

## 7. Special Accommodations

Cynthia is a freelance travel writer for Mode Magazine, a monthly, well-respected international publication. Her contract with the magazine states that she must pay retail whenever she travels anywhere for them, from hotels and restaurants to airlines and rental cars. She also must arrive at her destination unannounced, so no one knows she is a travel writer. The magazine always reimburses her expenses following the trip, within the pre-established price range, so cost is never an issue for her.

Cynthia never had a problem with this policy before. She understands the magazine's mission statement to their readers concerning travel clearly states that, "The magazine's editors and reporters pay the same prices you do and travel unannounced to ensure that we experience travel the way you do with no special recognition, treatment or obligations. This also ensures that we are free to report our findings honestly, with no conflict of interest or ulterior motives."

For her latest assignment, Cynthia is writing about a weekend in Toronto. She reserves a room at a new hotel there via Expedia's website. She uses her credit card in her married name, as her byline has always been her maiden name, to make it easier to disguise her true identity.

When she is taken to her room, however, it is not the standard double room she requested but rather the penthouse suite--a two bedroom, duplex apartment with a kitchen, three flat screen TV's, a fireplace, Jacuzzi, wet bar, spa bathroom and wrap around terrace overlooking the city, complete with sun chaises. When she inquires why she has been given this luxurious apartment, the desk clerk says it must just be an upgrade given that the room is vacant for the weekend.

With her husband about to meet her here after a two-week business trip abroad, she can think of nothing nicer than surprising him with this pent house suite for their rare weekend away from their three small children. What's more, they have a few friends in town she could have over to the suite for a terrace party.

But she also senses this is not just any normal upgrade and that her cover must have been blown. Technically, her contract requires her to call her editor back in New York, tell him the problem, and basically abort the assignment by leaving the hotel right away, and reserving a room at another, since she will not be able to write about the same

experience her readers might have if she stays at the first hotel. But she is not even certain she can find another hotel worth reviewing with a room available.

### **Study Questions for Special Accommodations**

1. Is it morally acceptable to ignore information that one knows might be relevant to making a decision? Why or why not?
2. Is it morally acceptable for businesses to wine-and-dine their reviewers? Why or why not?
3. How does Cynthia's responsibilities as a journalist compare to her responsibilities as a wife and friend?