

The LGBT Guide to Study Abroad

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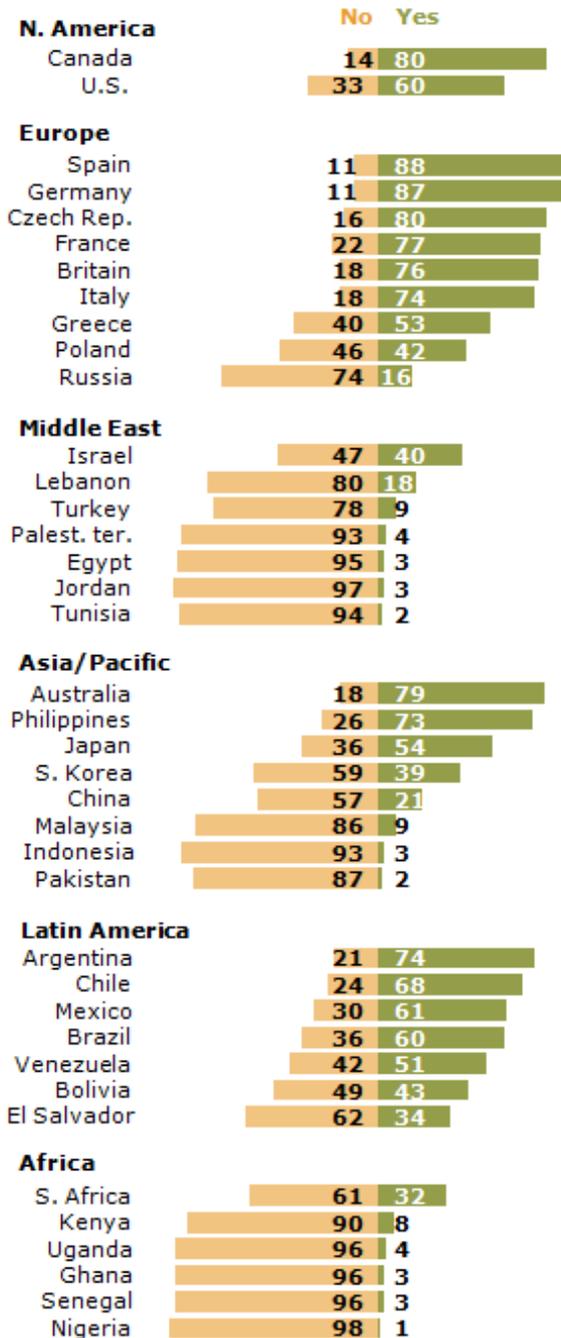
Tufts

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Should Society Accept Homosexuality?



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q27.

Dear Student,

The Pew Research Center conducted a world-wide survey between March and May of 2013 on the subject of homosexuality. They asked 37,653 participants in 39 countries, “Should society accept homosexuality?” The results, summarized in this graphic, are revealing. There is a huge variance by region; some countries are extremely divided on the issue. Others have been, and continue to be, widely accepting of homosexuality. This information is relevant not only to residents of these countries, but to travelers and students who will be studying abroad.

Students going abroad should be prepared for noted differences in attitudes toward individuals. Before departure, it can be helpful for LGBT students to research current events pertaining to LGBT rights, general tolerance of LGBT persons, legal protection of LGBT individuals, LGBT organizations and support systems, and norms in the host culture’s dating scene. We hope that the following summaries will provide a starting point for the LGBT student’s exploration of their destination’s culture.

If students are in homestay situations, they should consider the implications of coming out to their host family. Students may choose to conceal their sexual orientation to avoid tension in the student-host family relationship. Other times, students have used their time away from their home culture as an opportunity to come out. Some students have even described coming out overseas as a liberating experience, akin to a “second” coming out.

As with any student returning from study abroad, LGBT students should be aware of the differences, positive or negative, that they will face in re-adapting to home culture.

This guide offers specific information relative to the locations of Tufts’ ten study abroad programs. We hope you find it helpful, and we wish you the best of luck in your study abroad experiences.

Sincerely,

The Tufts Program Abroad Office

Chile

Santiago

Both male and female same-sex sexual activity has been legal in Chile since 1998, but same-sex couples and households headed by same-sex couples are not eligible for recognition by the government or adoption.¹ However, Santiago calls itself the “gay capital” of Chile, due in particular to the small neighborhood of Bellavista. A gay pride parade is held every year in downtown Santiago.² There have also been a series of well-publicized cases of LGBT discrimination, which led to the passing of an anti-discrimination law in April 2012.³

Resources:

The mission of **Iguales** is to “work through research, dissemination, education, public policy development and legislative management, to ensure the full inclusion of sexual diversity in Chilean society.”

<http://www.iguales.cl/>

The **Movement for Sexual Diversity (MUMS)** is a social movement organization that brings together people, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Its purpose is to promote the recognition of civil rights and human diversity.

<http://www.mums.cl>

The **Soy Hombre, Soy Mujer** project demonstrates the breadth and diversity of definitions of gender in Chile through photographs and videos that respond to the questions: for me, what does it mean to be a man? For me, what does it mean to be a woman?

<http://soyhombresoymujer.cl/>

China

Hangzhou

Adult, consensual and non-commercial homosexuality has been legal in the mainland People’s Republic of China since 1997. Same-sex couples are not permitted to adopt children and do not have the same rights as heterosexual married couples. Homosexuality was removed from the Ministry of Health’s list of mental illnesses in 2001, but the public health campaign against the HIV/AIDS pandemic does include education for men who have sex with men.

There is no anti-discrimination law or policy currently in place.⁴ Overall, the attitude of the Chinese government towards LGBT individuals has been described with the Chinese idiom “不支持, 不反对, 不提倡 (not encouraging, not discouraging and not promoting).”⁵

However, as in the US, acceptance of LGBT individuals varies widely in China according to re-

gion and city. Westernized cities such as Shanghai and Beijing are more diverse and tolerant of LGBT individuals, while smaller cities and towns may not be familiar or accepting of the idea of homosexuality. This is partly due to the culture of conformity in China; everyone is expected to marry, produce male offspring, and continue the familial blood line. Thus, many gay Chinese men lead “double lives,” marrying women and concealing their sexuality.⁶

Resources:

“Founded with a mission to “Empower Gay Asia,” **Fridae** provides a platform that bridges cultures, transcends borders, and unites the diverse groups to form Asia’s largest gay and lesbian community.”

<http://www.fridae.asia/>

Ghana

Legon, Accra

Sexual activity between males is illegal, while there is no legislation regarding sexual activity between females. On July 21, 2011, Paul Evans Aidoo, the Western Region Minister, called for all gay people in the west of the country to be rounded up and arrested, and for landlords and tenants to inform on people they suspected of being gay.⁷ Gay culture is very hard to find in Accra, and many rural Ghanaians are not familiar with the idea of homosexuality. As with any unfamiliar LGBT culture, one should also approach meeting places and relationships with caution and discretion. There have been some reports of scams that were carried out through LGBT websites and meeting places.⁸

Resources:

There are mentions of a **Gay and Lesbian Association of Ghana (GALAG)** in articles online, but no website has currently been found.

Modern Ghana, an African news service, has recently begun publishing articles and op-eds about LGBT culture and events.

<http://www.modernghana.com/>

The **LGBT Ghana Facebook** page posts news relating to LGBT culture in Ghana. They also have a Twitter account which is updated less frequently: @lgbtGhana.

<https://www.facebook.com/lgbtGhana>

<https://twitter.com/lgbtGhana>

Hong Kong

Homosexuality was legalized in Hong Kong in 1991, and the age of consent was equalized with heterosexual acts in 2006. Same-sex unions are not recognized, but transgender people can have gender on official documents changed after a sex reassignment surgery. The Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance 1991 outlaws government discrimination, but does not outlaw discrimination outside of a government setting.⁹ However, gay culture is appearing more and more in popular media.

Resources:

The Big Love Alliance is a Hong-Kong-specific non-profit organization.

<https://www.facebook.com/BigLoveAlliance>

The Pink Alliance (aka Tongzhi Community Joint Meeting or TCJM) aims to link tongzhi (LGBT) organizations operating in Hong Kong, to assist

them in their work and to provide a network for information in both Chinese and English within the tongzhi (LGBT) community.”

<http://tcjm.org/>

Rainbow Centre is a non-profit Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) organization concerned with the quality of life in the LGBT community in Hong Kong.

<http://www.rainbowhk.org/>

“Founded with a mission to "Empower Gay Asia," **Fridae** provides a platform that bridges cultures, transcends borders, and unites the diverse groups to form Asia's largest gay and lesbian community.”

<http://www.fridae.asia/>

Japan

Kanazawa

Japan has very open gay scenes in its larger cities, but there is still widespread denial of homosexuality. Change of legal sex following a sex reassignment surgery has been allowed since 2008.¹⁰ As in China, many gay men also marry women in order to fulfill societal norms and thus lead “double lives.”¹¹ There are currently no laws against homosexuality, but there is no recognition of same-sex relationships.¹² Gay culture is appearing more in popular media. Japan also held its first Rainbow Week in April 2013 with an aim to reach out to LGBT individuals in the country.¹³

Resources:

Pink Dot Okinawa is an LGBT festival that originated in Singapore; the first event in Japan was held in June 2013.

<http://pinkdotok.jp/>

“Founded with a mission to “Empower Gay Asia,” **Fridae** provides a platform that bridges cultures, transcends borders, and unites the diverse groups to form Asia's largest gay and lesbian community.”

<http://www.fridae.asia/>

England

London, Oxford

As one of the largest cities in Europe, London is tolerant and accepting of LGBT culture. Civil partnerships have been recognized in the UK since 2005, and most recently, the passage of the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act on July 17, 2013 will allow same-sex couples to marry as of summer of 2014. Same-sex sexual activity is legal, and the age of consent was equalized nationwide in 2001. Since 2005, citizens have the right to change their legal gender and obtain a new birth certificate. Anti-discrimination policies have been in place since 2010. Adoption by same-sex couples has been permitted since 2005.¹⁴ Keep in mind that the four jurisdictions of the United Kingdom differ; for example, Scotland and Northern Ireland are more restrictive in their LGBT rights.

Oxford is tolerant and welcoming of LGBT individuals, with a small gay nightlife scene in the town.

Pink News is Europe's largest gay news service.

www.pinknews.co.uk

The Beaumont Society is run by and for those who cross-dress or are trans-sexual.

<http://www.beaumontsociety.org.uk/>

The **Out4 Marriage** campaign is a UK-based campaign that supports same-sex marriage and the coming out of LGBT individuals, similar to the “It Gets Better” campaign in the US.

<http://www.out4marriage.org/>

The **Oxford University's LGBT Society** “aims to provide a safe space for all members of the LGBT community.” <http://www.oulgbtsoc.org.uk/>

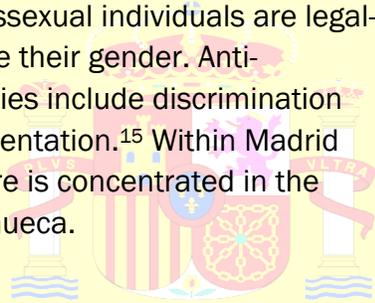
Oxford Friend “provides free and completely confidential information, support and counseling services for LGBT people.” <http://www.oxfordfriend.co.uk/>

www.oxfordfriend.co.uk/

Spain

Madrid

Spain has some of the most progressive laws and legal protections for its LGBT citizens. Same-sex marriage has been recognized since 2005, and same-sex sexual activity has been legal since 1979. Same-sex couples are allowed to adopt as well. Transsexual individuals are legally allowed to change their gender. Anti-discrimination policies include discrimination based on sexual orientation.¹⁵ Within Madrid itself, the gay culture is concentrated in the neighborhood of Chueca.



Resources:

FELGTB (Federación Estatal de Lesbianas, Gais, Transexuales y Bisexuales) is a space where LGBT organizations can share and collaborate on their work.

<http://www.felgtb.org/>

Madrid Orgullo 2013 is an annual gay pride parade.

<http://www.madridorgullo.com/en/>

France

Paris

Same-sex marriage was legalized in France on May 18, 2013. Same-sex couples and LGBT individuals are allowed to adopt. Transgender individuals are legally allowed to change their sex. In 1985, an anti-discrimination policy was formed to forbid discrimination based on sexual orientation; in 2012, this policy was expanded to include sexual identity.¹⁶ While attitudes towards LGBT individuals vary widely within France, Paris is among the most tolerant and cosmopolitan cities in Europe. It boasts many gay clubs, restaurants, and bars; the neighborhood known as Le Marais is also known as a hip, predominantly gay community.

Act Up Paris is an organization that addresses a wide variety of social issues, among them homophobia, rights for foreigners, feminist causes, and transgender rights. They hold weekly meet-

ings in Paris, carry out research, and distribute publications.

<http://www.actupparis.org/>

Bi'cause is an organization created for and by bisexuals with the object of promoting the emergence of a bisexual identity.

<http://bicause.webou.net/>

Le centre Lesbien, Gai, Bi et Trans de Paris Île-de-France is dedicated to putting LGBT people in contact with each other, helping one another, and fighting for equal rights.

<http://www.centrelgbtparis.org/>

SOS Homophobie is dedicated to fighting against homophobia that affects lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals.

<http://www.sos-homophobie.org/>

Germany is fairly progressive in its tolerance of LGBT rights and individuals. While same-sex partnerships have been recognized since 2001, same-sex marriage is not yet officially recognized. It is already becoming a key campaign issue for upcoming elections.¹⁷ Anti-discrimination policies cover both sexual orientation and gender identity. Transgender individuals are allowed to legally change their names, and homosexual transsexuals have the ability to get their partnerships recognized.¹⁸ Tübingen, like Berlin and Stuttgart, is one of Germany's most culturally liberal cities, and so gay culture is typically accepted.

Resources:

While the **German gay-web.de** association technically dissolved in May 2013 due to staff shortages and increased availability of information online, the website still exists and offers information on LGBT groups.

<http://www.gay-web.de/home.html>

This page, created by the German National Tourist Board, offers guidance for gay and lesbian tourists visiting Germany.

<http://www.germany.travel/en/germany-for/lgbt/gays-lesbians.html>

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¹³

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¹⁷ http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/28/world/europe/gay-rights-emerge-as-campaign-issue-in-germany.html?_r=0

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