

COLORADO AND WASHINGTON: DRUG TOURISM DESTINATIONS?



Colorado is known to be the highest state in the United States of America, as it has an average altitude of 2072 meters. However, since the legalization of the recreational use of marijuana by the residents of Colorado, tourists may be looking for a different high when they visit the state.

Colorado and Washington state have both recently legalized recreational marijuana, which is at odd with federal laws which ban possession of the drug as well as producing and selling it.

It is thought that **tourists may now be visiting these states more frequently in order to get a legal high**, in the same way Amsterdam has attracted up to a million tourists into its coffee shops which offer hashish and marijuana.

The tourists which are attracted to the ski slopes in both of these states will not be overtaken by those coming into the states for drugs, claims Morgan Fox who is a spokesman for Marijuana Policy Project, who were significant contributors to the campaign to legalize it. He said that people use these drugs all over the country anyway so they aren't likely to travel elsewhere to do it.

The response to the new law will depend on how the federal government reacts to the change. Their legal position is unchanged but the Justice department is considering a change in how voting is done. They are likely to be worried that other states will follow, particularly if there is seen to be an increase in revenue in these states as a result of it, which will encourage others to desire a similar revenue increase.

If the law is passed it will allow adults to possess up to six marijuana plants and one ounce of marijuana in these states from January 5. The states will have a year to draft up regulations on whether it can be sold legally and how it will be sold.

The head of the Office of Tourism in Colorado, Al White, said it is too early to judge what might happen to tourism. He said some people are likely to avoid Colorado because of the new law and some will be more likely to visit it, although probably it will slightly increase tourism. **However, until the drug is legalized it may not have much impact as they certainly won't be promoting people to come to the state** to do something illegal, so there won't be much positive marketing of the new law.

It is not thought the new law will increase crime in the states as it will still be illegal to use the drug in public. It is usually not the sort of drug that is strongly associated with crime. The organizer of Hempfest in Seattle which campaigns for the legalization of pot, thinks that people are more likely to steal food like potato chips rather than anything of real value when they are high.

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