

# The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

## TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

### United Airlines canceled my flight, so why can't I get a refund?

By Christopher Elliott  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

**Q.** I am writing to request a refund for tickets I had to purchase at the last minute after our international travel had already begun. United canceled part of our international itinerary without notice or remedy.

My wife and I had booked tickets through United.com from Albuquerque, N.M., to Keflavik International Airport in Iceland, with stops in Houston and Frankfurt, Germany. When we checked in at Albuquerque for our departure, a United representative told us that we couldn't check in for our flight from Frankfurt to Keflavik because Icelandair was not a United code-share partner airline. But the representative assured us that this was normal, and we would only need to pick up our luggage in Frankfurt and take it to the Icelandair ticket counter.

We flew to Houston, and again, we tried to check on the status of our Icelandair reservation. But Icelandair's website and mobile app could not find our reservation under our confirmation code. In Houston, Icelandair's customer service line told us that the tickets were never issued and that the reservation itself had been canceled by the issuing travel agency the day before travel. Since we bought our tickets on United.com, I presume that United itself was the agency.

We found this out while our flight to Frankfurt was boarding. The United gate agent in Houston could not help. She told us that she couldn't even look up our reservation under its confirmation number since, again, Icelandair was not a partner airline.

We had to repurchase the seats that had allegedly been canceled at a cost of \$1,959. It would be appropriate for United to refund that cost to make me whole. Can you help?

ANDY WILSON, *Albuquerque*

**A.** What a nightmare! You booked your airline tickets through United.com, so it's responsible for getting you to your destination. It doesn't matter if United has a relationship with Icelandair or not. The buck stops with United.

Normally, you would find out about a problem with your ticket well in advance of your flight. But it looks like United canceled the last leg of your flight just before you left. A last-minute call to Icelandair might have revealed the problem. But if you buy a ticket on United.com, and it sends you a confirmation number, you should be confident that you actually have a reservation for all the travel segments.

I don't think you had much of a choice about buying a new ticket on Icelandair. You could have gone to the United ticket counter in Frankfurt and explained the problem, but if you had missed your flight, it would have screwed up your entire vacation — car rental, hotel stay, tours, etc. You were cornered and had to purchase a more expensive, last-minute ticket. And you're absolutely correct: This was something United should pay for.

You contacted United in writing and did an excellent job of keeping a paper trail. In response to your request, the airline offered to refund the unused leg but nothing more, claiming a "desynchronization of your ticket" caused the problem.

"Due to operational changes, we're unable to guarantee flight times or aircraft types, especially when the flight is operated by another airline," the representative said. "United apologized and deposited 5,000 "goodwill" miles into your account and refunded the canceled leg. That's a good start, but United needed to step up and cover the cost of your new flight. I contacted the airline on your behalf, and it issued a full refund.

*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

### Bank president Lisa Murray on the cafe car, MFA access for all, and what she's reading next

**A**s president of Citizens Bank Massachusetts, Lisa Murray has spearheaded many community-focused initiatives and provided mentorship to the next generation of female business leaders. The 54-year-old Acton native and mother of two is the only woman who leads one of the top 25 banks in Massachusetts. She is also the new chair of the Massachusetts Business Roundtable, a public policy organization made up of top business leaders whose mission it is to strengthen the state's economic standing. Some priorities for the organization include workforce development, housing, and early childhood education — "all things that impact the business community here in Massachusetts," she said. Exposing underserved communities to the arts is also a priority for Murray, who in her role at Citizens organized a free admission day at the Museum of Fine Arts on Jan. 15 in celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Another Citizens-backed free admission day to the MFA is scheduled for June 19 in honor of Juneteenth. "This allows us to bring the community to the MFA," she said. "We want to make it accessible to everyone." We caught up with Murray, who lives in Lexington, to talk about all things travel.

**If you could travel anywhere right now, where would you go?** We are busy pulling together a trip to Italy. We just decided to go a few weeks ago. Coordinating calendars with my family can be challenging, but we made it work and are planning a trip to Italy. My sister is a chef and my mom and I are foodies, so what could be better than eating our way through Italy? Ever since I saw "Under the Tuscan Sun," I've wanted to go there. This trip checks all the boxes for us: great food, beautiful scenery, and a rich history.

**Do you prefer booking trips through a travel agent or on your own?** TBD. This is the first time we have used a travel agent to coordinate a trip. A colleague of mine from Citizens recommended a travel agent and since it's a last-minute vacation, we thought it would be helpful to work with a travel expert.

**Thoughts on an "unplugged" vacation?** That sounds like a nightmare to me. Because my kids want to stay connected with their friends and I want to stay in touch with my office, completely unplugging isn't an option for us.

**What has been your worst vacation experience?** This past Christmas our extended family organized a sailing adventure. My brother-in-law is a boat captain, so we chartered a catamaran in the Caribbean. Sounds great, right? Well, the weather was awful, and the boat — including the engine — literally fell apart. Worst trip ever.

**What is your favorite childhood travel memory?** My parents, sister, and I were supposed to fly to Philadelphia in 1981 for a family reunion, but the air traffic controllers strike forced us to rethink our plans. Determined to get to our destination, we took the five-hour Amtrak train from Boston to Philadel-



Lisa Murray with her son, Jack, at a Red Sox-Orioles game at Camden Yards in Baltimore.

phia. My sister and I spent the entire trip in the cafe car. My dad kept giving us money to keep us happy, quiet, and well-fed. What more could a 12-year-old want?

**Do you vacation to relax, to learn, or for the adventure of it all?** My vacations are usually a combination of relaxation and adventure.

**What book do you plan on bringing with you to read on your next vacation?** A friend of mine recently gave me a copy of Kristin Hannah's new novel, "The Women," which I plan to read during our vacation. Coincidentally, the book's premise ties into a project I'm currently involved in. The Lexington community is working to install a monument in the town square which celebrates local women of note. It's called LexSeeHer and it's part of the 250th commemoration of the American Revolution. Lexington is steeped in history, but so much of the spotlight is traditionally focused on men. This monument will pay homage to women who have contributed to Lexington through art, business, education, and social change. Like the book, the installation clearly demonstrates that women can be influencers, leaders, and heroes in their own right.

**If you could travel with one famous person/celebrity, who would it be?** I would have loved to travel with chef and author Anthony Bourdain. Through his many exceptional television series, he took view-

ers to often undiscovered places and explored the intersection between food, history, and culture.

**What is the best gift to give a traveler?** A universal charger.

**What is your go-to snack for a flight or a road trip?** The Tex Mex Trail Mix from Target.

**What is the coolest souvenir you've picked up on a vacation?** My late husband. I met him when a group of friends and I went on a 30th birthday trip to Turks and Caicos. We found out that we lived in the same town, belonged to the same gym, and played for the same volleyball league. Yet we never crossed paths until we traveled to Turks and Caicos.

**What is your favorite app/website for travel?** I like home rental apps like Airbnb and VRBO. I'd much rather stay in a house than in a hotel.

**What has travel taught you?** People everywhere are more alike than they are different. Going to a museum or a popular shopping district is great, but I'd rather get to know people on a personal level.

**What is your best travel tip?** Go where the locals go. During a trip to Ireland, we went to a local pub and began a conversation with the people around us. One of the women began singing a traditional song and everyone joined in. Seeing how people live their daily lives is much more interesting than visiting a 5-star tourist destination.

JULIET PENNINGTON



## HERE

### SHORESIDE ROOMS MAKE SPLASHY DEBUT

Taking a luxurious seaside getaway just got more tempting with the debut of eight Shoreside Rooms at The Viewpoint in York, Maine. Cut into the coastline, the rooms' floor-to-ceiling glass doors look directly out to the Atlantic and the iconic Nubble Light-house. A mid-century modern aesthetic informs the décor, with king beds, warm natural textures, private patios, and lavish Kohler spa showers. Sitting atop a cliff, the two-acre property's additional accommodations include Grand Boutique Suites (one- to two-bedroom flats with separate living rooms and mini kitchens) and Petit Boutique Suites (one-bedroom studios). All guests can enjoy amenities — some seasonal — such as a heated salt-water pool with ocean view; beach club service with private shuttle to nearby Long Sands Beach; free bicycle use; Peloton and Hydro-Rower fitness center; and more.

Looking ahead to June: Just around the corner from The Viewpoint on Long Sands Beach, the property is gearing up to debut The Nevada, a 21-room beachside motel. The

restored design maintains the original property's distinctive U-shape (built by a World War II veteran to resemble The USS Nevada battleship) and its 1950s art deco aesthetic while adding modern details, including luxe suites with private terraces and 180-degree views of the ocean. The Nevada will also house a surf school and restaurant, Lulu's Tiki & Tacos. Shoreside Room April rates from \$430. Nevada opening rates in June from \$279. 207-361-3261, www.viewpointhotel.com.

## THERE

### TWO HOTELS BLOOM IN OREGON WINE COUNTRY

May is Oregon Wine Month, and those heading to sample the state's regional wineries and tasting rooms now have two new accommodations to consider that cater to wine-loving travelers. Both establishments provide a restful oasis when touring Willamette Valley, an area that boasts more than 700 wineries as well as scenic opportunities for hiking, biking, kayaking, and more (www.willamettevalley.org). The Setting Inn, a fully renovated contemporary inn located in Newberg, offers modern luxury in a rural valley landscape. The eight-room inn features in-

door and outdoor fireplaces, stunning views overlooking the valley and vineyards, and thoughtfully designed tasting room for sampling the brand's own wines. Each room is outfitted with king bed, luxe linens, plush robes, and the usual expected amenities such as flat-screen TVs and Nespresso coffee makers. Stays include daily Europe-meets-Oregon rustic continental breakfast, and use of fitness center, bocce court, and yard games such as badminton, croquet, cornhole, and more. May rates from \$349. 503-554-9528, www.thesettinginn.com.

The Tributary Hotel, a Relais & Chateaux property, debuts in a meticulously restored 100-year-old building in historic downtown McMinnville, a tree-lined street dotted with boutique shops, coffeehouses, antique stores, craft breweries, and more. Offering only eight suites — with fireplaces in each room — the spacious accommodations include king beds, sizable bathrooms, and luxury amenities including Le Labo bath products and custom-made soaps and salts. The property also houses kta, the restaurant helmed by 2024 James Beard Award Semifinalist Matthew Lighter, and all hotel bookings guarantee a coveted reservation at the restaurant. In addition, all guests receive a complimentary multi-course breakfast

from the award-winning restaurant delivered to their suites. May rates from \$600. 503-376-5200. www.tributaryhotel.com

## EVERYWHERE

### E-PEDAL FISHING CRAFT LAUNCHES

Move over e-bikes! Just in time for the warm weather fishing season, electric pedal technology takes to the water with the launch of Old Town Watercraft's BigWater ePDL+ 132, a kayak fishing craft with seamlessly integrated battery-powered pedal drive. With this new technology, anglers can more easily explore the outlying nooks of local waterways, allowing more time for their favorite activity. (Fishing!) The drive system provides up to five levels of power assistance. To break from pedaling, users can engage cruise control, take their feet off the pedals, and let the motor take over. Full control of propulsion power settings is just a button push away using the intuitive keys and polarized sunglass-friendly display. Additionally, enhanced upgrades include a wider stern tank well, larger cup holders, and improved offset shallow water anchor mount. A compact 36-volt lithium-ion battery is included with the watercraft, as is a two-year warranty. \$5,999. <https://oldtownwatercraft.johnsonoutdoors.com/us/epdl>

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