

HOMO-GROWN HOLIDAYS

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would rather arm wrestle their muses than sit quietly with them in front of an easel, a cold shower in a little white water might help. Open to women couples, the Oregon Paddler offers a July 18 and 19 raft trip on the McKenzie River. With food, lodging and a massage, the trip is yours for just under \$400.

A similar trip open to all women runs Aug. 15 and 16, and a men's trip is available Aug. 1 and 2.

Another event, while not specifically targeting the queer community, welcomes us heartily and promises to be very exotic: the 12th annual BC Witchcamp. Forty miles east of Vancouver, B.C., at Loon Lake, this year's theme is *The Charge of the Goddess*. The sliding-scale cost is U.S. \$410-\$600.

Scheduling conflicts shouldn't deter lesbian and gay travelers from heading out to recharge their batteries this summer. Travelers need not be tied to particular queer events like pride weekends or camp outs. Queer-friendly lodging beckons from across the region.

Les 'n' Bo's, for example, is a "womyn-only" escape 40 minutes by ferry from Vancouver, B.C. Janice Munn, a co-owner of the coastal escape, says the big draw at Les 'n' Bo's is privacy, emphasizing that gay men and lesbians sometimes have a greater need for getting away and being themselves.

"You can lounge around in the woods naked," she confides. "You're completely on your own."

Munn says the majority of her guests come from Vancouver, B.C., and Portland.

Additionally, she admits that she personally looks for accommodations akin to what she offers women travelers: "Privacy, peace and solitude...safe, cozy and quiet."

Jeff Pfaff co-owns the Bear & Penguin Inn in Rockaway Beach, Ore., with his partner Danny Leines. The inn's clientele is a bit different than what Munn sees in Canada though. Pfaff estimates his ratio of straight-to-queer guests to be about 50-50. Nevertheless, "We don't take any trouble to hide," Pfaff says proudly, referring to the big rainbow flag in front of the inn.

And, whereas Les 'n' Bo's offers privacy and solitude, Pfaff says the Bear & Penguin tries to offer relaxed community with cookouts, conversation with guests, etc. "We're really neighborly."

He adds he would choose to stay in gay-owned-and-operated lodging not only to feel more comfortable psychologically, but physically as well.

"I think the quality of service is better," he says.

But how do queer vacationers know which lodges are welcoming? A random call to Shilo Inn to ask the question, "Are

you gay-friendly?" nets an affirmative answer: "We just had a gay pride group rent out our hotel in Palm Springs." But what does that mean?

Because of such unknowns, Rupinski suggests gay and lesbian travelers take advantage of the free services offered by gay, lesbian and community-friendly travel agents.

"The person on the phone may be gay-friendly, but that doesn't mean the company is,"



Rupinski warns, adding that a client base of lesbian and gay travelers reporting problems—or great finds—to their travel agents is an invaluable network that other travelers can access.

Another clue is whether a business belongs to the International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association. An IGLTA sticker in the window is a safe bet. The association can also refer travelers to lesbian and gay travel agents and accommodations around the world.

Queer Web sites also offer a huge number of listings.

Choosing to "go gay" can sometimes be pricey, though. Arrangements can be elaborate, too.

RSVP, a tour company catering largely to gay men—though they also have a lesbian clientele—offers amenities, such as entertainment a notch above what you'd find in a similar mainstream setting.

"If you want the whole gay experience," Rupinski says, "you're going to pay for it."

He adds, however, it can be well worth it. Both he and Boulette use the word "camaraderie" to describe what exclusively lesbian and gay tours offer that can't be matched by their straight counterparts.

On the whole, people in the know seem to agree the gay and lesbian travel industry is growing rapidly, especially when it comes to the numbers of partnered people vacationing together.

And as gay and lesbian travelers employ what Rupinski sees as "a more concentrated effort to support gay-friendly vendors," more vendors will emerge, that are queer or queer-friendly. "The market is reaching out," he says. "The travel industry is making money by being accepting."



1997 GAY & LESBIAN TRAVEL SURVEY BY COMMUNITY MARKETING, INC.

Of those surveyed...

Eighty-nine percent took a vacation during the past year, compared to 48 percent of the general U.S. population.

Forty-two percent planned to take an international vacation within a year. Only 27 percent of the general population traveled beyond their home state or neighboring area within the past year.

Sixty percent preferred hotels in gay neighborhoods.

Seventy-five percent of respondents indicated they belong to frequent flyer programs, compared to slightly more than nine percent of the general population.

CALENDAR

MAY

16-17 Long Beach Pride

22-25 Gay and Lesbian Equestrian, Biker and Hiker Games and Camp-Out

JUNE

5-7 Queer Fest '98

20 Honolulu Pride

20-21 Portland Pride

27-28 San Francisco Pride
Los Angeles Pride

28 Victoria, B.C., Pride
Seattle Pride

JULY

5 Victoria, B.C., Pride, cont'd.

24-26 San Diego Pride

25 Vancouver, B.C., Pride

AUGUST

1-8 Gay Games V

2-3 Vancouver, B.C., Pride, cont'd.

3-8 Dyke Art Camp