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PRESS RELEASE #243

**TRAVEL IMPRESSIONS LAUNCHES INNOVATIVE
GAY & LESBIAN TRAVEL PROGRAM, WEBSITE**

More than 950 properties in 150 Destinations Verified by Travel Impressions as Gay-Friendly

FARMINGDALE, NY (June 5, 2008) -- Travel Impressions

(<http://www.travelimpressions.com>) recently launched its TI Gay & Lesbian Travel program and a related website, <http://www.travelimpressions.com/gaytravel>, to help travel agents become involved in the growing gay and lesbian travel market. The program consists of two parts:

- <http://www.travelimpressions.com/gaytravel>, a website featuring gay-friendly travel options around the world that can be accessed by both agents and consumers for research purposes and a booking engine **just for travel agents**.
- A database of gay-friendly *verified* product, allowing travel agents to confidently book appropriate packages for their clients.

“Whether the gay and lesbian market is already part of an agent’s sales mix, or something new, our program makes it easy for agents to market themselves more knowledgeably in gay-friendly travel,” said John Hanratty, chief marketing officer, Travel Impressions.

“At Travel Impressions we pride ourselves on anticipating the future and innovating ways for agents to sell travel. Through the TI Gay & Lesbian Travel program we help agents tap into a growing market that they might find too challenging to enter without support.”

Added Hanratty, “When developing this program, we paid close attention to the data and trends in the gay and lesbian travel market. By doing so, we were able to make informed choices about the features we would offer, such as providing a website where consumers could browse but

not book, saving that for the travel agent, and creating a gay-friendly verified product line that could be booked with confidence.”

Respected gay market research development lab, Community Marketing, Inc. (CMI), found in its 12th annual Gay & Lesbian Tourism Study (2007/2008) that the annual economic impact of gay and lesbian travel is at least \$64.5 billion in the United States alone. CMI also noted that:

- October, September and February (in that order) were the top vacation months chosen by study respondents, demonstrating non-peak seasonal preferences for gays and lesbians and the opportunity for travel agents to build revenue during these traditionally slow times.
- More than 76% of U.S. lesbian and gay respondents have a current passport (compared to 24% to 30% of all U.S. adult citizens), making international travel an even easier sell.
- The availability of online information plays a critical role for gays and lesbians as they research and book a trip.
- 75% of gay travelers state that known gay-friendliness is a #1 reason for choosing a destination and 64% say that reputation for gay-friendliness is the #1 influence for choosing a hotel.
- The most important destination criteria for gay and lesbian travelers are safety from harassment and city or community support for diversity and gay and lesbian civil rights.

Gay-Friendly Verified Product Line

Travel Impressions understands the importance of selecting destinations and properties for gay and lesbian clients where they will feel comfortable and welcome. To meet this need, the TI Gay & Lesbian Travel program features a gay-friendly *verified* product line.

Currently there are more than 950 properties in 150 destinations participating in the program. These destinations and hotels are truly interested in the gay and lesbian travel market. Each one has been contacted by Travel Impressions and has opted for inclusion, agreeing to be referred to as a gay-friendly property. Travel Impressions defines gay-friendly properties as those *which are open to actively welcoming gay and lesbian vacationers, and extending the same service levels, courtesies and professionalism as they extend to all other visitors.* The properties are located

in the continental United States and Hawaii, Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, Europe and Tahiti, with more destinations to come.

Niche marketing is also a growing segment of the gay and lesbian travel market. To help travel agents, the website features special sections for romantic vacations, family vacations, group vacations, tours, gay and lesbian events and hot deals.

Since online research is so important to gay and lesbian travelers, travel agents can confidently suggest to their clients that they browse the program's website, <http://www.travelimpressions.com/gaytravel>, for ideas. The site is a wealth of information but does not feature a consumer booking engine.

Opt-in Program

Travel agents can opt in to the TI Gay & Lesbian Travel program on the <http://www.travelimpressions.com/gaytravel> website home page, in the "Book Gay-Friendly Hotels" section. Registration allows agents to book on the site and it will authorize Travel Impressions to send agents faxes, e-mails and promotions that are specific to the TI Gay & Lesbian Travel program.

The TI Gay & Lesbian Travel program offers the same services already available through Travel Impressions: "Cancel for Any Reason Travel Protection Insurance," 24/7 Customer Care, upgraded documents, highly skilled reservations staff and sales support, and much more. The added benefit is the confidence that travel agents are selling a "gay-friendly" property while receiving all the benefits of booking with a major U.S. tour operator.

For complete details about the TI Gay & Lesbian Travel program or to register, contact Travel Impressions, visit <http://www.travelimpressions.com/gaytravel>.

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Travel Impressions

Headquartered in Farmingdale, NY, with an additional office in Bethlehem, PA, Travel Impressions is a wholly owned subsidiary of American Express. Travel Impressions has been the recipient of *Travel Weekly's* Readers Choice award for "Best Tour Operator, Sales & Service" for three consecutive years (2005, 2006 and 2007), and has won the publication's award for "Best Tour Operator, Domestic" for 2006 and 2007. The company has also been recognized three times as an "Editor's Pick" by *TravelAge West* – first in 2006 as "Best Tour Operator Website, designed specifically for travel agents" and in both 2007 and 2008 as "Best Tour Operator Mexico."

Since its founding in 1974, Travel Impressions has taken approximately six million travelers on vacations to Mexico, the Caribbean, the Islands of the Bahamas, Bermuda, Costa Rica, Panama, Argentina, Brazil, Europe, the Islands of Tahiti, Canada, Hawaii and the Continental U.S. And, its newest destinations are Croatia, Dubai and South Africa. Today, Travel Impressions provides leisure vacation packages to 150 destinations and more than 1,800 resorts and hotels worldwide, departing from cities nationwide.

For more information about Travel Impressions, visit the website:

<http://www.travelimpressions.com>.

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