



Just a trip away, trip away

It's spring and chances are your fancy has turned to thoughts of getting the hell out of Dodge. It's never too soon to plan an escape, and in these chaste times, even vicarious travel, like phone sex, is an adequate form of satisfaction.

B Y W. C. M c R A E

Planning a vacation or a short holiday can sometimes be as fulfilling as the holiday itself. A map, a guide book, and a glass of wine can yield up sophisticated pleasures, at a price you can afford. Until your summer vacation actually arrives, *Just Out* provides suggestions for weekends away, along with an idealized High Gay Culture itinerary for the sophisticated gay and lesbian traveller.

Days Away

Like others who have a job instead of a career, I have days off instead of a vacation. Luckily, the Pacific Northwest is long on events and destinations that compensate for the area's economic shortcomings: In Oregon, even the under-employed-yet-overworked, vacation well.

The next time you have a day or two off, check out these opportunities for R & R.

Just that little bit too far south to be regularly engulfed by the Portland hordes, the coast south of Yachats is relatively unspoiled and uncrowded. The sandy beaches are interspersed with craggy cliffs, rocky promontories — just the place if, like me, you go to the coast less to see Yups and their children, than to watch seals, the occasional whale, and share the beach with your choice of partner.

Run by the ever-accommodating Two Carls, the **See-View Motel**, seven miles south of Yachats, is the perfect base from which to explore this area. One of the most idiosyncratic motels imaginable, I'll bet you can't stay at the See-View just once. And certainly not after you discover the tidepools at the Devil's Churn.

An established and friendly hostelry for women on the coast is the **Enchanted Blue Wave**. Located on the long sandy beaches of Seaview, Washington, this bed and breakfast offers a hot tub and fitness room, necessary because of its proximity to **The Arc Restaurant**. Here, you'll never have a better time over-eating. Blessed by food maven and fellow traveller James Beard, the Arc is worth the journey, and the agony of fitness afterward.

A new, and decidedly novel addition to getaways at the Oregon coast is the **Sylvia Beach Hotel** in Newport. Created by deserteur Goode Cable and partner Sally Ford, this restored 20-room hotel promises to be a high-brow haven. Dedicated to the goals of good conversation, good food, and good books, the Sylvia Beach Hotel has its own library, bookshop and gallery, communal dinners — and "no closets." The hotel is designed to facilitate the giving and getting of high ideas and literate conversation. Even the rooms are decorated on a literary theme: Cable and Ford gave free rein to friends, who decorated individual rooms according to a bookish design. Art graces the Gertrude Stein Room, a knife protrudes from the wall in the Edgar Allen Poe Room.

Use those Frequent Flyer coupons for a trip to San Francisco. This time, however, plan your visit to coincide with specific events. After San Francisco's Lesbian and Gay Pride in June, Mardi Gras will seem merely "festive," and Carnival "effusive." Or screen next year's hit films this year at the Tenth Annual International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival, November 20-29.

The European Gay Trail

It's never a bad time to travel to Europe, and there's no time like the present. Airline tickets have rarely been cheaper. But if the idea of just another trip to St. Tropez or Monaco induces ennui, this time be creative about your itinerary.

While gays in America vacillate on the coasts, historically in Europe gays have drifted south. Plan an itinerary for a European holiday around the Great Gay Trail. With a little research, you can (albeit at the distance of a century or two) migrate south along the path of the great gay artists and personalities who drifted to the Mediterranean for self-knowledge — and a good time.

Begin in the northern capitols. If last time London seemed grey, wet and dubious, get an informative introduction to the

city by visiting the homes of famous gays and lesbians. In *The Pink Plaque Guide to London*, authors Michael Elliman and Frederick Roll provide a fascinating guide to personalities, history, and addresses of hundreds of gay men and women who have lived in London. From Radclyffe Hall to Christopher Marlowe, from 10 Downing Street to Grosvenor Square, there's no better focus for a walking tour of quirky (queerky?) London. When "droughty," stop in for a Scottish brew at my favorite working-man's gay pub in London, the **Golden Lion**, at Shaftsbury Avenue and Dean Street.

Stop long enough in **Paris** to abase yourself before one of the idols of Gay, Oscar Wilde's cenotaph in Pere-Lachaise Cemetery. Pay homage to Gertrude Stein's pied-a-terre at 27 rue de Fleurus, where she housed Alice Toklas and her Picassos. Marvel over how cruisy Paris is; play "Who's gay here?"

Berlin is a city with a fatal attraction for some gays: It mingles a subtle blend of vampy drag (Dietrich), decadence (The Kit-Kat Club), and contemporary nihilism (David Bowie). Central Europe never seems so pall-casting, and yet so energizing. Walking into a smoke-filled club sets the skin atingle: This isn't Portland anymore.

As you plunge south, remember that gays have been visitors in Mediterranean Europe and Africa for generations; gayness is known as the "English vice" by the Italians. Some destinations have been around so long that they're practically sanctified for gays and lesbians. **Ibiza**, an island in the Mediterranean off Spain, is a monument to chic gay elitism. With money, the fun need not stop at the beach by day, nor at the disco by night. Only your credit card limit or scruples need limit you. Likewise **Mykanos**, in the Greek Cyclades, is a combination of stunning beach, museum, and fleshpot. It's the most popular gay vacation resort in Europe, and sort of like a gay theme park, but so be it.

For penance, visit Missolonghi, where Byron died, and Lesbos, where the spirit of Sappho still lives.

Pass through **Taormina**, in Sicily, an astoundingly vertical seafront town that spans enormous cliffs. Taormina was the home of Baron von Gloeden, connoisseur of early photography and Early Youth. His collection of homoerotic photographs was viewed by scores of 19th century notables.

Most of whom were on their way south. Across the Mediterranean from Sicily, the real Gay Trail begins. Northern Africa was Fire Island to 19th century literary Europe. Gustave Flaubert went there to research **Salambo**, and instead discovered boys. French Count Montesquiou dallied there when not posing for Marcel Proust. Andre Gide used his consumption as a cover for his compulsion for Arab boys. Oscar Wilde and boy wonder Lord Alfred Douglas swept through in fur coats. And in this century, Northern Africa has played host and brothel keeper for William Burroughs, Jack Kerouac, and Allen Ginsberg.

Start in **Algiers** or **Tunis**, and visit the numerous Roman ruins (many in better condition than those in Italy). Marvel most of all at the camels. For romance, journey inland, into the Sahara. At **Blidah**, in Tunisia amongst the dunes, the young Gide lost his virginity to a beautiful young man with gap-teeth, an event the world would never hear the end of. Further into the desert, at the Algerian oasis of **Biskra**, lies the Citadel of the Gay Trail South. Here, Wilde and Douglas, while "doing" oases, rendezvoused, by chance, with Gide. At least three novels resulted.

It's useful, as you survey the date palms, burnouses, and camels in Biskra, to remember that for a generation of gay men less than a century ago, this was the gay Mecca. They came here to *cruise*.

Allow time for an epiphany as you realize that Biskra was the Castro of the 19th century.

And be glad to return to Portland. •