



Hunters Not Welcome

AS SOON AS the snow starts to melt, I start dreaming about spring turkey season, packing gear, and loading my truck. No other species in the world lends itself as well to a classic hunting road trip. In many states tags are available over-the-counter, and a nonresident tag is darn reasonable. For this reason, multiple buddies and I bounce from state to state, moving across a state line and starting over when a tag is filled. It's a great way to see parts of our great country and get in some fantastic hunting along the way. Every couple of days we grab a hotel, shower, repack gear, and hit the road. Yes, spring turkey hunting represents the quintessential and possibly most doable of all hunting road trips.

But in our current PC culture, traveling, at least overnighting at certain hotels, with firearms has just become a bit more difficult. I have long been a fan of Holiday Inn Express hotels (Stay Smart, right?), so much so that I belong to their InterContinental Hotel Group (IHG) rewards club and choose to stay there whenever I am hunting around the world. In fact, I have stayed in Holiday Inns from Colo-

rado to Cape Town while on hunts. But that is about to stop.

Recently, while on a hunting trip, I logged onto my IHG app and reserved a room. Right before confirmation, a disturbing screen popped up: "This hotel does not allow any guns on its premises. This prohibition includes concealed and openly carried handguns."

Shocked and disappointed that a corporation would arbitrarily infringe upon the rights of nearly 20 million hunters and 80 million gun owners, I emailed IHG for clarification. What I learned was that the "no firearm" policy is not an "official" IHG policy but dictated (with every negative connotation of the word) by its individual franchisees. Corporate doublespeak at its best—as this "no guns" policy is obviously aided and abetted by corporate IHG because it comes up on its official app. I might have bought their cop-out excuse had I walked into a Holiday Inn Express and found a handwritten "no guns" notice at the front desk, but since the notification was part of the corporate app, it is a different kettle of fish.

After several email exchanges trying to persuade IHG to use some common sense (Do they think someone intent on harm is not going to bring a gun onto the premises because of a notice on their app? Silly, I know.) and modify its policy to allow legal, responsible gun owners a lodging option, I gave up and booked a week's stay elsewhere.

The last time I checked, the Second Amendment is a civil liberty. Where did we go so wrong that we allow corporations to trample upon our rights, where they would dare not trod upon other civil liberties? Can you imagine the same screen popping up saying, "This hotel doesn't allow blacks, Hispanics, women, homosexuals, Christians, Jews, or Muslims on the premises"? The outrage would be swift and the repercussions permanent—and rightfully so. No corporation would allow such an outrageous travesty; nor would it try to shift the blame onto individual franchisees. But since the Second Amendment was not covered under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, honest hunters and gun owners have had to accept second-class treatment and discrimination.

All we can do is vote with our wallets. If IHG allows (nay, encourages) its franchisees to discriminate against 80 million law-abiding, gun-owning Americans, that's on them. There are plenty of other lodging options available that are not so ignorant and discriminative.

So when you are on the road this spring—or any other time of the year—avoid IHG hotels (Candlewood Suites, Crowne Plaza, Holiday Inn and Holiday Inn Express, Hotel Indigo, Staybridge Suites, and InterContinental) and look for a mom-and-pop place that still has a sign out front that says, "Hunters Welcome." Thank them for their support and understanding that gun ownership by responsible citizens is part of the solution to violence—not the problem.

Mike Schobez