



AN LGBT STUDENT GUIDE TO STUDYING ABROAD

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WHY WE WROTE AN LGBT STUDY ABROAD GUIDE

A NOTE FROM GOABROAD



LGBT students who decide to study abroad are making the decision to take on an even bigger challenge than their heterosexual peers. Every country around the world has varying laws, customs, and beliefs about the LGBT community, and therefore will react and treat LGBT international students in a unique way.

After overcoming the challenges of coming out in their home countries, LGBT students who head abroad can be overwhelmed when faced with coming out all over again, except this time in a completely foreign and sometimes unfriendly environment for people who identify as LGBT that may or may not lack an understanding or acceptance of LGBT students.

More and more, studying abroad is becoming somewhat of a standard endeavor of college students; this guide was created to help ensure that LGBT students have all the resources they need to participate in study abroad safely, happily, and successfully. Everyone deserves the opportunity to study abroad, and GoAbroad is dedicated to provide every LGBT student, and every student for that matter, with the tools, knowledge, and confidence they need to do so.

LGBT DEFINITIONS

There is no better time than the present to understand what being an LGBT student means and to raise awareness about the unique needs and challenges that LGBT students face in our world today. For the sake of all LGBT students who have a desire to step outside their comfort zone and study abroad, we are here to help get a few things straight. We encourage study abroad advisers, university professionals, program providers, teachers, and everyone involved in education to take time to understand the LGBT community on a deeper level.



What does lesbian mean?

A female who is attracted woman, and not men, is called a lesbian. A lesbian is the name associated with female homosexuals.

What does gay mean?

A male who is attracted to men, and not women, is called gay. The term gay is associated with male homosexuals.

What does bisexual mean?

Both males and females can be bisexual, which means they are attracted to both males and females.

What does transgender mean?

A transgender person is someone, whose gender identity, expression, or behavior is different from what is typically associated with their assigned sex at birth. Transgender individuals are commonly referred to as transgender men or women. Transgender men are those individuals who have transitioned their gender identity from female to male (also signified by FTM). On the other hand, transgender women are those individuals who were assigned as male at birth, but have transitioned to females (MTF).

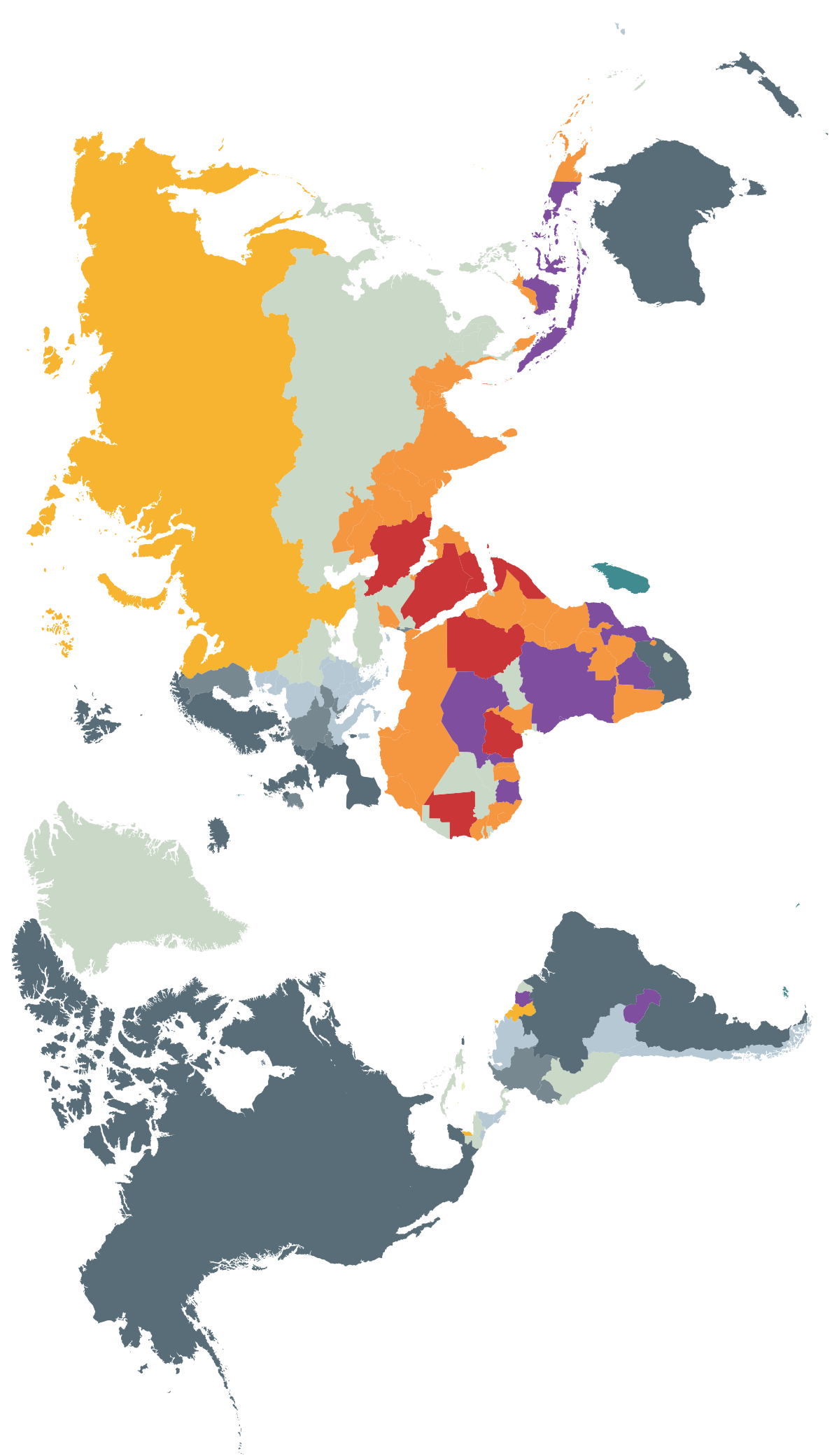
What is a transition?

Those who have “transitioned” from their gender assignment given at birth have successfully changed their gender expression or behavior to the gender which they truly identify with. Some transgender individuals choose to use medical procedures or hormones to help with their transition, and others alter legal identity documentation.

CONTRADICTIONARY LAWS

SAME SEX MARRIAGE

ANTI GAY LAWS



THE LEGALITY OF HOMOSEXUALITY AROUND THE WORLD

With recent news stories, like Ireland and the United States passing same sex marriage laws, filling social media newsfeeds the LGBT community has much to celebrate. Progress is being made, but this is unfortunately only true in some countries. Therefore, the concerns remain among LGBT students of how safe they can be studying abroad, when in some countries LGBT rights are still only minimal, that is if being openly LGBT isn't completely forbidden.

More recently, stories of discrimination and violence toward the LGBT community in countries like Russia and Uganda have left many people in disbelief of the varying acceptance of LGBT people around the world. But the truth is, differences do exist and it is important for LGBT students going abroad in any capacity to be aware of laws and policies to ensure their trip abroad is the incredible experience it should be.



WHY LGBT STUDENTS FACE UNIQUE CHALLENGES



Female or male. Boy or girl. When our mothers were pregnant everyone wanted to know the sex of the baby. When we went to school, girls wore skirts and boys wore pants. As we got older, girls were expected to like the color pink and dolls, while boys were supposed to like the color red and cars.

Gender socialization has had a huge impact on societies all across the world for centuries. For many years, gender and sex were synonymous, and every one was assigned only one, regardless of any internal or physical differences they may have.

Today, gender and sex are distinctly different, and the world is no longer black or white. However, acceptance takes an unfortunately long time, and some people remain entirely uneducated about the reality and diversity that exists within gender constructions and sexual orientation. Therefore, there are still a great deal of discrepancies that exist and much more awareness left to be raised, terms to be understood, and discussions to be had.

In terms of international education, LGBT students face a whole host unique challenges, uncertainties, and questions when contemplating study abroad. They may ask themselves any one of the following questions, among hundreds of others:

- Will I be accepted?
- Will I be safe?
- Will I be able to express myself?
- Will I feel comfortable with my housing?
- Will I experience discrimination?
- Will I have trouble in transit?
- Will I have support from my host university?

All of these questions are important, and each one deserves an answer. Continue reading this guide to find answers to some of the questions listed above. Although we may not have all the answers yet, we are doing our best to find them.

We invite the LGBT student community, study abroad alumni, advisors, and all LGBTQ allies out there to speak up! Email lgbt@goabroad.com to share your story, advice, and tips for LGBTQ students, and you may just find yourself inspiring others to go abroad!



RESOURCES FOR LGBT STUDENTS



To help LGBT students who are contemplating studying abroad, preparing for their trip, or currently participating in an international program, we have put together a comprehensive list of resources to make researching easier; and in turn, studying abroad easier for LGBT students.

- [Education Abroad Guide](#)
- [NAFSA: Association of International Educators Rainbow Special Interest Group](#)
- [The International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association](#)
- [Rainbow Europe](#)
- [MSU - Study Abroad for LGBT Students Resource Page](#)
- [Northwestern University Study Abroad - LGBTQ Students Abroad Page](#)
- [IES Abroad LGBTQ Study Abroad Support](#)
- [LGBT Identity Abroad by The University of Iowa](#)
- [U.S. Department of State LGBTQ Travel Informationz](#)
- [AU Abroad - Information & Resources for LGBT Students](#)
- [CIEE - Identity: Sexual & Gender Expression Abroad](#)
- [Know Your Rights: Schools by National Center for Transgender Equality](#)
- [LGBTQ Organizations Worldwide - Resource Page by U of M](#)
- [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Returned Peace Corps Volunteers](#)
- [International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association](#)
- [Foreign & Commonwealth Office of the UK - LGBT Foreign Travel Advice](#)
- [Diversity Abroad](#)
- [UC Santa Cruz - Queer & Trans Study Abroad Resources](#)
- [National Center for Transgender Equality](#)
- [A Blueprint for Equality: The Right to Travel \(2015\)](#)
- [Know Your Rights: Airport Security](#)
- [University of Minnesota - GLBT Students Abroad](#)
- [Stories for Love](#)
- [University of San Diego - LGBTQ Students & Study Abroad](#)
- [University of Colorado - Boulder - Office of International Education - LGBTQ*IQIA Resources](#)
- [Western Michigan University - LGBT Student Abroad Resources](#)

Useful Articles:

- [Suggestions for LGBTQ Students Going Abroad](#)
- [10 Reasons why LGBTQ Students should Study abroad](#)
- [GlobalGayz Blog](#)
- [NYU Student-to-Student Guide for LGBT Students](#)
- [4 Tips for Advising Trans Students on Study Abroad](#)
- [Putting LGBTQ into Generation Study Abroad](#)
- [Some Questions LGBTQ Students Should Consider When Making the Decision to Study Abroad](#)
- [LGBT Safety: Advice for Study Abroad Students and Their Institutions](#)

Videos:

- [University of Minnesota - Orientation for LGBT Students Studying Abroad](#)
- [IES Abroad - It Gets Better Project for LGBT Students](#)



HOW TO STUDY ABROAD AS AN LGBT STUDENT



Study abroad can be quite an intimidating idea to approach, but an entirely worthwhile challenge to take on no doubt. For LGBT students, study abroad comes with a host of additional considerations, so it is time to lay it all out on the table and simplify the process, so you can make it happen! From finding a study abroad program to funding your trip to tips for arrival, here is a step-by-step process of how to study abroad as an LGBT student, following by plenty of resources to help get you started:

1 Visit Your University's LGBT Center

Nearly every college or university campus has one, though it may be called a variety of names. Every LGBT student should visit their campus LGBT Center to get some basic advice on how to best approach the topic of study abroad with their advisors and how to prepare themselves for the challenges that study abroad may present. LGBT Center staff can speak from their own experiences abroad, or provide you with contact information for LGBT students who are study abroad alumni, among other things.

2 Talk to your International Office or a Study Abroad Advisor

After you've prepared yourself to discuss the topic on a larger scale, and considered your ability to face immersing yourself in a completely unfamiliar place, it is time to talk to a study abroad advisor and visit your campus' international office. The team of student advisors in your international education office will be able to give you information on the [basics of studying abroad](#), the breadth of programs available to you, transferability of academic credits, semester options, location-specific information, and travel advice.

Embrace all the information you receive, take time to review all the opportunities that fit your academic goals, and discuss possibilities with family, friends, and maybe even some other LGBT students you know who have studied abroad too.

3 Narrow Down Location Options

Now it is time to narrow down the locations that fit with your interests and attract you most. But before setting your heart on a location, be sure to consider safety issues, stance on the LGBT community, and possible language barriers. Make a list of locations you can't wait to visit, and then look up information on each to give you a better idea of what type of challenges you would face there as well as positive characteristics you would be happy to immerse yourself in.

4 Search for The Right Program

Once you have a much smaller list of location options, let's say two to four possible destinations, you should begin looking through all the study abroad program opportunities in each location. Consider narrowing down your search by the semester you'd like your study abroad program to take place, your major or areas of interest, and the structure you'd like to have to your program follow.

Next you should look over the inclusions and benefits of each individual program. Do they include excursions? What type of housing arrangements are available and will you feel comfortable with the accommodation provided? Will you have meals prepared for you? How much money will you need to budget for your own personal expense and how much of your daily costs of living will be covered? These are all essential questions every student must consider before selecting a study abroad program.

5 Check out Scholarship Opportunities

There are a number of scholarships specifically for LGBT study abroad (see Scholarships section below), created to help support LGBT students who want to expand their education abroad.

However, there are also hundreds more study abroad scholarships that are open to all students interested in going abroad, whether for a semester or even a full year.



6 Read up on your Location of Interest

Now that you have selected your program, it is time to read up on your new home as much as possible! Find out all the ins and outs, insider tips, advice from past study abroad alumni, and everything in between so you are as prepared as possible. Make sure there isn't anything you missed about your location of interest, or your program for that matter, that is a deal breaker for you. You can start by checking out [GoAbroad's Article Directory](#).

7 Apply & Finalize Your Trip

Congrats! You are now ready to apply for your study abroad program and make your dream a reality! Keep in close contact with your study abroad office, your academic advisors, and your host university or program provider, so you can keep up to date on the status of your application and program arrangements.

8 Prepare

Time to start making your packing list and getting your flight and visa sorted out! The most important thing is to stay calm, organize your list of “things to do before you leave”, and remember to keep an open mind. You are about to embark on what may be one of the most life-changing experiences of your life, so take time to mentally prepare yourself for a completely new way of life and outlook on the world.

9 Arriving & Adjusting

Upon arrival, you will surely feel a mixture of excitement, anxiety, and anticipation. It is completely normal to go through a period of adjustment, also known as culture shock. If you are prepared for it to happen, it will be much easier to overcome. Do your best to embrace and learn about the local way of life, instead of criticizing it, and [maximize every opportunity for cultural immersion](#).

Seek out local organizations, events, or venues that are specifically catered to LGBT students or the local LGBT community in general. These will prove to be a great place to meet other LGBT students and locals, socialize in a comforting environment, and provide you will a place to learn more about the LGBT community in your host country.



TOP STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS FOR LGBT STUDENTS

As the global fight for gender equality and understanding marches on, the number of available LGBT study abroad programs has increased. More and more schools and universities are discovering the value of engaging issues of identity and activism within a global, cross-cultural context. Any LGBT community members or supporters considering studying abroad should start by checking out the following highly acclaimed programs, but by all means this is not an exhaustive list.



1 [CEA Global Education & the University of Maryland, Baltimore County \(UMBC\) – Culture & Identity Studies: Explore Gay Paris](#)

The University of Maryland (UMBC) has teamed up with CEA study abroad to create a four-week gender studies course in Paris, France. CEA works in conjunction with the University of New Haven and is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC).

Winner of the [2011 Innovative New Program Award](#) in the annual GoAbroad Innovation Awards, the curriculum focuses on construction of 20th century gay and lesbian identities within Parisian culture, specifically in relation to race, immigration, and religion. Students map gay and lesbian histories in the Marais district and suburbs and neighborhoods of the city to visualize and discuss LGBT spaces in urban society. This LGBT study abroad program immerses students in French gay culture, and they can also choose to participate in the LGBT pride parade.

Program costs include orientation, tuition, cultural excursions, volunteer opportunities, access to computers and wi-fi, international cell phone, health insurance, and book shares. Accommodation options include shared studio, dormitory, shared apartment, homestay, or independent living. High school graduates with at least a 2.5 GPA are eligible, and experience in French language is not required.

STUDY ABROAD SCHOLARSHIPS FOR LGBT STUDENTS

2 Center for Global Education, Augsburg College – LGBT Study Abroad in Mexico

The Center for Global Education at Augsburg College offers this summer academic program in Mexico that connects students of various backgrounds and ethnicities to create a dynamic learning environment. The theme of the study abroad program is Crossing Borders.

Students travel to Cuernavaca, located about one and a half hours south of Mexico City, to participate in this community based course focusing on the intersections among language, nationality, race, gender, religion, and politics, with an emphasis on feminist, queer, and postcolonial liberation priests, nuns, and religious minorities. Coursework also includes intensive Spanish language training and students can elect to integrate an internship or volunteer work into this LGBT study abroad program.

Students live in campus housing with access to computers, wi-fi, and a library. There are also four to six week homestays available. Classes are mostly taught in English. Program fees include tuition, room and board, cultural excursions, travel insurance, and some transportation. [Scholarships](#) are available to offset costs.

3 Syracuse University Madrid Center - LGBT Study Abroad in Spain

Syracuse University offers a LGBT course entitled [Sexuality in Spain](#), during which students travel to Madrid to explore how sexuality plays out in Spanish social spaces, both modern and historical. In addition to standard academic readings, materials also include a collection of memoirs, fiction, media, and film. The program is offered during the spring or fall semester. Fees

generally include accommodation or a housing allowance, orientation, cultural activities, some meals, and an international student ID card.

4 SIT Study Abroad – LGBT Study Abroad in the Netherlands & Morocco

In this LGBT study abroad program, students travel to the Netherlands and Morocco to better understand the relationships among gender, sexuality, race, class, and religion as they relate to both personal experience and public perception. Students have the opportunity to connect with local white, Muslim, and Afro-Caribbean communities within both countries to further explore program themes, such as queer movements, political rights, and migration. Participants stay with a host family in the Netherlands for twelve weeks and take an excursion to Morocco. Program costs include accommodation through homestay, meals, transportation, health insurance, and museum entrance fees.

Find more study abroad programs in GoAbroad's [Study Abroad Directory](#).



Study abroad can be a defining moment in any student's educational journey, one filled with opportunities for growth, numerous realizations, and many more meaningful experiences. For LGBT students, studying abroad can be not only an incredible powerful educational experience, it can also be an opportunity to expand understanding, awareness, and acceptance of the LGBT community globally. To support LGBT students who are ready to take on the challenge of studying abroad, many organizations, institutions, and associations have established study abroad scholarships to specifically provide financial assistance to LGBT students.

Every student deserves the chance to study abroad alongside their peers and experience all the world has to offer, and these scholarships are just some of the opportunities that have been put in place to inspire LGBT students to take the leap and study abroad.

1 The Point Foundation - LGBTQ Scholarship

Point Foundation is a national, publicly-supported, scholarship-granting organization focused on helping LGBTQ students. It seeks to empower promising LGBTQs to achieve their academic and leadership potential. Aside from financial support, the Point Foundation also provides mentorship, leadership development, and community service to LGBTQ students in high school and university. Each year the scholarship ranges from \$5,000 to \$28,000.

2 Gamma Mu Foundation Scholarship

The Gamma Mu Foundation seeks to award individual scholarships to gay men who are interested on attending a postsecondary institution or a vocational school. The foundation supports a wide array of educational options, so that every gay student can pursue their specific educational aspirations, including associate degrees, bachelor's degrees, graduate programs, and vocational and technical training. The foundation gives a \$19,000 award each year.

3 Pride Foundation Scholarships

Established in 1985, the Pride Foundation is a regional community organization that is dedicated to giving opportunity and equality to LGBTQs across the Northwestern region of the United States. The Pride Foundation has over 50 scholarships available for LGBTQ students. These scholarships are categorized by academic pursuits, community leadership, cultural identities, and geography, but are available to students at every degree level. The Pride Foundation's scholarship awards range from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

4 Live Out Loud Educational Scholarship

LGBTQ youth who are pursuing a degree at a college or university can apply for a scholarship with Live Out Loud, a non-profit organization dedicated to empowering and inspiring LGBT youth and the larger LGBT community to live proud, live out, and live free. The scholarship is open to LGBT high school seniors in the tri-state area. Five students are awarded a \$5,000 educational scholarship every year.

5 LEAGUE Foundation - LGBT Scholarship

Since 1996, the LEAGUE Foundation has been providing financial resources to American LGBT high school seniors who want to pursue higher education. The foundation has three separate scholarship awards: the Laurel Hester Memorial Scholarship, the Matthew Shepard Memorial Scholarship, and the LEAGUE Foundation Scholarship. Applications are accepted from January through April annually, and awardees are announced in July.

6 APIQWTC Scholarship

Asia Pacific Islander Queer Women and Transgender Community (APIQWTC), pronounced as "Api-cutesy", is a volunteer-based organization founded in 1987. The APIQWTC scholarship is awarded to two Asian Pacific Islander, lesbian, bisexual, queer, or transgender students pursuing technical or professional training or full degree programs at higher education institutions each year. The selected scholars receive a \$1000 scholarship to go toward their educational endeavors.

7 PFLAG National Scholarships

Founded in 1972, PFLAG is the largest grassroots-based organization in the U.S. The organization is committed to advocating for equality and societal affirmation of LGBTQs. The PFLAG National scholarship is open to LGBT and allied students worldwide, who plan to pursue a higher education and demonstrate an interest in participating in the LGBT community. Awardees receive \$1,000 to \$5,000.

8 Stonewall Foundation Scholarships

Since 1990, the Stonewall Foundation has been focusing on the needs of the LGBTQ community specifically in the state of New York. The foundation inspires meaningful change by creating scholarship opportunities for LGBTQ students. In 2015, the Stonewall Foundation offered four separate scholarships opportunities for LGBTQ students, each one reflecting the unique values of its donors.

9 Colin Higgins Youth Courage Award

Established in 2000, the Colin Higgins Foundation gives away the Youth Courage Award annually to recognize exceptional students who demonstrate courage in the face of adversity and discrimination. LGBTQ youth activists who apply will have the chance to win a grant of \$10,000, an opportunity to attend the National Conference on LGBT Equality, and be honored during Pride Week on an all-expense paid trip to Los Angeles or New York.

10 NGPA - Aviation Scholarship

Founded in 1972, PFLAG is the largest grassroots-based organization in the U.S. The organization is committed to advocating for equality and societal affirmation of LGBTQs. The PFLAG National scholarship is open to LGBT and allied students worldwide, who plan to pursue a higher education and demonstrate an interest in participating in the LGBT community. Awardees receive \$1,000 to \$5,000.

11 Rainbow Scholarship

Made possible by the generous donations and support of numerous international education professionals that are dedicated to helping LGBT students participate in international programs, the Rainbow Scholarship is awarded to LGBT students who want to pursue meaningful, intensive education programs abroad. Awarded by the Fund for Education Abroad annually, this scholarship is part of the NAFSA Rainbow Special Interest Group, which is made up of professionals that are devoted to supporting and counseling LGBT students as well as combating discrimination against LGBT students.

12 IGLTA Foundation Scholarships

The International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association Foundation offers Annual Global Convention Scholarships in order to support future LGBT leaders in the fields of tourism and hospitality. The IGLTA Foundation also focuses on supporting students interested in establishing businesses in destinations that lack LGBT acceptance, in order to help promote awareness and global acceptance of the LGBT community.



To find more Scholarships visit the GoAbroad [Study Abroad Scholarship Directory](#).

WHERE SHOULD LGBT STUDENTS STUDY ABROAD?

Choosing your destination for study abroad may just be one of the hardest and most important parts of the process. For LGBT students contemplating study abroad, choosing a location can present slightly different concerns, and prove to be even more influential determinant of study abroad success.

Every country varies in its acceptance, awareness, and understanding of the LGBT community, and it is important for LGBT students to understand what type of environment they will be walking in to. The types of laws, policies, and organizations present in any country are huge factors in determining its social environment, so these are all things LGBT students should consider before studying abroad.

LGBT-FRIENDLY STUDY ABROAD LOCATIONS

1 The Netherlands

Recognized globally for its progressive laws and an infamous nightlife in its most well known city, [Amsterdam](#), it is no surprise that the Netherlands is also an open-minded place when it comes to LGBT study abroad. The Netherlands was the very first country to legalize same-sex marriage, back in 2000, so LGBT acceptance, rights organizations, and policies are no new thing for the Dutch. A true pioneer for LGBT rights, LGBT students who want to truly relish in the nation's LGBT community should not miss Gay Pride Week in Amsterdam.

2 Argentina

Even with an overwhelming majority of citizens possessing strong Catholic beliefs, when it comes to same-sex marriage and other policies that support the LGBT community, Argentina is definitely near the top of the list. Since legalizing same-sex marriage in 2010, the nation's capital, [Buenos Aires](#), has become a welcoming destination for LGBT student from all over the world.

3 Sweden

Although the exact term "same-sex marriage" wasn't legalized in Sweden until 2009, civil unions for same-sex couples have been possible for almost 20 years. Sweden is no stranger to civil rights laws for the LGBT community. The Swedish people are sociable by nature, making Sweden an even more LGBT-friendly destination for study abroad. It seems the only deterrent from studying abroad in Sweden may be its high cost of living.

4 Canada

A nation packed with immense diversity, Canada has become a nation that welcomes individuals with all beliefs, practices, and ways of life. Far ahead of its southern neighbor, same-sex marriage has been legal since 2003 in Canada, a testament to the longevity of the nation's acceptance of the LGBT community. Canada is also in favor of anti-gay laws and policies to help further protect its citizens, and visitors, which include LGBT study abroad students, making it a very safe place to study abroad. They even enacted anti-discrimination laws to support LGBT individuals as far back as the mid-90s!

5 New Zealand

With a growing network of LGBT-friendly homestay options, New Zealand is increasing in acceptance rapidly, and even hosts a Gay Ski week at the end of August (the biggest gay party in the Southern Hemisphere, I've heard).

6 England

England's LGBT community is beyond thriving. Known globally for its LGBT scene, especially in its capital city of [London](#), LGBT students will never feel bored or out of place while studying abroad in England. In terms of LGBT rights, the British government has also never been shy about expressing its progressive stance and support of LGBT rights.

7 Belgium

Viewed as one of the most progressive countries in all of Europe, Belgium has led the pack when it comes to LGBT legal rights, and continues to do so. Being out in Belgium is not something to be afraid of, especially in [Brussels](#), where there are signs of the nation's LGBT acceptance on nearly every street. Also, for LGBT students considering turning their study abroad experience into an international career, Belgium is an incredible place to work abroad, and there are even anti-employment discrimination laws in place to make sure sexual orientation is never factored into employment decisions.

8 Spain

With pride parades that may just be the most popular and largest in the world, Spain has made a name for itself in the LGBT world for years. Although the majority of Spanish citizens are Catholic, same-sex marriage was legalized in Spain in 2005, making it only the third country in the world to enact a nationwide law favoring same-sex marriage. Spain continues to play a central role in the global LGBT community and Madrid will even play host to the World Gay Pride event in 2017.

Although the world varies in acceptance of the LGBT community as a whole, there are a large number of countries around the world that offer students a safe, LGBT-friendly environment for study abroad. The following is a list of the most LGBT-friendly countries for study abroad in the world, but there are a number of other location worth considering:





9 Uruguay

Definitely not the most commonly thought of country for study abroad, but one that is more than worth looking into, especially for LGBT students. Recognized as a very secular nation in comparison to its neighbors throughout Latin America, Uruguay was also the second country in the region to officially legalize same-sex marriage. Surprisingly stable economically, Uruguay is a great place for LGBT students who want to expand their Spanish language skills, but aren't quite ready to be fully immersed in the developing side of Latin America. Oh, and did we forget to mention how affordable it is?

10 Ireland

Having recently passed a national same-sex marriage law that was greeted with celebrations across the country, and of course many, many marriage ceremonies, Ireland is clearly on its way to more LGBT-friendly laws and policies. As an English-speaking nation, Ireland is one of the top destinations for study abroad in the world.

11 Czech Republic

The Czech Republic, for the most part, mirrors the homophobia present in Eastern Europe. However, [Prague](#) sparkles bright as a LGBT beacon in the region, and offers some of the most active LGBT communities, with monthly events.

12 Brazil

Only the second country in all of South America to legalize same-sex marriage, Brazil is yet another great place for LGBT students to study abroad in. When it comes to selecting a city, [Rio de Janeiro](#) is ideal for international LGBT students, as the city is home to a range of gay and lesbian events and groups; but, [Sao Paulo](#) still supposedly holds the title for largest pride celebration in the world. Outside of these two major cities, LGBT students may find acceptance varies, so choosing Rio or Sao Paulo will ensure the most successful study abroad experience in Brazil.

13 Denmark

As far back as 1989, Denmark was beginning reform to support gay and lesbian couples, when the nation passed a law that allowed same-sex couples to register legally as domestic partners. The Danish clearly have a long-standing understanding and acceptance of the LGBT community, with a number of LGBT establishments specifically dotting its capital city of [Copenhagen](#). Denmark, therefore, welcomes LGBT students to participate in a variety of study abroad programs.

14 Norway

Well known for its social policies and high standard of living, Norway is lesser known for its support of the LGBT community, but that does not mean it is any less important to the Norwegian people. Norway has played a large role in international debates regarding the decriminalization of homosexuality, pushing to increase acceptance of the LGBT community worldwide and encouraging a higher quality of life.

LGBT-NEUTRAL STUDY ABROAD LOCATIONS

LGBT students are not technically banned from studying abroad in any country in the world. What they should be aware of, however, is that reality might be different abroad, and adjustments in behavior might be necessary. If you don't want to feel threatened by your sexual orientation, but have no need to lead equality marches, parts of [Asia](#) and [Central America](#) have plenty of nature, history, and delicious treats to offer LGBT study abroad students without infringing on their sexual identification. Understand your social agenda, decide how much you are willing to compromise, and then take a look at the neutral locations for LGBT study abroad outlined below.

1 China

Unwanted attention in China will likely come from skin color, rather than sexual orientation. While social pressures force many people to remain "closeted," the LGBT movement has grown significantly in the last ten years, and new rights are being steadily gained.

2 Japan

Since its samurai days, expressions of gender dressing have been more open, with skirts, long hair, and facial piercings not uncommon. Today, same-sex marriage and gender changes are legal. Society might not be open as publically as other countries, but that is changing every day.

3 Costa Rica

Even though Catholicism and Latin American machismo are still present in Costa Rica, the high volume of international travelers are establishing a growing acceptance of the LGBT community. [San Jose](#) offers LGBT-friendly areas and same-sex relations have been legal since 1972.



LGBT-NEGATIVE STUDY ABROAD LOCATIONS

Unfortunately, many parts of the world do not approve of LGBT identification. While all are welcome to study abroad in these locations (and the opportunity for cultural revelation can be great), it's not recommended to flaunt your personal life and romantic choices publicly and you should seriously consider how comfortable you can be in an anti-LGBT environment before studying abroad in one of the following locations. [America](#) have plenty of nature, history, and delicious treats to offer LGBT study abroad students without infringing on their sexual identification. Understand your social agenda, decide how much you are willing to compromise, and then take a look at the neutral locations for LGBT study abroad outlined below.



1 [Malaysia](#)

As an Islamic nation, homosexuality and gender changes are not supported by law, and society's understanding of specific terms is very limited. Penalties for such behavior include up to 20 years of imprisonment.

2 [Nigeria](#)

With over 95 percent of the population not accepting of homosexuality and same-sex acts punishable by death, Nigeria is the least LGBT-friendly country in Africa. It shares its opinion with many neighbors, such as Mauritania, Sudan, and Somalia.

3 [Jamaica](#)

Although the LGBT community here is starting to fight for rights, there are still many violent crimes directed toward homosexual and bisexual people. Sexual acts between men can result in ten years of imprisonment, and homophobia is high in society.



Regardless of which country you chose as your next study abroad venture, it is important to understand local customs of host countries. Even if LGBT practices are legal, maybe culture discourages coming out publically (and this is probably true of many private matters, don't take it personally). At the same time, you can use this as an opportunity to show others that LGBT people are just humans who happen to identify or love differently than most people and teach others some new vocabulary; just be smart about your approach.

LGBT acceptance is a growing trend, but it still has much room for evolution until global equality has been reached. It is important to continue the fight, but it is also important to understand your role in other nations. Sense of confinement is not positive, but knowing safety zones is important. Especially when opting for a homestay option, reach out to program advisors and state your situation. It's better to explain concerns before they become issues.

COMING OUT WHILE STUDYING ABROAD

If you're not straight and/or cisgendered, your sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity (or lack thereof) make the already difficult feat of traveling even more challenging. For LGBT and non-binary people, traveling becomes more than just getting over jetlag. One's sexual orientation can affect one's safety. Many people think that coming out of the closet is a one-time deal, but for LGBT people, it's a never-ending process that depends on where they are and how safe they feel exposing their sexuality.

Unfortunately, not everyone has the privilege to come out. It might not always be safe to do so. It's also much easier to come out as lesbian or gay than to come out as bisexual, transgender, or non-binary. Same-sex behavior is illegal in almost half the countries in the world, so don't feel pressured to come out while abroad.

When you're living with a host family especially, coming out to them can be awkward at first, but if you do, you're helping them realize how diverse people are. Here are some tips for coming out while studying abroad as an LGBT student:



1 Know that it's okay to stay inside the travel closet.

Although it's illegal to be gay in over 70 countries, don't let your sexual orientation and/or gender identity stop you from traveling meaningfully. More and more queer people ("Queer" is a reclaimed term referring to non-cisgender and/or non-heterosexual people) are traveling abroad, and they have their fair share of coming out stories on the road.

2 Be honest with your program provider or university about your concerns.

Check program websites before you apply and pay program fees to see if they are outwardly LGBT friendly and offer resources, and get recommendations from program reviews. Ask if they provide specific resources, like an online forum, for LGBT participants. Some program directors are openly out and gay, so never expect they will be closed-minded. If you're not honest with them about how your sexual orientation and/or gender identity is making you nervous to travel, then they cannot support you.

3 Ask your provider if your host family will be LGBT-friendly.

If possible, ask your provider for your host family's previous guests' contact information so that you can ask them how LGBT-friendly the host family is. If not, ask your program provider if the host family has hosted LGBT guests before. Whether their previous guests were queer or not, they might have valuable insight as to how accepting the family is toward queer people sleeping under their roof (whether they be thatched or aluminum).

In general, host families are trusted community members who are already well-versed in hosting people from other cultures, so it should be comforting for you to know that they are open-minded in the sense of wanting to host someone who looks, speaks, and thinks differently from them.

Be sure to read reviews of programs, whether you're studying, volunteering, or teaching abroad, to get a feel for any comments related to your situation. Follow up with organizations specifically on these issues.

4 Test the LGBT-friendly waters.

Observe how your host family talks about LGBT issues. During television shows (if they have a television), watch for the way they talk about a singer's or an actor's gender presentation. They might have a lot or very little to say about Ricky Martin's sexuality, about same-sex marriages allowed in South Africa, or Russia's 2013 anti-"gay propaganda" law, which prohibits any positive mention of homosexuality in the presence of minors.

Strike up a conversation when the situation presents itself. Many people think that being LGBT is a decision, not an identity. Now, hold your horses before you say "Hey mum, can you pass the falafel? Oh and by the way, I'm gay." Instead, ask her what the community thinks about LGBT issues. If the community is fine with it, then ask her what she thinks about LGBT people. You don't have to out yourself, but you could mention an LGBT friend you have who you miss back home, then see how they react.

Do they empathize with you? Do they seem confused? You might be the first person who brings up LGBT topics in a non-prejudiced way, and that in itself might confuse them.

5 Ask your family to respect your privacy.

Just because you feel safe at with your new family doesn't mean that the people in the community will be as accepting. If you come out to your host family, but feel unsure about being out of the closet in your community, explain that to your host family. Sometimes people assume that if you come out to them, that you are comfortable coming out to anyone, but that's not true. You might come out to your school friends, but not to your host family. Find the communities that accept and affirm you.

6 Get ready for potentially awkward questions.

If a host family members asks you how LGBT people have sex, you don't need to answer that question. When people ask questions like this, it reveals that they still see heterosexual sex as the only "real" sex there is. Sex and sexuality are very different.

You didn't come out to them to talk about sex, you did it because doing so would make you feel more comfortable as a human. Mention how your identity pushes you to look for safe spaces wherever you go, or how withholding who you are makes you uncomfortable, but sometimes you do it in order to feel safe.

Once you begin talking about how your sexual orientation and gender identity affects your daily life, then people will understand that being LGBT is a unique identity that shapes your life in profound ways. Once they realize that you didn't choose to be LGBT, and that it's how you were born, then it'll start to click for them that your orientation and gender identity (or lack thereof) are just small parts of the complex person you are.

7 They're likely teaching you a language, so you can teach them terminology, too!

Be patient if you're family assumes you're straight. Relationships between men and women are what they are used to seeing every day, whether it's out the window or on television. Most romantic songs are about heterosexual romantic relationships. If you're a lesbian and your host mom asks you if you have a boyfriend back home, it's just an innocent question that shows she is trying to get to know you. You could answer by saying "No, I don't have a boyfriend. My partner is a woman." Or "No, I don't have a partner." Reinforcing the word "partner" gives the conversation a less heteronormative tone..

Whether you decide to travel meaningfully to a country that's allowed same-sex marriage for years, or you're choosing to stay in the travel closet, remember that your presence in a country will make an impact when it comes to teaching others about yourself and your culture. If your sexuality and gender identity doesn't make it into that conversation, your host family will still learn from you, and you from them. However, if you do decide to come out, be prepared for some potentially awkward yet impactful conversations!



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