



ATTITUDE SPEAKS TO **CARLOS KYTKA**, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE GAY EUROPEAN TOURISM ASSOCIATION (GETA), ABOUT SOME OF THE ISSUES FOR GAY TRAVELLERS TO CONSIDER WHILE THINKING ABOUT WHERE TO TOP UP THEIR TANS:

What are the issues facing gay travellers in 2014?

As states legalise marriage and adoption and gay families grow, it can make choosing a holiday destination more difficult: What happens to your rights as a partner or parent if you travel to a country that doesn't recognise these relationships? GETA is campaigning to encourage European countries to sign-up to a charter which commits them to recognising and respecting these relationships – whatever the legal situation is in that particular country.

Is it ethical or desirable to travel to parts of the world where gay equality is not enshrined in law or where being gay is actually illegal?

Whether it's an ethical issue or not is down to each individual traveller, but most people want to feel relaxed and safe when they're on holiday: why would you want to spend it in a place which legally and culturally doesn't welcome you? I think there is a difference between boycotting and avoiding, but there are countries it would be best to avoid if you want to be open about your sexuality and feel comfortable.

So should we restrict ourselves to places like Gran Canaria and Mykonos, where we know we will be accepted, or even in the majority?

Well the great thing now is that there are so many more places you can go to and be open about your sexuality. Gran Canaria, Mykonos and Sitges are all still there and thriving, but most major cities have good gay nightlife: Iceland has a small but vibrant gay scene in the capital city of Reykjavik and Tel Aviv, Stockholm, and Vienna are actively promoting themselves to

gay people. Outside of Europe, Brazil is going to become even more popular over the next few years and the attractions of China just keep growing – Grindr works very well there!

Can gay tourism help gay rights in countries where gay people are discriminated against or even punished by law?

Well it's more difficult when homosexuality is illegal and visibility could lead to arrest or attacks by locals, so in the Middle East and parts of Africa for example the impact of gay tourism is far less. But a good example of how gay tourism can help is Central and Eastern Europe, where the legal position of gay people moved faster than the social acceptance because states had to end legal discrimination as a condition for joining the European Union (EU). The subsequent growth in popularity of cities like Prague and Budapest with gay tourists has helped local gay people to become more open and confident.

What about Russia; is there anything that can be done?

GETA has been in correspondence with the Director General of the International Olympic Committee seeking assurances for the safety of gay visitors and we are not happy with his responses. Because there is a clear focus, Russia is one of those occasions where a boycott could be effective. Gay Baltic cruises should leave St. Petersburg off their itineraries. Gay people should not visit the Sochi Olympics. I think this also raises a wider issue: should major events be awarded to host cities that don't welcome gay people? But if you think Sochi is a problem – you haven't seen anything yet. The football World Cup will soon be held in Qatar where being gay (if you are male) is totally illegal.

• FOR MORE INFORMATION ON GAY TRAVEL IN EUROPE, VISIT GETA'S COMPREHENSIVE WEBSITE GAYWELCOME.COM