

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER



ADOBE

Iceland Car Rental charged my card, and my refund is frozen

By Christopher Elliott

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Q. I'm trying to get a full refund from Iceland Car Rental for our trip to Iceland in August 2020 that was canceled because of COVID-19. At the time we booked the rental, in March 2020, they offered a "100 percent money back" guarantee. We notified them to cancel our reservation as soon as our flight was canceled, in July 2020. Can you help me get my \$545 back?

KRISTEN NELSON, *Minnetonka, Minn.*

A. This shouldn't have happened. Most car rental companies don't charge you until you pick up your car. I reviewed the terms of your agreement with Iceland Car Rental, and it works a little differently. If you cancel your reservation up to two days before your pickup date, you get a "100 percent refund." If you're within the 48-hour cancellation window, they'll charge you for your rental.

You canceled before two days, so you should have received your money back. So why didn't you?

An Iceland Car Rental representative tried to explain it in an e-mail to you. "The coronavirus outbreak has resulted in thousands of cancellations," he explained. "This means that a lot of people have applied for refunds — including you. Each refund application is handled individually. And with the great amount of cases that we're currently processing,

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the waiting time is currently too long."

But after you asked how long it might be, you got a different answer.

"As is the case for many tourism related companies around the world, the future of our company has been secured throughout this difficult period with a survival agreement with our bank," the company noted. "However, the financial restructuring of the company could not include the refunds of outstanding reservations for the foreseeable future; therefore, we will not be able to refund your booking."

This appears to be a different argument. The car rental company was restructuring, which means the old company — the one with which you had the reservation — technically no longer exists. The new Iceland Car Rental apparently didn't feel it had to honor some of the obligations of the old company.

But the Iceland Car Rental you were dealing with shouldn't have charged your card in the first place. I think you would have had a legitimate case for a credit card dispute, had it come to that.

It didn't. I contacted Iceland Car Rental on your behalf, and it issued a full refund.

Christopher Elliott is the chief advocacy officer of Elliott Advocacy, a nonprofit organization that helps consumers resolve their problems. Elliott's latest book is "How to Be the World's Smartest Traveler" (National Geographic). Contact him at elliott.org/help or chris@elliott.org.

THE VIP LOUNGE

Italy is a cut above for this hairstylist to the stars

Jana Rago, owner of Jana Rago Studios on Newbury Street, has styled hair for everyone from models Gigi Hadid to Kendall Jenner to Emily Ratajkowski and is a regular at the New York, Paris, and Milan fashion weeks. Rago also takes care of the locks of local celebrities and those who are in town filming movies, pilots, commercials, etc. But ask Rago, 40, to divulge their names, and mum's the word since discretion, she said, is one of the secrets to her success. "We keep everything very private," she said, adding that she and her fellow stylists also make the salon "a very homey environment so everyone feels comfortable." The New Hampshire native, who was raised in the Lakes Region, worked for Acote Salon on Newbury Street for 20 years before opening her business three years ago. And while owning her own salon and traveling for fashion shows and other events keeps Rago busy, when she can travel for pleasure, it is Italy that calls her name. We caught up with Rago, who lives in the Seaport District with her boyfriend, Brad Satz, an entrepreneur, and their nearly 3-year-old red lab, Lukie, to talk about all things travel.

Favorite vacation destination? Italy because I get to immerse myself into the culture and feel closer to my heritage. I love Sorrento on the Amalfi Coast. It's three hours from where my dad's from and it feels like home.

Favorite food or drink while vacationing? Stuffed zucchini flowers, stuffed artichokes, or frutti di mare. Honestly, any kind of seafood from the coast of Italy. I love to pair the local wines with different dishes.

Where would you like to travel to but haven't? I would love to travel to Thailand to volunteer at an elephant sanctuary. They are my favorite animals and I would love to do something positive for them.



Jana Rago and her boyfriend, Brad Satz, on Lake Como in Italy in August 2020.

One item you can't leave home without when traveling? Sk2 hydrating cream and the R=CO Skyline dry shampoo. Those are essential to my day-to-day routine, but especially while traveling.

Aisle or window? Window because I don't necessarily love to fly, but it makes it easier when I get to take in the views.

Favorite childhood travel memory? I had the opportunity 20 years ago to go to Rome, Italy, with my father, who grew up there, and compete in an international hair competition. It was really special to

share that experience with him and spend some quality time just the two of us.

Guilty pleasure when traveling? I love to shop in different countries and go into all the little shops and markets. I'm always on the lookout for a snow globe for my twin sister, Lea.

Best travel tip? Pack light because you almost always find new clothes or accessories while you are there.

JULIET PENNINGTON



HERE

MAINE FESTIVAL CELEBRATES WINTER

Break free from winter doldrums in Portland at the second annual Carnival Maine 2022, Fire and Ice (Feb. 17-26). This 10-day extravaganza features live music, art installations, light shows, rail jam competition by Sunday River, Fire and Ice Gala, ice and snow sculptures, food trucks, and fan-favorite Bites and Brews, where award-winning chefs and craft brewers collaborate on made-in-Maine pairings. Kid-friendly activities include a fun zone with activities including a snowshoe obstacle course, bean boot toss, face painting, and more. In the evening, popular regional and national bands turn up the volume for adults. Proof of vaccination or negative rapid test results required for entry. General admission from \$15; Bites & Brews (21+ only) \$65; Fire and Ice Gala (a benefit for WinterKids) \$100. www.carnavalme.com

LIFESTYLES OF THE RICH AND GILDED

Fans of HBO's new period drama "The Gilded Age" who want to visit some actual locations where scenes were filmed last year should plan a trip to Newport Mansions. While set primarily in New York City, a number of The Preservation Society of Newport County's historic house museums were included in the drama, including the opulent interiors and exteriors of The Breakers, Marble House, The Elms, Rosecliff, Chateau-sur-Mer and Hunter House. Engaging audio tours in The Breakers are designed to bring to life the stories of people who lived and worked in what were the "summer cottages" of a new wealthy class of people with names like Vanderbilt, Morgan, Ford, Carnegie, and Rocke-

ller. Breakers tickets: adult \$25; youth ages 6-17 \$8. 401-847-1000, www.newportmansions.org/gilded-age

THERE

HONORING BLACK HISTORY AND CIVIL RIGHTS

Celebrate Black History Month with a trip to Memphis, a city where Black history can be experienced in historical sites, museums, recording studios packed with music history, and more. Not to be missed is The National Civil Rights Museum, created to share the cultures and lessons from the American Civil Rights Movement through artifacts, films, oral histories and interactive media. A special exhibit, "Outside the Lorraine: A Photographic Journey to a Sacred Place," showcases more than 90 photos by the artist David Katzenstein. (The title references the historic Lorraine Hotel where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in 1968.) On display through April



4 (www.civilrightsmuseum.org). Stylish accommodations in Memphis can be found at the centrally located Hu. Hotel, with 110 rooms and lively rooftop bar offering craft cocktails and sweeping view of the Mighty Lights Show over the Mississippi River. Rates from \$135. 901-333-1200, huhotelmemphis.com

PLAN AHEAD FOR ARCHES NATIONAL PARK VISIT

Those planning to visit Arches National Park in Moab, Utah, this year will have to navigate new admission protocols designed to relieve overcrowding, including a timed-entry program (running from April 3 to Oct. 3) that opens three months in advance. For example, visitors who hope to go to the park in May will need to reserve a slot in February. A small number of last-minute tickets will be available every day for the following day. For reservations, visit www.recreation.gov/timed-entry/10088426. Another strategy is to leave the car behind and visit the park under the guidance of a professional tour operator. The timed-entry program does not apply to those who have concessions contracts such as Moab Adventure Center, a tour company offering daily morning and sunset discovery adventures. Adults \$91; ages 5-12 \$81. 866-904-1163, www.moabadventurecenter.com/arches-national-park

SACRED PILGRIM TRAIL REOPENS

If visiting Bhutan is on your bucket list, a new opportunity debuts in April when international tourists will be able to walk the historic and sacred Trans Bhutan Trail for the first time in 60 years. Following two years of extensive restoration, the Kingdom of Bhutan will open the ancient route for

tourism and adventure while simultaneously providing much-needed economic benefits to rural communities along the way. Tourism company G Adventures has been selected by the Bhutan Canada Foundation, the nonprofit that led the restoration of the trail, to be the first group adventure operator. Two active trekking itineraries can now be booked, an 11-day Camp the Trans Bhutan Trail trip, which features camping and homestays, and a 12-day Highlights of the Trans Bhutan Trail itinerary with accommodation in homestays, locally-owned guest houses and hotels. From \$3,149. 800-676-6230, www.gadventures.com/search/?destinations=Bhutan

EVERYWHERE



LET THERE BE LIGHT

Frequent travelers will want to check out LumiCharge LD, a compact four-in-one voice-controlled lamp, universal phone dock, and Bluetooth speaker. Weighing less than two pounds, it is easy to tuck into your suitcase with other necessary travel gear. The lamp has a cradle for fast wireless charging, and USB plug in the back to charge two phones at once. LED light colors and brightness can be controlled with any voice-assistant device or mobile app. Take a call or listen to music with the built-in Bluetooth speaker. Optional rechargeable battery allows you to make your music and light outdoors, making it a perfect camping accessory. \$45. thelumicharge.com/products/lumicharge-ld-desk-lamp-wireless-speaker-voice-controlled-led-and-phone-charger

NECEE REGIS