

HGTV stars support tourism tax boost

The stars of HGTV's "Home Town" visited the Mississippi Capitol last month to help lobby for a possible increase in a local tourism tax for their community.

Ben and Erin Napier renovate homes in and around Laurel, Mississippi, on the show.

Mayor Johnny Magee said Laurel—with a population of about 17,000—has enjoyed a big boost in tourism since "Home Town" began in 2016.

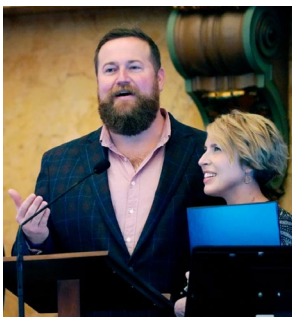
The state House presented the Napiers with a resolution that commends them and their show for "promoting positive images of Mississippi nationwide."

Laurel already has a 2-cent tax on restaurant meals and hotel stays, and Magee said the city collected about \$2 million from it last year. Senate Bill 2155 would allow Laurel residents to vote on setting an additional 1-cent tax on hotels only.

Magee said the city wants to use some of the additional money to advertise Laurel, as well as develop a welcome center that would include a museum highlighting Black history and culture.

"Of course, Ben and Erin are a great draw," Magee said.

— AP, via wfxrtv.com



Ben and
Erin Napier



Academic study says Canada can become the 'Napa Valley' of cannabis tourism

Researchers have found the recent success of Canadian cannabis tourism has both normalized a formerly "deviant" leisure activity and opened the door to other potentially lucrative forms of cannabis-related tourism, such as complete growing, consuming and experiencing tours.

"Tourism is as an already existing social institution. Packaging cannabis and tourism together at the federal level has broken down moral barriers to legal domestic cannabis use," said the University of Waterloo's Sanjay Nepal, a co-author of the study.

"This broader social acceptance could convince decision-makers to embrace Canada's reputation for cannabis. Like California's reputation for wine for example."

Nepal, along with researchers from the University of Guelph, arrived at their findings by creating a database of all Canadian cannabis tourism businesses. Through a qualitative review of the first two years of cannabis legalization in Canada they discovered significant growth in acceptance by the public of cannabis if it is presented to tourists as legally separate from other illegal drugs.

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Panelists see wine-like future for NJ cannabis tourism

If you legalize it, they will come, especially if they have somewhere to consume it.

That seemed to be the message last month at a virtual panel on cannabis tourism.

The free event was sponsored by the Lloyd D. Levenson Institute of

Gaming, Hospitality and Tourism at the Stockton University School of Business, in partnership with the Greater Atlantic City Chamber and Stockton's cannabis studies program.

Panelists compared cannabis tourism to wine tourism. People

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Some see a chance for a windfall via well-managed cannabis tourism

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want to visit where the plants are grown, much like a vineyard tour, with the expectation that the visitors will also want to taste and have a chance to purchase the product. Visitors also want an educational component to cannabis tours, just like with wineries, they said.

New Jersey legalized recreational use of marijuana in 2021.

In California, which legalized marijuana in 2016, work is underway to develop an appellation system similar to how wine regions are dedicated, said Brian Applegarth of the Cannabis Travel Association and a California marketing and events agency, one of four participants in the event.

Cannabis tourism has been an increasing industry in California, Colorado and elsewhere. Some business leaders see a chance for New Jersey to cash in big, with millions of potential customers in New York City and Philadelphia just over the bridges.

“Right now, we have a lot of people who are preparing for all the opportunities that will come,” said Rob Mejia, an author and adjunct faculty member with Stockton’s cannabis studies minor.

He joined Jamie Hoffman, who runs a cannabis-infused edibles company in Seattle, and Susan Dupej of the Social Studies and Humanities Research Council of Canada on the panel. Canada legalized cannabis in 2018, the first G20 nation to legalize at the federal level.

The discussion was presented by

the Cannabis & Hemp Research Initiative at Stockton. CHRIS provides cannabis and hemp education, research and resources for local and national markets.

Dupej discussed a Canadian program that allows cannabis growers to offer tours and sell directly to visitors, similar to vineyard and brewery tasting tours. She said some states in the U.S. are ahead of Canada in offering consumption lounges.

In most instances in which cannabis is legal, it cannot be smoked or consumed in public, and most hotels and rental properties do not allow smoking. That means visitors who want to enjoy their legal weed may have few options.

In New Jersey, plans are to offer consumption lounges. Licensed cannabis sellers will be able to offer lounges, but only if the municipality opts in.

But according to Mejia, only nine communities out of more than 500 in New Jersey have said yes to such lounges. Atlantic City is one of them.

Other recommendations from the panel included making connections between cannabis companies and other tourist-centric services, so that visitors don’t have to drive. Other possibilities included having restaurants offer infused dishes.

For now, New Jersey’s restrictions on edibles remain strict and very limited, although indications are that could be eased once the market is up and functioning.

– pressofatlanticcity.com

“Cannabis cultivation could be elevated as another attractive feature of our landscape.”

– Sanjay Nepal, a co-author of the study.

‘Napa Valley’ of cannabis tourism

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“It is critical that a Canadian perspective on cannabis tourism be developed because currently we are a leading country in the world with federally legalized cannabis tourism for leisure and recreational consumption purposes,” said lead author Susan Dupej of Guelph’s School of Hospitality, Food and Tourism Management.

The researchers believe the study serves as a blueprint for researchers around the world to examine how by legally disassociating cannabis from other illicit drugs, and presenting it as a legitimate tourism option, can both unlock new tourism revenue streams, while advancing social acceptance for domestic users.

“For Canada we believe the success of cannabis consumption tourism, could lead to the cannabis tourism experience as a cultural product,” Nepal said. “Canada is already known for its geography. With the social stigma removed, cannabis cultivation could be elevated as another attractive feature of our landscape, adding another lucrative dimension to our unique international tourist appeal.”

The study was recently published in the journal *Tourism Review International*.

– Univ. of Waterloo via phys.org