

GAY

The e-magazine
by Lesbians with a Sense of Humor

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Travel & Vacation Issue

Shannon Wentworth and the Sweet future of lesbian travel

Special Features

- Interviews with:
 - Author Fay Jacobs
 - Comedian Chantal Carrere
 - Gay Games Olympian Kaia Wilson
- Chasing Tail—Chapter 3

Check Your Baggage

**Confessions of a
Tourist Attraction**

**Daddy Said
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AND MUCH MORE!!!!



Life is Sweet for Shannon Wentworth

**Interview by
Natasia Langfelder**

**Photos courtesy of
Sweet**



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Shannon Wentworth

Have you ever found yourself sitting on the couch after a long week, too tired to do anything other than watch reruns of *The L Word*, wishing you could get away from the hassles of everyday life? Or maybe you've spent time wondering how you could work with other women to get out and make a difference in the world. Well, while you were wishing and wondering, Shannon Wentworth was launching Sweet, the future of lesbian travel.

Shannon is the Chief Executive Officer and Founding Partner of Sweet. Along with fellow Founding Partner Jen Rainin, Shannon's mission was to create both a company and a travel experience which gave back to its employees, guests, and the community – and thus far it's been mission accomplished!

Employees enjoy top-notch health benefits, a gym membership, organic produce and healthy snacks in the office, state of the art equipment, and flexible hours, among other perks.

For its guests, Sweet offers fun-filled vacations and events that allow the busy lesbian traveler to combine volunteerism and tourism, creating a "voluntourism" experience that serves to empower and create a sense of community amongst all who take part. Whether you prefer to set sail on an Alaskan cruise, enjoy an all-inclusive resort vacation in Mexico, or participate in a happy hour and a local bayou clean up, Sweet has the travel package or local event for you – along with affordable pricing that includes a no-interest payment plan option.

Sweet's vacations are also noted for their impressive list of entertainers, including comedians Suzanne Westenhoefer, Andrea Myerson, Jennie McNulty, Heather Gold and singer Corday.

As if running a travel empire isn't enough, Shannon can also be found enjoying some of her favorite hobbies - running, hiking, rock climbing and swimming – and serving as an enthusiastic supporter of organizations such as the National Center for Lesbian Rights, Equality California, the Galapagos Conservancy, the Humane Society, Sports for

Kids, Sierra Mono Indian Museum, Save the Children, the Human Rights Campaign, and the San Francisco AIDS Foundation. She also serves on the board of the San Francisco LGBT Center.

GAY is proud to feature this Renaissance woman as our July cover girl.

GAY: How did you come up with the concept for Sweet?

SW: Sweet came from a conversation with co-founder Jen Rainin. We wanted to do something together that combined our love of travel, women, and giving back. We do all kinds of vacations. Our Sweet Caribbean

Cruise this past fall was the largest. We've also done land tours, a rafting trip on the Salmon River, and a safari in Kenya. This year, we've got a Vegas

weekend, another rafting trip, a Hawaiian Islands cruise, and a resort in Cozumel.

GAY: Who came up with the term "voluntourism"?

SW: While we use it liberally, we did not coin the term, nor invent the concept.

GAY: Do you think that this is a concept that works because of the socially conscientious nature of lesbians or could this kind of a "voluntourism" work with straight people?

SW: Yes, I think it works because lesbians are really aware of their impact on the environment and love to give back. Non-lesbians enjoy it, too. They invented it.

GAY: Have you considered making a *Lesbians Gone Wild on Sweet* video? You could donate all the proceeds to charity.

SW: I feel like there were several women who did that on our cruise. I'm not sure what they've done with the proceeds.

The future of lesbian travel
Sweet[®]



GAY: Have all of your volunteering efforts gone smoothly or have there been some hiccups?

SW: *Crossing fingers* It's all been amazing so far. Beyond all of our expectations. Our guests love it and are more generous than I ever imagined with their time and attention. Our guests really dig in and they keep digging in when they get home. For instance, we did a project in Roatan at a computer learning center. We delivered two new computers to the center and repainted it. Our guests donated enough money to put four more kids through the program for a year. One of our guests, Denise Johnson, came home and raised enough money on her own to send them seven new computers.

GAY: Have all the natives in the ports you stop at been friendly?

SW: We've been welcomed with open arms everywhere. Even in Belize where it's illegal to be gay, we were welcomed by the community. It was a big deal there. The media came out to cover our projects and our

visit. In addition to building a children's library (donating over 1,000 books and a copier) and painting cartoon characters on the walls of a children's hospital ward, we also showed the community who lesbians are in a resonant and impactful way.

GAY: Quick: Out of all the comedians and singers you have featured on board Sweet, which one is your favorite?

SW: Oof, you are trying to get me into trouble. I love them all. Suzanne Westenhoefer is my all-time favorite, as both a person and comedian. I love Jennie McNulty, Gloria Bigelow, Sandra Valls, Kate McKinnon, Erin Foley, Nicol Paone—everyone was hysterical on the cruise, even when they weren't trying. Our musicians are amazing, too. I love Edie Carey, Jen Foster, Natalia Zuckerman, Adrienne and Corday. We had a week of phenomenal performances.

GAY: Do you personally go on all the trips?

SW: I try to go on everything. I'm going on everything this year.

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GAY: What is your most embarrassing moment during a Sweet cruise?

SW: Singing karaoke. I was pretty terrible.

GAY: Sweet features a number of theme parties, including Bubbles & Champagne, Naughty & Nice, and '80s parties. Why do you think lesbians love '80s parties so much?

SW: Who doesn't jump at the chance to wear a side ponytail? The clothes are so fun. That was my favorite party and night. Plus the music was so lively and everyone knows it. I danced with my mom all night long.

GAY: You seem to have a policy of 100 percent transparency, right down to breaking down the pricing for your customers. This isn't very common for businesses; why did you decide to make that kind of transparency part of Sweet?

SW: Lesbians are smart. They care what you're doing with their money and they want the best deal. For us, it's the only way to do business in this community. Two things I know: Don't mess with a lesbian's money and don't try to schedule karaoke during a football game.

GAY: What do you want the women who go on Sweet vacations to take away from the experience?

SW: I want them to feel powerful, beautiful, and



loved. I want glee to be pouring out of every pore.

GAY: Hurricane Ida hit during the inaugural Sweet Caribbean Cruise in November 2009, with 1,200 women on board. That must have been a nightmare. How did

you deal? Where the passengers freaking out?

SW: Ida Shmida. We actually outran the hurricane, so it didn't actually hit us, but the story gets bigger with every retelling. We had to get everyone on board early and get the hell out of Dodge or we would have had to stay in New Orleans for four days. Our captain steered us around it. We had about ten hours of pretty rough seas, then

smooth sailing after that. Nobody freaked out. Sweet people are the most fun and nicest people on earth. Everyone was helping each other. Everyone had a story to tell. It was incredibly bonding for us as a group. We laughed about it all week long. By the

end of the week, everyone knew everyone else.

GAY: What is your funniest on-board story?

SW: There were so many funny things that happened. The first night, the ship was rocky from Ida, but that didn't keep the dance floor from being packed. With the rocking, it looked like we were all line dancing in unison. Everyone rolled with it. It was really

fun. Our Club Skirts' pool party the last day was insane. Completely.

GAY: Have there ever been lovers' quarrels or out and out fights on a cruise? How do you handle that?



SW: You've met lesbians. In general, we've had nothing to write home about in terms of spats. Anytime you put a couple together for seven days, 24/7, they're going to get on each other's nerves a bit. We don't spend that kind of time together at home. I think we made more couples than we lost on the cruise.

GAY: *GO Magazine* named you as one of their "100 Women We Love" in 2009. Has that helped you score?

SW: Totally. *The Advocate's* "40 Under 40" list, too. Touchdown!

GAY: What's a vacation destination spot that you think no lesbian should miss?

SW: I don't think any lesbian should miss an exclusive Sweet vacation. My favorite places I've been are the Galapagos Islands, Roatan, and Australia.

GAY: We've heard that you were once mistaken for Scott Baio. Please tell us that horrible story in painstaking detail.

SW: Ha. In 1984, I got my hair cut like Mary Lou Retton. It was a big mistake. I was a tomboy, so it looked way more Scott Baio than Mary Lou. Anyway, I was collecting for my paper route and was called the "paperboy" on a number of occasions. I was probably wearing a wristband and cut-off jean jacket à la Chachi.

GAY: You've said that *Fried Green Tomatoes* is your favorite movie. Mary Stuart Masterson or Mary-Louise Parker?

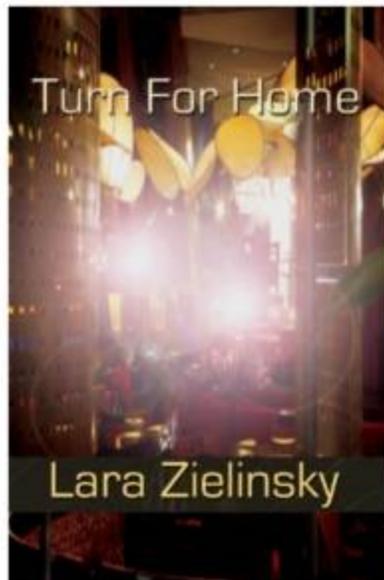
SW: I'd like them to make a Shannon sandwich. When I watched, I identified a lot more with Idgie. I wouldn't kick either of them out of bed for eating crackers.

GAY: Wildcard: Tell us something you want GAY readers to know about you.

SW: I have a birthmark on my ...

For more on Shannon and the eco-friendly travel options offered by Sweet, visit www.DiscoverSweet.com.

From the author of *Turning Point*
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Suspenseful... with realistic, emotionally-rich characters...
four stars" - Bob Lind, *Echo Magazine*

Falling in love wasn't easy. Staying together may be impossible.

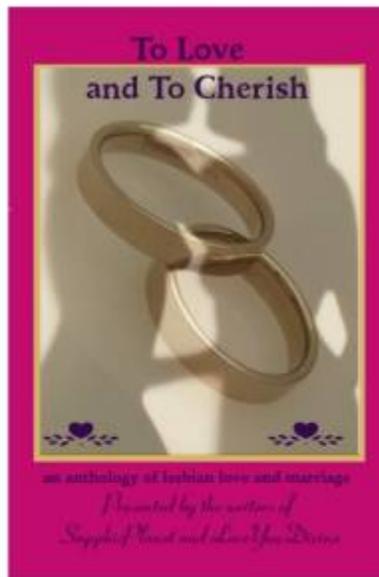
Breza and Cassidy return from holiday hiatus to *Time Trails*, sneaking precious moments of intimacy in shadows and trailers. With many of the cast and crew showing support, they try to date in hopes of being seen simply as friends. The paparazzi give chase, however, very interested in the attitude change from cold shoulder to openness between them.

When their romance is suspected, the "lesbian" label sets off Mitch Hyland, Cassidy's ex-husband, who plans to remove his son from being raised by a lesbian -

By force if necessary.



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an anthology of lesbian love and marriage
Presented by the writers of
Sapphic Planet and *LoveYouDivine*

ISBN: 978-1-60054-322-7



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"as exuberant a statement on the beauty of woman to woman love as one is likely to find" - Victor J. Banis

"Bravo... for an engaging (pardon the pun) read. Five stars out of five."
- Bob Lind, *Echo Magazine*

Love is universal. Marriage is... not. But it should be. It is a matter of civil rights and equal protection. The writers of *SapphicPlanet* and *LoveYouDivine* joined forces to bring you diverse and heartfelt stories of the many forms of lesbian love and yes... marriage.



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