



Philadelphia Gay News

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Businesses step up to woo gay weddings

by Larry Nichols

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Peter Wiles (left) and Jim Williams of Mid-Lakes Navigation

Gay marriage may not be legal in Pennsylvania, but the commonwealth is a mere bridge or couple of tolls away from civil unions (New Jersey, Delaware starting in January) and less than a day's drive to legal marriage, depending on which state you'd prefer to have rice thrown on you.

With gay marriages legal in New York, the Empire State has a lot of businesses rising to the occasion and catering to same-sex couples every step of the way to the big day.

Hotel-review website Oyster.com recently put together a list of the top eight wedding hotels in the Big Apple (blog.oyster.com/celebrate-equality-the-top-8-wedding-hotels-in-new-york-city-17391/), all of them luxurious and opulent, with icons like The Plaza (\$1,300 a night? I said goddamn!) and The St. Regis topping the list.

Face to Face NYC (www.facetofacenyc.com), one of New York's most popular gay spas, has hosted a number of "groomzillas" seeking out services to look perfect for their impending nuptials.

Enrique Ramirez, the spa's founder, said he had a steady flow of groomzillas coming to the spa even before gay marriage became legal in New York.

"Usually they come in right before the wedding for a facial or to get waxed or clipped," he said. "So it's fun. So now I have to create some specific groomzilla treatments. There's a lot of guys that normally would not do this but because they're getting married and going on their honeymoon, they do things they normally would not do the rest of the year."

Ramirez also warned to plan ahead if you intend to get a spa treatment for your wedding, and not just to ensure you get an appointment.

"We have a high volume of clients and we do get busy," he said. "If you're going to get married, you cannot get a facial the day of or the day before. You at least need a week. Also, people love doing the sunless tanning. If that goes wrong the day of or the day before your wedding, it can ruin your day. I also see some guys who want to get waxed for their fun honeymoon. They say, 'Oh, I want to get my balls waxed.' I always tell them to try it ahead of time because I don't want to do it right before you leave and then something goes wrong and your whole vacation honeymoon is just going to be ruined."

With the influx of people attending gay weddings in New York, Gray Line New York, the

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double-decker bus-tour company, is offering its services to couples and their guests, including airport transfer, private sightseeing tours for out-of-town guests and group ticket rates for area theaters and attractions. For more information, visit www.grayline.com/New_York.

Finger Lakes Wine Country, a popular LGBT vacation spot, is quickly becoming a gay wedding location, offering lake-view weddings set at one of the eight winery venues in the region. Afterward, honeymooners can celebrate their nuptials with a weekend at one of the region's many bed-and-breakfasts. For more information, visit www.fingerlakeswinecountry.com.

Couples in the Finger Lakes region can also opt to get married on the water via cruises offered by Mid-Lakes Navigation. Co-owned by Peter Wiles and his partner, Jim Williams, the cruise company started up in 2008 in Massachusetts, before New York state weddings were an option. Cruises run May 13 through Oct. 1 and are available for weddings, rehearsal dinners, lunches and other outings. (Start planning now for next year.) For more information, visit www.midlakesnav.com.

If Massachusetts is a contender for your wedding destination, the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism wants to show you all that the state has to offer. The agency recently launched a new site, www.massvacation.com/LGBTwedding, as a resource directory for same-sex couples. The site provides a step-by-step guide to everything you need to plan a wedding in the state.

If you need some appropriate shiny, sparkly bling for your wedding, jeweler A. Jaffe has a new style of rings called "The Wonder of You" collection, perfectly suited for same-sex couples. The collection offers a wide variety, from diamond eternity styles to high-end men's bands (ranging in price from \$1,400-\$6,800), featuring everything from classic 18-karat rings to extravagant platinum rings with baguette and round diamonds arranged to say "I Love You" in Morse code. For more information, visit www.ajaffe.com.

Love and Pride Jewelers (loveandpride.com) specializes in LGBT jewelry, featuring collections of rings and bands for same-sex engagements, weddings and anniversaries. Options range from traditional to innovative, and prices range from \$95-\$4,495; the website lists resources for same-sex marriage.

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