



# OUT and About

## Navigating LGBTQ+ Experiences Abroad



### Questions to consider before going abroad:

The more research you do beforehand, the more prepared, comfortable, and safe you will be!

- **Do I want to openly express my sexual orientation and/or gender identity while abroad?** -  
– *(It will likely depend on the answers to the other questions.)*
- Does my right to be LGBTQIA+ in the U.S. conflict with the religious or cultural values and traditions of my host country?
- What are the laws regarding LGBTQIA+ and gender equality in my host country?
- Are there safety considerations that I should be aware of?
- What are gender relations typically like in my host country?
- What is considered typical male and female social behavior in my host culture?
- What is the social perception of members of the LGBTQIA+ community in my host country?
- What roles do transgender people play in my host culture?

### Questions to consider while abroad:

- How will I keep myself safe while I'm abroad? Should I come out to my host family or my roommates?
- What are the cultural norms for dating and friendship in my host country?
- What kinds of LGBTQIA+ resources are there in my host country? What kinds of communities or support networks exist?
- What is the LGBTQIA+ population like in my host country? How large and visible is it? How do they represent themselves?
- What are the terms and definitions used in my host country to talk about LGBTQIA+ issues?

### Building Community:

- Before you go: Network with others on your program and others going abroad in general.
- Research your specific region – gay bars, queer community centers, events, etc.
  - Pride Calendar: <https://www.gaypridecalendar.com/>
  - Meetup.com
- Dating apps – keep safety in mind. Catfishing is a legitimate concern in some regions!

**TED Talk:** [This is what LGBT life is like around the world](#)



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### Resources:

#### Pre-Program Country Research

- [Equaldex](#): Gives an overview of laws, discrimination, and public opinion relating to sexual orientation and gender
- Diversity Abroad's [Culture & Diversity Destination Guide](#)
- Gender Equality by Country: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/gender-equality-by-country>

#### Safety & General Info

- [IGLTA](#): Provides free travel resources and information while continuously working to promote equality and safety within LGBTQ+ tourism worldwide.
  - [LGBTQ+ Safety Guide](#)
  - [Travel Guides by Country](#)
  - [Travel Tips for Transgender, Genderqueer and Non-Binary Wanderlusters](#)
- IES Abroad: [LGBTQIA+ & Ally Resources](#) - Links to resources (general and country-specific, also identity-based resources for race and ethnicity) and student stories.
- Transgender Equality: [Knowing Your Rights – Airport Security](#)

#### International Travel

- **HRT abroad:**
  - Always carry medicines (and applicators/syringes) in their original, correctly labelled packages. Check that you have enough to last your trip.
  - Make sure any medication you take will remain in date and is stored properly. Carry your medicine in your carry-on luggage with a copy of your prescription.
  - Remember most airlines restrict cabin liquids/gels to 100ml.
- **Airport Security:**
  - Full-body scanners are commonly used at airport security checkpoints. Keep in mind that binding/tucking/prosthetics/etc. could be read as anomalies on these scanners. You may be asked to comply with additional questioning and screening.
  - If you are selected for a pat-down, [know your rights and what to expect](#). Pat-downs can be invasive, but they are usually done quickly and efficiently so that agents can keep the security line moving.
  - Make the necessary preparations, if any, that work best for you. Be sure to research the security guidelines of international airports abroad that you will be traveling to/from.



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### Passports and Gender Markers

In 2023 to January 2025, the U.S. Department of State issued passports with an “X” gender marker for nonbinary, intersex, and gender non-conforming travelers. U.S. State Department has confirmed that currently issued and non-expired Gender X passports will remain valid. The State Department is no longer processing any gender marker updates for binary markers and for “X” markers. When they are renewed or if a lost passport is replaced, they will have to conform to the executive order and will be replaced with a passport reflecting sex assigned at birth. These are valid, government-issued passports and should be accepted everywhere as any other U.S. passport, but OSAC is aware of travelers encountering issues.

### U.S. Department of State Resources

The U.S. Department of State maintains resources for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual travelers. Each country page on [Travel.State.gov](https://travel.state.gov) notes relevant information under the “Special Laws and Circumstances” tab. The OSAC Country Security Reports also maintain information about LGBTQI+ concerns for each country and might include any known issues with entering on an X gender passport.

The U.S. Department of State is aware of countries that do not accept X gender passports, and their country pages on [Travel.State.gov](https://travel.state.gov) provide details on available assistance at the nearest embassy or consulate. While the United States government issues passports with the X marker, it cannot guarantee your entry or transit through other countries. Before you travel, check with the foreign embassy or consulate in the United States for more information. Considerations:

**U.S. Nationality:** Any country that recognizes U.S. passports should make no distinction as to the gender on the passport. There are countries where traveling on a U.S. passport exposes the traveler to greater scrutiny by local officials. If local officials are looking for pretext to harass U.S. travelers, they may use an X gender marker as justification. However, most countries, even those with laws hostile to local LGBTQI+ populations, are less likely to harass a U.S. traveler since being an expatriate often affords some degree of isolation from local customs.

**Local Laws:** Most countries do not have laws about nonbinary, intersex, or gender-nonconforming individuals, particularly laws that would decide the permissibility of X gender passports. In countries with anti-LGBTQI+ policies, laws often only criminalize male homosexual activity and say nothing about transgender people. It is also likely that trans women and femme-presenting people face more concerns than trans men in countries that only criminalize male homosexuality or crossdressing. Often these differences are culturally understood, but not written into the formal laws. Note also that authorities may use local anti-prostitution laws against LGBTQI+ people traveling with items such as gender-affirming prosthetics, which they may classify as “sex paraphernalia.”



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**Anti-LGBTQI+ Sentiment:** Most customs officials in most countries will conduct themselves with professionalism regardless of their individual beliefs about LGBTQI+ identities. However, unofficial harassment can still occur based on individual attitudes; this can occur anywhere and is not predictable based on country or region.

**Airport Logistics:** Many countries separate travelers by sex for security screenings. Travelers often self-select into the line they are most comfortable in without having their documents checked. You should have a plan in advance to either follow officials' guidance to join the line they are directed to even if it does not match their identity, or should proactively request a private screening. These requests may or may not be granted. While travelers should always treat local officials with respect, it is the prerogative of the traveler to decide how to handle these situations that may force them into a binary decision. If this is likely to be an issue, travelers should leave additional time to comfortably navigate airport security. Airport officials' response to interactions like these likely differs by airport and by person.

**For more information, visit [Travel.State.Gov](https://travel.state.gov)**