

ASK THE experts

Sell LGBTQ+ holidays with confidence using these practical tips, writes **India-Jayne Trainor**



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1 “LGBTQ+ travel is not one size fits all – we all have different interests”

Since 2009, LoAnn has led communications for the International LGBTQ+ Travel Association (IGLTA). As a trained journalist, she has contributed to numerous publications and spoken about LGBTQ+ travel at events around the world. She lives in Crystal Palace and Fort Lauderdale, Florida, with her wife.



LoAnn Halden
vice-president, communications, IGLTA

LGBTQ+ travel is not one size fits all – and we all have different interests. The IGLTA is a valuable resource for connecting travellers with LGBTQ+ product, as agents can filter for hotels, tour operators and excursions run by dedicated queer operators and IGLTA members that offer specialised knowledge of LGBTQ+ needs.

Agents also need to be aware of the ways in which a destination’s laws may impact their clients’ holidays. Offer experiences that showcase LGBTQ+ culture and history alongside mainstream attractions. Create opportunities for them to connect with the local LGBTQ+ community in meaningful ways, whether through artisans, culinary experiences or off-the-beaten-track tours.

We’re seeing a rise in LGBTQ+ family travel as more couples gain legal protections and feel they can safely explore the world with their children.

So many destinations are actively working to become more welcoming to LGBTQ+ travellers. Some of my favourites are Palm Springs in California, which has natural wonders and a thriving LGBTQ+ community; and New Delhi, India, where we held our Travel Symposium, which showed that India is far more welcoming to LGBTQ+ travellers than people might think.

US-based IGLTA member Vacaya has sold out its LGBTQ+ cruises to Antarctica, while South African safaris are popular with honeymooners.

2 “Create trips that reflect a customer’s individual requirements”

Josh Wilson-Naylor has worked for Kuoni for more than 12 years, starting out as a personal travel expert in 2011. He now works as distribution partnership executive in the brand’s retail partnerships team, and co-chairs the company’s LGBTQ+ employee network, Stay Proud.



Josh Wilson-Naylor
distribution partnership executive, Kuoni

It’s important to create trips that reflect a customer’s individual needs, which is what we specialise in at Kuoni. While there’s no doubt that ‘gay-friendly’ destinations often prove most popular with the LGBTQ+ community, we’re seeing an increasing number of LGBTQ+ travellers taking trips in countries with more conservative outlooks. The experience on the ground can often differ and doesn’t necessarily mirror local laws. The Maldives is a great example – clients increasingly call for the exclusivity and privacy of private villa accommodation to allow them to freely be themselves, which the Maldives does so well.

There should also be regular discussion about inclusivity, diversity and relevant information – Kuoni’s intranet has helpful resources to explore LGBTQ+ rights across the world, as well as news articles.

Greece is one of the top LGBTQ+ honeymoon destinations, so it’s hard to believe that same-sex marriage was recognised there only in February this year. Thailand is also making historic steps towards marriage equality and it’s expecting to receive endorsement for a law change by the end of 2024. LGBTQ+ clients love its vibrant mix of culture, wildlife and awe-inspiring landscapes.

3 “Be honest with clients about safety, so they can decide for themselves”

Kenny Smith has worked in travel since the age of 16, with roles at Thomson Holidays, Holiday Extras and Monarch. He began working for Online Travel Training in 2017, and is now head of training and commercial, and subject-matter expert on OTT’s Introduction to LGBTQIA+ Travel course, available at tinyurl.com/OTTLGBTQIA



Kenny Smith
head of training and commercial, OTT

LGBTQ+ travellers often face unique challenges related to safety, discrimination and legal issues in certain destinations, so agents should stay informed about local laws impacting same-sex relationships. Lots of gay couples want to visit the Maldives, for example, but many travellers and agents don’t realise it’s illegal to be gay there. However many LGBTQ+ travellers still love it as a destination, including me.

Agents need the tools to be confident in selling and discussing LGBTQ+ travel, such as via our online course, which allows agents to understand terminology, use appropriate language and learn about popular LGBTQ+ destinations. Amsterdam, San Francisco and Greece are popular, but people might not be aware of Buenos Aires – Argentina has some of the world’s most LGBTQ-friendly laws. Destinations shouldn’t be avoided due to legal issues; agents should be honest with clients about safety concerns, so they can decide for themselves.

It can also be important to incorporate local pride parades and festivals into clients’ itineraries, but some LGBTQ+ travellers don’t want to be part of that, so it’s down to agents and operators to be inclusive and give clients the option. Research shows the LGBTQ+ community also tends to travel more frequently and for longer, so they are willing to pay more for a great holiday if it means they’ll have a safe and inclusive experience.