

LGBT Student Guide for Education Abroad

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Why This Guide Was Made

A Note From The Author

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In order to tell you how and why this guide was made, I must first give you some background on myself. I attended USF as an undergraduate student of the College of Business and the Honors College from Fall 2006 to Spring 2010. During that time, I became very involved with the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) advocacy movements on campus, including being President of the PRIDE Alliance for a year. When I was told that the Education Abroad department was looking for an Honors Thesis candidate to help find ways to make the department and its programs more LGBT-friendly, it seemed like a natural choice.

As I conducted my research, I realized that there are some things that LGBT students need to consider before traveling abroad that other students don't. Coming out as an LGBT student abroad can be much different than in the U.S.; in extreme cases, the results of not knowing cultural or legal standards can be violence or imprisonment. Many students, me included, don't think to consider the LGBT climate when worrying about airfare, passports and course approvals. For those that do, accurate information can be difficult to find, especially in the regions where it is most necessary.

Though safety is the focus of my study, meaning the important information is negative, I think it's important to note that Education Abroad can be a great experience for LGBT students. Several students I've talked to say that while studying abroad, they weren't treated any differently than their travel companions. A friend who went to China felt that as a bisexual she wasn't treated differently than her heterosexual classmates; there, she stood out for being American, not for her sexual orientation. Some cultures, where acceptance of the LGBT community is even higher than in the U.S., can provide an opportunity for students to explore a different LGBT culture. Another student I spoke with said that experiencing the welcoming atmosphere of Paris was actually an eye-opening experience that allowed him to gain a new perspective and renewed comfort with his sexual orientation.

I decided that students should have a resource that compiled this information, so I created this guide. In here, you'll find lots of links to sources of global and country-specific information, because the political, social and legal climate towards the LGBT community can and does change quickly. You'll also find brief summaries of the LGBT climate in countries that Education Abroad programs travel to, arranged by continent. These entries are my overall impression, from reading news articles, legal data and culture studies on these countries, of the LGBT climate in the country, but they are certainly not perfect. If you feel that an entry is misleading or a link is not working, please contact Education Abroad so this can be as accurate as possible. I hope that you find this useful. Stay safe and enjoy your Education Abroad program!

General Things to Consider



The above map, taken from ilga.org, shows the legality of homosexual relations around the world. In the nations that appear red on the map, homosexual relations are currently prohibited by law and are punishable by imprisonment or, in rare cases, death.

LGBT students face unique experiences and sometimes additional challenges during study abroad programs. Before departure on an Education Abroad program, think about the culture of your host country and attitudes towards the LGBT community. Some questions to consider:

- What are the laws regarding homosexuality and gender identity in my host country? Keep in mind that Education Abroad recommends following the laws of the country you're in.
- What is the social attitude towards the LGBT community in my host country? Are there any current news stories about LGBT events? Are there any LGBT publications, advocacy organizations, or LGBT-friendly establishments in my area?
- Are sexual orientation and gender identity openly discussed or more taboo in my host country?
- How LGBT-friendly are the host institutions? Will I be staying with a host family who may or may not be accepting if I come out?

Consider the resources you have available in-country if you face discrimination or legal problems. As always, you should familiarize yourself with the location and functions of the local U.S. Embassy, which can be found at www.usembassy.gov and can provide information and assistance to U.S. citizens. Many countries also have LGBT advocacy organizations, some of which are accessible by travellers.

After learning about the cultural and legal expectations of your host country, think about how you will act while in your host country.

- Will you be “out” to your program’s faculty director? Your classmates? People you meet in-country?
- If there are safety issues for LGBT people, will you alter your behavior?
- If your destination is a country that is accepting towards LGBT people, will you explore the local LGBT culture?

Resources that can help you answer these questions are on the next page and in the country entries.

Global Resources

Internet Resources

- **INTERNATIONAL LESBIAN AND GAY ASSOCIATION** (ilga.org)
 - Provides LGBT relevant legal information and news reports by region and country, including an interactive map.
- **INTERNATIONAL GAY AND LESBIAN HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN** (iglhrc.org)
 - International LGBT campaign which provides information on the legal, social and political climate towards the LGBT community by region and country on its website.
- **GLOBALGAYZ.COM**
 - LGBT travel and culture website that compiles news reports, links, stories and photo galleries for over 190 countries. Though there are many banner ads, the combination of sources allows for a broader picture of cultural attitudes towards the LGBT community in a region than basic legal information.
- **HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH** (hrw.org)
 - Compiles reports on human rights issues, including LGBT issues, for countries around the world.
- **SODOMYLAWS.ORG**
 - Provides information on the legality of homosexuality in countries around the world and recent news reports.
- **THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR TRANSGENDER EQUALITY'S TRAVEL CONSIDERATIONS**
(<http://transequality.org/Issues/travel.html>)
 - Provides specific travel considerations for transgendered people.

Print Resources

- **SPARTACUS INTERNATIONAL GAY GUIDE 2010**
 - Offers the addresses of LGBT-friendly businesses and extensive information on the legal and social status of homosexuals in more than 120 countries
- **THE DAMRON MEN'S TRAVEL GUIDE 2010**
 - Thousands of listings of gay-friendly businesses in the US, Canada, Mexico, Costa Rica, the Caribbean, South America, and most European capitals.
- **GAY TRAVEL A TO Z: THE WORLD OF GAY AND LESBIAN TRAVEL OPTIONS AT YOUR FINGERTIPS**
 - Produced by a gay publisher who has specialized in gay and lesbian travel since 1980.
- **FROMMER'S GAY AND LESBIAN EUROPE**
 - Tips on the lesbian and gay scene in European locales, plus practical information on hotels, dining, and attractions.
- **LONELY PLANET**
 - Guides for international travel, with editions focusing on different regions, that often include a Gay and Lesbian travel excerpt.

Region and Country Narratives and Resources

Africa

The continent of Africa contains a wide variety of cultures with differing attitudes towards sexual orientation and gender identity, many of which are negative; any LGBT student should research his or her destination before traveling to Africa. Some areas, like Cape Town, South Africa, are growing in popularity as LGBT vacation destinations because of liberal attitudes towards sexual orientation and are relatively safe (Out Magazine). Others, however, can be dangerous for travelers in a social and legal sense. A recent increase in legal movements and violence against homosexuals in areas of Africa that were considered to be relatively tolerant, like Senegal, warrants special attention for LGBT students travelling to the continent (Callimachi 2010).

Though Africans tend to act familiar towards members of the same sex in a way that might be considered "gay" by American standards, such as men holding hands with men, there is a strong social stigma in most areas against the LGBT community. This comes from a sense of strict Christian influence on perception of the issue and the association of homosexuality with Western culture. Many African leaders have referred to homosexuality as an invasive, un-African import and this seems to be a widely-help cultural belief as well. Gender roles, especially the perceived masculinity of males, are often rigidly held. Deviations from the norm on gender identity are also often reacted to negatively. The repercussions of violating cultural standards for sexual orientation or gender identity can range from social tension to violence. Travelers should take care when deciding whether to reveal their sexual orientation or gender identity in a social situation if it varies from cultural standards. (NYU Student-to-Student Guide)

In Mauritania, Sudan and regions of Nigeria and Somalia, same sex acts are punishable by death. The penalty is for these acts is 11 years to life in prison in Malawi, Uganda, Zambia, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Tanzania, and other regions of Nigeria. The penalty is between a month and ten years imprisonment in Botswana, Ghana, Eritrea, Algeria, Ethiopia, the Comoros, Egypt, Libya, Guinea, Morocco, Tunisia, Cameroon, Togo, Senegal, Western Sahara, Mauritius, Zimbabwe and other regions of Somalia (Van Der Westhuizen 2009). The laws enforcing these penalties often apply only to male-to-male sexual acts and include no penalties for lesbian acts. For specific information on the scope of these laws for a particular region, please visit ilga.org.

Ghana

At present, USF Education Abroad only offers one trip to Africa, to Ghana. In Ghana, male-to-male sexual acts are illegal and punishable by 10 or more years of imprisonment (ILGA). The Education Abroad department recommends that students obey the laws of the country they're studying in.

In addition to the social stigma in African culture against homosexuality mentioned in the above section and the illegality of homosexual acts in Ghana, students should be aware of specific cyberspace risks regarding Ghana. An internet search engine query for information about homosexuality and Ghana will yield pages of online personal advertisements from young gay Ghanaian men claiming to want to meet Americans and other pages accusing these same men of blackmailing tourists (Haute 2009). Neither source is particularly credible or verifiable, but the accusations certainly merit caution on the part of students in cyberspace interactions.

Resources for further information

The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Campaign – Africa (<http://www.iglhrc.org/cgi-bin/iowa/region/8.html>) offers legal information as well as links to news

Radio Netherlands Special Program – Being Gay in Africa (<http://www.rnw.nl/english/radioshow/being-gay-africa-special>) is a recording of a radio show focused on LGBT human rights issues in Africa, including contributions from LGBT people in Namibia, Ghana, Uganda and South Africa.

Globalgayz country entry Ghana (<http://globalgayz.com/country/Ghana/GHA>) provides an informal overview of the LGBT climate in Ghana and links to further news.

Pacifica Australia

The state and social attitude towards the LGBT community in Australia is, in some respects, more progressive than it is in the United States. As in most developed nations, tolerance levels vary by region and cities are generally more accepting of the LGBT community than rural areas. Depending on the destination, LGBT travelers to Australia may even find themselves more comfortable being "out" than they do at home.

The major difference between the Australian and U.S. views on the LGBT community is the reliance on boundaries. Scholars note that Australians in and out of the community seem to put less importance on labels of sexual orientation and gender than we do in the U.S. (Worth 151). LGBT travelers to the progressive areas of the country may find less pressure to conform to gender norms.

According to the International Lesbian and Gay Association, homosexuals can serve in the military, citizens can change their gender on official documents and discrimination on the basis of gender identity is illegal in Australia. Adoption rights for homosexual parents and substitutes for marriage exist in some areas (ILGA).

Though LGBT organizations exist across the nation, they are most concentrated in the Victoria region between Melbourne and Sydney, site of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, one of the largest LGBT events in the world. Tasmania, the last to overturn Australia's ban on homosexuality, used to be considered more conservative than other states on many social issues. However, it now has some of the most progressive relationship legislation in the world (Relationships Tasmania 2008). Regardless of the high acceptance levels, students should still research LGBT-relevant current events in their destination before traveling. Some students may also want to enjoy the LGBT celebrations and events while in Australia.

Sources for information on current LGBT events and other resources

Gay Northern Territory Newspaper (<http://gaynt.e-p.net.au/>) provides LGBT news for Darwin and the surrounding areas.

Sydney Star Observer (<http://www.starobserver.com.au/>) - free daily newspaper covering events in the Sydney and Victoria LGBT community

Gay and Lesbian Tourism Australia (<http://www.galta.com.au/>) - a tourist services and business directory catering to LGBT travelers.

The Gender Centre (<http://www.gendercentre.org.au/index1.htm>) provides a calendar of events and links to resources for transgendered people in Australia.

Asia

China

As of April 2010, homosexual relations are legal in China, though there is no national recognition of same sex partnerships or gay adoption rights (ILGA). There is also no law prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, though activists are campaigning for one (Chu & McLeod 2010). Since the law used to criminalize homosexuality was overturned in 1997 and homosexuality was removed from the China Psychiatric Association's list of mental disorders in 2001, there have been signs that the historically taboo treatment of anything LGBT-related is changing in China (Lau 2010).

There is no doubt that the social perception of the LGBT community has improved in China in recent years, but the degree of this change is based on location and perception. The community's presence in cities has increased significantly as urban China has experienced rapid economic and social globalization (Ho 2009). It also doesn't hurt that China is mostly secular and influential Confucian teachings don't comment on homosexuality. In 2008, an LGBT Center was established in Beijing; in 2009, activists organized the country's first Pride celebration in Shanghai, a project that had been shut down five years earlier (Lau 2010).

These signs of progress are tempered by the fact that many LGBT Chinese people are still "closeted" because of social pressures. The pressure in Chinese culture to continue the family line has led many gay men (and presumably lesbians) to enter heterosexual marriages and start a family. There are so many of these that wives of gay men, self-proclaimed "tongqi," have created support networks and begun speak out against the practice and the social stigma that causes it (Homosexuality in China 2010).

Though China may not have the most thriving LGBT culture, it does seem to have a low level of violence towards LGBT people (Lau 2010). Still, with the pace of change in LGBT rights in China, LGBT students should check current events before departing.

Resources for current events

Globalgayz entry: China (<http://globalgayz.com/country/China/CHN/>) gives an informal overview of LGBT climate in China and links to news articles.

ILGA's China entry (<http://ilga.org/ilga/en/countries/CHINA/Articles>) provides current events stories and the "Law" tab leads to legal information.

India

India is currently in a state of transition regarding treatment of the LGBT community. Though homosexual relationships have historically been forbidden under the Indian penal code, the New Delhi

High Court decriminalized adult homosexual relationships on July 2, 2009 (Venkatraman 6). Combined with the re-launch earlier in 2009 of India's only LGBT magazine after a seven-year hiatus, this may symbolize a change in LGBT relations in a country that has largely ignored or condemned the LGBT community (Phukan 12). Students should still monitor current events, as a political or legal backlash to these progressive events is possible.

The High Court's ruling did not make homosexuality socially and culturally acceptable. The huge influence that religion has on society in India means that a major cultural change will have to come from religious leaders. Leaders of the Orthodox Islam and Christianity churches in India have publicly declared opposition to the ruling. Because the major religion, Hinduism, doesn't directly condemn homosexuality, its leaders are split in opinion on the decriminalization. The stance that Hindu spiritual leaders reach on this issue will likely have a major effect on the treatment of LGBT people in India (Venkatraman 6-7). Again, LGBT students should monitor current events regarding the LGBT community before departure.

Resources for further information

Globalgayz entry: India (<http://globalgayz.com/country/India/IND/>) gives an informal overview of LGBT climate in India and links to news articles.

Bombay Dost Online (<http://www.bombaydost.co.in/>) is India's first LGBT magazine. Currently, the website only includes preview pages, but it will be expanded.

Trikone Magazine (<http://www.trikone.org/index.shtml>) based out of San Francisco, is focused on South Asia LGBT issues in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Myanmar (Burma), Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Tibet. Full issues can be found through the ProQuest database in USF Library Services.

ILGA's India entry (<http://ilga.org/ilga/en/countries/INDIA/Articles>) provides current events stories and the "Law" tab leads to legal information.

Japan

In Japan, homosexual relationships are legal and citizens have the ability to change gender on official documents (ILGA). Human Rights Watch and other groups are currently seeking a bill prohibiting discrimination on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation (Kato 2009). As in many other Asian cultures, the Japanese LGBT community is not as public as in some Western nations. LGBT activists in Japan are also not vocal (Kato 2009). However, in the 2009 elections, power shifted towards political parties that are supportive of LGBT rights. Activists hope that this will bring positive changes for the LGBT community in Japan (Kato 2009).

The boundaries of gender expression in Japan are significantly different than those of the U.S., especially for men. Japanese men, famous for their style, have made common such styles as pierced ears, long hair and, most recently, skirts and kilts. Though these fads are adopted predominately by fashion-forward heterosexual men, their presence has led to general cultural acceptance of more fluid physical expressions of gender (Kaneko 2010).

As political power and perceptions of the LGBT community are changing, LGBT students traveling to Japan should research current events for an update.

Resources for further information

Globalgayz entry: Japan (<http://globalgayz.com/country/Japan/JPN>) gives an informal overview of LGBT climate in Japan and links to news articles.

ILGA's Japan entry (<http://ilga.org/ilga/en/countries/JAPAN/Articles>) provides current events stories and the "Law" tab leads to legal information.

South Korea

In South Korea, male and female homosexual relationships are legal but are not yet recognized by marriages, civil unions or legal partnership benefits (ILGA; Pettid). Citizens are offered some allowances for changing their gender on official documents, perhaps indicating a level of acceptance of transgenderism in the country (ILGA).

Socially, it seems that South Korean culture tends to encourage discretion regarding sexual orientation and gender identity because of an overall emphasis on keeping a mainstream public appearance. LGBT citizens in South Korea are more likely to be “out” around friends than in the public sphere. However, this social stigma is suspended somewhat in “kijich’on,” or the areas surrounding military bases. These are specially designated for tourists by the South Korean government and are subject to different legal and social standards than the rest of the country, including standards regarding the LGBT community; most of the nation’s LGBT nightclubs are located in these kijich’on (Pettid). As many metropolitan areas and universities are near U.S. military bases, it is likely that Education Abroad programs to South Korea will be located near kijich’on and therefore will experience these more liberal social standards. LGBT students should monitor current events in South Korea and check the status of the specific areas they’ll be visiting.

Resources for further information

Globalgayz entry: South Korea (<http://globalgayz.com/country/South%20Korea/KOR>) gives an informal overview of LGBT climate in South Korea and links to news articles.

ILGA’s south Korea entry (<http://ilga.org/ilga/en/countries/SOUTH%20KOREA/Articles>) provides current events stories and the “Law” tab leads to legal information.

Malaysia

Since gaining independence from colonial British rule (which also condemned homosexual behavior) Malaysia has become an Islamic nation (Yeh 85). Thus, national and Islamic law both outlaw homosexuality and gender changes (Yeh 95). LGBT travelers to Malaysia should be careful, as homosexual relationships are illegal and are punishable by up to 20 years imprisonment (ilga.org). The Education Abroad office recommends that students follow the laws of the country they're in.

Social stigma is very negative towards the LGBT community as well. The distinctions drawn between homosexuality and transgenderism in the U.S. are not the same in Malaysia. There are many different overlapping terms in the Malay language for members of the LGBT community, but they are all currently subject to blanket condemnation (Baba 143-145). Because this condemnation is based in the values of Islam and their connections to Malay nationalism, it is less likely to be applied to a visitor, someone already considered a foreigner (Yeh 95).

Though the areas around Malaysia are becoming more progressive, change is slow in coming in most Islamic nations. However, the social situation is improving for LGBT people in Malaysia and it is possible that the country may follow the lead of India or fold to increasing pressure from the UN to decriminalize homosexuality. LGBT students traveling to Malaysia should check current events in the area to see if the situation has changed from the time this guide was created.

Resources for current information

ilga.org

Pink Triangle (PT) Foundation - the only public LGBT support organization in Malaysia. The non-profit's webpage (<http://www.ptfmalaysia.org/>) includes events and resources for LGBT people.

Globalgayz entry: Malaysia (<http://globalgayz.com/country/Malaysia/MYS/>) gives an informal overview of LGBT climate in Malaysia and links to news articles.

ILGA's Malaysia entry (<http://ilga.org/ilga/en/countries/MALAYSIA/Articles>) provides current events stories and the "Law" tab leads to legal information.

Europe

Czech Republic

For its location, the legal and social climate in the Czech Republic seems to be relatively LGBT-friendly. Eastern Europe is typically considered a homophobic region. The Czech Republic made history in July 2006 by establishing same sex partnerships, referred to as “registered partners,” on a national level (AFP 2006). According to the International Lesbian and Gay Association (2009?), discrimination in employment on the basis of sexual orientation is illegal (ilga.org).

Prague, the capital, is heralded as the best place in Eastern Europe for LGBT travelers and has a number of gay-friendly establishments (Wilder 2010). The most prominent LGBT organization, Gay Iniciativa, dissolved in 2009 claiming that it had accomplished its goals (Gay Iniciativa 2009). Despite these positive signs, LGBT students should still be aware of the historically anti-LGBT attitude of Eastern Europe and monitor current events in the Czech Republic before departure.

Resources for further information

Globalgayz entry: Czech Republic (<http://globalgayz.com/country/Czech%20Republic/CZE/>) gives an informal overview of LGBT climate in Czech Republic and links to news articles.

Gay and Lesbian information (from Czech Republic’s official tourism website) http://www.czchtourism.com/eng/uk/docs/_uk/usefull-information/gay_and_lesbian.html gives links and cultural information for tourists.

Human Rights Watch – Europe/Central Asia (<http://www.hrw.org/en/europe/central-asia>) gives news, reports, and commentaries on human rights issues in the region.

Prague-life.com’s “The Gay Side of Prague” article (<http://www.prague-life.com/prague/gay-prague>) provides information on LGBT-friendly establishments and LGBT organizations. (Warning: many of the linked pages are in Czech).

Denmark

In 1989, Denmark became the first country to recognize civil unions for homosexuals at the national level. More than 20 years later, its status as one of the world's most politically LGBT-friendly cities was confirmed by the approval of adoption rights for homosexual parents (AP 2009).

The capital of Denmark, Copenhagen, has a thriving LGBT culture. In addition to many LGBT-friendly entertainment and lodging establishments, Copenhagen has a specifically gay radio station (GLCVB 2010). It was the site of the 2009 World OutGames, an international LGBT athletic event with over 5,500 participants representing 98 countries, and the OutGames Human Rights Conference. These events did face isolated homophobic incidents, but for the most part demonstrated the acceptance of the LGBT community by Danish society (Luongo 2009).

Resources for further information about LGBT Denmark

"Gay and Lesbian Convention Visitor's Bureau" from VisitDenmark, the country's official tourism website (http://www.glcvb.org/lap_dk.php) provides specific information for LGBT travelers to Denmark.

Globalgayz entry: Denmark (<http://globalgayz.com/country/Denmark/DNK>) provides an informal overview of the LGBT climate in Denmark and links to LGBT-relevant news.

Copenhagen Gay Life (<http://www.copenhagen-gay-life.dk/>) provides locations of LGBT-friendly venues, including an interactive map, as well as listings of LGBT events.

(Not in English) LGBT Danmark (<http://www.lbl.dk/>) is one of the world's oldest LGBT organizations. Its website offers national and international LGBT news as well as a calendar of LGBT events for those who are interested in the LGBT activism and advocacy in Denmark.

France

France is known for having progressive LGBT legal policies in the world. In 1999, France became one of the first countries to legalize homosexual civil partnerships on a national level ("French 'gay marriage'" 1999). French LGBT activists' attempts to gain full marriage rights have been unsuccessful (as of 2010) but France has enacted laws prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation (ILGA 2009). Despite a less progressive record when it comes to transgender people, France became the first country to remove transsexualism from its list of mental illnesses in 2010 (Faure 2010).

The social climate towards the LGBT community in France is mostly accepting, but can vary. The famous lack of Mediterranean macho culture in France and the general social liberalism of the country yield a fairly LGBT-tolerant attitude among French people, especially in cities and towards travelers. However, because French culture encourages discretion about what are considered to be personal matters, "coming out" can be considered in poor taste ("French attitudes" n.d.).

Just like in other countries, there are still incidents of homophobia in LGBT-friendly Paris such as the attacks on LGBT activists by Christian activists at a "kiss-in" demonstration ("Gay 'Kiss-in'" 2010). Students should remember that some prejudice may remain, especially among strictly religious citizens.

Sources for further information

Globalgayz France entry (<http://globalgayz.com/country/France/FRA>) provides an informal country overview and links to LGBT news.

Gay-France.net, which is sponsored by a gay vacation company, offers insights about French attitudes towards LGBT people and LGBT-friendly establishments in France.

The International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) France country survey (<http://ilga.org/ilga/en/countries/FRANCE/Law>) includes legal information as well as an area for links to news articles.

Germany

Germany is among the world's most LGBT-friendly countries in terms of civil rights. Not only are homosexual relations legal, but same sex partnerships have been recognized on national level since 2001 (ILGA). In August 2009, second parent adoption rights were granted to homosexual couples. In October, pension benefits for homosexual civil partners of government employees were made equal to those for heterosexual married partners (Geen Oct 2009).

The incredible contrast between present-day treatment of the LGBT community in Germany and the days of pink triangles is solidified by the large-scale public LGBT events hosted in the country. 2010 Gay Games, an international LGBT sports and culture event, will be hosted in Cologne, Germany, the site of one of the world's most famous Catholic Cathedrals (Gay Games 2010).

Social acceptance of the LGBT community in Germany varies by region. Many urban areas, like Berlin, are liberal and there is little social stigma toward the LGBT community. Areas like Bavaria, which are more conservative and closely linked to the traditional Catholic Church, are generally less socially welcoming and openly accepting of the LGBT community

(http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/09/30/germany_has_a_gay_minister_yaewm)

Resources for further information

Globalgayz Germany entry (<http://globalgayz.com/country/Germany/DEU>) provides an informal country overview and links to LGBT news.

The Lesbian and Gay Federation in Germany's website (<http://www.lsvd.de/229.0.html>) provides information on the LGBT organization in Germany as well as indications of the current political and social climate in Germany towards LGBT people.

The International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) Germany country survey (<http://ilga.org/ilga/en/countries/GERMANY/Law>) includes legal information as well as an area for links to news articles.

Greece

Despite ancient Greece's strong homosexual traditions, modern Greece is not as socially accepting of the LGBT community as some other European nations. According to activists, the media and the influential Orthodox Church perpetuate anti-LGBT sentiments. This is demonstrated multiple legal attempts by residents of the island of Lesbos to make LGBT groups stop using the word "lesbian" to describe homosexual women; ironically, homosexual female visitors to the island contribute significantly to its economy ([Smith 2008](#)).

Homosexual relations are legal in Greece, but despite pressure from the European Union, same sex partnerships are not legally recognized ([ilga.org](#)). Gay marriage rights are the source of ongoing conflict between the conservative courts and LGBT activist groups in Greece. Two homosexual couples were married in the island of Tilos in July 2008, but the courts annulled these marriages in 2009 ([Geen 2009](#)). USF students travelling to Greece should monitor LGBT-relevant current events, as the outcome of legal and political battles over rights may affect the LGBT climate.

Resources for LGBT current events in Greece

Pink News ([pinknews.co.uk](#)) – though based out of the UK, this news service covers international LGBT events, especially the European Union (which Greece belongs to).

Globalgayz Greece entry (<http://globalgayz.com/country/Greece/GRC>) provides an informal country overview and links to LGBT news.

The International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) Greece country survey (<http://ilga.org/ilga/en/countries/GREECE/Law>) includes legal information as well as an area for links to news articles.

Italy

Homosexual relations are currently legal in Italy, but there is no national recognition of same sex partnerships, though activists have been working towards changing this (ILGA). The legal, social and political climate in Italy is influenced by both the progressive trends towards LGBT rights in the European Union and the opposition to LGBT-friendly initiatives from the Roman Catholic Church. While the Church disagrees with European Union LGBT initiatives, LGBT activists claim the Vatican has an excessive amount of influence on Italian policies. To protest this influence, activists took to the streets in Rome and other European cities in 2009 in favor of gay marriage (Associated Press 2009).

Socially, Italian cities seem to be relatively LGBT-friendly. Despite the presence of the Vatican, Rome hosts a large annual Pride festival and many LGBT-friendly establishments. However, the appeal of the LGBT culture has been tempered by reports of a rash of hate crimes in 2009, which stirred international reactions (Geen Sept 2009). LGBT students traveling to Italy should monitor current events if they plan to engage in the LGBT culture because of these recent events.

Resources for further information

The English website for Arcigay (<http://www.arcigay.it/arcigay-english>), the largest LGBT organization in Italy, provides information about the legal and social climate towards LGBT people in Italy as well as a newsletter.

Pink News (pinknews.co.uk) – though based out of the UK, this news service covers international LGBT events and news, especially the European Union.

Globalgayz Italy entry (<http://globalgayz.com/country/Italy/ITA>) provides an informal overview of the LGBT climate in Italy and links to news stories.

Russia

In Russia, the anti-LGBT tone typical of Eastern Europe still defines politics, though progress is being made. Homosexuality was decriminalized in 1993 and gays and lesbians can currently serve in the Russian armed forces (ILGA 2009). However, the imprisonment of LGBT activists as recently as March 2009 on the grounds of distributing “homosexual propaganda to minors” is troubling to those hoping for equal treatment of LGBT people in Russia (“Two Moscow” 2009).

According to an article in *Passport Magazine* in March 2010, “being queer now in St. Petersburg, and in Russia, is still not a fact to be broadcast to anyone but your closest friends”(Strubbe 2010). Discretion seems to be key for LGBT citizens of Russia and should be for LGBT travelers as well. The denial of marriage rights to a lesbian couple in 2009 stirred controversy, which may lead to increased LGBT rights and/or a social backlash (“Lesbian couple” 2010). Also, a St. Petersburg Parliament member’s recent condemnation of LGBT Pride parades as “anti-state actions” could mean the collision of established anti-LGBT sentiments in government with an increasingly vocal LGBT movement at the planned Gay Pride event on June 26 (GayRussia 2010). LGBT students traveling to Russia should monitor current events before departure because of the tumultuous nature of LGBT relations in the area.

Resources for further information and current events

ILGA’s Russia entry (<http://ilga.org/ilga/en/countries/RUSSIAN%20FEDERATION/Articles>) provides current events stories and the “Law” tab leads to legal information.

Project GayRussia’s website (<http://www.gayrussia.ru/en/>) though the English translations can be slightly confusing, offers news stories on LGBT events in Russia.

Globalgayz Russia entry (<http://globalgayz.com/country/Russia/RUS>) provides an informal overview of the LGBT climate in Russia and links to news stories.

Slovakia

In Slovakia, homosexual relationships are legal, but same sex partnerships are not recognized on a national level (ILGA). Though located in traditionally anti-LGBT Eastern Europe, Slovakia's membership in the European Union since 2004 seems to be a motivating factor behind recently increasing political and legal support for the LGBT community (Traynor 2004). Before joining the EU, Slovakia was required (like all member countries) to adopt an anti-discrimination law (Slovakia n.d.). As the EU becomes more openly supportive of full LGBT rights, the pressure is rising for the member countries that do not yet protect these rights for their citizens. This may lead to increased LGBT rights in coming years.

Though few resources are available in English regarding current LGBT events in Slovakia, it seems that there is a small active LGBT community. An LGBT travel publication called Passport Magazine ran a spotlight piece on Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia, revealing that there are a few gay-friendly venues in the city (Haggas 2010). The first Pride festival in Slovakia is planned to take place on May 22, 2010, making Slovakia the last country in the European Union to say it is going to hold a national LGBT Pride event (Pink News 2010). Despite this apparent progress in LGBT rights and climate, students may want to check current LGBT events in Slovakia before departing.

Resources for further information

The International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) Slovakia country survey (<http://ilga.org/ilga/en/countries/SLOVAKIA/Law>) includes legal information as well as an area for links to news articles.

Globalgayz Country entry for Slovakia (<http://globalgayz.com/country/Slovakia/SVK>) provides an informal overview of the LGBT climate in Slovakia and links to news stories.

Pink News (pinknews.co.uk) – though based out of the UK, this news service covers international LGBT events and news, especially the European Union.

The official website for PRIDE 2010 in Bratislava (<http://www.duhovypride.sk/en/about-rainbow-pride>), though awkwardly worded at some points in its English translation, provides a glimpse into the growing LGBT movement in Slovakia.

Spain

Spain is considered one of the most LGBT-friendly places in the world and became one of the first countries to legalize gay marriage in 2005 (Ferren 2009). In accordance with its European Union membership standards, Spain also has anti-discrimination laws in place regarding sexual orientation and gender identity (ILGA).

Spain's LGBT community is active and visible in its major cities. Organizations like FELGT (Federation of Lesbians, Gays, Transsexuals and Bisexuals), an umbrella political and activist group, have a strong presence in Spain. Within cities, organizations focused on LGBT advocacy and activism have a place, like Madrid's LGBT Center, COGAM. Visibility is also bolstered in cities by the LGBT nightlife, which is thriving (Ammon 2008). LGBT students visiting the major cities of Spain will find a number of LGBT-friendly establishments.

Resources for further information

VisitSpain's article on LGBT tourism in Spain (<http://www.visitspaininfo.com/story.php?id=35>)

Globalgayz entry for Spain (<http://globalgayz.com/country/Spain/ESP/>) provides an informal overview of the LGBT climate in Argentina and links to news stories.

Gay in Spain (http://www.spainexpat.com/spain/information/gay_in_spain/) is a guide to LGBT culture in Spain from a website for expatriates living in Spain.

Sweden

Currently, Sweden offers significantly more civil rights to the LGBT community than the United States; gay marriage is legal, homosexual partners can adopt children and there are laws prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity (ILGA 2009).

Socially, Sweden is generally a welcoming place for LGBT people. Some attribute this to the socially liberal nature of the Lutheran Church of Sweden, which most Swedes are part of. It is almost surprising that gay marriage wasn't legalized before May 2009; in 2008, 71% of people in Sweden and six of the seven parliamentary parties supported gay marriage (Pink News 2008). The capital, Stockholm, boasts a thriving LGBT scene and a huge Pride festival every summer (Pridefestival 2010). Because of the culture and welcoming climate, the Stockholm, and Sweden overall, is a popular destination for LGBT travelers.

Resources for further information

The International Lesbian and Gay Association Sweden country survey (<http://ilga.org/ilga/en/countries/SWEDEN/Law>) includes legal information as well as an area for links to news articles.

QX (<http://www.qx.se/english/>), though imperfectly translated into English, offers LGBT news from Sweden and around the world, a guide to Sweden for gays and lesbians, and a map of LGBT-friendly establishments in Stockholm, the capital. For those who speak Swedish, QX publishes a free monthly magazine as well.

"Gay and Lesbian Convention Visitor's Bureau" from VisitSweden, the country's official tourism website (http://www.glcvb.org/lap_swn.php) provides specific information for LGBT travelers to Sweden.

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is politically and legally very progressive when it comes to LGBT rights. Homosexual partnerships have been recognized on a national level since 2005, homosexual couples can adopt and there are a number of laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity (ILGA). In addition to the government's statements in support of international LGBT rights, it sends an LGBT-friendly message through actions; on May 1, 2009, open lesbian Carol Ann Duffy was named the British Poet Laureate (Wockner 2009).

London's LGBT scene is thriving, with many LGBT-friendly establishments - so many, in fact, that VisitLondon has created an iPod/iPhone application for tourists called "Gay London" (Staff Writer 2010). Students traveling to London who choose to experience the LGBT culture should have no trouble finding something to do.

Resources for further information

PinkNews (<http://www.pinknews.co.uk/>), "Europe's Largest Gay News Service," covers LGBT events in the United Kingdom and internationally and offers an LGBT guide to the United Kingdom.

Stonewall is an LGBT charity in the UK. Its website (<http://www.stonewall.org.uk/>) offers comprehensive political and legal information about LGBT issues in the United Kingdom.

UK Gay News (<http://ukgaynews.org.uk/latest.htm>) compiles LGBT news stories from the United Kingdom and around the world.

The "Gay London" iPod and iPhone application includes 131 listings of bars, restaurants, hotels and attractions and a blog and is free to download.

The Americas

Argentina

In Argentina, the legal and social climate towards the LGBT community varies significantly by region. On a national level, homosexual relationships are legal, but same sex partnerships are not recognized. In Buenos Aires, Rio Negro and Villa Carlos Paz, a substitute for marriage is an option for homosexuals. Some regions have laws prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation (ILGA). There is hope for national change; in 2009, the ban on gays in the military was lifted (AG Magazine 2009).

The typical macho nature of Latin American societies and the opposition to pro-LGBT initiatives expressed by the hugely influential Roman Catholic Church make progress towards LGBT rights in Argentina slow in coming. Homophobia, especially towards gay men, is most prevalent in rural areas (Kelly 2009).

Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina, is unique in its relatively welcoming climate towards the LGBT community; it even boasts a number of expressly LGBT-friendly establishments (Gay Argentina 2010). Buenos Aires famously became the first Latin American city to legalize civil unions in 2002. Though the city does not yet recognize gay marriage, extensive legal battles resulted in one gay marriage being permitted in 2009, which activists hope will lead to an expansion in LGBT rights throughout the country (Kelly 2009). LGBT students traveling to any area of Argentina should monitor LGBT current events in the country because the climate may change as the gay marriage battle heats up.

Resources for current events

Globalgayz Country entry for Argentina (<http://globalgayz.com/country/Argentina/ARG>) provides an informal overview of the LGBT climate in Argentina and links to news stories.

The International Lesbian and Gay Association Argentina country survey (<http://ilga.org/ilga/en/countries/ARGENTINA/Law>) includes legal information as well as an area for links to news articles.

AG Magazine (<http://www.agmagazine.com.ar/>), though in Spanish, is a great resource for LGBT news in Argentina and around the world.

Bolivia

Though homosexual relations are legal in Bolivia, there are major anti-LGBT forces affecting the social and political climate (ILGA). Typical Latin American gender divisions lead to homophobia, especially for gay men. Evangelical and Catholic churches also have a heavy influence on society and do not support LGBT rights. Because of these factors, LGBT Bolivians face harassment and discrimination (Garat 2009).

Activists are trying to start a movement for increased LGBT rights and protection, but homophobic responses like the bomb thrown at gay march participants in 2009 hurt the progress (Garat 2009). The LGBT community has historically been ignored, as poverty and political instability have made it difficult to gain momentum for the LGBT movement (Bolivia Overview 2009).

There are signs, however, cultural and political opposition to the LGBT community may be fading. The most significant of these is that the constitution approved in early 2009 made discrimination based on sexual orientation illegal (Garat 2009). LGBT students traveling to Bolivia should monitor current events to have a clearer picture of the LGBT climate in Bolivia before departure.

Resources for current events

Globalgayz Country entry for Bolivia (<http://globalgayz.com/country/Bolivia/BOL>) provides an informal overview of the LGBT climate in Bolivia and links to news stories.

BoliviaGay (<http://www.boliviagay.com/>), though in Spanish, provides LGBT news and relevant information for Bolivia.

The International Lesbian and Gay Association Bolivia country survey (<http://ilga.org/ilga/en/countries/BOLIVIA/Law>) includes legal information as well as an area for links to news articles.

Brazil

In Brazil, homosexual relations are currently legal and an inferior substitute for marriage is recognized in some areas (ILGA). The Latin American influences of religion and masculinity breed homophobia in Brazil, though cities like Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paolo are more tolerant and have flourished as LGBT tourist destinations. Sao Paolo's Pride celebration is the largest in the world and expects four million participants for the 2010 event (Gay Pride Brazil 2010).

Despite the active community, there is still violence and homophobia. LGBT hate crimes reportedly rose 55% in 2009, concerning activists greatly in combination with a growing number of demonstrations against LGBT pride marches (Frassinet 2009). This has drawn attention to the fact that beneath the celebratory urban image of LGBT Brazil, the nation has one of the highest hate crime rates in the world (Columbia Law School 2010). Students should be aware of the contradictory nature of the LGBT climate in Brazil and monitor current events prior to departure.

Resources for further information

Globalgayz country entry for Panama (<http://globalgayz.com/country/Panama/PAN/>) provides an informal country overview and links to news articles.

The International Lesbian and Gay Association Brazil country survey (<http://ilga.org/ilga/en/countries/BRAZIL/Law>) includes legal information as well as an area for links to news articles.

The Sao Paolo Gay Pride page (<http://www.gaypridebrazil.org/sao-paulo/>) gives a glimpse into the events and media surrounding the largest Pride celebration in the world.

Canada

Canada is known as one of the most LGBT-friendly countries in the world. In 2005, it became one of the first nations to legalize same sex marriage (ILGA). There are laws prohibiting discrimination and “hate propaganda” based on sexual orientation and gender identity in most provinces (<http://www.canadianelderlaw.ca/Gay%20Timeline.htm>).

The LGBT scene in Canadian cities is thriving. In addition to the presence of many LGBT publications and establishments, LGBT events are welcomed by the government and boast huge attendance. More than a million participants were at Toronto’s gay pride parade in 2009; the population of Toronto is around two million people (Im 2009). Students traveling to Canada who want to engage in the LGBT culture of the area should consult the numerous guides to LGBT establishments and entertainment in different provinces.

Resources for further information

Xtra! (<http://www.xtra.ca/public/National.aspx>) provides LGBT news and listings of LGBT-friendly businesses in Canada.

Canadian Elder Law’s Timeline of LGBT-related laws (<http://www.canadianelderlaw.ca/Gay%20Timeline.htm>) provides information on the history of LGBT rights and protections in Canada from the 1960s to 2005.

Globalgayz Country entry for Canada (<http://globalgayz.com/country/Canada/CAN/>) provides an informal overview of the LGBT climate in Canada and links to news stories.

Costa Rica

In Costa Rica, homosexual relations have been legal since 1971, but same sex partnerships are not yet recognized on a national level (ILGA). Like other Latin American nations, Costa Rica's culture is characterized by general loyalty to the anti-LGBT Catholic Church and machismo, which breed homophobia. Activists are struggling against these powerful forces to gain rights for the LGBT community. There are indications of national change though; in 2008, Costa Rica's government decided to recognize the annual International Day Against Homophobia on May 17 (Pink News Costa Rica 2008). LGBT activists hoped to gain rights for same sex couples when a new president took office in 2010; unfortunately, she reversed her position not long after taking office and now claims not to support civil unions (Molina 2010).

The conservative and Catholic influence that restricts widespread acceptance of the LGBT community in Costa Rica is generally highest in rural areas. The capital city, San Jose, is more secular, socially liberal and LGBT-friendly. There is an active LGBT nightlife scene in San Jose, though LGBT students should be cautious and check current events in Costa Rica before considering visiting such venues (Costa Rica 2009).

Resources for current events

Globalgayz country entry for Costa Rica (<http://globalgayz.com/country/Costa%20Rica/CRI>) provides an informal country overview and links to news articles.

The International Lesbian and Gay Association Costa Rica country survey (<http://ilga.org/ilga/en/countries/COSTA%20RICA/Law>) includes legal information as well as an area for links to news articles.

Gay Costa Rica (<http://www.gaycostarica.com/>), though in Spanish, offers news stories and information on LGBT culture in Costa Rica.

Honduras

Though homosexual relations are legal in Honduras, it's a dangerous place for LGBT people right now (ILGA). Like other Latin American countries, the cultural value placed on masculinity in men and the influence of the Catholic Church have historically caused an anti-LGBT climate in the country. However, the LGBT movement seemed to be making some slow progress with the establishment of LGBT organizations and openly friendly bars until 2009 (Ammon 2010).

In May 2009, Human Rights Watch (2009) issued a statement calling for an end to violence against transgendered people. The call revealed that hate crimes against Honduran trans people have been high in the last few years and the government does nothing to prevent them (Honduras: End Violence 2009). In June 2009, concern about this was overshadowed by a coup against the democratic government that was followed by a rash of LGBT murders and the arbitrary arrests of activists (Ferreyra 2009). Despite a political election in November, HRW reported that LGBT hate crimes continued through the end of the year (Honduras: Investigate 2009). This violence does not seem to be aimed at foreigners, but LGBT students should still investigate the subject further before visiting Honduras.

Resources for further information

Human Rights Watch: Honduras page (<http://www.hrw.org/en/americas/honduras>) provides updates on human rights issues in the country.

International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission: Honduras page (<http://www.iglhrc.org/cgi-bin/iowa/region/102.html>) provides LGBT human rights current events in the country.

Globalgayz country entry for Honduras (<http://globalgayz.com/country/Honduras/HND>) provides an informal country overview and links to news articles.

Mexico

Mexico is recognized as one of the most LGBT-friendly nations in Latin America. Same sex partnerships are recognized in some areas of the country, a practice common to Latin America (ILGA). In 2010, Mexico City became the first city in Latin America to legalize same sex marriage, raising expectations for both other Hispanic countries and the U.S. (Malkin 2010).

Culturally, elements of machismo, conservatism and Catholicism keep the whole country from being as LGBT-friendly as Mexico City (Joaquin 2009). Homophobia still runs high in rural areas, especially in the few areas where formal Catholicism is practiced in traditionally anti-clerical Mexico (Malkin 2010). In Mexico City, however, areas like the Zona Rosa district act as a haven for members of LGBT community from other parts of Mexico. Though the city is much more accepting than rural areas, entrenched homophobia still has an impact. This is especially true for gay men, many of whom do not disclose their sexual orientation because of the pressure to fit traditional gender roles (Joaquin 2009). LGBT students traveling to Mexico should keep these pressures in mind when visiting this newly progressive area.

Resources for further information

Globalgayz country entry for Mexico (<http://www.globalgayz.com/country/Mexico/MEX>) provides an informal country overview and links to news articles.

International Lesbian and Gay Association: Mexico page (<http://ilga.org/ilga/en/countries/MEXICO/Law>) provides legal information and news.

Panama

Homosexual relations were decriminalized in Panama in 2008 and it is possible for Panamanians to change their gender on official documents, a relatively progressive policy for Latin America (ILGA). Otherwise, however, the LGBT movement in Panama has been slow in progressing. As of 2010, Panama's only reported LGBT advocacy organization was the AHMNP (Asociación Hombres y Mujeres Nuevos de Panama or the 'New Men and Women of Panama'). To be recognized by the nation, this group had to battle one of the biggest opponents of LGBT rights throughout Latin America – the politically powerful Catholic Church. Now, Catholic leaders speak out against any LGBT initiatives that AHMNP proposes (Ammon March 2010).

Besides the anti-LGBT stance of the Catholic Church and the influence of machismo, the movement also faces a major lack of LGBT participants. Panama's cities have a lively LGBT nightlife, but low (less than 500 people) attendance at annual public Pride parades. This willingness to be openly LGBT around the community but not publicly suggests that LGBT Panamanians may fear social stigma (Chesnut 2009). LGBT students traveling to Panama may want to keep this in mind when determining whether to disclose their sexual orientation during a trip.

Resources for further information

Globalgayz country entry for Panama (<http://globalgayz.com/country/Panama/PAN/>) provides an informal country overview and links to news articles.

AHMNP's website (<http://www.ahmnp Panama.org/>), though in Spanish, provides information on the LGBT movement in Panama and LGBT current events from Panama and other countries.

Passport Magazine, an international LGBT travel magazine, article "Doing Business in Panama City" (<http://www.passportmagazine.com/businessclass/PanamaCity767.php?pagenum=1&rand=1>) gives an overview of the LGBT climate and movement in Panama and suggests a few LGBT-friendly venues.

Peru

Homosexual relations are legal in Peru, but police and state attitudes towards the LGBT community have historically been inconsistent (ILGA). Along with the Latin American forces of machismo and the anti-LGBT influence of the Catholic Church, LGBT residents of Peru must deal with another anti-LGBT force – the Serenazgo. The Serenazgo, a police force in Lima, is notorious for homophobic and transphobic violence, though it is rarely prosecuted. Serenazgo hate crimes are not constant and seem to spike for specific periods of time, so LGBT students traveling to Peru should check LGBT current events to monitor any recent human rights issues.

The Movimiento Homosexual de Lima (MHOL) was the first LGBT organization established in Peru and its efforts have left a positive mark on the LGBT climate in Lima. It was formed in 1983 after the dictatorship in Peru collapsed and has been instrumental in organizing events and campaigning for social, political and legal equality for LGBT people (Historia 2010). Lima, the capital of Peru, seems to be relatively tolerant for MHOL's efforts; despite some slight interference from police, a very public "Besos Contra la Homofobia" (Kisses Against Homophobia, modeled after a French event) was held on February 14 2010 (Noticias Nacionales 2010). This and other events are helping to change the LGBT climate in Peru for the better.

Resources for further information

International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission: Peru page (<http://www.iglhrc.org/cgi-bin/iowa/region/108.html>) provides updates on LGBT human rights issues in Peru, like the Serenazgo abuses.

The Movimiento Homosexual de Lima (MHOL) page (<http://www.mhol.org.pe/>) though in Spanish, provides information on LGBT current events in Peru, the LGBT movement and in-country LGBT resources.

Human Rights Watch: Peru page (<http://www.hrw.org/en/americas/peru>) provides updates on human rights issues in Peru.

Globalgayz: Peru country entry (<http://globalgayz.com/country/Peru/PER>) gives an informal overview of the LGBT climate in Peru and links to news articles.