

require you to take out a second mortgage, the 200 to 300% markup charged by most hotels can make Apu's Kwik-E-Mart on *The Simpsons* seem like a dollar store by comparison. We're talking \$3 for a can of cola, \$5 for a bag of pretzels, and \$7 or \$8 or \$10 for a tiny, airplane-size bottle of Jack Daniels. Even a simple mixer like orange juice is likely to set you back three or four bucks, and we won't even get into the cost of calling room service at two in the morning and asking them (in a slurred voice, so you have to repeat yourself two or three times) to send up a bottle of almond bitters.

So what's a bone-weary traveler to do? The formula is complex, but it boils down to two main variables: your vacation budget on the one hand, and your expense account on the other.

TRAVELING FOR YOUR COMPANY

Let's get real: there is no corporation on the face of the earth that will reimburse an employee for a \$75 banana daiquiri. Sensibly, the only folks who get compensated for such expenses are the ones who can most afford them, such as CEOs, senior VPs, and chairmen of the board—and if you belong in this select company, your room's minibar probably contains a foldout couch and a complimentary breakfast-in-bed, which puts you way beyond the purview of this book.

Even if you're just an ordinary middle-managing shlub, though, there are ways to make your corporate T&E department work for you. (I'm not saying there are ethical ways, but there are ways.) The key, of course, is how the minibar and other expenses are broken out on your hotel bill.

Imagine yourself slogging back to the office after three days in the Midwest, carrying two bills from two separate hotels. The first one looks like this:

Room rate	\$120
State tax	\$11.75
Incidental expenses	\$145