

CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS  
**NEWS RELEASE**  
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## CHICAGO WELCOMES LGBT TRAVELERS

Chicago is proud to be home to one of the most active and friendly lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities in the world. Boasting renowned arts and cultural organizations, a thriving LGBT sports scene, and hundreds of LGBT-owned businesses and social hubs throughout the city — and as the host of Gay Games VII in 2006 — Chicago is known internationally as a welcoming destination for LGBT travelers.

To download the free Chicago Navigaytor, a comprehensive visitor guide to the city written and designed specifically for gay and lesbian travelers, visit [www.citynavigaytor.com/chicago](http://www.citynavigaytor.com/chicago).

### ARTS AND CULTURE

Chicago is widely recognized as a cultural mecca, with hundreds of performing arts organizations located throughout the city, including a variety of renowned LGBT organizations. The **Chicago Gay Men's Chorus** entertains audiences with innovative musical programming exploring themes ranging from love to politics to the sometimes fabulous, sometimes challenging world of being gay—often all at the same time. The award-winning **About Face Theater** presents works that strive to challenge audience's intellects, imaginations, self-conceptions, moral expectations, and ideas about gender and sexuality. Each year, Chicago is home to the **Reeling Film Festival**, the second oldest LGBT film festival in the United States. Reeling demonstrates the diversity of work being created today by screening films from a range of genres—from award-winning international feature films to social documentaries to experimental shorts.

### NEIGHBORHOODS

In addition to hundreds of LGBT-owned and friendly businesses and social hubs throughout the city, Chicago has an official City of Chicago–designated LGBT neighborhood, **Lakeview** (Boystown,) marked by 22 rainbow-ringed and illuminated 20-foot pylons on Halsted Street, from Belmont to Waveland Avenues. Known by the locals as "Boystown," this highly eclectic gay quarter features fine restaurants, outdoor cafes, vintage clothing, high fashion, and several blocks of LGBT bars ranging from classic Chicago pubs, to sultry lounges, from hard-core leather scenes to booming, high-energy dance clubs. Wandering Halsted and Broadway streets, the neighborhood's main thoroughfares, a visitor might think he or she had stumbled onto a gay pride celebration.

**Andersonville**, an old Swedish enclave, has steadily developed into a very popular, yet low-key lesbian and gay neighborhood. Andersonville, a sort of "Girl's Town," features one of few remaining independent women's bookstores in the nation, a sleek LGBT gym, coffee houses, art galleries, and a wide variety of ethnic culinary experiences. LGBT-owned restaurants, gourmet delis and ethnic food stores add elegance to the somewhat bohemian scene. Andersonville has also become an exciting nighttime destination, and is home to many LGBT bars, including a swank wine bar, taverns, dance clubs, leather bars, and some of the friendliest neighborhood pubs you will find in the city.

Hollywood Beach, long recognized as the city's LGBT beach, is a pleasant 15-minute walk away through the beautifully landscaped and garden-laden streets of Andersonville.

### ACCOMMODATIONS

From luxe 5-stars to trendy boutique properties to student-friendly hostels, Chicago is home to dozens of hotels that can suit any travel style and budget. While LGBT travelers are welcome at any hotel in the city, properties near the Boystown neighborhood are known for being particularly LGBT-friendly. The **Neighborhood Inns** of

Chicago are three stylish hotels located in Lakeview – the City Suites Hotel, Majestic Hotel and Willows Hotel. Those looking for a smaller venue can check out two elegant B&Bs located minutes from Boystown – the **Ardmore House** and the **Villa Toscana**. The **Hawthorne Terrace Best Western** is a charming boutique hotel nestled in the heart of Lakeview.

### **PRIDE CELEBRATIONS**

Each June, Chicago celebrates **Pride Month**, with dozens of social, cultural, political and athletic events. The culmination of Pride Month is the annual Gay Pride Parade, which takes place on the last Sunday of the month (in 2008, the Parade will be held on Sunday, June 29). The Parade, which attracts more than 400,000 viewers, steps off from the corner of Belmont and Halsted and proceeds through the Boystown neighborhood.

**Halsted Street Market Days** is a mid-summer street festival in Boystown that takes place each year in August (2008 date: August 9-10). During the festival, Halsted Street is closed to vehicular traffic for two days of music, dancing and food. Festival organizers believe that Market Days is the largest street festival in Illinois, with more than 300,000 attendees each year.

Andersonville's MidSommarfest in early June (2008 date: June 14-15) and Lakeview's Pride Fest on the Saturday before the Pride Parade (2008 date: June 28) are also popular festivals with an LGBT flavor.

### **SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS**

Chicago has a thriving LGBT sports community and is home to several large LGBT sports membership organizations that manage and support more than 4,000 local athletes on an annual basis. These include the **Chicago Metropolitan Sports Association**, **Windy City Athletic Association**, the **Women's Sports Association**, **Frontrunners/Frontwalkers Chicago**, **Chicago Smelts**, **Team Chicago** and the **Illinois Gay Rodeo Association**. Athletes from around the world compete in the many LGBT international sports tournaments hosted in this sports-loving town — from basketball to softball, volleyball to tennis, and ice hockey to road races.

### **CENTER ON HALSTED**

Center on Halsted opened early 2007, and has become Chicago's premiere LGBT destination. The Center houses more than a dozen community service partners plus a theater, gymnasium, organic grocery store, café, technology center, and other unique gathering spaces for LGBT programs and services.

### **MEDIA**

There are several LGBT media outlets located in Chicago that provide resources for both local residents and visitors. These outlets include [Boi Magazine](#), [Chicago Free Press](#), [Gay Chicago Magazine](#), [Pink Magazine](#) and the [Windy City Media Group](#).

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Visitors and Chicagoans planning to entertain out-of-town guests can receive Chicago brochures, reserve hotel accommodations and receive trip-planning assistance by calling toll-free 1.877.CHICAGO (1.877.244.2246), or visiting [www.explorechicago.org](http://www.explorechicago.org). Brochures and information on Chicago's exciting events and activities are also available at the Visitor Information Centers. The centers are located at Chicago Water Works, 163 East Pearson Street at Michigan Avenue and the Chicago Cultural Center, 77 East Randolph Street. The TTY toll-free number for the hearing impaired is 1.866.710.0294.

The Chicago Office of Tourism, a division of the Department of Cultural Affairs, is the official City agency dedicated to promoting Chicago to domestic and international visitors and to providing innovative visitor programs and services.