

GERMAN NEIGHBORS FEAR CANNABIS TOURISM



It has been a topic of discussion for several years, and now, a decision has been made. Since April 1, 2024, it has been declared legal to consume and possess cannabis in Germany, but under certain conditions. From July 1, cannabis clubs will open and be allowed to sell their members' products from their cultivation. Neighboring countries are afraid of cannabis tourism.

Germany is not the only country in Europe to have taken this step. Other countries, such as Spain and Malta, have also decriminalized the use or possession of cannabis in recent years. **However, the most prominent example of liberal cannabis laws in Europe is probably the Netherlands**, particularly in the capital city, Amsterdam, where cannabis tourism has thrived for many years.

Despite the legalization of cannabis in Germany, some experts and police representatives are concerned that the country could also experience increased cannabis tourism, like Amsterdam. The question is, are these fears justified?

Rules to Be Applied Starting April 1, 2024

If you are 18 or older, you can own up to 50 grams of cannabis at home and a maximum of 25 grams outdoors. However, selling or passing it on to third parties is prohibited.

If you are 18 or older, you can also grow cannabis at home. Up to three plants are allowed.

Those who exceed the maximum limits or smoke weed in restricted areas may face hefty fines or imprisonment. Special regulations are applied for the cannabis clubs.

Impact of Cannabis Tourism on Germany

Are French tourists flocking the Black Forest to smoke weed? Thomas Strobl, the Baden-Württemberg Minister of the Interior, is concerned about this and is calling for restrictions on cannabis clubs near the border. Although it may sound like a joke, it is a severe issue.

There is a fear that many people, particularly those in border areas, will come to Germany for cannabis consumption. For instance, the Austrian police have announced that they will conduct focused checks in the future.

"The police will increase inspections, particularly in the border area, and apprehend individuals found with drugs and driving under the influence," stated Austria's Interior Minister Gerhard Karner.

It is feared that controlling whether cannabis clubs adhere to the requirements for cannabis distribution could be problematic in reality. This is evident in Spain, where clubs allow only members to have legal access. Tourists are also allowed to become members for a short time. These clubs are known for pushing the boundaries of the law, but law enforcement agencies usually turn a blind eye. This circumstance can lead to an increase in crime. According to the Catalan police

Mossos d'Esquadra, Catalonia is now "the epicenter of Europe's illicit marijuana market."

Cannabis possession and cultivation have been legal in Malta for several years now. However, it is still prohibited to consume cannabis in public—nevertheless, multiple shops on the Mediterranean island sell cannabis-infused edibles, joints, and other related items. Tourists are also welcome to purchase these products.

Other Places Restrict Cannabis Use

The Netherlands has been known for its liberal drug policy for a long time. The sale of cannabis in the country's coffee shops was tolerated, and possession of less than five grams was not punishable. However, Amsterdam, the hip capital of the Netherlands, wants to get rid of its reputation as a stronghold for cannabis users. Since May 2023, **public smoking of weed has been prohibited in the city center**. This ban is one of several measures that Amsterdam is taking to restrict party tourism.

For many years, Copenhagen has also been a popular destination for cannabis tourism due to the lenient drug laws in the self-proclaimed autonomous district called Christiania. While the area was known for its free-spirited culture and a place where drug use was tolerated, it has been plagued by organized drug trafficking on Pusher Street. Unfortunately, what was once a thrilling experience for visitors or an easy way to obtain drugs has become a severe problem for the locals.

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