

Hawaii High on Drugs Could Affect Tourist Trade

In Some Rural Areas it Creates Serious Crime Problems that Can Involve Tourists

By Carol Forsloff

There's a saying that if you drive to Waianae, Hawaii don't drive too slow or someone will steal your tires. Well, that's no joke these days because people are stealing around there, and other places, to maintain drug habits.

Marijuana is prevalent, with many people having private plants, but ice is the drug of choice in too many places these days. This isn't a toke or two, that people do with a bush on the home lanai. Oh, no. This is serious stuff. I have seen folks yelling while drying out and talking about it later while working as a counselor in the islands, but my worries increased as the drug skyrocketed in use. With homelessness on beaches and hopelessness too, I worry even today far away where I have retired in Louisiana to work as a journalist, as authorities in Hawaii do, about crime and drugs in the tents and on the beaches of the islands that I love.

Because of Hawaii's air and maritime conveyances it is ideally suited to serve as a haven for [illicit drugs](#), and it is. According to the National Drug Intelligence Center most of the drugs brought in there are abused in the islands

The [islands get drugs](#) in six different areas by plane and ship. The drugs are circulated and are part of a major syndicate of dealers and users in all of the islands in the chain. The big problem is ice which has created serious problems in Hawaii making it sometimes called by local authorities the "ice capitol" It is associated with the increase in the crime rate especially with domestic violence, child abuse, theft, and street fights. "Ice" or crystal meth is associated with unemployment and all sorts of social problems. Shipments usually come in by mail from the Southwest.

As the missionaries brought diseases to the islands, the foreigners from off island have brought in drugs. A large percentage of abusers are among the poor and rural people of mixed Hawaiian parentage. This means once again [Hawaiians get involved](#) in ice and end up in jail or unemployed and poor. One in four families on the Waianae Coast where many native Hawaiians live has a family member on ice. Ice abuse has become so bad even a schoolteacher was got caught trafficking in drugs. [The special education teacher](#), whose name wasn't disclosed to the press, was found guilty of dealing in drugs and got a four-year sentence for it.

Hawaii struggles with drug use, and reports declare folks trying to combat it as well, although it is likely to be more difficult to do it as the rate of homelessness and poverty continues to increase.

In the meantime the drug trade, and the fact that the problems have become visible to tourists, makes this a serious issue for Barack Obama's home state of Hawaii.

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Takeaways

- Drug use is prevalent in Hawaii
- Theft is a major crime and used to get drugs
- Tourists are cautioned to guard their possessions and not leave items open in cars or on beaches.