Queer Castmates on Max's 'Swiping America' Travel in Search of Love

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Queer castmates Ash Warren and Kris Kelkar on Max's "Swiping America" (Photo Credit: Max)

Vacationer Magazine talks to queer castmates Ashleigh Warren and Krishnanand Kelkar about traveling across the US to find their ideal match on the heart-warming Max Original, *Swiping America*.

You're just not clicking, they're unemployed, or you have an emotional wall up – they're all reasons why dating and finding the right match can be a challenge. Stephen Warren and Johnnie Ingram, the creators and executive producers of the award-winning series, *We're Here*, are heading into uncharted dating territory. The first two episodes of their new romantic documentary, *Swiping America,* will drop on the Max (formerly HBO Max) on Thursday, June 15.

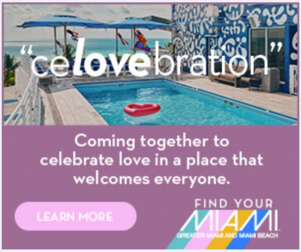
max ORIGINAL
4 NEW YORKERS. 8 CITIES. 140 DATES.

SWIPING
AMERICA
FROM THE CREATORS OF WE'RE HERE
NEW ROM DOC SERIES
STREAMING JUNE 15
max

(Courtesy of Max)

The eight-part series, *Swiping America* follows four New Yorkers – Reagan Baker, Kesun Lee, Ashleigh Warren, and Krishnanand Kelkar – as they embark on a cross-country dating experiment, allowing the show's producers to choose their suitors for dates in seven cities: Miami, New Orleans, Seattle, Asheville, NC; Austin, TX; Sante Fe, New Mexico; and Boulder, CO. But each of them must decide which special person will join them for the final date in Honolulu.

So, we sat down with the queer castmates, Ashleigh Warren and Krishnanand Kelkar, to get the scoop about the show and their take on this unique dating experiment. Expect a few twists and surprise dates, including Kelkar's date with porn star Diego Sans! You'll have to tune in to find out what happens.



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Before diving in, you should know that Ashleigh 'Ash' Warren is a lesbian Brooklyn-based entrepreneur and a pastor's kid. She's also a world traveler who likes "bougie shit," thinks dating in New York City is "trash," but remains optimistic in her search for a partner.

Krishnanand 'Kris' Kelkar is a gay data scientist, half-Indian, and a first-generation American. He met his last serious boyfriend on Tinder and thought they'd get married, but he broke up with Kelkar. Now, single, he's trying to be more spontaneous.

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Kris, Kesun, Reagan, and Ash (Photo courtesy of Max)

Producers Pick Their Dates

Of course, the first thing we had to ask Warren and Kelkar about was just how nerve-racking it was to allow the show's producers to pick their dates in each city, and they were pretty honest. "My face says it all (he laughs). I think part of the experience was letting go and also admitting that the way I've been dating wasn't working," said Kelkar. "At first, it felt a little uncomfortable, but eventually, I think part of the process was really making the most of it and enjoying it for what it was."

Warren believed giving up control was a challenge at first, but it provided a unique opportunity to spend some time getting to know people before seeing them in person. “I guess what would that be like … the 90s? Before we had all these swiping things, it was nice to have conversations with people and realize, ‘I’m attracted to your personality or your laughter.’ So, it was definitely a fun journey,” said Warren, originally from San Diego, CA.

Ashleigh ‘Ash’ Warren (Photo courtesy of Max)

The Dating Experience

Allowing producers to choose whom they dated was only one piece of this unique dating experience. Kelkar described it as “a journey to tease out what’s getting in our way of what we want out of love,” which also gave the four castmates time to bond and “reveal deep dark truths about each other” that they probably wouldn’t share with most people. And with the cameras on all the time, he felt that all of his quirks and thoughts were on display, but he grew comfortable in owning every experience. “I feel a little bit more comfortable in any situation now,” said Kelkar, originally from LA.

Warren thought the most interesting part of her journey on *Swiping America* was dating different people that she normally would never encounter in NYC. “In New York, everyone feels like the same but in a different body. So, it was so beautiful to meet different personalities and meet people from completely different backgrounds–everyone was really, really nice!”

Krishnanand 'Kris' Kelkar (Photo courtesy of Max)

Eight Cities, But Your Favorite

Traveling to multiple cities, the four castmates had approximately 140 dates combined. So, we had to ask if there was one particular city on their cross-country dating jaunt, that they liked or the city that fit their personality. Before the show, Warren visited a friend in Austin, TX, and contemplated moving there. "I feel like Austin is another place I could see myself living out of the cities we visited…or Seattle."

Kelkar with equal excitement immediately agreed, "I was going to say, for me, it would be Seattle. I love Seattle." For him, it's the combination of mountains, water, forests, and city in one place that won his heart. "I was just completely blown away. I'd like to believe I'm a little bit of an indie-alt girl. The punk scene can be a little aggressive for me, but it appeals to me (he laughs).

Seattle (Photo Credit: Timothy Eberly on Unsplash)

Perfect First-Date Spots In New York City

After their eight-city tour across the US, what appealed to Warren and Kelkar was returning home and sleeping in their beds again, and getting back to their regular routines. With their incredible love for the Big Apple, we had to ask for a couple of recommendations. Summer travel planning has already kicked into high gear, so they rattled off a few of their favorite spots in the city.

Kelkar recommended LGBTQ+ visitors visit Central Park, Prospect Park, and McCarren Park to witness queer and non-queer people co-existing in the city's limited green spaces, where visitors can also experience the diversity of New York City on full display.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, Warren recommends going to the Brooklyn bar, **The Woods**, on Wednesday nights. A frequent spot for her and friends almost every week last summer, she said, "It just felt so nice to be around people who love, respect, and accept you while dancing and having a good time."

Warren and Kelkar also spilled the tea about what they would do for their ideal first date. Warren told *Vacationer*, "Oh, I would never take a date to The Woods, but it's a good place to go with friends. I'm very artsy so a museum or have a cute picnic in the park or have a nice drink. I'm a little bougie in a sense because I like a good view with a nice cocktail." Kelkar's ideal first date includes grabbing slices of Hot Honey Pizza from **Paulie Gee's**, then heading to Transmitter Park, drinking a few beers, and getting to know a person in a very casual setting. We're sure their future dates won't include cameras and a production crew – so rest easy queers!

Kris, Reagan, Ash, and Kesun (Photo courtesy of Max)

Why You Should Watch 'Swiping America'

But one thing you don't want to sleep on is this show! Both Warren and Kelkar think *Swiping America* will appeal to all viewers for various reasons, and Warren called the show "a beautiful display of humanity." She also thinks it will appeal to the LGBTQ+ community. On the show, she reveals her dilemma about where she fits in the lesbian community because she doesn't identify as either masculine or feminine.

"If I saw this show three years ago, I feel like it would've made my experience as a queer person even more beautiful just to know that I don't feel alone," she said. "I think being queer and seeing other queer people on TV going through the struggles that you feel day to day, having those inner battles with your sexuality and how you present to the world. Is the person I'm going on a date with going thing I'm blah, blah, blah... you know, it's difficult," she said.

Kelkar hopes that everyone will appreciate and enjoy the show and its diversity. "I love that the cast is diverse around sexuality and around race, but it's not the center of the tension in the show. It's really about trying to find love regardless of who we are and that's a universal experience."

The first two episodes of Swiping America will drop on Max on Thursday, June 15 for viewers to stream. The following four episodes are scheduled to debut on June 22, with the final two episodes debuting **on June 29, wrapping up the rom-doc series.**