

Nightlife gets into full swing around 11 pm and goes until 4 am. Key West has some of the best night-clubbing you can find anywhere... all part of a friendly and romantic setting. Key West has the advantages of being easily accessible, and has none of the health hazards and poor communications of many of the Caribbean islands. The weather is ideal year-round and Key West is especially cost effective in the summer.

Closer to home are Palm Springs and the Russian River, playgrounds for Los Angeles' and San Francisco's lesbians and gays, respectively. Palm Springs is ideal during the late fall through early spring for most vacation bound tourists. Summer tends to get a little warmer than most like. If, however, you enjoy hot days and cool nights Palm Springs can be very cost effective during the summer months.

Activities include sunning, golf, tennis, shopping and sightseeing. A trip to Palm Springs must include the Aerial Tramway to the top of Mount San Jacinto. The temperature variation is astounding and what a way to cool off and see some beautiful sights on a hot summer afternoon.

By all means, Palm Springs vacations would not be complete without eating at the world-famous Billy Reeds. This is located at the North end of Palm Springs between Indian Ave. and Palm Canyon. A fair warning—they don't take reservations so a wait is always in order. They have a nice piano lounge for your entertainment while waiting. This is a restaurant with mixed clientele but is lesbian and gay supportive. El Mirasol Villas is a great place to stay with wonderful hosts.



West Hollywood: Gay urban village

A place that loves gays and lesbians and celebrates the fact.

BY REX WOCKNER AND PAT BECHDOLT

When West Hollywood incorporated in 1984, it was dubbed "the first gay city." And until such time as Castro Street, Greenwich Village or Chicago's New Town declare themselves independent cities as well, West Hollywood will likely remain America's only gay city.

Rainbow and lambda flags line the main street, Santa Monica Boulevard. Gay and lesbian partners are eligible for city-paid health insurance. The five-member city council has had as many as three gays on it at once. The city publishes a pamphlet on how to avoid getting gay-bashed and lists gay bars in every guide to local nightlife.



For men, West Hollywood is the quintessential ghetto. From one end of the city to the other, a gay bar is never more than two blocks away. See any gay guide for details.

There is only one pure lesbian bar (the Palms), but West Hollywood dykes do stalk the sidewalks. This may be as good as public girl-cruisin' gets.

The Ramada West (which has a Cher fixation), the Mondrian (very chi-chi), the Hyatt and the Sunset Marquis are the plush hotels. If you have got the bucks and would get off on hearing Eurythmic snoring through the wall, go for it. The best suites approach \$300 per day, but smaller rooms with less spectacular views of the smog can be had for around \$100.

West Hollywood is food-lovers heaven. In less than two square miles, the city has squeezed more than 100 restaurants. Some excellent, if expensive, food stops are: the French Quarter (great for breakfast), Hugo's (breakfast also), gay-owned La Fabula (muy Mexicans), the Rose Tatoo (lesbian-owned) and Trumps (très Hollywood).

Apart from walking, which is a pastime West Hollywood is eager to encourage, other diversions include art galleries, theaters, clubs and bookshops.

Galleries showing contemporary art include Margo Leavin, Stuart Regen, Taylor-Gratzer and Earl McGrath. The lesbian-owned Double KK Gallery on La Cienega, just steps over the border into Los Angeles, features "American folk art and vintage design."

Well-known clubs include the Roxy, the Comedy Store, Carlos 'n Charlies and the Whiskey A Go Go.

The futuristic Pacific Design Center—the pride and joy of West Hollywood—boasts more than three million square feet of interior showrooms.

If your tastes are more suited to three million ways to pierce your anatomy, run, don't walk—to the Gauntlet. But don't blame us if you blush looking through the sample books. Freshly pierced, you might stroll Sunset Strip (just where was number 77?), although the natives prefer to careen down it in a Mercedes 450SL, preferably red.

According to city officials, West Hollywood, in addition to its indigenous charm, is



centrally situated for seeing the rest of Southern California. Cruisy boy beaches in Santa Monica and Venice are about a half-hour away by car. Scores more bars are scattered throughout Los Angeles, along with other gay attractions, such as A Different Light bookstore on Santa Monica in the gay Silver Lake neighborhood.

On the general tourism scene, there are, of course, such things as the Universal Studios tour and the ubiquitous pastime of stalking stars.

An "urban village" vacation in West Hollywood offers unlimited nightlife, non-stop food, the thrill of hanging out where STARS hang out (with the ever-present possibility that you will rub elbows with Harry Hamlin or Kim Basinger at any second), and the unusual feeling of being extra welcome *because* you are gay.

City officials estimate that 35 percent of the population is gay or lesbian. It is not quite enough to give heterosexuals a taste of their own medicine but it's a lot more comfortable than Akron.

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