

John had perhaps been blinded by the potential of legal marijuana as a motivator for tourism and had not considered the potential conflicts within the existing tourism community when he started his cannabis tour business. But he soon discovered that being associated with a product that, although legal in the state of Colorado, was still considered illegal by Federal standards, posed its own business problems. Furthermore, marijuana use was still seen as anti-family, dangerous and not something that a wholesome vacation would include. He tried to break into the local tourist market by teaming up with the destination management organization that promoted tourism in the area but he was soon met with resistance. Should John continue to pursue the potential target markets for his cannabis tour? How might he navigate the conflicts from within the existing tourism community?

### THE INDUSTRY – CANNABIS TOURISM

Although cannabis tourism was growing, city and state tourism boards still shied away from promoting marijuana as an attraction. Marijuana lounges were against the law, and hotels were quick to provide their no-smoking policies when someone asks about using a marijuana vaporizer in their room or smoking a joint on a hotel balcony (PotGuide.com).

According to the Colorado Pot Guide:

*“Marijuana tourism is a huge industry in Colorado. While more and more hotels and lodging providers are starting to accommodate the cannabis tourism market segment, it is still early enough in the game that many commercial lodging providers are still defining their policies or are hesitant to publicly market themselves as marijuana friendly”* (ColoradoPotGuide.com). As lodging properties struggled with how to accommodate 420 guests, private accommodations were filling the gap.

Although Durango had not seen dramatic growth in cannabis tours, other areas in Colorado had. Cannabis tours were seen as a popular option to gain insight into the industry and get a behind the scenes look into specifics into industry operations. Many tourists who came to Colorado had no information about buying marijuana, or even about consuming it. These tours could be a way to educate the new consumer. Tour companies across the state offered visits to commercial marijuana grow operations, glassblowing demonstrations, recreational dispensary visits and more.

The tour companies all offered unique tours with their own perspective on the cannabis industry in Colorado. Some tour companies primarily focused on group tours in a large limo bus, while others, such as High Up Tours and Transportation, focused on smaller groups or private concierge style services.

### TOURISM IN DURANGO, COLORADO

In 2014, Durango received recognition for several awards. These awards included Top Value Ski Spot in North America by Trip Advisor, Top Ten Western Town by True West Magazine, and were included on the lists for Best Motorcycle Trip and Best U.S. Cycling Town by USA Today’s Reader’s Choice.

There were two visitors’ centers in the area and nearly 150,000 visits from tourists were recorded in 2014 in addition to over 450,000 visits to the tourism website and over 40,000 requests for hard copies of the travel planner. Geographically, Durango had identified that most visitors drive in from the key target markets from other areas of Colorado (Denver, Grand Junction, Colorado Springs), New Mexico (Albuquerque, Farmington, Santa Fe), Texas (Dallas, Houston, Austin, Amarillo, Lubbock), and Arizona (Phoenix, Flagstaff, Sedona). The only origin cities with direct