

WIN A HOLIDAY FOR TWO IN FORT LAUDERDALE

The greater Fort Lauderdale Convention and Visitors' Bureau caused quite a stir in Brighton last month when it parked its sexy travelling roadshow outside the Queens Arms in George Street. Inside the glass-sided lorry were a couple of gorgeous hunks working

out and strutting their stuff for the cameras.

The Fort Lauderdale Visitors' Bureau is offering exclusively to the readers of *Gscene* and *GT* the chance to win a fabulous five-day holiday for two in Fort Lauderdale, staying at the award-winning luxurious Royal Palms and flying courtesy of Zoom Airlines, which commences direct flights from Gatwick to Fort Lauderdale from May 22.

Florida was voted second most popular foreign holiday destination in the recent national *Pink Paper* awards, and Fort Lauderdale is as gay as it gets, with a wide choice of guesthouses and hotels, bars to visit and some of the best beaches anywhere in the world. There is even a gay shopping mall.

Zoom Airlines will be operating its twice-weekly services from Gatwick on Thursdays and Sundays. Fares start at £399, which includes taxes and all charges.

To enter the holiday competition go to www.sunny.org/zoom

flyZoom.com

ROYAL PALMS WITH ATTITUDE

Greater Fort Lauderdale's Royal Palms Resort and the Flamingo Inn Amongst the Flowers have been named part of Attitude Hotels Premium collection. The Attitude Hotels brand debuted this month as a unique selection of hotels, inns and B&Bs all created, designed and developed to satisfy the needs of gay and lesbian travellers. Both hotels are members of Greater Fort Lauderdale's Rainbow Alliance and Superior Small Lodgings programme, as well as recipients of the top Five Palm PlanetOut.com rating. The Royal Palms Resort boasts such accolades as the 2007 *OutTraveler* Readers' Choice Favourite Gay Resort/Guesthouse and the 2006 *PlanetOut* Editor's Choice Best Gay Accommodation. Greater Fort Lauderdale has more than 150 gay-owned venues, including hotels, bars, clubs and restaurants, as well as three gay and lesbian publications. Last year, gay visitors contributed some \$1.2 billion to Greater Fort Lauderdale's economy. For more information, visit www.sunny.org.

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IS IT A BOAT? IS IT A PLANE? NO, IT'S JUST A TRAIN – EUROSTAR

For the second anniversary of our CP we fancied a trip to Paris, and why not? Eurostar is the only way to go and get to see the new St Pancras station. Online booking would appear to be easy-peasy and initially it is – unless you use a debit card like Maestro, because they let you go through the whole booking process before telling you they can't handle debit cards. I had completed my booking and got an immediate email. "Whoops," it said. "We have cancelled your booking as there was a problem with your card and if you still fancy a trip on Eurostar, then log on to the website." Having just spent 20 minutes doing that, we obviously wanted a trip on Eurostar, but no reason was given as to why the card was a problem.

There was a phone number. I called and 25 minutes later I eventually got the booking I wanted and they 'generously' waived the extra cost of booking by phone. It seems there's a known problem with Maestro cards, a fault with their software, but nowhere on the website does it say you can't use debit cards.

Having wasted nearly an hour on this 'simple' procedure, I decided to complain and many emails and phone calls later, we were compensated with an upgrade to first class for our return journey – thank you Eurostar. When questioned about the informality of their 'whoops' email I was told, "We like to make Eurostar a fun and friendly experience." My riposte was simply, "It's a train. Fun it will never be, all we ask is for it to get us to Paris."

The eventual trip was fine, the new St Pancras is fantastic, Capital First Connect, formerly Thameslink, runs right into the new international station and the check-in could not be easier. Security is at the highest possible airport level – we had luggage unpacked and scrutinised closely and then an approach from an officer from HM Revenue and Customs asking if we were taking much money with us. If only! It was all unexplained and very odd – did we look that suspicious?

The train left on time and arrived two hours and 20 minutes later in Paris. Second or standard class was perfectly comfortable and the trip was completely uneventful – it is, after all, just a train. Sorry I forgot,



it was a fun experience. We didn't actually experience much fun but Eurostar employees are obviously told they have to believe their own PR. Our return trip in first class, thank you very much Eurostar, was excellent, breakfast

on a very reasonable par with British Airways economy class, but completely acceptable, very comfy seats and an effortless journey. Of course, arriving back in London on a Sunday is another story. Miscellaneous engineering works meant our return to Brighton took more than three hours and involved a tube train, two mainline trains and a bus from Three Bridges.

Happy anniversary, and to quote Rick's immortal line, "We'll always have Paris." **Roger Wheeler**

STRAIGHTS TAKE GAY BREAKS

The new trend in gay and lesbian travel is special products for gay and lesbian travellers that are now open to straight travellers, according to the organisers of the Gay & Lesbian Travel Pavilion in Berlin. "Apart from gay and lesbian cruises, we have noticed a clear rise in hotels and resorts that are not only gay-friendly but targeted mainly towards gay men. Straight people are, in most cases, allowed to stay, too. The magic word is 'straight-friendly'," said Robert Kastl of Publicom GmbH. Among the gay events that are attracting straight-friendly travellers are sporting events such as the EuroGames in Barcelona this year, the Outgames in Copenhagen in 2009, and the Gay Games in Cologne in 2010, and the major Pride events, such as EuroPride in Stockholm later this year.