

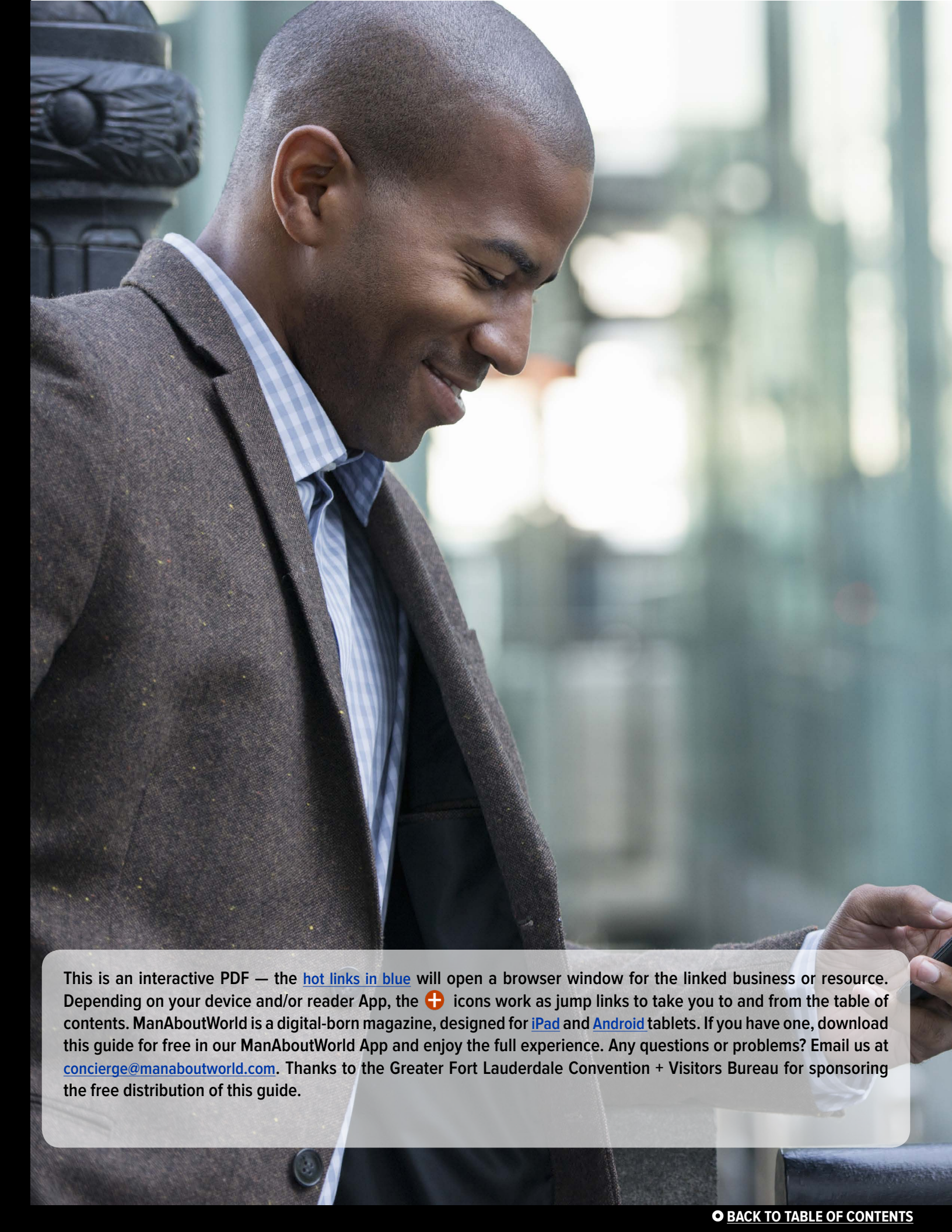
LGBT GUIDE TO BUSINESS TRAVEL


FROM THE EDITORS OF **MAN** ABOUT
WORLD



PRESENTED BY



A close-up, profile view of a man with short dark hair, smiling and looking down at a device he is holding in his hands. He is wearing a brown textured blazer over a light blue and white checkered shirt. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be an outdoor setting with greenery and a building.

This is an interactive PDF — the [hot links in blue](#) will open a browser window for the linked business or resource. Depending on your device and/or reader App, the  icons work as jump links to take you to and from the table of contents. ManAboutWorld is a digital-born magazine, designed for [iPad](#) and [Android](#) tablets. If you have one, download this guide for free in our ManAboutWorld App and enjoy the full experience. Any questions or problems? Email us at concierge@manaboutworld.com. Thanks to the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention + Visitors Bureau for sponsoring the free distribution of this guide.

Vacation travelers can choose their destinations. But business travelers don't have that luxury. We go where the job sends us. And when the job sends us to a country where sexual orientation or gender identity are criminalized or marginalized, it adds layers of complexity. Business travel can be challenging and stressful under the best of circumstances. This guide from the editors, contributors and Global Correspondents of ManAboutWorld Magazine addresses issues specific to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender travelers, while also providing some savvy advice to make all business travel less daunting and more rewarding.

We have gathered the most reliable and current online resources, and collected insights, anecdotes and recommendations to help you travel more safely, comfortably, confidently, productively and enjoyably. Our contributors are among the most important and influential voices in the business and travel worlds: leaders in LGBT rights, nationally-acclaimed journalists, CEOs and business leaders, celebrated travel pioneers and other influencers in the political, business, and travel worlds, who bring their decades of experience travelling around the globe to educate our readers as how to stay safe, stay connected, and engage with local cultures in a way that is politically and culturally sound. We have asked this list of accomplished world travelers to relay personal anecdotes, savvy guidance, and their knowledge and resources to help better guide you through the main issues that face LGBT business travelers today.

This guide would not have been possible without the sponsorship of Marriott International and IBM, and the support of the NGLCC. Their leadership in making a business case for the importance and value of diversity, equality and inclusion is helping advance the cause of human rights globally, and we're proud to be partnering with them in this project. We encourage you to learn more about their efforts in the last section of this guide.

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Everyone’s individual experiences will vary, and the situational threats at any destination can change very quickly. Where cited, you should refer to the primary sources for more information. By using this guide, the reader accepts these terms.

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Here you'll find organizations that are making a difference around the globe, and explore ways that your personal actions can make a positive impact.

ABOUT OUR SPONSORS

This guide was made possible by Marriott International and IBM, with assistance from the NGLCC. Learn about their history of diversity and inclusion initiatives.

MASTHEAD/ CREDITS



SAFETY & SECURITY



Homophobia has no borders. In these rapidly evolving times, it's important for LGBT people travelling the world on business to better understand the cultures they are stepping into, the potential harms they face, and the resources available to ensure their confidence and safety. The issue of safety always goes beyond LGBT rights to the much broader topic of human rights. You will enter these countries with a responsibility to be mindful of their citizens as well as the circumstances of their lives, and to respect the local culture.

Travelers to LGBT-unfriendly countries usually don't face the same discrimination, harassment and persecution that locals do. As someone with "tourist privilege," you may make things better or worse for the local LGBT community. There are 76+ countries where homosexual behaviors are against the law. But even legal issues aren't black and white. In some places, like Singapore, there are laws on the books that are no longer enforced, while in other countries, like Egypt, the law does not prohibit homosexuality, but public decency laws may be used to harass and persecute gay men.

ASK YOUR EMPLOYER

Are you protected by your company? That is an important question every LGBT person must ask themselves before travelling to a country where it is illegal to be gay. What rights and protections does your company offer? And how do you open that dialogue with your employer? When is it appropriate and when should you refrain? This category tackles these questions with expert opinions.

▶ How much are you protected?

"It's going to depend how much you're protected by your company. 'If you work for a global multinational, you should have that conversation before you go, but you absolutely have to deal with your employer before you leave the country. 'You asked me to go to Tehran, what safety precautions and resources are in place for me? Is there a contact or organization available for me if I feel unsafe?' I don't think it's asked enough. And it's not just something gay men should do. Women will experience the same issues in a lot of these countries. 'You're sending me to Cairo, and I want to do well by the company but where is the support network?' It pushes the envelope and forces the company to ask, 'What are we doing overseas?'" —**Charlie Rounds**, *Managing Director of OutThink Partners*

▶ Raise concerns, be respectful

"It depends what your company's perspective on gay rights are. I expect most large American companies have some policies in place. From the business traveler perspective, you're going there to do work. If you're concerned about safety, there are places in the Middle East, for example, where it's riskier for LGBT travelers, and I would raise that concern with my company. Above all, be respectful of the culture and learn about the country and the local community. —**Regan Taikitsadaporn**, *Chief Human Resources Officer, Asia Pacific, Marriott International*

▶ Do you have internal resources?

"One thing people should look at is the company they work for. Is it a multinational company with inclusive policies? And is there someone you should check with in the US office, a point person, that can explain what rights and protections are available to you. Having those conversations is important before you leave."

—**Justin Nelson**, *Co-Founder, National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce*

▶ Conservative vs. Progressive Employers

"If you work for a global petrochemical company and you don't have any protection for yourself, and you're going to Kazakhstan a conservative country, you may want to take the most conservative route — maybe you don't tell your employer, maybe you don't seek out LGBT life. If you're going to a more progressive country, and you work for a more liberal financial institution and you have non-discrimination protection, then yes, come out and ask and start that dialogue with your employer. Bigger corporations who genuinely care about LGBT employees, care about those issues." —**Julie Dorf**, *Senior Advisor, Council for Global Equality*

▶ Stand up for your Safety

"Raise the issue to your company. They're blissfully unaware. It takes LGBT employees standing up and saying something. Say: My safety and family are at risk. They need to know and you need to be protected."

—**Todd Sears**, *Founder of Out on the Street*

Acquainting yourself with local culture, speaking to locals, visiting some of the web resources we list below and reading recent news articles can prepare you to respectfully and safely navigate your way through countries and places where LGBT people face unique risks. If you learn how to engage with LGBT locals before your arrival, you'll better protect yourself and the locals you may engage with on your trip.

▶ Educate and respect

"The most important thing is to respect the local values. We have to educate people who are hosting us. We also have to educate the traveler to learn how to respect local values without losing their identity or compromising their values. I don't think I lose my identity by wearing a scarf over my head in Iran. As long as I'm a guest I have to respect that." —**Joan**, *An international travel marketing executive*

▶ Broader cultural caveats

"If you're going into strict Islamic countries, you need to be careful. It goes beyond gay issues. I was almost arrested for munching on a piece of bread in a mall during Ramadan in the Persian gulf. You can buy bread, but you can't eat it, and I wasn't aware. Understanding those sorts of cultural caveats can help immensely." —**Geoff "Chester" Woolley**, *CEO of Unitus Impact*

▶ Do your due diligence

"People need to be really cognizant that there are real safety issues, and they should be really smart about who and how we tell our story. Don't assume everybody is going to be as open. On the one hand, coming out to people is important because LGBT people are a part of business and trade. On the other side of the coin, you have to be aware of where you're travelling, do your due diligence, know the laws." —**Justin Nelson**, *Co-Founder, National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce*

▶ Don't become a target

"I always say do your due diligence. If it's not the local culture to have public display of affection, then be discreet while in the country. When you leave the hotel, it's even more important to behave discreetly so you don't become a target. If you go to a public spot such as an ordinary restaurant, you might want to be careful. You go to a city to enjoy the tourist attractions, you should respect the culture as well." —**Jack Suwanlert**, *Director of Risk Management, Marriott International*

▶ Consequences can be severe

"While it is easy, especially for white Westerners, to live and work in the Persian Gulf as long as a few simple rules are respected, those "simple" rules must be respected, or the price can be severe: No public displays of affection are countenanced, heterosexual or otherwise. Drinking and driving is completely forbidden. No amount is too small to cause trouble, and punishment is severe and without nuance. Any measurable alcohol on one's breath can easily result in an immediate month in jail - and it's no country club - along with a US\$10,000 fine and immediate deportation after the jail time has been served. Irrespective of fact, should one get into a traffic accident with a local; chances are the arriving police will cite the foreigner. —**Kile Ozier**, *Global Events Producer*

▶ Use the resources

"One of my favorite resources is the CIA World Factbook app. It really has great, concise facts including religions, and all the things you need to function in a country. There are a lot of great guidebooks that have great beginner traveler stuff. Understanding local culture is important. My daughter went to Vietnam this summer and we read advice for Vietnam that said "Don't touch anybody on the top of their head." That's the kind of specific detail you just wouldn't know unless you took the time to be informed." —**Julie Dorf**, *Senior Advisor, Council for Global Equality*

► **Assess Who You Are Speaking To:**

“In India I mentioned my same-sex partner. It’s not 100% conservative. It was legal at the time. The people I was speaking to were comfortable. When I travel for work in the Persian Gulf, I wouldn’t make it clear to them. They don’t want to make it clear because it’s not allowed and because it’s quite dangerous. I admit that I wouldn’t correct an incorrect assumption. They see I have kids and assume I have a husband. Having kids is important in these cultures and they always ask the question whether to men or women and for some reason it seems more important to ask of women. It also depends on the person you’re talking to. You have to make an assessment about how people would react to it.” —**Joan**, *an international travel marketing executive*



NEXT:
RESOURCES FOR LGBT TRAVELERS



RESOURCES FOR LGBT TRAVELERS



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There are a wide-range of resources available to LGBT travellers to educate them on safety and to acclimate them with local cultures. Local LGBT organizations, State Department data, CIA Factbook, multiple apps and even a gay dating app, using these resources can help you better understand the political climate and cultural nuances of a country before you leave home.

[Ilga.org](https://ilga.org)

A worldwide federation that campaigns and supports LGBT rights, providing annual reports to help LGBT people better understand the legal and cultural landscapes of countries around the world.

[US State Department](https://www.state.gov)

The State Department website has fact sheets for all countries, even highlighting the many countries where being gay is criminalized, and a special travel section for practical information.

[HumanRights.gov](https://www.humanrights.gov)

Website with up-to-date information about global human rights, LGBT, and transgender issues, with reports to help travelers. Prepared by the U.S. Department of State.

[CIA World Factbook](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook)

The Factbook maintains country profiles with extensive data on all aspects of foreign nations.

[Geert Hofstede Center for Cultural Insights](https://www.geert.hofstede.com)

The Geert Hofstede Center publishes background information for most countries, using a 6-dimensional model to help understand the cultural context. While not LGBT-specific, it's very useful for understanding the cultural norms that surround understanding of LGBT issues, and interactions between locals and visitors.

[Alturi.org](https://www.alturi.org)

On the Alturi website, you can learn about the current challenges faced by the international LGBTI community, search by country or issue, learn about the organizations doing work in that country or on that issue, and then support that work by donating, signing petitions, volunteering, or signing up for news.

[SCRUFF](https://www.scruff.com)

The "Venture" tab of this social dating app encourages locals to answer travel questions for visitors as ambassadors for their cities, and allows users to post upcoming trips, so that they can connect in advance with locals and other travelers. Scruff alerts and push notifications provide information from ILGA.org, when the App is opened in places where homosexuality is still criminalized, so travelers can be aware of LGBT laws in those countries.

[IGLTA.org](https://www.iglta.org)

The International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association is the oldest LGBT professional association representing travel and hospitality providers on six continents. Their weekly email newsletter is a good resource for news of interest for LGBT travelers.

[HSBC Expat Explorer](https://www.hsbc.com/regions/asia-pacific/india/india-2017)

These country guides are written for relocating employees, and contain no LGBT-specific information, but they offer a very good overview of the culture and cultural challenges faced by foreign visitors.

[Luxe City Guide](https://www.luxecityguide.com)

These sassy and snappy city guides provide chic recommendations and overviews to educate you on local cultural customs.

[Kiss, Bow, Or Shake Hands: The Bestselling Guide to Doing Business in More Than 60 Countries](https://www.kissboworshakehands.com)

A fantastic book focusing on the practices, customs and philosophies of doing business in foreign countries, with tips of protocols and a trove of helpful tips and resources.

► Search for local LGBT groups

“One of the best annual compilations of human rights reports, country by country, are the State Department’s reports, at HumanRights.gov. You can search by sexual identity, and look at the most recent reports that our embassy prepared. The other place I’d look is ILGA.org, which has searchable maps and translations. The Internet is pretty easy to search these days – you can find LGBT groups and activists. They might be too busy to respond but you can get a general sense of how open a society is.” —*Julie Dorf, Senior Advisor, Council for Global Equality*

► Scruff Alerts

“We’ve built a resource that shines a light on more than 90 countries where it is dangerous to be gay to help teach people what the laws are.” The app has alerts with the most salient laws and their details, including excerpts from actual legal code based on research done annually by ILGA. “What we have done is taken this excellent research and we’ve deconstructed it and built a comprehensive website and we’ve created these simple, condensed alerts.” Silverberg said their information is in the public domain and anyone can take the work that they’ve done to build their own public advisory service.

—**Eric Silverberg**, CEO, SCRUFF

► Sources in the LGBT World

“I always go to the U.S. State department. I find out the geopolitical climate. When I went to Malaysia, I had never been there, didn’t know what to expect. Then, I’ll call our in-country contacts. If your employer has offices in the country you’re visiting, use those resources. There are also great resources in the LGBT world: IGLTA website has up-to-the minute feed. In the early days, Out & About was one for me. To understand the cultural nuances, it can be as simple as Google sometimes. Just type: “What’s the appropriate greeting in Malaysia” into Google, and you’ll get an answer. I went to Africa in 1993 and I had to use Lonely Planet. You were definitely flying more blind back then. There’s just so much out there nowadays with the Internet.” —**Brian King**, Global Brand Officer, Marriott International

► Google is your friend

“I follow the Washington Blade, and they always have an article about what’s going on in other countries. Google is your best friend. The Human Rights Campaign has a lot of information, and the U.N. has a good website too. I usually tell friends and family to try and find a specific website.” —**Jack Suwanlert**, Director of Risk Management, Marriott International

► Register with the State Department

I always read the State Department reports, and you should register with the State Department, too, and in these volatile times, that is very important. This way, they know to look for you. It puts the State Department in a position to demand your release or return should anything happen. —**Michael S.**, Investment Banker, based in Dubai

NEXT:

LGBT BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

LGBT BUSINESS ETIQUETTE



Bringing your authentic self to work isn't always easy. Even in countries with non-discrimination laws and companies with policies prohibiting discrimination, many LGBT employees hide their sexual orientation and gender identity. In countries and cultures where protections and acceptance are not the norm, personal authenticity is even harder.

Every circumstance is different, and only you can decide what feels right at any given time, in any given situation. But you're not alone in struggling with these issues. Whether you're choosing to reveal yourself to business colleagues, or trying to avoid conversations and situations that would do so, the experiences and anecdotes of those who have navigated this path before you may be helpful and instructive.

COMING OUT IN A BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Coming out in a business environment can be powerful, but when is it the right time? You have to be able to gauge the climate, really understand who you're coming out to, whether it's best for you to do so, and if the reward is worth the risk. If a business colleague asks about your "wife," do you correct them? What about in cultures where it's illegal to be gay, or within companies with a homophobic atmosphere? It is important to respect local cultures, especially when doing business. So when is it time to come out, and how do you do so in a professional and respectful way?

▶ A Personal and Powerful Thing to Do

"Coming out in a business context is a very personal thing. I believe in the power of coming out – when the foreigner is in a privileged and safe environment, it's worth doing. Only that individual employee would know if negative ramifications could come of their career. People should use their best judgment. If the risk seems low, you can't underestimate how powerful it can be that competent professionals are openly gay and comfortably so. That changes hearts and minds. When people can they should be encouraged to." —**Julie Dorf**, *Council for Global Equality*

▶ Trust First

"I would only come out on a very personal basis. I would just say no. You never know who you could offend. If I'm working with somebody shoulder-to-shoulder, and there is trust, then I could." —**Kile Ozier**, *Global Events Producer*

▶ Be Mindful of the Social Context

"When you're talking about it from a business standpoint, it would be a function of the rapport you build with your colleagues, and the degree to which you think they would be understanding of your sexuality without necessarily putting them in an untenable situation with their manager. It's one thing to come out as a force of social change, to say "I'm here, I'm queer!" But in a business context, you're not "here," you're just travelling through. It's harder to make a social and political point when your purpose is just business. While I do think it's critical to increase visibility globally but I would be mindful of the social context." —**Eric Silverberg**, *CEO of Scruff*

▶ Avoiding the Question

I don't proactively bring it up in more conservative situations. In India, for example, I wouldn't walk around talking about my sexual orientation until I've developed a good relationship with the people I'm working with. Once I know the people I'm working with well, I introduce them to my partner. It's not something I would bring up, however. If someone assumed something about me, I wouldn't lie, but I would find a way to get around the question. I've been in business meetings and people assume I'm married with kids. In that situation, I corrected her without coming out. I will say something like 'Oh, no, I don't have a wife.' —**Regan Taikitsadaporn**, *Chief Human Resources Officer, Asia Pacific, Marriott International*

▶ Ambiguity may be best

"I suggest you only reveal the truth after you know someone for a while because this middle-class notion of "I have to tell the truth" is nonsense. The risk you take is disproportionate to the reward you receive. If I were traveling to the Caribbean, where it's extremely conservative and highly intolerant, you don't come out until you have established some rapport. Better to say, "I wish I had a wife," or some other ambiguous statement." —**Michael S.**, *Investment Banker, based in Dubai*

► Trust Your Gut

“You can’t place enough emphasis on your gut instinct in these cases. I want us to be as authentic as possible, but we can’t be naive and the world in a lot of places has not evolved, or has not evolved as quickly.” —**Bruce Rohr**, *Senior Director Global Brand Management for TownePlace Suites, Marriott International*

► Educate the Locals by Being Yourself

“I am a firm proponent of taking a moment to educate people. As LGBT businessmen and women, we’re like everybody else. But people need to be really cognizant that there are real safety issues, and they should be really smart about who and how we tell our story. Don’t assume everybody is going to be as open. On the one hand, coming out to people is important because LGBT people are a part of business and trade. On the other side of the coin, you have to be aware of where you’re travelling, do your due diligence, know the laws.” —**Justin Nelson**, *Co-Founder, National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce*

► Respect The Local Culture

“If they ask me directly I answer them. It’s not the culture of most of those countries to ask a lot of questions. By culture, they’re taught not to. Even when certain friends of mine are comfortable with me and my sexuality, they have a little bit of a hesitancy. I feel comfortable to come out only once people have led you down that path. Let it be their choice to go that direction. Countries all have human rights issues, not just for gay people: religious people, women, minorities of all kinds, and I’ve always taken a look at the overall perspective of how free a country is. A lot of what I’ve always done is find the overall culture of the people, and instead of impose the culture I come from, I try to respect theirs. In an ideal world, it’s great to be and open, but the reality is, you can’t be doing business in these countries without accepting the terms they lay down for you. You don’t lay over and play dead, but you if you go against the norm, you basically have an uphill battle.” —**Geoff “Chester” Woolley**, *CEO of Unitus Impact*

► Country vs. Company

It is absolutely critical to understand the country you’re working in. Take off the LGBT hat and put on the good global professional. I really hope people who are working abroad are taking the time to learn the cultures. Even if you get the broad strokes. I used to go to the Persian Gulf and the people there knew I was gay. I would talk about my partner Jim the exact same way I would my wife. However the Gulf is a horrible place to be gay. But there is a difference between the country as a whole and the microcosm of your company within. —**Dionysios Bouzos**, *Pharmaceuticals Executive*

► Safety First

“I don’t think there’s a good rule of thumb. Safety first. Even as someone who does this for a living, who strongly believes coming out is a big deal and of massive importance, if it’s going to put you at risk, it’s not worth doing. There are a lot of cultures where it’s not illegal to be gay. In much of Asia, for example, the locals don’t always care if you’re gay, but they don’t want it rubbed in their face. For many Asians, it’s about family; it’s a fraternalistic culture. If you stay within the confines that are acceptable to that culture, you’ll be fine.” —**Todd Sears**, *Founder of Out on the Street*

► Being True to Yourself

“Coming out in a work environment is an individual decision. If somebody assumed I’m straight, I will correct them in a way that is not defensive. I’ll say, “My partner’s name is Chris, thank you so much for asking.” As a business professional, you have to make that decision for yourself. For some people, the business mission is more important, and they don’t want to derail that by getting too personal. For me, I’ll always be true to myself. In regards to when it’s appropriate, my rule is: only if I’m asked. If the person asking the question wants to know, I’ll answer. You need to consider how comfortable the relationship is, how long you’ve known the people.” —**Brian King**, *Global Brand Officer, Marriott International*

► Is Your Work Environment Gay-Friendly?

The work environment at my former employer was different, not as sensitive. I didn't come out when I first got there. I got close to a woman very quickly and during our travels we would always go out, and the environment is a lot of beer drinking, and they'd ask straight jock questions like, "Who would you want to sleep with?" I'd laugh it off because I didn't want to make an issue out of it. It's a case by case basis. I never felt like I was in harm or being judged. For me, it's about "Am I being harassed or threatened?" —**Robert Suarez**, *Director of Product Management, TUMI*

► Don't Force it

"Every time I have a business meeting, people look at my wedding ring and assume I have a wife. Or they look at my new born baby, and assume I have a wife. I try to say "partner" and leave it at that. Some places do not get it. In some countries, I try not to force it." —**Jack Suwanlert**, *Director of Risk Management, Marriott International*



NEXT:
STAYING CONNECTED



STAYING CONNECTED



Staying connected to home has both its technical and emotional challenges. We live in a technologically advanced world, where it's easier than ever to stay connected through video chat or through affordable international plans for texting and calls. You may already know them, but we'll discuss a range of services Skype and Whatsapp, international SIM cards, and apps that remove many of the barriers to communication with your loved ones back home. Be sure to check with your wireless carrier about pricing before you leave the US. If you don't have an international calling or data plan, you can easily rack up hundreds of dollars of charges, especially from data-heavy applications running in the background.

And those problems that can't be fixed with an app? Having the ability to stay connected 24/7 can exacerbate or create problems with miscommunications and expectations. Gay business travellers struggle with time zones and work loads, along with deeper, more complex emotional issues such as jealousy and loneliness. We'll delve into those personal issues with suggestions and examples from our experts and experienced travelers.

THE TECHNOLOGY

International roaming on your wireless device can get very expensive, very quickly. Check with your carrier for options before leaving, and check out these essential services that savvy travelers rely on. Many travelers to countries like China are surprised to find out they can't access services like Facebook that are blocked in the country. A Virtual Private Network service is the easy and affordable fix. These products and services have been recommended by our contributors, but their inclusion here is not an endorsement by ManAboutWorld or the sponsors of this guide. We list them as examples and for guidance, and recommend you review their terms of service before use.

SKYPE

The original "Voice Over IP" service, Skype is still one of the best ways to reliably and inexpensively connect with your contacts all over the world. Skype is notable for its video calling features, and for requiring only an email address, not a phone number to register.

WHATSAPP

WhatsApp Messenger is a cross-platform mobile messaging app, allowing you to send and receive text/SMS messages without accessing your SMS plan, making it an easy way to message with international friends. WhatsApp Messenger is available for iPhone, BlackBerry, Android, and Windows Phone, allowing all those phones to message each other. WhatsApp uses your existing phone number as your ID, and your existing internet data plan/WiFi connection to avoid international SMS charges. WhatsApp is free for the first year, and 99¢ after that.

VIBER

Like WhatsApp, Viber offers wifi-based messaging and calling between Viber users. Like Skype, Viber offers a desktop client, although it still requires a phone number to register. Viber-to-Viber service is free, but Viber also offers low-rate calling to phone numbers of non-Viber users.

T-MOBILE

For US-based travelers, T-Mobile offers the most advantageous global data roaming, included free with most plans. The data is only 2G, but that's enough to update your email in the background, run Google Maps or Uber, or check in on Scruff or Facebook. 3G and 4G upgrades are available for a fee.

LOCAL SIM CARDS

Replacing your existing SIM card with a local card is often the least expensive way to access cellular services abroad. It can be a hassle to set up — a big one in some countries, and especially if you don't speak the language.

[The Prepaid Data Sim Card Wiki](#) sorts out the options around the globe.

GLOBAL SIM CARDS

A few companies offer global SIM cards, with calling plans that cover most of the world. They tend to be pricey, but much simpler than local SIM cards, especially if you're frequently traveling to multiple countries.

[BOINGO](#)

With more than 1,000,000 hotspots, Boingo offers WiFi access designed for global travelers, and some American Express cardmembers get this service for free.

[VIRTUAL PRIVATE NETWORKS \(VPN\)](#)

Some countries, like the United Arab Emirates, block access to many LGBT sites. Others, like China, block access to Facebook and Twitter. If you're traveling to a country where internet access is controlled, a VPN allows you to circumvent restrictions, and add an additional layer of anonymity to your internet access. We've used [ExpressVPN](#) successfully, and [PC Magazine](#) has a great comparison of various services and an explanation of how they work, including how people use them to access services like Netflix and HBOgo away from home. Using a VPN is as simple as loading the App on your phone, computer and/or tablet, and launching it before accessing the web.

[TRIPIT](#)

Simply forward your airline and hotel confirmations to Tripit (or connect it to your gmail, Yahoo or Outlook account), and Tripit consolidates all your plans into a single itinerary that can be easily or automatically shared with your family or friends, so they'll always know what flights you're on and what hotel you're at.

[THE EMOTIONAL ASPECTS](#)

Some relationships benefit from regular and frequent contact while traveling, but sometimes less communication is better. Figure out what works for you and your partner/spouse/family.

▶ [Plan a regular check-in](#)

"I primarily use Facebook messenger and Skype. In a lot of other parts of the world, I'll use Whatsapp to stay connected to my friends when I'm abroad. I definitely stay in touch every couple days with my family, and I'll also text and email. It depends on what kind of internet access I have. If I'm in a place with greater risk, I would have a plan with my family and to check in because there would be more reason to be worried." —**Julie Dorf**, *Senior Advisor, Council for Global Equality*

▶ [Beware the over share](#)

"My husband likes to check in every day. But rehashing my day just feels like more work. And telling him about my night when it includes something that might make him jealous is really awkward. So we exchange text messages just once or twice a day when I travel. I'll share something that made me think of him, or wish him a great day, or let him know the big meeting went well, or tell him how much I'm looking forward to our reunion." —**Rodrigo Espinosa**, *Global Sales Manager*

▶ [Announce your arrival](#)

"One thing I do is text when I depart and land, to let him know I've made it there safe. We try to email, every third or fourth day." —**Brian King**, *Global Brand Officer, Marriott International*

▶ [Connect often](#)

"I try to connect as often as I can. If I'm in a country where there's been recent attacks against LGBT people, I check in more to let him know I'm safe. You just have to be mindful." —**Jack Suwanlert**, *Director of Risk Management, Marriott International*

▶ [Save some conversation for your return](#)

The longest [my partner and I] have been apart is one week. I'm not really into Facetime; I prefer to talk on the phone. I will use Google hangouts and Facebook messenger. I want to let her know I'm OK, but I don't want to give her every detail. We were originally very co-dependent, and we just recently started talking about what each person prefers. It's OK to say, "If we talk everyday, we won't have anything to talk about when I get home." But I think in a more dangerous place, I'd probably check in more. —**Talisha Padgett-Matthews**, *Senior Manager, Digital Marketing, Marriott International*



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SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT



Business travel can be isolating and lonely, for anyone, and especially for LGBT travelers who may be uncomfortable in work-related dinners, happy hours and other social activities with customers and colleagues. At the same time, LGBT travelers have an advantage when it comes to meeting locals and making new friends. Using the Apps, and recommendations below will help you do just that. Reaching out to local LGBT organizations is another strategy.

Safety should always be a top-of-mind concern — not just for yourself, but for the locals who may be outed by your interactions. “Traveler privilege” may allow you greater freedom of expression, but it can be accompanied by worrisome or risky repercussions for the locals you engage with. Use these best practices and recommendations to help guide you appropriately.

If you face the challenge of excusing yourself from work-related social obligations, you’ll benefit from some clever strategies that our experienced travelers use to free up their precious after-work hours without raising suspicions or seeming anti-social.

SAFETY FIRST

Every expert we spoke to emphasized the need for caution, and an imperative to consider safety first.

► Err on the side of caution

“In countries that are not democratic and are kind of known to be more hostile, you can pretty much guarantee it’s not going to be a safe place for gay people. With that said, you should always consider the locals, ask if they are out, and use common courtesy and seek permission to take photos and tag. You should absolutely use caution with how visible you are with local LGBT people. You might not suffer the consequences, but the punishments for the locals could be much more severe. A visitor needs to take their cues from the locals, and err on the side of caution. There are a lot of places where foreigners are followed, the government keeps an eye on who you’re with and may visit the people you’ve hung out with after you’ve left the country. That can definitely get people in trouble.”

—**Julie Dorf**, *Senior Advisor, Council for Global Equality*

► You may be under surveillance

I use a VPN: a virtual private network. It enables you to use the Internet and email without the country monitoring you., In the Persian Gulf, for example, they control the press and it is far more restrictive than China. China is the East Village compared to the Gulf. You need a VPN to protect your privacy. Would it be dangerous if you didn’t do that? Yes, I would say so. My better half is very fond of SCRUFF, and it depends on how you use it, but we have met a lot of very nice people through that. It is not necessarily dangerous to use grindr and Scruff but use a VPN.

—**Michael S.**, *Investment Banker, based in Dubai*

CONSIDER THE LOCALS

There is privilege extended to business travelers, who are mostly insulated from the discrimination that affects locals in places where sexual orientation and gender identity are criminalized. Many of these nations depend on tourism dollars to help sustain their country, so while they may not accept LGBT people comfortably, they also are unlikely to offend or accost foreign tourists travelling on business. This is especially true for travelers from North America and Western Europe, who are generally treated with the additional privilege that is afforded to more affluent visitors. The local LGBT community will experience a much harsher level of reprimand. When travelling to countries where homosexuality is illegal, you need to look outside yourself and consider the locals.

► Tourist dollars buy privilege

“I think it’s more dangerous for the locals than for the tourists. If a culture is anti-gay, there is a margin of acceptance with tourists because it’s bringing in a little money. The locals don’t have that same acceptance.” —**Todd Sears**, *Founder of Out on the Street*

▶ Locals can suffer consequences

“The first thing I would say is, you need to think about the safety of the people you are with, who are native, as much as your own. You can be outing locals who are with you, and putting them in even greater jeopardy. And it’s more likely, they’ll be the ones to suffer the consequences. If you’re a visitor in a country where homosexuality is criminalized, you might be asked to leave the country, but their punishment may be much more severe. Consider that perspective first.” — **Eric Silverberg**, CEO of *Scruff*

APPS & SOCIAL NETWORKS

From Facebook to Scruff, travelers have many more ways to connect with locals. Reaching out to friends for introductions to their friends before you leave on your trip is the best way to make new friends and get the most current and local take on the social environment for your visit.

▶ Use Apps, But Be Careful:

“The apps like Grindr make it much easier to meet locals, whereas it can be difficult in bars. I find the apps work quite well. Once again be respectful to the culture. I prefer to have coffee rather than meet them at the hotel – meet at a public place first. And remember apps differ in the different countries - certain countries prefer certain apps. Some countries, an app will be very popular, and then you can cross a boundary and another will be more widely used. For example, GayRomeo is really popular in India, though not so much elsewhere, so understanding which apps to use in which countries is helpful.” — **Geoff “Chester” Woolley**, CEO of *Unitus Impact*

▶ Leverage your network

“The only thing I would say is, leverage your network. Use Facebook, ask for introductions. That’s how I’ve met most of the folks I know. Connecting with LGBT resource groups is something to consider. I jokingly say Grindr, but I was in Singapore for my first meeting, and the apps are global and everywhere. I would definitely be afraid of entrapment, though, so use caution.” — **Todd Sears**, Founder of *Out on the Street*

▶ The friend of a friend is your friend

When it comes to LGBT’s looking to meet local LGBT’s I would give those people the same advice I’d give a non-business person. If you’re in Moscow and you meet some really cute guy, that’s fine, but don’t hold his hand in public. I would never ask my host or business counterparts for gay places. I would never ask for a gay bar. Part of that is because it puts them in an awkward situation. Utilize the wonders of the web, instead. The best thing would be to find friends who have friends. And given the global nature of our world, I’d like to think it wouldn’t take a lot. That’s the absolute best way, connecting on Facebook, etc. — **Dionysios Buozos**, *Pharmaceuticals Executive*

▶ Avoid secluded meetups

“I say meet in person. Meet in public first, meet in places where it’s not too sketchy. Do not go to secluded places.” — **Jack Suwanlert**, Director of Risk Management, *Marriott International*

LOOK UP LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

Local LGBT organizations can often provide an introduction to the local community, and a better understanding of the issues they face. A small donation made locally can have great impact and is always appreciated.

▶ The Power of LGBT Organizations:

“People are going to talk about Grindr and Scruff, but I would highly recommend people look up the local LGBT organizations. Just call them up and say, “Hey, could I come over, I’m here on business.” And then you leave them \$25. I talked to a guy in Marrakech and he said we’d love for people to reach out to us. Meet the local communities, get real, authentic information, and leave some money when you can.” — **Charlie Rounds**, Managing Director of *OutThink Partners*

TALK TO LOCALS & OTHER VISITORS

We're all human. And the chance to interact with locals can often be the most memorable part of any trip, business or pleasure. Nobody knows the city better than the people on the ground and if you can unplug and meet people face to face, you'll meet real locals and begin conversations. How to do this? Here's some advice

▶ Culture starts with food

I often ask my local colleagues to take me out. Eating is huge in Asia, so it's not uncommon to schedule meetings and social activities around meals. Ask them to take you to a local meal; not where the tourists go, but where they would eat with family or friends. And then you can ask a lot about the culture, society, religion, politics, etc. in a more relaxed atmosphere. I don't use any LGBT apps. Each country generally has a social app that is popular among the locals. Utopia Asia is a good resource to learn about LGBT friendly places in the different countries in Asia. The one thing we have to be careful of as travelers, is to be mindful about who you meet. Your safety comes first. It's not just LGBT who has to be careful, but all travelers. —**Regan Taikitsadaporn**, Chief Human Resources Officer, Asia Pacific, Marriott International

▶ Beyond the Concierge

I'm going to look up gay neighborhoods, gay restaurants, and a nice brunch. In the Dominican Republic, I definitely sat at the bar and tried to talk to people beyond the concierge. Somebody local. A security guard or bartender. Somebody who knows the city and knows what's cool. —**Talisha Padgett-Matthews**, Senior Manager, E-commerce, Marriott International

▶ Easy Ice Breaker

"Offering to take a photo for strangers who are struggling to take a selfie is an easy ice-breaker, and almost always appreciated." —**Billy Kolber**, Founder, ManAboutWorld

▶ It helps to go with a friend

"Find local guides in the country and talk to locals before you get there using online forums or apps like Scruff, and once you arrive. That's going to be the most accurate and the most rewarding way to learn about a culture. We live in interesting times. What is acceptable is changing rapidly in this country and globally. The advice you got a few years ago may not be accurate anymore. Refresh your knowledge. If you're going in cold and just arriving at the gay bar, you're really not going to understand the culture. Go with a friend who knows the culture and can teach you. Some of these communities really operate underground, in house parties and private parties, and it helps to have somebody who grew up around it." —**Eric Silverberg**, CEO of Scruff

EXCUSING YOURSELF

If work-related social activities cause stress, finding a polite way to excuse yourself can be invaluable.

▶ The Little White Lie

"When I want to get out of dinner with colleagues, I use a little white lie, saying that I'm having dinner with an old college friend who lives in the destination. People of all cultures seem to respect that without feeling insulted as they might if I said I needed to work" —**Leslie H.**, VP Sales Europe/Middle East for a large pharma corporation

NEXT:

UPGRADING YOUR TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

UPGRADING YOUR TRAVEL EXPERIENCE



Few words in travel are imbued with such mystical reverence as “upgrade.” Some travel geeks have made careers (literally) from their upgrade prowess. For decades, these pros have found all kinds of ways to game the system, and they share their secrets on blogs and in newsletters. If it seems like upgrades don’t flow as freely as they used to, they don’t: Consolidation in the airline industry and the increasing use of big data to better target high-value customers have made it harder for upgrade pros... and harder still for upgrade amateurs.

But don’t give up. There are still lots of ways to upgrade your travel experience. Let us show you how. From the holy grail of free Business and First Class upgrades, to clever products that will enhance your comfort, we’ll help you put some comfort and joy back into the travel part of business travel.

AIRLINE UPGRADES

As the free first class upgrade becomes more elusive, the surest route is still to be a top-level elite flyer with one particular airline. If you fly a lot, it definitely makes sense to concentrate your travels on a single carrier, to reap these rewards. Many of these tiers are now based on cost-adjusted mileage — you earn based on your spend, more than the miles flown. These “elite qualifying miles” (EQM) determine your level, and while the entry level starts at 25,000 EQM, you’ll need 50,000-125,000 EQM to really reap upgrade benefits.

One reason upgrades have become scarce is that the airlines would rather sell the business class seat at a reduced price than give away the upgrade. The newsletter [First Class Flyer](#) tracks these discounted fares and provides strategies for booking them. At a minimum, be sure to check business and first class fares when you book. You may be missing an affordable premium class bargain if you limit your search to coach fares.

Remember, gate agents have the greatest latitude and ultimate authority in deciding who sits where on the plane. And while they don’t just give out upgrades on a whim, it never hurts to ask, especially if you’ve been inconvenienced by a flight cancellation or other irregularity. Charm sometimes still works. Belligerence never does.

► It’s good to have frequent flying friends

“Top-level elites earn annual upgrade awards that expire the same time every year. (usually between January and March). Many of these flyers save those awards for a perfect redemption, but end up giving them away just before they expire. Ask around.” —**Billy Kolber**, *Founder, ManAboutWorld*

UPGRADED HOTEL ROOMS

Like the airlines, all of the major hotel companies have frequent guest programs that reward loyalty with room upgrades, free stays and other benefits, like late check out, or executive lounge access. Using [Marriott Rewards](#) as an example, you earn points based on your dollars spent, and elite status based on the number of nights you’ve spent. Once you’ve stayed 10 qualifying nights, you earn [Silver Elite](#) status, which gets you priority late checkout, weekend discounts and a 20% bonus on points for stays. At 50 qualifying nights, you earn [Gold Elite](#) status, which gives you lounge access and breakfast for 2, enhanced internet access, complimentary room upgrades, and a 25% bonus on points for stays. At 75 nights, you earn [Platinum Elite](#) status, which gives you 48-Hour guaranteed availability, a platinum arrival gift, and a 50% bonus on points for stays. Choosing a large program like Marriott Rewards, which lets you earn points and status at more than 4,000 hotels across 16 brands makes it much easier to achieve elite status, but elite or not, there are other ways to upgrade your hotel stay.

BOOK DIRECT

When you book through a 3rd-party website or online travel agent, you may miss out on benefits offered exclusively through the hotel website or brand website, like special amenities or the ability to earn rewards points at the hotel. Booking direct on the hotel or brand website also makes it easier for the hotel to get to know you before you arrive, allowing you to set your personal preferences directly with the hotel and personalize your stay based on your preferences.

CONNECT BEFORE ARRIVAL

Whether you use social media or call the front desk, let the hotel know you're coming. Check LinkedIn to see if you might be connected to someone in the front office. If you reach out on social media, make sure to tag the specific property and the brand. Ask about the room types, and let them know your preferences, whether that's a larger room, a better view, or an early check-in. If a hotel is under renovation, let them know you're eager to stay in a new room.

CHECK IN TO THE POSSIBILITIES

Ask about your room options when you check-in. Again, if you have a preference or priority — near the elevator or close to the pool — say so. Don't hesitate to ask the front desk about variations among the rooms available, and if you don't like the room you've been assigned, head back to the desk and ask again. Just like the airline gate agents, charm helps. If something's not right with your room, give the hotel a chance to fix it.

AIRPORT LOUNGE ACCESS

Gaining access to an airport lounge can make your time spent in the airport much more pleasant. Typically, lounge access is restricted to top-level frequent flyers on international tickets, airline club members, and travelers in international premium class tickets. But there are programs you can buy your way into, and many lounges now allow you to purchase day passes, a decent option if you have a particularly long layover.

PRIORITY PASS

Priority Pass contracts with hundreds of airport lounges around the world, giving their members access through three different plan tiers, including an unlimited tier.

THE CENTURION LOUNGES

These unusually stylish and comfortable lounges are available to most American Express Platinum Card members for free, or to other American Express cardholders for a \$50/day fee. With local food, a premium bar and friendly staff, they are our favorite lounges. Locations currently include LGA, DFW, SFO, SEA, LAS and MIA. We can't wait for more.

INFLIGHT COMFORT

If you're flying in economy class, and can't score an upgrade, there are still ways to increase your comfort. One of the obvious ones is purchasing a premium seat with extra space. Usually, these are available for a small fee (\$20-150, depending on flight length and demand) that's well worth it for many travelers. But there are other ways we've discovered in our years of travel. These products and services have been recommended by our contributors, but their inclusion here is not an endorsement by ManAboutWorld or the sponsors of this guide. We list them as examples and for guidance, and recommend you review their terms of service before use.

Seat Guru

Not all seats are created equal. Seat Guru helps you avoid the seat that doesn't recline, or is missing a window, or is too close to the bathroom.

The Empty Adjacent Seat

There's no way to guarantee this, but there are ways to increase the likelihood that the seat next to you stays open. In a row of 3, try to book an aisle where the window is already taken (or vice-versa). Middle seats fill up last, as do those towards the back of the plane. Ask the gate agent if the flight isn't full, can they help you choose a seat where the adjacent seat will stay open (they might even block that seat if you ask nicely.) You can also use some airline Apps to check the seat map and change your seat right up to boarding.

[A Good Travel Pillow](#)

Many airlines don't provide pillows in economy, and if they do, they're rarely great. There are many different types of travel pillow. We've curated this collection of our favorites.

[Inflatable Seat Cushion](#)

While your airplane seat cushion may be used as a floatation device, it's not always comfortable to sit on for hours and hours. It's amazing how an inflatable seat cushion can improve your comfort, especially on long flights.

[Eye Shades](#)

If you need total darkness to sleep, these blackout eye shades will do the trick.

[Ear Plugs](#)

Not all ear plugs are created equal. We like these. Better than the cheap foam ones that the airlines give out.

[A Good Water Bottle](#)

Staying hydrated in flight is essential to your wellbeing. And while you can't take bottled water through security, you can bring an empty bottle and fill it before getting on the plane. That way you're not stuck waiting for drink service. We like this Under Armour bottle for its one-handed operation and locking cap.

[Homeopathic Jet Lag Remedies](#)

Hard to say if these really work, but we think they help.



NEXT:
SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS



SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS



For small business owners, business travel can be particularly grueling. Without all of the resources and benefits that are typically available to corporate travelers, small business owners are road warriors without the battle armour. There's no way to replicate all the travel benefits and discounts that employees of large corporations receive. But you can approximate some of them. Various programs and association benefits are available to small businesses. Some are free, but even those that have a membership fee attached can be worth their cost many times over when used appropriately.

AIRLINE PROGRAMS

Most US Carriers have corporate programs for small business. They are parallel to individual frequent flyer accounts[, and award your company benefits based on your combined employee spend with the carrier. In the United States, each of the large legacy carriers has a program:

- [Delta Air Lines SkyBonus](#)
- [American Airlines Business Extra](#)
- [United Airlines Perks Plus](#)

MEMBERSHIP PROGRAMS

While these programs have a fee to join, the benefits often pay for the cost many times over.

[AAA](#)

The American Automobile Association discount on rental cars is often the best rate available on rental cars for those who don't have access to large corporate accounts. They also offer a 10% discount on most Amtrak fares.

[FOUNDERS CARD](#)

Founders Card is a global membership community for entrepreneurs, offering networking opportunities and premier benefits with many business suppliers. They have a heavy focus on travel benefits, including elite tier upgrade opportunities for frequent flyer programs, and special hotel discounts, including a partnership with The Ritz-Carlton, which is booked direct so you preserve your Marriott Rewards or The Ritz-Carlton Rewards benefits.

[AMERICAN EXPRESS PLATINUM CARD](#)

The Platinum Card was the original frequent traveler charge card, and its portfolio of benefits remains unrivaled. With three different airport lounge systems to access (their own Centurion Lounges, Delta Sky Clubs and the Priority Pass network), a \$200 annual airline fee credit, credit for your Global Entry fee, a free Boingo membership, and access to the Platinum Card Concierge and Premium Global Assist Hotline, the Platinum Card offers unique and valuable benefits designed for frequent travelers.

NEXT:
**ADVANCING THE CAUSE OF
HUMAN RIGHTS GLOBALLY**

ADVANCING THE CAUSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS GLOBALLY



At ManAboutWorld, we believe that travel—the authentic, personal experience of different peoples, places, and cultures—is transformative. That being gay allows us to cut through many of the formalities and barriers that separate most other travelers from the people and places they visit. And in so doing, we experience a profoundly intimate global connection that few others will. We believe that our freedom to travel comes with a responsibility to advance the cause of freedom for LGBT people all over the world. But knowing how to do this isn't easy. We've identified some organizations and advice to give you a start.

ORGANIZATIONS

There are many organizations working for human rights and equality globally. Here are two that we believe make a difference.

[OutRight Action International](#)

Known for the first 25 years of its existence as the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, OutRight is a leading international human rights organization dedicated to improving the lives of people who experience discrimination or abuse on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression. They are dedicated to strengthening the capacity of the LGBTI human rights movement worldwide to effectively conduct documentation of LGBTI human rights violations and by engaging in human rights advocacy with partners around the globe. They work with the United Nations, regional human rights monitoring bodies and civil society partners. OutRight holds consultative status at the United Nations as a recognized Non-Governmental Organization representing the concerns and human rights of lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender people worldwide.

[ALTURI](#)

Launched in 2015, Alturi enables individuals at all levels to take a stand against the violence and oppression facing the international LGBTI community and provide direct help for LGBTI advocates around the world. On the Alturi website, you can learn about the current challenges faced by the international LGBTI community, search by country or issue, learn about the organizations doing work in that country or on that issue, and then support that work by donating, signing petitions, volunteering, or signing up for news.

PERSONAL ACTIONS

As LGBT travelers, we have a unique opportunity to be ambassadors for our community when we travel. Our personal actions can help change hearts and minds and advance the cause of human rights. Knowing how to do this, without putting ourselves or others at risk, isn't simple or formulaic. So we've gathered some best practices and advice from those who have done it successfully.

► [Pushing the envelope](#)

"Forty years ago, who expected to see gay marriage reach mainstream acceptance in their lifetime? It happened because millions of people took the scary and sometimes dangerous step of coming out. Most Americans now have a friend who is gay. Before you travel, do some research about your destination's laws, and the cultural attitudes toward gay people. If we're still second-class citizens in some respects, give some thought about how you can be visible as a gay person, within the context of that culture. It's a balancing act. Many people pushing the envelope will help. Trying to shatter the envelope single-handedly is likely to just leave things worse for those who live there, after you go home."—**Sasha Alyson**, *Volunteer Adviser*, [Big Brother Mouse](#)

► [Small donations](#)

"A few dollars donated to an LGBT NGO at your destination can mean the world to them, making an impact far greater than those same dollars could in North America or Europe. Do your homework, but there are some very good ones out there. Here's my favorite: [Lakshya Trust](#)."—**Tom Roth**, *President and Founder*, [Community Marketing and Insights](#)

► Respect and conversation

“Learn a culture before you visit, and respect it. When visiting a developing nation, or a nation that is developing LGBT rights, you have the power to be an ambassador for LGBT rights and the global LGBT movement. This might sound dramatic, but simple respect and conversation can have such a tremendous impact. We demand tolerance and respect from others and in turn we should treat them with the same respect. By doing so, a line of communication is opened which can prove to be educational and rewarding for both parties. Open the eyes of just one mother or father and they can pass down their tolerance and understanding to their children who will one day contribute to that society. A movement begins with just one single person.”

—**Robert Sharp**, [Owner, Out-Adventures](#)

► Be a living example

“Get educated first and fast. Know the conditions and circumstances in other nations and jurisdictions, and educate yourself and others. When traveling, especially, and when safe to do so, remind your hosts and travel suppliers that you are gay and that you value their respect and welcome — make sure they know that they always are surrounded by other gay people, and to think of them with the same respect and equal welcome. Be a living example.”

—**Bob Witeck**, *President*, [Witeck Communications](#)

► Share in a matter-of-fact way

Let’s say you’re a junior employee, you’re out at work in the US and you’re sent on a three day trip to Moscow. The question becomes, “How out should you be there?” The reality is, even if the headquarters is wonderfully gay accepting, many of the international offices are not. I think there you need to establish a rapport with the people. I don’t like the idea of a gay person having to hide himself. I go back to the company culture and where you’re working. You work for Google or Levis any of the many companies with very open accepting cultures for LGBT, I would be more aligned with the strategy of ‘be yourself.’ Share with other people in the same way they share with you, in a very matter-of-fact way. —**Dionysios Bouzos**, *Pharmaceutical Executive*



NEXT:
ABOUT OUR SPONSORS



ABOUT OUT SPONSORS

This guide would not have been possible without the sponsorship and thought leadership of Marriott International, IBM and the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce. Learn more about why we're so proud to partner with them, and how all three have been passionate advocates for equality, diversity and inclusion.

ABOUT OUR SPONSOR:

Marriott International

“If you take care of your people, your people will take care of your customers, and your business will take care of itself.” – **J.W. Marriott, Jr.**

Although today’s Marriott is one of the world’s largest publicly traded hospitality companies, its [core values](#) — putting people first, being of service — have made it a leader in diversity and inclusion.

At ManAboutWorld, we have seen this in action. We’ve seen it in the extraordinary recognition Marriott has received from the [HRC](#), [PFLAG](#) and [NGLCC](#). We’ve seen it in the way the company has used its [voice and reputation](#) to support marriage and immigration equality for same-sex couples. We’ve seen it in their [marketing campaigns](#). And we’ve experienced it ourselves at Marriott hotels around the world. From conversations with CEO Arne Sorenson, to countless welcomes at the front desk, Marriott’s embrace of diversity has truly impressed us.

If Marriott’s leadership in diversity is news to you, the diversity of their hotels may really surprise you. Marriott grew tremendously in an era when the predictable, familiar comforts of home were the priority for business hotels. But today, the company’s portfolio includes some of the most dynamic and exciting hotel brands in the world. From the luxury of the Ritz-Carlton to the eccentricity of the Autograph Collection, the glamour of EDITION Hotels to the bold style of Moxy Hotels, Marriott continues to innovate in surprising ways. The Marriott Mobile App not only lets you check-in to your room and sends you an alert when your room is ready, it also lets you order things like towels, valet parking, and chat in real time directly with hosts on property. Even Courtyard by Marriott is modernizing, with a new look and “The Mix” — a next-generation social hour.

With more than 4,200 hotels in 19 brands, it’s easy to rack up Marriott Rewards points wherever you have to travel, and redeem them wherever you want to travel. Every dollar spent at participating properties earns you twice the redemption value of a dollar spent at a Starwood Hotel, and nearly triple the value of a dollar spent at a Hilton, according to the folks at [Wanderbat](#), who did the math. And the benefits start with your very first stay – including free WiFi just for signing up.

Ultimately, hospitality is about people. The warmth, engagement and professionalism we’ve experienced at Marriott hotels can only come from employees who feel safe, respected and empowered. Which brings us back to Mr. Marriott’s credo. Diversity and inclusion is an integral part of how Marriott cares for its guests, employees and the communities in which it operates. This LGBT Guide to Business Travel is a natural extension of Marriott hospitality. We’re grateful for their sponsorship and leadership, and honored to partner with them in helping LGBT business travelers feel safe, respected and empowered, so they can also perform at their best.

– **Billy, Ed + Kenny**

NEXT:
ABOUT OUR SPONSOR: IBM

ABOUT OUT SPONSOR: *IBM*

IBM has been a leader in diversity and inclusion for more than 100 years. Understanding the value of a diverse workforce, IBM has championed opportunities for all - including women, African Americans, blind, people with disabilities and the LGBT community. In 1953, IBM's then president Thomas J. Watson wrote the first U.S. corporate mandate on equal employment opportunity, stating simply that IBM would hire solely based on ability, regardless of race, color or creed. And the company's list of early diversity achievements, so often ahead of society and law, is impressive:

1899: Hires its first black employee

1914: Hires its first disabled employee

1935: Hires 25 professional women

1940s: Launches a major initiative to hire and train people with disabilities

1953: First equal opportunity mandate

1956: Opens the first fully integrated plant in the South in Lexington, KY 5 years before the city desegregates.

1984: Becomes one of the first companies to add sexual-orientation to its non-discrimination policy,

1995: Established eight Executive Diversity Task Forces

1996: Grants domestic partner benefits

2002: Gender identity and expression added to IBM's global EO policy

It's a heritage of diversity and inclusion with few equals, but what impresses us even more are the ways that IBM addresses diversity as a business strategy, creating a work environment that appreciates and leverages differences. In doing so, they better service their clients, encouraging and empowering those clients to unlock the power of diverse people and thought in their own enterprises. They have developed programs and initiatives that invite members of diverse communities to come together to share experiences in mentoring and networking, and in doing so, they have achieved not just diversity of the workforce, but also diversity of thought. By embracing and capturing diverse backgrounds, culture and workplace experiences, IBM fosters creativity, and stimulates decision making and innovation, enabling clients to better deliver customized services for target markets.

IBM generously shares its learning, experience and best practices with the world. They have sponsored and participated in numerous forums and conferences addressing LGBT issues in the workplace, and sponsored a series of LGBT Resource Guides for employers in Hong Kong, India, and China, looking at cultural, historical and practical issues to help enterprises understand the value of diversity and accelerate their own embrace and practice of it.

IBM might not be an obvious sponsor for a travel guide, but their products and services help power the information networks that keep the travel industry moving daily. IBM's deep experience in building collaborative environments, diverse workplaces and integrative global solutions was instrumental in the conception of this guide. Their enthusiasm for this guide validated the need for this discussion among corporate travelers and their managers. And their support helped make its distribution possible.

We are grateful for their partnership in this endeavor, the work they do on behalf of LGBT business communities around the world, and their steadfast commitment to advancing diversity initiatives ahead of the broader cultural and political advances yet to come in our world.

– Billy, Ed + Kenny



NEXT:
ABOUT OUR SPONSOR: *NGLCC*



ABOUT OUT SPONSOR: *NGLCC*

The [National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce](#) (NGLCC), the business voice of the LGBT community, is the only national advocacy organization dedicated to expanding the economic opportunities and advancements for the LGBT business community. NGLCC is the exclusive third-party certifying body for LGBT Business Enterprises (LGBTBEs).

ManAboutWorld is proud to partner with NGLCC in ensuring LGBT business travelers are safe and successful while on the go. As business leaders, we can all shape policy, fund innovation, and mentor the next generation of success stories that show world that the LGBT business community is, and will always be, a vital and dynamic part of this global economy.

The estimated 1.4 million LGBT business owners NGLCC represents generate tax revenue, create jobs, and innovate business solutions nationwide. Economic visibility, just like social visibility, is essential in building a diverse and inclusive society that welcomes LGBT business owners to an equal seat at the table.

Most recently, NGLCC helped craft and implement policy that gives LGBT suppliers equal footing when competing for state contracts in Massachusetts and prepared California LGBTBEs for expanded procurement opportunities with the implementation of AB 1678. NGLCC is continually expanding partnerships and agreements with federal agencies, including the LGBT Biz Builder with the U.S. Small Business Administration, and added the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to the list of federal agencies with whom NGLCC is working to make more federal contracting opportunities available to LGBT businesses. These agreements are part of NGLCC's larger policy priority of ensuring inclusion of certified LGBTBEs across the entire federal government.

NGLCC's 140+ Corporate Partners have spent tens of millions with NGLCC certified businesses, strengthening small business and at the same time strengthening the LGBT community. With the support of corporate partners and local affiliate chambers, NGLCC forged agreements to add LGBT suppliers to the diverse pool of vendors competing for contracts at Super Bowl 50 in San Francisco and the Democratic National Convention Philadelphia. Through a continued private-public partnership with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Wells Fargo, and MillerCoors, NGLCC Global has made connections with LGBT entrepreneurs and activists across the globe and continues to build an international network of LGBT suppliers.

NGLCC was a major force in rounding up over 400 corporate signatures for the Business Amicus Brief in the landmark Obergefell v. Hodges Supreme Court Case that brought marriage equality to all 50 states and gave added piece of mind to LGBT business owners and the future of their companies.

We're grateful for their support in helping make this guide available to business leaders, business travelers, and Certified LGBT Business Enterprises throughout the NGLCC network.

— Billy, Ed + Kenny

LGBT Business Owner?

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nglcc



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Learn more about LGBT Business Certification

at www.nglcc.org

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THANKS FOR READING MANABOUTWORLD

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