

Hawaii Sells Smoking Ban as Clean Environment Policy



Let's imagine Hawaii, pineapple pizza, girls in the grass skirts performing traditional local dances, golden sands, and clear Blue Ocean. However Hawaii is also associated with one the strictest smoking bans.

Individuals are threatened with an immediate \$US50 fine, whereas fines for businesses could rise to as much as \$US500. Smoking has been banned in all public places and it has even been prohibited to light up less than 20 feet away from the entrance to a public area. The new law has seen a mixed response, some seeing it as a threat to tourism, others viewing it as a way of maintaining Hawaii's pure image of paradise.

The importance of the tourism industry to the Hawaiian economy is undeniable. Around 6.4 million people visit the Pacific islands every year, bringing approximately \$10US billion in revenue. Of course, many of these tourists smoke and some believe that tourists may be tempted to go elsewhere due to the ban.

Chris Kiaha, a barwoman in one of Hawaii's most popular destinations, Waikiki, believes that her customers smoke and would be put off by the smoking ban. She stressed that after the disappearance of pineapples and sugar cane, any negative effect on tourism would be disastrous.

Many of Hawaii's tourists come from Japan, a country known as a smoking paradise. As an estimated 45% of Japanese males smoke, one can understand Kiaha's concerns.

The state tourist suggests to move the focus away from the word "ban": the new law is to protect visitors and employees from passive smoking and to promote the notion of a clean and pure environment and therefore to make an emphasis on ethics and health.

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