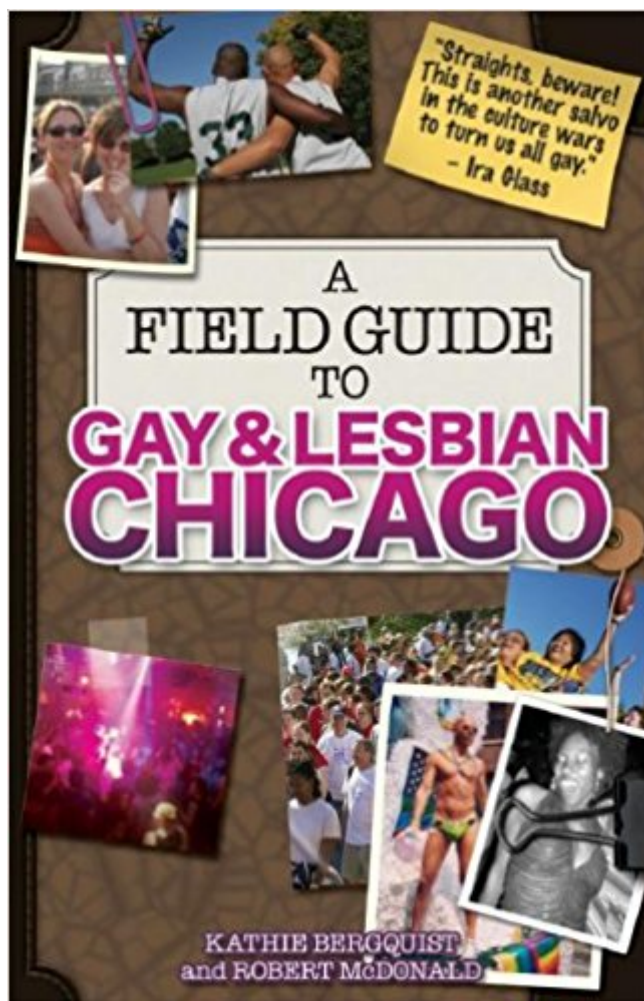


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A Field Guide To Gay And Lesbian Chicago



Synopsis

Book by Kathie Bergquist, Robert McDonald

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Howdy, Homo! An Introduction Howdy, homo! (Or, for the politically correct: Greetings, fellow homosexuals and those who explore nontraditional gender/sex mores and roles including but not limited to same-sex attraction!) Oh, "Howdy, homo!" will do for a start. Thank you for picking up our field guide to gay and lesbian Chicago. Assembling this book has been a labor of love, and we hope that you will find our affections well spent. For years, both of us have worked within Chicago's GLBT community, and in the midst of our work and play, we have appreciated the diversity of its offerings. As book clerks in gay- and lesbian-identified shops, we both have also served many years on the information front lines for visitors to Chicago, answering, with witty frankness, their questions about where to stay, play, or pray, where to two-step, or where to 12-step. "What is a good bar to take a date?" "Is there a place where both my girlfriend and my mother can feel comfortable?" "Hey, I'm straight, but my out-of-the-closet-like-a-bullet queer-boy cousin is coming to town--what can I tell him?" "Where can I meet a girl just as charming as you, Kathie?" "Robert, where do gay gents who share your sterling qualities keep themselves in this wonderful town?" Frankly, we got sick of it--sick and tired. If only there were a single resource that had this information--and more--compiled in one slim, portable volume. Something we could put in the hands of the information seekers, to guide them as a best friend or chatty book clerk would guide them through the myriad of Chicago's gay community offerings. Something filled with the type of off-the-cuff insights and tongue-in-cheek

observations that we had so long provided while leaning over a Chicago map spread across a bookshop counter. And the startling fact is that up until now, this resource did not exist. Sure, a handful of advertising-driven "phone books" have been published over the years, and naturally, Chicago is mentioned in all the major national gay travel guides, but we have often found these resources inaccurate, misleading, or so slanted to advertisers as to be fairly useless for anything other than leveling a crooked table. "Who compiled that information, and do they live on Uranus?" we would ask ourselves when reading that the Closet, a tiny lesbian (but very boy-friendly) bar, has a pool table or, even more laughable, a dance floor. These listings were clearly not doing anyone any service. And yet, Chicago's gay and lesbian cultural scene has so much to offer the visitor (or resident, for that matter). Chicago has two active neighborhoods that are so strongly gay and lesbian identified that even the straight denizens of these hoods admit that they live in a gay neighborhood. These areas are filled with gay-oriented shops, services, restaurants, gyms, bars . . . gay everything. But these two communities, vibrant though they are, are not the be-all and end-all of Chicago's culture and nightlife. Gay life in Chicago spreads from the city's farthest reaches on the North and Northwest Sides to the South Shore and Far Southwest Side. Our community includes numerous churches encompassing virtually every denomination, a comprehensive health center, several gay weekly papers, two competitive sports leagues, a chamber of commerce, and a marching band. Every year thousands of gays and lesbians visit Chicago for several annual events, including tML, the Lesbian Community! Cancer Project's Coming Out Against Cancer Ball, the Northalsted Market Days, and, of course, Chicago Pride, which attracted more than 440,000 participants and spectators in 2005. And hundreds more come to the city for non-gay-specific reasons: to visit family and friends, to sightsee, to attend conventions at McCormick Place, the world's biggest (and perpetually expanding) convention center, or to take in a trade show at the Merchandise Mart. All this culture, yet no way to disseminate it. All these visitors, but no one to tell them where to go. It became clear that we had a mission, and a calling. And, not to put too fine a point on it, a contract. This is our field guide to the lesbian and gay Chicago that we know and love. It contains the field notes we have accrued in our many, many collective years in the homosexual midst and queer fringes of this city. Some of the knowledge we gained in the school of hard knocks and bitter experience (not to mention extension courses in naughty delights and delighted excess). Some of it we begged and borrowed from friends, exes, acquaintances, and the occasional beautiful stranger. We offer it to you, dear reader, the way we would if you were standing across the counter from us at a bookstore or sitting catty-corner from us at the Closet, where we both have been known to grab an after-work drink or five, and where we know from experience that there is no pool

table--and certainly no dance floor. It's our guide, filled with our own predilections, biases, opinions, experience, and advice. We love Chicago, and frankly, while we don't know everything, we do know a lot. This is our guide, and we hope you will make it your guide, too.

Reviewed by Rhiannon Kelly Fionn for Reader Views (8/06)"A Field Guide to Gay and Lesbian Chicago" is, by far, the very best travel guide I've ever read--and I did read it like a novel; it is that well written. I only wish it had been published years ago; guess I'll have to go back to Chicago now. There will be no arm twisting involved, well, unless it's February (shiver); after reading this I'm raring to go. Ms. Bergquist and Mr. McDonald use humor, common sense, honesty, and pure gusto to entertain throughout their divine reference book. Their candor is amusing and dead on; consider page 114 "We Wish! Brief descriptions of notable Chicago restaurants we can't afford". This is a perfect example of how well organized and thoughtful this guide is: they really did think of everything. Everything! Some of their readers may very well be able to afford that list of eateries but they know most of us can't and I appreciate the heads up. In other areas where the authors admitted they didn't have as great an interest as others might, like shopping, they enlisted the help of friends who ensured nothing was left out. The book begins with an insightful look into how and why Chicago became the San Francisco of the Midwest in "A Taste of Chicago History, Queer Flavored". Don't skip this chapter; it's as witty as it is educational. Though the title clearly indicates the focus of the book will be the delights of "Gayborhoods" and GLBT friendly businesses for the non-straight segments of society, there is so much excellent, practical, and thorough advice for travelers contained within, anyone will benefit. Besides, it isn't all gay--they include locations for strait burlesque troupes, too! The authors, and I'm guessing here judging only on the length of chapter 13, entitled "How About a Cocktail, Darling? GLBT Bars in Chicago", seem to have had a fantastic time researching their work - which, I am sure, was painstaking and thankless. Their good time spills onto the page making "A Field Guide to Gay and Lesbian Chicago" a pleasure to read. It will remain on my bookshelf until I begin planning my next trip to the windy city - and with their encouragement that will be sooner than later. Book received free of charge.

The title of this book really should be changed to "The best gay friend you may or may not have had who taught you almost everything you need to know about nearly all things gay and lesbian in Chicago." But I guess "Field Guide" will do. Kathie (a fiction writing alum of Columbia College Chicago) and Robert have compiled a valuable and expansive resource for anyone from newcomer queers to tired old queens and even straights that either enjoy the gay vibe or have the occasional

visit from their flamboyant cousin. A little bit of history combined with a whole lot of detail and sprinkled with a few personal anecdotes, this field guide is a virtual romp through the `hoods, dives, stages, stores, hotels (and more) that are quietly and boldly queer Chicago. Audio walking tours might be overkill but I wouldn't be surprised if that weren't next for these two out and seasoned Chicagoans.

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