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Trans & Gender Diverse Travel Guide:

A Roadmap for Safe and
Enjoyable Adventures

Created by IGLTAF's Gender Diverse Travel Advisory Group

Travel is a form of freedom. For many in the queer community, it's an opportunity to finally feel like their most authentic selves, often away from daily environments that may be limiting. For trans and gender diverse travelers, travel can also represent hope. A chance to start anew, to explore possibility, or rewrite one's life.

Yet, this sense of liberation isn't always guaranteed. Discrimination during airport screenings, traffic stops, boarding trains and cruise ships, combined with a lack of legal protections, can quickly turn a joyful trip into a stressful one. These challenges often mirror broader daily realities, and when layered with other identities like race, class, or religion, the risks of harassment or violence can intensify, especially in unfamiliar or less inclusive regions.

Below are practical tips designed to help trans and gender diverse travelers navigate travel with greater confidence, safety, and ease.





Know Before You Go

Traveling as a gender diverse person can mean navigating legal systems and social norms that don't affirm your identity. Some countries criminalize gender expressions that don't align with your sex assigned at birth, while others lack basic anti-discrimination protections based on SOGIESC (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sexual Characteristics).

Before departure, whether you are traveling by land, air, sea, or rail:

- Confirm that your identity documents (passport, visa, ID) are consistent and will be accepted without issue.
 - If your documents do not fully align with your identity, check with your embassy or consulate in the destination for guidance.
- Research the legal and social climate in your destination, including laws around gender identity, expression, and bodily autonomy.
- Identify if the destination enforces “cross-dressing,” “public decency,” or other anti-LGBTQ+ laws.
- Note the location and contact information of your nearest embassy or consulate in the destination.
- Join a local or regional LGBTQ+ travel forum or online group. First-hand traveler updates can often give you more accurate, on-the-ground information than official sites.



Border officials and airport security may not be trained in gender diversity. They may scrutinize your gender expression and/or sex characteristics, especially if it differs from the gender marker on your passport or ID. Some countries explicitly restrict entry for transgender, nonbinary, and intersex people if their presentation and legal gender markers do not align. For example, Qatar, the UAE, and Oman have laws criminalizing gender non-conformity and lack clear policies for gender diverse travelers. Policies are evolving, though inconsistently, around the world. Saudi Arabia has signaled a more welcoming stance toward LGBTQ+ tourists, but currently lacks clear guidance for gender diverse travelers at borders. For a comprehensive list of countries with anti-LGBTQ+ laws, visit ILGA's World Database.

It's important to remember that challenges aren't limited to your destination. Many **LGBTQ+** travelers face discrimination in their home countries or points of origin, making travel even more difficult.

Cultural awareness and self-advocacy are key. Travel has the ability to open hearts and minds through the sharing of cultures and creating opportunities for different communities to interact. These experiences support a greater understanding overall, even though some identities may not be recognized or accepted everywhere.



“After traveling to Osaka, Japan, I created a travel assessment, documenting all of my experiences...both positive AND negative. This simple exercise will go a long way in ensuring my future travels will be more sustainable, safe, and enjoyable.”

Gabrielle Claiborne

She/Her



Travel Documents & Visas



These best practices are important to keep in mind even when you are just connecting through airports, bus terminals, or cruise ports, and apply to both international and domestic travel.

Ensure your gender marker, aligned name, and presentation are consistent across all travel documents to reduce risks of delays, intrusive screenings, or denied applications. If traveling for business, consider bringing an official invitation or letter that includes your name. This can help verify the purpose of your trip if needed during travel or at border controls.

Requirements vary significantly by country and gender diverse travelers often face added complications. Some nations require visa applications to reflect sex assigned at birth. The U.S., for example, issued guidance in 2025 requiring all visa applications to show sex at birth, causing confusion and concern. Other countries, including India, China, Russia, and Turkey, lack clear policies on visa processes for gender diverse applicants, leading to inconsistent treatment. The European Union's 2024 ruling mandates that member states recognize gender marker changes from other EU countries, though visa forms and procedures still vary widely.

Always double-check that the name, gender marker, and date of birth on your travel reservations exactly match what appears on your government-issued ID or passport. This simple step can help ease the journey through check-ins and border security.





“I always pay attention to the sex and gender information entries. To make sure I am addressed correctly, I always choose the gender that affirms my identity. At the same time, I keep an eye on any official notes where they may require my gender to align with the sex listed on my ID.

Complying with that (due to a lack of gender recognition in my country) is not surrender, but a way to ensure my safety. Still, I never change how I present myself to officials: as a decent woman traveler.

If I am asked, I simply reply while pointing at myself, ‘My passport is wrong—but I am correct.’ I believe that when we are true to ourselves and others, people will empathize with us. If not, I’d better travel somewhere else.”

Bella Vongvisitsin
She/Her

Packing

Packing is more than just clothing and toiletries. And for trans and gender diverse travelers, it can affect how you are perceived at borders and airports. In regions like Southeast Asia, trans women have reported being profiled or unfairly suspected of sex work. While we believe that all work has dignity and support the rights of sex workers, it's important to be mindful of these perceptions.

All prosthetics, prescription medications (including hormones and puberty blockers for minors*) and medical accessories (e.g., ice packs, syringes) will be screened at the airport. If you plan on boarding an aircraft with any of these items, pack them separately and inform airport security that they are medically necessary.

If possible, pack prosthetics and binders in your checked luggage to help minimize additional scrutiny during security screening.

Always carry prescriptions and relevant medical documentation with you.



Ensure that you have enough medication for the duration of the trip and a contingency plan if for any reason your trip gets extended. This could include traveling with a couple extra days of supply and/or being aware of any gender-affirming providers at your destination where you could obtain an emergency dosage.

It's also recommended that you bring a printed list of medications and a copy of your prescriptions — include the original packaging or a doctor's note when possible.



***Important note:** Before you travel, check the laws in your destination on bringing hormones or other prescription medications. Some countries prohibit or restrict the import of hormones, even with a prescription.

For travelers who are considering purchasing hormones abroad, exercise utmost caution. Travelers may face suspicion of smuggling or other legal issues. Always research local laws thoroughly and consider the risks involved.

Travel by Air



Airport Security

Security procedures vary by country and airport. Many staff may have limited training on gender diversity, which can result in invasive questioning or delays.

Some countries use Advanced Imaging Technology (AIT) scanners that may flag body contours, binders, or prosthetics as anomalies, potentially leading to additional screening. Most scanners have a binary gender setting (male or female) which means some trans and gender diverse people might show “inconsistencies” during scanning. Some items (like gel breast forms) are exempt from liquid restrictions but may still trigger extra screening. Travelers generally have the right to opt out of AIT scans but may be subject to full-body pat-downs instead.



If you request private screening, consider bringing a trusted companion to observe. Policies on who conducts screening (e.g., same sex as the traveler) are often unclear and inconsistently applied. In the U.S., the TSA offers a [Disability Notification Card](#) that you can present to discreetly alert officers about medical needs.

Some airports, particularly [U.S. Preclearance sites](#) abroad, allow travelers to clear customs before departure, reducing stress upon arrival.

For residents of the United States, the [Advocates for Trans Equality \(A4TE\)](#) provides helpful guidance on what to expect when traveling as a trans or gender diverse person. While their advice focuses on U.S. travel, their insights may be useful for international travelers as well. [Here is some information from A4TE about security checkpoints](#) and how gender information is used in the U.S.

The Secure Flight program checks the reservation information against government watch lists. The gender information included in your reservation is used to eliminate false matches with the same or similar names — not to evaluate a person's gender. TSA Travel Document Checkers will check as you enter security to ensure that the name on your ID matches your boarding pass. It does not matter whether your current gender presentation matches the gender marker on your ID or your presentation in your ID photo, and TSA officers should not comment on this.

If you live in the United States and travel frequently, you may want to consider enrolling into the TSA PreCheck program, which offers expedited screening and reduces wait times in TSA lines. Visit [here](#) for more information about this program.



Another option is Global Entry, a U.S. Customs and Border Protection program that allows pre-approved travelers to use automated kiosks when entering the U.S. Global Entry includes TSA PreCheck benefits and can help minimize time spent in crowded lines, face-to-face screenings, and potentially invasive questioning or scrutiny, making the travel experience safer and more comfortable. To apply for Global Entry, [click here](#).

Situational awareness is crucial in setting your travel experience up for success. For gender diverse travelers, this can mean staying mindful of your surroundings while taking public transportation and navigating large assembly areas, developing an exit strategy if needed, OR using the restroom without engaging with other people to avoid being harassed – or being accused of harassment.

When setting your awareness to be conscious of the quickest way to verbal or non-verbal cues that could be interpreted as volatile and threatening. With this, it will be important to balance your situational awareness with joy and confidence, knowing that you have done your due diligence in setting yourself up for success and have every right to enjoy every experience along your journey.

When I visit new places, I always research whether the city or country is supportive of trans travelers so I know what to expect. TSA Precheck and Global Entry have made travel less stressful since I've already shared personal information. I check my assigned gender at birth but tell people I'm trans masc nonbinary when asked, keeping my IDs unchanged for safety abroad.

Jess Osborn

He/They





I do a fair amount of pre-trip research—before I book I review a company’s history as allies to the gender diverse community. I rely on companies that I trust. I’ve been on numerous Olivia Travel cruises and know that the lesbian-owned company does extensive vetting of destinations and experiences before ever booking a ship. Marriott has long been supportive of the LGBTQ+ community and I know I will be welcomed at any of their properties. Other members of IGLTA are equally committed to making travel joyful for all of us.

Jacob Anderson-Minshall

He/Him



Travel by Land

If you are not comfortable traveling by air, consider taking a road trip. Road trips can be extremely fun, but also anxiety-inducing for gender diverse people when passing through less densely populated areas where there are fewer resources, witnesses, or cellular service. Travel with a companion if you can, and inform friends and family about your route.

When traveling by car, plan your stops in advance so that you will know the following:

- Service plaza stops along your route (larger ones may actually have single/family use restrooms).
- Have a restroom buddy, and never travel into a gender-congruent restroom alone. Your buddy can stand near the door and be an extra pair of eyes while you use the sink/wash area.
- Avoid leaving your car unattended and/or parked in dark, unlit areas.
- Carry a gas can (or two) in your trunk in case there are long stretches of the trip through unfamiliar areas.
- Keep an emergency car kit with you along with copies of your license, gender-affirming documents, and insurance.
- When traveling alone by car, use cruise control during long stretches. Consider installing a GPS system in the car, a dash cam (optional), and a toll pass (if affordable).

When traveling by bus:

- Refer to bullets 1 & 2 above for recommendations.
- Refer to “Travel Documents and Visas” above section for recommendations regarding legal documents.
- Refer to the “Packing” section above for packing recommendations.

Driving As BIPOC

Black and Latinx travelers — especially in the United States — have long faced racial profiling and disproportionate risks during traffic stops, with far too many escalating into violence. More recently, there has been a rise in aggressive policing of Latinx drivers, particularly in border states, where even citizens have been targeted.

For BIPOC gender diverse travelers, these risks can be heightened if your ID does not align with your presentation — or if an officer makes a biased assumption. To help minimize risks:

- Make sure your headlights, brake lights, and turn signals are all working.
- Avoid even minor traffic violations, like rolling stop signs or speeding, that could give police a reason to pull you over.
- Keep your license, registration, and insurance easily accessible.
- If stopped, keep your hands visible and ask before reaching for documents.
- Avoid driving with a firearm if possible. If you feel it necessary for your safety, **ensure you have the proper permit to carry with you in the vehicle** and notify law enforcement that you have one if you are stopped.

- Record any engagement with law enforcement
- Above all else, stay calm to avoid escalating a routine traffic stop into a dangerous situation, even if the stop is not warranted and law enforcement provokes a volatile exchange.



Additional tips that are important to know for Latinx travelers or those targeted by ICE/immigration enforcement in the United States:



- You are not required to answer any questions about your immigration status, country of birth, or how you entered the country.
- You do not have to show documents unless you are driving (in which case you must present a valid driver's license).
- You can refuse consent to search your belongings, car, or home.
- If arrested, you have the right to an attorney and to make a phone call.

While these precautions can't eliminate systemic risks, being prepared can go a long way in keeping you safe.

Travel by Train

Traveling by train can be an affordable, fast, and scenic alternative to flying or driving when following these recommendations:

- Refer to the “Know Before You Go” section for recommendations in determining/navigating final/intermediate stop destinations whose legal systems and social norms don't affirm your identity.
- Refer to the “Travel Documents and Visas” section above for recommendations with legal documents related to booking, border security (if applicable) and general travel.
 - If you're traveling with hormones or other medications, check local regulations in advance to ensure smooth passage. In regions like Europe, where a single journey may cross multiple countries with different laws, be prepared for unexpected delays or reroutes, such as unscheduled stops due to technical issues, which could bring you into a country with stricter regulations.
- **Sleeper train safety:** Keep your belongings secure and your compartment locked when possible. Choose cabins that align with your comfort and safety needs, and consider sharing a compartment only with trusted companions. Be aware of train staff and security resources if you need assistance.



- Refer to the “Packing” section above for packing recommendations.
- Refer to restroom best practices under “Travel by Land - Car or Bus” section for facility use recommendations at train terminals and intermediate station stops.

Travel by Sea - Cruise Lines

- Refer to the “Know Before You Go” section for recommendations in determining/navigating final/ intermediate excursion destinations whose legal systems and social norms don't affirm your identity.
- Refer to the “Travel Documents and Visas” section above for recommendations with legal documents related to booking, border security (if applicable) and general travel.
 - Be sure to check entry requirements for all countries where the cruise will dock, including necessary travel documents.
 - If you're traveling with hormones or other medications, check local regulations and maritime laws in advance to ensure smooth passage.
- Refer to the “Packing” section above for packing recommendations.
- Refer to restroom best practices under the “Travel by Land - Car or Bus” section for facility use recommendations while visiting excursion destination(s).
- Refer to the “Travel in Groups” section below for recommendations while visiting excursion destination(s).



Travel in Groups

There is safety in numbers. While having a buddy or group with you may reduce your risk of being a target of discrimination, harassment and/or violence, having a plan for what to do in the event something goes wrong is equally important. Be sure that:

- You and/or your travel companion(s) know who to contact in the event of an emergency, including friends, family members and the phone number of the nearest respective embassy or consulate if traveling abroad.
- You have a meeting location if you become separated from your travel companion(s).

Post Travel Assessment

Create a post travel assessment by documenting what went well and what didn't as this can inform your next trip. When traveling to new places, oftentimes we don't know what to expect until we experience it. Why not benefit from the experiences whether they're a memory you'll never forget or a lesson you never want to repeat. Both are essential in creating sustainable travel experiences that are safe and enjoyable.

Additional Resources

- [Advocates for Trans Equality \(A4TE\)](#)
- [Lambda Legal](#)
- [Destination Pride](#)
- [Global Trans Rights Index](#)
- [203 Best \(& Worse\) Countries for Trans Rights in 2023](#)
- [Equaldex](#)
- [ILGA World Database](#)

Research your travel destination to determine if there is an active LGBTQ+ community or LGBTQ+ organizations on the ground that represent your lived experience to better understand how you will be received as a visitor. You can also reach out to these organizations and ask for any advice that they could offer while traveling in their country.

Please note many of these recommendations may only relate to countries that provide adequate protections to LGBTQ+ travelers. It is advised that you proceed with caution when traveling outside of your home country.

About the Gender Diverse Advisory Group

The IGLTA Foundation's Gender Diverse Travel Advisory Group (GTAG) provides guidance and resources to enhance accessibility and safety for trans and gender diverse travelers. The volunteer-led group works to ensure IGLTA members, and the broader tourism industry create welcoming spaces where all travelers can thrive. [Learn more about the group's work here.](#) The "Trans & Gender Diverse Travel Guide" would not be possible without the generous support of AWAY and the Arcus Foundation.

This guide builds on the original Trans Safety Guide published in 2018, written by Anita Dolce Vita (she/her), QPOC femme, owner of dapperQ, and contributing fashion editor at Curve magazine. The IGLTA Foundation thanks her for creating this foundational resource.



"Traveling for me is never as simple as booking a ticket and showing up. Vietnam reminded me of this—conservative in many ways, yet I felt a deep relief when I spotted a small rainbow flag outside a hotel. It wasn't decoration, it was safety. Inside, the staff were from the community, and for once, I could check in without fear. Japan was similar—Before confirming any hotel, I always send an email first, asking directly if they accommodate transgender women. Only after getting a reply would I book. These extra steps are not a choice for me; they're survival.

Once in Goa, a hotel denied me entry at the reception desk because I am transgender. That humiliation has stayed with me, and it's why I now take ten extra steps that most cisgender travelers never even think about—just to ensure that when I arrive, I'll be safe and recognized as myself."

Sonali Khan
She/Her



As a trans nonbinary person, I take several measures before a trip to ensure safety and peace of mind. I carefully review the laws and cultural attitudes toward LGBTQ+ individuals in my destination, paying close attention to rules around gender identity, documentation, and public expression. I make sure my travel documents align, and I carry copies. I also research trans-friendly healthcare resources, accommodations, and community networks in the area. Most importantly, I keep situational awareness in mind — knowing when it's best to blend in, when to speak up, and how to protect both my identity and my well-being.

Alexander Semidey

He/They





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