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## Why LGBT homebuyers are looking beyond traditional 'gay resorts'

Greater integration means places like Mykonos and Sitges are no longer the holiday home hotspots

**Perspective**



A beach picnic in Provincetown, Massachusetts, during the city's annual Family Week © Essdras M Suarez/Getty Images

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YESTERDAY by [Hugo Greenhalgh](#)

Ash is keen on Beirut, but Andrew favours Montreal. Linda plumps for Boston in the States, while Dominic would rather go to Cape Town. Sue advises against Somerset, but Ralph recommends Rio. Iceland crops up several times, not least, as Feargus says, because "it gives people with beards ample jumper modelling opportunities".

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A straw poll of mainly gay and lesbian friends throws up a wide range of destinations in which to buy a holiday home. A city's attractions are not just its nightlife any more; prospective part-time residents want to know about nurseries, schools and neighbourhoods.

And that's the point. The days of Mykonos in Greece and Sitges, just outside Barcelona, as the [gay places](#) for beach houses or apartments are long over. Indeed, the maturity of the scene in Sitges, in particular, is reflected by the level of properties

available, stretching up to villas for €10m.

The same holds true for Mykonos, which has a range of properties on sale between €6m and €8m.

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Yet for me and my friends, most of us in our early forties, these represent the ultimate gay destinations — and who wants to stay or buy a holiday home in a gay resort nowadays? Certainly not Tyler Brûlé, editor of *Monocle* magazine. He replies by email (from Essen in Germany): "My headline: 'I think the ghetto has had its day.'"

I phone him to ask for more of an explanation. "Whether you're looking at property or booking a holiday," he says, "we've had decades of men and women fighting for gay rights and equality and this is one of the results.

"People have become more integrated and that has both its benefits and its challenges, and is something that the gay community has to come to grips with. You're not so special any more."

Indeed. It was different 20 years ago, when my then boyfriend and I were just looking to book a holiday. Back in the 1990s, we mixed adventure with clubbing; by day rummaging around the ruins at Lebanon's Baalbek (while dodging the Hizbollah fighters in the marketplace) and then getting drunk at Beirut's only gay nightclub on the hill just outside town.

That sense of meeting like-minded people — and feeling safe — meant something back then.

Now in our forties and looking to buy somewhere abroad, it's the last thing on our minds. Legal restrictions still matter, of course, not least in terms of recognising gay marriages. Couples buying joint [properties in homophobic countries](#) should ensure both their names are on the title deeds.

But, again, who would buy in a gay resort nowadays? For those in the west, the question, while not redundant, has taken on a different meaning. The same tribes found among straight people looking for holiday homes can be identified among the LGBT community looking for the hot new destinations. "Our market is divided into many different marketing niches — and now people with families," says Carlos Kytka, executive director of the Gay European Tourism Association. "We cannot really put them all in the same boat as we used to do, so you can only really say for certain segments that there are some new destinations within those."

Married couples with kids. Elderly homosexuals (oh god, that's me) looking for a small pied-à-terre somewhere obscure but in a location worthy of dropping lightly at the next dinner party. Or single people seeking an investment in the sun. We're growing up — not just in terms of our own ages — but as a community. And with maturity come different responsibilities, as well as different interests.

“The mainstays of the gay resort, the circuit party and gay cruises are still going strong. It's just that most of us wouldn't be seen dead at either

Provincetown, which has the highest concentration of same-sex couples in the US, has it nailed. The city in Massachusetts sees its year-round population of just 3,000 swell to 60,000 over the summer when it hosts, in quick succession, Bear Week followed by Girl Splash (for lesbians) and then Family Week, a "chance for children to meet other children

with gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender parents, and for parents to meet with other parents and share experiences".

Not something you're likely to find in downtown Tel Aviv.

Provincetown is like the slightly more respectable older brother to New York's Fire Island crowd. You look to party on Fire Island, but buy in Provincetown. And while prices might not have reached the level of Sitges or Mykonos, expect to pay \$1.5m to \$2.5m for a three- or four-bedroom house.

The mainstays of the gay resort, the circuit party — huge club nights that travel around the world — and gay cruises are still going strong. It's just that most of us wouldn't be seen dead at either. And would certainly never consider one as the location for a holiday home.

Tyler snorts loudly when I ask him if we'll see him soon at the next circuit party or playing quoits aboard HMS Queenly Splendour. "Probably not," he laughs. "Probably not."

Sex, of course, is still a factor. And why not? Jamie loved Hiroshima. "Nice little scene, though maybe hard to navigate without some Japanese," he says. "But it's a lovely city and right on the Inland Sea. Got chatted up by both a 21-year-old and a 73-year-old."

I failed to ask Jamie who had the greater success, but the luxuries of equality afforded to those of us who live in developed nations should not be overestimated. Jamie might have a completely different experience in Lagos or even in Moscow.

Yet while for many The Gay Resort may long be a thing of the past, certain aspects of city living still play a part. Ask Philip. He plumped for Seattle when asked. Why? "Lots of daddies apparently," he says.

*Hugo Greenhalgh is the FT's wealth correspondent*

*Photograph: Essdras M Suarez/Getty Images*