

# Philly travel guru pens handbook on LGBT tourism, hospitality

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Jeremy  
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Jeff Guaracino wanted to help marketing professionals target LGBT tourists for business.

“[The LGBT community is] still a community that is told, ‘No. No, you’re not welcome. No, we don’t want to give you rights,’” Guaracino said. “It’s certainly a community that still needs the power of the invitation. When you invite someone to come and visit, it makes a big difference especially to a community that’s not always welcomed. We are a major economic force in terms of getting married and honeymoons, business travel, meetings and conventions. I think the more you know about the customer and about the business opportunity, then you can make money. The LGBT traveler likes to spend money with people who respect them and who want their money.”

To help tourism and hospitality professionals target this community, Guaracino co-wrote “Handbook of LGBT Tourism and Hospitality: A Guide for Business Practice” with New York-based writer Ed Salvato, chief content officer for ManAboutWorld. Guaracino is a PGN contributor, president and CEO of Welcome America, Inc., and the former vice president of communications for Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation, where he helped spearhead the “Get Your History Straight and Your Nightlife Gay” campaign.

He wrote “Gay and Lesbian Tourism: The Essential Guide for Marketing” in 2011.

For this latest work, Guaracino and Salvato traveled to six continents, conducted interviews with industry leaders and compiled a guidebook with tips, case studies, Q&As and discussion guides.

Guaracino said each interview subject is a “part of the history of LGBT travel in some way.” He noted Jon Allen, owner of Island House in Key West, and their discussion of how LGBT travel has changed over the last 30 years. Additionally, the writers talked with professionals in the Middle East, home to some areas where homosexuality is illegal.

In the past few decades, LGBT tourism has significantly expanded, Guaracino said. He noted that the LGBT-honeymoon industry has seen a significant boom with the legalization of same-sex marriage in Canada, the United Kingdom, France and the United States. Additionally, more millennials are coming out while older generations are also reaching milestones.

“The boomer generation, for the first time, has people who are celebrating their 50th or 60th birthdays,” Guaracino said. “The generation prior to us was devastated by HIV and AIDS. If you really think about what happened in the ’80s and ’90s, we lost an entire generation of mostly men who would have been celebrating their 50th birthday parties and the like. Now that you have a community that is living longer, they get to expand into other events.

“It’s not a history book but in some ways, I think over time, it will be viewed as that because it captures the earliest moments from the last 30 years of LGBT travel,” Guaracino added. “We’re really excited about that.”

Guaracino said anyone from businesspeople to tour companies to college students can use the book as a reference source.

“It’s designed in a handbook style so people can refer back to it.”

Guaracino said it’s “very exciting” to promote the adoption of the book into curriculums at tourism and hospitality schools, an effort he and Salvato are working on with the book’s publishers, Columbia University Press and Herrington Park Press.

“Currently, LGBT travel is not taught as a part of the regular curriculum, for the most part,” Guaracino said. “What you have are students who are interested in the subject who might do a research paper or thesis paper on it. We have a real shot at having LGBT travel and hospitality adopted as a course of teaching, which would be extraordinary.”

Guaracino noted the book’s dedication to “family, friends, mentors and the LGBT pioneers in travel and civil rights.”

“All the nights and weekends and time to write the book, to pull pieces of it together, was really our way of giving back to an industry that has taught us so much.”

“Handbook of LGBT Tourism and Hospitality: A Guide for Business Practice” can be purchased via [harringtonparkpress.com/lgbt-tourism-hospitality](http://harringtonparkpress.com/lgbt-tourism-hospitality).