

# The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

## TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER



ANGUS MORDANT

American Airlines planes at Terminal B of LaGuardia Airport in New York.

## American Airlines changed my flight, but won't give me a refund

By Christopher Elliott  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

**Q.** Last year, I booked a flight from Seattle to Miami on American Airlines. The flight was a red-eye leaving at 12:39 a.m. This itinerary was ideal for me because I work late nights and didn't want my trip to interfere with my schedule.

Before my flight, I received an email saying that my flight time had changed and would be departing at 10:15 p.m. I couldn't make this flight because I was working late that night.

I called American, and a representative told me she could not refund me because it was less than a four-hour schedule change. She said I would have to apply for a refund online, and she canceled my ticket.

I applied for a refund online and received an email a week later stating that my refund was denied because of American's policy and because I had purchased a cheap ticket.

I called American again and spoke to a supervisor. She would not even give me a flight credit for future use. She did give me an option to book another flight at that time and possibly get me money back. When I said I didn't have any known plans to travel, she suggested I call back when I'm ready, and someone could possibly help me. But she could not promise anything.

American told me to cancel my ticket and apply for a refund. Then it denied my request for a refund. I think that's a deceptive business practice. Can you help me get a refund?

NEIL GUPTA, *Seattle*

**A.** If an airline changes its schedule, it should offer you a full, no-questions-asked refund. But American Airlines is correct: It gives itself the right to change its schedule by up to four hours without offering your money back.

The amount of delay required for a refund varies by airline. If you're flying in the European Union, it is standardized at two hours under the European airline consumer protection regulations.

Your situation was a little different. You had spoken to an American Airlines representative who led you to believe that you just needed to apply for a refund, and she canceled your ticket. The representative should have told you that there was no way you could get your money back, even if you applied for a refund.

By the way, how much you spent on your ticket is irrelevant. The refund rules govern all tickets, no matter how much you paid.

I think this one's on American. If a representative suggested you might get a refund, you should reasonably expect to get your money back. And, on top of that, a supervisor also suggested you could get a credit. Even if it's a misunderstanding, American could give you a ticket credit as a gesture of goodwill.

A brief, polite email to one of the American Airlines executive contacts might have helped. I publish their names, numbers, and emails on my consumer advocacy site, Elliott.org.

I contacted American on your behalf. To be clear, American wasn't required to do anything under its policy. But I think a refund would have been the right thing to do under your circumstances.

American Airlines agreed to refund your ticket.

*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

# Ben Platt

loves a salty-sweet snack combo and a well-timed cocktail in the air



Ben Platt at Lake Como.

**A**fter a nearly three-week residency at the newly refurbished Palace Theatre in New York City that ends on June 15, Broadway star Ben Platt will kick off a 21-city tour (in the United States and Canada) in Boston on June 19 at the Boch Center Wang Theatre. In a recent phone interview, the 30-year-old Tony, Grammy, and Emmy Award winner said his set will include a "sprinkling of something for everyone" — including songs from his past two albums and his new release, "Honeymind," some covers, and numbers from some of the Broadway shows in which he's starred (including "Dear Evan Hansen.") Platt said his last tour was in larger, arena-type venues. "As much as I enjoyed that, it did make me miss the slightly more intimate experience of more traditional proscenium theaters and beautiful natural amphitheaters like The Greek Theatre [in Los Angeles] and places like that," he said. "So I'm really excited to perform in slightly more intimate settings and play music that's a little warmer and more emotionally connective." And while Platt said he loves performing in musical theater on Broadway, he said he also enjoys the "more creative freedom" his own tour affords him. "I'm going to need to start it off with as much love as I can," he said. "So I promise to throw it all onstage ... and I hope [the Boston audience] enjoys it as much as I do." He will perform in Providence on June 20. When the tour ends (in Seattle on July 27), Platt said he plans on diving into wedding plans for his fall nuptials to stage and screen actor Noah Galvin, whom he referred to as his "muse" for his latest album. We caught up with the Los Angeles native, who lives in Brooklyn with Galvin, to talk about all things travel.

**If you could travel anywhere right now, where would you go?** This is sort of a tough one because I'm about to go on my honeymoon in the fall and we are going to go to Italy to the coast, and that's sort of my dream location and I'm finally going to get to kind of live out that dream. So I guess the answer for someplace I want to go is where I'm already going, that would be it. If it's somewhere that I don't already have plans to go, I've always wanted to go to Japan. I'm a really big nerd of Japanese culture and Japanese cuisine. I'm thinking Tokyo and Kyoto, and there are so many other places I'd like to see.

**Do you prefer booking trips through a travel agent or on your own?** I like a hybrid. I like to come in and have kind of a middleman. I don't necessarily just give over to the travel agent because I'm way too type-A and controlling for that, so I tend to come in with ideas for things like where I want to dine, things I want to do, and a basic map — but then have someone to help me put it in motion. So I like a collaboration; not an entire you-plan-it-for-me vibe.

**Thoughts on an unplugged vacation?** I think it would be incredibly healthy for me because, unfortunately, so much of what I do depends on being connected and being on social media. Noah would be the first to say it would be a great mental health cleanse to do that.

**What has been your worst vacation experience?** I was with my family — I think I was 15 — and we went to London and Paris and we took the Chunnel [The Channel Tunnel, a railway tunnel underneath the English Channel] and we got stuck in the tunnel. There was no electricity and no air conditioning. It was sort of like a three- or four-hour wait of panicking and sweating and wondering if we were going to

die under the water. But we made it out of the tunnel. That was a stressful moment and any other time I've had to make that same transit, I fly. I'm going to have to [try] the Chunnel again at some point though.

**Do you vacation to relax, to learn, or for the adventure of it all?** It really depends. If I'm coming off of a long job, like I've done a Broadway show for six months or a year and I've been doing eight shows a week ... I think definitely first and foremost I love for it to be an escape and to relax and decompress. But if it is at a quieter time when I'm looking for something to spark things up — especially with Noah, who's very adventurous — I'm definitely game for something that's more about exploring and learning. I think our favorite vacations we've ever planned are ones where we get to do [a mix] of things.

**What book do you plan on bringing with you to read on your next vacation?** I just started "Tom Lake" [by Ann Patchett] and I really am loving it so far, but I'm now in rehearsals for the Palace [Theatre residency] and then I'm going to go on tour, so I don't have faith that I'm going to follow through. I also have the sequel to "Less" called "Less Is Lost" [by Andrew Sean Greer] that I would love to read.

**If you could travel with one famous person/celebrity, who would it be?** Beyoncé, only because anytime I'm asked about a celebrity, that's my answer. I'd love to sing with her, travel with her, hang out with her, do her hair ... anything she needs.

**What is the best gift to give a traveler?** I think a gift that gets a bad rap — because there are so many [expletive] versions at airports — is a really excellent neck pillow or really anything having to do with posture and making sleeping on planes or cars or trains more comfortable is huge. Noah often travels with his own pillow and it allows him to really conk out anywhere he goes.

**What is your go-to snack for a flight or a road trip?** Well for a flight I definitely drink my snack. I'm a very anxious flier, so I tend to have a cocktail in the air, which always helps things. Maybe a whiskey ginger — or if it's the morning, a bloody Mary or something because I get very nervous. On a road trip or a

train trip, I'm a big salty-sweet combo person, so I love a kettle corn or chocolate pretzels — something that scratches both issues of salty and sweet.

**What is the coolest souvenir you've picked up on vacation?** When we were in Italy last — the only other time I've been with Noah was a very brief trip to celebrate the end of my run in "Parade" [on Broadway in 2023] — Noah brought his film camera and took some really beautiful pictures on Lake Como where we stayed and gifted me with some beautiful framed prints that are in our house. I'd say that's one of my favorite souvenirs.

**What is your favorite app/website for travel?** For driving, Waze is very helpful for planning time of day and route and all of that. I would say I'm a big American Airlines girl, so the American Airlines app is generally very helpful. And we love The Infatuation [app] for restaurant recommendations.

**What has travel taught you?** It has taught me how small my life is — in a really positive way. I think sometimes things can feel so big and the stakes can feel so high and it's hard to see outside yourself. I think travel helps to remind me how big the world is — literally and figuratively — and just how many different lives are happening and how much joy and respite there is to find elsewhere and it's a beautiful way to just get out of your own mind and your own bubble.

**What is your best travel tip?** Controlled chaos — but controlled chaos in the sense that I think preparation creates freedom. If you are very clear about as many of the plans as you can be as far as where you're going to spend certain amounts of time, where you're going to stay, where your reservations are and things like that, you can leave yourself chunks of time to be free and explore and just go with the flow and be confident that you're not going to end up wasting your trip away because it's in very particular parameters. I really love to set myself up for success and give myself room to explore and be free — but also with very clear structure around it so I know I'm going to get the best of it no matter what happens.

JULIET PENNINGTON

## HERE

### WINE WEEK UNCORKS IN MAINE

It's no secret that Portland, Maine, is a national culinary destination. With its many independent restaurants working in collaboration with Maine-based farmers, fishermen, cheese mongers, specialty purveyors, and local wine distributors, the city has earned its stellar reputation as a foodie and beverage lovers' haven. You can experience a taste of the town's quality-focused wines and award-winning bites at the 7th celebration of Portland Wine Week (June 10-16). Tickets are on sale now for wine tastings, lunches, brunches, dinners, and other special events such as themed wine sails, oyster and wine tastings, and floral arranging sessions — with wine, of course! Events sell out quickly so snag your tickets while still available. Prices vary per event. [www.portlandwineweek.me](http://www.portlandwineweek.me)

### SPOTLIGHT ON LUXURY & WELLNESS IN NEW PORTLAND HOTEL

Looking for a new place to stay in Portland? The long-awaited debut of Longfellow Hotel, a new member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World, has finally arrived. Located in Portland's historic West End, the five-story, 48-key hotel includes a wellness spa, Astraea, the wellness-focused Twinflower Café (open for breakfast and lunch), and The Five of Clubs, an intimate, library-style lobby bar and lounge serving small-batch cocktails, rotating taps of local beer, and curated wines paired with charcuterie, chilled seafood, and shellfish. Guest rooms and suites juxtapose contemporary elements with



traditional features like custom moldings, ceiling medallions, and wide-plank, hardwood floors. The Longfellow's luxury house car, an all-electric 2023 BMW i7 Sedan, offers guests complimentary transportation into the Old Port district. Rates from \$499. 207-800-3004, [www.longfellowhotel.com](http://www.longfellowhotel.com)

## THERE

### ALL JAZZED UP IN MONTRÉAL

Mon Dieu! Jazz lovers are swooning over the upcoming artists scheduled to play at the 44th Festival International de Jazz de Montréal (June 27-July 5). Headliners André 3000, Robert Glasper, and Norah Jones are just a few of the more than 350 shows taking place on multiple stages in the Quartier des Spectacles, in the heart of downtown Montréal. The modern and diverse music programming spans from traditional, with big-name artists like Pres-

ervation Hall Jazz Band and Marcus Miller, to popular favorites such as Pink Martini and Jesse Cook, to hip-hop, with artists like Killer Mike and Erick the Architect. As always, the local scene is very much front and center, as are several artists from Africa, including Etran de l'Aïr, The Brother Moves On, and Vieux Farka Touré. Artists and schedules are available to view online, as is the ability to purchase tickets. Worth noting: two-thirds of the programming is free! You can also book a place to stay at a hotel or Vrbo via the website, with an interactive map showing walking distances from each accommodation to the venue site. <https://montrealjazzfest.com/en>

## EVERYWHERE

### GRILLS GO RETRO ON SUMMER ADVENTURES

Grilling on the go just got easier (and more fashionable) with Kenmore's 2-

Burner Retro Portable Gas Grill manufactured by Permasteel. The grill's compact dimensions make it perfect for beach parties, picnics in the park, tailgating gatherings, and camping trips. Made from cast aluminum, the two-burner gas grill provides 14,400 BTUs of cooking power across a 17-inch-by-14-inch surface, large enough for cooking nine burgers at the same time. A warming rack keeps things toasty until you're ready to eat. Additional features include "push and turn" ignition, temperature gauge, side lid latches and carrying handles, and slide-out grease tray. Foldable legs are convenient for transport and storage. Compatible with both 5- and 20-pound propane gas tanks. Available in six bold colors that are sure to make you smile and wow your guests: blue, red, turquoise, pink, black, and white. \$199. <https://kenmoregrill.com/product/kenmore-2-burner-portable-tabletop-retro-gas-grill-turquoise>

NECEE REGIS

