# Young men caught with 37 kilos of cannabis at Manchester Airport after Thailand trip



Two young men recently returned from a three-week holiday in Thailand, only to find themselves facing serious legal troubles upon landing at Manchester Airport. Lewis Ellis and James Poutch, both aged 20, had travelled to participate in the vibrant Water Festival. However, their holiday took a drastic turn when customs officials discovered a staggering 37 kilos of cannabis hidden in their luggage. The substantial quantity, cleverly packed in sealed plastic parcels, was revealed when Ellis openly admitted to having cannabis, anticipating that the officials would uncover it during inspection.

Prosecutor Georgia Kennedy-Curnow noted that upon their arrival from Bangkok, via Abu Dhabi, Ellis was initially questioned and promptly disclosed his cannabis possession. Following a search, it was found that Ellis had 19.83 kilos while Poutch's bags contained an additional 17.22 kilos. During their police interviews, however, both men chose to remain silent, leading to a lack of further clarification regarding their actions.

The case underscores the ongoing challenges faced by law enforcement in tackling drug smuggling at UK airports. Both defendants were handed suspended sentences, with a judge chastising their decisions as "naïve and stupid". The defence lawyer, Simon Hustler, pointed out the duo's misguided motivations, suggesting that they had initially intended to enjoy the festivities but were swayed into drug trafficking by unsavoury associations in Thailand.

The plight of Ellis and Poutch is not isolated. Recent data highlights a worrying trend in drug-related offences at UK airports, particularly concerning cannabis. The National Crime Agency has reported a significant rise in cannabis seizures—tripling in volume compared to the previous year. In 2024 alone, approximately 15 tonnes were confiscated, as organised crime syndicates capitalise on the burgeoning legal cannabis markets in countries such as the USA, Canada, and Thailand. This illicit trade often involves recruiting unsuspecting couriers who, like Ellis and Poutch, may be drawn in under the premise of leisure.

Similar incidents at Manchester Airport include that of a Spanish national arrested with nearly 160 kilograms of cannabis, demonstrating the scale of the challenge facing authorities. The National Crime Agency's efforts focus on intercepting these operations, underscored by the fact that the maximum penalty for cannabis importation can reach up to 14 years in prison.

In an era where drug laws are becoming increasingly relaxed in certain jurisdictions, the ramifications for individuals attempting to smuggle substances into stricter countries grow increasingly severe. The integration of legalised cannabis abroad not only poses risks for those caught in smuggling attempts but also raises questions about the effectiveness of border control measures in safeguarding public health and safety.

As Lewis Ellis and James Poutch reflect on their decisions, families and communities are left to grapple with the consequences of such reckless actions, shedding light on a grim reality where a quest for enjoyment can lead to disaster.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2062774/boys-holiday-thailand-ended-disaster-when-landed-back-uk-airport)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2062774/boys-holiday-thailand-ended-disaster-when-landed-back-uk-airport), [[2]](https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/spanish-national-jailed-following-large-manchester-airport-cannabis-seizure)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/smugglers-prevented-from-bringing-27-tonnes-of-cannabis-into-the-uk-in-2024), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/article/2024/aug/28/amount-cannabis-seized-uk-airports-triples-national-crime-agency)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://www.gmpcrime.co.uk/city-news-detail/Father-Sentenced-for-Smuggling-Cannabis-into-the-UK-2612), [[5]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cd1q0egz341o)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/article/2024/aug/28/amount-cannabis-seized-uk-airports-triples-national-crime-agency), [[7]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/08/28/legal-cannabis-abroad-blamed-surge-smuggling-uk/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2062774/boys-holiday-thailand-ended-disaster-when-landed-back-uk-airport> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/spanish-national-jailed-following-large-manchester-airport-cannabis-seizure> - In May 2024, Spanish national Fernando Jacobo Mayans Fuster was arrested at Manchester Airport after attempting to smuggle nearly 160 kilograms of cannabis into the UK. The drugs, concealed in eight suitcases, had an estimated street value of £4.8 million. Mayans Fuster was charged with importing class B drugs and subsequently sentenced to 40 months in prison. This case highlights the significant efforts by the National Crime Agency (NCA) and Border Force to combat drug smuggling at UK airports. ([nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk](https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/spanish-national-jailed-following-large-manchester-airport-cannabis-seizure?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.gmpcrime.co.uk/city-news-detail/Father-Sentenced-for-Smuggling-Cannabis-into-the-UK-2612> - In November 2024, Michael Platt, a father of three, was sentenced to two years in prison for attempting to smuggle 24 kilograms of cannabis into the UK from Thailand. Platt was arrested at Manchester Airport after arriving from Phuket, where Border Force officers discovered the drugs concealed in his luggage. The case underscores the risks associated with drug smuggling and the severe legal consequences for those involved. ([gmpcrime.co.uk](https://www.gmpcrime.co.uk/city-news-detail/Father-Sentenced-for-Smuggling-Cannabis-into-the-UK-2612?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/smugglers-prevented-from-bringing-27-tonnes-of-cannabis-into-the-uk-in-2024> - In 2024, the National Crime Agency (NCA) prevented smugglers from bringing nearly 27 tonnes of cannabis into the UK, a significant increase from previous years. The NCA highlighted that organised crime groups exploit legalised cannabis markets in countries like the USA, Canada, and Thailand, recruiting couriers to transport the drug to the UK. The maximum penalty for cannabis importation in the UK is up to 14 years in prison. ([nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk](https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/smugglers-prevented-from-bringing-27-tonnes-of-cannabis-into-the-uk-in-2024?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cd1q0egz341o> - In May 2024, Border Force officers at Manchester Airport discovered eight suitcases containing 158 kilograms of cannabis, valued at around £1 million. The drugs were concealed in 278 packages within the luggage. A 51-year-old Spanish man was arrested and charged with importing class B drugs. This seizure is one of the largest cannabis finds at Manchester Airport in recent years, highlighting ongoing efforts to combat drug smuggling. ([bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cd1q0egz341o?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/article/2024/aug/28/amount-cannabis-seized-uk-airports-triples-national-crime-agency> - The National Crime Agency (NCA) reported a significant increase in cannabis seizures at UK airports, with the amount tripling in less than a year. In 2024, approximately 15 tonnes of cannabis were seized, compared to five tonnes in 2023. The rise is attributed to organised crime groups exploiting legalised cannabis markets abroad and recruiting couriers to transport the drug to the UK. The maximum penalty for cannabis importation in the UK is up to 14 years in prison. ([theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com/society/article/2024/aug/28/amount-cannabis-seized-uk-airports-triples-national-crime-agency?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/08/28/legal-cannabis-abroad-blamed-surge-smuggling-uk/> - The decriminalisation of cannabis overseas has contributed to an exponential rise in the number of passengers smuggling the drug through UK airports in suitcases, according to the National Crime Agency (NCA). The NCA revealed that the amount of marijuana Border Force officers seized at airports had tripled in the past year. Charles Yates, NCA deputy director, said people were 'brazenly' walking through airports with luggage full of cannabis following the relaxing of drug laws in countries such as the US, Canada, and Thailand. ([telegraph.co.uk](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/08/28/legal-cannabis-abroad-blamed-surge-smuggling-uk/?utm_source=openai))