



## Aramark Talks Houseboats, the Pink Dollar and Much More

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*Exclusive Q & A with Brian Murphy / National Director of Marketing, Aramark Harrison Lodging*

Consistently named one of America's most admired companies by *Fortune Magazine*, Aramark was also just recently recognized as one of the "40 Best Companies for Diversity" by *Black Enterprise* magazine. With those kinds of accolades in its back pocket, it only stands to reason that Aramark would be a leader in terms of reaching out to the gay and lesbian community.

In recognition of the fact that visiting National and State Parks is one of the most popular forms of travel in the United States, earlier this year, Aramark Parks & Resorts introduced "Out & About" packages aimed at LGBT travelers for its operations in or at Denali, Olympic, Shenandoah and Mesa Verde National Parks, as well as Deer Creek Resort & Conference Center, Zephyr Cove Resort & Marina and Lake Powell Resorts & Marinas.

This week, **Brian Murphy**, the National Director of Marketing, talks to [GayWired.com](http://GayWired.com) about Aramark's outreach to gay and lesbian travelers, the value of the pink dollar, why Aramark hopes LGBT travelers will rediscover houseboats and so much more. Here's what he had to say:

**GayWired.com:** So Brian, at what point did Aramark decide to launch the Out & About packages? What was the impetus behind the decision to launch the packages?

**Brian Murphy:** Aramark Parks & Resorts launched our 'Out & About' packages in 2007, with the first one being offered early in the year at Mesa Verde National Park, which was featured on *Gay Wired* and received a highly positive response. The impetus behind it

comes from doing regular and thorough marketing research into every existing and potential customer segment out there.

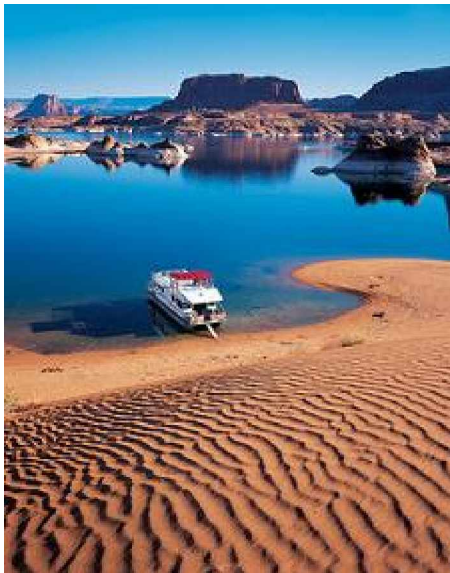
What we found was that the GLBT market in particular, in addition to other minority segments, reveals a strong desire to feel a sense of invitation and welcome from a destination, including national parks, before they visit. We wanted to create packages at all of our destinations that would resonate with this community, celebrate diversity amongst all of our guests and make sure that anyone and everyone feels more than welcome.

**GW: Why do you think companies are finally actively courting the pink dollar?**

**BM:** Based on our research, I don't think its any secret that the GLBT community, as a segment of today's community, has the highest average disposable income per capita of any other market segment.

**GW: What do you say to those critics who say that the LGBT market is overvalued?**

**BM:** As far as the market being overvalued, no, I don't believe it is at all. In fact, with the right approach and product, the GLBT community is undervalued in my opinion.



**GW: What has the response been since the Out & About packages launched? Any fallout or backlash?**

**BM:** The response to Aramark's first Out & About package launched at Mesa Verde National Park was phenomenal. It is, to date, the most successful package the park has ever offered and we are starting to see similar responses at our other park destinations as well. We are very pleased with the turnout and have not seen any kind of fallout or backlash at all.

**GW: What's special about the Aramark Out & About Packages? What distinguishes them from other gay-specific travel packages?**

**BM:** As the first national park concessionaire to openly and proactively market to and welcome the GLBT community, we offer something that most existing gay-specific travel packages can't—a comfortable and enriching experience at some of our nation's most notable national park destinations. We want everyone to feel more than welcome to celebrate and enjoy these lands the way they were meant to be enjoyed, while being treated fairly and with the respect they deserve.

In addition, we are not putting the GLBT community in astereotypical bucket. We don't want to suffer the misconceptions that gay packaging is only about romance or other attractions that may or may not relate to a destination. We simply want to extend an

invitation for discerning travelers to enjoy amazing and diverse experiences in comfort and at ease.

**GW: How do you go about deciding upon the packages and destinations that you are going to offer to the LGBT market?**

BM: We're offering the Out & About packages across all Aramark Parks & Resorts destinations. The packages are simply based on what we believe a couple, often times without children, would enjoy the most from our exceptional portfolio of properties.

**GW: What are some of the big highlights of the 2007 – 2008 season?**

BM: Highlights for Aramark Parks & Resorts in the coming year include:

- Lake Powell Resorts & Marinas welcomes two new classes of boats: The customer-influenced, 54-foot Escape luxury houseboats, offering all the amenities of the 75-footers, but on a smaller, more affordable scale; and the new 36-foot Weekender pontoon boats, offering a new and relaxing way to gather on the lake with friends and family.
- A major renovation and new salon-style update for Lake Tahoe Cruises' famous Tahoe Queen paddlewheeler boat.
- A new spa at Lake Quinault Lodge, at Olympic National Forest.
- New Kantishna Experience bus tours at Denali National Park & Preserve
- Five world-class culinary series' at Shenandoah National Park.



**GW: What is Aramark's most popular package?**

BM: Lake Powell Resorts & Marinas' yearly Early Bird Special has been the most popular package we've offered, thus far. Our hopes are high that the GLBT community will embrace activities such as houseboating and give us some suggestions on how to get them aboard!

**GW: What would you say about Out & About packages to the LGBT travelers who generally take city vacations and have never visited a park like the ones in the Out and About packages?**

BM: We want our Out & About packages to say to a typical city traveler, "Come to our national park destinations where you can really get out and live!" We want to communicate that, while the national park experience is ideal for those who already have a passion for the outdoors, it's not all about camping and roughing it.

All of Aramark's national park destinations offer full-service, comfortable and charming accommodations, upscale amenities, gourmet and sustainable cuisine and dining options that most people wouldn't expect to find within a national park.

**GW: What can gay and lesbian travelers expect from Aramark going forward?  
What is Aramark's commitment to diversity?**

Aramark Parks & Resorts plans to continue offering the Out & About packages at all of our park destinations and continue to listen to our customers, cater to their needs and exceed their expectations. We will update and expand the packages on an ongoing basis, as we would with any other kinds of packages, with the sole purpose of celebrating diversity and welcoming everyone to enjoy our properties in their own individual styles. It is our sincere pleasure to have connected with the GLBT community, and if they ask, they will receive.

Aramark's commitment to diversity is unwavering. We recently renewed and updated our sensitivity training to ensure fair and proper treatment and communications between Aramark employees and all of our guests. We are so pleased that we've now engaged the GLBT community and will continue to grow the relationship and expand upon what we can offer to these and all of our customers.

For more information on Aramark Parks and Resorts, go to [www.AramarkParks.com](http://www.AramarkParks.com)