

# MAN ABOUT WORLD



SAVVY. OPINIONATED. INSPIRED. GAY.



**A PLANNING GUIDE  
FOR SUCCESSFUL  
GROUP PRESS TRIPS**

# MAN ABOUT WORLD

## INTRODUCTION



At their best, press trips align the interests of travel promoters, travel journalists and travelers. In our decades of experience in travel editorial, we've experienced the very best of this synergy, as well as too many head-scratching missed opportunities.

The best press trips follow the simple guideline of being tailored to their audience. But in practice, creating press trips that do this isn't simple — particularly for an LGBT audience, which isn't nearly as homogenous as our umbrella acronym would imply.

We've taken the best practices we've observed over the years, combined them with advice from some of the best press trip organizers we've met along the way, and organized it into this Guide to Press Trips.

At nearly 8,000 words, it will be invaluable to first-time organizers, and we expect even industry veterans will glean a kernel of knowledge or inspiration to make their trips even better. While it's specifically written for the gay market, you can think of gay as a case study example: Nearly all of the advice is relevant for any niche such as single women or luxury baby boomers.

We love travel. And we're driven to help others share our passion for discovery. We hope this guide helps you share your passion with the LGBT media, and by extension, the broader LGBT and travel media communities.

— Billy Kolber, Ed Salvato and Kenny Porpora

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## 1.2 IS AN LGBT\* PRESS TRIP RIGHT FOR YOU?

Earned media from press trips is one of the most effective ways to promote your destination though it's not the only way. Clarifying what you hope to achieve and whom you're targeting is the first step in creating a successful press trip, and it will help you decide whether a press trip is the best option. (\*LGBT stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender.)

### ✓ QUESTIONS TO ASK

What are your goals for the press trip?  
Who are your target markets and segments?  
What is your budget for the trip?

### SAMPLE GOALS

Clearly knowing and communicating why you're hosting a press trip is essential for a successful trip. Before you decide on a press trip, ensure that it'll meet at least some if not all your goals. If not, consider another media tactic, like a press conference, media advisory or press release.

- Satisfy an internal need (your boss or board of directors asked you to do it)
- Increase awareness among LGBT travelers
- Broadcast the gay-friendliness of a destination (brand awareness)
- Entice travelers to your destination/travel product (sales/marketing)
- Drive coverage geared to a specific event or season (editorial)
- Generate content to repurpose internally

### TARGET MARKETS

There's no such thing as LGBT travelers. We're all either L, G, B, or T and our needs, desires and interests aren't always aligned. The more specific your targeting is, the more productive your media will be. There are many segments to consider including the following:

- Millennial gays and lesbians
- Gay, lesbian or mixed gay/lesbian groups
- Gay men over 50
- Lesbian couples
- LGBT couples with children
- Transgender
- General LGBT travelers, etc

### BEST PRACTICE

- *Know that we live in a quickly changing world and there is a difference in how different generations grew up "gay": Don't be surprised if a millennial journalist writing for a younger audience is interested in/asks to see more mainstream places, while someone older is more interested in the community and its history. In that same vein, transgender equality is the next frontier of gay rights. Expect writers to ask about gender-neutral bathrooms, hotel/nightlife policy on bathroom use of members of this community.*

## BUDGET

Press trips cost money. Partner businesses and organizations can help defray the direct costs to your organization, but obligations to additional partners may impact the usefulness of the experience and the quality of your coverage. Your press trip will be an investment, with a demonstrable ROI, which should not be diluted with too many commitments to partners who may not have the same goals.

- Avoid using partner venues that are not relevant to the market just to save money
- Travel journalists have very little budget for incidentals, so the more you can include the better. Let them know what is not covered.

### BEST PRACTICE

- *Look to community organizations and LGBT-owned businesses for sponsorship, partnerships and support, especially hotel, air and ground transportation partners as these are usually the largest expense of a press trip.*

## ABOUT ManAboutWorld

### **ManAboutWorld is the Global Gay Travel Magazine**

It's not in print or online — It's only on iPad and Android Tablets  
Digital-born for the HD-3D-4G-GPS-WIFI world we travel through

### **NEW for 2015:**

Sponsored content will be available on iPhone and Android phone platforms

### **Top Rated in iTunes**

#1 For Gay Travel

In the top 1% of all travel apps, often outranking Condé Nast Traveler and National Geographic  
Grown organically from 0 to 25,000 App users in just 2 years

### 1.3 CURATING OPTIMAL PRESS GROUPS

A recipe is only as good as its ingredients, and one of the most important components of a successful press trip is the participants. Your choice of whom to invite will have a bearing on the editorial output. The LGBT media market is remarkably diverse. Spend some time learning about the different media platforms — including new tablet-based media — and considering the most appropriate writers that fit the opportunity.

#### ✓ QUESTIONS TO ASK

- In what media would you like stories to appear?
- Who are the ideal writers for the opportunity?
- What is the optimal size of the group?
- Should you allow guests?
- Will a mixed group (gay/lesbian; gay/straight) be effective?
- What are the communications strategies involved?

#### TARGET MEDIA

Conduct research on the media landscape: Interesting, dynamic publications with good reputations and large followings should be given preference.

- Consider print and digital-native tablet magazines and newspapers; websites; blogs; e-newsletters; and guidebooks.
- Consider including social media influencers or, if budget permits, conduct a separate familiarization tour for them. Social media influencers often have very different styles and priorities from more traditional journalists and may require some form of direct payment.
- Know the demographics of the media outlets; tailor your press trip activities and venues to the demographics.
- Note that some media cannot accept paid press trips. You shouldn't be discouraged from inviting media that can't accept freebies; just be clear that media rates are available, and spell out what they are.

#### WHOM TO INVITE

For best results match the correct writer and outlet to the opportunity. It's a small gay media world; some writers and outlets have better reputations than others; and all cover travel differently.

- Ask respected peers in the industry for their recommendations but be sure to think outside the box. Avoid inviting the identical group of writers as your industry colleagues.
- Ask trusted editors and freelance writers for their confidential recommendations for one or two key additional media you might have overlooked.
- Just do not ask them to do your work. It's not their job to assemble your group. Pay a consultant to do that.
- Become a member of [NLGJA \(National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association\)](#) and attend the events/annual convention to cultivate relationships with journalists who are LGBT but who may work for mainstream media. They could cover you from a gay angle in their mainstream outlet; they may also do freelance writing for gay publications.
- Attend the [CMI \(Community Marketing and Insights\)](#) convention and the [IGLTA \(International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association\)](#) convention to meet LGBT media and to meet others who have gone before you with respect to organizing press trips. Pick their brains. They usually love sharing their experiences.
- Consider personality fit of participants: you may wish to avoid an overly dominant writer or one who has a bad reputation in the industry when he's in a group. If he's otherwise a good, productive writer, perhaps set up an individual press trip.
- Make sure that freelancers are legitimate and request a letter of assignment from a publisher if necessary.

#### BEST PRACTICE

- *Mix up long-, medium- and short-lead publications to ensure a nice steady drumbeat of coverage.*
- *Research the writers, and gather recent clips of similar pieces and/or request that potential participants provide recent examples of what kind of piece they plan on creating from their trip (based on previous press trips).*
- *Where possible and appropriate, consider inviting editors on your trip. They often have greater control over the size, focus and positioning of their coverage.*

## SIZE OF GROUP

This can vary from 2 or 3 to 20 to 50 depending on the goals of the trip but you will want a manageable number of people to ensuring good one-to-one quality time between media and sponsors and good inter-media interactions without becoming too unwieldy. Budget is also an important factor.

- Establish the number of media that your budget will support comfortably.
- Depending on the circumstances, 4 to 12 participants is usually a good number for a gay press trip allowing meaningful time for interactions among participants and between participants and sponsors.
- A larger number (20 to 50) may work when it coincides with a global event (World Pride) that is the main reason for the media visit. For such a big group you may wish to establish several anchor events and group meals during the press trip but otherwise provide a suggested itinerary, transportation and event passes.

### BEST PRACTICE

- *It's always important to plan time for media to meet local experts and influencers but especially true in a big group. At least one of your anchor events should allow time for media to meet, talk with and, if appropriate, formally interview knowledgeable locals.*

## WHEN TO ALLOW GUESTS

For most general press trips, guests can be a distraction drawing attention from the destination as well as possibly preventing group cohesion. But for gay press trips especially to destinations or venues that are not known to be gay welcoming, or destinations or venues that are marketed to romantic couples, it can be helpful to have a guest — otherwise a solo gay media rep is only 'theoretically' gay.

- The clerk welcoming a solo gay journalist to a hotel, for example, may not know he's gay so that it's difficult for the journalist to gauge the 'gay friendliness' of the hotel.
- An easy rule of thumb: If your marketing heavily features couples and families, it is beneficial for your LGBT earned media to reflect that same experiential appeal, meaning you may wish to allow the media to have his/her spouse and any kids if that's a major focus of the host destination/hotel.

### BEST PRACTICE

- *Typically guests share a double-occupancy room and pay some to all of their other expenses such as airfare, meals and admissions.*

## BLENDED GROUPS

When combining straight and gay journalists in the same press trip, organizers have to consider the different needs of the segments.

### Mixing Men and Women:

Blended lesbian/gay press trips are very common for destinations and less common for tour operators who host media, especially tours that are traditionally mono-sex (Out Adventures or Olivia).

### Mixing Gay/Straight Media:

For a blended trip where gay media is invited to join a mainstream press trip, allow time for the gay media to experience gay-specific venues and activities and meet gay-knowledgeable locals.

### BEST PRACTICE

- *If your gay media is scheduled to experience the local nightlife (and they should), don't plan mandatory early morning activities the next day. You may even wish to plan a fun 'recovery' morning experience at a spa (as one press trip organizer put it, "tox/detox/retox").*

## 1.4 TIMING YOUR TRIP

Timing your trip for events like Pride or seasonal destinations can be complicated. Shoulder and off-season trips often miss the excitement of a destination. Peak season and annual event-based trips pose publication scheduling challenges for long lead media, who may need to hold their coverage for 6 to 11 months.

- Because LGBT travelers generally can travel when their straight counterparts are back to school.
- Generally shoulder season is an easier time (there's availability, rates are lower) to plan a visit by media
- Blending short, medium and long-lead media can generate editorial as a steady drum beat for a long period after the trip.
- If you're compelled to hold the trip during an off season, check to see if there's a really fun event or celebration that you can tie a trip with and which would then allow you to partner with the host organization of that event. Example: the Miss'd America Pageant in Atlantic City.
- Avoid religious holidays, particularly the lunar calendar-based Jewish holidays, many of which take place in early fall.
- Timing a particular trip to when you want the coverage to land can also be key if you're promoting a specific event or season.

### BEST PRACTICE

- *Informally canvas gay staff members or gay friends about a particular date. The LGBT community has events and celebrations you probably have never heard of!*

## Reach the Fastest Growing Audience of Modern Gay Travelers

ManAboutWorld is read in 105 Countries

Top 10 Markets: USA, China, UK, Canada, Australia, Mexico, Brazil, Russia, France, Germany

ManAboutWorld Marketing is Innovative and Affordable

Full-year Marketing programs start at US\$1200 - just \$120/issue

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Learn More: <http://bit.ly/MAWpartner>

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M: +1.310.365.0348

Download our Media Kit: <http://bit.ly/MAWpress>

## 1.5 COMMUNICATIONS

Clear, consistent and timely information along the entire arc from the invitation to the post-trip wrap-up is one of the keys to a successful press trip. It helps avoid misunderstandings and makes the trip more productive for everyone. Query key stakeholders, and communicate as much of your resultant plans as possible to everyone involved in a clear and timely manner.

- Invitations should include the proposed dates, itinerary and highlights. Ideally sent at least a month in advance — longer for busy times (like June/Pride month) or the summer in general.

### BEST PRACTICE

- *JPGs and PDF invites are lovely but be sure to include the information as simple text so people can easily add it into their digital calendar.*

- In the same way you should tailor a story pitch to a journalists, personalize invitations based on your research to convey a greater sense of partnership. Example: “Hey Ed, I thought you’d find this trip to New Orleans interesting for ManAboutWorld’s “Next” or “Getaway” section.” Or, “the hotels on this trip would make fantastic subjects for your ‘CheckOut’ section.”
- Seems that you’ll always find a vegetarian or a vegan on a gay press trip. Inquire early about any dietary or religious considerations.

### BEST PRACTICE

- *Share a draft itinerary or list of options with your invited media and/or LGBT locals to elicit their feedback on the suitability of your choices:*
  - *Is there anything your guests would suggest be modified or reconsidered?*
  - *Could there be a gay-unfriendly proposed venue? For example, the Dorchester Hotel group has been boycotted due to the owner’s homophobic views.*
  - *Are there particular interests and things they’d like to see or do and can you try to factor that into the planning?*
  - *This could become a nightmare for a big group in which case you can simply provide two options for a given activity and gather feedback.*

- Itineraries should clearly differentiate what is included and what guests may need to pay for themselves, particularly gratuities and incidental expenses that are the responsibility of the writer. Sometimes hosts ask media to pay for alcoholic beverages.
- Itineraries should clearly delineate which activities are mandatory/expected and which are optional.
- Suggested dress code and any specialized clothing/gear/skin-protection requirements should be outlined.
- Make the itinerary available as a PDF and cloud-based document for easy access during trip.
- Review each day’s itinerary with the group the night before and/or again at breakfast. Do not expect that participants have read and processed your full itinerary.
- Include websites, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram links/handles.

## ManAboutWorld Global Correspondents

Our Global Correspondent team is a who’s who of gay travel. These 75 men and women around the world ensure that our content is fresh, original and sophisticated, filled with local insights and insider recommendations.

Meet The Team: <http://bit.ly/MAWglobal>

## 1.6 PLANNING THE PRESS TRIP

Creating a productive, content-rich trip that is well-matched to an LGBT audience is both art and science. And while many factors (budget, personalities, weather, partner and participant stipulations) may be beyond your control, balancing the many factors you can is the key to success. Treat your media like guests — not contractors. (Or else just purchase advertising which allows you to control the message and content, and skip the press trip!) You want their experience to be filled with the kind of surprise and delight that inspires them to not just report on but enthusiastically recommend your destination or experience to their readers.

### WORKING WITH PARTNERS

Don't go it alone. Look for partners and resources that add value and LGBT-specific interest to your program.

- Identify key leaders and venues in destination (hotels, restaurants, bars, entertainment venues, party planners, event planners) to partner with who would happily welcome LGBT travelers to their venues.
- Particularly if you are new to targeting the LGBT segment, consider hiring a consultant with expertise and relationships in this market.

#### BEST PRACTICE

- *Find the highest-ranking out LGBT business, marketing, sales, PR officer of a potential partner and request their cooperation.*
  - *LGBT allies often participate in useful ways, using their knowledge and position to help with accommodations, meals, venue/attraction passes.*
  - *Ask them for their recommendations of other potential partners which will allow you to tap into their 'gay net works.'*
  - *In this process you're building an ad hoc gay business group which will help ensure the success of your gay press trip and may help set the stage for further growth of the LGBT segment.*
- If you time the trip (see above) to coincide with a major gay event or party, work with the party planner/promoter who may agree to provide a complimentary or VIP welcome to your guests during their event.
- Focus on LGBT-specific activities, but not to the complete exclusion of key mainstream tourist attractions.
- Ensure mainstream partners know that this is an LGBT trip, and ask them to tailor their site visit, stay, meal, event, etc. accordingly. Of course this may not apply to cultural sites, tourist attractions but it can't hurt to ask. There may be a gay docent who can provide a tour that includes hidden (to mainstream) gay undertones.

#### BEST PRACTICE

- *Resist pressure from stakeholders to include venues or activities that are related to other niches and not the LGBT media's interest or audience, particularly if it takes time away from core activities like exploring the gay neighborhood and nightlife. Some particularly unproductive examples to avoid:*
  - *Overnighting at bland hotels far from the city core (counterproductive for all)*
  - *Family-friendly hotels (unless the target is LGBT with families)*
  - *Tours of hotel meeting facilities (a waste of everyone's time)*
  - *Golf courses (though these may be relevant for lesbian trips).*
  - *Birdwatching excursions (unless they're particularly relevant)*

### INVOLVE OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES

- Your staff may include LGBT members. Don't hesitate to ask their opinion of your draft itinerary.
- In many destinations, especially small- or medium-size ones, there are high-profile LGBT personalities (TV reporters, the mayor, author, activist, city councilor) whom you may query about participating as influential LGBT locals at a dinner or cocktail party to hobnob with your guests and highlight the gay friendliness of your destination, hotel, etc.
  - Guest speakers break up the monotony of being with the same PR rep for days on end. Invited media get tired of hearing from the same PR person their perspective on the destination. Inviting others also gives the PR person a break from talking/entertaining and changes the dynamic

## 1.7 STRUCTURING THE PRESS TRIP

It's not quite as complicated as a Mideast peace conference but a successful press trip involves many variables. One of the most difficult is balancing the various interests and activities of your guests which can range from a lesbian writer interested in romance and outdoors to a millennial gay writer interested in parties and nightlife. Your media is working, but they must enjoy your destination in order to convey the excitement that gets their audience to book.

### ✓ QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

How long should a trip be?

How do you balance interests and activities, including day-to-day activities?

How do you choose appropriate accommodations, dining and nightlife options?

How do you tell the story (stories) of the destination?

How important is it to include cultural and other attractions?

Is there a guiding principle or theme to help you make decisions relating to the press trip?

What other logistical considerations should be included?

### LENGTH OF TRIP

Generally speaking, the farther the invited guests have to travel, the longer you may wish to make the trip.

- For U.S.-based writers traveling to domestic destinations on non-stops, the typical length is three to four days.
- Longer trips may make sense for a more remote destination (Cape Town or Patagonia) but 10 days seems like an absolute maximum with very few freelancers and certainly no staff able to devote that much time to one trip.

#### BEST PRACTICE

- *Trips of any length should include a Saturday night stay for the group to experience gay nightlife life. If a Saturday night stay is difficult to host, Thursday, Friday and Sunday nights often have fun nightlife options.*

### BALANCING INTERESTS AND ACTIVITIES

Most LGBT participants are generalists. The challenge becomes: how to build in enough variety to please all.

- Remain mindful of the consumers' budgets. That six-star resort may impress your media, but would any of their audience ever book a room night there?
- Refer back to the demographics of the media outlets

#### BEST PRACTICE

- *If gay nightlife is included, the itinerary shouldn't demand participants be available for a 7am or 8am hotel site visit. As a rule of thumb, breakfast should be "on own" till 9am with a hard meeting time of 9:15am for the group to start their day.*

## BALANCING INTERESTS AND ACTIVITIES

- There should be ample free time built in to day-to-day itinerary for media to explore on their own (with options provided by hosts) and for the opportunity to blog and post during the trip.
  - If free time is provided, the press trip sponsor may wish to include a public transportation pass, bike share pass, or taxi vouchers (with explanation of how to use these, how to tip, etc.) to facilitate easy transportation by the media.
- Keep the gay in the gay press trip: LGBT events, LGBT venues, LGBT nightlife must be factored in since gays love meeting other gays.
- Gay history and politics are generally of interest, but incidental for travel-specific media, though it is important for travel media to have a sense of the gay culture in a destination.
- Include time for individual research and an offer to accommodate individual research requests. You may get unexpected questions...are there bathhouses? Where are they?

### BEST PRACTICE

- *Include knowledgeable, local LGBT hosts and experts and 'connector' types, including gay staff at hotels and other venues, local gay figures/leaders.*

## ACCOMMODATIONS, DINING AND NIGHTLIFE

**Accommodations:** It's best to showcase hotels that are unique to the destination rather than cookie-cutter big brand hotels that could be anywhere and if there is a really good gay-owned or gay-managed accommodations option, that should be included in the mix. That said, sometimes a mainstream brand is the right hotel. Marriott, Hyatt, Hilton and Loews hotels have all sponsored major gay events. Additionally:

- You can't show all the hotels to the media. Instead select the top three or so and explain how they fit into the big picture of the destination. The hotels should all have experience and interest in welcoming gay guests.

### BEST PRACTICE

- *Be transparent about hotel choice. Avoid including hotels that are inappropriate for coverage by the gay media, particularly hotels that are far from the center of town or the gay neighborhood/gay nightlife, and those that cater to giant tour buses, conferences and conventions.*
- Media can switch hotels during their stay, but shouldn't stay in a hotel less than two nights if possible to get a realistic sense of the hotel experience.
- A site visit should include the areas leisure guests care about (lobby, rooms, spa, fitness center) rather than meeting rooms or conference spaces.

**Dining:** Mix it up. Think in terms of helping your media create a fun, informative destination-restaurant article: including options for a splurge, romance, value eats, fun for brunch (which is the 'gay meal'), street food, venues that showcase the area's specialty, etc.

- New, interesting venues are usually of interest to gay media.
- Highlight any LGBT angle to the restaurant which will be of interest to your guests (queer chef; lesbian owner; sassy gay waiter).

### BEST PRACTICE

- *Invite local LGBT leaders, personalities and business people to join the group for meals.*

**Nightlife:** The press trip should include nightlife options for your LGBT participants, which could be separately or together. Perhaps start with a cocktail at an LGBT-friendly venue then create optional visits to gay, lesbian or trans\*-friendly venues afterwards.

## STORY TELLING

It's important to tell the story of the destination and underscore it through your choice of hotels, restaurants and activities.

- Some press trip organizers theme a trip: hotel junkie press trip or culinary press trip, which allows you to include journalists interested in the same concept which helps promote cohesion and mutual enjoyment. Organizing a trip around a theme is a way of telling your story.

### BEST PRACTICE

- *Hotel and event destination tours can be boring. Think of ways to make them interesting.*
  - *One press trip organizer organized a tour of the destination with the best places to take a selfie.*
  - *Another organized a hotel tour based on the most Instagrammable parts of the property that included the main attributes of the historic hotel, but in a very interesting way.*
- If you include a welcome gift (which is a lovely idea and can be provided upon check in; at turn down or at some other time), you may wish to consider the theme of the trip and the stories you're telling to find the right gift that reflects your goals.
- Part of the story you tell is through the words, pictures and videos you create for your destination (hotel, event or venue). Have LGBT-specific images, videos and editorial/press-release materials available as story starters or support for the media's upcoming stories.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This may seem obvious and easy but it's neither: To guide all decisions relating to the press trip, hosts, sponsors and participants must think about the ultimate consumer of this information, which is the reader, viewer, site visitor or radio listener of the invited media. First of all, they depend on the writer to recommend venues that are safe at least if not gay friendly. Second, consumers are more intelligent than you may think and can often tell that a venue may be included due to an advertising commitment even when not disclosed.

- Would that person be better off if the participant is shown a particular venue (an ill-suited hotel, for example).
- If the answer is no but if that hotel is a major sponsor, what do you do?

### BEST PRACTICE

- *Be upfront and honest and explain to the host this guiding principle. If the consumer of the information won't benefit, don't do it.*

## CULTURAL AND OTHER ATTRACTIONS

Depending on the available time, you may wish to provide an overview of some of the major cultural attractions in your destination, but try to do it with a gay twist, if possible.

- What aspects of your destination are you most proud of and what defines your destination at this time?
- Any good writer can discover and write about a destination's core cultural attributes, but to breathe life into the press trip and to the resulting editorial, find the queer angles of your destination. LGBT readers enjoy learning about the hidden queer narrative of a destination.
- This may help your media discover unknown and rich aspects of your destination that they can report on.

### BEST PRACTICE

- *Hire a knowledgeable expert to interpret the culture and history of the city through the lens of a queer person. Example: Engage an LGBT guide who can point out hidden queer angles to paintings in your fine art museum.*

## 1.8 LOGISTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Start from the assumption that hosts are responsible for the media from the time they arrive to the time they depart. Not every trip will be so fully inclusive, so it's important to manage expectations when they're not.

- Ideally, someone should greet the journalist and pick him/her up and convey them to hotel. This is especially important late at night or in far-flung destinations the writer doesn't know or if language may be a concern. If not, very detailed directions and a taxi voucher or transport pass should be included. Remember: This is the first impression of your destination the media will have.

### BEST PRACTICE

- *Being greeted by someone who can share excitement about the trip to come is the best way to start.*
- Ask if your airline partner can grant priority access, priority seating, first bag free luggage; if airline won't grant this, the host may consider adding those for the journalist.
- Logistical elements to include in press trip itinerary:
  - All contact information of hosts, partners, participants, including cell numbers, social media tags and confirmation numbers. For venues include address, phone number website, social media tags and confirmation numbers.
  - Key messages of host/destination should be included this will help focus the writers' attention.
  - Brief descriptions of each venue along with key messages (Writers often refer to the itinerary when composing their coverage.)
  - Names, contact info, interests and passion points where possible of trip sponsors so that participants have a sense of who they may wish to interview ahead of time and handy notes for their article writing after.
  - Link to any gay-specific art/imagery mainstream art/imagery including high-res images.

### BEST PRACTICE

*→A nice way of kicking off an itinerary is with an overview tour of the destination in a bus or if the weather is nice on motor scooters or in some other fun conveyance that reflects the destination (tuk tuks in Bangkok; limos in Las Vegas). This is an opportunity to hire a colorful queer local (gay historian; articulate drag queen) to amuse and inform the participants while 'gaying up' the trip.*

- *Free, functional WiFi for a minimum of two devices is essential for modern media — their mobile workspace and social media platforms demand it. Finding ways to provide it — a mobile cellular hotspot for a group on a bus — will pay off in both goodwill and real-time postings.*

- A gym or other fitness opportunities
- Include a welcome envelope at the first hotel with the press trip materials, maps, passes, taxi vouchers, thumb drive with any relevant editorial pieces to share. If there are different transit passes or vouchers for different days, label them appropriately.

### BEST PRACTICE

- *Anticipate your media not reading or retaining everything in your packet. An "executive summary" for each day, and/or a morning briefing is recommended. Focus on why as much as what.*
- Ask yourself: Does this itinerary meet the needs for most of the invited media and is there enough free time for on-the-ground exploration/research on their own?
- Once you have a solid draft itinerary, send it to participants and hosts/sponsors a couple of weeks before trip to elicit any feedback from participants. Once finalized, send it to the participants a few days before the trip, and include a hard copy in their welcome envelope and post a cloud-accessible version as well.

## 1.9 DURING THE TRIP

All trips are subject to countless factors that can ruin the best laid plans. Press trips are no different, and most travel media have experienced their share. Planning for the unexpected and building in flexibility where possible will help ensure success. Having host staff present and available to answer questions and handle problems can turn a snafu into a “happy accident.”

### DEPARTURE/MEETING TIMES

Setting a schedule, and the varying ability of everyone to adhere to it, is often problematic. Hosts understandably try to squeeze as much into a schedule as possible. Working media can't stop the flow of their business duties and deadlines, which sometimes take priority, and every group has at least one time laggard, whose tardiness can be the source of mild amusement or enormous frustration.

- Be clear about meeting times and contingencies — and the cultural expectations around them. Dinner at 8 means very different things in Switzerland vs. Argentina.
- Pad your schedule with enough free time and transition time.

#### BEST PRACTICE

→It's best to plan a 'breakfast on your own' till 9am, for example, then set a group departure time of 9:15am.

- Explain what is expected of anyone who misses a firm departure time, such as taking a taxi at their own expense to catch up.

### HANDLING UNFORESEEN SITUATIONS

It's impossible to plan for every contingency during a press trip. During even the best-organized trips there may be situations that require quick and smart thinking.

- Hosts may wish to limit their own alcoholic intake to be sure they're able to deal with any emergencies.
- Staffer should have credit card and 'walking around' cash to handle contingencies.
- It can't hurt for the staffer to reconfirm ahead of time with drivers, hosts, and other contacts you are meeting during the visit.
- Always have a plan B in mind. if a bus doesn't show up, get ready to hire a bunch of cabs.
- Things will go wrong (from transportation not showing up, dinner reservations not being ready, charges showing up on folios to a random stranger/tourists/local making a rude comment). It's how you react and recover that makes a difference.

#### BEST PRACTICE

- *Honesty is always the best policy. It's okay to acknowledge how things might have been or confront perceptions upfront ... address how things have changed or why the perception is wrong. How is the community rallying to make a change.*

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## SOCIAL MEDIA

Assign a staff person to follow social media coverage of invited media in real time to welcome (via social shout out which will help generate bursts of social activity); and to monitor and respond to postings from your media guests. This is especially important if the media complains in real time in social media about some aspect of the trip or a host venue. You'll want to identify and deal with any such issue in real time. Remember: Despite its being virtual, the internet is forever.

- You may wish to create a hashtag (Twitter, Instagram) for your trip. and share that with all participants and hosts.
- Think of ways to encourage participants to engage in social media before, during and after the entire trip.

### BEST PRACTICE

- *Have your social media manager start conversations with each participant in their preferred social site: Tweet out a "looking forward to your visit" message to each one using the trip hashtag. You're sure to see really good pick up in Twitter even before the first guest arrives.*
- Make sure they know the social tags for the relevant venue/event at the right time.
- Make sure they have easy access to free WiFi everywhere. (Get a local hotspot generator if necessary.)

## PERSONALITY CONFLICTS

Mark Twain said "there ain't no surer way to find out whether you like people or hate them than to travel with them." Most LGBT groups get along well, and some much better, but occasionally, there are problem guests.

- Address issues you might have with a particular journalist in private, and not in front of the whole group. You may find out that his griping or bad attitude may have nothing whatsoever to do with the trip.
- If your media start to form cliques or groups you may address this by simply assigning seating during meals so that a journalist sits next to a staffer or a local. This creates an atmosphere of learning and dialogue. You may also address this during the "inviting media" stage. Invite those who have good reputations as attentive media who ask good questions, remain present and focused during a press trip, have good personalities and produce content. Also try to vary the group so you're not inviting pre-formed cliques of friends.
- Personality conflicts don't emanate solely from the media. Some staffers are just not meant to lead press trips; they may be too junior or perhaps just not good with people. Assign staffers who are patient, possessing good personalities and able to think on their feet.

## DEVIATIONS FROM PROGRAM

Participants, particularly experienced journalists, may sometimes request a deviation from group activities. Every situation is different, and many can be justified or even beneficial for the coverage they need to create. Building in free time, providing some optional activities and setting clear expectations up front will take care of almost all situations.

- Media should be provided a clear process for communicating any schedule deviations or conflicts.

### BEST PRACTICE

- *Provide one primary contact for these issues, so they don't end up in the hands of a local or temporary guide/host who is not versed in the full program.*
- If a request is problematic, address it directly, discussing both the participant's reasons and the ramifications for your partners/sponsors, transportation, and group dynamics.

## 1.10 AFTER THE TRIP

You'll want to follow up on an individual basis with all of the participants to ensure they have all the information they need for their editorial and to answer any questions they may have. Schedule follow up later too depending on the expected coverage. Sometimes writers need (and appreciate) a reminder.

### FOLLOW UP TO CONSIDER

- Gather feedback from all participants (media, hosts, sponsors): What worked well and what could we have done differently? Some organizers send a short survey, which can be an email, Word document, SurveyMonkey, or some other mechanism. It should be short and easy to fill out.
- Send a thank you card (an actual paper-based card!) to all participants
- Analyze social media activity and share back with participants, partners and hosts via a social media reporting tool.
- Send a follow-up email to each participant with a social media summary from the trip and all contact information, including, if possible and relevant, links to photo/video assets.
- Gather clips from media and create a clip report to send around later. This may be a file you build over a year depending on the type of media you invited.
- Remember PR begins at home: Thank the local restaurants, hotels, etc. that helped you and share coverage and media feedback with them. They'll see the value of hosting and will be more likely to do it next time.



Delivering the next generation of gay travelers by delivering your stories directly to their iPads, iPhones and Android devices.

## 1.11 APPENDIX: PRESS TRIP PARTICIPANT GUIDELINES

The best press trips are fun and content rich and will result in a stream of terrific earned and social media for the host. However, beyond being expensive to execute, they represent hours of hard work by hosts, partners and media. Invited guests must keep this in mind and hold up their end of the arrangement: to be present, ask questions and absorb as much information as possible. Everyone has a stake in the outcome, most of all the consumers of the media. Our audiences depend on us for great tips and recommendations but primarily they want to be ensured that the destinations, accommodations, restaurants and other venues we cover are gay welcoming, safe and inviting. We've seen some regrettable behavior among press trip participants. We know no one's perfect but in our experience it's best for media to keep the following in mind. It should be noted that the following is a professional ask and any professional journalist will agree to this. If not, you may wish to move on to the next writer.

- Avoid the J-word. Never refer to press trips as junkets. This diminishes the hard work of the hosts and demeans the profession of the travel writer. A press trip is your job. Granted it can and should be fun but it's demanding for all parties involved.
- Assigning editors should not send the most junior person on the team as his or her perk.
  - This is a learning experience but that junior person should review this code of conduct and understand they are representing their readers and their brand and they're expected to produce well-researched and written content in a timely manner.
- This is not a vacation; this is a job.
  - Act and dress appropriately.
  - Bring and distribute business cards.
  - Collect business cards, menus, maps, receipts and other printed collateral.
    - ◆You think you can find everything online later but you can't always and the printed pieces may add context to your write up. Also, they may prompt you to remember a venue or a detail of the venue what will add color to your write up.
    - ◆You should also jot a note on each menu ("the braised hare is to die for") and business card ("this GM is gay and said he was thinking of hosting a monthly gay party; follow up").
- Be present and attentive. Ask questions. Be prompt and punctual to all organized events and meetings.
- Be assertive and upfront about making a change to the itinerary if it'll benefit your readers. It's best to communicate any proposed variances to the itinerary well ahead of the actual trip, for example when you first receive a copy of the itinerary.
  - This is especially true for LGBT participants on a mainstream press trip. You'll want to experience the gay nightlife, check out the LGBT center, meet gay locals.
  - Let the trip hosts know well in advance so they can plan accordingly.
  - If you check out a venue till the wee hours, you'll want to be realistic about the 7am site visit that's scheduled the next day. Offer to take the site visit on your free time.
- If, during the trip, you think you may be late for a meeting or visit, be upfront, honest and clear to the organizer about why, and explain how you will make up that visit and meet up with the group later on your own dime.
- Go easy on the alcohol.
  - Wine, beer and liquor can flow freely on these trips, allowing guests to relax, have fun and socialize more easily.
  - Do not overdo it! Drink a glass of water between each alcoholic beverage. You don't want to do anything that may embarrass you or the publication you represent (the PR world is small and people talk and there are such things as blacklists) and you want to avoid a hangover the next day which will detract from the all the experiences that have been planned.
  - Even if your hosts imply you can ordering anything on the menu, do you really want to be the one everyone remembers for ordering the \$100 bottle of cognac (true story)?
  - As much as you may appreciate the wining and dining, (who doesn't like it when the hotel sends a bottle of Veuve Cliquot to your suite?), your editorial is best formed by your readers' interests, not your own.

- Engage with partners and sponsors.
  - **Remember:** You can see your fellow journalists back home or talk with them via Viber or Facebook. You are here to learn about a destination, venue, event, restaurant, culture, etc. You are not there to gossip or talk about the other people on the trip or make fun of the sponsors (well, ok a little of that helps let off steam). But remember that your primary reason is to learn and absorb so later you can write a piece that nails a destination for your readers.
  - If there's a local expert, politician, destination or hotel representative present, at the minimum introduce yourself, provide your business card, and request their card. Ask them a few really good questions to elicit information you may need to supplement your story:
    - ◆ What is their experience with LGBT guests, visitors?
    - ◆ Does their company/organization have a (marketing, PR, social media) strategy for inviting LGBT guests, visitors?
    - ◆ Does their company/organization offer same-sex couples the same rights and privileges as their mainstream guests?
  - Also tell them about your publication and readers. Maybe they can provide you more context for your story.
  - Jot any notes about them or their comments on the card they provided you.
  - They'll remember you and appreciate the interest. Also, you never know, they may contact your publisher about possibly advertising in your publication.
- Be social.
  - We already believe that the media has an obligation to socialize with hosts and partners but we also think it's a great idea to post to social media in real time about the destination and venues you visit.
    - ◆ This helps generate activity in social media and builds anticipation for your editorial coverage.
    - ◆ It can also help you as form of digital crib note if you need to remember where you went at what times.
- Be grateful.
  - Thank your hosts when you meet them and especially when you're staying at their hotel or eating at their restaurant. Yes, it's their job to invite you and your job to visit them but still they extended an invitation to you personally. Let them know you appreciate their time, effort and outreach to you (and by proxy to the gay and lesbian community). And just thank them for a nice stay, meal or glass of wine!
  - After the trip, send a nice email follow up to each host (remember you grabbed business cards!).
  - Tag them in any posts you do after the trip.
  - This graciousness is even more important in instances where you may not be able to recommend a particular venue, business or sponsor to your audience. Other ways to acknowledge their generosity, such as a social shout out or referral to other appropriate media helps trip organizers maintain cooperation of local partners.
  - Deliver what you promised and send links/clips/PDFs.



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If there's a best practice or suggestion you'd like to contribute to a future edition of this guide, please e-mail us at [concierge@manaboutworld.com](mailto:concierge@manaboutworld.com).