

The Handbook of LGBT Tourism and Hospitality

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LGBT tourism has gone from a niche business to a major player in the over all tourism business in the last decade. Major mainstream travel brands including **Marriott, Alaska Airlines, Hilton, Preferred Hotels** and **Virgin Holidays** plus tourism boards are investing serious resources in ad campaigns and marketing plans to court the competitive LGBT market. However, many professionals in the tourism industry may lack information or know how in serving LGBT clientele effectively. Up until now there's only been one book on the subject, **Gay and Lesbian Tourism: The Essential Guide for Marketing** by **Jeff Guaracino**, which was written ten years ago.

Expanding and updating the idea of his last book Guaracino and his business partner **Ed Salvato**, both gay travel industry veterans with experience in marketing, journalism, and education, have written **The Handbook of LGBT Tourism and Hospitality**, the first major handbook about all aspects of the LGBT travel market. The Handbook of LGBT Tourism and Hospitality is divided into six sections:

- The Foundations of LGBT Tourism and Hospitality
- Business Essentials: Understanding the LGBT Market
- Business Opportunities
- Marketing Your Business
- The Global View: Opportunities and Challenges
- Trends and Industry Resources

Salvato and Guaracino traveled to six continents and spent countless hours interviewing close to 100 industry experts in researching the book.

Below is an interview with Salvato and Guaracino for anyone in the travel business who works with LGBT clients or looking to expand their LGBT client base.

What was the impetus to write The Handbook of LGBT Tourism & Hospitality?

We had several reasons for writing the Handbook of LGBT Tourism & Hospitality Marketing:

- There is no book of its kind out there. Jeff wrote [Gay and Lesbian Tourism: The Essential Guide for Marketing](#), but it is already almost 10 years old.
- We wanted to gather together best practices in the industry in one easy to read and informative volume so that other marketers who are starting out or who want to improve their efforts have a resource.
- We also created this for students studying hospitality and tourism at the undergraduate and graduate level to have an informative, smart guide for best practices.

What are some of the myths and stereotypes of LGBT travel do you dispel in the book?

- One myth is that all LGBT travelers are the same. LGBT travelers have as much diversity as their mainstream counterparts. Within the LGBT segment you have different genders, different ages, different behaviors, characteristics and motivations.
- Another myth is that lesbian travelers are not a significant market. They are very important and we discuss the key ways they differ from their gay male counterparts (and the ways they are similar to their mainstream counterparts).

- Another myth is that to attract LGBT travelers you can simply add a rainbow flag to your current marketing and carry on the same and attract their business. You need to invest time and money into the market.

What were the most surprising things you learned during your research that you didn't know before?

- We interviewed nearly 100 professionals working hard in this industry to attract LGBT customers, including nearly a dozen targeting lesbian travelers in particular. This segment is very important but most marketers ignore them to their peril.
- This important segment is very much important for the efforts of marketers. Similarly, it's important to remember that gay travelers include those who aren't just white! There are many LGBT travelers who are people of color and it's important to learn more about them. They are also largely ignored by marketers and they represent significant buying power and are very loyal.

Both of you are travel industry veterans. Why this book now and not before?

- The LGBT market is reaching an important point. It is maturing in **North America** and starting to flourish in **Europe**. There are signs that the Asian outbound LGBT markets are also starting to grow and become a significant market.
- The book attempts to provide the best practices of those who've been working on this segment for years to share with those in other global markets who are starting to see the benefits in their own markets.

What are some practical tips you have for travel agents when booking travel for LGBT clients?

- We provide many important and practical tips for all marketers including travel agents when booking travel for LGBT clients. Safety is key. Make sure your clients will be safe wherever you book them including both destinations and hotels. Remember that in over 70 countries around the world homosexuality is criminalized.
- Also you must know hotels ... you can't rely on their self declaration of 'gay friendliness' when deciding to send a client to the hotel. You have to know. We talk about sources for travel agents and others to know whether a hotel is truly welcoming to the LGBT community.

What are a few of the current trends in LGBT travel that are in the book? We cover many trends including 10 of the most significant ones. Here are a few from that list.

- The top travel destinations in the **United States** are stable. It is difficult for destinations to crack into the top-versus "most visited" destinations.
- More countries on more continents are reaching out to the LGBT traveler. LGBT travel is no longer just about North America. **Asia**, **South America**, **Central America**, and **Africa** are trying to attract LGBT travelers.
- Advertising creative is getting more creative. At one time, advertising was all about shirtless gay men, but many marketers are moving beyond beefcake. **Philadelphia**, **Las Vegas**, and even **Campbell's Soup** and **Oreo Cookies** are using humor to get travelers' attention through smart ads on TV and in other media.

What are some new destinations for LGBT travelers?

There are many destinations reaching out to the LGBT market that may be very surprising:

- **Taipei, Taiwan**, is one that may come as a surprise since the Chinese culture is thought to be traditional.
- The **State of Illinois** is another destination reaching out to the market. Statewide LGBT tourism efforts are very rare, and the governor is Republican which in the U.S. is considered conservative.
- Another is **Monaco** which is a small principality of 38,000, which recently began to market to LGBT travelers.

What are the most welcoming and least welcoming countries for LGBT travelers?

There are over 70 countries where homosexuality is criminalized and same-sex marriage is legal in over 20 countries. While this tells you about the legality of homosexuality around the world, it doesn't necessarily describe the welcome gay travelers will receive.

At **ManAboutWorld** gay travel magazine (at which I am editor in chief) one of our writers and his husband visited **Iran** and had a very welcoming time. Anecdotally the only times I have ever heard the word faggot yelled at me was in **Boston, Provincetown** and **San Francisco** – three places you may assume are the world's gay friendliest. So the reality is quite complicated.

Many destinations like **Egypt** and **Morocco** have hospitality for all built into their DNA. But if you look at deeply embedded efforts to welcome LGBT travelers where nearly every hotel and every attraction affirmatively reaches out to LGBT travelers, you have to cite: **Ft. Lauderdale; New York City; San Francisco; Great Britain; Spain; Argentina; Tel Aviv** to name a few. We cover many more in our book.

Can you tell us some top LBGT travel agencies?

Will there be updated versions or addendums of the book?

Yes, we are planning on updating the book in the future. The format and publishing dates are to-be-determined. For now you can purchase the book on Amazon at <https://www.amazon.com/Handbook-LGBT-Tourism-Hospitality-Business/dp/1939594189>.

Ed Salvato has worn many hats in the travel world including journalist, author, public speaker and content expert. He was editor in chief of **Out Traveler Magazine**, was corporate director of travel media for **PlanetOut Inc.**, overseeing travel content at **Gay.com, PlanetOut.com, OutTraveler.com, Advocate.com**, and **Advocate Magazine** and since 2012 he has served as chief content officer of **ManAboutWorld**, the world's number-one digital gay travel magazine for tablets and smartphones.

Jeff Guaracino was the vice president of communications for the **Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation (GPMTTC)** from 2001 until 2012, leading the team that created Philadelphia's groundbreaking campaign, **Philadelphia Get Your History Straight and Your Nightlife Gay**. The award-winning campaign set a new record for effectiveness and return on investment, making history with many LGBT marketing firsts, among them the debut of the world's first television commercial for a destination for the LGBT traveler. In 2016 Philadelphia's **Mayor Jim Kenney** named Guaracino president and CEO of **Welcome America, Inc.**, in Philadelphia.