

Roam If You Want To

Q: My partner and I are getting ready to plan our first vacation together. Instead of going to one of our families' for the holidays, we're heading out for a holiday of our own. We both love travel, but we've never traveled together. We'd love some advice about where to look for LGBT-friendly hotels, resorts, etc. And we can always use advice about how to make sure we travel well together.

A: First, there are a lot of places you can go to find LGBT-friendly vacations.

Vacation companies: There are numerous companies out there specializing in LGBT excursions. Check out Sweet and Olivia for lesbian excursions and Atlantis and RSVP Vacations for gay cruise and vacation options. These companies do everything from chartering entire cruise ships to buying out full resorts in order to give guests all-gay vacations. Companies like Spirit Journeys offer vacation workshops and retreats.

Queer magazines: *Curve* and *Out* have travel sections, and online reviews of properties as well as locations, if you're looking for a thorough exploration of possible destinations from the LGBT perspective.

Listing websites: There are websites out there that serve as clearing houses for queer-friendly lodging. Global Gay Lodging has a listing of hotels, and Purple Roofs has a list-

ing of queer-friendly bed and breakfasts.

Still other websites provide a place for queer travelers to talk about their experiences.

Organizations: In addition, there are a number of organizations that certify travel companies, hotels, airlines and the like as queer-friendly. The International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association and TAG can help you find out if the places you're planning to visit are friendly.

Mainstream: Many mainstream properties and travel websites have pages dedicated to gay travel. Orbitz and Travelocity both have information for gay travelers.

Websites like airbnb.com offer rooms for rent by the night or week in people's homes. Check the listings for queer-friendly lodging.

Also, a lot of individual properties and companies now have information for gay travelers. Take a moment when you're booking tickets or rooms to search the site for a gay travel page.

As for how to travel well together, I wish there were a formula I could give you. Some people travel very well together. Other couples, who are able to spend every second of

every day together with no conflict at all, will buckle under the stress of trying to catch a cab or shove carry-on luggage into the overhead bin. Just watch *The Amazing Race*.

But I think there are a few things you can do to relieve some of the stress of travel, before it rears its ugly head.

Communicate: It really is the solution to most of the world's problems. Communicate before you plan your trip. Talk about what it is that you both are hoping to get out of the trip. Is it relaxing time on the beach, or adventure in the jungle? Is it a shopping excursion to a big city, or a meditation retreat at a spa? Knowing where each person is before the trip will allow you to plan together and avoid some (maybe not all) of the potential conflicts that can arise.

And when issues do arise on the trip, communicate then, as well. Maybe one of you wants to spend the day by the pool, while the other wants to hit the sand. Talk it out. I'm not kidding. This kind of thing can seem like a major issue in the moment, but if you just discuss it, you can probably find easy compromise. It takes both people talking about their wants, and both people being flexible.

Be flexible: Sometimes it rains on a tropical island. Sometimes it rains for a week. Sometimes it doesn't snow at a ski resort. Sometimes a flight is canceled or a room reservation is lost. But those unexpected setbacks can lead to great experiences. You might spend an extra night in a new city, or end up in a different room than you expected. If you can keep your cool and go with the flow, you will be more likely to get along with your partner—and more likely to enjoy the experience.

Do your homework: Some people can fly by the seat of their pants. Until you know how you travel together, make sure you have things like confirmation numbers and itineraries printed out. Double- and triple-check passport requirements, and make sure you have your identification with you. Have a plan for withdrawing foreign currency if you're traveling outside the country.

Be kind: Be kind to the people you meet. You never know how long you'll be sitting next to someone. Or whether that airline worker will upgrade you. Be kind to your partner. And be kind to yourself. Being kind will make your trip more enjoyable for everyone. And, even if everything falls apart, you'll still enjoy each other. ☐

KRISTIN loves traveling gaily. You can read about her travels at midleap.com.

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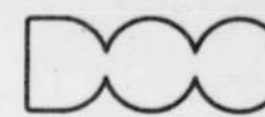
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