a sought-after destination for LGBTQIA+ travelers in the last decade, with San Jose leading the way as a welcoming city for the community. The capital has a variety of gay-friendly establishments, including bars, clubs, saunas and a few gay-owned B&Bs, as well as LGBTQIA+ bookstores and community centers.



The power of traveling openly

WRITTEN BY JAY PARKER

Travel has always been one of my greatest passions, and I know it always will be. But getting to travel openly as a gay man, when it feels safe to do so, makes it even more meaningful.

Just like you might not feel represented by your government or the laws of your home country, the same goes for many of the people you meet on your travels. People are so much more than their country's legislation. I've been lucky to experience this firsthand while traveling solo and with my partner Michael.

It's important to acknowledge that my experience as a white, cisgender, male traveler is shaped by privilege – and it's likely very different from that of other travelers and locals who are also part of the LGBTQIA+ community.

That said, it's still worth approaching certain destinations with care. When I'm traveling with Michael, I always let the local team know that we're a same-sex couple before the trip begins. It helps make sure everyone's comfortable and on the same page from day one.

Here are a few places where I've felt genuinely welcomed by my group leaders, allowing me to connect more deeply.





Mongolia

Michael and I spent nine days in Mongolia on a Tailor-Made trip in May 2016. Mongolia is big, so we spent up to five hours a day in the car with our leader, Zhena. Over that time, we talked about so many things – history, food, finances and family dynamics, to name just a few. Zhena asked us as many questions about the UK as we asked about Mongolia. We had such a special time that she burst into tears when we said our goodbyes at the airport.

The situation for queer people in Mongolia isn't as bad as it is in some places, but there's still very little positive representation. It's very possible that this was her first time meeting two openly gay men. I hope that what stayed with her is how ordinary we are – kind, generous, curious. We do our laundry on Sundays, too. If our time together shaped how she sees queer people, or helped her navigate a future conversation, that would mean the world.

Jordan

In November 2022, Michael and I went to Jordan with Intrepid. Midway through our travels, during the Back Door trail to Petra, our local leader Nadar voiced his curiosity. "What is life like back in the UK, and are you married?" he asked. His openness also allowed us to ask him about the LGBTQIA+ community in Jordan.

Nadar wondered why the organizers of a custom trip for an LGBTQIA+ group had recently requested a female leader. I explained that the only people who ever had issues with my sexuality were men, so the group likely felt more comfortable around women. I like to think this helped him consider his position and how he could support these groups. His views weren't identical to ours, but it was an honest, respectful and humorous exchange for both parties.

Colombia

Sometimes, you feel safe right away. My Intrepid trip in Colombia was one of those times. Even though I was traveling solo, I very quickly realized I could be my authentic self with both the group and Guiliano, our leader. For me, this means not second-guessing how I speak, the stories I tell or which pronoun I use for my partner.

I actually use the word 'partner' instead of 'husband' in all parts of my life because it's a safe habit. But it's nice to forget about stuff like that around the right group of people. Feeling safe allowed me to go deeper in conversation, and I was able to ask Guiliano more specific questions about the LGBTQIA+ community in Colombia.



Bhutan

While descending from the Tiger's Nest Monastery in Bhutan, I got talking to our local leader one-on-one. Five minutes into the conversation, I asked him if he'd ever met any gay travelers. He replied in the affirmative and, based on his response, I felt like I could tell him about my sexuality. He told me he was also gay, which felt like a very special exchange for us both. I didn't want to ask too many questions as it didn't feel culturally appropriate, but I had the sense that he wasn't able to live fully open in his life. This conversation really bonded us for the rest of the trip.

All of these moments remind me why I view travel as mutual exchange; an act that allows you to connect with people outside of your normal circle, where both sides walk away having learned something.

When researching if a destination is safe, don't just stop at laws on paper. Look into how (and if) those laws are enforced, whether there are reports of harassment or vigilantism and seek out blogs or videos from queer locals.

In many cases, the law targets physical interactions, not presence – so simply being somewhere isn't illegal. But ultimately, use every source you can to make the call that feels right for you. 🙋



Traveling somewhere where same-sex relationships aren't accepted can be tricky. My now-wife and I traveled to Egypt with Intrepid in 2022 and were a bit nervous, as same-sex relationships are still illegal there. But even though our group started out as strangers, they – and our amazing leader – were so welcoming that we felt safe enough to share this part of our lives. It made the whole experience so much more meaningful.

- Maddie, Intrepid Traveler





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