



Over the last decades, the tolerant, liberal-minded city of Zurich has become home to a highly diverse gay and lesbian scene. Various associations and societies actively promote a dialogue between each other, and fight for the rights of and equality for the LGBT+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and other spectrums of sexuality) community. Countless bars, festivals and events endorse tolerance for same-sex love. A liberal attitude that in Zurich can look back on a long history.

→ zuerich.com/lgbt

Actively Lived Tolerance in Zurich

A lively lesbian and gay scene has established itself in the city of Zurich. But what we today largely take for granted was in fact preceded by a fight for equality that lasted for decades. In terms of legislation, Switzerland played a pioneering role in this respect. For the decriminalization of homosexual acts between adults was firmly anchored in the Swiss Civil Code as from 1942 – in those days something unheard of in Europe.

Progressive Switzerland and Zurich Pioneers

It is therefore hardly surprising that during the Second World War, Switzerland became increasingly important for homosexuals. Zurich – where the first human rights movements had already been fighting for the rights of LGBT+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and other spectrums of sexuality) people since the beginning of the 20th century – played a central role here. For the most important of these organizations was based in Zurich: “Der Kreis” (The Circle), which had developed from the Amicitia Ladies’ Club and, as the first ever organization for gays and lesbians, influenced and inspired the entire Western world between 1943 and 1967. From 1948 to 1960, its club venue, Eintracht, was located on the site of the present-day Theater am Neumarkt. After the organization was disbanded, some of the members founded Club 68, which later evolved into the Swiss Organization of Homophiles (SOH). In 1978, together with two other interest groups, the SOH organized the first Christopher Street Day in Switzerland at Zurich’s Platzspitz. All three institutions subsequently merged to become the present-day umbrella association, Pink Cross, which together with the Lesbian Organization Switzerland (LOS) continues to actively promote gay rights. In 2014, a movie was made about the emotionally-charged history of the Swiss gay organizations under the title of “Der Kreis” (The Circle), which subsequently won the Panorama Audience Award for a Documentary Film at the 64th Berlinale film festival. Incidentally, the two protagonists, Ernst Ostertag and Röbi Rapp, still live in Zurich and were the first pair to officially register their partnership in the City of Zurich. Registered partnerships between same-sex couples have been recognized in Zurich since 2007.

Nightlife, Bars and Meeting Places for the Gay Scene

However, in Zurich, tolerance towards homosexuals is more than simply a historical fact, but rather a living and lived tradition. The City on the Limmat still has countless bars and meeting places for people of the same sexual orientation, particularly in the Niederdorf quarter. It is here that the oldest gay bar in Europe is located – the **Barfüsserbar**, with the rainbow flag still hanging above the entrance. These days, the clientele here is mixed, for the locale is particularly renowned for its delicious sushi. Numerous bars are considered to be meeting places for members of the LGBT+ scene. In **Petra’s Tip Top Bar**, men can enjoy a sophisticated evening to the sounds of hit music, while the disco-bar, **Les Garçons**, which opened at the end of 2013, is distinguished by its 1920s-style art deco interior and a huge model railway suspended above the heads of the bar staff. The **Cranberry Bar** is not just a hotspot for cocktails, but has also become something of an institution among Zurich’s gay community. Other favorite venues are the **Platzhirsch Bar** and, on Wednesdays, the **Provitreff**, in Zürich-West, where the Heldenbar organizes parties for a queer, gay, lesbian, bi and hetero public.

Party Animals and Dancing Queens

Having already run for 25 years now, **Tanzleila** is the oldest series of parties in the city of Zurich, and is still a guarantee for a great women-only night out, offering a musical journey from disco fox to pop, right through to techno beats. Also well frequented are the events staged by the largest gay party organizers, **Angels**. They include the Kitsch Party, featuring bizarre decorations, and the White Party, where guests are required to wear white. Party labels such as **Offstream**, founded in 2004, where indie, rock, pop und electro is played rather than the House music that was popular at the time, are top meeting places among the LGBT+ community. The Offstream parties are held in different locations in Zurich, another highlight that goes down well with guests.

Festivals From Liberated to Cultural

A Shining Example

Since 1994, not only Christopher Street Day but also the annual Zurich Pride Festival have been regularly celebrated in Zurich. For several days in June, the Kasernenareal and Zeughaushof are the scene of a vibrant gathering that is as colorful as a rainbow. By staging various concerts and events, the festival takes a stand against discrimination and advocates tolerance, liberal-mindedness and dialogue. True to this ideal, the festival is not just geared towards the LGBT+ community, but also aims to explicitly attract heterosexuals.

→ zurichpridefestival.ch

Pink Apple

Pink Apple is the name of the gay and lesbian film festival at which the red carpet is rolled out each year for movies with a homosexual background. There is plenty to discover, too – for the program offers a veritable cinematic bouquet for all movie lovers, whether hetero- or homosexual. With much glamor, documentaries, feature films, short films and even a children's program are screened. A selection that leaves guests in no doubt – the apple is not just pink, but above all crisp and crunchy.

→ pinkapple.ch

Culture With a Difference

Warmer mai (warm may) is a cultural month focusing both on culture with homosexual themes and on diversity. Cabaret, exhibitions, readings and even a hike turn the month of May into a “warm may”.

→ warmermai.ch

An Opportunity to Browse

A total of 4,000 titles, including non-fiction works, novels, crime thrillers, comic books and DVDs – the Gay Library at Zurich's Sihlquai is the most comprehensive library in Switzerland on the theme of male sexuality, and invites visitors to come and browse on Wednesday and Friday evenings from 8.00–9.30pm. The books comprise not only new additions, but also historical rarities and silent witnesses of the times. Some books still bear the stamp, “Der Kreis”, on the inside cover, indicating that they once

belonged to the internationally renowned homosexual organization of the same name. The women's counterpart of the Gay Library can be found at the Frauen* Zentrum Zürich, which stocks a considerable amount of literature on lesbian topics.

→ fraum.ch / haz.ch

Commemorating the Past

“The first meeting of the Amicitia Ladies' Club in August 1931 signaled the launch of the Lesbian Women's organization in the city of Zurich. From 1932–37, the club published the magazine, “Das Freundschafts-Banner” (The Friendship Banner), and paved the way for the recognition of homosexual and bisexual people in Switzerland.” These are the words on one of three commemorative plaques at Brunngasse 15. The brief texts are a testimony to the impressive history of homosexuals in the city of Zurich. It is a moving story, which to some extent is hard to believe from a present-day standpoint – for example, the fact that the police actually kept a “homosexual register” right up to 1979. At the same time, however, it is also a story of moral courage and plucky people who have stood up for their rights. Moreover, the Barfüsserbar, which directly next door invites guests to enjoy its delicious sushi specialties, is regarded as the oldest gay bar in Europe, thus acquiring national – and even international – renown.

→ mannschaft.com

For Sports Enthusiasts

There are around 70 homosexual rugby teams worldwide – and one of them is based in Zurich. The Rascals, founded in 2015, is Switzerland's first and currently only gay rugby team. The 12 players train weekly in Zürich-Wiedikon.

→ gaysport.ch

Zurich From a New Perspective

Various walks for lesbians are held in Zurich within the framework of warmer mai and Pink Apple on the themes of “The heyday of lesbian culture – the 1980s and 1990s” and “Active lesbians – the 1930s and 1970s”. Participants stroll through various quarters of the city and learn about the past and present lives of particular lesbians in and around Zurich. As a result, a familiar city is transformed into a place of new discoveries, and much of what was previously hidden becomes visible.

→ lesbengeschichte.ch

Further Information

Organizations

The Swiss gay organization, Pink Cross, and the Lesbenorganisation Schweiz LOS (Swiss Lesbian Organization), are active at a national level. In Zurich, the main body for gays is the Verein Homosexuelle Arbeitsgruppen Zurich HAZ (Zurich association of homosexual working groups).

→ pinkcross.ch / los.ch / haz.ch

Zürich Tourism

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T +41 44 215 40 10, zuerich.com, [#visitzurich](https://www.instagram.com/visitzurich)

Links

Gay news, competitions, places to go, online shop

→ gay.ch

News, dialogue, parties, shopping for lesbians

→ lesbian.ch

Events

Pink Apple Film Festival

Arthouse-Kinos, Apr 29–May 7, 18

→ pinkapple.ch

Warmer mai (warm may)

City of Zurich, tba

→ warmermai.ch

White Party Weekend

Club Heaven, Club X-TRA, Alte Kaserne, May 4–6, 18

→ angels.ch

Zurich Pride Festival

Kasernenareal & inner city, Jun 15–16, 18

→ zhpf.ch

Street Parade

City of Zurich lake basin, Aug 11, 18

→ streetparade.com

Black Party Weekend

Club X-TRA, tba

→ angels.ch

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