



A giant rainbow flag is part of the annual Columbus Pride parade.

# COME ONE, COME ALL

## INCLUSIVE

Discover six cities rolling out the welcome mat for LGBT groups. These large and small communities are proving inclusivity isn't merely a smart social stance, but also a boon for their bottom lines: The economic impact of U.S. LGBT travelers was more than \$75 billion in 2015, according to CMI's 20th Annual LGBT Tourism & Hospitality Survey. Find out what's drawing LGBT events to town, what strides communities are making in LGBT meetings and where attendees should go once they're checked in.

By Marc Boisclair

German Village neighborhood



## COLUMBUS

Few destinations are as welcoming as Ohio's capital city. Experience Columbus is spreading the word (publishing a targeted website and e-newsletter, "Out in Columbus") that LGBT attendees will find the city a good fit for both business and pleasure. Bolstering the CVB's efforts is a large, thriving hometown LGBT community. To wit, take a walk through German Village and Short North Arts District, where all are free to enjoy cool shops, eateries, galleries, parks and playgrounds while holding hands. Foodies, take note: A walking tour of Grandview Avenue is worth skipping breakfast for, as Columbus' offbeat restaurant row can sate your culinary desires for an entire day.

Better yet, both neighborhoods are a short stroll or free CBUS ride from Greater Columbus Convention Center, which will grow to 75 meeting rooms and 373,000 square feet of contiguous exhibit space—plus earn LEED certification—when a \$125 million expansion wraps in 2017. Columbus accommodations include 4,000 guest rooms downtown (2,100 either connected or adjacent to the convention center), all close to the hopping nightlife in the LGBT-friendly Arena District.

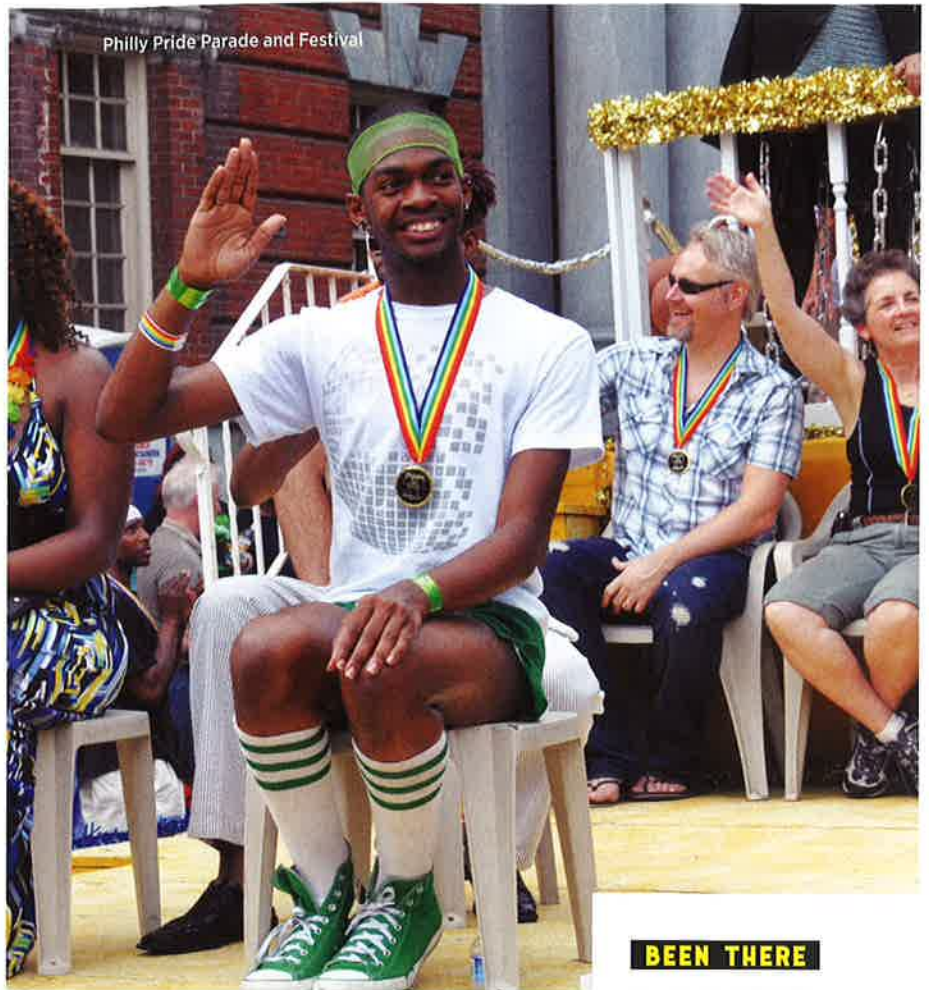
### BEEN THERE

- LGBTQ Health Equity Conference (2015)
- North American Gay Amateur Athletic Alliance (2015)
- Gay Softball World Series (2015; 2010)
- Ohio State Bar Association LGBT Diversity and Inclusion Conference (2015; 2013)
- TransOhio Trans & Ally Symposium (2015)
- North American Gay Volleyball Association Labor of Love Classic (2014)

### DONE THAT

- Columbus Arts Festival (June)
- Stonewall Columbus Pride Festival and Parade (June)
- Ohio State Fair (July-August)
- Independents' Day Festival (September)

Philly Pride Parade and Festival



## PHILADELPHIA

Steeped in history and chock-full of arts and culture, this East Coast gem, at once a big city and still user-friendly, satisfies a huge to-do list for LGBT groups in search of a work-and-play destination. "We're a safe, comfortable and welcoming city for all diverse people," says James Delmar, national accounts manager for the Philadelphia CVB. Moreover, Philly's a surprisingly easy city to get to and around in, with its central Northeast Corridor location accessible via Interstate 95, plus ample air options through Philadelphia International Airport, about 20 minutes from downtown. SEPTA's many mass transit arms, including an extensive subway system, make in-town (Center City) travel a breeze. That's a good thing, as attendees will want to experience as much as possible before and after their meetings.

The best starting point: Reading Terminal Market, a few blocks from Pennsylvania Convention Center. Go west and relive Rocky's run up the Philadelphia Museum of Art steps; then head east to the Liberty Bell, Penn's Landing and the National Constitution Center. Just south, you'll find Midtown Village, a popular LGBT neighborhood. Don't miss South Street, a maze of entertainment, retro clothing stores and some of Philly's best cheesesteak stands.

### BEEN THERE

- Pennsylvania Youth Action Conference (2016)
- Equality Forum Summit (2015)
- National Gay Flag Football League Gay Bowl XIV (2014)
- National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association National Convention (2011)
- Trans-Health Conference (2001-present)

### DONE THAT

- Mummers Parade (January)
- South Street Spring Festival (May)
- Philly Pride Parade and Festival (June)
- Tall Ships Philadelphia Camden (June)
- AIDS Walk and Run Philly (October)

GERMAN VILLAGE SOCIETY; BRYAN KARK; LATIROP