

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER



ADOBE

Expedia said it would refund my tickets four years ago. Help!

By Christopher Elliott
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Q. I need help getting a refund from Expedia. I booked two round-trip Air Transat tickets from Toronto to Paris through Expedia back in 2020. I had to cancel the flights, and, under the refund rules during the pandemic, Expedia said I could get my money back. Expedia said it would process the refund in a matter of weeks.

I waited a few months, but the refund never showed up on my credit card. I contacted Expedia in early 2022, and they told me to contact Air Transat for my refund. I did, and an Air Transat representative said the airline had already sent my refund to Expedia.

I've contacted both Expedia and Air Transat on numerous occasions since then, and I've also asked my credit card company for help. It says that there's no record of a refund from Expedia or Air Transat.

I would love to get my refund. Can you help me?

KEITH DAWE, *Toronto*

A. Expedia should have refunded your money four years ago. I believe this is a new record for the longest airline refund case. (Congratulations, Expedia!)

Air Transat is a relatively small charter airline, so that might explain the initial delay. But at some point, Expedia should have taken ownership of this problem and helped you get a refund. Instead, it looks as if you bounced between Expedia, Air Transat, and your credit card company for years. Literally, years. You must be exhausted.

What happened? It looks as if Air Transat refunded part of your purchase with a check, which appears to only cover taxes and fees. This left an outstanding balance of about \$1,002. Air Transat claims it sent the money to Expedia, but Expedia said it never received the money.

Here's the thing: When you buy an airline ticket through an online travel agency, it is responsible for the refund. It doesn't matter if the airline refunds it or not. So, if Expedia says that you're entitled to a refund, and it promises to process a refund in a few weeks, it's on Expedia.

You were way too patient with your airline and online agency. You should have received the promised refund promptly, and if you didn't, you should have filed a credit card dispute to recover your funds.

I list the names, numbers, and email addresses of the Expedia executives on my consumer advocacy site, Elliott.org. A brief but firm email to one of them might have motivated Expedia to find your missing money.

I contacted Expedia on your behalf. In response, the company apologized and admitted that there was "an error with the refund."

"The refund has been processed," a representative said. Expedia also added \$200 worth of points to your loyalty account as an apology for the delay.

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

Katharine McPhee

on gummy bears, Kris Jenner, and what travel has taught her about perspective

Singer, songwriter, and actress Katharine McPhee, who in 2006 was runner-up on the fifth season of "American Idol," has toured the world extensively in the past nearly two decades. So when asked about where she would like to travel most, she replied — emphatically — "straight to my bed and home and not leave for a week." But for now, she is on a national tour with her husband, composer and music producer/industry executive David Foster, that makes stops at the Providence Performing Arts Center on May 12, The Cabot in Beverly on May 14, and The Music Hall in Portsmouth, N.H., on May 15. "I haven't really toured in this part of the country too much, so I am looking forward to it," she said in a recent phone call. "I love being in different parts of the country and seeing how different the audiences are — and often being surprised." McPhee, 40, said that while there are "challenging" aspects to being on tour with one's spouse, she and Foster, 74, with whom she shares a 3-year-old son, Rennie, "get on great." Having said that, she added that coming off of the "An Intimate Evening with David Foster & Katharine McPhee" tour, they both enjoy their "down time ... enjoying basic things like cooking a meal and watching TV together." McPhee, who attended the Boston Conservatory (now Boston Conservatory at Berklee) for three semesters and who in 2018 made her Broadway debut starring as Jenna in the musical "Waitress," said that the current show features a variety of musical genres, a fair amount of storytelling, and even some occasional bickering. "It's a pretty spontaneous evening," she said. "And it's a really good time." We caught up with the Los Angeles native, who still calls LA home, to talk about all things travel.

If you could travel anywhere right now, where would you go? I travel so much these days that I would travel straight to my bed and home and not leave for a week.

Do you prefer booking trips through a travel agent or on your own? I prefer booking through a travel agent. It's very overwhelming looking at flights.

Thoughts on an "unplugged" vacation? It's a good idea in theory, I guess. But I've never tried it. I like to know what's happening in the world and with my loved ones.

What has been your worst vacation experience? A couple years ago on Christmas Day, traveling to Hawaii with my husband, 10-month-old, my mom, and [a] friend, the flight was delayed — but they had already put everyone on the bus to go to a different terminal and then ended up not having an actual gate so they put us on this bus and went clear across to the other side to go to a terminal where we had to stand on the tarmac for more than an hour. It was very cold and there were no bathrooms, no food ... not how we wanted to spend Christmas. But we were able to find some humor in it and laugh a bit. Oh, and then once we did get on a flight and finally got Rennie to sleep, David got up to get something out of the overhead compartment, and when he closed it, he woke up our son. He was awake for the rest of the flight.

What is your favorite childhood travel memory? Going skiing with my mom, dad, and sister. Skiing takes a lot of effort — especially with kids. But it's such a gift to have something to do all to-



Katharine McPhee in Italy.

gether. Having a child now I appreciate it so much more. We would mostly go to Mammoth and make a real road trip out of it. I remember stopping in a town called Bishop and always going to the same bakery every time. Great memories.

Do you vacation to relax, to learn, or for the adventure of it all? Typically, I vacation to relax and see and experience some culture and eat great food.

What book do you plan on bringing with you to read on your next vacation? "Elon Musk," a biography written by Walter Isaacson. I'm a fan of his [Isaacson's] storytelling in previous biographies.

If you could travel with one famous person/celebrity, who would it be? Kris Jenner. She seems like a blast.

What is the best gift to give a traveler?

RIMOWA lightweight suitcases. They are the best.

What is your go-to snack for a flight or a road trip? Not specific for me. I like all the fun junk like gummy bears and chips.

What is the coolest souvenir you've picked up on a vacation? Any piece of jewelry I love because it reminds of me where I was.

What is your favorite app/website for travel? Abercrombie & Kent.

What has travel taught you? That your worries and life are so small in comparison to the whole world. Your life holds the same value as anyone else's, so don't sweat the small stuff. And you can also go somewhere and start over if you wanted.

What is your best travel tip? Pack light. Plan out your looks for each day.

JULIET PENNINGTON



HERE

SUMMER SEASON ARRIVES EARLY IN P-TOWN

Memorial Day is often celebrated as an unofficial start to summer, but on the Cape's tip in Provincetown, the season begins on May 16, when fast ferry service resumes from Boston. Operated by two companies, Bay State Cruises, with a dock in the Seaport District (baystatecruisecompany.com), and Boston Harbor City Cruises on Long Wharf (www.cityexperiences.com/boston/city-cruises/provincetown-ferry), the high-speed catamarans will, in about 90 minutes, whisk you to all the fun this colorful town has to offer.

Provincetown's 2024 calendar includes more than two dozen events. May and June festivities include Sin-

gle Women's Weekend followed by — to name some but not all — MEMDAY Weekend Women's Festival, Provincetown PRIDE, CabaretFest, Provincetown International Film Festival, Juneteenth Ptown, and the Provincetown Portuguese Festival. High summer is packed with the Independence Day parade and fireworks, Bear Week, Family Week, Provincetown Jazz Festival, Carnival, and the 37th Swim for Life and Annual Flotilla. Fall boasts a Book Festival, Tennessee Williams Theater Festival, Women's Week, Trans Week (the Golden Jubilee celebration), Spooky Bear Halloween Weekend, Provincetown Food and Wine Festival, and more. Then it's almost time for holiday favorites Holly Folly and First Light. Whew! If you prefer the quieter side of this historic seaside town, there are bike and hik-

ing trails through the National Seashore's dunes, SUV dune tours, whale watches and Race Point Beach. In town, stroll to the many art galleries, the Provincetown Art Association and Museum, the Provincetown Museum at the Pilgrim Monument (climb to the top for amazing views!), boutique shops, and ogle well-tended gardens when meandering along narrow side streets. <https://ptowntourism.com>

THERE

VINTAGE HOTEL DEBUTS IN WESTERN COLORADO

Those heading west this summer to explore the natural wonders of Colorado might want to detour to Grand Junction, a city in the western slope region that is an intersection of mountains, rivers, canyons, lakes, and forests. Nearby outdoor recreation areas, referred to as "Nature's Trifecta," include Colorado National Monument, known as a mini-Grand Canyon; Rattlesnake Arch, said to have the second-highest concentration of natural arches in the world; and Grand Mesa, a flat-top mountain with more than 300 lakes. In addition to hiking, biking, golfing, fishing, and other activities, Grand Junction also has art galleries, boutique shops, craft breweries, distilleries and wineries, and farm-to-table fare in numerous local eateries. www.visitgrandjunction.com

Need a place to stay? The Hotel Melrose, Grand Junction's first downtown boutique hotel, opened in late 2023 with 16 elegant suites. Located in a restored 1908 building by William and Charlotte Ponsford, it is the sole survivor among 12 original buildings that once defined the town. Today, the

hotel evokes the spirit of a bygone era while offering modern comforts. The sleekly designed suites include kitchenettes, coffee stations, lofty ceilings, and separate private bathrooms. The technology-driven hotel offers keyless check-in and a digital concierge. There's also an in-house cocktail bar, Melrose Spirit Co. Rates in May from \$195. 970-317-2176. www.thehotelmelrose.com

EVERYWHERE

BABY CAR MONITOR FOR STRESS-FREE TRAVELS

Road trips will be safer with the Tiny Traveler Classic, a wireless camera monitoring system for travel (and home) use. Mount the touchscreen monitor on your dashboard or windshield in a spot where you can easily view it. Attach the compact HD camera to the headrest straps, facing your child, and voila! You can see exactly what your little one is doing without turning your head when driving. The device can be removed from the car quickly when you reach your destination. It features automatic night vision for any low-light environment, and it can also connect to a second camera, and monitor both simultaneously. It can also record or take pictures of special moments and includes everything you'll need to set up the system, including two USB car charger adapters, windshield mount, micro SD card, and more. \$199.99. There are add-on bundles and accessories that include a padded travel case, portable battery cradle, add-on camera, and more. \$49.99-\$399.99. <https://mytinytraveler.com>

NECEE REGIS