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The suggestions in this guide represent just some of the hundreds of LGBTQ-friendly businesses in Bloomington. You’ll find yourself welcome wherever you go in our fair city. For more restaurant, hotel, and entertainment ideas, see visitbloomington.com or tweet us @visitbtown.
It’s different here. Bloomington is a small Midwestern city with a downtown square and tree-lined streets. But it’s not like every other town in Indiana, or the Midwest. It’s a college town, home to Indiana University, where students and faculty from around the world flock, in large part because of our progressive attitudes. And we accept people for who they are, and more importantly, we help them become who they want to be. We give, we support, we share, and we open our minds and hearts to anyone who joins our community, whether it’s for a day, for four years, or for a lifetime. You’ll find all the typical small-town things to see and do, but you’ll also find some distinctly atypical things. You’ll find that it’s different here, and you’ll like it.
Every good vacation starts with checking in to your swanky hotel and dropping off your bags before a night out. The Hyatt Place in downtown Bloomington is a favorite among travelers – from their Bloomington-themed décor and local artwork along the adjacent B-Line Trail, to their sponsorship of Bloomington PRIDE and host of summer pride festival workshops, you’ll find comfort and classiness at the Hyatt Place. For an even more local flair, stay at the Grant Street Inn, which is also in the heart of downtown and features newly updated rooms with one of the best breakfasts in town.

After you check in, head to dinner at one of Bloomington’s 100+ locally owned restaurants. You can’t go wrong with Upland Brewery, one of Indiana’s most popular breweries and a local favorite. Sidle up to the bar to catch the game with locals, enjoy a table in their newly expanded restaurant, or head outside to the patio for a meal under the stars. Or try the plethora of international restaurants on 4th Street, a.k.a. Restaurant Row. From Korea to Afghanistan to Italy, you’ll find something new to surprise your palette with.
And now it’s time for a show. The Buskirk-Chumley Theater hosts theater, live music, dance, film, and more, including the annual PRIDE Film Festival in January. Or pop into The Comedy Attic, ranked among the top ten comedy clubs in the nation. For a perfectly Bloomington experience, visit the Indiana University Cinema for top-notch independent film or catch a bout with the Bleeding Heartland Roller Derby.

Before you head back to the hotel, swing by the Back Door, Bloomington’s beloved queer bar, for dancing, drag queens, and delicious drinks like The Beard and Maliboobie. Don’t leave without checking out their handmade countertop filled with all sorts of vintage pictures we can’t describe here.

No trip to Bloomington would be complete without locally roasted coffee. Some local favorites include:

- **SOMA COFFEE** an eclectic coffee shop with an impressive array of teas and smoothies.
- **HOPSCOTCH COFFEE** located along the B-Line Trail in a sunlit room with an exquisitely fancy espresso machine.

Pick up a souvenir mug and a bag of beans to take home and share with friends (or don’t share; we won’t tell).

If boozy drinks are more your thing, walk out the doors of Hopscotch and down the trail to Cardinal Spirits, the best (and only) distillery in town. They’re coming up with new liquors faster than you can say “Tiki Tuesday” (which is as festive and frequent as it sounds). Take home a bottle of Gay Vodka, whose profits support our local LGBTQ nonprofit.
For an adventure, you’ve got the largest lake in the state (Monroe Lake) on the south side of town, which is also adjacent to the enormous Hoosier National Forest, full of hills and trees and gorgeous vistas. Relax on the water with a boat rental at the Fourwinds Lakeside Inn & Marina. But even if the ground is blanketed in snow, don’t worry – Hoosier Heights climbing gym can get you set up with all-day excitement, whether you’re a novice on the rocks or an experienced boulderer.

Now it’s time to stimulate your mind, and we suggest none other than the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, & Reproduction. Founded by Dr. Alfred C. Kinsey in 1947 with the intent of creating open
dialogue about sexuality, the Kinsey Institute is a pioneer in research and maintains a unique art gallery right in the center of the Indiana University campus. While you’re at IU, you might check out such landmarks as:

SIMON SKJODT ASSEMBLY HALL
where the Hoosiers play basketball

ESKENAZI MUSEUM OF ART
designed by I.M. Pei

THE ROSE WELL HOUSE
which has seen many a kiss from couples young and old

Before you go, treat yourself to a souvenir. There’s no better place to shop local than downtown, where you’ll find high-quality handmade items at Gather Handmade Shoppe, well-tailored suits for men and women at Andrew Davis, one-of-a-kind international finds at Global Gifts, and vintage furniture and decor items at Lola & Company. There’s so much to explore, so give yourself at least an afternoon.

For more travel ideas and itineraries, check out visitbloomington.com or get in touch on social media.
In Bloomington, no day is ever too quiet.

Whether you’re walking down Kirkwood enjoying the live music pouring out of local bars, or strolling the halls of the Jacobs School of Music as future virtuosos practice Puccini and Paganini, music is a part of our culture. Many of this city’s active musicians identify among the LGBTQ spectrum, and contribute mightily to Bloomington’s booming music scene. We interviewed a few of them to see what inspires them, what moves them, and how their music has been influenced by the creative culture of Bloomington.

Among them is Jess Waggoner, a PhD student at Indiana University and multi-talented musician. Since moving here in 2009, she’s been in several bands, all with a focus on acoustic instruments and resonant
vocal harmonies. Currently she has been songwriting and performing with a country/Americana band called Corn Palace.

“I’ve always been drawn to big dramatic harmonies and the portability of acoustic instruments such as guitars, banjos and violins,” Waggoner explains. “I especially love collaborative projects where multiple folks in the band write songs—it feels more communal and is much more satisfying to me than merely highlighting a lead singer/songwriter.”

Gender and sexuality have played an important role in Waggoner’s musical development, as she explains: “Songwriting is a space where one can play with gender fluidity, trying on different characters and perspectives.”

Many of this city’s active musicians identify among the LGBTQ spectrum, and contribute mightily to Bloomington’s culture.

JESS WAGGONER (CENTER), PERFORMING AT 2015 PRIDE SUMMERFEST
within an established form. I like to hear other voices singing songs I’ve written, and have been lucky to have bandmates who have no qualms singing different gendered and sexual perspectives from their own.”

Waggoner’s music fits well into the eclectic Bloomington musical scene, which boasts recording studios (like Russian Recording), record labels (such as Secretly Canadian), and dozens of venues. Her favorite venues include The Back Door for their stage and campy atmosphere and The Bishop for their sound system. These venues have performers nearly every night of the week.

“Something my friends and I always say about Bloomington is that whatever weirdo project you want to start, there’s always a few folks who will collaborate with you and always a few folks who will come to see you. When I began the drag gospel project, I knew I wanted to sing these old gospel songs from my childhood in rural Alabama, and I was stunned and grateful that others wanted to join me.

“I’ve never been made to feel that I have to only perform with other queer acts or only in queer venues. There’s a lot of openness and excitement in Bloomington audiences and I’m grateful for that.”
Barry Magee, director of Quarryland Men’s Chorus for gay and allied male-identified singers, echoes that sentiment. “The support we get in terms of invitations to perform, concert audiences, and financial support continues to grow and that allows us to grow our mission of outreach.”

Quarryland has been around for 14 years and continues to grow in size and musicality with each season. They have also grown to embrace the gender spectrum and its potential to impact their music - “As we’ve grown in size in the past 14 seasons we have also become more diverse in terms of people of color, allies, and from time to time have had trans men and genderqueer singers,” explains Magee. “This diversity has grown in part because we have authentic conversations about the limitations...”
of the chorus when there is limited diversity of both on-stage and off-stage members."

The choir also feels a special calling to reflect on the importance of its gay identity, specifically choosing music written by LGBTQ composers and recognizing that the composer’s sexual orientation could have an effect on the music they wrote. And it’s just a great opportunity to explore the vast canon of men’s choral music, which isn’t as commonly performed as music for mixed and treble choirs.

Quarryland’s music is eclectic and impressive, singing everything from popular music to choral standards and music from the past centuries. For those who don’t consider themselves choral music fans, a Quarryland concert is a great place for an introduction. And for those with a classical music sensibility, the choir’s high standards for musicality and interpretation will make you rethink everything you thought you knew about amateur choirs.

And then there’s Ly Wilder, the young and unreasonably accomplished visiting professor of jazz at Indiana University. She grew up near New York City and spent her childhood running around bluegrass festivals and rubbing elbows with the likes of Fred Waring and other great jazz artists. Currently she directs the Singing Hoosiers, an 85-voice ensemble that brings popular American music and dance to life. Catch one of their shows if you can – you won’t be disappointed.

“I’m inspired every day by my students and colleagues at IU,” Wilder explains. “I can’t believe so much art and culture exist here for our community.”

“I can’t believe so much art and culture exist here for our community.”
Wilder and her wife, Brennan Wilder, founded BEAT (Bloomington Expressive Arts Training), when they moved to Bloomington. Ly smiles as she explains how Brennan’s talent as a choreographer and musician translate to her ability to understand how the children in the choir need to connect their bodies to the singing as well as to the movements. Wilder says that above all, the kids should aspire to be great people and gain skills from their art that transcend the performance.

As a member of the LGBTQ community, Wilder finds that she has become a more compassionate person, musician, and educator. “It’s definitely made me grateful for how loving and accepting the artistic community of friends and family that Brennan and I are a part of have loved and supported us, and that comes through in my music for sure.”

Whether you seek classical guitar on a restaurant patio or a grunge concert at a queer bar, jazz in a concert hall or local bluegrass in a park, Bloomington’s music scene is diverse, supportive, and ever growing.

**MUSIC VENUES**

**THE BLUEBIRD**
A historic music venue booking high-caliber talent in Bloomington.
[thebluebird.ws](http://thebluebird.ws)

**BUSKIRK-CHUMLEY THEATER**
Hosts music, theatre, dance, film, and community events presented by more than 50 organizations.
[buskirkchumley.org](http://buskirkchumley.org)

**THE BISHOP**
Craft beers, spirits, great music, and no cover all week.
[thebishopbar.com](http://thebishopbar.com)

**IU JACOBS SCHOOL OF MUSIC**
(Musical Arts Center, Simon Hall, & Auer Hall)
Produces world-class opera, ballet, and musical performances throughout the year.
[music.indiana.edu](http://music.indiana.edu)

**IU AUDITORIUM**
Presents an exciting season of Broadway shows, concerts, and student events.
[iuauditorium.com](http://iuauditorium.com)

Find more live music options at [visitbloomington.com](http://visitbloomington.com)
Planning a wedding can be challenging: once you’ve decided on “the one,” you’ve got to decide on about one million other things for the wedding. So we have two recommendations: get married in Bloomington and call us for help. There are many fantastic venues in Bloomington that can act as a ceremony or reception site (even our City Hall is gorgeous), and numerous vendors to provide everything from food to flowers. Wading through the options can be tough, but that’s where Visit Bloomington steps in. We can help guide you through the local resources and ease a little of the stress. This section will give you a glimpse of what’s available and what we do, but talking with our expert team is even better.

**Vendors**
- RAINBOW BAKERY
- LIBY BALL CUSTOM ATTIRE
- ROYALE HAIR PARLOR
- JACOBS SCHOOL OF MUSIC

**Venues**
- WONDERLAB MUSEUM
- SYCAMORE FARM
- INDIANA MEMORIAL UNION
- BUSKIRK-CHUMLEY THEATER

*Find more venues, vendors, and resources at visitbloomington.com/weddings*
Wedding Tips

Make sure to call us to see what else is going on in town before you set a date! We offer these services free of charge.

Bloomington has so many local vendors that can help make your day flawless and totally you. It just might save you some money, and you’re helping out local businesses!

Start planning as far in advance as possible (a year is usually good) to get your ideal venue and start booking hotel rooms for out-of-town guests.

Prepare for the weather & have a back-up plan! Indiana weather is unpredictable, but we do hear that rain on your wedding day is good luck.

Include some suggestions of fun things to do in town for guests while they’re here. Some families might want to plan a mini-vacation around your wedding as well.

“One of my happiest times in Bloomington was the first few days when same-sex marriages became legal in Indiana. Watching the community rally around all of the couples who could finally express their love for one another helped me realize what an open and accepting city we live in. And I got to officiate a few of the ceremonies, too!”

NICOLE BOLDEN, Bloomington City Clerk
Our Wedding Services

- Arrange hotel room blocks with special rates
- Suggest wedding venues and places of worship for your ceremony and/or reception
- Recommend vendors: caterers, bakeries, wedding planners, photographers, videographers, florists, DJs, & more
- Provide rehearsal dinner ideas
- Advise on travel times, weather, and concurrent events that might interfere with your wedding
- Give suggestions for bridal showers and bachelor/bachelorette parties
- Provide visitors guides, maps, & brochures to help out-of-town guests navigate Bloomington and all it has to offer
Bachelor & Bachelorette Party Ideas

IU FAN & GRADS
Plan a weekend around a Hoosiers basketball game; the men's & women's teams have plenty of weekend home games to choose from. Grab a bite to eat at Mother Bear's or Lennie's, head to the game, and then celebrate a win at Nick's with a round (or two) of Sink the Biz!

RELAXING WEEKEND
Book a room at one of the B&Bs in town, grab brunch at the Runcible Spoon, followed by an afternoon of indulgent massages & mani/pedis at a spa downtown, dinner at Uptown Cafe, and finishing up the evening with drinks at Cardinal Spirits.

NIGHT OUT ON THE TOWN
Begin your day with a tasting at Oliver Winery, dinner at Scholars KEEP or Grazie Italiano, a show at The Comedy Attic or Bloomington Playwrights Project, and drinks at The Atlas Ballroom (complete with skee-ball) to cap off the evening.

BOAT PARTY
Rent a party pontoon on Monroe Lake (we highly recommend the double-decker ones with a slide), don't forget to stock up on food as well as Upland & BBC beer! There's plenty of room to cruise around the lake. Whether you're looking to join other party boats or just want to chill and do your own thing, Monroe Lake has what you're looking for. Book a room at a lakeside inn or camp in the middle of the Hoosier National Forest to complete your weekend!

DANCING QUEEN
Ready to put on your dancing shoes? Start with dinner at King Dough or FARMbloomington and get the party started at the Root Cellar (in the basement of FARMbloomington) for a cool underground vibe & great DJs, and end your evening at The Back Door where you'll find great cover bands, DJs, and drag shows!
Attractions & Events

PRIDE FILM FESTIVAL
Late January
The PRIDE Film Festival is devoted to issues and situations concerning the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer communities.
bloomingtonpride.org

IU GLBTAA CELEBRATION
Late January
The GLBTAA Celebration Weekend offers faculty, staff, alumni, students and friends a wonderful schedule of diverse and fun-filled events.
alumni.indiana.edu/glbtaa

PRIDEFEST
Late August
Summerfest is a free weekend-long celebration of queer people and allies.
bloomingtonpride.org

THE KINSEY GALLERY
Open year-round, Wed. - Fri.
The Kinsey Institute Gallery features changing exhibitions that highlight art focused on sexuality, gender, and reproduction.
kinseyinstitute.org

ROLLER DERBY
February - June
The Bleeding Heartland Roller Derby has home games and tournaments throughout the spring.
bleedingheartlandrollerderby.com

THE BACK DOOR
Open daily until 3am
Bloomington’s only queer bar, known for great dancing and clever cocktail names.
backdoorbloomington.com

For tons more events that are open to all, check out visitbloomington.com/events
Indiana University is ranked in the Campus Pride list of the top 50 LGBT-friendly colleges and universities.

The Advocate ranked Bloomington the fourth-gayest city in the country.

The Kinsey Institute on sexual behavior and health was founded at IU Bloomington in 1947 by Dr. Alfred C. Kinsey.

Bloomington has received a perfect 100-point score on the Human Rights Commission’s Municipal Equality Index every year from 2015-2018.

Bloomington was named the number one “surprisingly gay small-town destination” by OutTraveler.com.

Bloomington Pridefest attracts up to 15,000 attendees every year.
BLOOMINGTON PRIDE
Bloomington PRIDE serves the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and allied community of Bloomington and south-central Indiana.
bloomingtonpride.org

PRISM YOUTH COMMUNITY
Prism is an inclusive social group for youth celebrating all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions.
bloomingtonpride.org

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
The City of Bloomington Human Rights Commission is designed to educate and raise awareness about civil rights laws and human rights issues.
bloomington.in.gov

RAINBOW RIGHTS TASK FORCE AT THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH
This group seeks to work with and for the congregation in the area of LGBTQ rights and concerns.
uubloomington.org

LGBTQ+ CULTURE CENTER
The Culture Center serves as a resource and information center for campus and community individuals, groups, events, and activities.
glbt.indiana.edu

IU GLBT ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
The IU Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Alumni Association (GLBTAA) seeks to improve the quality of life for LGBT students, faculty, staff, alumni, and fans of Indiana University.
alumni.indiana.edu/glbtaa

800-800-0037

VISITBLOOMINGTON.COM