

## Travel

# Feel at home on the road in gay-friendly B&Bs



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Pink Planet

MAYNOOTH, ONT.—Have you heard of Maynooth Pride? A gay-owned B&B called Wildewood ([www.wildewood.net](http://www.wildewood.net)) hosts the annual celebration near this tiny village on the outskirts of Algonquin Park.

We share a 50-course potluck supper with dozens of lesbians, gay men, and friends. Then we gather behind Leslie, our bagpiper, who's wearing a canvas kilt with enough pockets to outfit any Land Lesbian. Carrying rainbow flags, we march around Wildewood's huge pond, some of us holding hands, some solemn, some laughing delightedly.

Lesbian- and gay-friendly B&Bs play a big role in many communities, gathering up the locals and hosting visitors from around the world. Feel at home in a houseboat in Amsterdam, a villa in Fiji, or the opulent mansion of a famous retired brothel Madam.

Bruce Morrison is a postman who operates Christchurch Gaystay ([www.gaystay.co.nz/chchgaystay.htm](http://www.gaystay.co.nz/chchgaystay.htm)) in New Zealand.

"I feel before I have even met a guest we are halfway there to knowing each other," he says. "We already know the struggles the other has been through — we hosts are not going to be judgmental — and we share stories about our lives. I feel close and friendly to most of my guests within minutes and find saying goodbye difficult."

This kind of welcome is appreciated by solo travellers. Lindsey's ([www.lindseys.ca](http://www.lindseys.ca)), a wom-

en's accommodation in Montréal, sees single businesswomen of all orientations, as well as doctors from Singapore and Thailand. One doctor came years ago, says staffer Tanya Briere Tardif, and now she sends all her female friends and colleagues. It's not hard to understand why. The cozy mansion, shared with Lindsey herself, feels homey with bookshelves, plants and art.

We wish the walls could talk about the visitors to the Amsterdam home of Xaviera Hollander, bisexual *Penthouse* columnist and author of *The Happy Hooker* ([www.xavierahollander.com/sleeper](http://www.xavierahollander.com/sleeper))

The famous retired New York Madam and her staff offer luxury, pampering, and every kind of service except sexual. The sunny villa is crammed with gifts, decorations and photos of the hostess in her younger days.

Nearby, in Amsterdam's Achtergracht Canal, is another unusual accommodation, the Friendship B&B ([www.friendshipbnb.nl](http://www.friendshipbnb.nl)). This houseboat is a good example of the crossover that happens, with lesbians visiting gay-owned places and vice versa.

"I tend to have more lesbian women come to stay," says owner Timon Fokker. "I think they are more appreciative of the luxuries, and prepared to pay the price, whereas most gay male visitors to Amsterdam tend to go for budget accommodation, as they'll be out in the bars."

Hetero travellers still provide the majority of business for many places. Gary Sowell owns Fijian Waters ([www.fijianwaters.com](http://www.fijianwaters.com)), a traditional Fijian riverfront home.

"We also get quite a few straight couples coming here to stay," he says. "When I ask them why they stay at gay guest houses they tell me it is because they are usually done better than the

ones done by straight couples."

Many owners find that the straight visitors automatically tend to be gay-positive. Montréal's Alexandre Logan B&B ([www.alexandrelogan.com](http://www.alexandrelogan.com)) sees no conflicts between their guests, who are almost half hetero. Other places market exclusively to LGBT visitors, and won't book a straight visitor if there is a gay or lesbian couple in the house.

Hosts who open up their homes find it enriches their lives. Yolanda Soryl owns English Park Eco Accommodation ([www.englishpark.co.nz](http://www.englishpark.co.nz)), an environmentally friendly guesthouse in New Zealand that serves vegetarian food.

"Offering B&B or home stays provides a service for our own community and creates opportunities to make friends from all over the world," she says.

Gary Sowell adds, "I can tell you that we do it for the socialization rather than the money. Being in Fiji, there is little gay life, so we bring it to us."

In Maynooth, there is plenty of local gay life gathered at Wildewood. After the Pride March around the pond, we settle on the lawn and watch the sun go down. My partner and I strike up a conversation with a couple who are camping and building a cabin on a remote property nearby.

As darkness creeps over the land, fireworks begin on the far end of the pond. Faintly, we can see Barry and Joey, the owners of Wildewood, dashing back and forth with flashlights and explosives in hand.

We ooh and aah over a dazzling display with all the colours of the rainbow.

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Books and art fill the walls at Lindsey's B&B. Below, a rainbow march around the pond, at Wildewood.

