

THE

GAY JOURNAL

WINTER 2019

LIFE | JOURNEY | STYLE

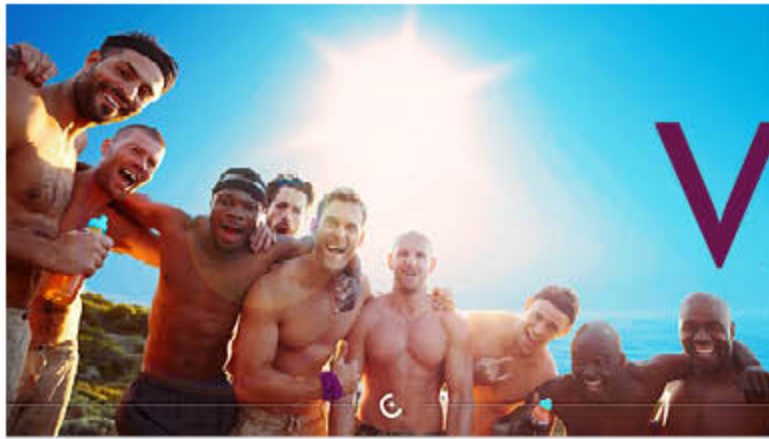


FEATURING...

THE ART OF JOJI
BOB RICHTER
REP. SUSAN WILD

PLUS...

LEHIGH VALLEY LGBTQ BUSINESS COUNCIL
ANNE LISTER
BODIES AND BARRIERS



What is VACAYA?

An interview with founder Randle Roper

VACAYA is a fresh new approach to LGBT travel, one focused entirely on our guests. We charter entire ships and resorts, so LGBT+ travelers have the freedom to express their individuality, make personal connections, celebrate life, rev up, or simply relax... together.

TGJ: Tell us all about VACAYA. How/who/where did it start?

The inspiration for VACAYA began for Randle, John, Patrick, Tracy, and Eric long before their roles in the full-ship/full-resort charter business, even before their twelve combined decades of experience in management, marketing, entertainment, and operations. The VACAYA concept was sparked on their own vacations, where they encountered two very different experiences. The all-gay cruises were liberating, empowering, and fun, but limited to a small spectrum of people. And while everyone loves a good time, there's more to a memorable vacation than just parties. Mainstream vacations offered more activities and destinations, and were accessible to a diverse set of people, but didn't always feel like a friendly, judgment-free environment. They all shared a sense there was a sweet spot – a great “in between” – one that offered the joy of like-minded people coming together to celebrate, with more activities, destinations, and ways to personalize the vacation experience than ever before. One that capitalized on smart, tech-savvy booking and customer service – just as you might expect with a mainstream vacation. From this inspiration, VACAYA was born. The name itself speaks to the concept: “VACAYA” is a word from Polari, a centuries-old language used by the gay subculture to discreetly communicate. Alongside that, the slang word “vacay” has become a casual mainstream term for vacation. Put together, the two meanings celebrate our LGBT identity and the inclusive, joyful, and unfettered spirit we cherish. Randle, John, Patrick, Tracy, Eric, and all of The Vacayans invite you to open yourself up to new experiences, mindful exploration, endless fun, and deeper connections... they invite you to VACAYA.

TGJ: What sets VACAYA apart from other vacations?

We're welcome to all.

There's no other large-scale travel company on earth welcoming the entire LGBTQIAPK community. We create a warm environment where ALL who believe love is love are welcome and we make it easy for everyone to leave their cares behind and focus on the fun. At VACAYA, guests of all shapes and sizes come together to celebrate the great diversity within our community. Traveling with VACAYA is all about being completely comfortable in your own skin, no matter where you fall on the LGBT+ spectrum. Whether you're single, coupled, black, white, skinny, thick, or even straight, you'll easily find a welcoming tribe. Add to that the safety that comes with being part of an undeniable majority while you're with us and VACAYA becomes a blissful utopia.

We offer new destinations and unique experiences.

We're focusing on creating memorable travel experiences to new destinations, with customized itineraries that haven't been offered previously by other vacation companies. VACAYA broke the mold with a never-before-seen all-LGBT+ itinerary to Ptown on Celebrity Summit, that sailed August 11-18, 2019 from New York's Port Liberty. And in regard to new destinations, we're offering an all-inclusive resort experience at The Leading Hotels of the World's UNICO Riviera Maya, October 27 – November 2, 2019 over Halloween and Day of the Dead.

We believe in balance.

We certainly love a great party and will produce some of the best parties at sea, but our focus won't be on all-night ragers every night of your holiday. VACAYA is about discovering magical textures, tastes, smells, sites, and sounds of lands near and far... together. Sailing the seven seas or enjoying a resort that's all ours is about the moments we spend connecting, laughing, and living life to the fullest. Its possibilities are endless and exciting, sensual, life-changing. These experiences open our minds, unify our rhythm, and bond us for life.

TGJ: What should LGBT people be aware of when traveling, especially to another territory?

With the progress the community has made, LGBT people are traveling more than ever, and statically more often than their straight counterparts. Internationally, over 70 countries criminalize same-sex relationships. Even without discriminatory laws on the books, the cultural climate of others may make gay travelers feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Though the U.S. is far from free of homophobic speech, actions, or environments, gay travelers who plan domestic vacations are reasonably well-protected by federal laws and national cultural norms. Though as any cultural experience, things can change place to place. The good news: many fantastic destinations have made gay-friendly culture a priority. Try Amsterdam during the slower Christmas Season, Provincetown in the Summer, Riviera Maya in fall. Cruises cater to gay travelers throughout the world to provide safety, acceptance, luxury, connection, and fun.

VACAYA is the first all-LGBT travel company in the full ship/resort charter sector to launch in over 25 years and we've set out to rewrite the playbook. The VACAYA founders all share a passion for travel and an understanding of the world. We are fascinated by culture, history, and cuisine. Our travel bucket lists are driven by curiosity, hope for a better tomorrow, and the belief that by understanding a place and its people, we can better share our stories and that little by little, sharing our stories can change the world. The current trend in LGBTQ travel is toward inclusivity rather than all-gay enclaves. That's why we are open to LGBTQ and their straight ally friends. We say, if you believe “love is love,” then you belong on our vacations.

Each and every LGBTQIAPK person has a different level of comfortability in their 'outness.' For one magical week, our community gets to be the majority and live life out loud in the blissful utopia VACAYA creates. That single change from being an always-minority to a sudden-majority can have a profoundly positive real-world effect on individuals. And in those moments of bravery when the individual is feeling safe within the traveling group, some choose to share their authenticity with the communities we visit which helps change the world, one story and connection at a time.

TGJ: What is the best way for people to find you and VACAYA?

- VACAYA Website - <https://www.myVACAYA.com/>
- Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/myvacaya>
- Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/myvacaya/>

There are multiple ways to travel with VACAYA.

We categorize our vacations to make it easy for guests to pinpoint the one that's just perfect for them.

VACAYA **BLISS**

Get what matters most with the style and service you want, all at a blissful price. Our large-ship cruises offer a welcoming judgment-free environment, all-star entertainment, mind-blowing parties, and non-stop activities to exponentially expand your social circle. Our commitment to excellence starts with the partnerships we're building with the world's leading cruise lines – Celebrity, Royal Caribbean, Holland America, NCL, Oceania, and Princess. But it's the magic of our guests coming together on these ships that really takes VACAYA to the next level. Our cutting-edge programming and innovative new social activities are meant to connect you with other travelers in lighthearted and unexpected ways. The VACAYA Bliss rhythm is... Fun. Light. Warm. Spontaneous. Joyful. Engaging. Celebratory. Non-stop. Ultimately, each Bliss vacation is what you make it – totally yours to define. Our ships are the ultimate hub for friendship – a chance to connect with like-minded people from all over the world in a festive playful environment.

VACAYA **LUXE**

From Indian spices and Mayan ruins to Antarctic penguins and European dreamscapes, our discovery voyages immerse you in the authentic flavors of the world's most exciting popular and off-the-beaten-path destinations – all in first-class style and luxury. Sailing boutique-style expedition and river ships, VACAYA Luxe offers intimate experiences, splendid accommodations, and unparalleled service. VACAYA Luxe is partnering with the world's leading small-ship cruise lines, including Emerald Waterways, Ponant, Avalon Waterways, and Hurtigruten – lines chosen because they're built to constantly exceed expectations. Our Luxe vacations are a celebration of the wonders of our planet. They will reach the far corners of the globe – giving VACAYA guests an opportunity to expand their horizons in completely new ways. The VACAYA Luxe rhythm is... Bold. Refined. Intimate. Exotic. Treasured. Calm. Cool. Grand. A chance to live life to the absolute fullest.

VACAYA **OASIS**

More laid back than our large-ship cruises, the irresistible 5-star resorts of VACAYA Oasis offer the perfect getaway for those seeking fun, relaxation, adventure, and romance. Whether you're looking to zip line through tree canopies or lounge by an incredible pool, you'll find it here as you create friendships and memories that'll last a lifetime. We're partnering with the world's leading resorts – ones who break the mold of what's expected and what's possible. Our exclusive multi-year partnership with UNICO 20°87° sets an all-new standard in all-LGBT, all-inclusive vacations. Others often say "everything is included," when in reality they mean "food and drinks." At VACAYA, we can genuinely say that nearly everything is included – from award-winning cuisine and top-shelf cocktails, to select spa treatments, excursions, salon services, SCUBA diving experiences, and golf. It's a whole new level of luxury, one we know you'll love. The VACAYA Oasis rhythm is... Relaxed. Easy. Fun. Balanced. Luxurious. Indulgent. Sporty. Unscripted. Adventurous. An all-new way to play.

P-town Cruise on Celebrity Summit

Sailed August 11-18, 2019 from New York (Port Liberty), this 7-night cruise made history by being the largest all-LGBT+ cruise to ever sail to Ptown for Carnival Kick-Off, and was also the largest ship to ever overnight in Provincetown.

Ports: Saint John, Canada; Bar Harbor, Maine; Provincetown, Massachusetts

VACAYA Mexico Resort

VACAYA completely reinvents the all-inclusive resort experience with the 5-star UNICO Riviera Maya, offering a level of luxury and inclusions unmatched by past or present options available to LGBT+ travelers. VACAYA takes over the entire resort October 27 - November 2, 2019, celebrating Halloween and Mexico's Day of the Dead.

VACAYA European River Cruises

Celebrate the holiday season as VACAYA explores the Christmas Markets of Europe from Amsterdam to Budapest aboard the luxurious Emerald Destiny River Ship. 7- and 14-night options begin December 5, 2019.

VACAYA Summer in Iceland Cruise

VACAYA makes history with the first all-LGBT+ circumnavigation (that means we're going all the way around!) of Iceland on the brand new luxurious 5-star Le Jacques Cartier from Ponant Cruises. This is the ultimate voyage of discovery of Iceland and the Arctic Circle – a truly exotic summer adventure on the trail of the Vikings

Clothing Optional: Our BLISS (Large Ship Cruises) and OASIS (Resort Vacations) both offer clothing optional spaces for sunbathing during the day and play spaces at night.

Themes: All VACAYA vacations are slightly different in terms of offering theme parties, but the thing all our vacations have in common is that whether you dress up to the nines for the theme parties or come as you are, you're going to have a great time.

