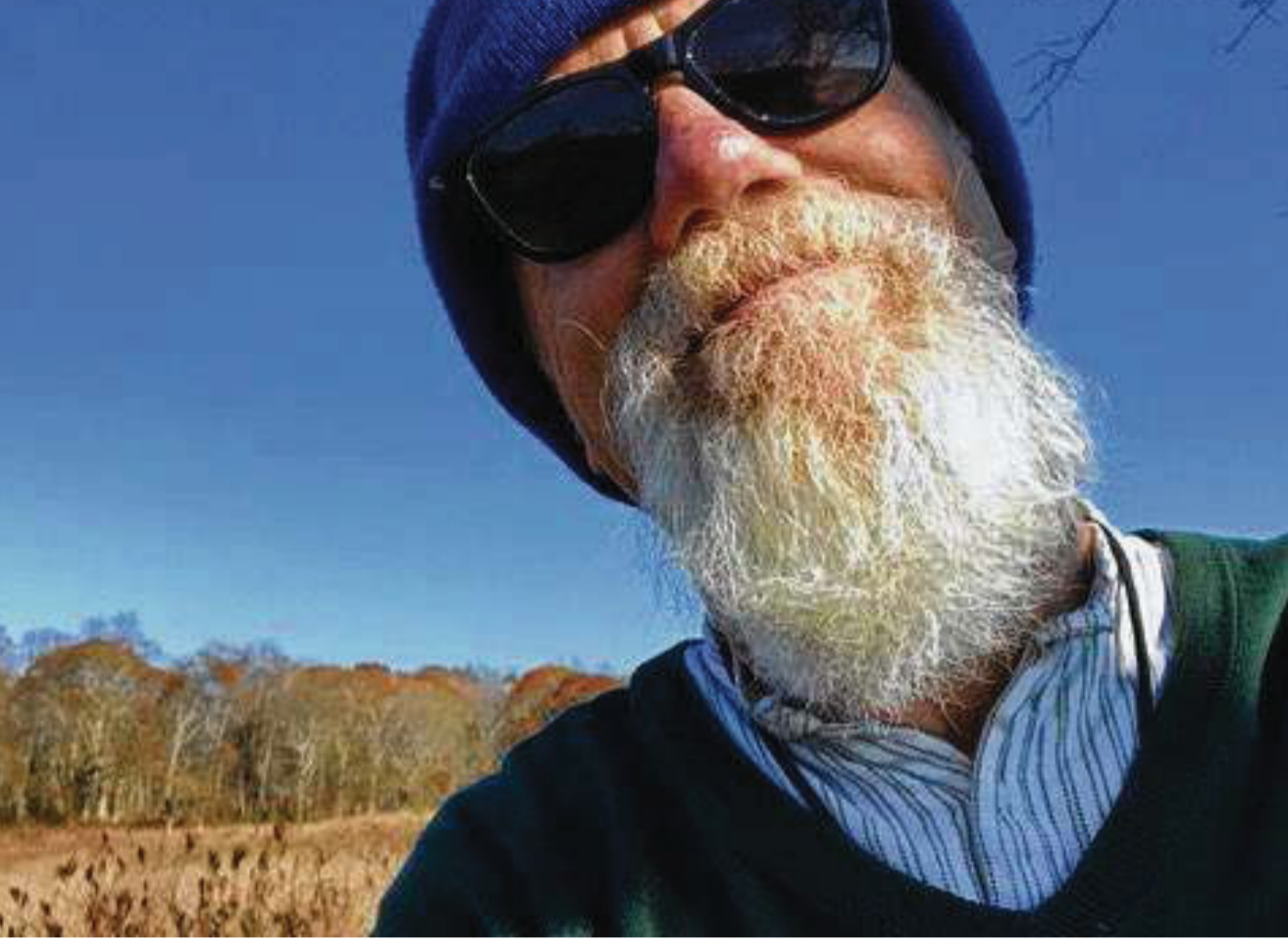


The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

Loudon Wainwright III is full of meds and memories



Folk singer-songwriter Loudon Wainwright III has spent much of his auspicious career touring, so staying put at his home on Shelter Island, off the coast of eastern Long Island, for the better part of the past year has been a treat. And while he hasn't been able to tour, Wainwright has been busy making music and, more recently, organizing a benefit in memory of his best friend, fellow musician (and actor) George Gerdes, who died Jan. 1. The event, which will be streamed live (in partnership with City Winery and Mandolin; visit www.citywinery.com/boston for tickets and information) will be held on Feb. 23, with proceeds going to Gerdes's partner, Judy Johns. In addition to Wainwright, performers — many of whom will sing Gerdes's songs — include Richard Thompson, Suzanne Vega, and Steve Forbert.

THE VIP LOUNGE

"George was a wonderful songwriter. I'm a huge fan of his work [which] was, in my opinion, underappreciated," said Wainwright. "Many other people feel the same way, including some of the people who are in this show, so we're going to honor his music, really. That's what it's all about." Wainwright, 74, was born in Chapel Hill, N.C., raised in Bedford Village, N.Y., and now lives with his girlfriend, Susan Morrison — articles editor at *The New Yorker* magazine — on Shelter Island. We caught up with the father of four (and grandfather of three), to talk about all things travel.

Favorite vacation destination?

Actually, due to the pandemic, I've been living for the last nine months in my favorite vacation destination, which is my

summer place, way out on eastern Long Island. Instead of barbecuing, we now eat pizza huddled around the fire pit.

Favorite food or drink while vacationing?

Pizza, olives, and vodka.

Where would you like to travel to but haven't?

Due to work, I've traveled so much in the last half century that there aren't many locations left on my travel bucket list. Guam? Just because it's there and I like the sound of the word.

One item you can't leave home without when traveling?

My meds — for a description, Google my song "My Meds."

Aisle or window?

The window's safer for older guys these days, but I prefer the aisle — easier toilet access.

Favorite childhood travel memory?

In 1956, my brother, sister, and I traveled with our mom on the Sante Fe Super Chief [passenger train] from LA to New York. I have a memory of seeing coyotes whizzing by from my lower berth window as we roared through the Southwest late at night.

Guilty pleasure when traveling?

Because I usually travel to work and I work at night, my afternoon siesta is essential. To quote myself: "No nap, I'm crap."

Best travel tip?

Leave early.

JULIET PENNINGTON

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

Alitalia says his ticket is refundable — so why isn't it?

By Christopher Elliott
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Q. I booked a flight from Cairo to New York via Rome on Alitalia. When I tried to check in for my flight to Italy, an airline representative denied me boarding, because my visa was rejected. My visa doesn't allow me to enter Europe en route to the United States, according to Alitalia.

Fortunately, my ticket was refundable. I sent an e-mail to Alitalia before the flight departed, requesting a refund. I enclosed the ticket receipt, which shows that the ticket is refundable, as long as I cancel before departure, and is subject to fees.

Alitalia replied that my ticket had "no value," and it denied a refund. Instead, it offered me a ticket credit and a refund of the taxes. They've stopped answering my e-mails. I've also called them, but I've gotten nowhere. Can you help me get my \$700 back, please?

AHMED SELOMA,
Giza, Egypt

A. If your airline ticket was refundable, you should be able to get a full refund. Unfortunately, airlines have taken their time during the

Department of State site at <https://travel.state.gov>. Also, visit the International Air Transport Association site at www.iatatravelcentre.com, which keeps the most up-to-date visa information.

You kept a great paper trail of the correspondence between you and Alitalia. It would have been good if you also sent the information to an executive contact at the airline, asking for their assistance. I list the names, numbers and e-mail addresses of all the Alitalia managers on my consumer advocacy site at www.elliott.org/company-contacts/alitalia.

Looking at your case, I think part of the delay was related to COVID-19. Another part was just normal airline shenanigans. Alitalia appears to have misread the terms of your ticket, falsely claiming that they owe you a ticket credit. By the way, if they'd persisted, you could have filed a credit card chargeback. In the United States, the Fair Credit Billing Act protects you against charges for products or services not delivered, which this certainly was.

Calling Alitalia wouldn't have done you much good. Phone or online chats are great for making a quick change to a reservation or asking a question about an upcoming flight, but not for refunds. You're better off keeping everything in writing.

I contacted Alitalia on your behalf. It issued a \$700 refund.

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.

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

Passports and visas are your responsibility, not your airline's.

pandemic. They were slow before, and they're even slower now.

Your case is instructive for anyone planning an international trip in 2021. Passports and visas are your responsibility, not your airline's. Had Alitalia allowed you to board your flight with the wrong visa, it could have faced government fines. So make sure you have permission to enter the country before you book your ticket.

What paperwork do you need? If you live in the United States, check the US

HERE

POP-UP IGLOOS WARM WINTER NIGHTS

Chilly nights just got a whole lot warmer at the Ocean Edge Resort & Golf Club on Cape Cod. Now through the end of March, the resort has converted its Ocean Terrace restaurant into Frost Bar, a pop-up winter wonderland dining and imbibing experience with choice of indoor or outdoor seating. The outdoor deck is the star of the show with geometric igloos for private dining for up to six guests that feature cozy blankets, heater, string lights, and specialty cocktail and dining menus. (Hot cocoa martinis, anyone?) Concurrent with the pop-up, the resort has created a First Frost accommodations package with 10 percent off one night or 20-percent off two nights in a Mansion Wing guestroom; \$150 food and beverage credit for an igloo experience; and access to complimentary winter programming. Make sure to confirm igloo availability prior to booking. Rates from \$314. 508-896-9000, www.oceanedge.com/frost

CAR RENTALS DELIVERED TO YOUR DOOR

Spontaneous trips to Portland, Maine, or Portsmouth, N.H., Providence or Provincetown just got easier with Kyte, a door-to-door, app-based car rental company that recently debuted in Boston. Clients can book their rental on Kyte's app or through its online portal. Simply report where you are and the date you want to drive, and the company will deliver your car within two hours. After your adventure, they will pick the vehicle up at a location of your



choice. No need to refuel before returning; the company does that as well — at local rates. Users are charged daily with discounts offered for weekly or monthly rentals. Extra sanitizing measures follow CDC guidelines, including the option to sign directly on your phone for a contact-free experience. www.drivekyte.com

THERE

CLUB MED TO DEBUT FIRST CANADIAN RESORT

In anticipation of next winter's ski season, the all-inclusive resort brand Club Med announces the opening of its first Canadian outpost, Club Med Quebec Charlevoix, in December 2021. Bringing its ski expertise from Club Med's Alpine resorts to Canada's Le Massif de Charlevoix, the all-season, ski-in ski-out resort features 302 rooms and an exclusive collection of 25 five-star suites. Situated 90 minutes from Quebec Airport, the low-density resort's low-rise buildings spread out across 50-plus acres, leaving plenty of space for guests to roam freely and comfortably. Amenities include all-day gourmet dining; ski and snowboard passes and classes; snowshoe and Nordic walking, ice skating, yoga, medita-

tion; à la carte well-being experiences inspired by Nordic spas; a 75-foot-long heated pool boasting a magnificent view of the St. Lawrence River; and more. Rates from \$182 per night per adult. 888-932-2582, www.clubmed.us/r/Quebec-Charlevoix/w

DREAM BIG AND PLAN FOR FUTURE CRUISING

If you're stuck at home yearning for grand adventures, you're not alone. Oceania Cruises, a culinary and destination-focused cruise line, is offering an antidote to despair with the release of its 2022 Europe & North America Collection. Dream big while perusing the complete collection of 110 itineraries, featuring 77 brand-new offerings including 10 new ports, and celebrate the idea of future travel while ogling a kaleidoscope of curated experiences at more than 250 ports of call throughout Northern and Western Europe, Iceland, Greenland, the Mediterranean, Greek Isles, Holy Lands, Alaska, Canada, New England, Bermuda, South America, and the Caribbean. Take advantage of even more value in this collection with 2-for-1 cruise fares and free Internet as well as the OLife Choice package that includes free airport transfers with free

round-trip airfare and amenity. 855-623-2642, www.oceaniacruises.com/europe-and-north-america-cruises

DECO REVIVAL IN WEST TEXAS

Fun fact: During Elizabeth Taylor's brief marriage to Conrad "Nicky" Hilton, she used the 17th floor of his 1930s-era El Paso hotel as her penthouse suite. Today, the entire landmark property — The Plaza Hotel Pioneer Park — has undergone a complete renewal inspired by its Pueblo Revival Art Deco architectural style, and the dramatic scenery West Texas. All 130 rooms and suites feature channel-tufted headboards and Matouk linens in a soothing desert palette; and spa-like bathrooms sport marble, brushed metal, and custom-textured wall tiles. Additional innovations include Ámbar Restaurant and its complementary bar; more than 7,000 square feet of event space; and La Perla, a rooftop bar and lounge (named after Taylor's famed pearl!) offering sweeping views of Mexico, New Mexico, and the rugged peaks of the Franklin Mountains in Texas. Rates from \$209. 915-440-7666, www.plazahotel Paso.com

EVERYWHERE

ESSENTIAL TRAVEL ITEM FOR 2021

Whether you're planning to board a plane or run errands in town, PlaneAire's expanding line of hand sanitizing sprays and gels will help you safely navigate the pandemic. In addition to killing 99.9 percent of most common germs, the 10 creative blended scents evoke tasty sensations (including cardamom-lavender, lemongrass-rosemary, tangerine-coriander) while keeping



hands soft with aloe vera and organic essential oils. The newest and most popular blend, sandalwood, is scented with notes of leather, musk, spice, cedarwood, smoke, and cardamom crafted with a blend of safflower oil, green tea extract, and glycerin and inner leaf aloe vera. When you're ready to fly again, the handy two-ounce dispenser is TSA friendly, as well as compliant with FDA regulations and CDC guidelines. \$6.99-\$7.99. planeaire.com

NECEE REGIS