

# Discussion

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*The LGBT tourism market have been known for some time but only a few destinations have understood the enormous opportunity and have put in place strategies, plans, operations and budgets to make it happen. GETA and IGLTA, in conversation with Travel And Tour World speaks about the various aspects of LGBT tourism.*



John Tanzella

President / CEO, The International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association

## The trend of **LGBT** Tourism in the last five years



We have grown from being a one-size-fits-all niche market to a mature market segment divided in many niche markets. In Europe alone when it comes to tourism, we estimate conservatively that we are worth over €50 billion annually.

Social changes have been rapidly translated into new products to cater to all our diverse segmentation. In the US, the adaptation from social changes in new products and services have been, as one expects, particularly fast. For instance, Provincetown has created a Gay Family Week, devoted to gay families with kids. Mainstream wedding planners have wasted no time in offering their services to marrying couples, as well as the hospitality industry, that extends its honeymoon packages to gay couples as well.

Tour Operators have also acknowledge our diversity and created new tours specifically to Bears, Circuit Party goers, Lesbians, etc.

From Israel to Argentina, many more national and local governments are creating campaigns promoting their countries and cities to us, rapidly expanding the number of destinations competing to an ever growing slice of our market. Places and businesses that promote themselves to us no longer fear being tagged as “gay” but understand that having a visible LGBT clientele is cool and help updating their brand image.



GETA  
Gay European Tourism Association

Carlos Kytka



The LGBT market continues to expand and diversify. We're seeing businesses specializing in luxury, adventure, family, and off-the-beaten path destinations for LGBT travelers rather than just “gay travel.” We also have seen more mainstream companies reaching out to LGBT travelers.



IGLTA  
International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association

John Tanzella

## Where do the **LGBT** travelers preferably go?



As I've just mentioned, more and more destinations understand the size and importance of our market segment and are gearing up to compete for our attention. We are no longer restricted to San Francisco, Key West and Amsterdam, but even second-tier cities are eager to learn how to promote themselves to us.

Recently Uruguay was voted one of the most gay-friendly destinations on earth. Who would have guessed a decade ago that a tiny South America country would even be quoted as a gay-friendly destination?

Smaller less known towns in Spain such as Granada and Seville have been investing a lot to welcome us. Iceland is a typical example of new exciting destinations that are thrilling, exciting and totally prepared to give us an unforgettable experience.

It is time now to re-think our destinations palette to include many less known places. I speak from my own experience - some of the smaller, less know towns are so rich in culture, sites and even cuisine, making them an excellent and memorable travel experience for us.



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There is no one-size-fits all when it comes to the LGBT travel world, but there are certainly stalwarts such as the Greek Isles, Sydney, San Francisco, New York, Rio de Janeiro, and Cape Town.

## Socio-economic impact of LGBT tourism on the global travel industry

“ GETA undertook research to estimate, for the first time, the size and value of European gay tourists. We believe that this now stands at over €50 billion annually. We have combined this with other research to reach a global spend on LGBT tourism of around \$190 billion each year.

This sounds like a huge amount – which it is - but it has to put in the context of an annual spend of \$1.3 trillion according to the World Travel and Tourism Council.

So we need to promote the additional features that make it worthwhile for companies and destinations to attract LGBT tourists. The most important of these is the fact that generally LGBT tourists are not restricted to school holiday travel so we are perfect for those difficult low seasons. We are also relatively easy to market to with much defined media we read and clear messages that attract us.

In the Spring of 2015 GETA will be launching a White Paper on just this issue. On the back of this we are in discussion with the European Commission about undertaking joint research which will demonstrate to the holiday industry the importance of LGBT tourism.



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“ Collecting data on the industry is key, both locally and globally.

## LGBT tourism in terms of travel business and the role of GETA and IGLTA

“ First of all, membership of GETA is free of charge. So, there is no reason why those companies who wish to understand our market segments and get more involved in it should not join.

We provide a series of free platforms where businesses can learn from us - through our GETA GURU - and also by contacting other GETA members. By learning and implementing good practices businesses will be able to improve their offers and attract more LGBT clients.

It is all about appealing and reaching LGBT clients in the right way. Many hotels owners new to our association think that they need to change their products dramatically. That is far from the truth. It is all about adapting what you have to cater for our needs. We are a very rewarding clientele. When we encounter a service provider that shows knowledge about us and the product and services correspond to our needs we are more than happy to return our custom.

Also, not only travelers can profit from our consumer website. Businesses can see what other businesses are doing to attract us and learn from them.



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“ We want LGBT travelers to feel like the entire world is open to them, so it's very important to us to help businesses in emerging destinations to join our global network. We've established the IGLTA Foundation to assist with outreach in places that don't have governmental support for LGBT tourism.

## Impact of social media on LGBT tourism

“ We have our GayWelcome Facebook page and twitter (@getaeurope) which we use to promote gay travel ideas and news and we publicise GETA activities on masses of gay facebook pages. But we concentrate most of our efforts on our two websites and everything we do it reflected within them.



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“ We promote our member businesses each week via Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to spotlight LGBT travel options around the world. We also give away trips through a variety of social media contests.



## Difference between LGBT tourism and traditional tourism

“ Absolutely. In the same way an Italian restaurant is different from a Mexican restaurant. There are some basic underlining characteristics such as good services and products but try to mix LGBT groups with others and it does not work. If you have decided to go on a LGBT holiday is because you wish to be with like-minded people. In the same way that if you have decided to eat Italian food, you will not be very happy with Mexican food, regardless if it is the best Mexican food in the world. It's just not what you have in mind. Of course we all mix together and enjoy many open-for all tours, but if you booked a LGBT experience, you do have different expectations. That has less to do with taboos of the society than it has to do with managing expectations.



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“ The LGBT segment is different in that we are welcomed in some places and abhorred in others – to the point that there are legal penalties against us. That's why IGLTA is still relevant after 32 years. There is still a long way to go in the fight for global visibility and acceptance.



## How is **GETA/IGLTA** stepping forward to create value for **LGBT** travelers

“ We at GETA have created a dedicated consumer website full of information, events and news that are geared to keep us travelers well updated with trends, politics, events, destinations, tours and almost everything important to create an informative travel choice.

This is now the most comprehensive website for LGBT travellers to and within Europe.

We also send a weekly newsletter to all our subscribers covering everything to do with gay travel, particularly in Europe.

The aim of the website is to help LGBT travelers get the most from their trip in Europe. They can look at top gay destinations, choose from over 4,000 gay and gay friendly hotels, check out events across Europe and read about all the top European gay and travel news. We also provide travel safety tips, having teamed-up with the British Government's Foreign and Commonwealth Office to be partners of the FCO's "Know Before You Go" programme, which you can see at [www.geta-europe.org](http://www.geta-europe.org)



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“ Our website is designed as an LGBT-friendly trip-planning resource. Our members are located in 80 countries. Travelers will find everything from welcoming hotels to travel agents that can do all of their planning for them; we also offer discounts, events listings, and media resources. IGLTA participates in global trade shows and is active on social media, where we often give away travel prizes from our members as well.