

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

I paid extra to get to my cruise. Why can't I get reimbursed?

By Christopher Elliott
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Q. I recently took a Western Mediterranean cruise with my family, which included flight arrangements made through NCL. On the morning before our scheduled departure, we tried to check in online, but the first leg of our flight was not showing up on the Delta Air Lines app.

We contacted the NCL air department, and a representative said they needed to reissue the outbound tickets and send us new air confirmations. She told me to go to the airport in the morning and resolve the situation at the Delta check-in desk.

When I arrived at the airport, the agent could not find our reservation. At this point, Delta only had four seats remaining on the flight, so I purchased the tickets to avoid missing the rest of the flight and the cruise.

I have asked NCL to reimburse us for the \$1,796 we had to spend. NCL asked us to file a claim with AON, the travel insurance we had purchased through NCL, but AON has turned down our claim. We've also disputed the charge on our credit card, but lost.

At this point, we have exhausted all of our known options in resolving this case ourselves. We would be very grateful if you would consider mediating on our behalf.

ELAINE SIMMONS,
Walnut Creek, Calif.

A. NCL should have given you valid airline tickets. If there was a last-minute glitch, it should have taken care of you instead of sending you to the airport to negotiate with Delta.

My advocacy team and I have been getting quite a few complaints about

NCL should have given you valid airline tickets.

airline tickets booked through a cruise line. They look a lot like yours. There's a ticketing glitch, and passengers have to buy new tickets to get to their cruise or to get home. The cruise line refuses to cover the extra costs, pointing to the strict terms and conditions on its site.

In your case, there were also some crossed wires. As I reviewed the correspondence between you, the cruise line, and the travel insurance company, it's clear there was a misunderstanding of what happened and who was responsible.

NCL was acting as your travel adviser when it booked your tickets, so it is responsible for ensuring that the tickets actually get booked. And when it fails, it needs to find a way to get you to your destination at its expense. Again, leaving you to fend for yourself at the airport is not my idea of excellent customer service.

But should you have booked tickets on your own? If you hadn't, you probably would have missed the start of your cruise. NCL would have attempted to rebook you on a flight that would have allowed you to catch up to your cruise at the next port of call. This is an inelegant solution and cuts your cruise shorter, but you wouldn't have incurred out-of-pocket expenses.

It looks like you tried to contact one of the NCL executives I list on my consumer advocacy site, Elliott.org. You also reached out to your credit card company for help. Your card's dispute department would have tried to help you instead of simply denying your claim.

You reached out to my advocacy team. I contacted NCL on your behalf. NCL then contacted you, asked you for receipts for the additional flights, and worked with Delta to reimburse you for the extra flights. "We are very grateful to you and your staff for the advocacy work you do," you said. "You get results!"

Christopher Elliott is the founder of Elliott Advocacy (elliottadvocacy.org), a nonprofit organization that helps consumers solve their problems. Email him at chris@elliott.org or get help by contacting him at elliottadvocacy.org/help.

THE VIP LOUNGE

Actor Jim Ortlieb

on escaping his phone and living every day like it's vacation

Film, TV, and stage actor Jim Ortlieb has received rave reviews in John Kolvenbach's "Stand Up If You're Here Tonight," a play in which he has starred for 2½ years. There has been such a strong audience demand that its current run at the Huntington Theatre's 150-seat Maso Studio has been extended for three weeks (until March 23). "This play makes the audience feel better about themselves and about each other and makes them good neighbors," Ortlieb said in a recent phone interview. "It seems so platitudinous, but it really is very simple." The actor, who has been in several Broadway plays and musicals, said if he's learned one thing during his tenure with the show, it's that people want to connect. "People want to talk. They want to communicate with each other. After the show [on a recent] Sunday night, I was there for an hour and 40 minutes talking with people," said Ortlieb, 67, who plays a character desperate for the connection the actor said he witnesses audiences craving at every performance. "There are so many things that are between us and our neighbors. First the pandemic and masks, and then politics and phones and screens of all sorts, and now our opinions are keeping us away from each other," he maintained. "There are so many things in the way of a civilized society. It's so nice to be a die and thrown into a Yahtzee cup, shaken about, and then turned over and grounded all over again." Ortlieb, who was born in Jersey City, N.J., and raised in Hazlet, N.J., said he hopes to bring the play "to every regional theater" in the country, since "theater is about connection; not about our differences. It's about what we have in common. We can all get along." We caught up with the father of two adult daughters, who lives in Los Angeles with his wife, Mimi, and their poodles Gina and Margaret, to talk about all things travel.

If you could travel anywhere right now, where would you go? Key West to lie in the water and have the sun warming my soul, but without drowning. Or being eaten by sharks. Or snakes.

Where was the first place you traveled to after COVID restrictions were lifted? I drove my daughters from my home in Los Angeles to Chicago in a new tank of an old car that I knew would last them forever. They were going to live there and I was doing a Dick Wolf show in Chicago ["Chicago Med"] with my friend Oliver Platt.

Do you prefer booking trips through a travel agent or on your own? I usually travel for work, so I book through my producer and my agent. In most cases I hope for a long flight so I can fly first class, which is always a treat.

Thoughts on an "unplugged" vacation? Every day I feel the shackles of social media. So, every day I give myself a little vacation by escaping from the phone or the computer for as much time as it will allow. There is nothing like being present to the world around me and meeting peoples' eyes with a smile or a shocking "good morning."

What has been your worst vacation experience? Back in Chicago when I was about 10 years into my acting career, I began working with a group of artisans on an historic building designed by the great Edgar Miller called the Carl Street Studios. Finances were scarce. Our hot humid summer days were filled with gorgeous tiles, and woodwork and my admiration for these artists' work — and plenty of laughs. This is how I learned to tile my own bath-



Jim Ortlieb in Malibu with his wife, Mimi, and their poodles Gina and Margaret.

room 30 years later. A lunch, on one particular day, was a hard-boiled egg. It was the best meal I had ever had. . . . I miss those days with those great friends. And that's as bad as it gets.

Do you vacation to relax, to learn, or for the adventure of it all? I learned how to live from my father, who hardly ever took vacations. Every day he would say, "I can't wait to retire." As a small child I didn't understand what retirement meant, but I knew that he was missing something, that he was putting whatever retirement was on hold for when he got old. I decided very early that I would never do that, so I was led to the joy the theater brought. Singing in musicals on the Jersey Shore was where I acted first. I never turned away from it. Every day is . . . my vacation. Especially when I'm working.

What book do you plan on bringing with you to read on your next vacation? Having never spent time in Boston, I brought David McCullough's "1776" with me. I look forward to exploring the city and learning all of its history. I also brought Elizabeth David's "French Country Cooking," first published in 1951. I travel to the French countryside during meals. She is a wonderful writer and funny.

If you could travel with one famous person/celebrity, who would it be? I find fame, having learned about it by watching, can be a hazardous existence. I had the honor to work with the great John Goodman a few times. During the last one I took him out to dinner at a terrific Cajun-Creole restaurant in Chicago. I chose a time when I knew no one would be there. But he was recognized on the street by a

few people who followed us in, sat at tables very close, and hounded him/us for the entire meal. It was one of the most awful experiences I had ever had. . . . I don't envy his fame.

What is the best gift to give a traveler? My cousin told me about a great suitcase that has served me well over the years: The Briggs & Riley 2-Wheel Expandable Carry-On.

What is your go-to snack for a flight or a road trip? Aside from hard-boiled eggs, I love salty things: olives, cheese, crackers. . . . The salt makes me thirsty, so I drink more water.

What is the coolest souvenir you've picked up on a vacation? The memories are astonishing. It still feels like a dream when I think about our trip to Kauai. . . . When I look into the eyes of my wife and best friend, Mimi, and say that it doesn't seem real that we really did that, she is as amazed as I am. That is cool.

What is your favorite app/website for travel? Everywhere I go I open my SetJetters: Movie Locations app and search out locations of particular scenes in movies. Some that I have done — like "Home Alone" — are on there. . . . I can't wait to go to Vienna to search the sewers that were depicted in "The Third Man" with Orson Welles.

What has travel taught you? Live every day like it's a vacation. And eat food like it's medicine before you have to eat medicine like it's food — Steve Jobs said that first.

What is your best travel tip? Travel light.
JULIET PENNINGTON

HERE

GIRLS JUST WANNA HAVE FUN

Sometimes a vacation with your besties is a needed antidote to the stress of daily life. With that in mind, The Beal House Inn in Littleton, N.H., proposes using its Garden Suite for a perfect pals' getaway or bachelorette weekend. The two-room, two-bed suite (with an adjoining shared bathroom) can accommodate up to four guests, and is decorated with antique furnishings and modern amenities. Located just off Littleton's historic Main Street, the six-room and suite property is close to local area attractions — the Riverwalk's covered bridge, historical museum, and brewpubs — and is a quick drive to skiing and outdoor activities, including Cannon Mountain, Bretton Woods, and Franconia Notch State Park. Located at the northern edge of the White Mountains, Littleton boasts a motto, "Be Glad," that celebrates the fictional Pollyanna. (Not kidding! A bronze sculpture pays tribute to hometown author Eleanor H. Porter.) Sophisticated American tavern fare, served in a rustic-chic environment, can be found at The Beal House's on-site restaurant. The seasonally-changing dinner menu, prepared by chef-owner Adam Alderin, includes small plates and salads, and a selection of entrees such as chicken pot pie, roasted fish, braised beef agnolotti, a cheeseburger with hand-cut fries, and more. When booking two nights or more through April 10, guests will receive a complimentary \$50 gift card to use at the tavern. Starting rates for the Garden Suite in March/April \$159.



Traveling with a larger group? A whole-inn buyout can comfortably accommodate up to 16 guests. Rates from \$1,500 for two nights. 603-444-2661, www.thebealhouseinn.com/

THERE

MODERN COASTAL LUXURY IN FLORIDA

Those looking for a relaxing spring getaway without noisy spring break crowds will want to consider the Jupiter Beach Resort & Spa, an Opal Collection AAA Four-Diamond oceanside property located at the northern tip of Palm Beach County. If you've stayed here before you'll notice a complete transformation of the accommodations, public spaces, and grounds. (If you haven't been here, you're in for a treat.) All 175 rooms and suites have been renewed with a coastal palette of blues and cream, with pops of orange and photos of green palm fronds that complement views of the beach and lush landscape below. The nine-story

hotel's amenities include a heated oceanfront swimming pool and whirlpool spa, an outdoor lounge area with cabana-style seating, a fire pit, fitness center, lighted tennis and (new!) pickleball courts, kids club activities, and more. Guests can indulge in the updated, onsite Opal Spa, offering a wide selection of facials, massages, scrubs, wraps, and wellness experiences in eight treatment rooms. The most stunning transformation is found at the resort's nautically-inspired three-meal restaurant, Lattitudes (formerly Sinclair's Ocean Grill), featuring a seafood-heavy sophisticated dinner menu, serving hotel guests and the local community. Prepare to be tempted by ahi tuna tacos, lobster bisque, Crab-Louis stuffed avocado and iced shellfish tower with Maine lobster, oysters, gulf coast shrimp, lump crab, Alaskan king crab, and more. Entrees include fresh grilled local seafood, shellfish stew, and plenty of options for carnivores such as burgers, steaks, and even pastas, including

a vegetarian option with oven-roasted veggies. (Insider tip: The half-pasta order is more than enough for an average eater.) The grab-and-go Beach Market Café and The Sandbar — for casual poolside al fresco fare — provide additional dining options. March rates from \$475; April rates from \$340. 877-389-0571, www.opalcollection.com/jupiter-beach/

EVERYWHERE

SHAKE IT UP WITH PORTABLE BLENDER

Love sipping fresh smoothies and shakes when traveling? With the BlendQuik Mason Jar Style Portable Blender, it's easy to make your own personalized shake on your next camping trip, beach picnic, road trip, or any on-the-go activity. Simply fill with your favorite fresh or frozen ingredients, flip upside down, and turn on the power button. Ten stainless steel blades, with a top speed of 18,000 rpm, will crush ice, fruit, nuts, and more in less than a minute. No need to transfer your beverage to a cup to drink; just insert the BPA-free reusable silicone straw and slurp. Or make guacamole and dips for chips. The side handle is useful for carrying. Recharge anywhere with a water-resistant USB Type-C port (included). The best part? When ready to clean, add water with a drop of soap and blend again for spotless results. Available in five colors. \$79.99. The Full Kit also includes a leakproof silicone storage bag, cleaning brush, and capsule straw case with hook. \$110.99. <https://blendquik.com/>

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