

## HGTV stars support tourism tax boost

The stars of HGTV's "Home Town" visited the Mississippi Capitol last week 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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## Webinar to discuss cannabis in the tourism industry

Stockton University (Galloway, NJ) is hosting a webinar today (March 15) to discuss opportunities for cannabis and New Jersey's hospitality and tourism industry.

The panel will discuss destination marketing, cannabis agritourism and food and beverage tourism. The

webinar is presented by the university's Cannabis & Hemp Research Initiative at Stockton (CHRIS), and the Lloyd D. Levenson Institute of Gaming, Hospitality, and Tourism at the Stockton University School of Business.

—burlingtoncountytimes.com



## Tourism Ireland hopes to kick up interest

Tourism Ireland is teaming up with Riverdance to promote the island of Ireland as part of the Riverdance 25th Anniversary Tour in the United States and Canada this year.

The tour is set to include over 120 performances in more than 40 cities across North America.

It is the second recent major artistic partnership for the organization. Last month they were the presenting partner for a new IMAX documentary about Ireland produced and distributed by MacGillivray Freeman Films.

The partnership will include

inspirational Ireland video content playing on screen to audiences before each of the performances, reaching approximately 310,000 people. Activity will also include joint publicity promotions in Washington, DC, in March and in Boston in May.

A new video has been created featuring some of the Riverdance cast at some of our iconic locations - including the Cliffs of Moher, the Giant's Causeway and Dublin - which will be shared on Tourism Ireland's social media channels.

– [hospitalityireland.com](http://hospitalityireland.com)

## Urge to travel raises likelihood of vaccination

Wanderlust can be a powerful motivator in people's decision to get vaccinated against COVID-19, a new study from Washington State University says.

People with a strong desire to travel are less likely to express concern about the vaccine's side effects or long-term complications and more likely to say they would get vaccinated, according to a survey of U.S. residents.

"Many people consider travel an essential part of their lifestyle and

a contributor to their sense of well-being," said Dogan Gursoy, Taco Bell Distinguished Professor in Hospitality Business Management at the WSU Carson College of Business.

Gursoy is the lead author on the research published in *Tourism Management*, which also involved Jessica Murray, a WSU doctoral student, and U.K. research collaborators at the University of Portsmouth.

– [eurekalert.org](http://eurekalert.org)

**"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](http://Univ.ofWaterloo.via.phys.org)