



TWISTIN' THE NIGHT AWAY
The weekly Twisted party at Drink is one of the few places where Staten Island's gay boys can let it all hang out.

QUEENS

This borough's quiet eastern neighborhoods look as straight as suburbia. But a gay scene thrives in the western, more urban reaches, with the melting pot of Jackson Heights as its epicenter. "Much of Queens' LGBT population is immigrants," notes local activist Pauline Park. "For many, it's the first time they can be open about their sexuality without fear of repercussion."

Several queercentric bars and clubs, mostly Latin-flavored, dot Jackson Heights, including the amiable **Friend's Tavern** (see Brooklyn); **Lucho's**, where it's rare to hear English spoken and the tunes are typically salsa or merengue; and **Zodiacs**, home to drag divas and male stripper contests. For friskier merriment, there's the **82nd Street Club**, a steamy bathhouse that's open 24 hours on weekends. Nearby Woodside is home to the lively lesbian joint **Chueca**, which doles out Spanish-American cuisine as it showcases go-go girls. Erotic dancers—male and female—also rock the cavernous **Krash** in Astoria.

Queens' annual Pride Parade, held the first Sunday of June, draws thousands of cheering spectators to Jackson Heights. The **Pride Community Center** in Corona organizes the march and also sponsors Generation Q, a program for LGBT youth, and several 12-step programs. Another community group, **Queens Pride House**, lodged in a Woodside storefront, offers health information and a referral program called Queer Links. Danny Drumm, who helped establish the Pride center in Corona and is running for Democratic District Leader, says "people used to go into Manhattan to participate in the gay community. Now they're much more likely to stay in the neighborhood."

In fact, the past several years have seen an influx of gay Manhattanites seeking affordable rents, mainly in ethnically diverse Astoria and

the industrial area and artist haven of Long Island City. "Half the people who live in my building are gay," says Darryl Price, a painter who shares a loft in L.I.C. "Since there aren't any bars to go to here, we mostly end up socializing at each other's apartments." He couldn't be happier that the Museum of Modern Art is relocating to his neighborhood (it opens Saturday 29) while its midtown home gets an addition. "I can't wait to greet all the cute patrons of the arts and show them lovely Queens."—*Les Simpson*

•**Friend's Tavern**, 78-11 Roosevelt Ave at 78th St (718-397-7256). Subway: E, F, V, G, R to Jackson Hts—Roosevelt Ave; 7 to 74th St—Broadway.

•**Lucho's**, 38-19 69th St at 38th Ave (718-424-9181). Subway: E, V, G, R to Jackson Hts—Roosevelt Ave; 7 to 69th St.

•**Zodiacs**, 69-16 Roosevelt Ave at 69th St (718-899-4724). Subway: E, F, V, G, R to Jackson Hts—Roosevelt Ave; 7 to 69th St.

•**82nd Street Club**, 40-33 82nd St at Roosevelt Ave (718-396-3945). Subway: 7 to 82nd St—Jackson Hts.

•**Chueca**, 69-04 Woodside Ave at 69th St (718-424-1171). Subway: 7 to 69th St.

•**Krash**, 34-48 Steinway St at 35th Ave (718-937-2400). Subway: V, G, R to Steinway St.

•**Pride Community Center**, 102-09 Northern Blvd at 102nd St (718-GAY-2300). Subway: 7 to 103rd St—Corona Plaza.

•**Queens Pride House**, 67-03 Woodside Ave between 67th and 68th Sts (718-429-5309). Subway: 7 to 69th Street.

STATEN ISLAND

Where's that thriving Staten Island gay scene? "In Manhattan," moans one queer, who's marooned on the wrong island if he wants to follow the Christopher Street rainbow. Somewhere on

this borough sits a pot of gold lamé—yet many gay residents of the Rock hide such luster, and themselves, in the closet. "Something here makes people maintain secrecy around sexual orientation," says Robin Garber-Kabalkin, a local who is the Lesbian AIDS Project Coordinator for the Gay Men's Health Crisis center in Manhattan. That "something," according to locals, is the primarily straight—and straitlaced—suburban community. Still, Garber-Kabalkin says, "My gay-pride flag is hanging off my porch," adding that she is part of a slowly growing contingent.

So: They're here, they're queer, now where's the friggin' beer? In Stapleton, as it turns out. You won't see E!'s *Wild on Stapleton* anytime soon, but the neighborhood is a gay mini-oasis. The N'awlins-flavored **Mardi Gras Lounge**, understanding the importance of proper accessorizing, hands out masks and beads. At nearby **Cross Roads Tavern**, the island's only other gay bar, mellower patrons loll about the outdoor patio while dancing queens head upstairs. Those craving caffeine can find it at **Muddy Cup**, a gay-friendly café strewn with comfy couches. In addition to hosting occasional drag shows, the coffeehouse features musical performances by Life Underwater, a folky lesbian lineup.

Outside of Stapleton, there's currently only one consistent gay shindig: Twisted, a throw-down on Saturday nights at **Club Drink**, an otherwise straight club on the South Shore. "People constantly complain that they have to leave Staten Island to have a good time," says Twisted's creator, Scott Silver; tired of the trash talk, he got the party started with go-go dancers, drag queens and DJs such as Lady and John Feelgood. Slowly, the mostly male, 18-to-25 crowd is discovering that you don't have to take a ferry to take home a fairy. The South Shore is also known to be more randy than Stapleton. Fags eager to shag cruise each other along the boardwalk here.

But in general, S.I.'s laid-back, couples-oriented gay populace meets through friends, on the Internet or at house parties. A Gotham-style parade of near-nekkid homos marching down Bay Street wouldn't be the chosen way to celebrate gay pride. "Oh, that wouldn't go over well here," says Mardi Gras Lounge owner Danny LaMantia. "We'd have a more subdued event, like a picnic." It's been no picnic trying to produce an event of any kind, though John Tyrcha, coordinator of the Staten Island **AIDS Task Force's LGBT Wellness Project**, hopes to put on a parade next year. Maybe by then it'll be time to break out that gold lamé.—*Vadim Liberman*

•**Mardi Gras Lounge**, 523 Bay St at Sands St (718-442-9196). Travel: Staten Island Ferry, then S51, S74 or S76 bus.

•**Cross Roads Tavern**, 12 Cross Street at Bay St (718-442-9615). Travel: Staten Island Ferry, then S51, S74 or S76 bus.

•**Muddy Cup**, 388 Van Duzer St between Beach and Wright Sts (718-818-8100). Travel: Staten Island Ferry, then S78 bus.

•**Club Drink**, 4849 Arthur Kill Road between S Bridge St and Richmond Valley Rd (718-608-2087). For directions, go to www.ravingqueen.com.

•**Staten Island AIDS Task Force's LGBT Wellness Project**, 56 Bay Street between Slosson Terr and Stuyvesant Pl (718-981-3366). Travel: Staten Island Ferry.