

# SURVEY SAYS COLORADO TOURISM BENEFITS GREATLY FROM MARIJUANA



Since the laws that legalize the sale of recreational marijuana in Colorado came to effect in January 2014, there has been differing opinions on whether many visitors to the western state have been coming purposely to enjoy the substance. People in the marijuana have always proclaimed that cannabis was one of the main factors drawing visitors to the state, a proclamation that many officials vehemently denied. However, a recent state survey has now given marijuana businesses enough proof that they had always been right.

In a study commissioned by the Colorado Tourism Office and presented to its board of directors, it was found that the now legal weed was a growing motivator for tourists visiting Colorado. In fact, **the survey noted that 48% of summer travelers alone were mainly influenced to visit Colorado so as to enjoy the legal recreational pot.**

This survey put to bed the wide belief by tourism state officials that their savoir-faire marketing had majorly influenced the record visitations that were witnessed in Colorado. This came at the backdrop of the state's "Come to Life" ad campaign, which was obviously successful, but not as influential as the marijuana attraction.

Even though there are contradicting remarks in the survey that mentions that only 8% of the Colorado tourists who responded to the survey admitted to have visited a marijuana dispensary, there were still reliable reports indicating that the law that legalizes marijuana in Colorado had great influence when people consider visiting the state.

A report from Strategic Marketing and Research Insights (SMARI) supported this finding. However, the organization was quick to mention that enjoying recreational marijuana is not the exact reason or activity that boost Colorado tourism, but is a motivator especially to those who want to do it.

In the survey that simply asked "How much did legalization of marijuana usage influence your decision to visit Colorado?" many were quick to mention that marijuana was indeed a motivation. **85% of those who visited pot shops in Colorado over the last summer cited marijuana as the main motivation behind visiting Colorado for their vacation.** This was an enormous growth from just 29% who had cited marijuana as the main reason behind their visits last year.

While refuting this survey, a number of Colorado tourism officials were adamant that this survey would portray the beautiful state as a negative place where tourists only visit to smoke marijuana. However, a reasonable number of industry players supported the findings of the survey and noted that it is absolutely validating. They went on to note that it was a great way to promote the state and called for tourism officials to fully embrace and support the opportunity that the legalization of marijuana has brought to the state.

This controversial survey contradicts the situation under the federal law where selling, possession and use of marijuana are illegal. And in following this law, Colorado state officials have never promoted marijuana because there are regulations that prevent marijuana pot businesses from advertising beyond Colorado.

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