

ALT by Bruvion Caters to
LGBT Jet-Setters



Roam If You Want To

By Michelle McCarthy

The holidays are over, the tree's down, and the extended family has left your spare room and headed back to their own homes. Now it's time to focus on you. And what better way to pamper yourself than with a much-needed vacation? It's perfect timing, too, since Bruvion—a leader in travel services—just launched Alternative Luxury Travel, a company that caters to the needs of discerning LGBT travelers. And to help you decide where you might like to visit in the new year, ALT by Bruvion has compiled eight destinations for our community to visit or avoid in 2013.

Bruvion has developed a great reputation around the world for high-end leisure and entertainment travel. But the company feels the luxury/adventure/customized travel market for gays and lesbians has been underserved. "The three partners at Bruvion [John Rukavina, Ken Bruce and Jason Couvillion] are all gay," Couvillion says. "We wondered where we would go for travel services. We are gay, we don't want to just travel to Pride events and we want a full-service travel company with a reputation with many luxury hotels and vendors around the world."

LGBT travelers need an agent who can do everything he or she would do for a straight client, and go one step beyond, according to Tom Whitman, ALT's event producer. You need to know which hotels are gay-friendly, which countries to stay away from, which cities have the best nightlife, which towns will be welcoming, etc. "We don't automatically put you up at the large chain hotel. We'll put you at a boutique design hotel near the gay neighborhood. We'll make sure that any hotel knows when you are traveling with your partner, you don't want to be asked if you need two beds. We think of the details a traditional travel agent or travel company wouldn't, because we know our client."

ALT partners with gay-friendly hotels from the largest luxury chains to the smallest boutique hotels. These hotels want to make a great impression on the gay and lesbian market, so they will bend over backward to make your stay amazing. The company is also working with hotel chains to develop its own LGBT rates and packages, as well as an awareness of its gay clients' needs during their stays.

"We do everything for you," Couvillion says.

"We can make suggestions on places to go based on your personality. We book everything—not just flights and hotels, but also tour guides, airport greeters, car service, private jets and villas. We'll get you on the list at a nightclub and get you into that overbooked restaurant. We'll give you a day-by-day itinerary as we plan your trip, and when there's something you want to switch around, we'll do it. We'll get you upgrades and amenities at no extra charge, because we are a large agency that works with these vendors in volume. You travel like a celebrity, no matter who you are."

As for the list of best and worst destinations, ALT formed its decisions after looking at a number of factors: local governments' stance on gay rights, public opinion of gays and gay rights according to polls, the amount of good accommodations and gay-friendly accommodations and economic conditions in the country. ALT took into account whether the country persecutes gays, has protection with anti-discrimination laws and whether they recognize same-sex marriage or unions. The company also considered the popularity of the destination and what would be of interest to the LGBT traveler.

"We didn't single out Detroit because we have anything against it personally," Whitman says. "It's just not a destination most people would want to go to anymore. But it's also because it's become unfriendly for gays, with an increase in crime and poor economic conditions. Detroit also lacks hip, fun, luxury accommodations, and many gay bars have closed down in recent years. Altogether, it makes for a subpar destination for gays."

"Sydney, on the other hand, is almost completely opposite of Detroit. It has a thriving gay culture, the economy is booming and they are very gay-friendly. You can't walk through the gay part of town without running into a hip bar, luxury hotel or swanky restaurant. Also, gay Mardi Gras is a must experience for everyone, gay or straight! Not to mention that Sydney is a beautiful city, and it's the gateway to a country filled with amazing landscapes and exciting experiences. And, of course, there are all those hot Australian men and women!"

ALT is a full-service, international, 24-hour travel company with offices in London, Nashville, New York and Los Angeles. For more information, check out travelalt.com.

8 Destinations for LGBT Travelers to Visit or Avoid In 2013

Most Opulent Destination: Sardinia, Italy

A playground for the social elite who flock here with their yachts each summer to see and be seen, Sardinia offers many luxurious five-star hotels featuring the most expensive rooms found anywhere.

Hottest New International Destination: Bhutan

This small Buddhist country in the Himalayas is opening its arms to tourists, but only to a certain number each year.

Most Dangerous U.S. City to Visit for Gay Travelers: Detroit, Mich.

A slumping economy, increase in crime, high number of landmark gay bars closing and a severe lack of smart accommodations puts Detroit at the top of our list of U.S. cities to avoid.

Best Destination for Gays & Their Girlfriends: Istanbul

With good-looking men, both gay and straight, centuries of history and culture on every corner, Istanbul is perfect for a gay guy and his gal pal.

Best Gay Family Destination: Copenhagen, Denmark

A very open and accepting culture, an amazingly beautiful city and sites for kids and adults. Plus there's nightlife once the kids go to bed.

Most Overrated Destination: Dubai

Full of hype and far removed from reality, Dubai is a big city in the middle of a desert with little charm, less visible history and antiquated laws.

Best Destination for Singles: Paris

With its opulent hotels, amazing food and fashions, Paris offers more than enough distractions to keep any single person occupied and carefree.

Hottest Gay Event Destination: Sydney/Cairns

Let your hair down at Sydney's Mardi Gras, then escape to recoup at the Great Barrier Reef.