

# The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

## VIP LOUNGE

### Javaad Alipoor on spicy Thai food, crying on planes, and the privilege of working in different places

Javaad Alipoor loves everything about Thailand, from the culture to the food. The English director, artist, and writer also enjoys training at a “properly traditional boxing gym” while in Thailand. Alipoor’s play “Rich Kids: A History of Shopping Malls in Tehran,” which won the 2019 Scotsman Fringe First Award, is part of the 17th annual Under the Radar Festival, which offers digital livestream and streaming-on-demand performances. Boston’s ArtsEmerson is joining other organizations as a global partner of the New York-based Public Theater’s annual festival. Alipoor said his play, which has select live performances through Jan. 10, then again Jan. 14-17, covers a range of topics including entitlement, consumption, and digital technology. “It’s really a show for people who are interested in global politics,” said the 34-year-old Bradford, England, native. “It’s a state-of-the-world play, but to keep it from being too heavy, you also get at least four gags in your hour’s viewing time.” The immersive play, which combines digital theater and a live Instagram feed, is produced by the Javaad Alipoor Company and is a sequel to the award-winning “The Believers Are But Brothers.” Information on Alipoor’s play and others in the festival’s lineup may be found at ArtsEmerson.org. We caught up with Alipoor, who lives in Manchester, England, with his wife, Natalie Diddams, an adjunct college professor who focuses on comedy and feminism, to talk about all things travel.

#### Favorite vacation destination?

Thailand. I have always loved the culture, Muay Thai [Thai boxing], the very particularly history of a country that’s one of only three in Asia and Africa not to have been entirely colonized at one stage or another, the food, Theravada Buddhism. My wife had been [there] on her student travels, but I had never been anywhere that far away from the UK, and she always said I’d love it. In Iranian culture we have this thing called mehrieh, which is sort of like a reverse dowry — where a husband gives a bride something for agreeing to get married — so Natalie got some Baklava, roses, a copy of the Quran, and a trip to Thailand. When my previous show, “The Believers Are But Brothers,” toured to Australia, I went to Bangkok on the way home and got to spend some time training at a properly traditional boxing gym in quite a working class neighborhood, which was awesome. And then my wife came out to meet me and we swapped the Muay Thai for Mai Tai.



#### Favorite food or drink while vacationing?

Thinking about that [vacation] . . . I love super, super hot Thai food. The funny thing is, what with being mixed race, and growing up in a part of the world where the big immigrant population is Pakistani, I’m used to being able to ask for food more authentic and home style — and then being taken seriously! But I suppose, it’s the vagaries of race and what not. In Thailand, I was just read as a “white person” or Farang. So people wouldn’t believe me! In the end I learned enough Thai to be able to say, “Can I have it like you like it, please?” and the always useful “with a ton of chili, please.” I’m also a big fan of Thai rum.

#### Where would you like to travel to but haven’t?

There are all kinds of parts of Iran that I would love to go to but haven’t had the chance. When you grew up as an immigrant with a “home country” to go to, trips back are largely meeting cousins, aunts, and uncles. So though I have been fortunate enough to go to some places, I haven’t been able to really see the heritage of the country. And after all, it’s a heritage that’s really important, both in terms of the history of civilization, but also because as a mixed heritage or mixed race person, what’s amazing about its history is that it is a genuine confluence of peoples; there are palaces and tombs and whatever else from Akkadians, Medes, Arabs, Mongols, and Turks. Iranians are the descendants of all those people, not simply “Persians.” I hope the political situation changes so that not just me, but the

whole world can go and engage with this history, and get a taste of Iran’s legendarily hospitable culture.

#### One item you can’t leave home without when traveling?

To be perfectly honest . . . some sort of a nicotine delivery system and either some resistance bands or a TRX to get a cheeky hotel room workout in.

#### Aisle or window?

Window if you’re going somewhere you’ve never been; aisle generally because you get to move around more.

#### Favorite childhood travel memory?

Three or four times we went to London as a family for a weekend. In those days there were hardly any Iranians outside of London, and we would sometimes go to Kensington and see this weird world of incredibly posh and aristocratic Iranians who had fled the revolution — a very different kind of person to us.

My father came to this country as an exiled revolutionary from a much lower class, basically peasant background, and worked in pizza shops through most of my childhood. But it was genuinely bizarre to go to this place that smelled like you were in Iran. And also to feel that the language you spoke at home, and the food you ate, was something that more than just three or four crazy families did.

#### Guilty pleasure when traveling?

Basically, I didn’t know that altitude can make you emotional, and when I was on the way to Thailand, I was already a bit that way as I had been on tour for five weeks, and hadn’t seen my wife — and was fairly hungover. On the plane I watched the film “Aquaman,” and to be perfectly honest, literally started crying. I was like “in a way aren’t we all Aquaman, struggling to find a place in the sea kingdom . . .” I didn’t even learn my lesson then, and had a bit of a moment on the plane to New York watching the live action remake of “The Lion King.”

#### Best travel tip?

I am privileged to be able to work in different places, and I think that always means you get a slightly different vibe to being a tourist. But I think the best trips are ones where you have something to do that connects you to people aside from the tourist connection. For instance, trying not to get killed in a downtown Bangkok boxing gym. But there are options for everyone, and individual mileage varies, so to speak.

JULIET PENNINGTON

## TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

### I paid twice for my airline tickets. Can I get my money back?

By Christopher Elliott  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

**Q.** Last year, I paid \$1,284 for two tickets from San Francisco to Barcelona. The day before our flight, I tried to print our boarding passes. I could not.

We went to the airport three hours early. Even though I supplied the airline’s agent with the confirmed itinerary, they couldn’t find it. To get on our flight, we paid another \$1,973. It took almost three hours to get us reticketed, and we nearly missed our flight.

Level Airlines won’t refund the \$1,973 because it says we were a “no show” for the flight. How can we possibly be a no-show if we were on the flight? Furthermore, we paid twice for the flight.

I called my credit card company and a representative suggested that I dispute the original purchase. I did, but my credit card sided with the airline. Can you help me get my \$1,973 back?

ELLEN BOELENS,  
Redwood City, Calif.

**A.** Level Airlines, a discount airline run by Iberia, should have had a record of your flight. You purchased your tickets through its site and tried to confirm your reservations online a day before your departure. You also arrived at the airport early to try to sort things out. Instead, Level marked you as a “no-show” and then sold you new seats at a \$689 markup. That’s wrong.

You may have found a less expensive fare on another airline, but I think it was wise to rebook on Level Airlines. That way, the airline knew for certain that you paid for your tickets twice. You actually were on your originally scheduled flight, so you

couldn’t have possibly been a “no-show.”

Although your flight took place before the pandemic, you tried to resolve it during the pandemic — and that was the problem. Level Airlines, like every other airline in the world, was overrun with refund requests. Yours was one of hundreds of thousands of them.

As I reviewed your paper trail — good job on keeping that, by the way! — I saw no evidence that you were a “no-show.” This was just an electronic glitch that Level Airlines pinned on you. And it seemed all too happy to let you pay for your ticket twice. That’s how airlines make their money these days. Ridiculous.

You could have appealed this double charge to one of the airline’s executive contacts. I publish the names, numbers, and e-mail addresses of Iberia’s managers on my consumer advocacy site at [www.elliott.org/company-contacts/iberia-airlines](http://www.elliott.org/company-contacts/iberia-airlines).

I contacted Iberia on your behalf several times, but the airline would not refund your ticket. Finally, you contacted the US Department of Transportation and filed a complaint. Iberia refunded your first flight, leaving you to pay the \$689 difference. You’re still happy to have received something back from the airline.

If you need help with a coronavirus-related refund, please contact me. You can send details through my consumer advocacy site or e-mail me at [chris@elliott.org](mailto:chris@elliott.org).

*Christopher Elliott is the chief advocacy officer of Elliott Advocacy, a nonprofit organization that helps consumers resolve their problems. Contact him at [elliott.org/help](http://elliott.org/help) or [chris@elliott.org](mailto:chris@elliott.org).*

## HERE

### CELTIC MUSIC FEST GOES ONLINE

Music venues may be shuttered this winter, but that doesn’t mean you can’t enjoy live performances in the comfort of your home. In addition to streaming open mic nights and concerts by individual artists, Cambridge’s beloved nonprofit music venue Passim is hosting the 18th Boston Celtic Music Fest (BCM Fest), featuring three days of music, song, and dance from Irish, Scottish, Cape Breton and other related traditions followed by two days of music workshops (Jan. 14-18). Performers this year include Matt & Shannon Heaton, Joey Abarta, Hanneke Cassel and Yann Falquet, Katie McNally and Neil Pearlman, Scottish Fish, Jenna Moynihan, and the Atlantic Folk Trio. Suggested donations vary per event, \$15-\$50. Available via the Passim YouTube site; schedule information and workshop registration online. [www.passim.org/bcmfest](http://www.passim.org/bcmfest)

### FINDING LIGHT IN DARKNESS

Post-holiday blues got you down? Lift your spirits with a stroll in the Seaport to view two new sculpture installations created around the theme of finding light in darkness. I’m for You (User Friendly) by Supernormal is on display in the One Seaport courtyard (60 Seaport Blvd.) and WALLESSNESS by Telta is located on Seaport Common. Commissioned by a Design Seaport jury, both of the playful, large-scale interactive installations — made by design teams in the Boston community — visually shift with the activity of their surroundings. Through the influence of light or distance, the works aim to cre-



ate an inclusive connection with the neighborhood, and to represent moments of joy and hope this season. On view now through Feb. 28. Two additional installations created by two other teams will debut in spring. Free. [www.bostonseaport.xyz](http://www.bostonseaport.xyz)

## THERE

### BELIZE BEACH BUNGALOWS DEBUT

When your travel-comfort-meter reads “go,” Belize is open and ready to receive international travelers. Perfect for coastal-social distancing, 12 new one- and two-bedroom Caribbean beachfront bungalows at Sirenian Bay Resort & Villas offer ocean or pool views, sleep up to six guests, and feature private porches or balconies and outdoor showers. Located in Placencia, at the southern tip of an emerald peninsula in southern Belize, the family-owned all-inclusive boutique resort can be a jumping off point for local adventures



(jungle ziplines, diving, snorkeling, fly fishing, and more) or enjoyed by simply relaxing by the pool, The Siren’s Spa, and dining with a tropical drink (and mini-golf!) at Inky’s 19th Hole Restaurant. In addition, the resort has three villas ideal for multigenerational families, large groups, and wedding parties. Stay updated with Belize international entry requirements here: [belizetourism-board.org/belize-covid-19-update-for-](http://belizetourism-board.org/belize-covid-19-update-for-)

travellers. Room rates from \$325/night for one-bedroom bungalow. [sirenianbay.com](http://sirenianbay.com)

### JUST SAY “OM”

To alleviate stress during these challenging times, embrace your inner “om” with an online session of wellbeing services from the experts at the luxury destination spa, Ananda in the Himalayas. Choose from six new programs including daily-to-monthly subscriptions for personalized and group yoga and meditation classes with experienced teachers; and comprehensive packages offering video consultations with Ayurvedic doctors and online physiotherapy sessions. Once safe travel resumes, you can physically journey to the 100-acre property located on a hill overlooking the ancient spiritual city of Rishikesh for in-person pampering. Monthly subscriptions from \$68. [www.anandaspa.com/en/ananda-live/online-well-being-services](http://www.anandaspa.com/en/ananda-live/online-well-being-services)

## EVERYWHERE

### PORTABLE GRILLS AND SMOKELESS FIRE PITS

Camping, RV, and outdoor adventure fans will want to check out the Breco Outpost, a portable grill solution for open-fire cooking at the beach, forest campsite, or wilderness trails. Made of 100-percent stainless steel, the adjustable cooking grate (available in 19- and 24-inch sizes) locks onto the stable Anchor-point, allowing you to prepare tasty wood-fired meals on the go. The Outpost is eas-



ily packable in the included heavy-duty bag, guaranteeing seamless transport. \$119/\$189. Staying home and entertaining outside? Backyard chefs can choose from a selection of smokeless fire pits. From \$399. 800-413-9848, [breco.co/products/breco-outpost-19](http://breco.co/products/breco-outpost-19)

### FLY FISHING FOR HEALTH

Getting out in nature is a known way to soothe our city-frazzled souls. Now a Colorado organization is taking the link between mental health and outdoor activity a step further. Specifically targeting men, the nonprofit corporation Fishing the Good Fight leverages the therapeutic benefits of fly fishing to support men’s mental health by donating 100 percent of its products’ proceeds to organizations offering counseling and mental health services. All flies — including scuds, midges, mayflies, stoneflies, and more — are hand-tied, and use the highest quality materials, starting with Tiemco hooks. Every fly is inspected before shipment. Additional fishing gear includes caps, tees, fly cups, and more. [www.fishingthegoodfight.org](http://www.fishingthegoodfight.org)

NECEE REGIS