



IGLTA[®]
FOUNDATION

**Going Further:
How to Make LGBTQ+ Travel
Transformational for Travelers,
Communities and the Planet**

About this document

This paper sets out a vision of how LGBTQ+ travel should develop in the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic. It explains why the case for deepening the social, environmental and economic impact of LGBTQ+ travel is stronger than ever before, and through a series of five positive steps for action, provides practical recommendations on how this can be done.

The insights and recommendations provided here are drawn from extensive desk research, as well as input through a dedicated focus group held with the IGLTA Foundation's Executive Board. This paper was prepared by Peter Jordan, Consultant in LGBTQ Destination Development.

FOREWORD

One of the key pillars of the IGLTA Foundation is leadership. The hallmark of strong leadership for us is providing the IGLTA network and the tourism industry at large with tools that will help them to better evolve inclusive business practices and inspire more responsible approaches to travel and hospitality around the world. Our focus is championing LGBTQ+ travel, but the forward-thinking strategies that drive best practices in our segment apply to everyone interested in a more equitable approach to tourism.

In 2021, we launched the IGLTA Foundation Impact Award (in collaboration with the TreadRight Foundation) to recognize small business members of the International LGBTQ+ Travel Association that are developing remarkable initiatives to promote responsible tourism. The inaugural winner, OUT in Colombia, demonstrated true commitment to the environment, community, and diversity & inclusion in their tour offerings. Even more applications came in for this year's award, showcasing the desire, even with limited resources, the small businesses in our network have for creating change in their communities.

Which brings us here, to this report, which the IGLTA Foundation commissioned to help our industry move forward more thoughtfully—from the pandemic, but also well into the future. By taking a close look at our LGBTQ+ community of travelers, we uncover insights that will impact us all.



Theresa Belpulsi, Immediate Past Chair, IGLTA Foundation



Executive Summary

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on global travel and local communities—particularly on the most vulnerable within our communities—has led us to find renewed resilience and compassion. It has also reminded us of the transformative nature of human interactions and what is lost when we are unable to travel and meet each other in person.

For the global LGBTQ+ community, COVID-19 has had the effect of what OutRight International has called ‘amplifying vulnerability,’ with impacts felt by LGBTQ+ individuals in both developed and developing countries. As global efforts to combat COVID-19 continue and the world reopens, it will be important to restore jobs and livelihoods that were lost in travel. However we do have a choice about how we build back our businesses and how we travel in the future—we have an opportunity to make a difference. To be truly transformational.

A selection of results from the 2021 IGLTA consumer survey—presented for the first time in this report—demonstrate that LGBTQ+ consumers are willing to adopt practices that reduce their environmental footprint and contribute to the wellbeing of communities in the destinations that they visit. This is a welcome step, and something that we need to understand better, and seize upon if we are to be agents of positive change in the destinations where we work.

This report explains how the LGBTQ+ travel community can work together to ensure that LGBTQ+ travel rebuilds in a way that brings net positive impacts to destinations. This is presented through **five steps for positive action:**

- 1. Lighten our environmental footprint**
- 2. Reflect our diverse community**
- 3. Build our social impact**
- 4. Strengthen LGBTQ+ travel as an agent of change in emerging destinations**
- 5. Drive community transformation through travel**

These steps should be understood as additional steps that businesses and destinations can take (beyond existing efforts to promote responsible travel) to achieve deeper impact for the benefit of their destinations, host communities and visitors.

Section 1: Introduction



Resilience, compassion, unity, and the transformative nature of human interactions.

The global LGBTQ+ community has long understood that these are the values that help our community to advance, and to gain our freedom; to be who we are and to love who we want. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on global travel and local communities—particularly on the most vulnerable within our communities—has led us to find renewed resilience and compassion. It has also reminded us of the transformative nature of human interactions and what is lost when we are unable to travel and meet each other in person. Meanwhile, the displacement of millions of innocent people from Ukraine and other global conflicts reminds us of how fragile freedom is, and how much we must do to give those around the world who belong to the LGBTQ+ community—as well as those who don't—an extra helping hand in times of need.

As global efforts to combat COVID-19 advance and the world reopens, it will be important to restore jobs and livelihoods that were lost in travel, so that we can restore the life-changing experiences that travel can bring. Yet we do have a choice about how we build back our businesses, how we travel in the future and how we can take extra steps to make travel truly transformative. Now is the time to reflect on what our true purpose and aims really are:

- **How can we shape our business to lessen our negative impact on the environment?**
- **What can we do to help those members of society, particularly in the LGBTQ+ community, who need additional support?**
- **Should success always be measured in visitor numbers and dollars, or other purpose-driven ways?**
- **Will future generations of LGBTQ+ travelers be free to discover the world in safety, learn and face the world with confidence? How can we prepare the ground for them to do this?**

Even before the pandemic emerged, consumers were paying increasing attention to the impact of business on their local communities, economy and the environment. The pandemic appears to have intensified this interest while the acceleration of climate change, and awareness of racial and gender inequality are major contextual issues that must be factored into this. Research carried out by IGLTA in the midst of the pandemic shows that LGBTQ+ travelers care more and more about these issues too (Pages: 10-12)

As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses, governments and tourism industry organizations around the world are advocating for tourism to seize this moment to #BuildBackBetter by reprogramming the sector as one that is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable.



“Purpose-driven initiatives will resonate with consumers in 2021. Amidst social unrest, consumers want the facts and expect brands to act. Communicating with compassion and supporting mental wellbeing are critical attributes to drive brand loyalty.”

- Euromonitor, Top 10 Consumer Trends in 2021, p.43

Some have gone further, calling for tourism not only to become sustainable by doing “less harm” but also to become an active agent of regeneration in destinations. With this paper, the IGLTA Foundation joins this movement and gives a range of practical guidance on how the LGBTQ+ travel community can play its part in achieving this.

The impact of Covid-19 on global travel

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has referred to the COVID-19 pandemic as ‘the greatest crisis ever known in travel and tourism,’ and the reasons for this are clear. Globally, the sector has been among the hardest hit by the pandemic, with the loss of global travel spending estimated to be at least 10 times greater than that which occurred following the Global Economic Crisis of 2008. [1] The picture remains complex; in mid-2021 nearly a third of destinations were still completely closed for international tourism (rising to 70% of Asia Pacific destinations), while a significant proportion were open but with major restrictions on movement still in place. [2]

The macro-economic impact of the global slowdown on tourism has been widely documented, while at a social level, the pandemic has separated friends and families, devastated livelihoods that depended on the sector, and put the brakes on a global phenomenon that supported intercultural understanding across borders and helped to underpin increasing global LGBTQ+ acceptance too. From this perspective, the drop in global LGBTQ+ travel could be described as millions of opportunities missed; opportunities for personal transformation among travelers and opportunities for the positive social and economic impact they could have brought to destinations.

[1] UNWTO (2020) Impact assessment of the Covid-19 outbreak on international tourism (Dec 2020) available [here](#)

[2] UNWTO (2021) Vaccines and digital solutions to ease travel restrictions (July 2021) available [here](#)



The impact of Covid-19 on the global LGBTQ community

During the years 2020-2022, while an increasing number of global businesses have formally aligned themselves with the Pride movement and are actively supporting their LGBTQ+ stakeholders and good causes, the global political level presents a mixed picture. On one hand, ILGA World [reports](#) how legislation that protects lesbian, gay and bisexual persons from discrimination and violence has actually continued to expand, achieving ‘progress in times of uncertainty.’ [3]

Nevertheless, according to Rainbow Railroad, a global charity supporting LGBTQ+ refugees, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the pervasive lack of human rights that LGBTQ+ people face the world over. The organization’s 2020 annual report lists some of the impacts of the pandemic on LGBTQ+ people. These include: [4]

- **Using Covid-19 restrictions as a pretext for increased state-sponsored violence persecution or crackdowns**
- **Lockdowns causing increased exposure to prejudiced family and community environments**
- **Increased unemployment and lack of access to job opportunities**
- **Closure of LGBTQ+ spaces and restricted access to local support groups**
- **Disrupted access to health services for hormone therapy, HIV treatment or gender-affirming care**

One study among 3,400 adults conducted in the United States during the COVID-19 surge of summer 2020 found that two-thirds of LGBTQ+ households had lost a job since the pandemic began, compared with just under half of non-LGBTQ+ households. Meanwhile, two-thirds of LGBTQ+ households were suffering with at least one serious financial problem— that number jumping to 95% for Black LGBTQ+ people and 70% of Latino LGBTQ+ people. [5]

It is especially important to recognize the disproportionate impact of these situations on young LGBTQ+ people, especially those who may face violence or discrimination at home, and for whom lockdowns or loss of employment meant being cut off from support from friends, communities or partners. In the UK alone, this was evidenced by a 20% increase in calls, emails and texts to UK LGBTQ+ helpline Switchboard during the pandemic, with the numbers only increasing. [6]

[3] ILGA World (2020) ILGAWorld updates report on state-sponsored homophobia report (15 Dec 2020), available [here](#)

[4] Rainbow Railroad (2021) Understanding the state of global LGBTQ persecution. 2020 Annual Report (June 2021), available [here](#)

[5] ABC News (2020) LGBTQ community sees severe impact from pandemic, study finds (23-12-2020), available [here](#)

[6] Barnardo’s UK (2020) How coronavirus has affected the LGBTQ+ community (22 June 2020), available [here](#)

Furthermore, public health restrictions saw many Pride events around the world cancelled or curtailed during 2020-2021, with the concurrent loss of voice and visibility for the LGBTQ+ community as well as lost economic impact, particularly for the tourism sector. While many cities held events online, as a Guardian article in June 2021 explained, ‘there is no substitute for the political impact of Pride at its loudest and boldest—taking over the space, clearing the public space, refuting the idea that there’s just one way to be, and that way is heterosexual and cisgendered [7]. In short, it is important that the momentum in achieving greater LGBTQ+ visibility and equality prior to the pandemic is not lost.


Finally, the return of the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2021 and the recent full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces in 2022 are just two examples that have put spotlight on the challenges that refugees face whether trapped in their own country or forced to flee, and how those who are especially vulnerable— including LGBTQ+ refugees—need additional support to get to safety.



[7] The Guardian (2021) You can't cancel Pride: the fight for LGBTQ+ Rights amid the pandemic (29 June 2021) available [here](#)



Section 2: Exclusive insights from the IGLTA's Consumer travel survey



Between March and April 2021, IGLTA carried out a consumer survey to understand the travel intentions of global LGBTQ+ travelers amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Building on the valuable insights uncovered by the [2020 survey](#), the IGLTA 2021 LGBTQ+ Post COVID Travel Survey went further, asking consumers about how the pandemic had shaped their own values and attitudes towards travel. It also asked them about the type of impact they would like to have on the places they visit. The findings from these two questions are presented exclusively in the following pages. The findings from the rest of the 2021 study can be downloaded [here](#).

About the survey:

- **Conducted between 26 March and 9 April 2021 through the association's global network, including members and media partners, with support from the IGLTA Foundation.**
- **Responses came from approximately 6 300 LGBTQ+ travelers around the world, with the largest representation from the United States, Brazil, Mexico, the EU and India,**
- **The survey was conducted in four languages: English, Spanish, French, and Portuguese.**

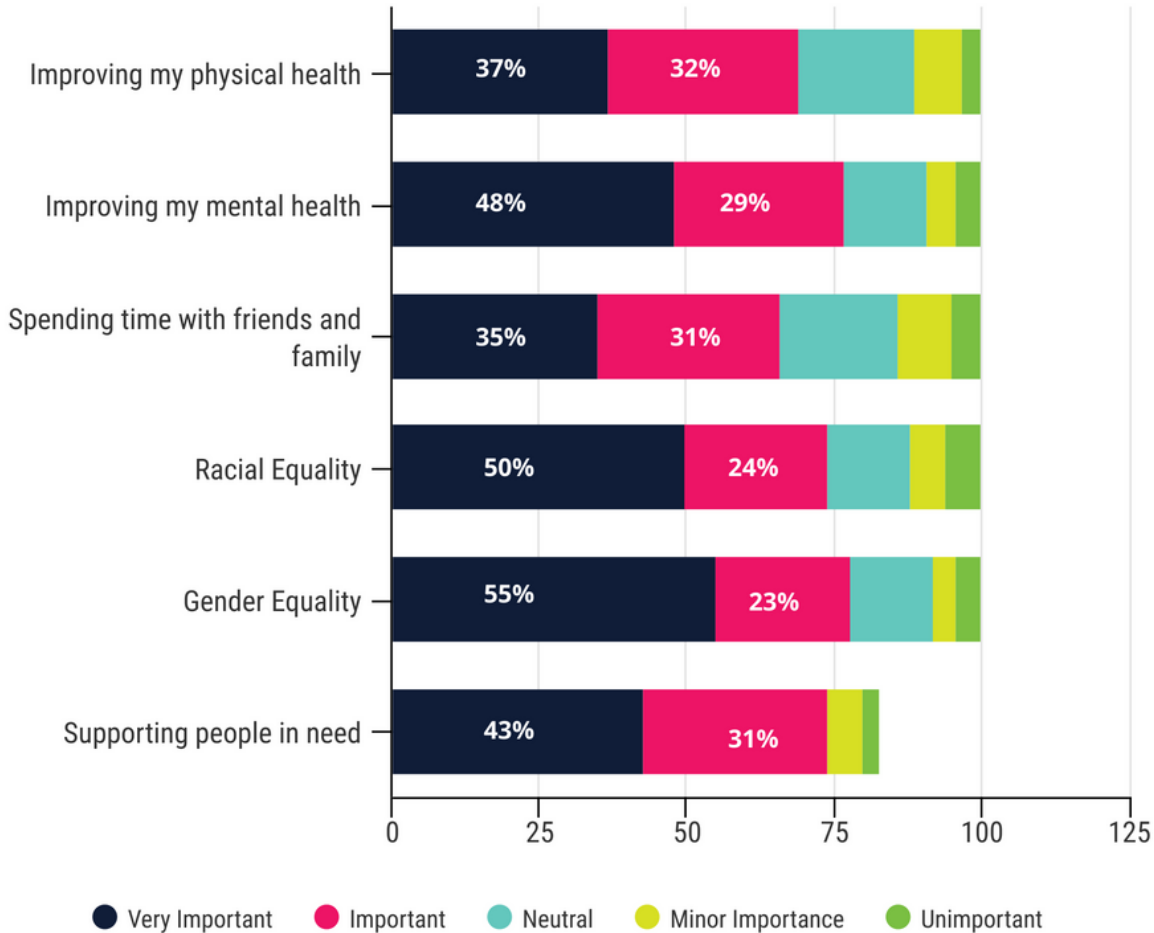
Respondent profile:

- **57% of respondents identified as gay; 19% lesbian; 17% bisexual**
- **70% of respondents are between the ages of 25 and 64**
- **63% of respondents are men; 31% are women, 1% are transgender, 4% identify as non-binary or preferred to self-describe**

How have travelers' personal priorities changed?

During the pandemic, LGBTQ+ travelers have placed a greater value on major social causes and on self-care

To what extent have the following become more or less important to you over the past 12 months ?



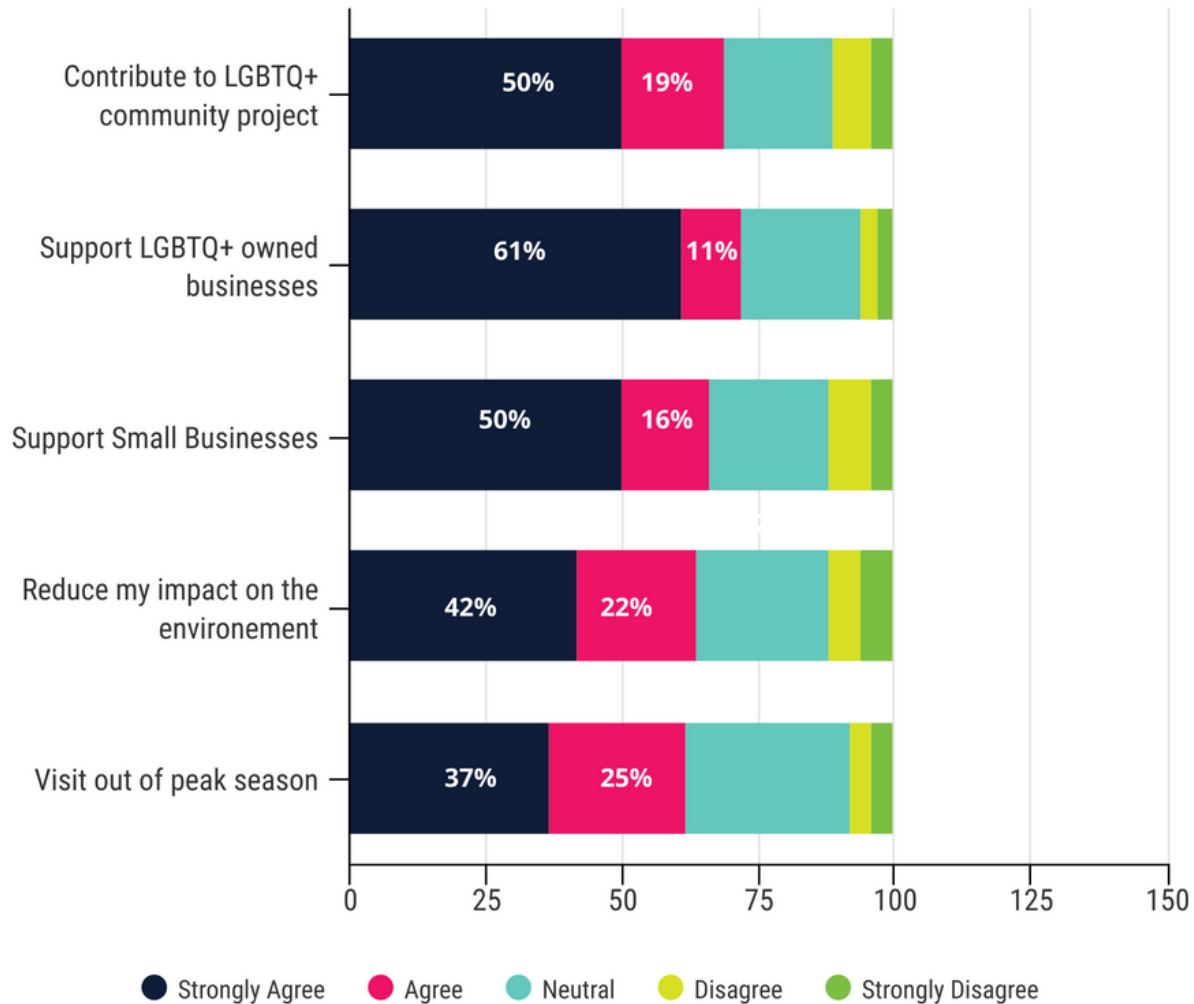
Key takeaways

- The pandemic exposed and, in some cases, deepened social inequality in many countries. These results show that LGBTQ+ consumers have paid increasing attention to this issue especially gender and racial equality. More than half of respondents marked these as 'very important' issues
- The murder of George Floyd in May 2020 highlighted the inequalities that people of color face in the US and around the world, and sparked debates around representation, visibility and the intersectional aspect to discrimination that people of color in the LGBTQ+ community face. The issue resonated strongly for many in the LGBTQ+ community, as evidenced by nearly three quarters of respondents saying that racial equality had become important or very important to them during the past year
- 2020-2021 has been a period of deep uncertainty, with many experiencing job worries, health concerns or loneliness imposed by lockdowns. These factors are likely to have driven respondents' growing interest in improving their mental health, with half saying that this issue had become 'very important' for them
- The strong share (69%) of respondents also said that improving their physical health had become 'important' or 'very important', also underlines the growing role self-care plays in the role of LGBTQ+ consumers
- This snapshot of LGBTQ+ travelers' personal priorities can help LGBTQ+ travel businesses to align their products and marketing more closely with how their customers feel in the wake of the pandemic

Making a personal impact on destinations

LGBTQ+ travelers aspire to have a more positive impact on the places they visit

"When I travel next for vacation, I would like to..."



Key takeaways

- These results strongly suggest that the LGBTQ+ traveler respondents are open to embracing sustainable practices, for example by reducing their impact on the environment, which is supported by 64% of respondents
- LGBTQ+ travelers also show a strong desire to support their destination's local LGBTQ+ community, for example by contributing to LGBTQ+ community projects (69%) and supporting LGBTQ+ owned businesses (72%). This underlines the value for IGLTA members of proudly showing their business is 'LGBTQ+ owned' on their company's profile
- LGBTQ+ travelers also have the potential to help destinations reduce the effects of seasonality and spread visits more evenly throughout the year, as 62% of respondents said they'd like to visit out of peak season
- Supporting small businesses in general -many of which were hit hard by pandemic lockdowns- is also a popular choice, among 66% of respondents
- **A major takeaway from these results is that LGBTQ+ travelers are strongly aware of major social causes, and conscious of their impact on the environment. They also care deeply about supporting the LGBTQ+ community in different ways in the places they visit. If travel businesses give LGBTQ+ travelers the opportunity to do just that, it can create a win-win situation for both travelers and the local community**

Section 3:

Where do we go from here?





Our ambition for building back better

The world has changed, and we must change with it

As we consider our role in the travel industry in the 21st century, it's worth reflecting that destinations around the world face a different set of challenges and pressures to those seen in the early days of LGBTQ+ travel, in the mid-1970s. While tourism has undoubtedly brought many benefits to destinations around the world in terms of job creation, investment and lifting many people out of poverty, it has also brought its own set of burdens too. It's important that we recognize this and that we assert our role as advocates and practitioners of responsible tourism that respects both planet and people.

Of course, fear of major change and the desire to maintain "normality" is deeply wired into the human psyche. At times of major social and economic upheaval such as these, understandably the desire to 'get back to normal', to re-establish connections and routines is even greater. Yet, as an industry that by its nature spans the globe, travel and tourism has enormous potential to touch lives, and to influence. The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us that the world is deeply interconnected, and that decisions taken in one country can have consequences many thousands of miles away.

Using our influence for good

Whether our role is in leading a business, building relationships with suppliers, sales and marketing, or guiding customers during their trip, we're all in a position to influence our customers, colleagues and suppliers to make more choices that are better for the planet and our local communities. **In fact, businesses that serve the LGBTQ+ community face both a significant opportunity and, arguably a moral obligation to help support those in the LGBTQ+ community who have suffered the social and economic impact of the COVID-19 more than most.** The adjacent box presents a series of formal UN-guidelines on how governments should do this at macro level, while the following pages explain the practical specific steps that LGBTQ+ travel businesses can take to make a net-positive impact moving forward.

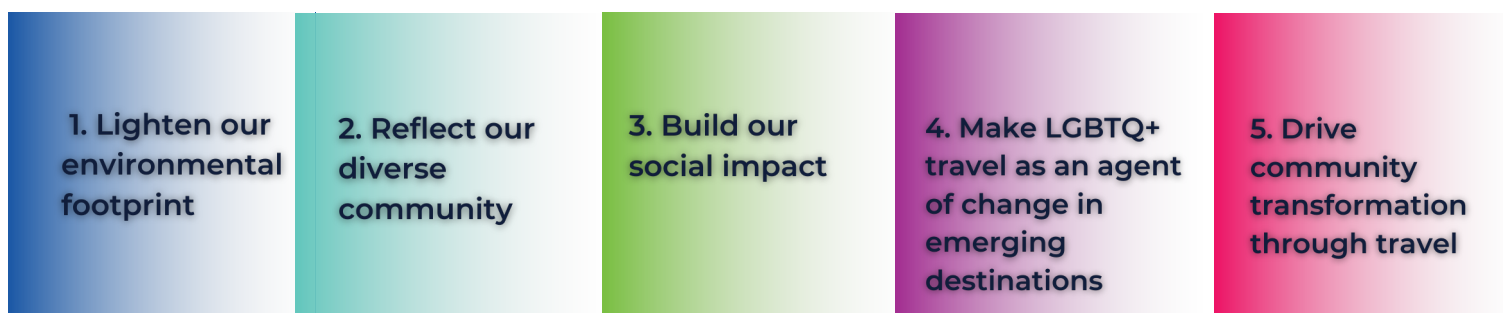
SUPPORTING LGBTQ+ COMMUNITIES IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19: UN GUIDELINES

United Nations and international human rights experts have called on States and other stakeholders to urgently take into account the impact of COVID-19 on LGBTQ+ people when designing, implementing and evaluating the measures to combat the pandemic. In June 2020, a ground-breaking set of guidelines were developed to help States fulfil their obligations to prevent and mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on LGBTQ+ persons. The "ASPIRE" guidelines are based on six fundamental actions. These actions are considered good practice in the design, implementation and evaluation of measures of pandemic response and recovery: Acknowledgement, Support, Protection, Indirect discrimination avoidance, Representation and Evidence-gathering. Further information is available [here](#).

Presenting our Five Steps for Positive Action

The following pages explain how businesses, destinations and travelers themselves can work together in order to ensure that that LGBTQ+ travel rebuilds in a way that brings net-positive impacts to destinations. This is presented through **five steps for positive action**. These steps are not intended to replace existing guidance on developing tourism in a responsible way. Instead, they should be understood as additional steps that businesses and destinations with a stake in LGBTQ+ travel can take to achieve deeper impact for the benefit of their destinations, host communities and visitors.

The five steps for positive action are:



Putting sustainable tourism into practice: recommended reading

Research shows that consumers are taking sustainability seriously when considering how and where to travel, making the issue a key point of competitiveness for businesses and destinations. The number of resources, accreditation schemes and campaigns is expanding all the time. Readers are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the language of sustainability and, to develop their own carbon literacy. IGLTA partners with a range of international organizations and industry associations that provide useful resources on putting sustainable tourism into practice. Useful starter guides include:

- European Travel Commission: [Handbook on Encouraging Sustainable Tourism Practices](#)
- European Travel Commission: [Sustainable Tourism Implementation: Framework and Toolkit](#)
- UN World Tourism Organization: [One Planet Vision for the Responsible Recovery of the Tourism Sector](#)
- UN World Tourism Organization: [Tourism and the UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)

Step 1: Lighten our environmental footprint



The disruption to daily life caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic gave us many reasons to think more carefully about our impact on the environment, with many resolving to change their consumption patterns to reflect this. This was reflected among LGBTQ+ consumers in the 2021 IGLTA Consumer Survey, which found that 44% of respondents ‘strongly agreed’ and ‘agreed’ that they wished to reduce their impact on the environment while travelling on their next vacation.

While for some, the links between stopping climate change and the fight for global LGBTQ+ equality may not immediately be clear, the long-term survival of LGBTQ+ travel (indeed the survival of the global LGBTQ+ population) depends on natural resources being conserved and biodiversity being protected. Already, the impacts of climate change—particularly extreme weather, droughts and the scarcity of resources—are disproportionately affecting those who are already marginalized. In developing countries, marginalized people are more likely to live in areas at most risk of climate change and are less likely to have access to resources or ability to relocate.

As we have seen through history, times of social and economic crisis can see LGBTQ+ people marginalized even further.[8] This is an argument made by Matthew Todd, former editor of Attitude UK magazine, and now an environmental campaigner who notes that “when civilization is stressed, minorities get attacked first,” and that “climate change is an unprecedented global emergency that LGBTQ+ people must make a priority. We need to care because we are people.”[9] One example of the link between respect for the environment and appreciation for the outdoors for the LGBTQ+ community being made creatively is through the work of environmentalist and drag artist [Pattie Gonia](#).

Combatting climate change will require ever greater collaboration, solidarity, innovative thinking and bold action. **As a core element of achieving more sustainable, equitable outcomes for our destinations, and for future generations of LGBTQ+ people, it is increasingly important that we discuss the impact of climate change on our community, and that we take the necessary action.**



[8] Friends of the Earth Scotland (2020) Why Climate Change is an LGBT issue (28-02-2020) [source](#)

[9] Todd, M., (2019) Believe in LGBTQ equality? Then you must join the fight against climate change, Attitude UK, 23-08-2019 [source](#)

Step 1: What you can do

- **Work on your carbon literacy.** Making sure that you know the key terms and issues involved is the first step to taking meaningful action, and educating others
- **If you don't have one already, develop a specific sustainability vision and strategy for your business** with an action plan that guides incremental change and clear KPIs
- **Measure to manage better.** Use online tools or speak to a specialist to measure your current carbon footprint, waste output and investment footprint, and work out to make improvements
- **Understand the value-action gap.** This is the gap between positive environmental intentions and positive actions. Discuss with staff and customers to investigate what barriers exist to everyday changes such as reducing energy use and waste, and how you could address them
- **Evaluate which tours, activities and events in your itineraries have the greatest impact on the environment or could put pressure on fragile locations.** Work with responsible partners on the ground to find alternatives, and change itineraries to reduce pressure at busy times
- **Give customers the tools to reduce their carbon footprint when travelling,** for example by enabling them to choose lower-impact forms of transport, or offsetting their carbon emissions
- **Use your communications channels to share advice and best practices** that inform travelers of how to reduce the environmental impact of their journeys

Example: In September 2020, The Travel Corporation (TCC), which includes brands such as Insight Vacations, Trafalgar, Contiki and Luxury Gold launched How We Tread Right, a **five-year sustainability strategy to address climate change, overtourism and animal welfare**. The strategy outlines initiatives to strengthen efforts that address sustainable food production, responsible consumption, and diversity and inclusion. A core component of the strategy is the launch of Make Travel Matter (MTM) Experiences, which have been identified using an industry-first, proprietary assessment tool.



Step 2: Reflect our diverse community





Since the gay men’s travel guide The Damron Address Book published was 1964, followed by the Spartacus International Gay Guide in 1970, the concept of ‘gay travel’ has gradually taken root and expanded to become known under a more inclusive umbrella as ‘LGBTQ+ travel’. Over the course of nearly 40 years, IGLTA has led global efforts for travelers of all sexual orientations and gender identities to be recognized, protected and warmly welcomed globally.

Visibility advances acceptance


One of the key factors that has driven improved acceptance of LGBTQ+ people globally has been greater visibility in many areas of society, with this visibility accelerated by social media over the past 10-15 years. As greater numbers of individuals identify themselves as LGBTQ+, this has helped to generate momentum in a virtuous circle of LGBTQ+ acceptance and visibility at home, at school, in the workplace or in public life. Greater acceptance from family, friends and colleagues helps individuals to feel more confident about asserting their own LGBTQ+ identity, with a multiplier effect in society. Social media has proved to be an important catalyst and amplifier too.

This process is certainly not an easy path for everyone and clearly, many political and social obstacles remain to achieving full LGBTQ+ acceptance around the globe today. However, the principle is an important one, and shows what can be achieved when LGBTQ+ individuals feel empowered to show who they really are to the world.

Improving inclusivity, accelerating the virtuous circle

In May 2020 the murder of George Floyd highlighted the inequalities that people of color face around the world. The Black Lives Matter movement has sparked many overdue conversations about inclusion and diversity in many spheres of life, including travel—a sector which has much work still to do in recognizing and representing the global travelling population. As IGLTA President/CEO John Tanzella reflected after the event, **“in order to honor our history, we need to elevate the voices of all minority communities, not just our queer one.”** This sentiment appears to be reflected in IGLTA’s consumer research in 2021 where nearly 3 out of 4 respondents (74%) said that in the past years, tackling racial inequality had become more important to them (see page 11).

As organizations with a platform and a public voice, it is therefore important to ask: “Are we really representing the true diversity of our community as well as we could?” It’s well known that when marketing to LGBTQ+ travelers, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Yet it’s hard to deny that when seeking to attract LGBTQ+ travelers, too many have often reached for the stereotyped images of white, chiseled, cisgender gay men that we’re all too familiar with. It’s never been more important to recognize and celebrate diversity and understand that there is no “one size fits all” to engaging with the LGBTQ+ market.



As well as people of color, women, seniors, families, transgender, non-binary, plus-sized or disabled travelers and many other groups in society deserve much greater recognition and visibility in the LGBTQ+ travel space than they've seen in the past. **Given that travelers increasingly seek honesty, authenticity and human connections, it's essential that our organizations boldly reflect society in all its beautiful diversity, in an authentic and integrated way.** Improving representation and reflecting the true diversity of our community has long been an important task, but one that is now more urgent for us all if we are to help drive LGBTQ+ acceptance around the globe.

Step 2: What you can do

→ **Be fair:** ensure that whether in B2B or B2C relationships, fairness and equality reign supreme

→ **Understand that tackling systemic inequality is a daily, ongoing commitment,** requiring constant action, improvement, and working alongside marginalized voices to bring about change. Understanding the intersectionality of the community is crucial, issues surrounding queer Black people and people of colour, women, non-binary, trans, and those with disabilities and neurodivergent needs.

→ **Employee training and integration:** integrate unconscious bias training into employee training programs. Keep the conversation going not only during particular themed months but all year long.

→ **When carrying out market research,** introduce measures to ensure that market research reflects customers and potential customers in a balanced way and overcomes unconscious bias

→ **Make sure that tours and activities are inclusive** and that they help travellers to understand local issues surrounding race, historic prejudice. To make a greater impact ensure that any conversation and discussions surrounding, race, gender, or sexuality have the relevant people with that experience in the team.

→ **Ensure that travellers are aware** of how to respect local laws and customs; this is important for ensuring the safety of travellers and customers.

→ **Embrace narratives of colour and minority voices,** and infuse them through your marketing channels in a consistent, and authentic way through collaborations and partnerships. This should also be reflected through the recruitment policy, by bringing on more diverse voices to senior positions.

→ **Ensure that queer spaces and events give ample opportunities** for people of colour and minority groups to be fully heard and represented.

Example: In September 2021 [Intrepid Travel](#), a global tour operator refreshed its brand with its new mission and vision centered on taking steps to create a more inclusive brand. This included working with six consultants on specific areas to create and sustain allyship and accountability, like LGBTQ+, size inclusivity, modern colonialism, greenwashing and travel for the Black, Indigenous and people of color communities. ([Source](#))

Example: Aisha Shabu, Founder and Director of Moonlight Experiences, London and a 2022 IGLTA Foundation David Martin Small Business Fellowship recipient, explained how the company had supported the queer community over the past two years: “Throughout the pandemic, we have been hosting digital events to educate queer individuals and allies on the underground queer history and culture of the UK. These experiences created a global network of 6,500 people, with profits helping provide financial support to queer artists (who may be struggling through these uncertain times).” ([Source](#))

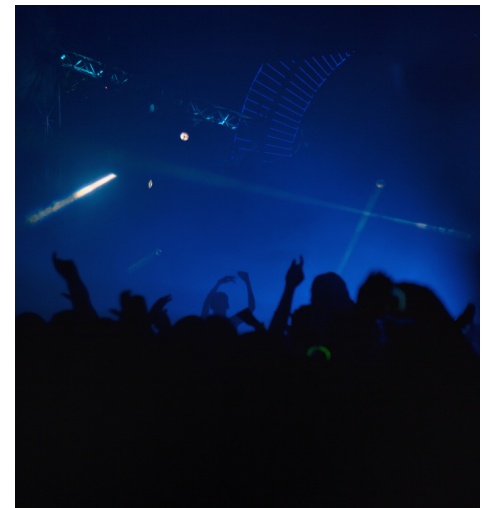


Step 3: Build our social impact




Making tourism more 'sustainable' is often thought of purely in environmental terms, yet sustainability has three pillars, environmental, economic and **social**. According to the United Nations, 'social sustainability is about identifying and managing business impacts, both positive and negative, on people. [...] Directly or indirectly, companies affect what happens to employees, workers in the value chain, customers and local communities, and it is important to manage these impacts proactively.' [10] With this in mind, this step 'Building our social impact' is about recognizing that we must be proactive in reaching out and supporting local people and places in a more meaningful, impactful way.

For decades, thriving communities of LGBTQ+ people have proved to be a force for positive transition, whether in bustling city neighborhoods or small beachside towns. Time and time again around the world, LGBTQ+ communities have helped to put new destinations on the map, regenerated run-down neighborhoods, created diverse cultural attractions, made nightlife vibrant and inclusive, and consolidated Pride events as pillars of their community's event calendar (with the added benefit of giving travelers a reason to cross continents to support these events and travel onwards).



Therefore, while so much has been achieved for LGBTQ+ equality in recent years, the need for community *solidarity*—for supporting each other with and supporting businesses which serve our community with integrity and authenticity has never been greater. The pandemic has taken a huge toll on both people and places in our community. In some places, decades-old 'queer spaces' such as bars, nightclubs and community centers that were unable to bear the impact of forced closures due to public health restrictions have been lost for good. The pandemic, as well as recent global conflicts have also weighed heavily on those who are vulnerable in our community, such as LGBTQ+ youth, seniors, refugees, those who struggle financially, the homeless and those in need to long-term health care. LGBTQ+ support groups have found it difficult to operate amid public health restrictions while seeing income from charitable donations and events decline.

[10] UN Global Compact, Social Sustainability, [source](#)



Given the scale of disruption and dramatic increase in inequality that has occurred as a result of the pandemic and subsequent rise in the cost of living, restoring our thriving communities and helping those in need is unlikely to occur through the trickle-down effect of consumer spending alone. Rebuilding our communities and supporting those in need will require a greater level of effort and collaboration.

Fortunately, the results of the 2021 IGLTA Consumer Survey point towards a greater desire among travelers to do good and spend their money with purpose: 69% of respondents showed a strong desire to support LGBTQ+ community projects, 72% said that they wanted to support LGBTQ+ owned businesses and 74% said that helping people in need had become more important to them over the past year. It's now time to build the connections to help travelers do just that.

Businesses of all sizes that are oriented to the LGBTQ+ market have a significant opportunity to build the social impact of LGBTQ+ travel by strengthening their role as agents of local regeneration, by changing the lives of those in need, and by helping to underpin the safety and quality of life of (LGBTQ+) residents in the destinations where they work.

Step 3: What you can do

- **Build alliances with nonprofit LGBTQ+ causes in your local community.** Take time to understand their needs, (which may be more than just financial...see next)
- **Offer support.** There are multiple ways for businesses to offer support to nonprofits beyond financial donations (though these are vitally important too). Consider providing:
 - Tickets for travel for staff or individuals receiving support
 - Business skills and guidance to nonprofit staff
 - Internships, professional mentoring or career advice to those receiving support
 - Meeting facilities for support groups
 - Catering facilities or food donations
 - Used furniture and equipment
- **Show clearly** when your business or suppliers are LGBTQ+ owned, and are supporting specific causes (IGLTA Members are able to show this on their online member profile)
- **Integrate volunteering experiences within tours and activities** that support local causes and encourage visitors and local people to meet and learn from each other in a safe, supportive environment
- **Work with destination authorities** to raise awareness of the LGBTQ+ causes and the positive impact that LGBTQ+ spending is having on the local business community and local causes.
- **When building LGBTQ+ events** consider how to provide work opportunities, visibility, logistical support and/or free entry to those such as seniors, those with reduced mobility or those facing financial difficulties, to ensure that they can participate

EBuilding social impact - examples:

- **Example:** In June 2021, Canadian tour operator Out Adventures partnered with Rainbow Railroad, a nonprofit supporting LGBTQ+ people who face persecution based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics. For every scheduled tour booked, the company makes a US\$50 donation to the nonprofit, with the aim of raising \$25,000 by the end of 2022.



Out Adventures

LGBTQ+ Owned

Canada, Ontario, Toronto | Accommodations, Accommodations Booking Services, All Welcome, Bisexual, Cruises, CVB, Festival, Gay Only, Guided Tours, Hotel, Lesbian Only, LGBT Owned, LGBTQ+ Owned, LGBTQ...

-**Example:** Tent Partnership for Refugees, 23 North American companies sign up to help LGBTQ++ refugees. An initial 23 companies committed to mentoring at least 50 LGBTQ+ refugees, totaling about 1,250 people over the next three years in the United States, Canada and Mexico, they said.



TENT

-**Example:** In March 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic worsened in Spain, Axel Hotels the 'hetero-friendly' hotel chain opened its doors to two hotel, in Madrid and Barcelona, for local authorities to use for any medical used deemed necessary. The company's Barcelona hotels also supported with extra field hospital capacity.




AxelBeach Miami

LGBTQ+ Owned

United States, Florida, Miami Beach | Accommodations Booking Services, Association, Attractions, Boutique Hotel, Concierge Service, Coordinator, Fitness Center, Guided Tours, Honeymoons, Hotel, LGBTQ...



Step 4: Make LGBTQ+ travel an agent of change in emerging destinations



The world has seen huge shifts in LGBTQ+ visibility and acceptance in recent decades, paving the way for LGBTQ+ travelers to more diverse destinations, and for more destinations to openly market to and welcome LGBTQ+ travelers. While much has been achieved in terms of advancing LGBTQ+ visibility and acceptance around the globe, it is vital to remember that in some regions of the globe, it is difficult for LGBTQ+ people to travel openly and safely, since local people may be fearful or hostile towards same-sex relationships or those who are not cisgender.

Over the years, IGLTA has played its part, through education, research and building connections between destinations and the travel trade around the globe. In fact, IGLTA, together with its members have often been the pioneers, helping to open conversations about LGBTQ+ travel in many places where LGBTQ+ people have lacked visibility, or suffered from a lack of acceptance in society, in turn clearing up myths, overcoming stereotypes and helping the local business community to understand the social and economic value that comes with LGBTQ+ acceptance. Indeed, travel is the vector that helps introduce LGBTQ+ travelers to local people (local employees, and residents) who may not have met someone who is openly lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer before.

When Mark Twain famously wrote in 1869, “travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness,” he was referring to the transformational effects of travel on the traveler, yet what about its effect on local people? Does LGBTQ+ travel catalyze greater acceptance among local people over time? This has long been a subject of debate, and anecdotal evidence from IGLTA members suggests that this process does occur. Alternatively, we should consider what would occur were LGBTQ+ travelers were to completely stop visiting a particular destination, for example due to a boycott. Typically, those who suffer most from boycotts are local people (including the local LGBTQ population) who depend on tourism as a vital source of income—one important reason why the IGLTA does not support boycotts.

Repressive political regimes around the world are actively seeking to stop, or roll-back quality for LGBTQ+ people, yet we believe that LGBTQ+ travel can, in its own way, help to counter this repression. Therefore, Step 4 is about expanding the potential of LGBTQ+ tourism to overturn false ideas about LGBTQ+ people, combat damaging stereotypes, and demonstrate that tourism can be a vehicle for the global LGBTQ+ community (both travelers and local people) to be more visible and better understood

Step 4: What you can do:

- **Support the IGLTA Foundation with a donation.** The Foundation funds education on LGBTQ+ travel in emerging destinations and empowers small business owners to join the IGLTA network at a reduced cost.
- **Larger multinational businesses can engage with employees and local small businesses** in emerging destinations to open conversations about welcoming LGBTQ+ visitors, and what support they might need to do so successfully.
- **Recognize that deep-seated attitudes won't change overnight** – this may especially be the case in dealing with government bodies which can be risk averse or concerned about the political consequences of engaging with the market. However respectful, well-informed engagement can help to soothe concerns and avoid conflict.
- **Build your case** for seeking government support (or countering opposition) by using the many resources available from IGLTA & the IGLTA Foundation (www.iglta.org/research).
- **Experienced businesses should be willing to mentor** those in emerging destinations to advance engagement with the market and achieve greater international visibility.
- **Help local providers that are new to the market** with basic sensitivity training, to ensure that new LGBTQ+ visitors are handled with professionalism.

For more information, please view the IGLTA Foundation webinar 'Can LGBTQ Tourism Actually Thrive in Emerging Destinations?' (1st June 2022), available [here](#).



STEP 5:
Drive community
transformation through travel



Given the scale of the challenges that the global travel and tourism sector has faced, it is natural that destinations and businesses globally will turn to those markets with strong prospects for driving recovery faster, among these the LGBTQ+ market. They may well ask “how can LGBTQ+ travelers help the travel sector?” However, taking Step 4 turns this question on its head, and asks instead “how can the global tourism sector help LGBTQ+ travelers?”

Here, we invite LGBTQ+ oriented destinations and businesses to go beyond the fundamentals of ensuring safety and respect and explore how they can make their services and experiences transformational for individuals, and the global LGBTQ+ community as a whole.

“Tourism should be planned and practiced as a privileged means of individual and collective fulfilment; when practiced with a sufficiently open mind, it is an irreplaceable factor of self-education, mutual tolerance and for learning about the legitimate differences between peoples, cultures and their diversity”

Article 2.1 UNWTO Global Code Ethics of Tourism

While huge advances made in global LGBTQ+ equality, acceptance and visibility have been made around the world, discrimination still persists, both in the developed and developing worlds. Grappling with homophobia and transphobia remains one of the major challenges of our time. However, too often discrimination and other social pressures both within and outside the LGBTQ+ community leads LGBTQ+ individuals to face poorer health outcomes than in the ‘mainstream’ population.

Too often, loneliness, anxiety, insecurity, fear of rejection or being unable to live an open, authentic life at home, at school or in the workplace hold LGBTQ+ individuals back and prevent them from realizing their true potential. We believe that travel can help to heal some of these deep-rooted challenges.

Travel as a catalyst for community wellbeing, education and solidarity

The results of the 2021 IGLTA Consumer Survey point towards our respondents' heightened interest in looking after themselves better. 69% of respondents said that looking after their physical health had become important or very important to them over the past 12 months, while 77% of respondents said this about improving their mental health. Anna Pollock, an acclaimed specialist in the concept of regenerative tourism explains:



“The root of many words associated with tourism such as hospitality and recreation are actually about healing or making whole what was broken. If done properly, tourism can become a vital regenerative force in communities enabling all participants (guest, hosts, employees, business owner-managers, resident) to flourish—not just in a material, financial sense but also emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually.”

- Anna Pollock (Regenerative Tourism Specialist) Conscious Travel

How then, can we spark the regenerative force of travel more widely in the LGBTQ+ community? After all, travelling to disconnect and relax is certainly nothing new. Let's consider that travel is also the best means possible to:

- **Bring new people together to meet, connect and learn about other cultures**
- **See issues from another person's perspective**
- **Give distance from life at home and break out of social boundaries**
- **Explore a new personal identity or make a fresh start**
- **Reconnect with a partner**
- **Build self-confidence, self-reliance and social skills**
- **Try out a new sport or wellness activity**

As LGBTQ+ visibility has increased, so has the diversity of destinations, experiences and events dedicated to the community. However, there is arguably much more room to break down stereotypes about what LGBTQ+ people look for when they travel. **By taking the time to understand our community at a deeper level, we can serve our community better, creating innovative new services and travel formats that helping our community to socialize, improve their health and wellbeing, make meaningful connections, and to help individuals to be their own beautiful selves.**



Step 5: What you can do:

→ **Take the time to understand the personal and social issues that travelers care about**, keeping in mind that these may have shifted during the pandemic (as evidenced by the 2021 IGLTA consumer research).

→ **Consider what you can do to help your customers address their own personal goals** through designing innovative itineraries that offer opportunities for improving personal health and wellness, including partnering with local health and wellness professionals.

→ **Make sure that travelers have plenty of opportunities to eat well and exercise** during their trips. Consider how you can introduce a new wellness regime, class or activity into their itinerary.

→ **Think about how to help single travelers socialize, meet others and develop their social skills** in an inclusive, friendly environment, for example through partnering with local LGBTQ+ sports clubs, music groups or non-profits seeking volunteers.



About the author

Peter Jordan is a consultant and researcher based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Over the course of nearly 10 years, he has also become established as one of the world's leading specialists on LGBT+ Travel, under his own personal brand 'Gen C Traveller'. During this time, Peter has authored pioneering reports on diverse aspects of tourism and LGBT+ inclusion and diversity for the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), European Travel Commission and International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association. He has also delivered multiple strategy projects, workshops and keynote presentations on LGBT+ travel in English, Spanish and French for clients in the public and private sector in five continents: Europe, Asia, Africa and North and South America.

He is currently engaged in several strategy projects aimed at helping national tourism organizations and destination marketing organizations plan for post-COVID-19 tourism recovery. This includes authoring strategies on COVID-19 recovery and guidelines on sustainable travel development. He is also the co-author of 'The Aftermath of Covid-19: Consumer Trends and Tourism Recovery in Asia and the Pacific' for the Asian Development Bank.

With every project he undertakes he aims to challenge the status quo, bring a global perspective to local projects, and build consensus among diverse groups of industry stakeholders.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Aisha Shabu, Founder and Director of Moonlight Experiences (London) for her kind assistance in reviewing and enriching the report with her recommendations on *Reflecting our Diverse Community*.





IGLTA[®]
FOUNDATION

About the IGLTA Foundation

Founded in 2012, the IGLTA Foundation is the 501(c)3 public charity subsidiary of the International LGBTQ+ Travel Association. The IGLTA Foundation supports initiatives for industry organizations, leaders and communities to advance LGBTQ+ travel around the world. It aims to empower LGBTQ+ welcoming travel businesses globally through leadership, research and education.

Donations to the IGLTA Foundation are welcome. Your donation will help create a more welcoming world for LGBTQ+ travelers. The Foundation also has volunteer opportunities available to support initiatives throughout the year.

For further information about the IGLTA Foundation please visit:

<https://www.iglta.org/iglta-foundation>