

# A GUIDE FOR LGBT TRAVELERS IN THE AMERICAS



Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) travelers face some challenges and restrictions in the Americas.

Attitudes and laws toward LGBT acceptance and rights span a wide spectrum throughout the region. However, state-sponsored persecution is generally less prevalent and less acute when compared with countries throughout other regions such as Africa and the Middle East.

Anti-LGBT laws persist in parts of the Caribbean, where same-sex acts remain illegal in 11 countries. Country-dependent penalties consist of prison sentences from two years to potential life terms, though in practice such laws are rarely enforced. In contrast, a number of countries in the Americas have taken significant political and legal steps to protect rights for LGBT individuals.

At its worst, anti-LGBT sentiment in certain countries has contributed in part to some of the highest levels of violence against LGBT individuals in the world.



## DID YOU KNOW?

### Northern Triangle

The Northern Triangle is a region within Central America encompassing the countries of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

An area plagued by gang violence and some of the highest homicide rates in the world, the Northern Triangle is a higher risk area in the Americas for targeting of and social discrimination against LGBT individuals. Same-sex acts are legal in these countries, though same-sex marriages are not performed or recognized. El Salvador is the only country of the three to have implemented some protections against discriminatory employment practices based on sexual orientation.

### South America:

**Brazil:** Recent changes in the political leadership in Brazil have increased the security risks for the LGBT community. On 1 January 2019, President Bolsonaro removed language that protected the LGBTQ population under human rights guidelines. LGBT groups in Brazil have reported several incidents since then of hate crimes targeting members of the community.

**Chile:** In Chile, there has been a 45% increase in reports of hostility toward LGBT people in 2017. While same-sex activity is legal in Chile, Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) travellers should exercise precautions, including to avoid drawing attention to their sexuality.

**Argentina:** Argentina is still considered one of the most LGBT permissive in the region.



## LEGAL STATUS AND SOCIAL ATTITUDES

A number of countries in the Americas have taken significant political and legal steps to protect rights for LGBT individuals - nationwide or localized prohibitions of discriminatory practices based on sexual orientation have been implemented in at least 14 countries throughout the region.



## BE AWARE

Travel risk managers should ensure that travelers are aware of any anti-LGBT legislation and hostile cultural attitudes in their destination countries before traveling and encourage travelers to conduct their own research.

LGBT travelers in parts of the Americas, particularly the Caribbean and Central America, should be aware that there is a credible risk of harassment or, in rare cases, legal implications if they draw attention to their sexuality. They should therefore avoid drawing attention to themselves or their profile through public displays of affection, by their dress or the display of accessories that indicate their sexual orientation, by their behavior, or by expressing opinions on LGBT rights issues in public.



SAME SEX  
ACTIVITY IS ILLEGAL IN:

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA  
BARBADOS  
BELIZE  
DOMINICA  
GRENADA  
GUYANA  
JAMAICA  
ST KITTS & NEVIS  
ST LUCIA  
ST VINCENT & THE GRENADINES  
TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

# A GUIDE FOR LGBT TRAVELERS IN ASIA/PACIFIC



The travel security risks for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) travelers in the Asia Pacific vary by location.

It is crucial to understand the laws and social attitudes towards the LGBT community in different destinations to mitigate the risks associated with being an LGBT traveler.

Homosexuality is illegal in 18 countries in the Asia Pacific, as well as in the provinces of Sumatra and Aceh in Indonesia, due to predominance of Sharia (Islamic law). It also carries the death penalty in Pakistan. Homosexuality is either decriminalized or legal in 26 countries, 11 of which have discrimination protection laws; two of these countries have same-sex relationship recognition laws.



## DID YOU KNOW?

### Malaysia

Illegal and not accepted

### Singapore

Illegal but accepted

### New Zealand & Australia

Legal and accepted

### Indonesia

Legal but not accepted



## BE AWARE

- Be prepared
- Keep a low profile
- Remain vigilant

Risks to travelers may include assault, detention, expulsion or imprisonment.



## FEMALE TRAVELERS

Of the 18 countries where homosexuality is illegal, only three countries and the provinces of South Sumatra and Aceh in Indonesia, explicitly criminalize homosexual acts between females in their penal codes.

Expressing sexual orientation and gender identity in public exposes women to the risk of hate crimes by men, such as 'corrective rape'.



## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

LGBT travelers should be no less vigilant in areas known to be more 'gay-friendly'.

An LGBT traveler should not be complacent, even in a place such as Bali, an Indonesian island popular with LGBT travelers where homosexuality is legal.

Travelers need to remain discreet, adopt a low-profile and be vigilant in all areas of a country, even where homosexuality is legal. Highly religious and conservative governments such as Indonesia's may employ a wide range of laws, such as censorship and religious laws, to penalize same-sex activities and behavior.



## PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Avoiding public expressions of sexual orientation and gender identity is vital to a LGBT traveler's safety in the Asia Pacific, irrespective of the legality of homosexuality and social attitudes and norms.

While most Asia Pacific countries criminalize same-sex sexual acts, it is highly improbable that an LGBT traveler would be prosecuted or face hostility as long as he or she does not commit such acts in public.



LEGAL AND ACCEPTED



LEGAL BUT NOT ACCEPTED



ILLEGAL AND NOT ACCEPTED



ILLEGAL, BUT ACCEPTED



ILLEGAL, DEATH PENALTY

# A GUIDE FOR LGBT TRAVELERS IN EUROPE



Northern and Western Europe remain at the forefront of LGBT rights, and same-sex relationships are generally well-accepted.

Public displays of affection or involvement in groups associated with the perceived promotion of LGBT lifestyles may elicit hostility among more conservative – and religiously observant – societies of Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans.



## DID YOU KNOW?

### Western Europe

Both the legislation and attitudes toward homosexuality are liberal in western and northern European Union member states.

During the past few years, thirteen Western European countries have legalized same-sex marriage, with some also permitting weddings in Protestant churches; discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation is generally prohibited.

Those traveling to Malta, Belgium, the UK, Denmark, Spain, Portugal, Norway and Finland reportedly experience the fewest difficulties,

In Hungary, parliament adopted a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage in January 2012

### Russia & Central Asia

Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are the only countries where male same-sex relationships are illegal and punishable by imprisonment, though female same-sex relationships are allowed. While legal in the rest of Central Asia, society remains conservative and generally opposes homosexuality, which is labeled as 'non-normative' behavior.



## LEGAL STATUS AND SOCIAL ATTITUDES

Countries in Western, Northern and parts of Central Europe have a generally tolerant attitude toward homosexuality. Many major urban centres host annual LGBT-related events and have distinct LGBT-friendly venues. Homosexuality is legal in all countries, while many have put into place a range of anti-discrimination laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. There is also legal recognition of same-sex marriage.



## BE AWARE

Even in countries which are generally accepting of LGBT rights, LGBT individuals face a statistically higher level of risk of violent assault. This increased risk profile should be factored into profile-specific advice.

The first step to mitigating risks is to be informed.

Expressing public displays of affection (holding hands, kissing in public, and insisting on double beds in a hotel), makes LGBT individuals more vulnerable to hostile attitudes. It is recommended that LGBT travelers remain discreet and keep a low profile, particularly in Eastern European and Central Asian countries.

In addition, rural areas tend to be more conservative than major urban centres; LGBT travelers should adapt their behavior accordingly. As a general rule, LGBT travelers are advised to remain vigilant to their surroundings.



LEGAL AND ACCEPTED



LEGAL BUT NOT ACCEPTED



ILLEGAL AND NOT ACCEPTED

# A GUIDE FOR LGBT TRAVELERS IN MENA



Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) travelers face significant challenges and restrictions in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Attitudes hostile to LGBT individuals vary between countries according to legal and political systems, and religious and cultural norms.

Many countries in the Middle East rarely distinguish between lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals and instead use the derogatory term shath (deviant) to refer to any member of the LGBT community. As the purpose of this report is to address risks stemming from such perception, it will focus on individuals belonging to the general LGBT community without discussing specific sub-groups. Anti-LGBT attitudes are deep-rooted, so the nature of the risks for LGBT travelers is likely to remain broadly static in the region. In general, LGBT travelers in the region should keep a low profile at all times, and exercise caution.



## DID YOU KNOW?

### Egypt

Although homosexuality is not explicitly a crime in Egypt, LGBT individuals have been jailed under a statute condemning 'debauchery and incitement to debauchery'.

### Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries

Homosexuality is considered illegal across the GCC. Penalties are severe, and in some countries can include execution.

### Iran

Iran's theocratic government has clear, strict laws against homosexuality, and these are regularly enforced.

### Israel

LGBT travelers should exercise additional caution in more conservative Arab-majority areas of the country.

### Jordan

While homosexuality is not explicitly illegal in Jordan, judges have used other statutes to prosecute individuals for acts relating to homosexuality.

### Morocco

Homosexuality is illegal here; a court in February 2016 sentenced two people to 18 months in prison on charges of homosexuality.



## BE AWARE

In general, LGBT travelers in the region should keep a low-profile at all times, and exercise vigilance and caution.

LGBT travelers in the Middle East must generally accept that there is a credible risk of harassment or legal implications if they draw attention to their sexuality. They should therefore avoid drawing attention to themselves or their profile through public displays of affection or expressing opinions on gay-rights issues in public.

If LGBT travelers receive unusual attention or are victims of abusive remarks, they should ignore provocations and leave the area immediately. Particularly in countries where the risk of being targeted in homophobic attacks is higher.



LEGAL AND ACCEPTED



ILLEGAL AND NOT ACCEPTED



NO LEGAL STATUS/UNCLEAR



ILLEGAL, DEATH PENALTY



# A GUIDE FOR LGBT TRAVELERS IN AFRICA



The legal status and social acceptance of same-sex relationships varies across Africa.

Differences in legislation and levels of social conservatism can be difficult to navigate for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) travelers, which exposes them to risks they may not have anticipated during other business postings abroad.

The majority of African countries criminalize homosexuality, though Botswana, Cameroon, Gambia, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, Uganda and Zimbabwe have taken steps to impose further sexual offense legislation that explicitly targets homosexuals. In Mauritania, parts of Somalia and parts of Nigeria under Sharia (Islamic law), homosexuality can be punishable by death.



## DID YOU KNOW?

### Cameroon

Same-sex relationships are punishable by up to five years' imprisonment under article 347-1 of the penal code. Homosexuals are often ostracized and some - particularly activists - have been threatened, detained, assaulted and even killed.

### Gambia

'Aggravated homosexual acts' are punishable by life imprisonment. Same-sex acts are punishable by up to 14 years' imprisonment.

### Congo (DRC)

An MP in December 2013 introduced a draft bill punishing homosexuality by up to five years' imprisonment; however, the legislation has not yet been adopted and comments by officials in 2015 suggested that the government may not proceed with it.

In May 2016, the Senate approved a draft bill that prohibited LGBT couples from adopting. Local activists say that social attitudes towards LGBT lifestyles have become less tolerant.



## LEGAL STATUS AND SOCIAL ATTITUDES

Across Africa, varying degrees of discrimination persist through the complex interface of social conservatism, patriarchy, religiosity and mistrust of 'Western' lifestyles.

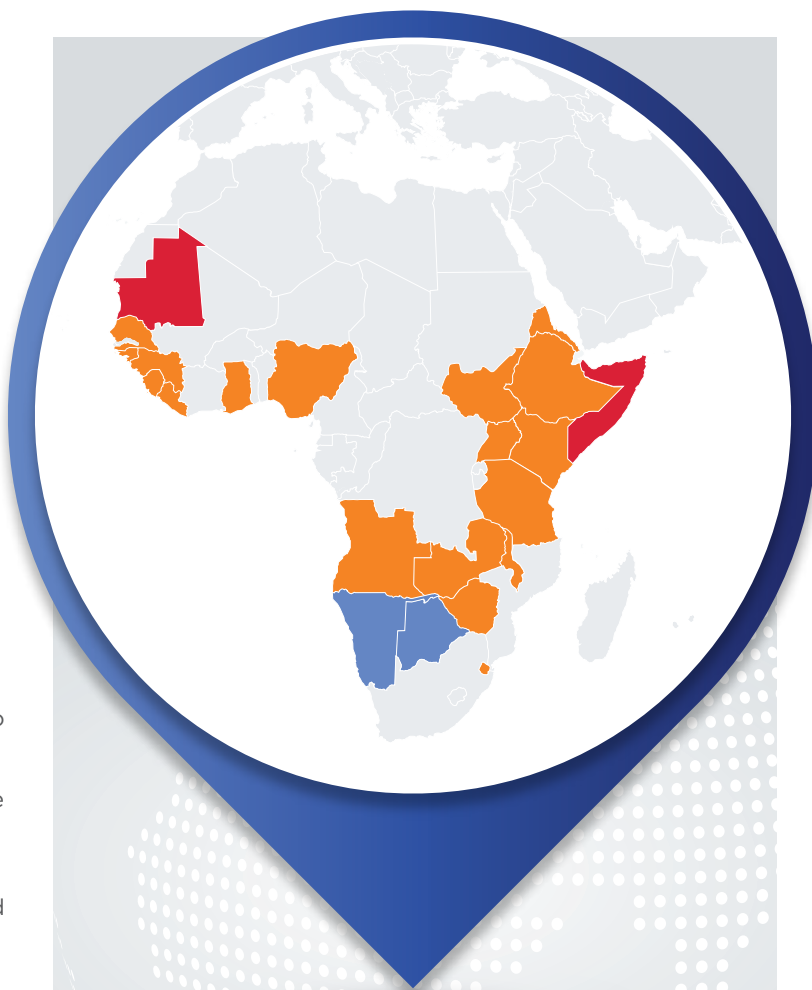


## BE AWARE

Be prepared and understand the risks.

As a general rule, travelers to rural or low-income communities should anticipate more conservative attitudes than in more cosmopolitan, upper-middle income urban areas. LGBT travelers in the region should keep a low profile at all times and exercise vigilance and caution.

Depending on the country, LGBT travelers may face harassment or legal difficulties if they draw attention to their sexuality. LGBT travelers should therefore avoid drawing attention to themselves through public displays of affection, their dress or the display of accessories that may indicate their sexual orientation.



ILLEGAL AND NOT ACCEPTED



ILLEGAL, NOT ALWAYS ENFORCED



ILLEGAL, DEATH PENALTY