

World Rainbow Hotels launch website to help LGBT customers find and book genuinely gay and lesbian-welcoming hotels

London, 6th August 2012

Gone are the days when a gay or lesbian couple need be concerned that at check-in their double room will be changed for a room with two single beds. Gay and lesbian customers can now search and book more than 850 genuinely gay-welcoming hotels worldwide on the newly launched World Rainbow Hotels website www.worldrainbowhotels.com.

World Rainbow Hotels (WRH), the gay & lesbian travel organization which made the headlines a year and a half ago as the first ever supplier of gay-friendly hotels on the GDS, launched a new website on August 1st, 2012, allowing LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) consumers to find and book genuinely gay and lesbian-welcoming hotels.

Since its creation in January 2011, World Rainbow Hotels – now boasting partnership with 175 hotel brands including high-profile names such as Kimpton, Morgans, Design Hotels, Joie de Vivre, Thompson Hotels, Rocco Forte, Orient Express, Four Seasons, Fairmont, Raffles and Swissôtel to name but a few – has endeavoured to set a new standard regarding the oft-misused concept of “gay-friendliness”.

Nicolas Wijnants, World Rainbow Hotels’ brand director, said:

“Too often hoteliers claim their establishment is “gay-friendly” but then fail to deliver on their promise. Gay and lesbian consumers want more than a rainbow flag in the window, they want to feel genuinely welcome as gay and lesbian individuals and they want to know that the hotel’s staff understands their travel concerns. World Rainbow Hotels’ mission is to give hoteliers all the right tools to make sure gay and lesbian guests are pleased with their stay.”

The online reservation portal selected more than 850 three to five-star properties in 129 global destinations through a rigorous set of screening criteria, including their current involvement with the LGBT community, compliance with non-discrimination policies and same sex benefits for their staff.

Member hotels are encouraged to undergo LGBT welcoming training and required to put together their own information guide about their local gay and lesbian scene.

These guides, called *Out & About*, provide information such as the destination’s best gay-friendly restaurants, the best gay or lesbian clubs and bars as well as special events. This information is visible online on the hotel’s profile and available to WRH guests at the hotel’s concierge.

According to Mr. Wijnants, all these elements contribute to a more pleasurable hotel experience for gay & lesbian travellers:

“Gay-friendly means that from the moment our guests make a reservation to the time they check out, they can just relax. They won’t be placed in the awkward situation of having to ask for a double bed instead of twin beds and they won’t have to think twice about requesting room service when they are in bed with their lover. Guests won’t be pressured to explain anything or justify anything or “come out” to the hotel staff, it’s already taken care of. Going to a World Rainbow Hotel is like going to a LGBT embassy, where guests can feel safe and welcome.”

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The company's portfolio offers accommodation for every wallet, as it ranges from luxury hotels perfect for a honeymoon to "budget chic" hotels for the more cost-conscious traveller. Besides the many renowned international chains, World Rainbow Hotels also feature many award-winning boutique hotels, apartment-hotels and resorts.

The World Rainbow Hotels website offers the latest updates on the top gay and lesbian events worldwide as well as valuable information on the social attitudes regarding homosexuality for each of the destinations featured on the site.

Mark Lewis, World Rainbow Hotels' managing director, said:

"Whilst our website only lists hotels in places where attitudes to LGBT travelers are friendly overall, not all countries have changed their laws in line with what is socially acceptable. Therefore, having up-to-date information is key to avoid any unsavory experiences. Our goal is to provide our customers not only with the best gay-friendly hotel, but also with all the relevant tools to ensure their stay is as pleasant as possible."

State-of-the-art technology finally available for gay & lesbian consumers

As the first and only gay and lesbian travel organization to be using the travel industry's own communication network (known as the Global Distribution System or GDS), World Rainbow Hotels can offer customers fast and secure transactions as well as the hotels' best available rates at all times.

This makes of World Rainbow Hotels a pioneer, allowing major international hotel brands to reach out to this increasingly relevant market segment for the first time.

What the leading players in the travel industry have to say about WRH

The launch of World Rainbow Hotels' consumer website has been met with industry-wide praise:

"We're very pleased to be a partner of World Rainbow Hotels. Each of our member hotels are ambassadors of their neighbourhood and strive to provide each guest with individually tailored, culturally-immersive experiences, both within and outside the property. The Design Hotels™ community is made up of free-spirited globetrotters from a broad range of backgrounds and preferences looking for meaningful journeys. Our carefully curated portfolio of 230 hotels worldwide are the perfect gateway to the local scene no matter where you are."

Arno Schwalie, VP Business Development & Corporate Strategy, Design Hotels™.

"Fairmont Raffles and Swissôtel Hotels and Resorts are thrilled to be partnering with WRH. We are very proud to have met the strict set of criteria set forth by WRH and are now able to welcome their clients at our participating locations worldwide. As our core pillars include our relationship and place in the community, we strive to ensure all of our guests have the most memorable experience when staying with us. We value the needs, ideas and individuality of others. We treat all Colleagues and Guests with fairness and dignity. We look forward to a very prosperous year ahead with WRH."

Cory Hagopian, Executive Director, Travel Industry Sales, Fairmont Raffles Hotels International

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"Kimpton Hotels is committed to creating a culture that reflects the diversity of our hotel and restaurant guests. With that goal in mind, several of our hotels have partnered with WRH to show support of understanding, accepting, and celebrating differences among people. That includes different personalities, lifestyles, work styles, education and experience. We also welcome and embrace people of all races, ethnicities, ages, religions, physical abilities, sexual identities, gender identities and genders. Our commitment to our internal clients (employees) mirrors our commitment to our guests from all backgrounds."

Yvonne Ruppert-Gordon, Director of National Accounts, Kimpton Hotels & Resorts

"We're excited about our new partnership with World Rainbow Hotels, which perfectly complements IGLTA's efforts to work with businesses around the globe that truly welcome gay travellers. Creating a hotel booking process that is more in tune with our community's needs can only lead to a better LGBT travel experience overall."

John Tanzella, President/CEO, IGLTA

World Rainbow Hotels is celebrating the website launch with a monthly competition (through to December 2012) to win two-night stays at their member hotels.

In August 2012, visitors to www.worldrainbowhotels.com have a chance to win a two-night stay for two people at the Hotel Ellington in Berlin, including continental breakfast. To enter this competition or check the next ones simply go to: <http://www.worldrainbowhotels.com/offers/competition>

About World Rainbow Hotels

World Rainbow Hotels is a carefully chosen collection of more than 850 gay & lesbian-welcoming hotels located in over 129 destinations worldwide. Hotels are approved into the program based on World Rainbow Hotels' acceptance criteria, which analyze:

- Hotel's location
- Hotel's characteristics and category
- Hotel's knowledge of local gay-scene
- Hotel's current involvement with the LGBT community
- Hotel's compliance with non-discrimination policies and same sex benefits for their staff

Hotels belonging to more than 175 hotel brands have already signed up to the World Rainbow Hotels program including:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts | • Thompson hotels | • The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company |
| • Kempinski Hotels | • Morgans Hotels group | • Rocco Forte Hotels |
| • Langham Hotels | • Kimpton Hotels | • The Leading Hotels of the World |
| • Design Hotels | • Langham Hotels | • Hyatt Hotels & Resorts |
| • Taj Hotels, Resorts & Palaces | • Joie de Vivre Hotels | • Hilton Hotels & Resorts |
| • Fairmont Hotels | • Preferred Hotels & Resorts | • InterContinental Hotels Group |
| • Raffles Hotels | • Small Luxury Hotels of the | • André Balazs Properties |
| • The Peninsula Hotels | World | • Caesars Entertainment |

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A number of iconic hotels in the LGBT community have also joined the program including:

- The Lords South Beach Hotel, Miami Beach
- The Standard Spa, Miami Beach
- The Elysium Hotel, Mykonos
- The Mondrian Hotel, New York
- St Martins Lane Hotel, London
- Hotel Cram, Barcelona

For information about World Rainbow Hotels, please visit www.worldrainbowhotels.com or call us on **+44 (0)845 004 9393 – ext 6534**

To see examples of *Out & About* guides, check: www.worldrainbowhotels.com/Why-Book-With-Us/Out-and-About/

Interested affiliates can find out more information on: www.worldrainbowhotels.com/affiliates and hoteliers interested in joining can find out more via www.worldrainbowhotels.com/hoteliers

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Website images, logos and photography can be provided on request.

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