



# Responsible Cannabis Tourism: A Summary of Social Benefits

Building a Safe & Responsible  
Cannabis Tourism Industry

Prepared by: Dr. Susan Dupej & Dr. Chris Choi

## Extended Information



# Introduction

## Welcome!

The global cannabis tourism market is expected to reach a value of [\\$25.7 billion by 2030](#). Canada, as the first G7 country to federally legalize cannabis, is uniquely positioned to lead in this new form of special interest tourism by pioneering cannabis-friendly destinations in legal contexts.

[\\*https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2025/07/22/3119558/28124/en/Cannabis-Tourism-Strategic-Business-Report-2024-2030-Cannabis-Festivals-and-Events-Generating-Seasonal-Travel-Demand](https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2025/07/22/3119558/28124/en/Cannabis-Tourism-Strategic-Business-Report-2024-2030-Cannabis-Festivals-and-Events-Generating-Seasonal-Travel-Demand)

Beyond its economic potential, cannabis tourism in Canada can deliver significant social benefits when guided by responsible practices.

This report provides a summary of findings from research published in *The International Journal of Tourism Research*.

The full article can be accessed here:

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/jtr.70014>

# Summary of Key Findings

- Canada has no formal regulatory standards for social cannabis consumption, which is an obstacle for tourism and hospitality.
- Regulatory uncertainty has prompted tourism suppliers to voluntarily self-regulate (e.g., develop informal standards like 'house rules' and safety protocols), positioning the industry as the de facto leader in setting standards for safe consumption.
- Central to operator best practices is considering non-consumers, connecting consumers to legal cannabis, customizing experiences to suit consumer familiarity levels, providing consumer education, and working closely with municipal and provincial leaders.
- The tourism industry is advancing ethical standards for society as a whole by holding the government accountable and advocating for cannabis consumption policies that protect consumers and enhance industry standards.
- Collective advocacy across sectors works to create industry-side support systems and strengthens legitimacy around cannabis.



# Why Responsibility Matters

## The Risks of Ignoring Responsibility:

- ✗ Legal liability → Guests consuming outside of regulations can expose you to lawsuits or fines.
- ✗ Reputation damage → Poorly managed cannabis use creates negative headlines.
- ✗ Lost opportunity → Without standards, policymakers may block industry growth.

## Responsible cannabis tourism can:

- ✓ enhance guest experiences
- ✓ strengthen public health and safety
- ✓ legitimize the industry for long-term growth
- ✓ support community and economic growth

Responsibility is a characteristic of *shared value*.

# What is Shared Value?

Shared value is a business strategy (from business sustainability theory) where companies generate profit while also creating benefits for society.

## Why it Matters for Cannabis Tourism:

Legalization opens up new opportunities, but stigma, risk and uncertainty remain. In response to fear and criticism surrounding the commercialization of cannabis consumption in a profit-driven environment, shared value builds trust, legitimacy and sustainability for the industry.

In addition to businesses adopting best practices to enhance creditability and reduce risk, partnerships across industries can improve regulation and public trust.



# Social Benefits of Cannabis Tourism

## 1. Reduces Stigma Through Normalization

By integrating cannabis into mainstream tourism activities, responsible operators help shift cannabis use from a deviant or marginalized activity into a normalized, regulated, and culturally accepted practice. Safe consumption lounges and guided tours provide legitimate and social spaces, reducing negative perceptions.

## 2. Protects Public Health and Safety

Clear consumption rules, staff training, and responsible service policies lower risks of overconsumption and unsafe behavior. Designated spaces reduce conflicts in public areas and protect non-consumers from secondhand exposure. Education initiatives ensure that novice consumers are informed about safe dosing, creating a healthier guest experience.

## 3. Strengthens Community Trust

Businesses that adopt voluntary standards, transparent policies, and self-regulation demonstrate accountability to communities and regulators. Trust-building reduces opposition from local residents and policymakers, creating a stronger foundation for long-term acceptance.

## 4. Promotes Inclusivity and Respect for Diversity

Responsible cannabis tourism recognizes that not all guests are consumers. Practices such as offering alternative experiences, monitoring smoke drift, and using inclusive language foster respect for diverse groups of travelers.

## 5. Empowers Cultural and Social Connection

Cannabis can serve as a cultural bridge, creating new opportunities for shared experiences in wellness, culinary, festival, and educational contexts. Tourists engage not only with the product but also with local communities, traditions, and values, fostering cross-cultural understanding.

## 6. Advances Policy and Industry Legitimacy

Advocacy and alliances help shape fair, evidence-based policies. When businesses model best practices, they provide policymakers with concrete examples of how cannabis tourism can coexist with public health goals. This contributes to the long-term legitimacy of cannabis industries globally.



# Best Practices for Operators

## 1. Set Clear Standards & Expectations

Set clear standards for guests through house rules, signage, and staff communication. Transparency builds trust and reduces conflict.

### *Why It Matters*

- Guests feel more comfortable when they know the rules. Setting clear expectations prevents misunderstandings, reduces risks, and creates trust. Similar to the professional tone that would be expected for alcohol, operators can be firm but welcoming in conveying 'house cannabis policy'.

## 2. Provide Safe Spaces of Consumption

Offer designated, well-ventilated, and supervised spaces for consumption. Establish clear safety protocols and waste disposal systems.

### *Why It Matters*

- Safe spaces protect consumers, non-consumers, and businesses. They reduce risks of accidents or complaints and work to normalize cannabis consumption.

## 3. Consider Non-Consumers

Respect the presence of non-consumers by planning for mixed groups, monitoring smoke drift, and using inclusive language in guest materials.

### *Why This Matters*

- Not all guests consume cannabis. A responsible operator balances the needs of consumers and non-consumers to keep experiences inclusive. Wine tourism etiquette, for example, often caters to both wine drinkers and non-wine drinkers with equal care.

## 4. Customize Experiences

Personalize experiences with intake forms and optional activities such as culinary pairings, wellness programming, and cultural tours.

### *Why It Matters*

- Customization improves guest satisfaction and loyalty. It allows operators to serve diverse needs responsibly and expand markets.



# Best Practices for Operators

## 5. Legal Compliance

Track licenses, permits, and evolving regulations. Compliance with the law ensures survival and credibility for cannabis tourism businesses.

### *Why It Matters*

- Non-compliance risks shutdowns, fines, and reputational damage. Compliance builds trust with governments and local communities and compliance efforts can be shared with guests to reassure them and show professionalism.

## 6. Self-Regulation

Adopt voluntary standards and internal policies beyond legal requirements. Create MOUs for partnerships and commit to transparency.

### *Why It Matters*

- Self-regulation demonstrates accountability and foresight. It shows leadership and reduces the risk of restrictive external regulation.

## 7. Education

Provide accurate information to guests, train staff, and offer resources such as 'Cannabis Etiquette for Travelers'.

### *Why It Matters*

- Tourists are curious. Many are new to legal cannabis and rely on operators for safe, accurate information. Education reduces risks, enhances the tourism industry as a trusted guide, and empowers guests to make informed and responsible choices.

## 8. Advocacy and Alliances

Engage with policymakers and tourism boards to advocate for fair policies. Form alliances to strengthen lobbying power and reduce stigma.

### *Why It Matters*

- Advocacy ensures industry voices are heard. Alliances amplify impact, shape policy, and build legitimacy across communities.



# Final Insights

Responsible cannabis tourism is more than an economic niche — it is a **social innovation**.

In addition to generating billions in revenue, cannabis tourism can reshape perceptions of cannabis as a legitimate leisure activity.

Responsible cannabis tourism creates shared value: businesses simultaneously drive profit, protect public health, respect community values, and strengthen industry legitimacy, thereby generating value for society.

Responsible cannabis tourism:

- ✓ Implements **safe and responsible consumption spaces**
- ✓ Builds **trust and credibility** with guests and regulators
- ✓ Enhances **guest satisfaction through personalization**
- ✓ Supports **industry-wide legitimacy and advocacy**
- ✓ Reduces risks by following **legal and self-regulatory best practices**



# Cannabis Agritourism Research Day!

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) and the University of Guelph invite you to attend a hybrid event:

## Cannabis Agritourism Futures Forum: Insights and Actions from International Research

**Wed. Nov. 19<sup>th</sup>, 12:30-4:30pm**

This is a free educational event that provides an opportunity to:

- learn more about research advances in cannabis agritourism (including farmgate) in Canada and the United States;
- hear from a panel of international agritourism experts;
- network and share resources with stakeholders.

This is a hybrid half-day event, accommodating both an in-person and virtual audience.

The in-person event will be held at the Delta Hotels by Marriott Guelph Conference Centre, 50 Stone Rd. West, Guelph ON.

An RSVP is required via a registration portal for either in-person or virtual attendance.

Sign-up here:

<https://forms.gle/4Hcbpgg28dq1BzXx8>

