



Travelling with Medical Cannabis

Protecting Yourself as a Prescription Cannabis Patient

About the Authors

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He holds a BA in Philosophy from Queen's University Belfast, where his interest in drug policy reform first took root, and he is soon undertaking a Master's in Public Policy in London.

Since graduating, he has gained experience across policy research and marketing for a range of cannabis and psychedelic-focused organisations. Luke is passionate about advancing public discourse on psychedelic and cannabis policy and advocates for the fuller recognition of these substances' medicinal potential.



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Adam Windish is CEO of BRITISH CANNABIS , a leading UK cannabis company. He leads the company's strategic direction, focusing on the development of regulated cannabis products and expanding patient access through compliant manufacturing, responsible supply chains, and innovative healthcare solutions.

With over a decade of experience in the cannabis industry, Adam has worked internationally with manufacturers, clinicians, and distribution partners to bring regulated products to both prescription and consumer markets. Earlier in his career he held patient-facing healthcare roles, giving him practical insight into clinical environments and patient needs within the medical cannabis landscape.



Overview

Although the UK legalised medical cannabis in 2018, travelling with it remains complex and uncertain. From varying legal frameworks to inconsistent enforcement, both within the UK and internationally, cannabis medicines are regulated and understood in a multitude of ways, creating a need for careful planning and organisation before travel.

This guide attempts to clarify the planning process, offering practical advice to help patients navigate travel with medical cannabis safely and confidently.

General Considerations

Sufficient Medication

Before travelling, an often-overlooked step is ensuring that you have enough medication for your trip. For short trips, the medical cannabis needed may simply be the remaining cannabis you have available. However, for longer trips, a medical review may be necessary to ensure that you receive a prescription commensurate with the full length of your trip.

Medical cannabis should always be kept in its original pharmacy packaging, in the same way as any other prescribed medicine.

Preparing Paperwork

A key part of organising medical cannabis for travel is ensuring that you have all relevant paperwork available. Bringing a hard copy of your prescription is critical, while carrying hard copies of details of your prescribing clinic (and your medical cannabis card, if applicable) are also useful. Your prescribing clinic may additionally be able to produce a travel letter or certificate. If provided, ensure that the clinic's information, your personal details, and the prescribed quantity are clearly listed.

Travel Within the UK

Travelling within the UK should not present significant legal difficulty, as medical cannabis is lawful throughout mainland Britain, Northern Ireland, and the Crown Dependencies when prescribed.

However, understanding of medical cannabis law can vary between police forces, transport operators, and venues. There are many documented instances of patients being questioned due to misunderstanding of the law, making preparation essential when travelling.

Flying

Patients may lawfully fly within the UK, including to Northern Ireland and the Crown Dependencies, with prescribed medical cannabis.

Prescription medication, including medical cannabis, should always be carried on the person or in hand luggage and never placed in checked baggage. This ensures accessibility during travel, avoids loss or delay, and allows patients to respond promptly if verification is requested.

Airport security is primarily responsible for identifying security risks, but they may refer suspected drug possession to airport police. Patients are under no obligation to proactively disclose their prescription when passing through security. If asked, patients should calmly provide their prescription and supporting documentation. If an officer is unfamiliar with medical cannabis law, patients may request that a supervisor be consulted.

Patients are strongly advised to contact their airline in advance to confirm its policy on carrying prescribed medical cannabis. Written confirmation is recommended where possible. While pilots have operational authority over aircraft safety, this does not override the lawful possession of prescribed medication. Any restriction imposed by airline staff is a matter of airline policy rather than criminal law.

Driving

The CIC has developed separate guidance on driving with medical cannabis. Please see the CIC website for more details.

Trains, Buses, and Public Transport

It is lawful to possess prescribed medical cannabis on public transport in the UK when carried in original packaging with appropriate documentation.

Most transport operators prohibit vaping onboard. There is no specific exemption permitting the use of vaporised medicines on public transport, and patients are therefore advised to avoid consumption during journeys except in exceptional medical circumstances.

Private transport operators may have their own policies. Patients are encouraged to review published guidance or contact operators directly before travel.

Police Encounters

Possession of prescribed medical cannabis is lawful. Police may ask patients to verify prescriptions due to cannabis remaining a controlled drug. Patients should remain calm and provide documentation if requested.

Where officers are unfamiliar with medical cannabis law, patients may request a supervisor. Prescribing clinics can also verify patient status if contacted.





Travel to Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland

Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland operates under the same medical cannabis framework as Great Britain. Travelling to Northern Ireland with prescribed medical cannabis is treated in the same way as any other domestic UK travel.

Republic of Ireland

It is unlawful to bring medical cannabis into the Republic of Ireland without explicit authorisation from the Irish authorities. UK medical cannabis prescriptions are not automatically recognised, and Ireland's Medical Cannabis Access Programme is highly restricted and domestic in nature.

Without prior authorisation, prescribed medical cannabis may be confiscated and may result in criminal charges. Patients are strongly advised not to travel to the Republic of Ireland with medical cannabis unless explicit written authorisation has been obtained.

International Travel

Prior to Departure

Patients should research the legal status of medical cannabis in their destination country. Where cannabis medicines are illegal or not recognised, they should not be brought into the country.

Prescription medication, including medical cannabis, should always be carried on the person or in hand luggage and not placed in checked baggage.

Where medical cannabis is permitted, patients should contact the relevant embassy or competent authority in advance to confirm documentation, certification, formulation, and quantity requirements.

Travelling

Arrival procedures vary widely by country. Patients should follow the guidance provided by the destination country's embassy regarding declaration. Some countries expect declaration of controlled medicines; others do not. When in doubt, it is often safer to declare.

Patients should remain prepared to demonstrate lawful possession throughout their stay, including during interactions with local authorities. Any written correspondence from embassies or authorities should be retained.

Returning to the UK

Patients may lawfully return to the UK with prescribed medical cannabis provided the quantity does not exceed a three-month supply.

Carrying more than a three-month supply requires a Home Office licence issued by the Drugs and Firearms Licensing Unit (DFLU).

There is no legal obligation to declare prescribed medical cannabis at the UK border when carried lawfully. However, voluntary declaration may be sensible to avoid delay or misunderstanding if questioned.

Country-Based Guidance

Note: Cannabis laws evolve frequently. The following guidance reflects general positions as of February 2026 and should always be verified before travel.





International Travel

Africa

African cannabis laws vary significantly between countries and are often unclear regarding travellers carrying prescribed medical cannabis. In many countries, cannabis remains strictly prohibited, and possession can result in severe penalties, including imprisonment. Even where domestic medical cannabis programmes exist, these do not necessarily permit visitors to import or possess cannabis medicines.

South Africa

South Africa has a relatively more permissive legal environment. Following the legalisation of medical cannabis in 2018 and the subsequent decriminalisation of private adult use, prescribed medical cannabis may be carried for personal use with appropriate documentation. Travellers should ensure quantities are consistent with personal therapeutic use and are strongly advised to contact the South African embassy ahead of travel to confirm current requirements.

Morocco

Morocco has established a legal framework for medical and industrial cannabis cultivation; however, the law does not clearly define rules for travellers importing prescribed medical cannabis. Patients should contact the Moroccan embassy before travelling to seek confirmation. Where permitted, travellers should carry their prescription, a travel letter from their prescribing clinic, and medication in its original pharmacy packaging. Travellers may be asked to confirm that the medication is for personal medical use, and embassy confirmation is strongly recommended due to the lack of clearly defined traveller import provisions.

International Travel

Asia

Thailand

Many Asian countries impose extremely harsh penalties for cannabis possession. Thailand is a notable exception, with an established medical cannabis framework and legal routes to access cannabis domestically through licensed Thai traditional medicine practitioners or conventional medical specialists where a medical need is identified.

While it is technically possible to obtain authorisation to import medical cannabis into Thailand, the process is complex, subject to change, and can be difficult for visitors to navigate in practice.

As a result, patients are generally advised not to travel to Thailand with medical cannabis. Instead, patients who require cannabis during their stay may find it more practical to access legally available medical cannabis within Thailand under local medical supervision. Despite recent legal changes, cannabis remains widely available in Thailand in practice, though enforcement and regulatory interpretation can vary.

Japan

Japan maintains strict controls in relation to cannabis possession and importation.

Limited hemp-derived cannabinoid products exist under tightly regulated domestic rules. However, foreign medical cannabis prescriptions are not recognised and there is no lawful route for visitors to enter the country with prescribed cannabis medicines. Patients intending to travel should therefore not carry prescribed medical cannabis and should consider lawful alternative treatment options before departure.

South Korea

South Korea maintains strict controls in relation to cannabis possession and importation.

South Korea permits very limited access to certain cannabis-derived pharmaceutical products through tightly controlled domestic arrangements, but foreign prescriptions are not generally recognised and travellers are not permitted to import cannabis-based medicines for personal use. Patients intending to travel should therefore not carry prescribed medical cannabis and should consider lawful alternative treatment options before departure.



International Travel

Middle East

Most Middle Eastern countries enforce zero-tolerance cannabis laws, including for medical cannabis. Foreign medical cannabis prescriptions are not recognised, and there is generally no legal route for visitors to import or possess cannabis, including flower, oils, vape products, or residue. Possession may result in arrest, detention, prosecution, imprisonment, or deportation.

This applies across much of the region, including countries such as Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Egypt, and Jordan. Travellers are strongly advised not to enter or transit through Middle Eastern countries with medical cannabis, unless they have explicit written authorisation from the relevant national authority, which is rarely available to tourists.

Lebanon

Lebanon has legalised cannabis cultivation for medical and industrial purposes under a tightly regulated domestic framework. However, this legalisation is focused on cultivation and export, not patient access. Lebanon does not operate a functional medical cannabis programme for patients, does not recognise foreign medical cannabis prescriptions, and does not permit tourists to import cannabis-based medicines. Despite occasional confusion caused by headlines about legalisation, travellers should not interpret this framework as permission to bring medical cannabis into Lebanon.

Israel

Israel is a notable exception. Israel has a well-established medical cannabis programme, and cannabis use for medical purposes is widely accepted domestically, including smoked, vaporised, and oil-based preparations. Adult possession of small quantities (generally under 15 grams) has been decriminalised.

However, while medical cannabis is legal in Israel, medical cannabis prescriptions are generally only available to Israeli citizens and permanent residents. In practice, visitors are not able to obtain a local medical cannabis prescription. Travellers seeking to enter Israel with prescribed medical cannabis should contact the Israeli Ministry of Health or the Israeli embassy in advance to confirm current entry requirements and documentation, as permission to import medical cannabis is subject to strict controls and may change.



International Travel

Europe

Across Europe, travellers are generally permitted to carry prescribed medicines. However, cannabis-based medicines are treated differently, and rules vary significantly by country, formulation, and route of administration. Some countries permit entry with prescribed cannabis medicines under defined conditions, while others require prior authorisation or specific certification. UK patients, as non-Schengen residents, may face additional requirements compared with travellers from within the EU.

Spain

Spain permits entry with prescribed cannabis medicines only where prior authorisation has been granted by the Spanish medicines regulator (AEMPS). UK patients should assume that THC-containing cannabis medicines require advance permission before travel. Entering Spain without authorisation carries legal risk, even if the medicine is lawfully prescribed in the UK. Patients should contact the Spanish Agency of Medicines and Medical Devices (AEMPS) or the Spanish embassy in advance to confirm requirements.

Turkey

Turkey permits limited cannabis cultivation for industrial and pharmaceutical purposes under strict government control. However, Turkey does not operate a patient medical cannabis access programme, does not recognise foreign medical cannabis prescriptions, and does not provide a lawful import route for visitors. While there are occasional reports of discretionary or inconsistent outcomes at the border, these do not reflect legal acceptance and cannot be relied upon. Travellers are therefore strongly advised not to enter Turkey with medical cannabis.



International Travel



Portugal

Portugal permits travellers to carry prescribed cannabis-based medicines for personal medical use, provided they can demonstrate that the medicine has been lawfully prescribed. Patients should carry their original prescription, a travel letter from their prescribing clinic, and medication in its original pharmacy packaging. These documents are generally sufficient if questioned by customs or law enforcement. While Portugal has a domestic medical cannabis framework, foreign prescriptions may be subject to additional scrutiny and are not automatically treated identically to domestic prescriptions. Travellers should ensure quantities are limited to personal therapeutic use and be prepared to justify possession if asked.



Germany

Germany has a well-established medical cannabis programme and permits entry with prescribed cannabis medicines under defined documentation routes. Requirements differ depending on whether the traveller is arriving from within or outside the Schengen area. UK patients should carry robust documentation and confirm requirements in advance.



France

France allows travellers to carry prescribed cannabis medicines for personal therapeutic use. There is no general requirement to proactively declare medication at the border. However, if French Customs ask, travellers must present the original prescription and supporting medical documentation. Quantities should be consistent with personal therapeutic use, commonly interpreted as up to one month.



Belgium

Belgium permits travellers to carry cannabis-based medicines provided they can justify possession with appropriate documentation. This typically includes a valid prescription and, where applicable, additional certification. Quantities should be limited to personal therapeutic use, and travellers may be questioned if documentation is incomplete.



International Travel

Netherlands

The Netherlands permits travellers to enter with prescribed cannabis-based medicines for personal medical use. UK patients should carry their original prescription, a travel letter from their prescribing clinic, and medication in its original pharmacy packaging. These documents are typically sufficient to demonstrate lawful medical use if questioned by customs or police. While medical cannabis is legal within the Netherlands, travellers must be able to clearly justify possession as prescribed medical treatment. Quantities should be limited to personal medical use, typically interpreted as no more than a one-month supply.

Scandinavia

Sweden, Finland, Norway, and Iceland apply particularly strict drug laws. Foreign medical cannabis prescriptions are rarely recognised, and enforcement is strict, including for travellers in transit. Patients are strongly advised not to travel to or transit through these countries with medical cannabis, as this may result in confiscation, detention, or legal action.

Denmark

Denmark allows travellers to enter with prescribed cannabis medicines for personal use, typically limited to a short treatment period (often interpreted as up to 30 days). Travellers must carry a valid prescription and supporting documentation and should confirm how their specific product is classified before travel.

Greece

Greece operates a regulated domestic medical cannabis framework, and travellers may be permitted to enter the country with prescribed cannabis medicines where appropriate prior authorisation has been obtained.

Prescriptions issued abroad are not automatically recognised, and patients are advised to seek confirmation in advance from the Greek Embassy and, where relevant, the Greek National Organisation for Medicines (EOF).

Travellers should carry a copy of their prescription, a travel letter from their prescribing clinic, and medication in its original pharmacy packaging. Quantities should be limited to personal therapeutic use, and patients should be prepared to present documentation if questioned by customs or law enforcement.



International Travel

Switzerland

Switzerland permits the medical use of cannabis within a regulated domestic framework, and entry with prescribed cannabis medicines may be possible for personal therapeutic use.

Foreign prescriptions are not automatically recognised, and patients intending to travel to Switzerland with medical cannabis are advised to confirm current requirements with the relevant Swiss authorities before departure.

Travellers should carry a copy of their prescription, a travel letter from their prescribing clinic, and medication in its original pharmacy packaging. Quantities should remain consistent with personal medical use, and patients should be prepared to explain the lawful basis for possession if required.

Italy

Italy operates a regulated medical cannabis programme, and travellers may be permitted to enter the country with prescribed cannabis medicines for personal therapeutic use.

However, prescriptions issued abroad are not automatically recognised in all circumstances, and patients are advised to confirm current requirements in advance with the Italian Embassy or relevant health authorities before travelling.

Travellers should carry a copy of their prescription, a travel letter from their prescribing clinic, and medication in its original pharmacy packaging. Quantities should be limited to those consistent with personal medical use, and patients should be prepared to present supporting documentation if questioned by customs or law enforcement.



International Travel

North America

Patients requiring cannabis during their stay should explore lawful local options where available and ensure nothing is carried across the border.

USA

Cannabis remains illegal at the federal level in the United States and cannot be brought into the country.

Canada

Canada also prohibits cross-border transport of cannabis. Travellers should not attempt to enter North America with medical cannabis.

Mexico

Mexico has taken steps towards domestic legalisation of cannabis; however, bringing cannabis into Mexico remains illegal without prior authorisation from the national health authority, COFEPRIS. UK medical cannabis prescriptions are not recognised for import, and there is no practical route for tourists to obtain advance approval. Travellers are strongly advised not to enter Mexico with prescribed medical cannabis, as possession on entry may result in confiscation, detention, or legal action.

South America

South America has a patchwork of cannabis laws. Countries like Uruguay and Colombia have comprehensive legalised medical cannabis programmes. Argentina, Chile, and Brazil also allow limited access to medical cannabis, though primarily CBD-based and tightly regulated through their national health authorities. Despite this progress, bringing medical cannabis into South America as a tourist is difficult. Most countries require advance authorisation or a permit, as UK prescriptions are not recognised.

Bringing medical cannabis without approval could lead to fines, confiscation, or legal trouble, even in countries more open to cannabis. Because of this, you should not travel to South America with medical cannabis unless you have explicit written permission from health authorities in the country you're visiting. Contacting embassies and national agencies ahead of time is essential. If approved, ensure you bring your prescription and governmental authorisation, as well as declare your medical cannabis on entry.



International Travel

Australia

Australia has an established route for travellers bringing prescribed medicinal cannabis into the country under a Traveller's Exemption. Under this exemption, travellers may import up to a three-month supply of prescribed medicinal cannabis for personal use, and may be asked to provide evidence that the quantity does not exceed what is prescribed for that period.

If the medication is intended for vaping, additional traveller limits apply to vaping goods (including limits such as 2 vapes and 20 vape cartridges/capsules/pods, plus limits on vape liquid).

Because interpretation and practical handling can vary by state and territory, patients are strongly advised to contact the relevant state/territory health department for the areas they plan to visit before travelling.

New Zealand

Travellers may bring a medicinal cannabis product into Aotearoa New Zealand if it has been prescribed to them by a registered prescriber, they carry a copy of the prescription or a prescriber letter, keep the product in its original container, and declare it on the passenger arrival card.

Quantity limits apply: travellers may bring no more than a three-month supply of a CBD product, or no more than a one-month supply of any other medicinal cannabis product.

Transit planning remains critical. Some layover destinations (including Singapore) enforce extremely strict cannabis laws, with severe penalties for possession and even harsher penalties for import offences depending on quantity.



Case Studies

Even when patients follow all rules, there are some unfortunate instances in which they're still left powerless. Luckily, these don't happen often, but it's still important to be aware of all possibilities before travelling.

Ultimately, as both of the following case studies show, staying calm and compliant is key to keeping any confrontation from escalating. While this may be hard to do in a stressful situation, answering questions clearly and honestly is the best way to ensure the situation is resolved, even if not in your favour.

November 2024, Jet2 Flight

As reported by Cannabis Health, David Toms, a medical cannabis patient flying from Belfast to Antalya, Turkey, had his medicine confiscated on a Jet2 flight in November 2024. It started just after boarding when Toms asked the cabin crew how he should store his cannabis during the flight.

Soon after, he was escorted to the front of the plane and told by the pilot that legal cannabis doesn't exist and that his prescription wouldn't be allowed on the plane. Airport police then boarded the plane, which delayed the flight greatly. Although the police were aware of the legality of medical cannabis, they said that the pilot had the final decision on whether Toms could travel with his prescription. The pilot refused, forcing Toms to give up his cannabis. As a result, Toms had to endure a painful, weeklong holiday without his medicine.

This case shows two things. Firstly, it shows that it's wise to contact the airline you're travelling with ahead of time to ensure that it's aware of your prescription and can confirm that it's permitted to travel with. This communication, if written, can provide additional proof to airline staff members if an incident arises.

Secondly, this story demonstrates that, often, it's best not to bring up your prescription when you don't have to. Toms had made it through security, providing relevant information when asked, and no longer needed to voluntarily let any staff know about his prescription.

While he should never be at fault for disclosing his medical cannabis prescription, it's sometimes best to keep quiet to avoid unnecessary confrontation. Toms was under no obligation to disclose his medical cannabis to flight attendants and regrets doing so since the incident. At the same time, Jet2 has committed to reviewing their policies on medical cannabis, so, hopefully, patients won't be punished for speaking up going forward.



Case Studies

June 2024, British Airways Flight

Cannabis Health also reported on a British Airways flight from London City Airport to Amsterdam in June 2024, where 5 medical cannabis patients were travelling with their cannabis. Upon noticing a smell of cannabis, flight attendants alerted the pilots, who expressed concern about receiving a contact high, a common misconception.

All five patients were then called to the front of the plane and asked to relinquish their cannabis publicly. The cannabis was subsequently placed in a bag in the hold, to be retrieved at the baggage carousel upon arrival. This action blatantly contradicts traditional guidance, which advises patients to keep medical cannabis in their carry-on for ease during security checkpoints.

This case highlights the importance of contacting your airline ahead of travelling. Providing evidence of prior conversations with British Airways support may have de-escalated the situation greatly. In particular, emphasising the necessity of storing cannabis in a carry-on to airline support ahead of time may have helped airline staff better understand and accommodate the needs of the patients.

December 2023, UK Border Force (Heathrow Terminal 4)

Cannabis Health reported that a patient was stopped by UK Border Force at Heathrow Terminal 4 on 4 December 2023 while travelling with prescribed cannabis-based medication and supporting documentation, despite having checked requirements in advance with the Drugs and Firearms Licensing Unit.

He was held for several hours and his medication was seized; however, a court later found that he had acted lawfully, and UK Border Force was required to return his prescription medication.

Travel Checklist

Travelling with medical cannabis requires preparation, caution, and awareness of differing legal frameworks. Laws that apply domestically do not automatically extend abroad, and enforcement can vary widely. Staying informed and prepared is essential.



Carefully research the legal status in the jurisdictions you are visiting



Speak with the relevant authorities - such as the embassy and airline - in advance



Do not bring prescription cannabis into jurisdictions where illegal or not recognised



Consider obtaining cannabis within jurisdictions where legal, rather than travelling with it



Bring hard copies of your prescription and details of your prescribing clinic



Ask your clinic for a travel letter or certificate to bring alongside other documents



Bring enough medication for your trip, kept in its original packaging



Ensure you don't bring unusually large quantities of your medication



Carry your medication on your person or within hand luggage



Be open and calm when speaking with customs and border officials



Do not return to the UK with more than three months' supply of prescribed medication

Helpful Links

- [UK-Based Embassy List](#)
- [UK Guidance on Travel with Medicine](#)
- [English-Language Medical Certificate](#)
- [Guide to Global Cannabis Laws](#)
- [Cannabis Industry Council](#)

Disclaimer

This guidance is provided for informational purposes only and reflects the current understanding of medical cannabis travel regulations as of February 2026. It is intended for patients, clinicians, and industry stakeholders and does not constitute legal advice.

Laws, policies, and enforcement practices may change or vary between jurisdictions. Patients are advised to seek confirmation from relevant authorities, embassies, airlines, or prescribing clinics before travelling. The Cannabis Industry Council accepts no liability for actions taken based on this guidance and all patients should seek advice from their specialist doctor.

Travel Checklist

This traffic light overview is intended for informational purposes only. Please read the country specific guidance, and speak with relevant authorities before any travel.

Region	Country	Status
Island of Ireland	Northern Ireland	●
Island of Ireland	Republic of Ireland	●
Africa	South Africa	●
	Morocco	●
Asia	Japan	●
	Thailand	●
	South Korea	●
Middle East	Lebanon	●
	Israel	●
Australasia	Australia	●
	New Zealand	●
Europe	Greece	●
	Spain	●
	France	●
	Belgium	●
	Germany	●
	Denmark	●
	Scandinavia	●
	Switzerland	●
	Italy	●
	Netherlands	●
	Portugal	●
	Turkey	●
	North America	USA
Canada		●
Mexico		●
South America	●	

About the CIC

The Cannabis Industry Council (CIC) is a leading membership organisation representing the entire UK cannabis industry. Membership is open to organisations and business which either work within or operate from the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands, and the Isle of Man.

Together, our mission is to lead the industry to success and enable it to speak with one voice – for, and by, the sector.

Learn more



A collective voice for the medical cannabis, CBD, and hemp sector across the UK.

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