

For Immediate Release
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25th Anniversary IGLTA Convention Draws Record Attendance in Las Vegas

Fort Lauderdale, FL (May 19, 2008) -- From April 29-May 4, nearly 500 travel professionals hailing from 25 countries convened in Las Vegas for the International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association's (IGLTA) 25th Annual Convention & Anniversary Celebration. The largest in the organization's history, the conference was hosted at the Flamingo Hotel and Casino.

Capitalizing on its prime location on the Vegas Strip, IGLTA's convention gave a record number of attendees unique access and insight into one of the world's most dynamic destinations through workshops, hotel tours, nighttime shows and outdoor adventures. In addition to the year-round sights and sounds, the conference coincided with Vegas' annual gay and lesbian Pride celebration, adding a wide array of social and cultural events to the convention's schedule.

"We knew that Las Vegas would be the perfect location to host our 25th Anniversary Celebration, and the city delivered a spectacular and memorable week for our attendees," IGLTA Executive Director John Tanzella said.

One of the programmatic highlights of the conference was a plenary session on Friday, May 2, with legendary American author Armistead Maupin, whose literary works include the hugely popular "Tales of the City." Interviewed by Bob Witeck, IGLTA member and CEO of Witeck-Combs Communications, Maupin shared life stories and rich anecdotes about his writing, travels, and the film and stage adaptations of his books. Maupin also gave hints about his work in progress of bringing "Tales of the City" to Broadway as a musical.

"It was a treasure just to talk with Armistead Maupin," Witeck said. "My hope was simply to bring out his immense skill as an unparalleled storyteller. He kept IGLTA attendees completely silent and awaiting every single word. That is a remarkable talent, and one that rewarded everyone at the convention this year."

The convention featured eight additional sessions on mission-related issues like accessing the gay and lesbian market, marketing strategies for staying competitive in gay and lesbian tourism, and unique destinations for gay and lesbian travelers.

New for 2008 was the organization's first-ever media trade show on Friday, May 2. Designed to help travel professionals make connections with the growing spectrum of gay and lesbian media worldwide, the event was attended by representatives from over 30 print and broadcast outlets, including Beige (United Kingdom), Q Travel (Spain), Outlooks Magazine (Canada), and LOGO-Online (United States).

Bringing the conference to a memorable close was a vintage Vegas-themed gala dinner on Saturday, May 3. Celebrating the organization's silver birthday, the gala highlighted the many achievements of IGLTA and its members over the past quarter of a century. Three awards were presented during the evening, including the Hanns Ebensten Hall of Fame Award to Lima Tours (Peru), the Chairman's Award to Columbia FunMaps Owner and Publisher Alan Beck, and the Director's Award to Stephen Smith for his seven years of dedicated service on IGLTA's Board of Directors.

"Recognizing our 25th anniversary, this convention was a milestone in the history of IGLTA because it brought together gay and lesbian travel professionals and innovators from all over the world," Tanzella said.

The leading Sponsors of the 25th Anniversary Convention included the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, Harrah's Entertainment, Travelocity, Hyatt Hotels, PlanetOut Inc, and Tourism Toronto.

IGLTA's 2009 convention will be held May 14-17 in Toronto, Ontario at the Toronto Hilton. Convention registration and schedule information will be available on the organization's Web site at iglta.org beginning in September of 2008. Those interested in sponsorship and visibility opportunities should contact IGLTA Executive Director John Tanzella at john@iglta.org.

IGLTA is the world's leading authority, resource and representative of gay and lesbian travel. Its membership is located in 55 countries around the world and consists of accommodations, airlines, tour operators, travel agents, tourism offices and other key players in the tourism industry. IGLTA works to help the tourism industry attract gay and lesbian consumers and learn more about the gay and lesbian market. Since its founding in 1983, IGLTA has expanded its international influence from just 25 members to well over 1,200 in 55 countries.

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