

GAY & LESBIAN NYC

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GAY & LESBIAN NYC

This city can feel pretty utopian to queer visitors who hail from less tolerant spots in the world. Cultural events, bars, clubs, eateries and even inns that cater to LGBT folks are plentiful here – and you'll find that practically no neighborhood or establishment (at least in Manhattan) will bat an eye at the sight of same-sex customers holding hands or canoodling over a meal.

Credit for much of the welcoming vibe can be given to a fed-up group of drag queens and other men and women who, on a June night in 1969, bravely (if unwittingly) kicked off the official gay-rights movement. They did it by standing up for themselves outside of the Stonewall Inn bar in Greenwich Village when cops on a routine shakedown (of anti-gay harassment) pushed this bunch of customers just a bit too far. They fought back, touching off what has since become known as the Stonewall Riots, and showed the city, the country and the world that gay folks were people, too – and that they deserved equal rights.

It's comforting to remember this city's fierce history when you're here, but it's just as inspiring to take a look around at present-day victories – from the fact that the speaker of the New York City Council, Christine Quinn, is an out and proud lesbian, to the existence of various local laws that criminalize anti-gay violence, forbid workplace discrimination of LGBT people and offer legal domestic partnerships to same-sex couples. Combine all of that with the vast array of gay entertainment options and très-gay neighborhoods – Chelsea, Hell's Kitchen, Greenwich Village and Brooklyn's Park Slope among them – and the queer visitor may never want to leave.

The best way to get a handle on the goings-on here, especially when it comes to the ever-changing scope of nightlife options, is to pick up a copy of either the weekly *Next* (www.nextmagazine.com, for boys) or monthly *Go* (www.gomag.com, for girls), two magazines that stay on top of the bar, club and performance offerings around the city and are available at various street boxes and gay establishments. Another great place to start is the LGBT Community Center ([p358](#)), a helpful resource for finding anything queer in this city, or Heritage of Pride ([p359](#)), which organizes the city's annual Gay Pride, a full month of parties and rallies that culminates in the famously long and lavish parade down Fifth Ave.

SHOPPING

It's certainly not necessary to limit your shopping to gay-themed outlets – especially with designer-stocked, aesthetically pleasing shops like Barney's and Bergdorf's at the ready – but sometimes it's just kind of nice. Sadly, Oscar Wilde Bookshop, the city's lone gay bookstore – and, purportedly, the oldest such place on earth – closed its doors in 2009, a victim of big chain stores, online buying and the weak economy. But you'll still find a handful of queer-centric spots left (though all are a bit less high-minded than the bookstore).

RAINBOWS & TRIANGLES

Map p126

Cards & Gifts

☎ 212-627-2166; 192 Eighth Ave btwn 18th & 19th Sts, Chelsea; 📍 A, C, E to 14th St, L to 8th Ave
Holding court along Chelsea's hoppin' Eighth Ave is this gay-obsessed card and gift shop. This is the place for buttons and magnets with rainbows or pink triangles, as well as quirky gag gifts, erotic greeting

cards and, in the hushed back room, various porn items geared toward guys.

DELPHINIUM CARDS & GIFTS

Map pp144–5

Cards & Gifts

☎ 212-333-3047; 358 W 47th St at Ninth Ave, Midtown West; 📍 C, E to 50th St

This Hell's Kitchen boutique is selling a lifestyle with its gay-themed jewelry, cards, candles, calendars and unique gifts. There's nothing earth-shattering, but it's a cute, fun place to browse and has really friendly staff. The same owners also have [Delphinium Home](#) (Map pp144–5; ☎ 212-333-3213; 653 Ninth Ave; 📍 A, C, E to 42nd St-Port Authority), a block away, stocked with a great selection of glassware, shower curtains, kitchen tools and various other houseware items.

UNIVERSAL GEAR

Map p126

Clothing

☎ 212-206-9119; www.universalgear.com; 140 Eighth Ave btwn 16th & 17th Sts, Chelsea; 📍 A, C, E to 14th St, L to 8th Ave

A more accurate name might be 'Chelsea Gear,' as the place is bursting with all that's de rigueur for handsome Chelsea boys and wannabes. Here's where you'll find cute-boy staples like G-Star and Diesel denim, pouch-heightening underwear by 2(x)ist and C-IN2, plus swimwear, jackets, shoes and accessories from Ben Sherman bags to D&G watches.

WEAR ME OUT Map pp144-5 Clubwear

☎ 212-333-3047; 358 W 47th St btwn Eighth & Ninth Aves; ☎ 11:30am-8pm Mon-Sat, noon-7pm Sun; 📍 C, E to 50th St

A fun little boutique (from the owners of Delphinium) for 'Hellsea boys' who need the perfect outfit to wear to **HK** (right) this weekend, this is a friendly place to pick up a pec-promoting tight tee, a pair of sexy Energie jeans, provocative undies and various types of jewelry. The flirtatious staff are full of encouragement, too.

EATING

Eating can be enjoyed nearly anywhere in this city, no matter how outwardly gay you are or want to be. But if you prefer to dine 'with family,' there are a number of good options, all of which offer clever takes on American cuisine.

CHELSEA GRILL OF HELL'S KITCHEN

Map pp144-5 American \$\$

☎ 212-974-9002; 675 Ninth Ave btwn 46th & 47th Sts, Hell's Kitchen; 📍 C, E to 50th St

Handsome boys pack into this festive, clubby dining room for hearty pre- and post-party meals such as burgers, meatloaf, grilled fish platters and pastas, plus salads for hardcore gym queens and a slew of potent cocktails.

ELMO Map p126 American Eclectic \$\$

☎ 212-387-8000; 185 Seventh Ave btwn 19th & 20th Sts, Chelsea; 📍 1 to 23rd St

One of several Chelsea hotspots that have mastered the art of blending a nightclub atmosphere with a solidly good menu, this is a consistent favorite. The sweeping space is low-lit and sexy (the fact that it's almost always packed with beautiful men doesn't hurt), and the food covers all bases, from roasted beet salad to chicken pot pie and grilled tuna. Cocktails are generously poured, too.

HK Map pp144-5 American Eclectic \$\$

☎ 212-947-4208; 523 Ninth Ave at 39th St, Hell's Kitchen; 📍 A, C, E to 42nd St-Port Authority

A bright spot on a slightly sketchy corner of Hell's Kitchen, this has fast become the hip gay spot to be – especially for post-work cocktails and dinner or Sunday brunch. The modern design is sleek and airy, with white accents and a space that gets flooded with sunlight during the day. The menu puts a creative spin on comfort foods, with plenty of salads and pastas in the mix, and a particularly impressive array of brunch items. Around the corner is its cocktail annex, the gay bar **HK Lounge** (p358).

LIPS Map pp118-19 American \$\$

☎ 212-675-7710; www.lipsnyc.com; 2 Bank St at Greenwich Ave, West Village; 📍 1 to Christopher St-Sheridan Sq

It's a drag-show dining experience here – which, yes, brings in hordes of straight tourists seeking thrills for bachelorette parties – but it can be truly enjoyable for any queer with a sense of humor, too. The food's been named after local drag queens – Lady Bunny (oven-roasted chicken), Bianca Leigh (penne primavera), Kevin Aviance (spicy chicken wings) – but the best dish is the entertainment, which stars many of the characters whose names you'll find on the menu.

LUCKY CHENG'S Map p112 Pan-Asian \$\$

☎ 212-473-0516; 24 First Ave btwn 1st & 2nd Sts, East Village; 📍 F to Lower East Side-2nd Ave

Yet another drag-themed eatery, this one features pert Asian drag queens serving up pupu platters, sweet and sour chicken, lemongrass beef and various other tasty treats – along with campy music, burlesque and comedy as part of the Fortune Cookie Cabaret dinner-theater shows.

DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE

This is one category that is unapologetically separated from the straight version – probably because gay bars hold such an important place in gay history, as they used to be the only places where being out was free and easy. You'll find endless options here and watering holes that appeal to all sorts of subcultures, from pierced and tattooed baby dykes to aging circuit boys. Note that places come and go very quickly around here, especially

nightclubs, which frequently get shuttered by police only to reopen a few weeks later under a new moniker – you may want to call before heading out. Places are numerous, and therefore organized by neighborhood; some parties listed here are only one-night affairs. See also p303 for clubs, and visit the websites of some of the community’s favorite roving weekly or monthly bashes to see what’s next on the agenda: **Shescape** (www.shescape.com) for lesbians is known for blowout Thanksgiving Eve and New Year’s Eve events, and the **Saint at Large** (www.saintatlarge.com) for party boys busts out each March with its massive, kink-themed Black Party.

Lower East Side & East Village

COCK Map p112 Boy Bar

☎ 212-777-6254; 29 Second Ave at 2nd St; 📍 F to Lower East Side-2nd Ave

A dark, dank spot that’s proud of its sleazy-chic reputation, this is the place to join lanky hipster boys and rage until you’re kicked out at 4am. Varying theme nights present popular parties with live performers, DJs, drag-queen hostesses, nearly naked go-go boys and porn videos on constant loops. It’s wild and friendly.

EASTERNBLOC Map p112 Boy Bar

☎ 212-777-2555; www.easternblocnyc.com; 505 E 6th St btwn Aves A & B; 📍 F to Lower East Side-2nd Ave

This intimate space hosts rotating DJs, theme nights, go-go boys, adorable bartenders and a packed house of cute local boys. It has a kitschy iron-curtain theme replete with Bettie Page videos and Communist-era posters, and a neighborhoody vibe.

1984 AT PYRAMID CLUB Map p112 Club Night

☎ 212-228-4888; www.thepyrmidclub.com; 101 Ave A btwn 6th & 7th Sts; 📍 F to Lower East Side-2nd Ave

A legendary and cramped multilevel club (see also p304) that saw its heyday sometime in the late '80s, its Friday nights take you way back there with its endlessly popular 1984 night. The party, which draws a very gay crowd, focuses on icons of that decade – Madonna, Abba, Pet Shop Boys, you name it – and gives you an overdose of their music and videos all night long.

MR BLACK Map p106 Gay Dance Bar

☎ 212-254-4090; www.mrblacknyc.com; 199 Bowery at Spring St; 📍 6 to Spring St

The roving fave has settled, for now, at this Bowery space, hosting parties Thursday through Saturday that involve hip downtown DJs and fab hosts, with low or no cover charge.

EDEN @ R BAR Map p106 Lesbian Party

myspace.com/edenevents; R Bar, 218 Bowery btwn Rivington & Prince Sts; 📍 F to Lower East Side-2nd Ave

This weekly lesbian lounge soiree, held on Wednesdays from 8pm to 3am, is known for drawing sexy, sophisticated ladies with its charming hostess, Maggie C, and music from the oddly named DJ sHEROCK.

Greenwich Village & West Village

MONSTER Map pp118–19 Club, Piano Bar

☎ 212-924-3558; 80 Grove St at Sheridan Sq; 📍 1 to Christopher St-Sheridan Sq

It’s old-school, gay-man heaven in here, with a small dance floor as well as a piano bar and cabaret space. Spirited theme nights range from Latino parties to drag-queen-hosted soirees.

HENRIETTA HUDSON Map pp118–19 Lesbian Bar

☎ 212-924-3347; 438 Hudson St; 📍 1 to Houston St
All sorts of cute young dykes, many from neighboring New Jersey and Long Island, storm this sleek lounge, where varying theme nights bring in spirited DJs who stick to particular genres (hip-hop, house, rock). The owner, Brooklyn native Lisa Canistraci, is a favorite promoter in the world of lesbian nightlife, and is often on hand to mix it up with her fans.

RF LOUNGE Map pp118–19 Lesbian Lounge

☎ 917-262-0836; 531 W Hudson St at Charles St; 📍 1 to Christopher St-Sheridan Sq

The former site of longtime lesbian favorite Rubyfruit Bar & Grill, RF is a re-designed loungey sort of place, now drawing a new crowd of women who find they have fewer and fewer places to call their own over the years. Themes, DJs and hosts vary nightly.

CUBBYHOLE Map pp118–19 Mixed Bar
 ☎ 212-243-9041; 281 W 12th St; 📍 A, C, E to 14th St, L to 8th Ave

A tiny hideaway festooned with brightly patterned bar stools and strings of colorful lights, this no-attitude neighborhood watering hole has that truly rare mix of lesbians and gay men who are out to make friends rather than hit the road with the first trick they find. It's got a great jukebox, friendly bartenders and plenty of regulars.

STONEWALL INN Map pp118–19 Mixed Bar
 ☎ 212-463-0950; 53 Christopher St; 📍 1 to Christopher St-Sheridan Sq

Site of the Stonewall riots in 1969, this historic bar was losing its fan base to trendier spots until new owners came along, gave it a facelift and opened it to a new and welcoming crowd several years back. Since then, it's been pulling in varied crowds nightly for parties catering to everyone under the gay rainbow.

MARIE'S CRISIS Map pp118–19 Sing-Along
 ☎ 212-243-9323; 59 Grove St btwn Seventh Ave S & Bleecker St; 📍 1 to Christopher St-Sheridan Sq

Aging Broadway queens, wide-eyed out-of-town gay boys, giggly tourist girls and various other fans of musical theater assemble around the piano here and take turns belting out campy numbers, often joined by the entire crowd. It's old-school fun, no matter how jaded you were when you went in.

Chelsea

BARRACUDA Map p126 Gay Lounge
 ☎ 212-645-8613; 275 W 22nd St at Seventh Ave; 📍 C, E to 23rd St

This longtime favorite holds its own even as newer, slicker places come and go. That's because it's got a simple, winning formula: affordable cocktails, a cozy rec-room vibe and free entertainment from some of the city's top drag queens.

EAGLE Map p126 Leather Bar
 ☎ 646-473-1866; www.eaglenyc.com; 554 W 28th St; 📍 C, E to 23rd St

Leathermen, furry bears and other masculine subsets descend on the Eagle for cruisey fun and thematic nights that include live S&M action. Come summertime, its open-air roof deck is the place to be for raucous beer blasts.

GYM Map p126 Sports Bar
 ☎ 212-337-2439; 167 Eighth Ave at 18th St; 📍 A, C, E to 14th St, L to 8th Ave

This popular sports bar for men is nothing like the rowdy straight sports bars that pepper Midtown side streets. Here the decor is classy – wide-plank wooden floors, high ceilings and a long, sleek bar – the men are polite and ice-skating championships are just as popular as basketball playoffs. The downstairs **Locker Room** is cozy and intimate, with DJs, drinking games and low lighting.

Flatiron District

SPLASH BAR Map p131 Club
 ☎ 212-691-0073; 50 W 17th St; 📍 L to 6th Ave, F, M to 14th St

As megaclubs come and go, this staple (found near Chelsea's eastern border with the Flatiron District) has become hotter than ever. It's a multilevel club that balances both a lounge and dance-club vibe, thanks to a mix of hang-out spaces, an unrivaled lineup of DJs, great special events and performances and some of the most smokin' bartenders around.

Midtown West

CLUB 57 Map pp144–5 Dance Club
 ☎ 917-388-2897; Providence, 311 W 57th St btwn Eighth & Ninth Aves; 📍 A, C, E, 1, 9 to 59th St-Columbus Circle

This Saturday-night dance party is run by a couple of promoters who really know how to pack in the hotties. You'll find three distinct spaces – a cozy lounge, a pop-music dance scene and a main dance floor ruled by some of the biggest names in DJing, plus live performances from pop singers and drag queens. A-listers – including Fergie, Kylie Minogue and designer Marc Jacobs – have also been known to enjoy themselves here.

BAR-TINI ULTRA LOUNGE

Map pp144–5 Lounge
 ☎ 917-388-2897; 642 Tenth Ave btwn 45th & 46th Sts; 📍 A, C, E to 42nd St-Port Authority

The newest Hell's Kitchen watering hole is this sleek, all-white lounge, popular for happy hour and hosting nightly special events, with guest singers, drag-queen hosted game shows and a rotating lineup of local favorite DJs.

HK LOUNGE Map pp144–5 Lounge

☎ 212-947-4208; 523 Ninth Ave at 39th St;

📍 A, C, E to 42nd St-Port Authority

Enter on the 39th St side of this popular eatery (p355) and you'll find one of the sleekest, best-designed lounge spaces around. Handsome men gather to hear mellow DJs and rub elbows with local glitterati, from drag queens to porn stars.

RITZ Map pp144–5 Lounge

☎ 212-333-2554; 369 W 46th St btwn Eighth &

Ninth Aves; 📍 A, C, E to 42nd St-Port Authority Gracing the western end of the city's Restaurant Row, in the Theater District, the Ritz has a front bar that's loud and abuzz, with a post-work, all-male crowd spilling onto the street in warm months. The upstairs space is a mellow retreat, while the downstairs back lounge, lined with banquettes, is often host to DJs or live vocal performers.

THERAPY Map pp144–5 Lounge

☎ 212-397-1700; 348 W 52nd St btwn Eighth & Ninth Aves; 📍 C, E, 1 to 50th St

This multileveled, airy and contemporary space was the first gay-man's hot spot to draw throngs to Hell's Kitchen. It presents nightly shows, from music to comedy, while the romantic 2nd-floor lounge has great fare (burgers, hummus, salads) served in front of a roaring fireplace. Drink monikers are wonderfully in keeping with the theme: Freudian Sip, Oral Fixation and Anorexic, to name a few.

Brooklyn**EXCELSIOR** Map p196 Gay Bar

☎ 718-832-1599; 390 Fifth Ave at 6th St, Park Slope; 📍 F, G, R to 4th Ave-9th St

Who says Park Slope is all girls? This long-running boy favorite has a cute and friendly crowd, a great jukebox and a refreshing back patio for summer months (and year-round smokers).

GINGER'S Map p358 Lesbian Bar

☎ 718-788-0924; 363 Fifth Ave at 5th St, Park Slope; 📍 F, G, R to 4th Ave-9th St

Since the recent closing of nearby Catty-shack, Ginger's has become the lone lesbian hang in the 'hood. It's a neighborhood watering hole, complete with a juke box, pool table, back deck and lots of friendly local ladies.

METROPOLITAN Map p185 Mixed Bar

☎ 718-599-4444; 559 Lorimer St at Metropolitan Ave, Williamsburg; 📍 G to Metropolitan Ave, L to Lorimer St

This friendly and low-key Williamsburg spot draws a good blend of arty fags and dykes with its cool staff, cheap drinks, outdoor patio and great DJs. It's neighborhoody, in a hipster sort of way.

SLEEPING

Gay couples can expect to be treated with utmost respect no matter where they choose to bunk in New York. But staying at an LGBT-owned establishment can provide the added perk of great resources and even instant friends – which is not a bad thing in a strange city. The gay inns have comparably low rates, too.

Bubba & Bean Lodges (p377) A carefree, fun and affordable spot where everyone and anyone is welcome.

Chelsea Pines Inn (p368) The decor is vintage Hollywood. OK, so it's only got loads of framed film posters. But we'll bet any of the boys bunking here can belt out some lines from the big hits as well.

Colonial House Inn (p368) The original home of activist group GMHC, this is a well-appointed, perfectly located townhouse.

East Village B&B (p366) A homey favorite among Sapphic couples.

Incentra Village House (p367) The 1840s townhouse has antique furnishings, fireplaces and a parlor with a piano that guests love to gather around.

Ivy Terrace (p372) Quaint, gay-run and -owned, close to shopping.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Gay organizations in this city are pretty plentiful, and cover the spectrum of support, activism, political, health-related and celebratory organizing. While you're probably not on holiday here to volunteer or attend coming-out meetings, you might actually want to plan for Pride, attend a queer AA meeting or give yourself a history lesson at an info-packed yet under-the-radar site such as the Lesbian Herstory Archives or the Black Gay & Lesbian Archive in Harlem.

LGBT COMMUNITY CENTER Map pp118–19

☎ 212-620-7310; www.gaycenter.org; 208 W 13th St btwn Seventh & Greenwich Aves, West Village;

📍 1, 2, 3 to 14th St

GAY PRIDE BEYOND MANHATTAN

Sure, the annual Gay Pride ([below](#)) march and flood of parties in Manhattan is a wild and wonderful thing. But New York City's outer boroughs have queer folks, too – and their lives and cultures can often feel worlds away from the Manhattan scene. Going to one of these smaller, nontouristy celebrations can be a joyously unique experience. [Queens Pride](#) (www.queenspride.com), held the first Sunday in June, takes place in the multiculti neighborhood of Jackson Heights and has a strong pan-Latin flavor. [Brooklyn Pride](#) (www.brooklynpride.org) kicks off the second Sunday in June and features a street fair and nighttime parade in Park Slope, with parties radiating throughout the borough at nightfall. Staten Island usually has a family-themed waterfront stroll and festival, while the Bronx tends toward live concerts and rallies in a park; they are less established, though, and the best way to find out information is to check in with the [LGBT Community Center](#) ([opposite](#)) in May or June.

For more than 25 years, this has been the nexus of LGBT culture in the Village. That's because it provides a surrogate home for queer folks who may not feel so comfortable in their actual one. It's host to endless groups who meet here – everything from Crystal Meth Anonymous to the Armenian Gay & Lesbian Association, Center Kids (for children of gay parents) and the Lambda Car Club. It also provides a ton of regional publications about gay events and nightlife, and hosts frequent special events – dance parties, art exhibits, Broadway-caliber performances, readings and political panels. Plus it's home to the National Archive for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender History, which can be used by researchers by appointment; the small National Museum of LGBT History, which has frequent exhibits; and a cyber center, which lets you use computers to surf the web for just \$3 an hour.

HERITAGE OF PRIDE

☎ 212-807-74333; www.nycpride.org

These are the folks who make New York's [Gay Pride](#) happen every year, organizing the Pride March on the last Sunday in June, among many other related events throughout the month, to the delight of hundreds of thousands who come to the city especially for this event. For best viewing of the march (called a march, and not a parade, to remember the political roots of the Stonewall Riots, which is what this event commemorates), which kicks off at noon and heads down Fifth Ave from 59th St to Christopher St, get to your spot along the route by 11am. Staking your claim above 14th St will give you much more wiggle room than in the Village, where crowds get massive.

JUBILATION

www.prideinthecity.com

The first week of August brings Black Pride festivities to NYC, providing a more focused perspective than that of the mainstream Pride in June. Events, most held in Brooklyn, range from film screenings and family picnics to panels on HIV. And the final hurrah is a massive dance party in the sand at Jacob Riis Park, in the Rockaways.

LESBIAN HERSTORY ARCHIVES

Map p196

☎ 718-768-4663; www.lesbianherstoryarchives.org; 484 14th St btwn 8th Ave & Prospect Park West, Park Slope, Brooklyn; ☎ F to 15th St-Prospect Park

This Brooklyn brownstone is filled to the brim with books, periodicals, videos, audiotapes, photographs and various ephemera that tell a long and storied lesbian tale. You can visit by appointment only or during several annual open houses – check the website for events. Founded by Joan Nestle and Deborah Edell in 1974, this is the oldest lesbian archive in the world. Be prepared to get lost among its fascinating holdings for hours.

BLACK GAY & LESBIAN ARCHIVE

Map pp170–1

☎ 212-491-2226; www.nypl.org/research/sc/sc.html; Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, 515 Malcolm X Blvd, Harlem; ☎ 2, 3 to 135th St

Part of the [Schomburg Center](#) (p174) in Harlem, these holdings include books, photographs and other writings that reflect a black gay experience. It's the brainchild of local publisher and writer Steven G Fullwood, and its documents go back to the mid 1970s.

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