

Queer Destinations' Statement on Turkey and Egypt Denying Entry to the LGBTQ+ Cruise

At Queer Destinations, we believe that travel should be an experience built on hospitality, respect, and equal treatment for everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. For this reason, we are deeply concerned whenever a group of travelers is treated differently simply because of who they are.

We recognize that every country has its own legislation, cultural context, and sovereign right to establish its own policies. However, when access to a destination is restricted on the grounds of "moral values" or "family values" associated with the identity of travelers, the message sent, not only to its own citizens but also to the rest of the world, is one of exclusion. It creates uncertainty for the LGBTQ+ community, the tourism industry, and society as a whole.

Tourism has always served as a bridge between cultures. Its greatest strength lies in bringing different people together, fostering mutual understanding, and creating economic opportunities for destinations and local communities. When doors are closed to certain visitors because of who they are, not only is the freedom to travel diminished, but an opportunity is also lost to promote a more diverse, responsible, and beneficial tourism industry for everyone. Travel also broadens perspectives, helps people understand different realities, and allows millions of individuals to feel seen and understood in their own countries by connecting with others who share similar experiences. That opportunity should be universal. When situations like this occur, everyone loses.

The LGBTQ+ community represents one of the world's most loyal and economically significant travel segments, as the LGBTQ+ community has an estimated spending power of approximately US\$3.7 trillion. Yet beyond the numbers, we are talking about millions of people who, before booking a trip, must ask themselves whether they will be welcomed, whether they can be themselves, and whether they will be able to enjoy their journey safely and with peace of mind. No traveler should have to ask those questions.

At Queer Destinations, we work to help destinations, businesses, and tourism professionals create environments where everyone feels respected, regardless of their origin, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Our mission has never been to confront cultures, but to build bridges through education, awareness, and best practices, bringing cultures and communities closer together and encouraging greater understanding of the many realities that exist around the world.

We also believe it is important to distinguish between the decisions of a government and the hospitality of its people. Over the years, we have worked alongside tourism professionals and businesses in many countries that have demonstrated a genuine commitment to diversity and to providing a welcoming experience for all visitors.

Today's global tourism landscape is no longer measured solely by visitor numbers, but also by the quality of the experience destinations provide. Inclusion, accessibility, and respect for human rights have become increasingly important factors in travel decisions and in the long-term competitiveness of destinations. Travelers are looking for places where they can feel safe, welcomed, and valued.

We hope that dialogue, cooperation, and the transformative power of tourism will continue to help build destinations that are increasingly open and inclusive. Truly outstanding tourism is tourism where everyone can travel with the same freedom, dignity, and respect.

We also believe the time has come for LGBTQ+ people, who have historically had to fear for their safety simply because of who they are, how they express themselves, or whom they love, to begin experiencing the sense of recognition, empathy, and understanding that has too often been denied to them. And we believe it is time for every person, in every country, to have the opportunity to experience authentic diversity, because diversity is what makes our world richer, stronger, and more complete.