

TRAVEL+ LEISURE

Gay Travel: 22 Companies We're Proud Of

From airlines to hotels to car services, these travel brands show their support for the LGBT community.

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Passersby at the JW Marriott in Washington, D.C., can't help notice an 83-foot-tall banner featuring NBA player Jason Collins under the hashtag #LoveTravels. "Every time I travel, whether for my personal life or with the NBA, I want to feel welcome," says the Brooklyn Nets center, who came out as gay in 2013.

Marriott International's latest outreach campaign features several prominent LGBT advocates. And it's among a growing number of U.S.-based travel companies to voice support for the gay rights movement—benefiting not only travelers, but also those working behind the front desk.

"The travel industry has been an early pioneer of LGBT inclusion," says Deena Fidas, director of the Human Rights Campaign's Workplace Equality Program. It releases an annual index for corporate policies relating to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender employees.

This year's Corporate Equality Index featured multiple travel brands with perfect scores of 100. Kimpton, for example, requires each of its hotels to be approved by Travel Alternatives Group (TAG) and member properties of the International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA). One of the benefits is staff sensitivity training to ensure all guests feel at ease.

"These companies know that their audiences want to see reflections of themselves before booking or buying a ticket," says Fidas. "They want to feel welcomed by the company."

Transportation companies are increasingly LGBT friendly as well. American, Delta, and Southwest all spoke out against the anti-gay legislation pending in Arizona earlier this year, protesting that their customers and employees deserved better. And Zipcar is donating \$1 per hour driven in a special fleet of "Pride Zipcars" to local LGBT charities in honor of Pride month.

John Clifford, a *Travel + Leisure* A-List agent from International Travel Management, believes that socially conscious travelers should think about where their tourism money goes. He encourages "boycotts," in which vacationers actively "support those who support you." The LGBT community spends \$200 billion while traveling annually, so their choices make a powerful statement.

By recognizing and advocating for employee diversity, and by welcoming LGBT guests with open arms, these companies are responsible for making travel in America more inclusive.



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Preferred Pride Collection

The **Preferred Pride** collection from Preferred Hotels includes more than 100 luxury properties around the world—from Grandhotel Pupp in the Czech Republic to the Fleming Hotel in Hong Kong—that have proven their commitment to LGBT equality. IGLTA members or TAG-approved, these hotels go the extra mile to ensure that guests of any orientation feel at ease. That means details such as personalized "Mr. and Mr." welcome notes for a gay couple or two pairs of women's slippers and bathrobes for a lesbian couple.

