

I am sorry, 'gaycation' is an awful word. I came across it on an American site, though it's a bit better than the hideous 'staycation'. Being a gay couple we don't want to have to explain ourselves or encounter judgment when checking into hotels or having to explain why you want one bed instead of two. To be fair it rarely happens now that there are so many gay travel sites but the problem obviously does exist. According to a recent American survey of some 500 gay travellers, 71% expressed a preference to stay at gay-owned hotels. If the survey had included gay-friendly accommodations, I suspect that the number would be even higher. Earlier this year we had the pleasure of staying at a qay-owned hotel; in short,

## **GAY TRAVEL WEBSITES**

**Gaytravel.com** is about the most comprehensive worldwide travel site for gay people. It's based in the US so most reviews are written by Americans but none the worse for that. One of my personal favourites is

there's something to be said for keeping it in the family.



gaytravellersnetwork.com, here you can join any number of groups that specialise in various countries or types of traveller; bears, naked beaches etc. US based, again, but they do have a lot of members from Europe and its well worth looking at.



**Qguide.com** is an Australian site with the slogan 'Inspiring gay travellers to venture out and explore their big gay world'. It covers and reviews international capital cities, with lots of recommendations of places to stay and see. As it originates in Oz it does have a slight bias towards Australia, South America, the US but their coverage of the rest of the world is pretty comprehensive.



International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA) is about the biggest gay travel site. It's based in Fort Lauderdale, which as most of us know, is the gay capital of America. But it is worldwide with 'ambassadors' in virtually all European countries who, technically, are there to help and advise gay visitors. IGLTA is a professional organisation that gives accreditation to hotels that can then carry the logo. I've tried this and it works, you can trust the logo, any hotel carrying it will be gay or extremely gay friendly.

## G O » FURTHER AFIELD

UK-based furtherafield.com is run by two guys in Herefordshire who launched their site when they couldn't find a small hotel or B&B they felt comfortable with. Their aim was to create an easy to use guide offering places to stay which have been hand-picked in amazing locations, with quality and personality. The sort of guide they could recommend to friends - straight and gay. Their site now features 130 properties in Spain, Italy, France and throughout the UK. We visited one of their recommended properties, Hotel Masia Sumidors near Sitges and it was a perfect place to relax. Gay owned and run by two great guys; if this is the standard of furtherafield then they are doing the right thing.

**Exclusivelypride.net** is the latest company to get into the gay market, offering a 'new travel concept' offering exotic, luxury destinations for discerning gay and lesbian travellers (their words not mine). Launched in October 2011, run by a Dutch-born South African and based in Cambridge, they offer tailor made holidays specialising in Southern and East Africa and India.



Increasing numbers of gay and lesbian tourists are choosing India, which was until fairly recently, thought of as a conservative society that disapproved of same-sex relationships. Consensual homosexual activities were effectively decriminalised in 2009, so it's not surprising that India has become popular as a gay destination. There are two new Indian companies, indjapink.co.in and outjourneys.com that are offering tours to Jaipur, Udaipur, Agra, Varanasi and Kerala which are apparently romantic destinations.



## TRAVEL REVIEW SITES

The biggest travel review site is, of course, tripadvisor.co.uk, but did you know that they have a gay forum. As they don't broadcast this facility you will need to search for www.tripadvisor.co.uk/ShowForum-g1-i12358-Gay\_Travel. It's a very interesting forum and certainly worth taking a look at.

On a more general travel theme if you subscribe to **travelzoo.com** (it's free, as are all the others) you will get a weekly newsletter of some very good airline and hotel deals. I have just found **insidetraveller.co.uk**, another travel advice site which is not free but you can sign up for a free monthly newsletter giving some interesting info on money saving deals, car hire and air fares. There are dozens of similar sites all of which offer advice and suggestions, really quite a mind boggling amount of choice. Confused? I am, most of us base our holiday choice on cost and how much time we can spend either on the beach or exploring new places.

The **Passport Office** strongly recommend that you renew your passport nine months before it expires, and will credit the unused period at the end of your new passport. Some budget airlines will refuse boarding if your passport has less than six months before expiring, which is wrong but try disputing that with a check-in clerk at a busy airport. New passports take about ten days to arrive, so renew in plenty of time.

Wherever you go have a great time and enjoy Christmas.