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For Immediate Release

Destination: Gay Beirut (and Beyond) IGLTA Ambassador organizes the first gay familiarization tour of Lebanon

Beirut, Lebanon (INSERT DATE, 2010)—San Francisco, Barcelona, Sydney, and ... Beirut? As surprising as it sounds, the buzz is building around Beirut, Lebanon as a gay destination. *The New York Times* dubbed Lebanon's capital "the Provincetown of the Middle East" in a 2009 article and the winter 2010 edition of Netherlands-based *Winq* magazine devoted eight pages to the city, citing its emergence as "the (gay) party capital of the Middle East."

The International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association's Ambassador to Lebanon, Bertho Makso, is now coordinating the first familiarization tour and symposium to Lebanon for travel professionals that work in the gay and lesbian market.

"Lebanon is a very liberal country. Once you're here, you'll be surprised," says Makso, who is based in Beirut. "It's a county rich in attractions to appeal to LGBT travelers. Beirut is like nowhere else!"

Set for Oct. 13-18, 2010, the Beirut-based trip, will not only tour the capital and check out its gay nightlife, but also take participants to famous historic sites throughout the country. Highlights include the Roman ruins of Baalbek, the ancient Phoenician city of Byblos, the beaches of Jounieh, and the underground caverns of Jeita. Also on the itinerary: the picturesque village of Deir El Qamar with its red-tiled roofs and the neighboring Beiteddine Palace, an architectural marvel dating to 1788 that now serves as the presidential summer palace.

"We're looking forward to being part of a FAM trip to such a unique destination," says IGLTA President/CEO John Tanzella. "Lebanon isn't the first country that springs to mind for LGBT travel, but Beirut is getting a lot of attention from travel media right now. It's exciting to see an IGLTA member at the forefront of this type of gay outreach."

The October trip will also include an afternoon educational symposium that will open a dialogue between trip participants and local gay business owners and activists. A post-trip extension to Syria is available as well.

IGLTA is the leading global organization dedicated to connecting businesses in the LGBT tourism industry. The association spans 70 countries and consists of accommodations, airlines, tour operators, travel agents, destinations, media and other key players in the tourism industry. For more on IGLTA, please visit www.lgbt.travel.

