

Travelling with Pride

As rainbow flags unfurl in cities worldwide for the 2023 Pride celebrations, **Estella Shardlow** looks at this summer's leading trips for LGBTQ+ travellers

With Pride festivals and events around the world attracting millions of people every year, we've rounded up some of the best options for LGBTQ+ travellers in 2023 – from a sun-soaked, rainbow-hued Pride Cruise up the Gold Coast from Sydney to a trip taking in the Christopher Street Day Parade in Berlin.

"When it comes to Pride, try not to pigeonhole your LGBTQ+ clients, thinking they all want the same thing," says Darren Burn, founder of Out Of Office and chief executive of Travel Gay, the world's largest LGBTQ+ travel site. "Treat everyone as an individual and make sure you ask what your clients want. Some will undoubtedly want to party, but others will prefer to just soak up the atmosphere and be in town when Pride is happening to feel safe and welcomed."

So whether your clients are looking for thought-provoking talks and history walks, raucous roller-discos and DJ sets – or something in between – these packages will have you covered.

NEW YORK, US

Where better to celebrate Pride than the birthplace of the modern gay rights movement? Visitors to the Big Apple can pay their respects at the site of the Stonewall Uprising, peruse paintings at the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art and lap up Harlem's ballroom culture before treating themselves to a rainbow-coloured soft-serve at Big Gay Ice Cream.

But advise clients to save some energy for one of the world's most epic Pride marches and Greenwich Village's vibrant street fair (both June 25).

Book it: Kuoni offers four nights' room-only at Arlo SoHo from £1,179, including flights with Virgin Atlantic departing on June 23. Kuoni can also arrange a Pride Walking Tour to see where New York's LGBTQ+ Pride movement was born and organised. kuoni.co.uk

VALLETTA, MALTA

Topping ILGA World's Rainbow Europe Index – a measure of the level of LGBTQ+ rights – for seven years running, and the first EU nation to ban conversion practices, sun-soaked Malta is a winner.

"It has really upped its game in terms of its LGBTQ+ credentials over the past few years," says Burn. What's more, this year it is hosting EuroPride, a 10-day extravaganza of roller-discos, concerts, exhibitions and boat parties in Valletta in September. "It provides a perfect way to round off summer in Europe," adds Burn. **Book it:** Jet2holidays' seven-night, room-only break at The Phoenicia Hotel, departing September 4, costs £1,888 per person based on two sharing, including return flights from Stansted and private transfers. jet2holidays.com

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

Having hosted both WorldPride and the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras in February, Sydney has

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"June is the traditional Pride month, but it varies from city to city and country to country. Being aware of the many Prides around the world, as well as other LGBTQ+ events, lets you surprise clients with options year-round. Puerto Rico is a standout in the Caribbean, and Japan gets our vote for emerging destinations in Asia."

John Tanzella, president and chief executive, IGLTA



top tip

For an in-resort Pride party, W Costa Navarino in Greece is hosting art exhibitions, live performances and DJ sets throughout Pride month in June



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: On board with P&O Cruises; last year's event in Sitges, Spain; holding the flag aloft in Barcelona

PICTURE: Shutterstock/Carlos Pereira M

certainly earned its (rainbow-hued) stripes as an inclusive, fun-filled city. And although those events have passed, LGBTQ+ holidaymakers keen to celebrate Down Under certainly haven't missed the boat – quite literally, thanks to P&O Cruises' new family-friendly Pride Cruise. Sailing up the Gold Coast from Sydney harbour, passengers can enjoy cabaret, comedy, swimming pools and a spa before hopping off at Moreton Island to book in some snorkelling, parasailing or a scenic helicopter ride.

Book it: Departing September 14, P&O Cruises' four-night Pride Cruise makes a round-trip from Sydney to Tangalooma on Moreton Island. The price is £348 for an interior cabin (based on two sharing), meals and £50 of onboard credit.
pocruises.com.au/cruises/pride

MADRID, SITGES & BARCELONA, SPAIN

Madrid lays claim to Europe's biggest Pride Parade (July 1); Sitges is frequently called the gay capital of Europe; and Barcelona's bar-packed Eixample neighbourhood is so LGBTQ+-friendly it has earned the nickname 'Gaixample'. You can experience all three via Contiki's moveable feast of flamenco shows, tapas, sangria, bike tours and, for the tour's grand finale, Barcelona Pride (July 14-15). Get ready to fiesta.

Book it: Departing July 8, Contiki's nine-night Spain Pride group holiday costs £1,508 for a twin room with breakfast and two dinners, and includes train travel and meeting members of a local LGBTQ+ community group for drinks.
contiki.com

BEST OF THE REST

PRIDE CELEBRATIONS AROUND THE WORLD

Disneyland Paris, June 17.

Where better to wave your rainbow flag than the most magical place on the planet?

London, July 1. Soho will be at its rainbow-clad, raving best again during one of the world's longest-running Pride events.

Amsterdam, August 1-6. All aboard the boat party – floating down the city's canals makes for a truly unique Pride parade.

Johannesburg, October 28. Dubbed 'Pride of Africa', Jo'Burg's event is undoubtedly the continent's leading light for LGBTQ+ communities.

BERLIN, GERMANY

The German capital's clubbing scene is legendary year-round, but takes on an extra sparkle during Pride Month (June 28 to July 23). Launched last year, the varied event line-up goes beyond partying to campaign on vital issues for queer communities – for 2023, Rainbow families, HIV/Aids and eastern Europe – via panels, meetings and workshops. The programme comes to a colourful conclusion with the long-established Christopher Street Day parade (22 July).

Book it: Queer Travel's six-day Berlin Pride group package with a July 19 departure starts at £698. It covers a four-star B&B hotel stay, two city tours with local gay guides, two lunches, one dinner and participation in Pride events. Flights not included.
queer-travel.com

PUERTO VALLARTA, MEXICO

For an inclusive long-haul holiday, a honeymoon or even destination wedding, Puerto Vallarta comes up trumps – the resort's Old Town boasts dozens of bars, restaurants and clubs that give LGBTQ+ travellers a warm welcome. And it's next to the gay-friendly sands of Playa Los Muertos. Consider combining it with a few days in Mexico City, which on June 24 will host one of Latin America's most legendary Pride celebrations.

Book it: Gay travel specialist Out of Office creates tailor-made luxury holidays. Sample private tour itineraries for Mexico include the seven-day Puerto Vallarta: Out of Office Collection, from £2,660.
outoffice.com