University of St Andrews Students' Association

LGBT

Lesbian ---------- Gay - Bisexual - Trans
The University of St Andrews Students Association brings to you the LGBT Guide. Here you will find the low-down on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender living in St Andrews as well as some essential advice and support.

EUGayNews has ranked St Andrews as the 2nd most LGBT-friendly University in Europe, and we are rated as extremely LGBT-friendly by Stonewall’s “Gay by Degree” checklist. Our wee town is happily cosmopolitan, diverse, lots of fun and is proud of our LGBT students.

This guide is aimed at both current and prospective students, LGBT or those just interested.
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We are blessed with an amazingly active and popular LGBT Society, nicknamed ‘Saints LGBT’. Societies organise much of the student social life at St Andrews, and our LGBT society has an excellent reputation as providing a social scene for LGBT students, as well as offering personal support. This year, the society has been made a Subcommittee of the Union, which means that all students are automatically members. They host a variety of events, including clubbing trips to Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee, comedy nights, drag shows, trips to prides all over the UK and beyond, queer cinema events, welfare talks, debates on LGBT issues and much more! What’s more, the LGBT society annually enters a handsome competitor into Mr. St Andrews, the male talent show. We hope this year’s contestant will do us proud!

The LGBT society is a friendly and sociable group who always welcome new members and is happy to meet up with students on an individual basis.

**The LGBT Society**

Why not check out their website or contact them directly for news about future events or for more info about how to get involved?

Out & About in St Andrews
St Andrews is no Las Vegas. However, it is full of fabulous students and is very LGBT-friendly, which is an excellent combination for a great night out. Our own student union is proud to host Rainbow Bops and together with most other venues in town, has strict anti-homophobia policies. However if you do run into any trouble, please speak to the door-staff. Many of the other bars in town have hosted LGBT events in the past, and cater for all tastes, be it dancing, pints, live music, or cocktails. Not to mention the house parties. When traveling through the town centre after dark at the weekend you are likely to stumble upon one. The bars may close at two but the party doesn’t end there. For a town of its size, St Andrews really does come to life at night.

Sometimes however it can be good to get out of the bubble. So why not check out the LGBT scenes in Dundee, Edinburgh or Glasgow which boast scores of gay clubs including Out in Dundee, Polo in Glasgow, Cheerz in Aberdeen and GHQ in Edinburgh? Nearly all St Andrews students enjoy city-life in Scotland at least once a semester; why not join them or the LGBT society on one of its clubbing trips?
Who’s got talent? St Andrews’ got talent. That’s right; students host and perform an enormous amount of theatre productions, musical shows, art exhibitions, film screenings and dance performances every year. As it happens, a number of these artistic displays have focused on LGBT culture. Mermaids, the university’s theatre subcommittee, have staged some outstanding queer theatre productions. Stanza, the town’s poetry festival, has been host to LGBT heroes such as Carol Ann Duffy and Patience Agbabi. Plus the Feminist Society often feature highly acclaimed queer cinema in their biannual Feminist Film Festival. Finally, the launch of a new gay & lesbian film festival, G-Fest, featured in the Byre Theatre’s events calendar.

So get involved with students activities, as after all it is the students who are the inspiration for all great events in St Andrews.
Are you questioning your sexuality or gender identity?

If you think you may be lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans, there is a lot of support and information available for you. Exploring this information does not commit you in any way to the LGBT label.

A good starting point may be browsing LGBT Youth Scotland’s website (www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/advice.htm) or attending an LGBT Society meeting. If you are having problems coming to terms with the fact that you may be lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans, it is important to remember that there is support available to you and that you certainly are not alone. Accepting your sexuality or gender identity does not necessitate a complete life-change. Although a close friend is often the best person to confide in, it is understandable that you may wish to speak to someone from outside your usual social circle. See our suggested points of contact at the end of the guide, all of which are strictly confidential. We’d definitely encourage you to get in touch with the LGBT Society and/or its committee members.
‘Coming Out’

Telling people that you are lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans may seem daunting, but it is important to remember that there is a strong support network behind you. It might be helpful to talk through coming out with a trusted friend or LGBT member. Just remember, make sure you are ready. It is not something to be rushed.

The LGBT Society runs a welfare talk in the first semester of each academic year about coming out. We also have strong links with Parents Enquiry Scotland who offer useful advice on how to tell your parents that you are lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans. They offer a support call number for parents who may be having trouble assimilating the social aspects of having a lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans child. For more information on Parents Enquiry Scotland, see their website (www.parentsenquiryscotland.org) or visit an LGBT coming out event.
For most students, our time at St Andrews relates to different kinds of personal development. For some this may mean a change in sexual identity or orientation. If you feel that you are going through a change in gender identity or have already been through this transition below is some information which you may interest you. The information is sourced from an individual experience of being transgender in St Andrews.

Student support services

“They were amazing. They liaised with various university departments on my behalf. As I was here before transitioning, Student Support Services spoke with staff in relevant departments about the change in my situation; they advised them on my name change and to use the appropriate pronouns. They assisted me in obtaining a new student card with the updated details and photo.

Another department they spoke to was accommodation. I was kindly afforded more flexibility in changing my accommodation as my circumstances changed. The SSS staff were all incredibly helpful and were always on hand if I encountered any difficulties, trans-related or not. They were nothing but professional and supportive. I could not have asked them to have done anything differently”.
St Andrews and its townsfolk

“St Andrews is a wonderful town and for its size, it is quite cosmopolitan in its attitudes. I believe it to be a very safe and open-minded space. Because the town is on a more intimate scale, I think the chance to more easily form strong friendships exceeds that of many other university towns and cities. Friendships form a natural support network and the benefits can be enormous in helping someone develop the courage to be themselves.”

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Medical Practice

“A good G.P can be hard to find. The focus on having a good G.P is probably more important if someone is questioning their gender or ‘pre-transition’ rather than ‘post-transition’, yet there are many wonderfully supportive health care staff in the St Andrews Practice.”
Saints LGBT Subcommittee

“Some Trans people don’t feel the need to associate with an LGBT society. However, regardless of sexuality, there is very much a warm, welcoming, safe place for trans or trans curious people at the LGBT society. Through the society it is possible to obtain more trans related resources — whether it’s books, movies, links, events, on-line forums, other organisations or other trans people.”
Q: Where is there free contraception?

A: Free condoms and lube are available from the Director of Representation, Student Support Services and Iain Cupples (who all live on the first floor of the Students Association). In halls of residence you can contact the night porter or the condom rep for condoms out of hours.

There is a wide selection of free contraception available at the St Andrews Community Hospital. The CASH clinics mentioned below give specialised advice on the different forms of contraception available, or you can book an appointment with your GP for contraceptive advice.
Q: Where is sexual health screening available in St Andrews?

A: CASH (Contraception and Sexual Health Service) clinics, further to offering extensive contraceptive service, provide cervical smears, medical gynaecology, referral for sexual problems and screening for some infections.

CASH clinics are held every Wednesday from 12.30pm-5pm on the second floor of the union (01334 462720) and Friday 9am-12.30 pm in St Andrews Community Hospital (01592 647979). Cervical smears in the union CASH clinic are only for patients aged 20 and over.

GUM (Genitourinary Medicine) clinics specialise in sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV; they offer full STI screens, treatment for STIs and HIV and vaccination for Hepatitis.

GUM clinics are every Friday 9.30 am-1pm in St Andrews Community Hospital (01334 465706).
Q: Should I get HIV tested?

A: One in twenty gay men in the UK is living with HIV. The NHS suggests that gay and bisexual men get HIV tested at least once a year.

For HIV testing you can make an appointment for the GUM clinic (details above) or request a test from your GP.

New tests can reliably diagnose HIV after one month. If you feel that you have put yourself at risk of infection in the last 72 hours you can request PEP (post exposure prophylaxis) which can reduce the risk of infection. You can request this treatment at the GUM clinic and from A&E.

Over a quarter of people with HIV in the UK do not know that they are infected and undiagnosed HIV would put yourself and others at risk. For more info on HIV and testing check out www.worldAIDSday.org.
Q: What is a good resource for information on trans and gay sexual health?

A: Check out the NHS LiveWell pages for advice and information about HIV and AIDS and all LGBT aspects of sexual health. Alternatively, if you are worried and need sexual health help urgently call the NHS Sexual Health Helpline on 0800 567123.
Fortunately homophobic and transphobic incidents are rare in St Andrews but if they do happen, the Students’ Association, University and local police are well equipped to help you deal with them.

If you are feeling bullied, threatened or harassed, it is important to speak to someone who can help as soon as possible. Get in touch with Student Services whose professional staff will listen non-judgmentally and offer help and advice if needed. All enquiries to Student Services are treated confidentially.

You can call in to Student Services at the ASC (Advice & Support Centre) at 79 North Street. Their offices are open between 9:30am and 4:30pm, Monday to Friday. No appointment necessary.

Alternatively you can telephone (01334 46) 2020 or email theasc@st-andrews.ac.uk. Student Services will also be able to advise you on reporting harassment and bullying.
The university has adopted a clear policy for both staff and students to deal with harassment and bullying at work and study (http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/staff/policy/hr/Harassmentandbullyingatworkandstudy/).

This policy stipulates that the university will not tolerate any behaviour that includes harassment on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender reassignment. For example, homophobic jokes or remarks, abuse relating to HIV/AIDS status, threats to disclose sexual orientation, or ridiculing dress and personal appearance.

If you experience any such harassment, then you should seek support from Student Services or the person in authority in the situation in which it occurs. If bullying occurs in a lecture or seminar, your lecturer or tutor is responsible for initially addressing it and ensuring that referral to the appropriate authority is enacted immediately thereafter; similarly, in the Students’ Association building, the on-duty door staff or porters are responsible for dealing with such incidents; and in a hall of residence, the warden’s team are the people in authority.

If you wish to make a formal complaint of serious harassment by a student or staff member, you should do this in writing to the Director of Student Services, Dr Chris Lusk (studentservices@st-andrews.ac.uk). She will make sure your complaint is fully investigated and that appropriate action is taken.
Hate Crime

Any incident that is committed against a person or property that is motivated by malice or ill-will towards people because of their sexual orientation or transgender identity is a hate crime and can be reported to the police.
If you're in immediate danger, phone 999. Otherwise you can call Fife constabulary's non-emergency number (0845 600 5702). You can also visit the police station in Pipeland Road and report an incident to the officer on duty (you can ask for a private space if you wish).

If you prefer not to speak to the police, there are groups who can talk to the police for you - this is called remote reporting. You can do this through the Hate Crime Helpline (0800 389 1425), Victim Support Scotland (0845 30 30 900), or Crimestoppers (0800 555 111; www.crimestoppers-uk.org). You can report the matter online by clicking here www.fifedirect.org.uk/reportthatecrime

This will take you to the Fife Community Safety Partnership online reporting form. These forms also enable you to submit details anonymously. Please note that the form will be received and processed during normal office hours.
Reporting Hate Crime to the Police...

If you report the incident directly to the police, they are required to respect your privacy. If you think you might be identified by the person who committed the offence you are reporting, you should let the police know. You have a right to have someone with you for support. You can ask for a break at any time if you find the experience upsetting. The police will tell you how to keep informed on how the case is progressing and how to access their Victim Information and Advice Service. Fife Police work with the Gay Police Association in Scotland (GPA) to promote better relations between the police and the LGBT community and have a GPA Coordinator in place who is openly gay. Any matter can be raised directly and in strictest confidence with that officer at fife@gpascotland.com and will be directed where appropriate to the Community Planning and Equality Unit (CPEU) within Fife Constabulary. The CPEU’s role is to advise the Force on any issues, work together with groups to help tackle crimes and incidents fuelled by prejudice and promote the Force as an organisation that can be trusted.
The LGBT Officer, whose position is the combination of SRC Member for Sexualities and LGBT Society President, represents all the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transperson students of St Andrews. He or she works closely with Student Services and the Student Experience committees to ensure that the University is doing enough to welcome its LGBT students, as well as working with student societies like LGBT and supporting their activities. The Officer also runs workshops to promote awareness and understanding amongst the student body.

If you have any issues that need representing or questions about LGBT in St Andrews, contact the LGBT Officer, Lea Duchemin on ld34@st-andrews.ac.uk.
St Andrews LGBT Society:
www.saintsLGBT.co.uk, ‘Saints LGBT’ Facebook group
or email lgbtsoc@st-andrews.ac.uk

Stonewall’s gay by degree checklist: www.gaybydegree.org.uk

LGBT Youth Scotland’s website:
www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/advice.htm

Parents Enquiry Scotland: www.parentsenquiryScotland.org

Scottish Transgender Alliance
www.scottishtrans.org

Diversitay: www.diversitay.org.uk

World Aids Day:
www.worldAIDSDay.org

Terrence Higgins Trust website www.tht.org.uk

useful contacts & links
**Useful Contacts & Links**

**NHS Livewell HIV**
www.nhs.uk/conditions/hiv/pages/introduction.asp

**The Advice and Support Centre:**
(01334 46) 2020; theasc@st-andrews.ac.uk

**Nightline:**
(01334 46) 2266 (8pm-7am); nightline@st-andrews.ac.uk

**Fife Constabulary:**
0845 600 5702; contact@fife.pnn.police.uk

**Victim Support Scotland:**
0845 30 30 900; www.victimsupportsco.org.uk

**Crimestoppers:**
0800 555 111; www.crimestoppers-uk.org
But hey, don’t just take this guide’s word for it! Take a look at what some of our students have to say about their own experiences of being LGBT in St Andrews.
“Before coming to St Andrews, I never had such a sense of belonging to a community. What Saints LGBT particularly provides is a platform for interaction with people with a broad set of experiences, all of which I can relate to in some way. It’s a forum for ideas, discussion and, rightly for a university society, is very educational regarding history, rights and current discourse. Since arriving I have felt welcomed by both town and gown; my peers are supportive and I feel safe and accepted walking hand-in-hand with my girlfriend. All in all, I’ve had a great couple of years and have met some great people — and I’m really looking forward to next year.”

Sophia Clarke (Fourth Year)
I think for many LGBT people, arriving at university can the first real opportunity they have had to explore and express their sexuality in the way that they really want to. The LGBT Subcommittee, and the Student’s Association as a whole, understand the importance of this, and both have worked hard to create an atmosphere of acceptance. I think they’ve succeeded as in the whole 5 years I was there I think the only negative comment I got was from a drunken postgrad (who later turned out to be gay himself!) I even felt at times that the student population ratio was 3 girls to every 1 gay man! That’s not true of course, but I’m glad it’s a place where people can be exactly who they are.”

Rob Grundy (Graduated 2012)
“What I love about being gay in St Andrews is the fact that everyone is so accepting and friendly about it and that you can just be yourself and have fun. In addition to this, the LGBT society have made my first year memorable in so many ways by throwing brilliant events and clubbing trips. Everyone in the society has been so welcoming which has really made it so much easier to be more confident and more outgoing. Being gay in St Andrews feels like being a member of a closeknit family which really is a comfort and made me feel more at ease.”

Jason McNulty (Third Year)
“I may not have decided to come to St Andrews if there was not an LGBT Society because I think having a community to connect with is so important. I have made some of my best friends through LGBT Soc events and have had a lot of fun! With weekly society events, you never have to feel alone. Though the town is small, I have never encountered discrimination based on sexual orientation. The main library also has a good number of books on sexuality, gender, and identity, so research on any aspect of the LGBT experience is possible. No matter where you are on the LGBT spectrum, the LGBT Society has a place for you.”

Maeve Lynn Klersfeld
(Postgraduate Student)
“St Andrews is a very easy place to be gay and out in. Simply put, there are very few people who would even think wrong of it. Being a university town, most people here are mature and accepting. Though there isn’t exactly a thriving gay scene, the gay people are very friendly and there are regular events held by the LGBT subcommittee. I found it very easy to get involved with the society and I am glad I did as it was there that I found my academic parents, so it turned out to be a great decision. At the Fresher’s Fayre I was hesitant to go over to the LGBT sign up table, but in hindsight there was really nothing to worry about and I am very glad I did. Finally you get a chance to get out of St Andrews with the LGBT subcommittee as there are trips to other committee spots, such as Edinburgh and Dundee, so it’s a great opportunity to experience the gay scene and life around other places in Scotland.”
“St Andrews is a close-knit town, full of very friendly people. Students from all over the world attend the university. As a Dundee University student, I have found the Saints LGBT group to be hospitable, kind and always up for a party. The range of activities organised ensure that there is something for everyone. There are debates, fancy dress parties and balls. You’re guaranteed to have a good time, with a wonderful group of people. Dundee students are always welcome to attend events. Sometimes, there are collaborative events, such as “DuSt till dawn”, which paves the way for a greater sense of unity and community between Saints LGBT and DULGBT students. With St Andrews being approximately 15-20 minutes away by bus, it’s no trouble getting there and with the quality of events put on, always worth the journey. We’ve met so many nice people who have quickly become our friends and would definitely say that LGBT life in St Andrews tailors to everyone’s needs.”

Jasmin Taffurelli
(Third Year at Dundee University)
Tom Whitehead (Third Year)

“Moving to a new place can be a daunting prospect, but knowing that you’re gay and moving to a new place can make it 100 times worse. In St Andrews these fears are quickly dispelled as you soon realise what a cosmopolitan and accepting place it really is. Even without the university’s LGBT subcommittee, there are plenty of LGBT friendly places to go and have fun. There are numerous coffee shops and bars dotted around the town, all of them with a really chilled out and friendly vibe to them. In St Andrews it seems that being gay just isn’t an issue and all are there for a good time.”