

The Rise of the 'Bud-and-Breakfast'

Consumption-friendly lodging is emerging as a key piece of Michigan's cannabis tourism industry

BY LAUREN WETHINGTON

Cara Jackson (left) and Jess Jackson run the Copper House Detroit "bud-and-breakfast" in the lower level of their red brick house in the historic Bagley neighborhood.

In the lower level of a welcoming red brick home in Detroit's historic Bagley neighborhood, a bright studio apartment gleams with bespoke copper accents. Shimmering veins of the hue run throughout the custom epoxy resin floors; a shiny copper bong and rolling tray sit on the dining table. The space is decorated in chic neutrals with pops of blush and turquoise. A cozy kitchenette suggests bagels and mimosas with friends, while a flower wall and accompanying ring light beckon budding social media stars to snap a selfie.

The space is available for short-term rental as part of Copper House Detroit, a "bud-and-breakfast," or cannabis consumption-friendly bed-and-breakfast. Guests of Copper House are welcome to light up during their stay, whether they choose to bring their own products or place a delivery order from a nearby dispensary. It's a business model that's taken off around the state as local and regional tourists find they have access to an abundance of high-quality cannabis products but few places to use them legally, says John Lipford, a professor at Grand Valley State University who teaches

a first-of-its-kind "Cannabis Regulations and Tourism" course.

"It's so important to have ... a safe space for those who are so inclined to go and use a product, and to do that free of the stigma," Lipford says.

MEETING DEMAND

In a 2021 cannabis traveler survey for which he helped cross-tabulate the data for the Michigan Cannabis Hospitality Industry Growth Organization, Lipford found that respondents ranked staying in cannabis-friendly lodging No. 1 overall among the weed-adjacent activities they'd most like to experience in the future. Growth in the sector has been fast, he says — partially because of the state's current surplus of marijuana products and associated low prices.

"[We have] oversaturation of the market now, and we can't divert the product out of state, so tourism becomes even more important," Lipford says. "We need to find other ways to use cannabis to stimulate revenue within local communities and provide these retailers with other

avenues for revenue."

At Copper House, those avenues include short-term overnight accommodations in addition to original events, classes, and parties, which are curated largely in partnership with other cannabis-friendly creatives in and around Detroit. Co-owner Jess Jackson, who opened Copper House in 2019 with her wife, Cara Jackson, calls this their Copper Creatives Program.

"We currently have 20 creatives on our team who are looking for a platform to build their own brands and host their own experiences," Jackson says. "We partner with them to solicit sponsorships to help pay for those events. We coach them on how to set up, design, and create a user experience, and then we allow them to flourish."

Past events have focused on comedy, fitness, painting, building charcuterie platters, drinking tea, and even learning how to roll a blunt. Guests can bring their own cannabis or order delivery from a nearby dispensary, exemplifying a business strategy Lipford calls the "everything-but-the-weed" experience.



True to Copper House Detroit's name, the metallic color runs throughout the basement "bud-and-breakfast," appearing in everything from the bong and rolling tray on the kitchenette table to the space's custom epoxy resin floors.

"Under the law, because they're a private property owner, [hotels and B&Bs] can permit use, or they can prohibit use completely," he says. But whether properties can provide marijuana products to guests as a complimentary amenity currently exists in a legal gray area — one Lipford says many business owners aren't ready to dabble in just yet.

Instead, offering "everything but the weed" gives owners of cannabis-friendly lodging and event spaces a way to market their properties as 420-friendly while avoiding legal risk. By partnering with local retailers and offering delivery or even transportation service, they make it as easy as possible for guests to use product safely during their experiences without providing said product themselves.

EMBRACING GREEN-ERY

The model looks different in different parts of the state, Lipford says. In northern Michigan, where tourism is largely centered on outdoor recreation, accommodations like Kelsey's Cabin near Thompsonville and Hammerhead Shark Ranch in Gaylord provide lodging as well as access to activities such as hiking, kayaking, fishing, and biking. This infusion of cannabis into outdoor activities is just getting started in Michigan, Lipford says, but it has already proved successful in other parts of the country.

Women's Wellness+ Cannabis
 An Educational Panel honoring Women's History Month
 March 7, 2023 | 6:30pm
 Detroit Foundation Hotel Board Room
 Register Online:
 [QR Code]
 Presented by:
 Copper House
 LIV
 DETROIT FOUNDATION HOTEL

Moderated by Jess Jackson, Copper House Detroit & Principle by Common Citizen

Featuring Anquetre Jamaica Sarfo, Culture

Featuring Bysiah Lee & Ebony Smith, Midwest Cannabis

Featuring Les Rae, LIV Cannabis Company

"In Aspen, for example, which is a huge mecca for skiing, their cannabis sales outpaced alcohol sales a few years ago," Lipford says. "In California, they have individuals who are very well educated on cannabis and strains and the effects, and they will recommend specific strains that go along with hikes."

Individuals who visit and stay at cannabis-friendly lodging may have many different reasons for doing so. Lipford says Michigan still attracts a large number of tourists from nearby states where recreational weed remains illegal, including Indiana and Wisconsin. But Michiganders themselves are



John Lipford

also using these accommodations as a way to enhance the quintessential "Up North" experience.

"It's no coincidence that there are many retailers along [Interstate] 94, 96, [U.S.] 131, [Interstate] 75 — that's all designed for tourists," Lipford says. "As they're on their way Up North to participate in outdoor activities or cultural activities, if they want to add [cannabis] to their journey, or they want to stay somewhere that's

going to be more welcoming than a traditional lodging experience, then we need to have that available for them."

While major hotel brands have largely stayed away from the 420-friendly mar-

ket in Michigan thus far, Lipford says that could change in the near future as cannabis gradually loses its stigma. In a promising move, the Detroit Foundation Hotel recently partnered with Copper House to curate cannabis education events for their guests on hotel property.

Jackson, who hopes to eventually open a consumption-friendly hotel of her own and help others do the same, says she views this new business frontier as a potential avenue to restitution for laws that "have been harmful and problematic towards the Black and brown community."

"The cannabis industry actually has a pathway ... where they're trying to right those wrongs," Jackson says. "And that is very exciting for me because it feels like justice is baked into the industry." ✨



GERI A. JOHNSON, CIC
President

Johnson & Associates Insurance where "Your Security is our Priority"

Securing your business with auto, property, liability, and worker's compensation programs for 40 years.

Johnson & Associates Insurance serves the insurance needs of personal and business concerns in northern Michigan. When you call our office, you'll be greeted by a real person – not a machine.

No two businesses are the same and at Johnson & Associates Insurance we have taken the time to know the products we sell to help you grow your business. Helping you with quality coverage while controlling cost is our goal to a winning insurance program. Make us part of your business team today.

- Dispensaries & Provisioning Centers • Indoor Grow Facilities
- Testing Labs • Infused Products • Extraction Companies

Contact us today, and let us help protect what's important to you.

(231) 938-8940



fax: (231) 946-3535 | web: jaiinsurance.com | email: gjohnson@jaiinsurance.com
3819 North Four Mile Rd., Suite 1 • Traverse City, MI 49686