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Spring/Summer 2026



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Happy & Safe Travels

from the publisher

Dear and queer travelers,

There's something magical about travel in the warmer months. The days stretch a little longer, patios fill with laughter, festivals spill into the streets, and suddenly the world feels wide open again. In this issue, we invite you to pack your curiosity and come along as we explore some of the places and experiences that make spring and summer travel so special.

Our main feature takes us east, where ocean air, rugged coastlines, and welcoming communities shape the rhythm of life across Atlantic Canada. From Nova Scotia to Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, the East Coast offers travellers something increasingly rare — space to breathe, landscapes that stir the soul, and communities where hospitality is still a way of life.

Closer to home, we also spend time in Kingston, a city that continues to surprise visitors with its mix of history, creativity, and vibrant local culture. With its walkable downtown, thriving arts scene, and welcoming spirit, Kingston reminds us that some of the most rewarding travel experiences can be found in places we might otherwise overlook.

This issue also celebrates the power of gathering together through events that bring people from around the world into the same joyful space. The Gay Games, taking place this year in Spain, stand as one of the most inspiring global celebrations of sport, culture, and community — a reminder that travel can also be about showing up, participating, and celebrating who we are together.

Along the way, we also wander through a collection of other destinations and experiences that make travel exciting: the energy of New York City, the coastal charm of Victoria, British Columbia, and the evolving cultural scenes in places like Hamilton here in



Ontario. And for those who follow the music wherever it leads, we also highlight festivals where the soundtrack of summer becomes part of the journey itself.

Wherever your travels take you this season — whether it's a weekend escape, a cross-country adventure, or simply discovering something new in your own backyard — we hope these stories inspire you to explore with an open heart.

And before you close the magazine, don't forget to check your horoscope — because sometimes the stars have travel plans for you too.

Because travel, at its best, isn't just about where we go. It's about the people we meet, the moments we share, and the feeling that somewhere out there, we belong.

Happy travels,

Antoine Elhashem

Antoine Elhashem is the president of INspired Media, the publishers of The Pink Pages Directory, PinkPlayMags and theBUZZ.

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Published by
INspired Media Inc.
Operating: INspired Creative,
Publishers of The Pink Pages
Directory, PinkPlayMags, and
theBUZZ.
Producers of On the Couch and The
Queer Bunch.
www.theBUZZmag.ca www.PinkPlayMags.com
www.thepinkpagesdirectory.com www.onthecouch.ca

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COVER PHOTO: Ketut Subiyanto
In This Issue Photo: Ron Lach
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Go East... Life is Peaceful There Go East... Lots of Open Air

A queer road trop across Atlantic Canada



There are destinations you visit to be seen, and there are destinations you visit to see clearly.

Atlantic Canada belongs to the second category. Heading east changes something subtle. Highways stretch longer between towns. The air carries the scent of salt and pine. The sky seems wider, somehow. Conversations slow down. You notice how often you're breathing deeply without thinking about it.

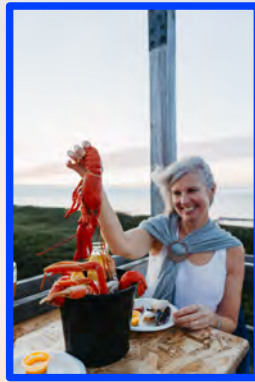
For queer travellers especially, that shift can feel restorative. Not every trip needs neon lights and packed sidewalks. Sometimes you want cliffs instead of crowds. Sometimes you want open water instead of glass towers. Sometimes you want Pride celebrations that feel like community gatherings rather than corporate productions.

Eastern Canada — New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland & Labrador — offers all of that. It is not flashy. It does not beg for attention. It reveals itself slowly. And if you let it, it will change your rhythm.

This is not a sprint. It is a road trip. It is ferry crossings and coastal curves. It is seafood eaten within sight of the water. It is live music drifting from pub doors at dusk. It is the realization that you don't need to rush to experience something meaningful.

Go east, life is peaceful there. Go east, lots of open air.

New Brunswick



Hotel de la plage, Grand-Barachois

Where the tides set the tempo

For many travellers driving from central Canada, New Brunswick is the first Atlantic province you encounter. It is also where you first feel the landscape begin to dominate.

The Bay of Fundy's tides — the highest in the world — dictate the rhythm here. At the Hopewell Rocks, you can walk along the ocean floor at low tide beneath towering rock formations, then return hours later to see those same formations surrounded by deep water. It is nature performing daily theatre without apology.

Fundy National Park offers hiking trails through forest and along cliffs, waterfalls tucked into quiet valleys, and lookouts where you can see the curvature of the coastline. Cape Enrage's lighthouse perches above dramatic cliffs. The Fundy Trail Parkway winds along coastal ridges with sweeping views that demand you pull over.

Saint John's historic uptown district blends brick buildings and waterfront views with cafés, restaurants, and galleries. Fredericton, set along the Saint John River, offers riverside walking trails, a vibrant arts scene, and independent breweries that invite lingering.

Chatting with Neil Hodge, from Tourism Heritage and Culture New Brunswick, we wanted to know if we landed in New Brunswick with three days and no plan, where do you send me first: "Start at the Bay of Fundy. The Hopewell Rocks are one of New Brunswick's most iconic sights, where visitors can walk on the ocean floor among the famous 'flowerpot' rock formations at low tide, then return hours later to see the same cliffs surrounded by

some of the highest tides on Earth. The surrounding coastal communities are perfect for exploring — charming fishing villages, sea caves, kayaking routes, and plenty of great seafood. From there it's easy to discover what makes the province special: big landscapes, outdoor adventure, and the feeling of wide-open space."

Beyond scenery, New Brunswick carries deep Acadian roots. You hear it in the language, taste it in the cuisine, and feel it in the music. Seafood is not an aesthetic here; it's a way of life. Lobster rolls and fried clams are found in modest roadside diners as often as in polished restaurants.

For queer visitors, the surprise often lies in the warmth. Saint John Pride and Fredericton Pride host summer celebrations that feel intimate and sincere. You are not swallowed by the crowd; you are part of it.

We also asked Neil about what surprises queer travellers about New Brunswick once they arrive: "Because New Brunswick is a smaller, largely rural province, some queer travellers arrive expecting a more conservative atmosphere. What often surprises them is how visible and active the LGBTQ+ community actually is. Cities like Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John host vibrant Pride celebrations and year-round events, and visitors frequently say they feel genuinely welcomed even in smaller coastal towns. It's less about nightlife and more about a relaxed, outdoorsy getaway where queer travellers can explore nature and community at the same"

Travel advice for New Brunswick is simple: check the tide charts. Build time for coastal drives. Don't underestimate the distance between towns. And always leave space in your itinerary for unplanned stops.



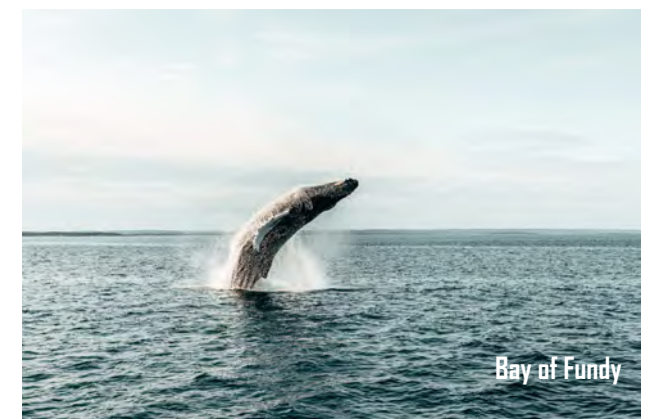
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Bay of Fundy

Prince Edward Island



Cavendish Beach, PEI, Nova Scotia

Small island, big sky

Crossing the Confederation Bridge onto Prince Edward Island feels symbolic. You leave the mainland behind and commit to island time.

PEI is small enough to cross in a few hours, but that misses the point. The island is about atmosphere.

Cavendish Beach's red cliffs and soft sand stretch against bright blue water. The Greenwich dunes at Prince Edward Island National Park ripple gently in the wind. Lighthouses dot the coast, marking time and distance.

Charlottetown's waterfront is walkable and inviting, with theatre venues, seafood restaurants, and live music filling the summer calendar. The Charlottetown Festival draws theatre lovers, while smaller performance spaces showcase local talent.

Cycling is popular here. Quiet roads and rolling fields make for relaxed day rides. Farm stands sell fresh berries and produce. Seafood is abundant and straightforward — oysters, mussels, lobster — often served without fuss.

We chatted with Cameron Cassidy, ED of Pride PEI, to find out what makes Prince Edward Island feel different from larger destinations: "Prince Edward Island has a special way of making people feel at home. It might be the warm hello you get walking down the street, or the friendly local who's happy to point you toward their favourite place to eat. There's a genuine sense of hospitality here - people are excited to share what they love about the

Island. For queer visitors, that might look like locals recommending queer-friendly bars and restaurants, sharing where the community gathers, or letting you in on a fun late-night event happening while you're in town."

PEI Pride typically unfolds in summer with parades and community events in Charlottetown. The scale is modest, but the energy is genuine. The island's queer community shows up visibly and confidently.

We also wanted to find out from Cameron where does the queer community show up on the Island, even if it's not always obvious to visitors: "Everywhere. Queer people live, work, and build community across Prince Edward Island, and you'll find that sense of belonging in many spaces once you know where to look. Visiting during Pride Fest (July 24 – Aug 2, 2026) is a great way to connect, events take place across the Island over ten days, bringing together locals and visitors alike. In downtown Charlottetown especially, you'll often spot rainbow flags in shop windows and gathering places that help guide you through the city and toward welcoming spaces."

Beyond Charlottetown, the island reveals itself in small harbours and quiet coastal villages. Fishing boats bob in the water beside weathered wharves, and roadside shacks advertise fresh lobster rolls and hand-cut fries. Scenic drives circle the island, passing potato fields, heritage barns, and tiny churches that seem to appear out of nowhere. It's easy to spend an afternoon wandering through places like Victoria-by-the-Sea or North Rustico, where galleries, cafés, and theatre stages feel stitched into the rhythm of everyday island life.

The beauty of PEI lies in restraint. You don't come here for excess. You come for simplicity — mornings that begin slowly, evenings that stretch long, and landscapes that remind you how little you actually need.



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View of Lunenburg from the Harbour

Where land curves into sea

Nova Scotia offers contrast.

Halifax delivers maritime urban energy: a working harbour, a lively waterfront boardwalk, historic sites like the Halifax Citadel, and a dining scene that blends tradition with experimentation. Craft breweries and cocktail bars sit alongside seafood staples. Live music spills from pub doors most nights in summer.

Drive beyond Halifax and the province opens up. The Cabot Trail curves through Cape Breton Highlands National Park with dramatic ocean views and forested hills. Peggy's Cove's lighthouse stands against crashing waves. Lunenburg's colourful waterfront — a UNESCO World Heritage Site — preserves maritime architecture in vibrant detail.

The Annapolis Valley's vineyards and orchards produce wine and cider that reflect Atlantic terroir. Whale watching tours depart from small fishing communities. Kayaking and coastal hiking offer intimate access to the shoreline.

We asked Pamela Wambach, from Tourism Nova Scotia, what's the most unexpectedly magical part of Nova Scotia for first-time visitors: "If I had to point to something unexpectedly magical, I'd say the Bay of Fundy shore

— especially around Burntcoat Head and Cape Chignecto — where you can walk (or even dine!) on the ocean floor among red cliffs and sea caves at low tide, then return a few hours later to see those same rocks swallowed by some of the highest tides on Earth. And then there's tidal bore rafting, one of the most unique experiences anywhere. You head out on what feels like a calm, quiet river, and as the tide pushes inland, a visible wall of churning water rolls upriver. The current reverses, the river turns wild and loud, and suddenly you're bouncing through standing waves and rapids. It's like being on a roller coaster — on the water."

Halifax Pride, typically held in July, is one of Atlantic Canada's largest Pride celebrations. It blends parade spectacle with community programming and cultural events. Smaller Pride celebrations take place across the province, reinforcing the idea that queer life is woven throughout Nova Scotia's communities.

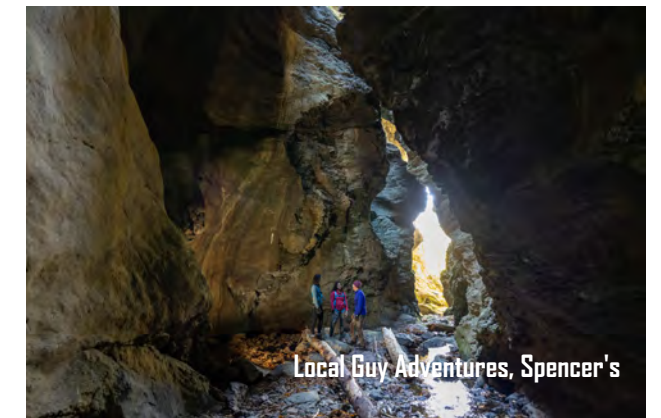
Chatting again with Pamela we wanted to find out how she would describe the personality of Nova Scotia in one sentence: "To me, Nova Scotia feels like a modest, sea-battered storyteller — gentle and unhurried on the surface, but full of wild edges, deep history, and surprising warmth once you lean in and listen."

Part of Nova Scotia's charm lies in the quiet spaces between destinations. Small fishing villages appear along the coast where brightly painted houses face the water and lobster boats head out before sunrise. Roadside bakeries advertise homemade pies, and local galleries showcase the work of artists inspired by the sea.

Travel tip: plan time for both Halifax and the coast. Nova Scotia is best experienced through movement — drive the Cabot Trail slowly, stop at lookouts, eat where locals eat, and leave room for conversation.



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At the edge, everything feels amplified

Arriving in Newfoundland & Labrador feels like reaching the edge of something vast.

St. John's greets you with brightly painted row houses climbing steep hills. Signal Hill overlooks the harbour, where ships pass through waters that once carried explorers and fishermen. Cape Spear marks the easternmost point in North America.

Gros Morne National Park's fjord-like landscapes and dramatic geology feel almost otherworldly. Icebergs drift along the coast in spring and early summer. Whales breach offshore. The terrain is rugged and uncompromising.

George Street in downtown St. John's claims one of the highest concentrations of pubs per square foot in North America. Music is constant. Storytelling is second nature.

We asked Candice Walsh from Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation why do people who visit Newfoundland & Labrador often find themselves wanting to return?

□

"Visitors often form a deep emotional connection with Newfoundland & Labrador. It's a place that tends to stay with people long after they've left. While the dramatic landscapes and wild coastline are unforgettable, what really draws people back is the human connection. You quickly find yourself among the friendliest of unfamiliar faces — people who are happy to strike up a conversation, share a story, and sometimes even become lifelong friends. The best moments here often happen spontaneously."

St. John's Pride typically takes place in late summer, bringing parades, performances, and community gatherings to the capital. Like much of Atlantic Canada, Pride here feels participatory rather than performative.

We also asked Candice how would she describe the sense of community and inclusivity visitors experience in Newfoundland & Labrador?

"You feel the sense of community almost immediately. Whether you're attending an arts festival in St. John's or exploring the small coastal communities, locals take real pride in their home and are eager to share it with visitors. Conversations start easily, stories flow freely, and travellers quickly feel like they're part of the place rather than just passing through."

The landscape is dramatic, but the warmth is what lingers. Conversations begin quickly. Invitations follow easily. The humour is sharp. The hospitality is real.

Travel advice: build in buffer days. Weather shifts quickly. Ferry schedules matter. And if someone invites you to stay longer, consider it.





"In Newfoundland, I've been able to let down my guard."

Dani Gomez-Ortega, on behalf of St. John's Pride

As a transgender woman who lived in Toronto for 20 years, I learned to be extra careful, alert, and guarded every time I left my home. Although I've had the privilege of travelling to many places across Canada, I often felt I needed to stay on high alert everywhere I went to remain safe.

Visiting Newfoundland was different — I've been able to let down my guard. From my very first visit, people were incredibly warm and welcoming. I remember going on a whale-watching tour and being surprised when a couple of older women came up to me and my partner, kissed us on the forehead, and wished us a happy life.

Getting "screeched in" — a ritual visitors take part in to become honorary Newfoundlanders — ended up being one of the most inclusive experiences I've had. During the ceremony, the host even acknowledged pronouns and trans people in his speech.

No place is perfect. However, while I was often called slurs on the street in Toronto, I have yet to experience transphobic hostility here. Although I'm sometimes called "sir" or "brother" by Newfoundlanders, I can tell it comes from a place of unfamiliarity rather than hostility. In Newfoundland, I'm treated with respect and dignity — and that's far more than I've experienced in most places.

That's why I made the decision to leave my big-city life behind — for the people I've met here, for the family I've found, and for the peace and quiet Newfoundland has to offer. Here, I've been able to build the "white picket fence" life I never knew was possible for someone like me.

The Road Between

What makes Atlantic Canada powerful is not just the provinces individually, but the movement between them.

The long drives. The ferry crossings. The diners you didn't plan to stop at. The small-town Pride events you stumble upon. The realization that distance here is not an inconvenience — it's part of the experience.

You learn to slow down. To leave early for coastal drives. To check the tide charts. To pack layers. To embrace fog as atmosphere rather than obstruction.

The further east you go, the less the world feels crowded.

Go East

You travel east for cliffs and coastline. For seafood eaten within sight of the ocean. For live music that feels unfiltered. For Pride celebrations that feel local and sincere.

You travel east because life does feel more peaceful there. You travel east because there is space — physical and emotional — to breathe differently.

And when you finally turn back west, you may notice something subtle has shifted. Your pace has softened. Your shoulders have dropped. Your horizon has widened.

Atlantic Canada does not compete for attention. It invites you to stay awhile. And in that invitation, there is something quietly powerful.

Compiled by: The editorial team at PinkPlayMags. Photo credits: Eric McLean, Bogdan Krupin, Laura Stanley, Jeffrey Eisen, Nao X Otl, Tourism New Brunswick, Tourism Nova Scotia, Tourism Newfoundland & Labrador, and Tourism Prince Edward Island (Emily O'Brien, Stephen Harris, and John Sylvester).

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Kingston

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Kingston isn't the kind of city that overwhelms you with spectacle. It doesn't need to. What it offers instead is something rarer: a sense of ease. You arrive, you start walking, and within a few blocks you realize the scale feels right. The streets are lined with limestone buildings that have seen generations pass through them, the waterfront glimmers just beyond the rooftops, and patios fill with people who look like they actually have time to sit and talk.

This is a city built on history, yes, but also on community. Markets, cafés, music venues, bookstores, and art spaces are all within walking distance of one another. You don't need a complicated plan to explore Kingston. You just need a comfortable pair of shoes and a willingness to wander.

For queer travellers, that feeling of ease matters. Some destinations impress you. Others invite you. Kingston does the latter. It feels like someone has already pulled up a chair and is waiting for you to join them.

So, what should I do first?

We asked Ashley, from Tourism Kingston, a simple question: if I'm visiting Kingston for the first time, what's the very first thing I should do when I arrive?

"Head straight downtown and walk the waterfront along Lake Ontario. If you can, get out on or in the water for a cruise, kayaking, or even scuba diving, or simply walk or bike along the shoreline, then grab a coffee at De Melo Coffee or Kingston Coffee House across from City Hall and Springer Market Square. If you find yourself at the entrance to Rocheleau Court, follow it to Chez Piggy, a must-stop culinary experience. That's usually where Kingston starts to feel personal for me."





That instinctive first recommendation says a lot about the city. Kingston is deeply walkable, and much of its charm reveals itself on foot. Hidden alleyways lead to antique markets and quiet patios. Historic storefronts sit next to modern cafés. The waterfront is never far away, and the rhythm of the city feels relaxed without ever being sleepy.

Home to Ontario's oldest public market, Kingston has always been a place where people gather. Springer Market Square remains a focal point year-round, hosting events, skating in the winter, and bustling activity in the warmer months. Around it, you'll find independent shops, restaurants, and creative spaces that reflect the city's artistic spirit.

That creative energy runs deep. Kingston is the hometown of The Tragically Hip and continues to nurture a thriving music and arts scene. Creative Kingston offers walking tours that highlight the city's artistic heritage, while annual film events like the Kingston Canadian Film Festival and the ReelOut Queer Film Festival bring diverse stories to local screens.

Kingstonlicious, a multi-week culinary festival, celebrates the city's food culture each winter, while year-round restaurants and cafés give visitors plenty of reasons to linger over meals. Whether you're sipping coffee, browsing a gallery, or listening to live music, the experience feels personal, not performative.

The city where everyone knows a place

One of the most noticeable things about Kingston is how quickly conversations turn into recommendations. Ask someone where to eat, and you'll get three suggestions. Ask where to go out, and someone will tell you their favourite bar, their favourite patio, and the place with the best late-night snacks.

We asked some local business owners and operators what life in Kingston feels like from the inside. First we checked in with Sean Billings from Fronternac Club, a luxurious botique hotel.

Have you always lived in Kingston? If so, what keeps you here? If not, what made you stay?

"I grew up on the St. Lawrence river near Brockville and spent plenty of time in Kingston as a young person. I lived abroad for several years prior to setting up the Frontenac Club. When we returned to Canada, Kingston was the place we zeroed in on. The natural beauty, history and quality of life is unbeatable here. Even 8 years later, I am still discovering more about Kingston!"

It's that sense of belonging that defines the city. Kingston isn't trying to be the biggest or the loudest destination in Ontario. Instead, it leans into its human scale. You can walk from a historic fort to a craft brewery, from a museum to a waterfront patio, all within the same afternoon.

We asked Matt Salton at ReelOut Film Festival where does persoannly go for a night out in Kingston.

"There are many great pubs like The Toucan, the Tir Nan Og, The Pilot House or The Red House; restaurants like Chez Piggy, Atomica, Diane's Fish Shack, Mayla, Woodenheads, and there's a terrific locally-owned arthouse cinema called The Screening Room that shows terrific films from around the world. If you feel like dancing, I recommend visiting "The Hub" on Princess Street which houses all the night clubs like Trinity, Stages, Ale House and The Grizzly Grill. Most of these spots frequent young clientele so if you're older and like to boogie, I'd suggest The Grizzly Grill."

At Daft Brewing, an ally-friendly midtown brewery, monthly drag bingo nights bring together locals and visitors alike. The atmosphere is relaxed, welcoming, and unmistakably fun — the kind of place where strangers become acquaintances by the end of the evening.





History, food, and a little bit of mischief

Kingston's past is everywhere, and much of it is open for exploration.

You can tour Kingston Penitentiary, Canada's oldest prison, where retired correctional staff guide visitors through its corridors, sharing stories from decades of operation. At Fort Henry, costumed interpreters bring 19th-century military life to the present through demonstrations and interactive experiences. In October, the fort transforms into Fort Fright, a full-scale haunted attraction that turns its historic walls into something far more sinister.

Down by the water, the S.S. Keewatin sits permanently docked at the Great Lakes Museum. This Titanic-era steamliner once carried passengers across the Great Lakes and now offers a glimpse into travel from another century.

But Kingston isn't just about the past. Its culinary scene is lively, diverse, and proudly local. The city is home to Ontario's first brewpub, the Kingston Brewing Company, which has been pouring craft beer since 1989. Today, eight breweries operate across the city, each with its own personality.

Restaurants like The Everly, AquaTerra, Toast and Jam, Dianne's, Otter Creek Kitchen, and the beloved Black Dog Tavern reflect a food culture rooted in local ingredients and independent spirit. Culinary history runs deep here too. Zal Yanovsky of The Lovin' Spoonful once opened Chez Piggy and Pan Chancho, and the family legacy continues to shape the local dining scene.

We reached out to Geoff Waycik, SLPC Director of Historic Sites to ask him what he loves showing visitors about Kingston?

"I love introducing people to Kingston through Fort Henry. It's a place where history feels alive, where our guests can explore 19th-century military life while taking in incredibly scenic views of the city and waterfront. Places like Fort Henry give people a sense of how important this city has been to Canada's story, while the broader city culture makes everyone feel they belong here."

Geoff tell us also that the reaction people usually have the first time they experience this is almost always the same.

"People are often surprised by how immersive the Fort Henry experience is. When they hear the drums, see the precision of the Guard's drill, or feel the power of the cannon fire, it makes the past feel tangible and human, not distant."

Before we move on, we asked Ashley another question about the city's character.

What part of Kingston do visitors always fall in love with that surprises them?

"People expect to love downtown Kingston, but they're surprised by how much there is to explore within it. You can move from the waterfront to spots like Fort Henry or hop on a cruise through the Thousand Islands, all within easy reach. It feels layered without ever feeling complicated, and that's what really stays with people."



Where you'll wake up happy you stayed the night

Kingston's accommodations reflect the city's personality. Many historic homes have been converted into intimate inns, each with its own character and story. These aren't anonymous hotel corridors — they're places where you notice the architecture, the details, and the sense of place.

At the Frontenac Club, a former Bank of Montreal building has been transformed into a boutique inn. Guests can dine in The Bank, the onsite restaurant, or enjoy a private meal in the building's former vault, now an intimate dining space. It's the kind of setting that blend Kingston's past with modern comfort.

We asked Sean Billings what does he hope guests feel or experience when they stay there.

"We felt that Kingston was under-served for a boutique hotel experience that delivered a more personal and refined experience. We aspire to having our guests feel an immediate sense of personal warmth and relaxation at the Club. We want to be the launch point for discovering new locations, new experiences, new tastes and new friends."

Across the city, visitors will find businesses that actively commit to inclusive experiences. Kingston is home to a number of Rainbow Registered businesses, as well as companies certified LGBTQ+ friendly by The Pink Pages Directory, reflecting the city's broader commitment to inclusive experiences.

From arts venues like the Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts and The Spire Art & Community Hub, to hotels, shops, and cultural attractions, the city's partners reflect a welcoming spirit that invites visitors to engage with Kingston's heritage, art, and local flavour.

Kingston's queer life isn't limited to one month a year. Events like the ReelOut Queer Film Festival bring LGBTQ+ stories to local audiences every winter, while inclusive programming and community



gatherings take place throughout the year.

A city that saves you a seat

Before wrapping up, we asked Ashley one final question.

Ashley:

Why do you think people keep coming back to Kingston once they've visited?

"It's the mix of waterfront, culinary, music, and arts that keeps people coming back. One visit might include a cruise through the Thousand Islands, the next a show at The Spire or a visit to Kingston Penitentiary, Canada's oldest penitentiary. There's always something happening, but it still feels easy and familiar. It's also a place where people feel comfortable being themselves, and that's what makes people want to come back."

Kingston doesn't feel like a place you visit once and check off a list. It feels like a place you return to. Maybe for a festival. Maybe for a quiet weekend. Maybe just because you remember a café, a waterfront view, or a conversation that stayed with you.

It's a city where history and creativity live side by side, where businesses take pride in being welcoming, and where the pace of life encourages you to slow down just enough to notice the details.

For more ideas on where to stay, dine, and explore, visit visitkingston.ca to browse accommodations, experiences, and local businesses across the city.

Come for the waterfront. Come for the food. Come for the music, the markets, or the museums. But don't be surprised if what you remember most is how easy it was to feel at home.

In Kingston, there's always room for one more at the table.

Compiled by: The editorial team at PinkPlayMags. Photo credits: Visit Kingston. Jaykumar Bherwani.

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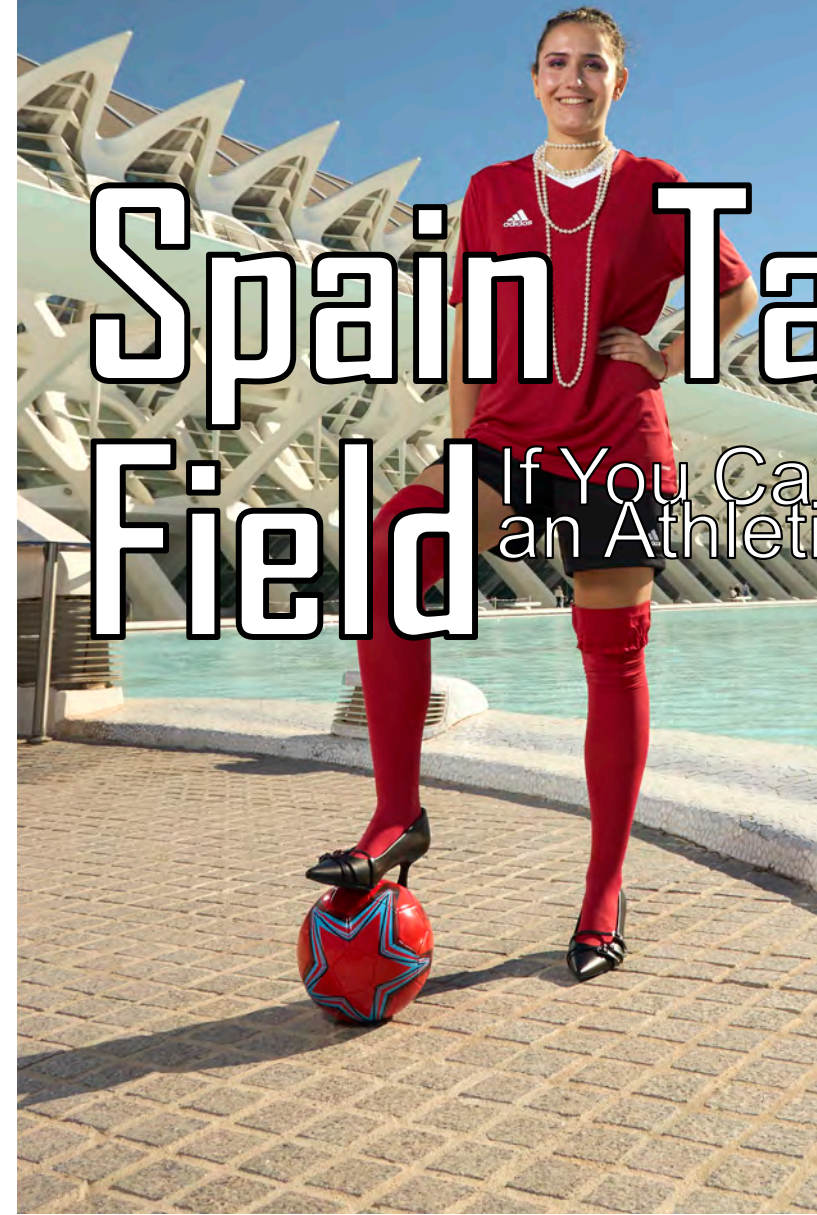


THEQMUSICALE.CA



Spain Takes the Field

If You Can't Be an Athlete, Be an Athletic Supporter



For many queer people, sport has never been neutral. It has been a place of passion and possibility, but also of silence, exclusion, and coded expectations about who belongs and who does not. Locker rooms, fields, courts, and stands have often asked LGBTQ+ people to leave parts of themselves behind in order to participate. And yet, queer people have always shown up anyway — competing, training, cheering, organizing, and quietly reshaping sport from the inside out.

The Gay Games were born out of that tension. They didn't reject sport — they reclaimed it.

"Do not forget that the principles of the Gay Games are, since the very beginning in 1982, 'Participation. Inclusion. Personal Best'."

Out, Proud, and On the Field

First held in 1982, the Gay Games were created as an international sporting and cultural event rooted in inclusion rather than elimination. Open to all regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ability, or athletic background, the Games challenged the idea that sport must be defined by hierarchy or gatekeeping.

Participation matters as much as performance. Showing up matters as much as winning.

Over the decades, the Gay Games have grown into the world's largest inclusive sporting event, bringing together athletes, artists, and allies from around the globe. Alongside competition, the Games include ceremonies, cultural programming, and community events that reflect the diversity and creativity of the LGBTQ+ community itself.

This is sport with a soul — and a sense of humour.

Why the Gay Games Still Matter

At a time when LGBTQ+ rights and visibility are unevenly protected across the world, the Gay Games continue to serve a dual purpose: celebration and

statement. They create a space where queerness is not something to be explained or justified, but simply lived — openly, joyfully, and collectively.

For many participants, the Games are a first. A first time competing without hiding. A first time being cheered for exactly who they are. A first time realizing that sport can be a place of belonging.

And for spectators and travellers, the Games offer something just as powerful: the chance to witness what inclusion actually looks like when it's put into practice.

Spain Says "Sí" to the Games

In 2026, the Gay Games come to Spain, with Valencia selected as the host city. The choice feels both symbolic and timely.

Spain has undergone a remarkable transformation over the past few decades, emerging as one of Europe's most LGBTQ+-affirming countries, with strong legal protections and a visible, confident queer culture. Hosting the Gay Games here reflects that evolution — and reinforces Spain's place as a global destination for queer travellers who value culture, openness, and connection.



Valencia, in particular, offers a compelling backdrop. Coastal and walkable, historic yet modern, the city balances Mediterranean ease with contemporary energy. Public spaces matter here. Food is a ritual. Life happens outdoors. It's a city built for gathering — which makes it a natural home for an event centred on community.

Meet the Man with the Clipboard (and the Big Picture)

To help us better understand what the Gay Games Valencia 2026 represent, we spoke with Jon Landa Diestro, who works in promotion, international affairs, and culture for the Games. Having lived in multiple cities across Spain and abroad before returning to work on this event, Jon brings both a global perspective and a deeply personal connection to the host country.

We asked Jon a series of questions that reflect the spirit of the Games — about sport, place, culture, and why this moment matters.

For readers discovering the Gay Games for the first time, how would you describe what makes them different from other international sporting events?

"The Gay Games are very different from a traditional sporting event. Here, people come to compete, but also to enjoy the experience rather than suffer through it. It's not about elite performance or records at any cost — it's about participation, celebration, and sharing sport in a positive and inclusive atmosphere. Do not forget that the principles of the Gay Games are, since the very beginning in 1982, 'Participation. Inclusion. Personal Best'. The event is truly an explosion of joy, camaraderie, and acceptance. Athletes of all levels take part in it, from beginners to experienced competitors, creating an environment where everyone feels



Jon Landa Diestro

Promotion, International Affairs and Culture

Gay Games XII
Valencia 2026

welcome and valued. The Gay Games combine sport with culture and community, turning the competition into a global celebration of diversity, inclusion, and human connection."

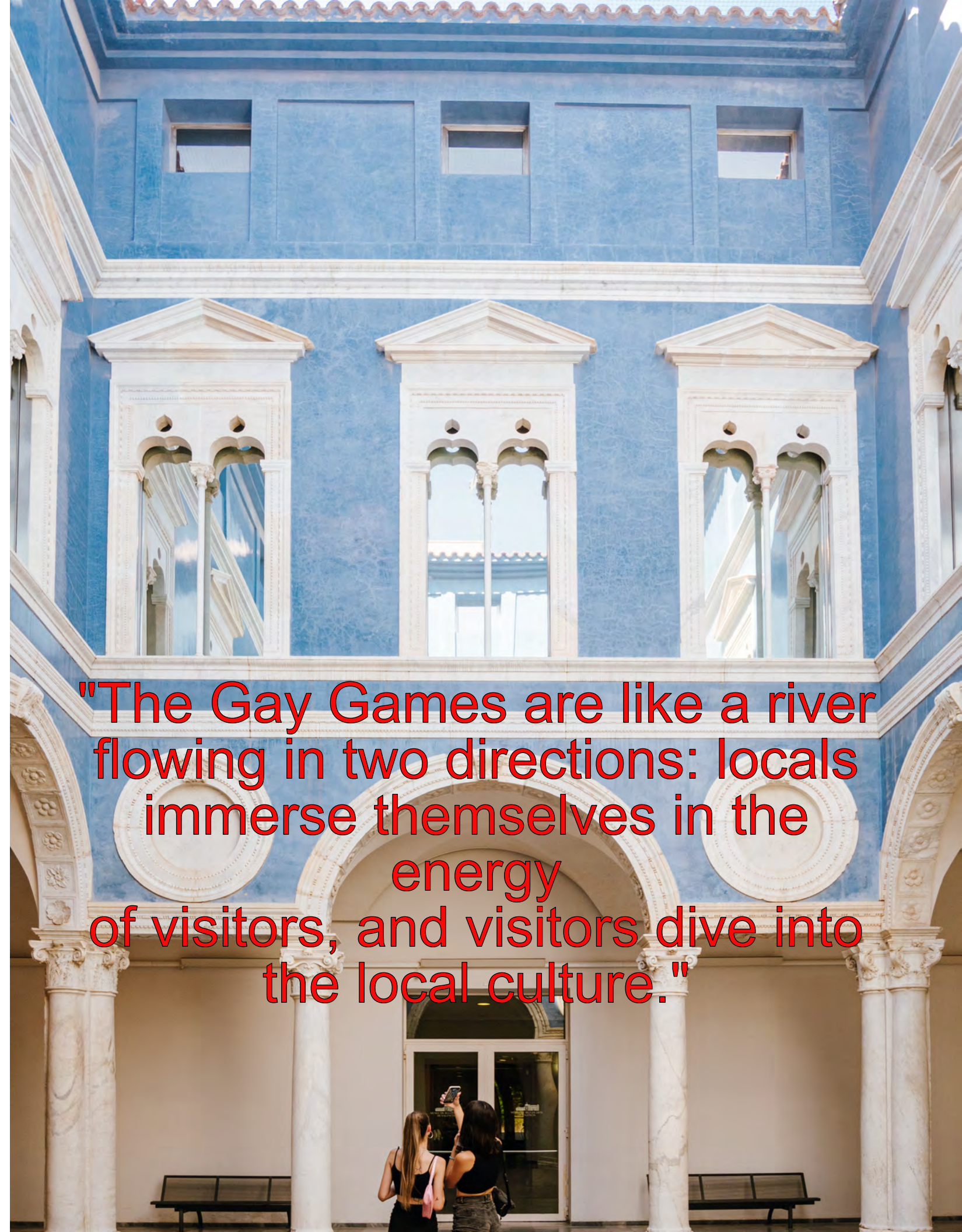
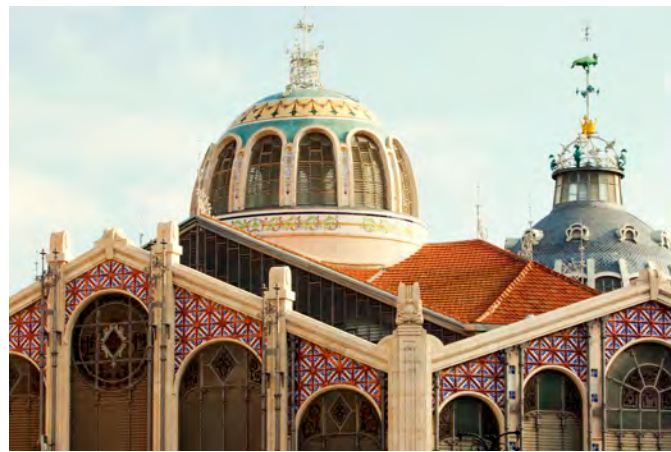
The Gay Games have always positioned themselves as something broader than a tournament. They are a meeting point — between athletes and allies, competition and celebration, personal challenge and collective joy.

Why was Valencia chosen as the host city for the 2026 Gay Games, and what does the city bring to the experience for athletes and visitors?

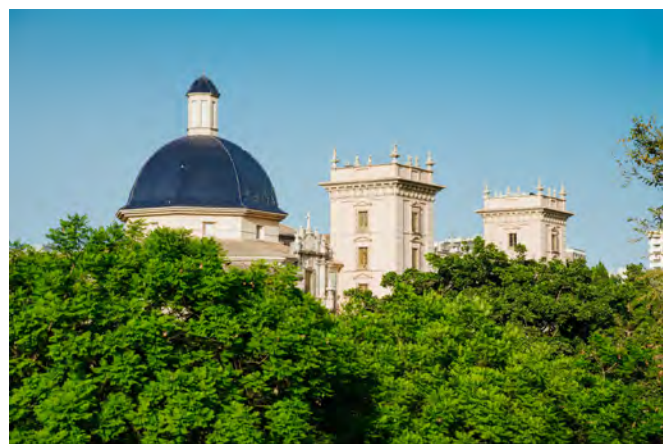
"València was chosen as the host city for the 2026 Gay Games because it offers a strong balance of sports infrastructure, cultural venues, and an open, welcoming spirit. One of its biggest strengths is that the Games will not be concentrated in a single area, but spread throughout the city's neighbourhoods, allowing both residents and visitors to feel part of the event and bringing the celebration closer to the local community. The bid also stood out for its commitment to inclusion, with competition categories that allow participants to choose what best reflects their gender identity. It also reflects the intergenerational spirit of the Games, bringing together participants from 18 to 75 years old. Altogether, this mix of inclusivity, community connection, and Mediterranean lifestyle creates a vibrant and welcoming experience for athletes and visitors from around the world."

Valencia's ability to feel both international and intimate plays an important role in how visitors experience the Games — not just as spectators, but as temporary citizens of the city.

As someone who has lived in different cities in Spain and abroad, what does it mean to you personally to see the Gay Games hosted here now?



"The Gay Games are like a river flowing in two directions: locals immerse themselves in the energy of visitors, and visitors dive into the local culture."



"The idea of bringing the Gay Games to my beloved city was incredibly exciting for me. I arrived in València when I was 23, and even though I was no longer living there when the bid process began, the city has always felt like home. When the queer sports movement started to grow in València and some of us began participating in the Gay Games and the EuroGames, the smaller European version, I started imagining what it would be like to host a major event here. That feeling became even stronger after EuroGames 2008 in Barcelona. Over the years I have attended many events in many different cities around the world, first as a participant and supporter, and now as an organizer. Bringing the Gay Games to my "own" city is sometimes stressful, demanding, and often exhausting, but it is also deeply rewarding. All those experiences have shaped my ideas about what I want participants to feel and enjoy before, during, and after the Games: something that goes beyond the concept of 'beautiful safe space'."

Personal stories like Joh's underscore how the Games are as much about return and reconnection as they are about arrival.

The Gay Games are about more than competition. How do culture, community, and celebration show up alongside sport during the Games?

"The Gay Games are a celebration first, and a competition second. Culture is present in every moment of the Games and in every corner of the city. Sport itself is culture, but the Games also bring many other expressions of culture to life. Music will fill València through festivals of bands and choirs, while a film festival will showcase movies and documentaries about diversity in sport. Fashion and art exhibitions will highlight local queer artists, alongside many other cultural events happening throughout the week. The Village will be the heart of the celebration — a meeting place for participants and locals alike, where people will celebrate medals, but also new friendships, reunions

with old friends, shared meals, music from around the world, and even a touch of València's style in the drinks. We often say the Gay Games are like a river flowing in two directions: locals immerse themselves in the energy of visitors, and visitors dive into the local culture. From the merchandising and gifts to the medals themselves, every detail celebrates culture beyond sport and shows that València is much more than paella, playa y sangría. It may sound like a melting pot, but more than anything, it's a safe space — probably the funniest safe space in the world."

This is where the Games truly come alive — in the spaces between events, where conversations, friendships, and memories are made.

In today's global climate, why do events like the Gay Games still matter?

"Every single act matters. The Gay Games are a way of saying out loud: we are queer, we are here — also in sports. They are also about welcoming every queer athlete, musician, or artist who wants to take part and, if they choose, to be visible. No one is pushed to be visible as queer; what matters is that people feel safe and supported if they decide to be. The Gay Games are a safe space for everyone: for our community and for the allies who stand up for human rights. We are hosting an event where everyone can feel included — and where every participant can feel that the medal hanging from their neck is truly deserved. Because everyone deserves to feel they belong in sport."

The answer to this question echoes far beyond Valencia.

Valencia, Off the Field

Between competitions and ceremonies, Valencia invites exploration. The city's historic centre offers winding streets, plazas, and architecture that reward wandering. Along the coast, beaches and promenades provide space to unwind after a full day of events. Food culture is



central here — from casual tapas to long, social meals that stretch late into the evening.

Valencia's pace is unhurried but lively, making it easy for visitors to feel at home. Whether you're travelling as an athlete, a supporter, or simply a curious observer, the city encourages you to participate — not just in the Games, but in daily life.

This is not a city you rush through. It's one you settle into.

Come for the Games, Stay for the Feeling

For travellers heading to Spain for the Gay Games Valencia 2026, the experience extends far beyond sport. It's an opportunity to witness a global community in motion, to explore a city that knows how to host and celebrate, and to be part of an event that continues to redefine what sport can look like when everyone is invited.

Whether you're competing, cheering, volunteering, or simply soaking it all in, the invitation is the same: show up as you are.

For more information about the Gay Games and the upcoming Valencia 2026 edition, visit www.gaygames.org and www.gaygamesvalencia2026.com/en/.

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Music has always been a reason to travel.

In the summer months especially, festivals become destinations — places where sound, community, and atmosphere collide. For LGBTQ+ travellers, the draw isn't limited to events labeled “queer.” We follow taste, curiosity, and connection. Sometimes that leads us to explicitly queer spaces built by and for our community. Other times, it takes us into mainstream festivals where we show up fully as ourselves, united by genre, energy, and shared experience. What matters most isn't the label — it's where the music moves you.

This list highlights festivals across different regions of Canada. Some are queer-led, others are mainstream, but all are destinations where LGBTQ+ travellers show up because of taste, genre, and cultural pull.

The Q Musicale - Toronto, Ontario

About the festival

A queer-led, music-first festival launched in 2024, created to centre 2SLGBTQIA+ artists and audiences through live performance and community connection. The festival has grown quickly, evolving from its inaugural year in the Queer Village to a multi-day destination experience.

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Why it's of interest

Explicitly queer, artist-driven, and built as a standalone music festival rather than a Pride add-on. Think chosen family, big feelings, and music that knows exactly who it's singing to.

We reached out to Sherry Sylvain, co producer of the festival with a couple of questions.

In one sentence, what do you hope people feel or experience when they attend The Q Musicale?

Sherry: When people attend The Q Musicale, we hope they feel the joy and freedom that a safe, inclusive, and diverse space provides to everyone, on or off the stage.

What makes The Q Musicale different from other summer music events in Canada?

Sherry: The Q Musicale is built first and foremost as a music festival — one that centres queer artists without being folded into a larger Pride event or program. Furthermore, The Q Musicale brings artists across genres in a way that creates an exciting festival for everyone. This year we are also launching The Q Music Awards in partnership with INSPIRE Awards.

Dates: July 9, 16, 23 - 5pm to 10pm

Location: Sankofa Square

Genre: Multi-genre / queer artists

Tickets & info: FREE, www.theqmusicale.ca

Boots and Hearts - Oro-Medonte, Ontario

About the festival

One of Canada's largest country music festivals, drawing fans from across the country for multi-day performances by major international and Canadian artists.

Why it's of interest

Queer travellers who love country music show up here in growing numbers — proof that taste, not labels, defines where we gather. Yes, there are cowboy boots, and cowgirl boots of course — and yes, they're worn by queer folks (we are getting hot already).

We chatted with Marc Cohen at the festival.

In one sentence, what makes Boots and Hearts a festival people are willing to travel for?

People travel to Boots and Hearts Music Festival for its unique blend of world-class artists, a vibrant camping atmosphere, and the kind of community that turns a weekend of music into a destination experience.

How would you describe the energy or community people experience at Boots and Hearts?

Boots and Hearts Music Festival is known for its unmatched fan community and immersive festival atmosphere. It's more than just the performances; it's the spirit of connection, the shared love of music, and the feeling of belonging that make the weekend so memorable. You may have also heard, we just announced The Jonas Brothers, The Chicks and Rascal Flatts as top healiners.

Dates: August 7 - 9, 2026

Location: Burl's Creek Event Grounds

Genre: Country

Tickets & info: www.bootsandhearts.com



Montreal International Jazz Festival - Montreal, Quebec

About the festival

One of the world's largest and most respected jazz festivals, the Montreal International Jazz Festival has been a summer fixture since 1980, welcoming legendary performers and emerging artists from around the globe across indoor venues and outdoor stages throughout the city.

Why it's of interest

Jazz attracts listeners who value musicianship, atmosphere, and cultural depth. Set in one of Canada's most queer-friendly cities, the festival offers LGBTQ+ travellers a sophisticated, walkable, and music-rich travel experience.

Come for the musicianship, stay for the late nights, wine bars, and effortless Montreal cool.

Dates: June 25 - July 4, 2026

Location: Quartier de Spectacles

Genre: Jazz

Tickets & info: www.montrealjazzfest.com

Bud Light Escapade Music Festival - Ottawa Ontario

About the festival

A large-scale electronic dance music festival featuring international DJs and producers, held in Canada's capital.

Why it's of interest

EDM culture has long been intertwined with queer nightlife and dance culture, making this a natural draw for LGBTQ+ music fans. If dancing until your legs give out feels like a spiritual practice, you're in the right place.



Dates: June 26 - 28, 2026

Location: Landsdowne Park

Genre: EDM

Tickets & info: www.escapademf.com

Calgary Folk Music Festival - Calgary, Alberta

About the festival

A long-running folk music festival celebrating storytelling, roots music, and community, with artists from Canada and beyond.

Why it's of interest

Appeals to travellers drawn to intimate performances, lyrical depth, and a more relaxed festival atmosphere. For those who like their festivals heartfelt, harmonized, and best enjoyed with the people they love.

Dates: July 23 - 26, 2026

Location: Prince Island Park

Genre: Folk / roots

Tickets & info: www.calgaryfolkfest.com

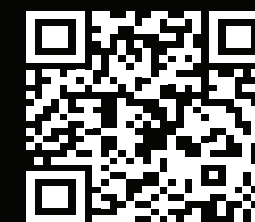
Beyond these highlights, music festivals take place in cities and communities across Canada throughout the summer months. Many Pride celebrations include live music and performance, while countless independent festivals showcase local and touring artists across every genre imaginable. Wherever you travel — or wherever you call home — explore your local listings, support live music, and follow the sounds that move you.

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New York doesn't ask for your attention — it assumes it. Loud, layered, unapologetic, and endlessly magnetic, the city has long been a queer pilgrimage site, whether you're coming for history, nightlife, culture, or just the feeling of being deliciously anonymous in a crowd that's seen it all. In spring and summer, New York loosens its collar: patios spill onto sidewalks, parks turn social, rooftops glow late into the night, and the city remembers it likes being flirted with.

For LGBTQ+ travellers, New York isn't just a destination — it's a vibe reset. A weekend here doesn't need an itinerary so much as stamina, curiosity, and shoes you can walk (and dance) in.

Where Pride Is a Year-Round Accent

New York City holds a singular place in LGBTQ+ history as the birthplace of the modern gay rights movement. The Stonewall Inn, tucked into Greenwich Village, remains a living landmark — not frozen in time, but actively woven into the city's present. Nearby Christopher Park and surrounding streets offer quiet moments of reflection that contrast beautifully with the city's constant motion .

But while Pride history grounds the city, contemporary queer life here is anything but stuck in the past. New York's LGBTQ+ culture isn't confined to one neighbourhood or month. It pulses year-round, across boroughs,

scenes, and generations — from drag brunches and dance floors to bookstores, galleries, comedy clubs, and community spaces .

Neighbourhoods That Know What They're Doing

Greenwich Village still hums with legacy and intimacy — narrow streets, historic bars, and the feeling that something important once happened here (because it did). Hell's Kitchen, by contrast, brings the volume up: high-energy nightlife, packed comedy clubs, and dance floors that don't really care what time it is. Chelsea and the West Village round things out with a mix of long-standing institutions and ever-changing hotspots, while Brooklyn continues to offer alternative scenes, creative energy, and community-driven events .

The beauty of New York is that you don't need to choose one version of queer life — you can sample several in a single weekend.

Spring, Summer, and the City Outside

Warm weather changes everything here. Parks become social hubs, streets turn theatrical, and the city leans outward. Queer-friendly outdoor spaces like Jacob Riis Park's People's Beach come alive in summer, offering a sun-soaked counterbalance to the concrete jungle — a place to decompress, connect, and people-watch at an elite level .

Walking is its own reward in New York, especially in spring. Wandering through neighbourhoods, stumbling into cafés, bookstores, or pop-up events is part of the city's charm. You don't plan New York so much as you let it happen to you.

Pride, Naturally

June remains a marquee moment. NYC Pride is one of the world's largest and most visible Pride celebrations, with events unfolding across the city throughout the month and culminating in the iconic Pride March,



typically held in late June. In 2026, the march is expected to take place on June 28, drawing locals and visitors into a city-wide celebration that's equal parts protest, party, and public love letter to queer resilience .

That said, Pride isn't a requirement for enjoying queer New York. Outside of June, the city offers a steadier, sometimes more relaxed rhythm — fewer crowds, easier reservations, and a chance to experience LGBTQ+ life as locals do.

Where to Stay, How to Move

New York is famously navigable without a car. The subway, walking culture, and bike lanes make it easy to bounce between neighbourhoods, even on a tight schedule. LGBTQ+-friendly accommodations are plentiful, from boutique hotels in the Village to midtown properties that put you close to nightlife and transit without locking you into one scene .

A long weekend works here because the city does the heavy lifting. You arrive. It performs.

Why We Keep Coming Back

New York doesn't try to be charming. It's too busy being itself. That's what queer travellers respond to — the permission to be bold, complicated, tired, thrilled, invisible, or loudly yourself, sometimes all in the same day.

Come for the history. Stay for the nightlife. Leave with sore feet, a full camera roll, and the quiet certainty that no matter where you go next, New York will still be exactly as you left it — waiting, wide-open, and a little bit dangerous in the best possible way.

Compiled by: The editorial team at PinkPlayMags. Photo credits: Following NYC, Ketut Subiyanto, Burst, Elvis Yang, Ibrahim Boran



June 18, 2026

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An alluring slice of west coast calm, camp, and coastal queer-friendly energy — perfect for a spring or summer escape. Victoria is not loud. It doesn't need to be. On a sunlit afternoon, the city feels like the warmest kind of exhale: ocean breeze, architecturally charming streets, patios full of laughter, and a pace that somehow makes time feel generous again. On Canada's west coast, where mountains and water meet in a natural embrace, Victoria manages to be both cosmopolitan and comfortably small — and in that balance, it offers something queer travellers tend to chase: space to be, and room to move.

If you're picturing a perfect weekend that's part seaside daydream, part spirited exploration, and part queer-inflected social life without Ever Hard Work, Victoria fits that bill with ease.

Where Culture Meets Coast

Victoria's walkable downtown is a mosaic of heritage buildings, public art, and boutique storefronts that invite exploration. Start your day at Inner Harbour, where ferries and sailboats bob against a postcard skyline. Museums, galleries, and performance spaces are never more than a short stroll away, and the city's compact

layout makes it easy to wander without losing your sense of direction — or your sense of fun.

The queer community here is subtle but present — not overblown by tourism, but visible in local culture, bars that feel like neighbourhood haunts, and events that bring people together without ever demanding spotlight or spectacle. It's a city where Pride might not be everywhere, but queer joy feels perfectly at home.

Tea, Tides, and Tiny Pleasures

Victoria wears its British influence like a well-loved cardigan: easy warmth, thoughtful detail, and unexpected delight. Afternoon tea is more than a cliché here — it's a thing worth trying at least once, with elaborate sweets, delicate sandwiches, and antique teaware that says "sit down and stay a while."

But you're also steps from the sea. Walk the waterfront in the morning and let the light play on the water. Come sunset, restaurants with patios spill onto the street, wine glasses catch the last pink of the sky, and strangers seem friendlier because they're all there for the same reason: this place feels good.

Queer Pockets and Quiet Pride

Victoria's queer scene isn't loud, but it's joyful in its own way. Local venues host drag nights, cabaret shows, and meet-ups that feel grounded in community rather than spectacle. If you want late nights and booming crowds, Victoria may not compete with the biggest cities — but it does reward curiosity. Ask a local bartender where people linger after 10 p.m. and you'll be invited to a dance floor that feels like a friend's living room party — in the best possible way. Small-town intimacy and big-city personality are not mutually exclusive here. They're layered.

Sips and Bites That Feel Like Local Pride

The culinary scene in Victoria leans fresh, harvest-to-



table, and unapologetically delicious. Waterfront seafood, funky cafés tucked into laneways, and tasting menus that respect local Beaufort Bay ingredients are everywhere. Queer-owned cafés and bars welcome a mix of locals and visitors, all converging around good food and better conversation.

Late summer and early fall bring outdoor markets where artisans, vintners, and producers share wares and stories. This is the kind of food culture that invites a wander without a strict schedule, a place where you can taste your way through a neighbourhood and feel like you've arrived — without ever having to rush.

Active Options for Playful Souls

If you want a side of movement with your relaxation, Victoria delivers. Kayaking in the harbour, cycling hidden trails through oak woodlands, and waterfront strolls that feel like meditation are all on the agenda. For queer travellers who want their travel to include doing as well as being, this city offers gentle adventures that don't need a medal to feel meaningful. And yes — there are beaches. Not the roaring surf of the Atlantic, but soft sand, tide pools, and the distinct comfort that comes from watching the water roll in at your own pace.

Best Times to Go

Spring and summer in Victoria are a delight tempered by fresh ocean air. Cherry blossoms bloom in early spring, turning the city into a pastel fairytale for a fleeting moment. Summer brings long days, outdoor patios, festivals, and an easy pace that makes it simple to plan a short weekend — or decide to stay longer. Fall tints the trees and softens sunlight into honey tones, and even shoulder season travel feels like a reward for smart timing.

Victoria's Quiet Invitation

There's a reason people who discover Victoria want to return. The city doesn't chase you with bold promises or flashy displays. It simply holds space — for good food, good laughter, slow mornings, friend-filled afternoons, and evenings that feel like a story worth retelling. For queer travellers who value nuance, connection, and seaside calm with a cheeky wink, Victoria feels like a secret handshake shared among friends who know a great thing when they find it. Victoria may not shout. But it doesn't have to — you'll hear it in the breeze.

Compiled by: The editorial team at PinkPlayMags. Photo credits: Harold, Brandon Godfrey





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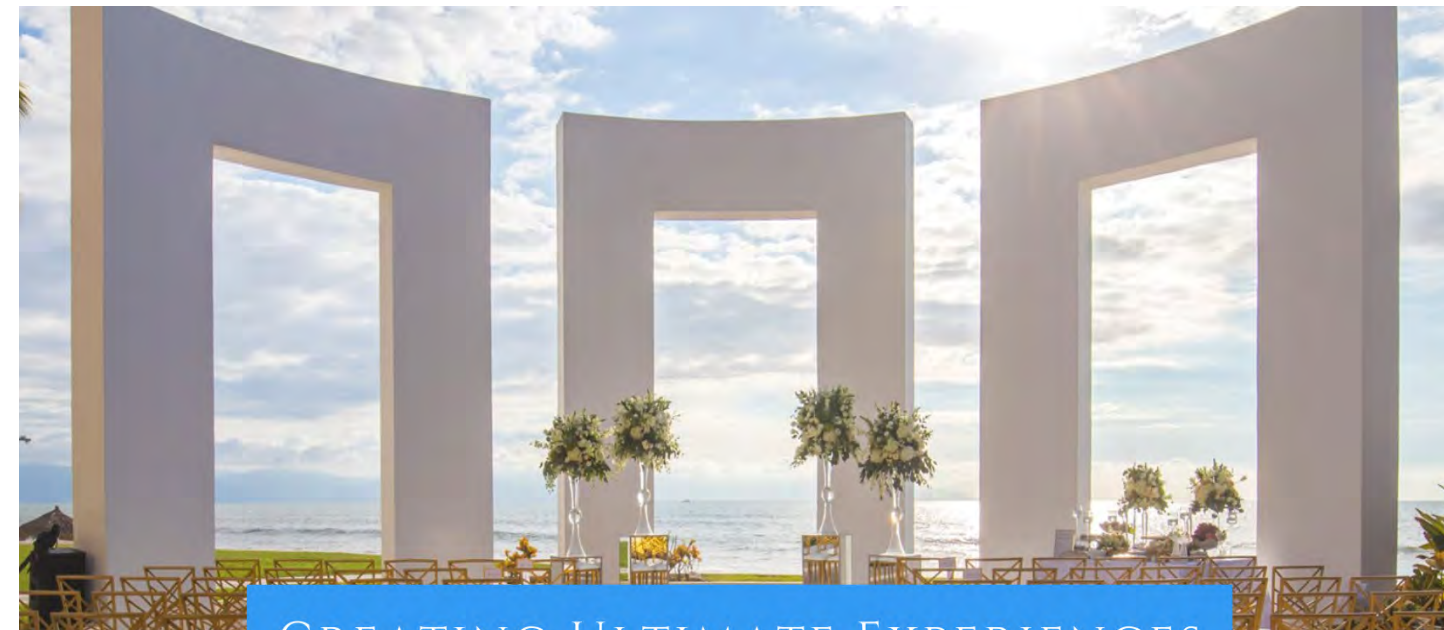
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Cosmic Compass

Spring/Summer Horoscope

Spring and summer invite movement — not just across borders, but within ourselves. As the days stretch longer and the air softens, we're reminded that travel isn't always about distance. Sometimes it's about timing, courage, rest, or saying yes when the moment feels right. Wherever the season takes you, let these horoscopes be a gentle companion — a whisper, not a rulebook.

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♈ Aries This season asks you to follow impulse — but with intention. Travel that includes action, movement, or challenge will light you up. Say yes to the trip that gets your heart racing, but leave room for rest between adventures.

♉ Taurus Comfort is your compass. Spring and summer favour destinations that indulge the senses — good food, beautiful views, slow mornings. You don't need a packed itinerary; you need space to savour.

♊ Gemini Curiosity fuels you now. Short trips, city breaks, festivals, and social travel suit your energy best. You may find yourself saying yes to plans at the last minute — trust that instinct.

♋ Cancer You're drawn to places that feel emotionally grounding. Travel with chosen family, or return somewhere meaningful. Water — oceans, lakes, rivers — plays a healing role for you this season.

♌ Leo This is your time to be seen and celebrated. Destinations with music, nightlife, or creative expression call your name. Whether on stage or in the crowd, you're meant to shine.

♍ Virgo You're craving balance. Travel that blends beauty with simplicity — walkable cities, nature escapes, or wellness-focused trips — will restore you. Let go of over-planning and allow space for surprise.

♎ Libra Romance, art, and connection guide your journey. You may be drawn to travel that feels aesthetically pleasing and socially rich. Shared experiences — concerts, galleries, cafés — matter more than distance.

♏ Scorpio Transformation is your theme. This season favours deeper journeys — places that challenge, awaken, or shift you emotionally. You're not looking for surface-level travel; you want meaning.

♐ Sagittarius Freedom calls loudly. Long-distance travel, cultural exploration, or anything that expands your worldview suits you now. Follow the horizon — your spirit needs wide-open possibilities.

♑ Capricorn You're learning that rest is productive. Travel that allows you to unplug, reset, and reconnect with yourself will be especially powerful. Structure is helpful — but don't overwork your vacation.

♒ Aquarius You're drawn to community and originality. Festivals, group travel, or unconventional destinations spark inspiration. Go where ideas, art, and people intersect.

♓ Pisces Dreamy, intuitive travel suits you best. Let feeling guide your choices — music, spirituality, and natural beauty play a big role. You may find clarity simply by changing your surroundings.

No matter your sign, this season carries an invitation: to stay curious, to choose joy where you can, and to trust that even small shifts can lead to meaningful journeys. Whether you're packing a suitcase or simply opening a window, may the months ahead meet you with warmth, wonder, and exactly the pace you need.

Bon voyage