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autumnplay!

**Gay, Lesbian, Bi, Trans, Queer, Two-Spirit
Community Seasonal • Autumn 2023**

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Queering Architecture

Canadian Architects with Heart, Kelvin Kung and Kurtis Chen

The Village, AIDS Memorial, Friends of Ruby House – Toronto's Architectural Landscape

Singing Out, Singing for Love, and Singing for Life

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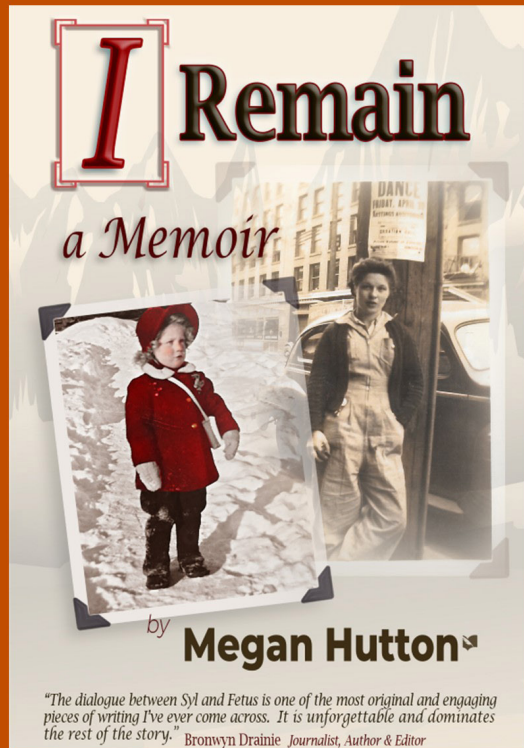
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From the **Publisher**

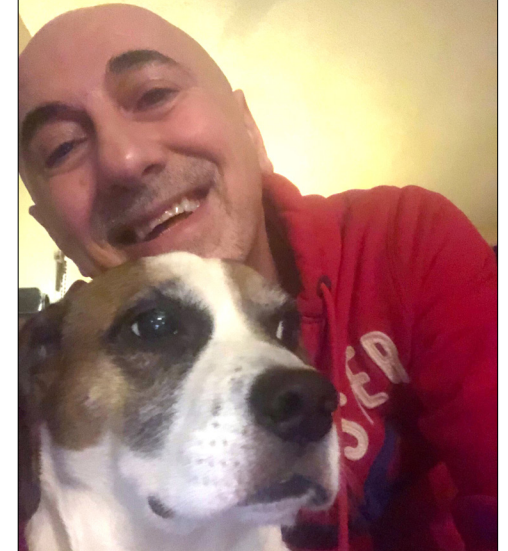
I admit I had a hard time
figuring out what to write
in my letter for this edition
— I don't know much, at least
not enough on the subject of
modern architecture.

I had an ex, however, who was obsessed with buildings, and on many of our dates we would walk downtown looking at Toronto towers and skyscrapers (not usually my thing, I'm afraid of heights).

Autumnplay!'s **Queering Architecture** is our third PinkPlayMags edition for 2023. Upon doing some recent research of my own, I've realized and learned that we've indeed had significant queer contributions to architecture through the years, bringing our unique perspective and talents to the field, leaving an indelible mark.

To name a few, Philip Johnson the architect of the Glass House, Brazilian-Italian bisexual architect and activist Lina BO Bardoio who designed the São Paulo Museum of Art, and the late Michael Sorkin, American architect and critic who identified as gay, used his architectural practice as a platform to address socio-political issues, sustainable urban development, affordable housing, and the democratization of public spaces. Sorkin did this with the belief that architecture can be a catalyst for positive societal transformation.

But are queers accepted in the field? I read about this industry event that took place in Las Vegas. One of the organizers who identifies as gay and cisgender, finds that because queerness isn't a trait visible to the eye, the community isn't being recognized in national research and conversations about equity, diversity, and inclusion in architecture in the same way as



other minority groups. "What if we were visible enough?" he asked the crowd. One architect shared a discrimination-based story about his superior having once told him that conservative senior management would not like it if they knew he was married to a man. Another issue is the degree to which designers feel comfortable being "out" with clients and contractors. An architect who identifies as transgender, non-binary, and uses they/them pronouns, mentioned that they still struggle with navigating coming out to new collaborators. "It's always touch and go," they said, indicating that while they work in an open and supportive design firm, challenges still arise outside of the office.

What I gather from all of that is yes, queers have over the course of human history, and to this day, had and continue to make great contributions to the architectural field, but like all other industries, still face some form of discrimination in certain cases.

Enjoy the read, *Queering Architecture*, to find out more.

Happy Autumn, Happy Halloween, Happy Pumpkin Spice season (my mortal enemy), see you in our next edition, *Winterplay!*'s **Queering Fashion!**

Antoine Elhashem
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autumnplay!

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LGBTQ+ Travellers 2023

Head to the back of this issue to
discover our inclusive 12-page guide
to everything queer travellers need to
know for the year ahead!

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From the Editor



Hello Friends!

Calendar, calendar on the wall, which of the 4
seasons is the queerest of them all? Autumn!
We've got International Lesbian Day on Oct.
8th, National Coming Out Day on Oct. 11th,
International Pronouns Day on Oct. 18th,
Asexual Awareness Week, Intersex Awareness
Day on Oct. 26th, Transgender Awareness
Week, Transgender Day of Awareness on Nov.
20th, and Pansexual Pride on Dec. 8th. AND
then there's World Architecture Day on Oct.
2nd. Ok, ok – I know what you're thinking,
but ... this Autumnplay! issue is dedicated to
queers in architecture. See? I wouldn't leave
you hanging without weaving loose spiderwebs
together. On that note, Happy Halloween, too!
Lots to celebrate – now let's get to it.

Taking a whole-queer-hearted, interdisciplinary
approach to the world of architecture, in our
first feature we have award-winning architect,
Kelvin Kung of Gensler, who embraces
machine learning, human connection and
empathy to power his creativity – and **Kurtis
Chen**, an intern architect and partner at Make
Good Projects, focused on sustainability and
the housing crisis. **Aaron Rothermund** walks
us through the importance of looking back and
looking forward when it comes to Toronto's
queer architecture, designs, and spaces in our
second feature – touching on **The Village**,
the **AIDS Memorial**, the **Friends of Ruby
House**, and more. Our third feature comes
from **Jordan Ashton**, a self-proclaimed "choir
nerd" who reminds us that sometimes building
is an inside job – such as creating a safe space
within oneself and cultivating a world to call

their own through love, music, and singing with
community.

CoCo La Crème is a burlesque performer
and sex-educator extraordinaire, and she's also
our *Hot Artist*, brought to you by **Sean Ban
Beaton**. **Priya Guns**, has a debut novel, *Your
Driver Is Waiting*, and it's featured in *Fiction*.
Sherry Sylvain looks back after 40 years since
the HIV/AIDS crisis by honouring the **Casey
House** in *Community Cornerstone*, Canada's
first and only hospital of its kind. You don't
need a crystal ball when we got your *Autumn
Horoscopes* inside! Our *Autumn in the City*
event listings by our Events Editor, **Sherry
Sylvain**, will help you plan a fall of fun and
frolic. *From the Heart* by our Creative Director,
Mychol Scully, will make you think twice,
maybe even three or four times.

Our exciting **Travel Supplement** by **Bryen
Dunn** is here, it's queer, and it's jam-packed
with travel tips and news on hotels, airlines,
and attractions, events and festivals, adventure
and trip ideas, and he even gives us the scoop
on sustainable, eco-friendly accommodations –
what more could you want? Bryen to pack your
bags, too? He would. If you bought him a plane
ticket and invited him along.

Happy reading, and happy creepin' you BOO-
tiful people!

Mel MacMullin
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THE NEW GENERATION OF HUMANITY-FOCUSED ARCHITECTS KELVIN KUNG AND KURTIS CHEN

By Melissa MacMullin

To see the change, is to be the change. Kelvin and Kurtis are born innovators-turned-leaders “paving the way with new ways of paving” in architecture and the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

Kelvin Kung and **Kurtis Chen** are revolutionizing what it means to be an architect; re-building (or building from scratch) through honouring yet compassionately dismantling what no longer serves, works, or what could be improved; examining the “post-dismantle rubble and debris” to absorb, understand and apply at the heart of their work, what matters most.

They are both young individuals, and true cross-disciplinary pioneers “ahead of their time.” Looking through a humanity-centric lens at re-envisioned progressive design, they’re the “new wave” of queer architects at the forefront of prioritizing advancements of inclusivity, diversity, sustainability and beneficial functionality beyond aesthetic.

Connecting humanity through approachable spaces, empathy and machine learning, especially on the topics of responsive palliative care, neurodiversity, and accessibility, is what drives Kung. Passionate about incorporating the human experience in his projects, he studies and utilizes artificial intelligence to compile community feedback to detect actionable insights. A 2021 Canadian Architect Award of Excellence recipient, he’s presently a Project Architect (and Pride Co-chair) at **Gensler** with over 12 years of multi-industry and multi-structure architectural design experience. Impressive to note, Kung has 3 architectural degrees from McGill.

Chen first started his Master of Architecture in 2018 at UofT and is an Intern Architect. He’s currently working to address real-world problems such as the climate crisis in addition to single-family and multi-family housing through inclusive, equitable and contextual-based architectural design. Ecology, technology, and society is his focus when looking at the built environment and when implementing an interdisciplinary course of action. As an Executive Member of the **Toronto Society of Architects**, he also helps to raise awareness of Toronto’s queer architectural history and queer space significance.

Where picky shoppers shop.

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Incepting and producing intersectional solutions from a place of lived experiences, Kung and Chen push to challenge and shift traditional concepts by churning out innovative ideas where technology and human emotion overlap, for the greater good. They are changing, perhaps even shaking, the very core of architecture, and their voices, as well as their notable contributions thus far, are rippling through-out the rest of the world.

Success for them is measured and determined by their ability to bridge critical gaps and “give back” to the people, the planet, to the queer community. “What is it to be human but to solve problems? What is design but problem-solving?” Chen expressed on his website blog, June 20, 2022.

Kelvin Kung

Growing up in Vancouver, there were countless times Kung would watch his parents help strangers which inspired his own caring heart. He later spent a decade taking care of his father who underwent treatments for cancer. “Those experiences unveiled the daunting reality faced by patients, their families, and the dedicated professionals navigating such environments. I hold a fervent desire to make a positive impact. It’s this aspiration that fuels my passion within the realm of architecture. I’m driven by the hope that my work could alleviate the hardships of someone, somewhere, even if in a modest way.”

Kung had developed a phobia of hospitals, but eventually channeled his fears and past observations into useful skills, and a newfound curiosity. He believes the untapped potential of machine learning can be remarkably pivotal. “We can unravel intricate patterns within patient data, gaining invaluable insights that could enhance the quality of palliative care and healthcare services. This endeavor not only paves the way for innovative advancements but also exemplifies our commitment to leveraging cutting-edge solutions for the betterment of human well-being.”

Seeing and processing “material nobility” from the heart’s viewpoint, Kung, shared how this profound internal dialogue started, “My interpretation veered from the norm, as I saw it as an embodiment of the human spirit’s nobility – a testament to resilience and a call to embrace empathy in our thought processes,

especially when considering the perspectives of others.” His classmates associated “material nobility” with marble, however Kung felt quite the opposite.

Kung’s exploratory roots can also be found in Kyūdō, a form of Japanese archery. “The arrow itself embodies nobility. In this practice, the arrow symbolizes the purity of intentions, harmonizing with the universality of nature and the human spirit – a nobility transcending mere physical form, perceptible only to the heart. Indeed, what is essential often remains hidden from the eyes, yet profoundly felt by the heart.”

At a **QT Conference**, Kung, the sole architect there, presented insights on machine learning in front of **Ubisoft, Accenture, Microsoft, McKinsey and RBC**, etc. “I discussed the importance of extending a helping hand to one another in times of dire need, a fundamental principle at the core of architecture in my opinion – caring for people and their well-being.” Aside from working at Gensler, Kung also serves as a Director for [The ArQuives](#), chairing the Relocation Committee preserving Canada’s 2SLGBTQIA+ history.

“To me, the essence lies in forging inclusive environments that foster genuine communication and human connections. This entails thoughtful consideration of seniors, queer families, and those with neurodiverse requirements. During my time at MJMA, I had the privilege of collaborating with Princeton University’s diversity guidelines, that led to the creation of a 3D rendering library. This process, though met with many technical hurdles, amplified my commitment to crafting spaces that embrace and reflect the rich tapestry of humanity.”

Kurtis Chen

“I had no idea that I’d end up in architecture until I decided to do my masters in it. I always thought I wanted to be a filmmaker,” shared Chen who is also a Juno Award-winning filmmaker.

“I couldn’t help but think I could be doing more to make a positive impact in my community and in my city. That’s where architecture came into the picture. I was attracted to how tangible and ‘real’ the built environment is.” Chen is also a photographer, and still a firm believer in the power of film as a tool to “communicate issues of the built environment.”



Kelvin Kung

His inquisitiveness and thinking skills, transferable, and applicable. “Generally, films are organized linearly in some sort of narrative sequence. Scenes happen one after another. Buildings are largely the same. What happens as you enter a building? What happens next? And after that? I believe that thinking through the ‘narrative’ of using a building is a helpful way to shape the overall experience of a space.” Chen thinks quite a bit about lighting as well when designing a space, he feels after having seen his share of crappy (for lack of a better word) lighting, there is a need for architectural improvement where light is concerned.

Chen is a carbon-conscious Certified Passive House Designer who cares about the impact of buildings on the environment and its inhabitants. “Buildings are enormously extractive and resource-intensive to build and operate, and they account for over a third of all greenhouse gas emissions. People also spend up to 90% of their time indoors, so the way we design a space can make a big difference on someone’s day-to-day. It’s critical we design buildings that are both highly efficient and deeply humane.”

Make Good Projects is the architecture practice Chen just recently started with his equally as talented partner, **Joël León**. “Affordable sustainability is very important to me. Often, building a ‘green’ building comes at a premium, but we’re at a point in the climate crisis where it’s no longer a choice to build sustainably – we must build sustainably and resiliently.” Acknowledging the housing crisis and the ever-increasing unaffordability of homes, Chen states, “High quality architecture that’s efficient,



Kurtis Chen

comfortable, and long-lasting shouldn’t be a luxury good for the wealthy.

Chen serves on the board of the Toronto Society of Architects and is the co-lead for Pride initiatives with another co-lead, Janice Miyagi. “It’s been enormously rewarding to bring the TSA’s research on queer spaces to light. We’ve conducted and compiled research looking at queer history in Toronto, with a particular focus on the buildings, landscapes, and places that facilitated this history. There are universal lessons in these stories that talk about the importance of affordable spaces and of creating the inclusive, equitable conditions that allow social movements to prosper and progress.”

“Our built environment is not inert; in fact, it is highly political. As designers and architects, we must be conscious of the role we are playing in the politics of space—thinking about not only about what we are designing but who we are designing for. Buildings last a long time, and so do their influence, whether good or bad.”

Melissa MacMullin is a freelance content writer and journalist for leading publications. A strong distinct queer Canadian voice with pride and purpose. Author. Screenwriter. Performer. Part-time adventurer.



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Toronto's Natural and Architectural Queer Landscape

By Aaron Rothermund

“Queer space enables people with marginalized (homo) sexualities and identities to survive and to gradually expand their influence and opportunities to live fully.”

*As articulated by Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter in *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance*, op. cit., p. 3-16.*

The LGBTQ2S+ community has a complicated relationship with building permanent spaces as our very existence defies categorization and implies natural fluidity amongst sexual orientations and genders. As mainstream society aggressively forced us to assimilate into heteronormative culture, we can often feel uncomfortable in public spaces especially since police officers and private citizens have in the

past targeted us with violence, vandalism, and hate-speech.

In response to this erasure, queer people concealed their identities and “hid in the closet” to remain free from judgement and violence. This universal suppression of anything that went against popular opinion meant we were yearning for solid grounds and yet unable to attain the right to possess such privileges.

During the 1960's, architects began to distinguish Toronto from its imperialistic roots as seen in such designs as the chateau of Royal York. The city moved toward modern designs such as the new City Hall by Viljo Revell (opened in 1965), and Toronto Dominion Centre tower by Mies Van der Rohe (opened in 1969). By the 1970's there was a substantial increase in the migrant population due to new European settlement and Americans dodging the senseless war in Vietnam.

The immediate shift in Toronto's culture saw studios, bachelors, and one-bedroom apartments spring up in the once flat and quiet downtown region. This shift

in demographics also brought cheap bars, strip clubs, and popular restaurants. The centralized downtown area sparkled and appealed mostly to the young, unmarried, and professional males and this naturally solidified a tentative gay and lesbian space within the area.

The fundamental need for community saw more LGBTQ2S+ individuals and allies flock to find permanent housing near their chosen family and close friends. Then as the desire for a place to congregate, gossip, and dance formed in their collective thoughts, [The Village](#) appeared bordered by Yonge Street to the west, Bloor to the north, Jarvis to the east, and College to the south.

Originally the Village was a secret haven for queer people offering them private dance clubs, alternative art shows, and titillating bathhouses. As The Village solidified its presence, the [Church-Wellesley Neighbourhood Association](#) began the work of heritage preservation in the traditional sense of preserving buildings and historical monuments.

This loosely contained area now stands as a pulsating palace of pride, offering a kaleidoscope bustling queer-friendly establishments such as the **519 Community Centre**, **Fly 2.0**, and **Buddies in Bad Times Theatre** (the largest combined LGBTQ2S+ theatre space, artistic company, and dance venue in Canada). There is also **Glad Day Bookshop** (the world's oldest surviving queer bookstore), which has moved almost ten times since 1973.

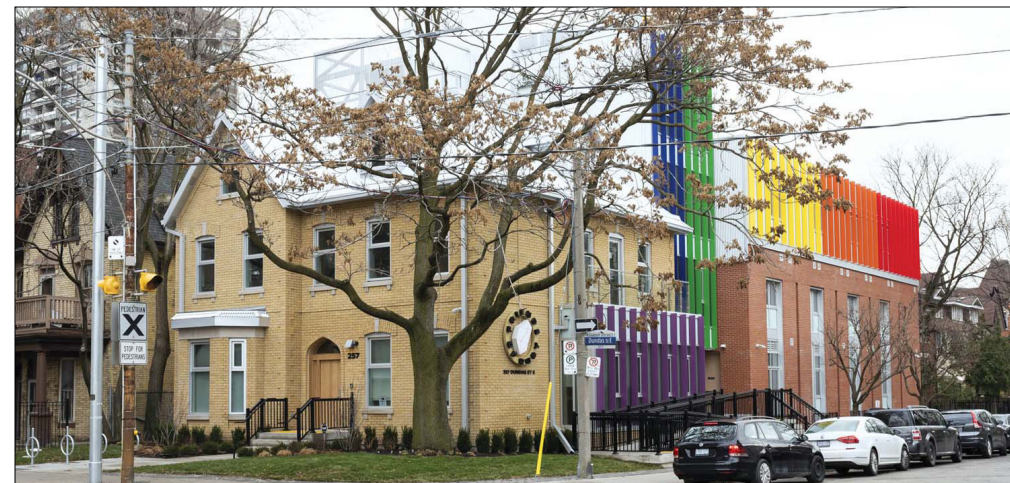
Pivotal examples of queer architectural works include the award-winning [AIDS Memorial](#) in Cawthra Park designed by **Patrick Fahn**, which broke ground north of Church and Wellesley in 1991. This public art exhibit infuses concrete slabs and stainless-steel plaques, each bearing the name of a person that died, which serves as a testament to the impact of HIV/AIDS on the LGBTQ2S+ community.



The AIDS Memorial officially opened in 1993, and a year later the city renamed the park after the former Ontario Human Rights Commissioner, Barbara Hall, for her work supporting marginalized communities. The rebranded AIDS memorial in Barbara Hall Park was featured on Vision TV in a documentary entitled *Spiritual Gardens* in 2006, which delved into the spirit of remembrance that permeates the memorial. Through the lens of art and architecture, it became a symbol of hope, not just for those who had suffered, but for the whole community that rallied around it.

Patrick completed the third phase of the park redesign by 2013, offering a space for reflection, unity, and healing. The AIDS Memorial still stands as a reminder of our fragile place within society, and how far we have come to demand our basic rights and freedoms.

Another shining example of architectural brilliance is [The Friends of Ruby House](#), which is a donor-funded community housing project designed by **Sustainable | Architecture for a Healthy Planet** in collaboration with The Daniels Corporation and Yabu Pushelberg. With deep community involvement facilitated by Egale Canada, the architectural team ensured that the community's needs were central to the project's planning and execution. Located in the Garden District near the Gay Village, they provide transitional housing and counseling for LGBTQ2S+ individuals facing a housing crisis.



The design of Friends of Ruby House reflects an unwavering commitment to inclusivity. The architects went beyond the traditional parameters, considering pet-friendly spaces and accessible rooms for both singles and couples. The thirty-one residential units, each equipped with individually controlled HVAC systems and private bathrooms, offer safe spaces to explore one's identity. The facility's communal living spaces, support rooms, and therapy rooms further foster a sense of belonging and connection.

Friends of Ruby House demonstrates how architectural innovation can address pressing social challenges. The facility's design incorporated sustainability principles, reusing existing brick and retrofitting building control layers to enhance insulation. With the growing need for shelter, the basement houses five emergency units, marking a crucial step towards tackling housing insecurity within the community.

As queer culture began exploring itself within the backrooms of bars, secret sex parties, or hidden in closets, let's not forget "off the beaten path" queer areas such as popular gay cruising spots: [Hanlan's Point](#) clothing optional beach (home to the first Pride and sensitive sand dune ecology), [Allan Gardens](#) (a conservatory and urban park featuring botanical gardens and five greenhouses), and amongst the cherry blossoms of **Philosopher's Walk** as part of the University of Toronto Campus.

As mainstream society has become more accepting of alternative lifestyles, we have seen a shift in the younger generations spreading out to the east and west of the city, and with recent gentrification they are also being 'priced-out' of the nearby neighbourhoods as well. More economical and inclusive spaces have popped up in the Junction, the Stockyards, Leslieville, and the Upper Beaches. These neighbourhoods have embraced the new crowds and profited from their direct patronage. Following these examples more districts in forgotten areas of the city have embraced sexual and gender diversity, becoming more secure hubs for creativity and intersectionality.

Although the LGBTQ2S+ community in Toronto feels safe to spread out and live aloud, there are still oppressed people across the world that need our attention and support. We must remember The Village was traditionally a safe place to meet and share our stories, and now it still serves as a beacon of hope to those living in darkness, that they too can join a community and learn to be themselves.

Aaron Rothermund is a freelance writer, theatre creator, and filmmaker. Aaron has worked on articles for *The Courier*, *Culture Days*, *theBUZZ*, and *PinkPlayMags*.





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Singing for My Life

By Jordan Ashton

Long before **Pitch Perfect** was popular and show choirs were a thing that people found cool, there was **Singing Out – Toronto’s Largest 2SLGBTQIIA+ choir**.

It was founded in 1992 as a place for queer folks to find a home, when the rest of the world had turned its back on us during the AIDS crisis. Singing together was a way to protest and a way to change the media’s demonized narrative of queerness.

Cut to this baby queer in 1992 – I was singing my little heart out to the soundtracks of *Grease* and *Rocky Horror Picture Show*. I came out a few short years later. I then told my best friend at a slumber party who proceeded to pull her sleeping bag up to

her chin while asking if I liked her “that way.” Word spread through grade school faster than lice. Boys would ask me to kiss my friends so they could watch. And friends would clarify sentiments with, “love you like a friend.” High school was the same, but less clarifying straightness and more spending time in the locker I was shoved in. Ah, but for an entire hour each day I got to lose myself in the school choir.

In 2003, I was at the Toronto Dyke March, and I saw two women wearing shirts that appeared to be from a local LGBTQ choir. I am not exactly the type to approach strangers, but I mustered all the courage I had in my gay little heart and asked how I could join. At the time I lived 150kms outside the of city, but I kept their information.

I had no idea that in 2009, **Singing Out** would save my life, for the first of many times.

In 2008, I moved to Toronto in a five-year relationship that was, to put it simply, very abusive. I couldn’t see a way out but when my partner attended

a choir event and “jokingly” told my new friends that she was going to teach me a lesson for forgetting to tell her something, they started the year long process of convincing me to leave her. When I finally did, it was my choir friends who drove four hours to pick me up off the side of the highway with whatever I could carry.

In 2014, my mental health, which I have struggled with my entire life, took a nosedive. For many months, the only time I left the house was to go to choir. In many ways it was the only thing keeping me going. It was the community and the safety I felt with Singing Out, but it was also the music. Singing with other people does something to you – it’s healing.

Your heartbeat syncing with one hundred other hearts makes it harder to feel alone.

As a full-fledged choir nerd, I have made the most meaningful and deepest friendships of my life in choir. I’ve dated, fallen in and out of love, U-Hauled (more than once) and finally met and married the love of my life and it was all because I wanted to sing show tunes with a bunch of other queers.

In 2019, the choir was again instrumental in putting my pieces back together when my partner and I lost our daughter during pregnancy. They held space for us, checked in and rooted for us as we continued trying to build our family. Every concert before going on stage we dedicate the show to loved ones who can’t be there for one reason or another. Two months after losing Georgia, we stood in a room with our choir family ... and dedicated our show to the baby we never got to bring home, and our choir family went with us.

Three short months after that, the world came to a screeching halt as the pandemic began. Believing we would get back to normal quickly, Singing Out went virtual. We fumbled through Zoom rehearsals where we sang over each other and shouted, “you’re muted!” a million times. We put on two virtual concerts while we waited for the world to bring us back together and we yearned for a time we could all be making music in the same room again. Those weekly rehearsals gave me something to look forward to and a way to connect during my own personal darkest time, but also a global darkness that we are still going through in many ways.

In 2021, my wife and I welcomed our second daughter, and this time we got to bring her home. The outpouring of joy from our choir family has been humbling. Our kiddo has a massive chosen family full of Guncles, Ankies and everything in between. She is surrounded by love, and they celebrate every little milestone with us. Recently someone referred to her as the choir’s mascot and to be honest, she just might be. She is certainly here in large part due to the choir. Who wouldn’t want a toddler dressed head to toe in rainbows as their mascot?!

The choir is set to start it’s 31st year in September. Every week at the end of rehearsal, all 120+ members of the choir stand in a circle and sing what has become our choir’s song. It is a version of Holly Near’s, “*We Are a Gentle Angry People*,” with lyrics updated to include the many diverse identities and intersectionality of the folks in the choir. And every week for the last fifteen years, I get choked up as we sing the last line of the song, “Bi, Trans, Queer and straight together, and we are singing, singing for our lives.”

As cheesy is at sounds, singing for my life is exactly what I have been doing for as long as I can remember.

I thank the universe every day that I joined Singing Out and I hope that this self-proclaimed choir nerd has inspired you to bring your voice out of the shower and into choir. You never know what a little music will bring you.

It brought me my whole beautiful world.

Jordan Ashton lives in the boonies with their wife and two year old daughter. They are an advocate for mental health and perinatal loss. They enjoy writing, green olives and of course, singing.



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Photo by David Hawke



When you're a child of the 80s,
into wigs, pasties, and Josephine
Baker, it only makes sense that
you'd end up onstage popping
balloons off your bedazzled
body, like **CoCo La Crème**.

This theatre kid from Toronto grew up vying for the spotlight, “I used to dress up in my mom’s black lace shirt and heels, and I’d pose and pretend to smoke in front of the hall mirror. When an older family member said I looked like a ‘prostitute’, I was pretty pleased!”

CoCo’s desire to work in fashion inspired her to make her own outfits, which led to fashion school where she enhanced her skills and knowledge. Although the fashion industry was not to be her calling, her costuming skills did not go to waste.

As a regular go-go dancer at Will Munro’s monthly Vazaleen party, she got a taste of strutting her costumes out onstage. It was at this time Tanya

by Sean Ban Beaton

Hot Artist

Cheex’s ‘Skin Tight Outta Sight’ started – one of Toronto’s first burlesque troupes. CoCo recalls, “We knew each other from the punk scene. She invited me to join, figured my style would fit right in. It was a perfect match!”

25 years in and she’s still going strong. “I am just happy to be performing and entering into my ‘Legend’ era.”

She describes her burlesque style as quirky and sexy, emphasizing how much heart, soul, effort, and bravery goes into each performance’s concept and execution. “I love a beautiful costume paired a dirty bump ‘n’ grind - and a sense of humour. Even my more serious routines tend to have an element of whimsy.”

CoCo stands out with her sheer body confidence and the infectious joy she brings. She knows how to get a crowd going. “Performing really is a joyful act. My confidence has built over time, and bodies change as time goes on. When I get nervous, I remind myself that I’m doing something I love and that the audience will appreciate my nearly naked audacity, regardless.”

Off stage she’s a sex educator, teaching a range of classes from Kissing for Couples and Flirting for Everyone, to Open Relationships and Overcoming Sexual Shame. “This is super fulfilling for me because, growing up, I absorbed messages that sex was shameful, that queer sex was unthinkable, and that Black women weren’t desirable. This had a tremendous impact on my own sexual development.”

CoCo La Crème will be performing in *Bad Girls of History* at *Revival* on September 30.

Sean Ban Beaton is a music creator, performer, and sound editor in Toronto.



I CHOSE TO

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- GO TO THE HOSPITAL
- CALL A HOTLINE
- GET LEGAL ADVICE
- GET COUNSELLING
- CALL THE POLICE

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LGBTQ2S

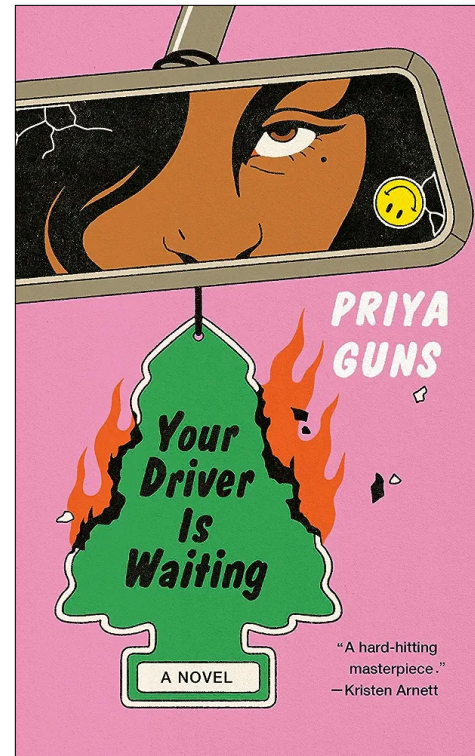


Ontario

This project has been made possible by a grant from the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services.



Indigenous 2-Spirit



Dubbed the “gender-flipped reboot of the 1970s film *Taxi Driver*,” *Your Driver Is Waiting* is a darkly humorous wild ride. Priya Guns’ debut novel is a “crackling send-up of our culture of modern alienation” and a “hard hitting masterpiece.”

Your Driver Is Waiting tells the bold story of Damani, 30-year-old queer socialist, RideShare driver, and Sri Lankan immigrant, grieving the loss of her father while taking care of her mother and figuring out how to survive paycheck-to-paycheck. One day, she gives a ride to Jolene, a rich white woman, who she starts to fall in love with, until Jolene does something unforgivable. Will Damani be able to move past it or will she succumb to obliteration in the wake of Jolene’s explosive chain of events?

Excerpt:

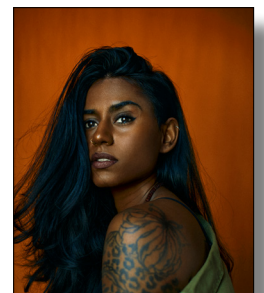
When the stars aligned, driving for RideShare was like driving a confessional. I was an anointed Sister sitting on near-ripped upholstery with Nouveau

Fiction

Car-scented air freshener for incense, and no velvet drape to protect me. I didn’t always care to hear passengers’ problems, but it occasionally made me feel like a better person to do so. Therapists were expensive and most people these days were atheists. Besides, God doesn’t always show that they’re listening. For the most part, though, driving was simply driving, day after day, night after night. If I had ten passengers in one morning, half of them wouldn’t bother to speak to me, three would be with friends so I was definitely a nobody, and the other two would be anyone’s guess. Soul-spillers, secret blurters, conspiracy theorists gone wild.

Every day I saw how people found ways to get high. Hard drugs, soft drugs, shopping, drinking, sex, fads, and online personas, stretching their phones out in front of their faces, immersed in their tiny screens. People did all sorts of things to feel alive. They were big adult babies scavenging for life, for that sensation, you know, the one that makes you feel just right. But if you looked close enough, sat on a park bench alone, leaned against a brick wall in a dirty alleyway, you’d see people who’ve stopped to catch their breath. Between the beats of a racing heart full of fear and anxiety, they nearly choke to death. Jolene would say we could have it all, and I believed her. She was a paper bag I could breathe into while she stroked my hair saying, “Everything will get better. Let me make you a sandwich. With the miche loaf, okay?” Her mouth tasted like grape jam, her bread worth the \$18.

Priya Guns is a Creative Writing graduate from Kingston University. A former teacher, she is an actor and PhD student previously published in short story anthologies, *gal-dem*, *Spring* magazine, and anonymously in the *Guardian*. *Your Driver Is Waiting* is her debut novel.



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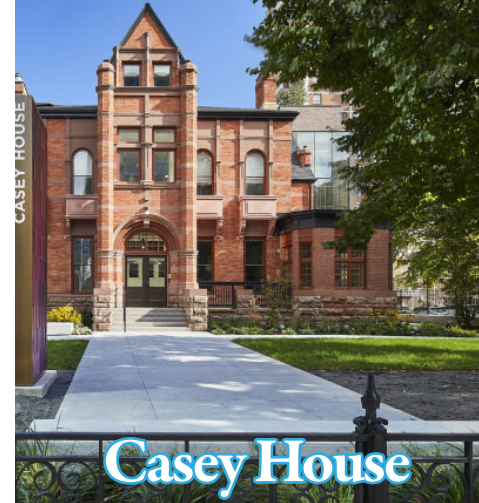
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Casey House is a specialty hospital in Toronto providing ground-breaking care to people living with and at risk of HIV. 2023 marks 40 years since the discovery and naming of HIV/AIDS.

In recognition, we continue to shine a light on the charitable and non-profit organizations who support individuals who continue to fight their HIV/AIDS battles.

In 1986, during the height of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, Casey House was registered as a charity by a group of volunteers led by journalist and activist, **June Callwood**. In 1987, the first home of Casey House, 9 Huntley St., becoming Canada's first stand-alone treatment facility for people living with HIV/AIDS, and Ontario's first free-standing hospice.

In 1988, the doors opened to the first patient-resident, who was greeted with a hug; the first time he had been touched in months. In 1991, **HRH Diana, Princess of Wales** visited Casey House, holding hands with clients and helping to destigmatize public hysteria that HIV/AIDS could be spread by casual contact. In 2003, Casey House expanded its physical space and services, with the purchase of 571 Jarvis St., Toronto, thanks to a generous donation from an individual benefactor.

by Sherry Sylvain

Community Cornerstone

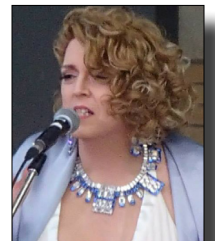
At the time Casey House was initiated, the average life expectancy for someone living with AIDS was 9 months. Many people were dying alone, cut off from the support of family, friends, and the medical community because of the associated vile stigma. Guided by the conviction that a dying person should do so according to their own wishes, surrounded by loving caregivers, June Callwood's goal was to create a place of medical excellence in HIV/AIDS treatment and of love and compassion.

The founders believed that every person deserved to be cared for with dignity and compassion; they created new welcoming approaches to palliative care and played a leading role in both end-of-life care, and HIV/AIDS health care, all in an environment reminiscent of home.

Over the years Casey House evolved from a hospice to a specialty hospital, providing care and support for people living with and at risk of HIV. Now they're a specialty hospital in Toronto providing ground-breaking care. Offer a growing mix of inpatient, outpatient and community-based services that meet individual needs and journeys of health and wellness, Casey House is Canada's first and only hospital for people living with and at risk of HIV with their holistic and interdisciplinary approach.

Building on a legacy of advocacy and social justice, they actively work to dismantle barriers to care and safe living. Casey House provides a community and sense of belonging that connects people to care. The humanity of each client is at the heart of everything they do.

Events Editor, Sherry Sylvain is a transgender woman who has been working in the LGBTQ community for too many years to count (or admit to).





Would you like to support community charities?

Coronation 37: The Crowns That Care Gala “Baubles & Bow Ties”

October 13 to 15

The Imperial Court of Toronto presents their Annual Creative Black-Tie Event. Events include: The Out-Of-Town Show; The Coronation Ball; The Victory Brunch. A wonderful Gala evening and supporting events to benefit the PWA Essentials Market and Rainbow Railroad.

Various venues in Toronto

www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com/

TICOT Drag Bingo - Victory Party Edition

October 15; 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Join TICOT for an afternoon of fun and friendship. Proceeds go to the Reign 36 Charities of Choice - Rainbow Railroad and The Toronto PWA Food Essentials Market. Meet the Upper House for Reign 37.

Flash On Church, 463 Church St., Toronto

www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com/

What’s happening in and around The Village?

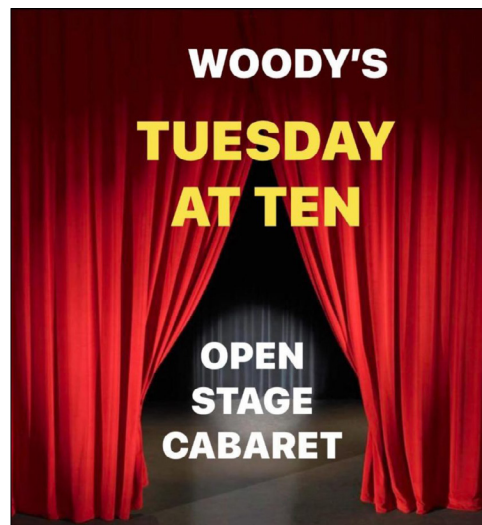
C.U. Next Tuesday - Open Stage

Tuesdays; from 9:00 p.m.

Bring your sheet music or pick a song from their song books. Musical theatre & jazz standards encouraged but, you may sing what you like.

O’Grady’s On Church, 518 Church St., Toronto

www.ogradyschurch.com/



SAVE THE DATE

The Imperial Court of Toronto's
Coronation 37
Saturday, October 14TH, 2023

We welcome you back to the
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For the Annual Crowns That Care™ Gala.

**“Baubles
& Bow Ties”**

Open Stage Cabaret

Tuesdays

STRIKE A POSE! Woody’s/Sailor Toronto’s Open Stage Cabaret. Hosted by a stunning array of leading queens with special guests. DJ Cory Activate. Glorious star-making machinery & big fun.

Woody’s, 467 Church St., Toronto

www.facebook.com/groups/7687276525/

Hump Night Hunnies

Wednesdays; from 10:00 p.m.

Katinka Kature and Carlotta Carlisle host a selection of guest performers for an evening of exceptional entertainment.

Woody’s, 467 Church St., Toronto

www.instagram.com/woodysonchurch/

Jock Night Thursdays

Thursdays; from 10:00 p.m.

Join hostess Morgan James, everyone’s second favourite drag queen, and the semi-clad (or less) men of Cock Bar for an evening of feisty fun and frivolity. Drink specials, prizes, and surprises. This is a “men only” space on the second floor, and not handicap accessible.

Cock Bar, 461 Church St., Second Floor, Toronto

www.flashonchurch.com

Hollywoody to Broadway show

Sundays

Hilarious host, Georgie Girl, welcomes a selection of guest performers every Sunday evening serving up your favourite hits of stage and screen, and more.

Woody’s, 467 Church St., Toronto

www.instagram.com/woodysonchurch/

Looking for fun with the Queer-adjacent crowd?

Randy Rainbow for President

November 3; 8:00 p.m.

American comedian and singer, best known for spoof interviews that blend political satire and musical parodies from a liberal perspective. For the tour, Rainbow will take on current topics and politicians while bringing fan favourite videos and parody songs to live on stage.

Massey Hall, 178 Victoria St., Toronto

www.ticketmaster.ca/andy-rainbow-for-president-toronto-ontario-11-03-2023/event/10005ED3A4FE13E1



Alan Carr: Regional Trinket

November 15; 7:00 p.m.

English comedian, broadcaster and writer. His breakthrough was in 2001, winning the City Life Best Newcomer of the Year and the BBC New Comedy Awards. In 2019, he became a judge on RuPaul's Drag Race UK. In 2021, he took over from Fearnie Cotton as host of BBC's Interior Design Masters.

Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre, 189 Yonge St., Toronto

www.ticketmaster.ca/alan-carr-regional-trinket-toronto-ontario-11-15-2023/event/10005EBAC0951EA6

How do you feel about hanging with the str8 peoples?

Just For Laughs Comedy Festival

September 21 to 30

Just For Laughs is one of the world's most important platforms for stand-up artists. Since 2012 the annual festival has showcased comedy's biggest stars, been a career-launcher for local and national emerging comedians and been an important driver of tourism and fiscal revenue for Ontario and the City of Toronto.

Various venues in Toronto

www.toronto.hahaha.com/en



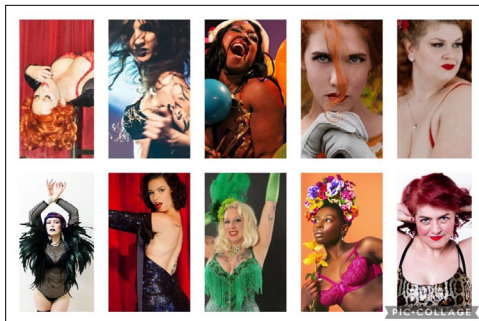
Bad Girls of History: A Burlesque Tribute

September 30; 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

This is a show celebrating messy, complicated, brave, rebellious women who made an impact by refusing to be meek and subservient. What better way to celebrate them but through the only art form that truly applauds women behaving the opposite way to how we're supposed to in public: burlesque!

Revival Bar, 783 College St., Toronto

www.badgirlsofhistory2023.brownpapertickets.com/



Bonnie Raitt: Just Like That...

October 6; 8:00 p.m.

US blues singer and guitarist known for such hits as I Can't Make You Love Me, Angel From Montgomery, Just Like That, and Something To Talk About.

Massey Hall, 178 Victoria St., Toronto

www.ticketmaster.ca/bonnie-raitt-just-like-that-tour-toronto-ontario-10-06-2023/event/10005E399B4C167B

The Wild Rovers

October 14 to November 15

The Wild Rovers is a mad-cap adventure that sees the famed band whisked away to a fantastical land of Athunia, not to be confused with their sworn enemy, Ethunia. These fictional countries find themselves on the brink of war and the loveable, hard-working band must help them find a path to peace through song! There will be puppets, there will be no intermission and most definitely no fourth wall.

Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre, 189 Yonge St., Toronto

www.ticketmaster.ca/the-wild-rovers-preview-performance-toronto-ontario-10-14-2023/event/10005EF0CCE93616

Opera Atelier presents Orpheus and Eurydice

October 26 to November 1

The ancient legend of Orpheus and Eurydice concerns the fateful love of Orpheus of Thrace for the beautiful Eurydice. Orpheus was the son of Apollo and the muse Calliope. It may be a late addition to the Orpheus myths, as the latter cult-title suggests those attached to Persephone. The subject is among the most frequently retold of all Greek myths, being featured in numerous works.

Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre, 189 Yonge St., Toronto

www.ticketmaster.ca/opera-atelier-presents-orpheus-and-eurydice-toronto-ontario-10-26-2023/event/10005EFEBFE933C5

Pink Martini

November 10; 8:00 p.m.

The biggest little orchestra around – Pink Martini featuring lead singer China Forbes, returns to Roy Thomson Hall. Crossing genres of classical, jazz and old-fashioned pop – Thomas Lauderdale founded Pink Martini in 1994 to provide more inclusive musical soundtracks for political fundraisers and causes such as civil rights, affordable housing, the environment, etc. Their first song "Sympathique (Je ne veux pas travailler)" became an overnight sensation in France.

Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St., Toronto

www.roythomsonhall.mhrth.com/tickets/pink-martini

Chris, Mrs. - A New Holiday Musical

December 5 to 31

The everyday collides with the enchanted in this new holiday musical. Between Charlie's nostalgic nature and Holly's Christmas cheer, it soon becomes a holiday no one will forget. Full of mischief and mistletoe, twisted ankles and tangled heartstrings, Chris, Mrs. is bound to be a musical holiday family tradition.

Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre, 189 Yonge St., Toronto

www.ticketmaster.ca/chris-mrs-a-new-holiday-musical-tickets/artist/3038888

Eager for an episodic emigration from the everyday?

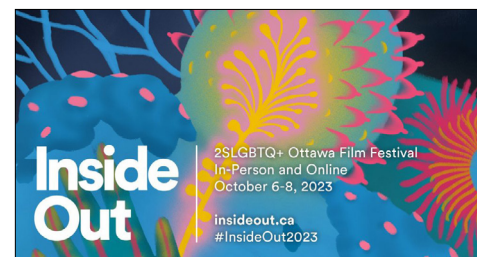
2SLGBTQ+ Ottawa Film Festival

October 6 to 8

Inside Out is a not-for-profit registered charity that exists to challenge attitudes and change lives through the promotion, production and exhibition of film made by and about 2SLGBTQ+ people of all ages, races and abilities.

Ottawa Art Gallery, 50 Mackenzie King Bridge, Ottawa

www.insideout.ca/ottawafestival/schedule/



Kim Mitchell

October 20; 8:00 p.m.

Multi-platinum, JUNO Award-winning Rock icon and inductee of the 2021/22 Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame, Kim Mitchell is one of the most well-known Canadian guitar players and an acclaimed singer-songwriter of classic rock anthems including Go For Soda, Rock N Roll Duty, Patio Lanterns, I am a Wild Party, Easy To Tame and All We Are.

The Rose Theatre, 1 Theatre Lane, Brampton

www.tickets.brampton.ca/Online/

The Vagina Monologues

October 26 to 28

An Obie Award-winning whirlwind tour of a forbidden zone, The Vagina Monologues wowed the world with its wildly divergent gathering of female voices. Directed by Jimish Thakkar, this Hive Performing Arts' production is a must see for anyone who is a woman or knows a woman.

Cyril Clark Library Lecture Hall, 20 Loafers Lake Ln., Brampton

www.tickets.brampton.ca/online/default.asp

The Jinx & DeLa Holiday Show Starring BenDeLaCreme & Jinx Monsoon

November 25, 8:00 p.m.

You better watch out, you better not cry, because "The Queens of Christmas" are coming back to your town with a brand-new edition of the internationally acclaimed The Jinx & DeLa Holiday Show.

FirstOntario Concert Hall, 1 Summers Lane, Hamilton

www.ticketmaster.ca/the-jinx-de-la-holiday-show-starring-hamilton-ontario-11-25-2023/event/10005EE7A7561818

Bravo Niagara! Presents: The Manhattan Transfer 50th Anniversary & Final World Tour

December 3; 7:30 p.m.

The Manhattan Transfer has achieved an incomparable career of pop and jazz hits, a legacy that defines the group as it celebrates its 50th Anniversary. This legendary quartet has won 10 Grammy Awards out of 21 nominations, and this past year they had been inducted into the Vocal Group Hall of Fame.

www.bravoniagara.org/manhattan-transfer

Events Editor, Sherry Sylvain is a transgender woman who has been working in the LGBTQ community for too many years to count (or admit to).



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by Mychol Scully

From The Heart

For this issue referencing “Queering Architecture,” I wanted to move away from a discussion of the built environment to address the concept of *queer space*.

This term has been used in a variety of applications, from discussions about the closet, to the history of bath houses, to looking at nightclubs, and the very notion of a *gaybourhood*.

All of these are manifestations of the psycho-social concept of *queer space*. In broad terms, queer space refers to environments and experiences that cater to and/or support individual and group expressions of queer identity. The term implies *queer SAFE space* — a place, environment or experience where queer people can safely express their queerness. This could be as simple as holding hands in public with a significant other or as challenging as displaying one’s body in non-heteronormative ways. Drag queens and kings, leather daddies, butch lesbians, and androgynous non-binary representation all come to mind.

I have often seen discussion online and in person questioning the “need” for gaybourhoods and other queer spaces. The comments often come from gay white males for whom modern society has provided a certain amount of accommodation. Straight people enthused about their experience attending a gay wedding and suggesting that homosexuals (and by extension, ALL queers) have now been successfully assimilated into “polite” society and therefore the idea of gaybourhoods and other queer spaces are no longer necessary.

What these self-satisfied gay men and uninformed straight people seem unaware of or are unwilling to acknowledge is that for many queer individuals, the world is very much still not a safe place to express

themselves. Even the most urban environments includes locales and situations where simply walking down the street holding your boyfriend’s hand can be an invitation to verbal confrontation (or worse).

This discussion is even more important for newcomers and citizens arriving in the city from smaller communities, rural areas, or constrained social situations (e.g. unsupportive family members). For these individuals, the existence of a “gay village” might be the first time they experience overt queer public behaviours. Such experiences can provide a special kind of support to their early queer journey, assuring them that they are not “the only one.”

A centralized gaybourhood also creates safe opportunities to explore queer social environments. For queer individuals with little to no experience navigating the city, it means they don’t need to risk unwelcome exposure by accidentally expressing their queer identity in an unsupportive heteronormative space.

While it’s true that there are more and more queer-friendly spaces available, even if they’re not exclusively queer, I think it will be some time before society can offer the inclusive experience that a gay village offers.

Mychol Scully is Senior Art Director for INspired Media publications PinkPlayMags, theBUZZ, The Local Biz Magazine, and The Pink Pages Directory. Mychol is available for thoughtful conversation or lascivious teasing any time at mychol@mychol.com.



Autumn Horoscopes

SEPTEMBER 2023 to NOVEMBER 2023

by Julie Antoinette

Aries (March 21 – April 20)

If avoidance, numbing and distancing have not worked managing that unpleasant feeling, take a new approach. Why not a bit of curiosity wrapped in loving compassion? Pause, get curious, implore a little. W5H is a good place to start. Who? What? Why? When? Where? How? Rather than a wall, build a bridge so you can access the other side of this.

Taurus (April 21 – May 21)

You can't figure out a pattern of self-sabotage in one area of your life. Are you afraid of your own power? Not so much the unbridled force of it, but rather, the vast burden of responsibility that being fully in charge entails. You've heard that responsibility is merely the ability to respond. We respond with our voice and in this area of your life, here lies your power. Do not abdicate.

Gemini (May 22 – June 21)

A decision weighing heavily on you keeps you up at night. You play out various scenarios in your mind and weigh outcomes against one another. Come out of your head and into your heart. Here in this space, you may abandon the rigors of logic and rest in the sureness of truth. Your decision will be obvious.

Cancer (June 22 – July 22)

A recent public shaming event was constructed from design to entrap you. Your attitude now will determine your recovery moving forward. Transparency, personal responsibility, and ownership of what is yours will dispel any notion of incrimination and might even provoke a positive public response. When you own your own dirt, no one can sling it at you.

Leo (July 23 – August 22)

It's not that you're discontented, but you're not fully content with your lot right now. What's missing in your life makes you thirsty. That missing piece comes with a price tag, but have no doubts, all will be worth it. The very pursuit will build your character and that is what's priceless.

Virgo (August 23 – September 23)

You are on a quest to truly discover and embody confidence. Your life requires it of you. Let's revert to the original Latin for some insight: The prefix, "con" means "with" and the root "fide" means, "neither specious nor counterfeit: genuine." With trueness. Seek to embody truth and trust and you will achieve your quest. "This above all to thine own self be true, and it must follow, as night follows day, thou canst not then be false to any man." ~ Shakespeare

Libra (September 24 – October 23)

Lately you wonder, are you truly a free thinker? Which of your thoughts are yours versus influenced and absorbed externally? One is not superior to the other but you must scrutinize those thoughts you adopt and incorporate into your belief systems. A belief is a thought you keep thinking. You are the curator of your creed.

Scorpio (October 24 – November 22)

Your ambition is unparalleled. Yet, how rewarding can it be to always be living in a future mental state? Take your time and acquaint yourself with the feeling of presence. Enjoy more moments with your presence now, because you won't get them back. The future can wait for its own moments of presence.

Sagittarius (November 23 - December 21)

Get out of your comfort zone - your lovely insular palace where you abide stagnantly undisturbed. It is time to stir things up! Allow yourself to experience "the unwanted" as it brings you awareness of the "wanted." Knowing what you don't want gives rise to the desire of what you do want. So, get uncomfortable and expand!

Capricorn (December 22 – January 19)

What conversations occur in your head when no one's around? Self-talk - it's a thing! Oftentimes, our "inner voice" is not so nice. What does your self-talk sound like? Is it cruel or criticizing? Imagine speaking that way to a child or to your best friend? If these words you speak to yourself wouldn't dare be addressed to a friend or a child, there's a problem. As the Brits say, "Have a word with yourself."

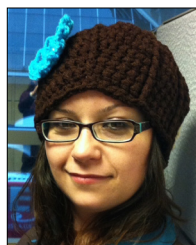
Aquarius (January 20 – February 19)

You've developed a habit of "productive worrying" that needs examining more closely. Does it give you a sense of control somehow? A sense of preparedness while mentally troubleshooting? Ask yourself some challenging questions. You may just uncover your justification mechanism for housing this harmful and useless internal energetic parasite. Then, you can release it and stop worrying. Worrying is a form of praying for what you don't want. Relax. Nothing is under control.

Pisces (February 20 – March 20)

Your heart breaks from a recent lover's betrayal. While the pain of a fresh wound cries loudest right now, know that in time you'll look back with immense relief. The quiet certainty that you recognized every red flag, and the knowingness that your love could never have filled that void cavern, much less be loved in return. "Rejection is God's re-direction." Operation Bullet Dodged: Successful.

Julie is a Sociology and Psychology graduate, a Psychotherapy Intern and a lifelong student of the psyche. She seeks to relay intuitive messages of guidance from the collective astrological archetypes.



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Canada Pride in Vancouver

Canadian Airlines Sun Destinations

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PLUS LGBTQ+ Travel Trends for 2024



Vancouver, British Columbia is one of most beautiful and picturesque cities in all of Canada. From its temperate climate and sweeping mountain vistas, to the numerous city beaches and laid-back vibe, it's no wonder that it's one of the top destinations to visit in the country.

We're going to look at some of the more alternative and queer aspects of the city, providing more of an insider's guide to some of the hipper happenings and places to hang. First off, one of the best times to visit for a truly queer experience is during the month of August, when the city not only hosts its annual [Vancouver Pride](#) festival, but also the [Vancouver Queer Film Festival](#).

This year, [Vancouver Pride](#) expanded their footprint immensely, taking place over the full weekend with a longer parade route, and larger festival grounds that is far beyond the queerness of Davie Village. As of now, the reactions have been mixed as to how everyone feels about this change. However, it's most likely a trial run leading up to Vancouver being the host city for [Canada Pride](#) in 2024. The first Canada Pride was held in Montreal in 2017 and Winnipeg in 2022. The host city must include a Human Rights Conference that lasts a minimum of three days, along with an opening and closing ceremony.

It's estimated that overall attendance numbers this year were upwards of 40,000. This year also saw the main stage being gated with no outside beverages permitted within the designated area. While still free to attend, the onsite concession sales generated an increase in earned revenue for the non-profit organization through onsite concessions. The longer parade route also had a few changes, as the organization aimed to expand their green initiatives and encouraged participating groups to reduce their use of motorized vehicles. Many groups also used recyclable materials to decorate their vehicles and handed out recyclable or reusable swag.

Later in the month, the [Vancouver Queer Film Festival](#) takes over the city for ten days of queer screenings, talks, and events. There's a large local spotlight, along with national and international components. Screenings take place at the [Vancouver Playhouse](#), as well as other locations throughout the city. Finally, the [Vines Art Festival](#) takes place during the second half of the month and includes multiple days of eclectic, grassroots programming. One of the events was specifically programmed for the queer community and took place on beautiful Sunset Beach.

On the topic of beaches, it seems that Vancouver's shoreline is one long continuous beach, from those located just outside Stanley Park all the way westward toward UBC, where the clothing optional Wreck Beach can be found. Each beach area has its own vibe, with Sunset being the more downtown gathering spot, Kits being more for the younger set, Jericho having a more relaxed community feel, and Wreck being the party spot for those who dare and are willing to walk down (and back up) over 100 steps to get there. If you do make it, make sure to catch the sunset at least once to partake in the cheerful appreciation as another day ends.

There are many areas outside of downtown that are worth visiting. On the east side, there's trendy [Commercial Drive](#) and the [Mount Pleasant](#) area, both filled with indie restaurants, bars, and shops. The east is also where you'll find most of the craft breweries and brew houses, which makes it quite easy to design your own tour. Be sure to stop by the retro-themed [Vintage and Provisions](#) while in the area for some bites and libations.

Over on the west side is where you'll find [Kitsilano](#) that includes many interesting finds along both 4th Avenue and Broadway. Further west (and upward) is [Point Grey](#), one of the swankiest and expensive neighbourhoods. Once here, the terrain becomes relatively flat again, and there's so much to explore by way of greenery and gardens, art displays, and the shops of [Wesbrook Village](#). As well, [Pacific Spirit Regional Park](#) is located adjacent to UBC, and offers a forest full of hiking/biking trails. If you're wanting to get a great view of the city skyline, stop at Trimble Park in the Point Grey area, a hidden gem for watching fireworks, or just star gazing.

In terms of accommodations, there are a couple hotel alternatives to be found. Hostelling International has two properties within the city limits, one [downtown](#) in the west end near Davie Village, and the other over at [Jericho Beach](#), an old army barrack building with a bar/restaurant, patio, steps from the sun, sand, and ocean, as well as the [Jericho Arts Centre](#). The [YMCA](#) downtown is another option, and fun fact, this is the location that inspired that big gay anthem by the [Village People!](#) There are also a couple of reasonably priced accommodation options at UBC, with [Triumf House](#), [Pacific Spirit Hostel](#), and [Suites at UBC](#). If you're wanting to have a more elevated stay, try the [Granville Island Hotel](#), or the newly opened [Azur Hotel](#).

This year there were two new queer bars that recently opened outside of Davie Village, the female owned [Bimini's Pub & Lounge](#) in Kitsilano, and [Rosette](#) in Gastown. Other queer friendly spaces can be found almost everywhere, including those owned by the [Narrow Group](#), and the [Fringe Cafe](#) which is located across from the newly refurbished [Hollywood Theatre](#). As well, [The Cobalt](#) has regular queer events over on Main Street.

Check out [Destination Vancouver](#) for more exciting things to do in this wonderful west coast city. Also, another recommendation that comes highly is the [Really Gay History Walking Tour](#). Events and happenings can also be found on [Vancouver is Awesome](#), [Daily Hive Vancouver](#), [Inside Vancouver](#), and [Vancouver Magazine](#).

Bryen Dunn is a freelance journalist based in Toronto with a focus on tourism, lifestyle, entertainment and community issues. He has written several travel articles and has an extensive portfolio of celebrity interviews with musicians, actors and other public personalities.



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Starting this autumn, [Canada Jetlines](#) passengers can now travel between Toronto and Montego Bay, Jamaica, and Orlando – in addition to existing services to Cancun, Mexico, and Las Vegas.

Toronto – Montego Bay – Toronto

Beginning November 5, 2023, weekend service will be offered between Toronto and Montego Bay. From January, it will be increased to x3 flights per week, offering the perfect chance to explore all that Montego Bay has to offer.

Toronto – Orlando – Toronto

Starting October 30, 2023, flights will be introduced between Toronto and Orlando International Airport taking eager travellers to central Florida's famous theme parks and beaches with x3 flights weekly.

Toronto – Cancun – Toronto

Canada Jetlines' popular year-round service to Cancun, Mexico, currently operating twice weekly, will increase to x3 weekly on October 6, 2023, before going to x4 weekly flights in February. During New Years, additional flights will also be made available.

Toronto – Las Vegas – Toronto

Canada Jetlines' early autumn schedule has it returning to the bright lights and excitement of Las Vegas with x2 flights weekly on Thursdays and Sundays, effective August 31, 2023. From October, services will increase to x3 flights per week.

[Porter](#), this fall, will be flying to Orlando, Miami, Tampa, Fort Lauderdale, and Fort Myers. Start your vacation on the plane with free beer, wine and snacks, free, fast streaming Wi-Fi, in-flight entertainment, delicious food options and no middle seats!

Tampa flights start November 1, 2023 – the jewel of Florida's Gulf Coast. Rich in history, culture and natural beauty. Explore Tampa along the scenic Riverwalk and get a taste of Cuba in historic Ybor City.

Fort Myers flights start November 10, 2023 – enjoy white sand beaches and pristine golf courses, then head to the Edison & Ford Winter Estates to learn about two of America's greatest inventors.

Orlando flights start November 21, 2023 – known as the Theme Park Capital of the World. Explore natural attractions in and around the city, like the Everglades to see unique landscapes and wildlife.

Fort Lauderdale flights start November 30, 2023 – explore 300 miles of waterways on a boat cruise or venture out on the canals on your own by jet ski or boat!

Miami flights start December 12, 2023 – soak up the sun at Miami Beach and explore the world-famous Ocean Drive for Art Deco architecture and ocean side dining.

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By Bryen Dunn

HALLOWEEN THRILLS

Mickey's Not-So-Scary Halloween Party at Walt Disney World Resort makes a frightfully fun return at Magic Kingdom Park.

Universal Orlando Resort's Halloween Horror Nights at Universal Studios Florida returns for a record-breaking 48 nights featuring 10 new movie-quality haunted houses.

At **SeaWorld Orlando**, guests can experience **Howl-O-Scream** returns to terrorize guests with an immersive experience.

Brick or Treat Presents Monster Party at LEGOLAND Florida Resort will feature tons of candy, never-before-seen exclusive LEGO characters and an all-new cinematic experience.

FOR THE FOODIES

Visit **Orlando's Magical Dining** for three-course prix-fixe menus for \$40 – \$60. This year's roster brings 22 new restaurants to the dining program, 8 are Michelin-recognized.

SeaWorld Orlando's Craft Beer Festival features more than 100 craft brews, wines, seltzers and cocktails, including an unbeatable mix of domestic and local Florida favourites.

At the **EPCOT International Food & Wine Festival presented by CORKCICLE** savour flavours from around the globe, circling the World Showcase with 25+ Global Marketplaces.

Central Florida Veg Fest Presented by Vegetarians of Central Florida will feature exhibits and activities centered on vegan cuisines and lifestyles from over 200 vendors.

The Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Food & Wine Classic is a street party festival with

unlimited award-winning food and beverage tastings at diverse food stations.

LGBT EVENTS

GayDays Orlando has blossomed over the past 3 decades into one of the world's largest LGBTQ+ pride celebrations.

Girls in Wonderland is a counterpart to GayDays, catering to female members of the LGBTQ+ community. It features parties, special performances and celebrity appearances.

One Magical Weekend is one of the world's largest LGBTQ+ pride and music festivals. Taking place at *Walt Disney World*, it boasts international DJ talent and world-class events.

RED Shirt Pride Day was inspired by the original 30+ "kindred spirits" that bravely met at [Magic Kingdom Park](#) in 1991, it's grown to become one of the longest running LGBTQ+ events in history.

Annual Pulse Remembrance Ceremony is about gathering in love, unity, courage and strength at the [Pulse Interim Memorial](#) to honour the 49 lives lost on June 12, 2016 – the memorial will soon be replaced by an impressive permanent structure.

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A Look Ahead at What's on the Horizon for 2024

By Bryen Dunn

As summer winds down, look ahead to 2024 to see what's new and exciting in some top destinations across the globe, from the U.S. to Europe and beyond.

Barbados will be opening [Sam Lord's Castle Barbados](#), a Wyndham Grand Resort and iconic 422-room beachfront all-inclusive luxury lifestyle experience. With a focus on green-living and well-being. The amenities include private balconies or patios with breathtaking views, an on-site bar and lounge, salon, poolside snack bar, babysitting services, live entertainment, and a state-of-the-art fitness centre and spa.

Belize's annual [Chocolate Festival of Belize](#) is celebrated yearly over the Commonwealth weekend in May. In the summer, the [LobsterFest](#) is a fusion of spices sizzling to perfection on fresh-caught lobsters accompanied by the enchanting view of turquoise waters. [Belize's International Music and Food Festival](#) is a two-day summer festival that showcases local and international musical artists.

Orlando, Florida is celebrating the 25th anniversary of [Fun Spot America](#) with deals on entrance passes. [Minion Land](#) is the latest addition to Universal Studios Florida. Also, [Magic Kingdom's](#) beloved Splash Mountain is to be rethemed and renamed Tiana's Bayou Adventure, inspired by Disney's *The Princess and the Frog*. [Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts](#) in downtown Orlando will open Judson's in fall 2023, offering intimate cabaret-style seating for 150 for live performances.

San Francisco, California, will boast [27 Michelin-starred restaurants](#) in 2024. The [Chinese New Year Parade](#) will feature acrobats, lion dancers, stilt walkers and a 268-foot Golden Dragon. Kicking off in February and culminating in a massive parade and

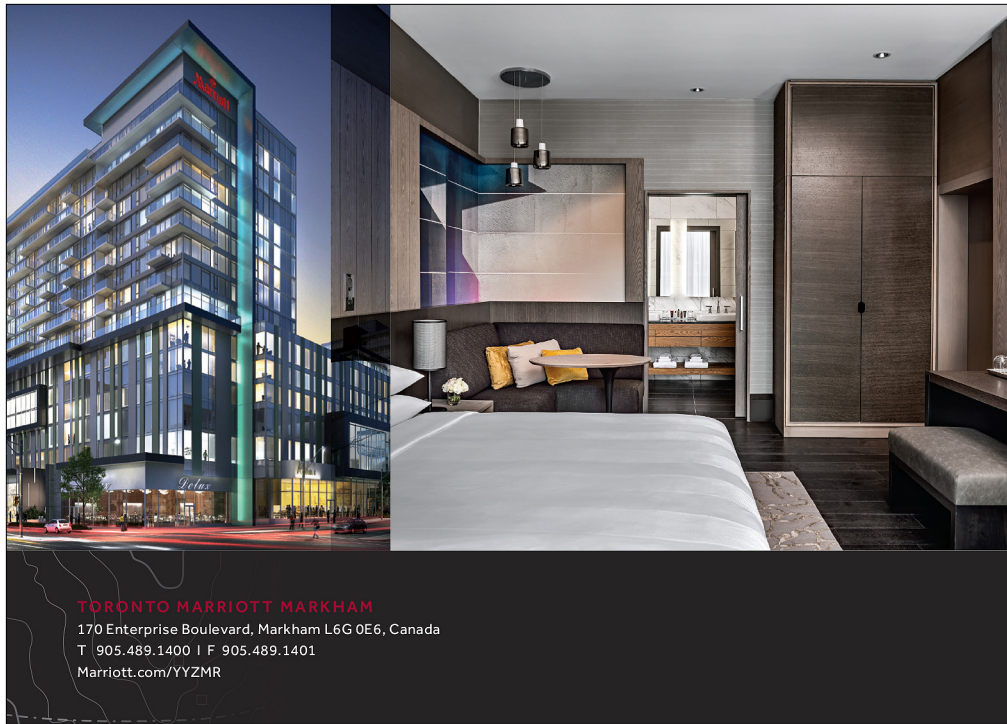
party on the last weekend in May, Carnaval celebrates San Francisco's Latin-American and Caribbean communities. As the [LGBTQ capital of the world](#), each year, millions gather in the [Civic Center](#) to join in solidarity to paint the town in Rainbow flag colours (created by San Francisco artist Gilbert Baker in 1978).

Vienna, Austria, will hold its [Vienna Opera Ball 2024](#) as the Vienna State Opera is transformed into a world-famous ballroom. The [Wien Museum's spectacular reopening](#) will take place in December of 2023, welcoming its first major temporary exhibition in February 2024 on the new top "floating" floor. [Palace Lamarr](#), named after 20th-century Hollywood star Hedy Lamarr, will open in Vienna, 2024. From January to July, experience [LGBTQ+ events](#) such as the [Rainbow Ball](#), to dance along the Viennese waltz in Parkhotel Schönbrunn, the [Vienna Pride and Rainbow Parade](#), and the [EuroGames](#).

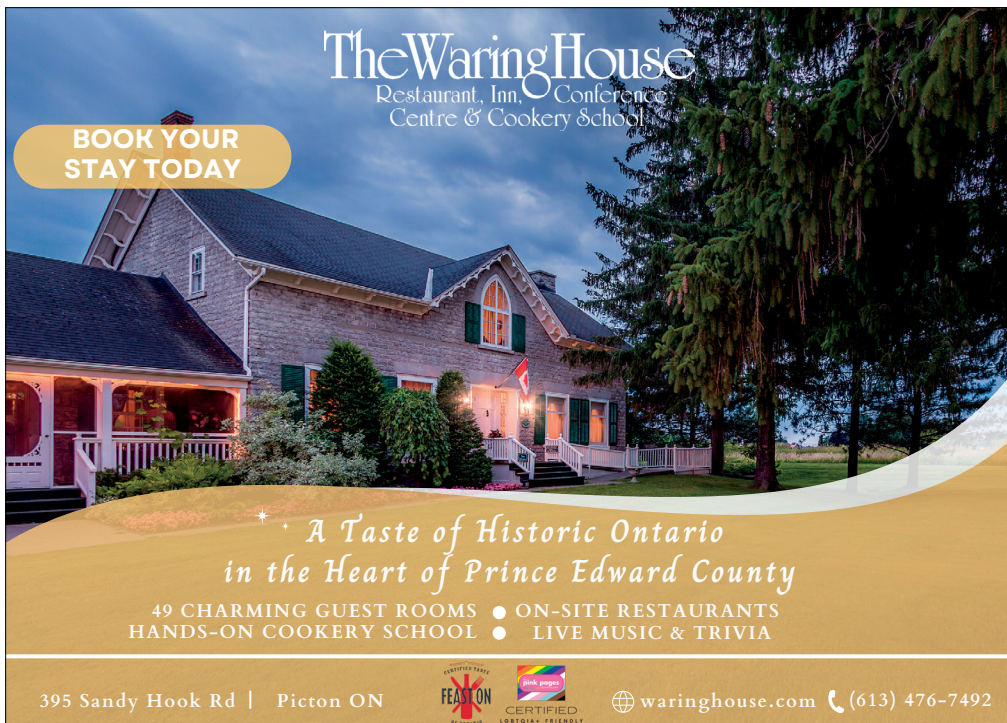
The nation of [Israel](#) is celebrating its 75th anniversary of the birth of the modern state of Israel. This summer, celebrate the largest LGBTQ+ pride event in the Middle East, [Tel Aviv Pride](#), showcasing how welcoming Israel is to diverse visitors. Other events include the [Jerusalem Film Festival](#) and the [Red Sea Jazz Festival](#).

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From the Maldives to Finland, companies and brands in the tourism industry are taking notice in the need for green investments when it comes to making a serious long-lasting impact in the environment through leading the development of sustainability within the tourism industry.

Coco Collection, Maldives

Comprised of two different boutique island resorts, Coco Bodu Hithi and Coco Palm Dhuni Kolhu, [Coco Collection](#) creates a unique Maldivian experience ranging from luxe amenities to eco-forward initiatives for guests to enjoy during their stay. The resorts' marine life development (including coral and tree planting), Chef's Garden, the Olive Ridley Project (a turtle rehabilitation program), and more, create a way for guests to get involved in their

conservation efforts. Each island resorts' location in the Baa Atoll lends way to a richly diverse marine biodiversity.

Ocean Club Resorts, Providenciales in Turks & Caicos

Located directly along the world-renowned Grace Bay Beach, sits [Ocean Club Resorts](#), two all-suite properties that were the first properties to be [Green Globe Certified](#) in the Turks & Caicos Islands. A few of the eco-forward initiatives that made the resorts eligible for the certificate include placing cloth reusable shopping bags in each suite; replacing plastic straws with paper and Styrofoam containers with paper boxes; use of LED lighting, encouraging guests in each suite to reduce water and energy use waste during their stay. Additionally, the resorts have recently premiered a [carbon footprint calculator](#).

Hotel Belmar, Costa Rica

Over the years, [Hotel Belmar](#) has crafted an organic hospitality model rooted in eco-friendly practices and innovation, pioneering programs to further sound regeneration of the ecosystem and economic benefit. Hotel Belmar's long-standing commitment to sustainability is evidenced the growth of their initiatives, including their authentic farm experience Finca Madre, which is the first agricultural project

of its kind in Costa Rica to earn carbon-neutral certification. SAVIA, the Hotel's own private reserve, engages raw nature, non-invasive architecture, and science to highlight the holistic connection between the human soul and the forest.

Hoteles Xcaret, Riviera Maya

[Grupo Xcaret](#), has consistently embraced the concept of cultivating economic, socio-cultural, and environmental value. Xcaret resorts adopted the use of salt, rather than chlorine, for treating their pools and water features, provide guests with reusable cups, and grow organic herbs within their on-site garden for use in its restaurants. Other notable efforts include: a responsible waste separation and disposal program, the implementation of a sewage treatment plant program, the installation of an osmosis treatment facility, and the installation of water fountains to help reduce single-use plastics.

Fairmont Mayakoba, Riviera Maya

Located in Riviera Maya, the unique freshwater canal system that weaves its way through the resort's thick jungle and mangroves was created by tapping into one of the world's most extensive underground river systems that lies below Yucatan. By bringing fresh water to the surface in a highly protected area, the resort created a viable and flourishing ecosystem, which has seen an increase in population of many species that call Mayakoba home. The property also has a [Coral Reef Restoration Program](#) in partnership with Oceanus AC that provides guests with the opportunity to help save the planet by restoring the Mesoamerican Reef, the second largest in the world.

Multiple Accommodations, Dominica

Dominica is acclaimed for its commitment to become the world's first climate-resilient nation, making the Nature Island the Caribbean's most environmentally conscious island. Most recently, Dominica has completed drilling the wells needed for their first ever geothermal power plant, making them one of the first islands in the Caribbean to successfully replace fossil fuel-generated energy with green energy. The [InterContinental Dominica Cabrits Resort and Spa](#), [Jungle Bay](#), and [Secret Bay](#) are perfect options. For those looking for sustainable, one-of-a-kind stays, [Coulibri Ridge](#) and [Fort Young Hotel](#) do not disappoint.

Swissotel, Chicago

[Swissotel Chicago](#) was one of the first hotels in the city to install low-flow toilets which led to a 50% reduction in water. They promote sustainability in ways that enhance the guest's well-being, from the architectural design through to the genuine and natural materials they use. 80% of lighting is from energy efficient products, such as LEDs, and guest room thermostats are connected to an energy management system that reduces usage. Their culinary team utilizes an eco-digesting machine that breaks down food waste and returns tens of thousands of gallons of water to the ecosystem per year.

Multiple Accommodations, Finland

[Haltia Lake Lodge Hotel](#), awarded the most sustainable hotel of 2022 by Boutique Hotel Awards Europe, is now collaborating with Arctic Farming, an agri-tech start-up dedicated to solving global food issues using technology. At [Hawkhill](#) you will get to know the most common wild plants that are easy to find in Finnish forests and meadows, and get the best tips on how to identify, forage, handle, preserve, and enjoy the plants. [Hotel Kasnäs](#) operates on retained heat: the outdoor pools, the spa and the restaurant are all heated with district energy produced from residual heat from its parent company, the Salmon Farm. Plus, all water you drink, shower and bathe in, is purified Baltic seawater.

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