

# amsterdam marketing

**PRESS FEATURE: LGBT in AMSTERDAM**

## **Amsterdam: One of Europe's most popular LGBT destinations**

**Besides being known as one of the most beautiful cities in the world, Amsterdam has become one of Europe's most popular destinations amongst the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) community. The city's relaxed and tolerant attitude towards different lifestyles is a major draw, as is its international atmosphere where English is widely spoken.**

Amsterdam has dozens of gay bars, dance clubs, saunas, bookshops, restaurants and hotels. The majority of the city's gay and lesbian hotspots are concentrated near the Reguliersdwarsstraat, Kerkstraat, Rembrandtplein/Amstelstraat and Zeedijk/Warmoesstraat.

### **A city of firsts for gay rights**

It's hard to imagine a more gay- and lesbian-friendly destination than Amsterdam. As a safe haven for centuries for those persecuted for their views or lifestyles, it's no surprise that Amsterdam emerged as a frontrunner in gay rights as far back as the 19th century. The result is a city that still leads the world in openness and freedom.

Amsterdam could be considered the birthplace of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights. Homosexuality was decriminalised here in 1811, and the first gay bar followed in 1927: Café 't Mandje on the Zeedijk.

One of the world's first organisations for gay rights, the Cultural and Leisure Centre, better known by the abbreviation COC Netherlands, was founded in Amsterdam in 1946. COC strives for the decriminalisation of sexual orientation and gender identity and for equal rights, emancipation and social acceptance for LGBTs in the Netherlands and all around the world.

As a tribute to the many gays and lesbians who lost their lives in World War II, the city unveiled the first-ever Homomonument ('Gay Monument') in 1987.

In 1998, Amsterdam became the first city outside North America to host the international Gay Games. The Netherlands was also the first country in the world to legalise same-sex marriage. On 1 April 2001, mayor Job Cohen officiated Amsterdam's first legal gay and lesbian weddings.

### **Tradition of tolerance**

Amsterdam has a reputation for being open-minded and tolerant. To some, this may seem a recent development, but in fact this tradition of tolerance stretches back to the 17th century. During the Golden Age, Amsterdam was a centre for freedom of press, religion and new ideas. The city became a refuge for Protestant and Jewish merchants as well as philosophers who were persecuted in their own countries.

Tolerance in Amsterdam continues to be based on respecting and accepting people's differences, including different races, religions, sexual orientations and political convictions.

### **Homomonument (Gay Monument)**

The Gay Monument commemorates everyone who has suffered persecution because of their sexual orientation, especially those who lost their lives in WWII. It aims to inspire the entire LGBT community to continue the struggle against denial, oppression and discrimination.

Designed by Karin Daan, the Homomonument lies beside the Westerkerk, taking the shape of a triangle on the edge of the canal. Its three points are symbolic: one corner points towards the National War Memorial on the Dam Square; another points across the canal to the site of the Anne Frank House; while the third corner points towards COC Amsterdam. It remains the largest monument in the world dedicated to homosexuality.

### **Pink Point**

Located next to the Homomonument, the Pink Point is an information kiosk created especially for gay and lesbian visitors. It is open seven days a week from 10 am to 6 pm. The kiosk is a great starting point for information about Amsterdam's LGBT scene, including nightlife, local activities and organisations. They also offer a variety of original souvenirs.

### **15 years of gay marriage**

Exactly fifteen years ago, the Netherlands introduced same-sex marriage – the first country in the world to do so. Mayor Job Cohen officiated the first ceremony for three male couples and a lesbian couple. To celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of the legalisation of gay marriage, the well-known I amsterdam letters were given a rainbow-coloured makeover.



Source: Harold IJskes

### **Pink in Blue Police Network**

The Pink in Blue (Roze in Blauw) network is a task force of police officers – most of whom are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender themselves – dedicated to protecting the Amsterdam LGBT community. The group started unofficially in 1998 during the Amsterdam Gay Games with the slogan '*Proud to be your friend*'. The police want to show that they look after the safety of everyone. The network's members help both Amsterdammers and visitors by reporting discrimination, insults, assault or theft related to sexual orientation or identity.

The Dutch National Police is organising the first World LGBT Conference for Criminal Justice Professionals under their slogan **Proud to be your friend**. The theme of the conference will be: 'To connect and inspire'.

### **Amsterdam Gay Pride and the Canal Parade**

Started in 1996, the Canal Parade is the highlight of Amsterdam Gay Pride. Held on the first Saturday in August, the extravagant parade features colourfully decorated boats filled with enthusiastic participants dancing their way down the city's famous canals. Drawing 500,000+ spectators – many from abroad – this exuberant celebration has become one Europe's most popular gay events.

The Canal Parade reflects the city's cultural mix and 'live and let live' attitude. The parade route is lined with a fascinating mix of spectators: gays and lesbians, parents with young children, waving grandparents and transfixing tourists. Clubs, bars, corporations, NGOs, political parties and other organisations compete to present the most spectacular boat. Popular locations to watch the Canal Parade include the Prinsengracht and along the Amstel, especially near the City Hall and National Opera & Ballet building. The Canal Parade is not the event's only party. Street

parties take place on and around the Reguliersdwarsstraat, Rembrandtplein, Halvemaansteeg, Zeedijk and Warmoesstraat. The festive week closes on Sunday afternoon with the big closing party on Rembrandtplein.

Organised by the Amsterdam Gay Pride Foundation, Amsterdam Gay Pride takes place annually during the first week of August. Gay Pride is more than just an excuse to let loose. In addition all the parties, the programme also includes debates, lectures, sporting events, exhibitions and other cultural activities where emancipation and acceptance play an important role.

### **EuroPride 2016: 'Join our Freedom'**

Amsterdam has been selected to host EuroPride 2016. This is an international LGBT event hosted in a different European city each year. The last time Amsterdam hosted EuroPride was in 1994. This 16-day event takes place 23 July-7 August 2016 and offers a broad programme of art, culture, sporting events and debates. The event begins a Pride Walk at Vondelpark during Pink Saturday and a concert celebrating freedom in Amsterdam. The second-to-last day will coincide with the world-famous Canal Pride, on 6 August. View the full [agenda of events](#) and read the [EuroPride magazine](#) for more information.

### **Pink Saturday**

Every year, Pink Saturday travels to another city in the Netherlands for its July event; the last time it was organised in Amsterdam was 22 years ago, in 1994. The aim is to show the diversity of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people to increase awareness. In 2016, Pink Saturday opens EuroPride in the first weekend at Vondelpark.

### **Milkshake Festival**

Another highlight during EuroPride and Amsterdam Gay Pride is the two-day Milkshake Festival in Westerpark. This year is the fifth edition of this dance festival that shows that entertainment, taste in music, choice of clothing and status has nothing to do with sexuality.

For more information about these and other Pride events, visit:

<http://www.iamsterdam.com/en/visiting/whats-on/amsterdam-gay-pride>

#europrideamsterdam

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**Note to the editor:** The information may be freely referenced or copied if the source is credited: [www.iamsterdam.com](http://www.iamsterdam.com). The above information is subject to change and Amsterdam Marketing accepts no responsibility for inaccuracies in published information.

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**About Amsterdam Marketing**

Amsterdam Marketing is the city marketing organisation of the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area, active in the fields of promotion, information, research and services. Our ambition is to put this region on the map as one of the five most attractive metropolitan areas in Europe for residents, visitors, businesses and influential groups. Under the motto 'I amsterdam', we present the region as a dynamic place to live and work, an attractive travel destination and a test market for innovation.