

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER



ISTOCKPHOTO

A 'small scratch' on a rental leads to a whopping \$1,800 bill

By Christopher Elliott
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Q. I recently rented a car from the Enterprise location in Munich. When I returned the vehicle after several days, no one inspected it. A few days later, I received a message in my spam folder saying that I had damaged the car. Enterprise claims I scratched the car during my rental. The scratch is small, barely finger-length and thin. They sent me a bill for just over \$1,800.

The photos they sent show no damage in one photo, and the other two photos that show the scratch don't show the license plate or any indication that it is the same car. I took a video of the car when I returned it, and it shows no damage where they claim the scratch is.

I called Enterprise's customer service. The United States representative couldn't find any record of the damage and couldn't help me. Three months later, Enterprise charged my credit card for the full amount of the damage. I disputed the charge with my credit card company, but they are siding with Enterprise.

How can I defend myself against this false claim?

ERIC WEIMAN, *San Diego*

A. You shouldn't have to pay for damage that didn't exist when you returned the vehicle. You're responsible for the car from the time you pick it up to the time you return it. But after you return it? That's on the company.

You did the right thing by taking a video of the car when you returned it. This gives you some evidence to support your claim. I also recommend taking "before" photos and videos of the vehicle, just to establish a baseline.

The most confusing part of your case is that you showed the rental location a video of the car you rented, and it appears the car didn't have a scratch. Meanwhile, the photos they showed that allegedly proved you had damaged the car did not identify this particular car as the car you had rented. In other words, it could have been any vehicle in the company's fleet. And when you asked for clarification, Enterprise seemed to double down on its claim.

I think you had one more option: an appeal to an executive at Enterprise. I list the names, numbers, and email addresses of the top customer service executives at Enterprise on my consumer advocacy site, Elliott.org.

I contacted Enterprise on your behalf.

"We take seriously any concerns brought to us by customers and investigate them thoroughly," a representative told me. "In this particular instance, damage to the vehicle was not present when the renter took possession of the vehicle, yet was clearly present when the vehicle was processed for return."

Enterprise says it has a photographic tunnel that is operated by a third party. Vehicles from all rental companies pass through the tunnel in and out of Munich Airport and are photographed for damage. The photos suggest that you returned your car with damage.

"Because of this, we do intend to stand by our charge in this case and pursue the renter for damages," the Enterprise spokesman said.

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

English actor Sam Tutty on Boston, sunscreen, and those stunning Swiss Alps

English actor Sam Tutty, who won a Laurence Olivier Award — the UK's version of a Tony — for best actor in a musical in 2020 for his lead role in the West End production of "Dear Evan Hanson," said he is enjoying everything about his current visit to Boston. "Of course, I'm enjoying the touristy stuff, but I think my favorite thing is just working here and sort of settling in to this place ... just blending in and doing the normal stuff like putting the wash in, but it's in Boston. And ordering a coffee, but it's in Boston. And going for a walk, but you're in Boston," said Tutty, 27, who is costarring in "Two Strangers (Carry a Cake Across New York)" at the American Repertory Theater through June 29. "All those sorts of things." Tutty played the role of Dougal in the play's West End debut, and he said that thanks to his current costar, Christiani Pitts (who plays Robin and has been in several Broadway musicals, including costarring in "King Kong"), for changing his perspective on his character. "There have been different Robins, so that means Dougal's got to change as well. And that was a bit scary at first, because I had two years of muscle memory embedded in my body about how I would perceive this character to be, and then Christiani comes along and completely changes that. It was so fun to sort of start from scratch again." The story follows Dougal, a young and naïve Brit, who has just landed in New York for his absent dad's second wedding. Robin, the sister of the bride and a native New Yorker, picks Dougal up at the airport and, taking a page from traditional rom-coms (with some twists and turns), the two strangers end up having a profound impact on each other's lives. "We want to offer escapism for 2-2 ½ hours, so I hope they [audience members] feel happy, or entertained, or distracted by whatever's going on in their lives — good or bad — for a certain amount of time. That's the only reason we do this," Tutty said. "There is no other higher purpose or world-saving thing that we can do other than offer escapism. So, if people enjoy it and they laugh and if they cry and if they feel something, that's my job done to the highest possible standard." We caught up with the Crawley, England, native, to talk about all things travel.

If you could travel anywhere right now, where would you go?

I'd return to Switzerland. My partner [Carly Turnbull, a wardrobe supervisor for West End shows] and I went there a year or two ago, and it was just the most magical experience I've ever had. You've got to remember that being from the UK, we're starved of mountains. The concept of mountains is so surreal to us in the UK — to me, anyway — so when my partner and I saw them for the first time, it was crazy. It was absolutely crazy. It was just an amazing time. The driving was incredible, the views were incredible, the food was amazing, we went up mountains, we went tobogganing ... such a beautiful time.

Do you prefer booking trips through a travel agent or on your own?

I prefer doing it by myself. I think you get more ownership, and you can cater to your own needs much easier.

Thoughts on an "unplugged" vacation?

If you think that's an ingredient that is necessary for the vacation, then absolutely. Hopefully, most vacations are more unplugged than when you are just at home or working because you're having an amazing experience.

What has been your worst vacation experience?

I've been very blessed to say that I haven't had one. I remember one for my mum, though. When we were



Sam Tutty in Switzerland.

kids, we went to a campsite and long story short, we booked a caravan [camper] that was covered in bugs. I was so young that I don't really remember. I was just playing outside all the time, but my mum was fighting off millipedes and mold and cockroaches.

What is your favorite childhood travel memory?

I was probably about 16 or 17, so maybe not childhood, but my family and I went to Disney World in Florida. And as cliché as it sounds, it was just everything that we hoped it would be. We booked it two years in advance, and I was counting down every single day. It got to the point where people in my class would ask, "how many days, Sam?" And I would say "391," like the weird little boy that I was.

Do you vacation to relax, to learn, or for the adventure of it all?

If you don't do all three, I would say it's a missed opportunity. I'm always trying to go to a museum or to learn about the culture where I am.

What book do you plan on bringing with you to read on your next vacation?

The one that I have read loads is the "A Court of Thorns and Roses" series by Sarah J. Maas. I've read all of them and they were just fantastic.

If you could travel with one famous person/celebrity, who would it be?

Other than with my family, I would probably like to travel with someone really profound — probably the late playwright Noël Coward. I did "Dear Evan Hansen" in the Noël Coward Theatre in London and it was a life-changing event for me. I saw photos of him and autobiographies of him everywhere. And I felt quite connected to him at that certain point in my

life, so I would like to maybe go on holiday with him and just chat with him about his experiences.

What is the best gift to give a traveler?

Probably a first aid kit. If you do need it, it could be lifesaving. And if you don't, that means you had a great trip.

What is your go-to snack for a flight or a road trip?

Crisps, like chips. I'm not much of a sweets or candy guy; I prefer savory.

What is the coolest souvenir you've picked up on a vacation?

When I was a kid, I went to Lanzarote [one of the Canary Islands off the north coast of Africa that is known for its volcanic landscape] and I picked up a bit of volcano, just from the ground. I remember that felt so rebellious and so cool. I brought it to school and all the kids were going crazy for it.

What is your favorite app/website for travel?

I think Reddit's really good. There's great sort of threads for places where you want to go. Do's and Don'ts on YouTube is also a great one. Before I came to Boston, I watched three videos on the Do's and Don'ts of Boston as a Brit.

What has travel taught you?

Travel taught me perspective. I'd also say privilege. I'm very fortunate to live in and to come from a country where tourism is huge all year round and not just seasonal.

What is your best travel tip?

Stay hydrated. Drink water and wear sunscreen, regardless of the weather!

JULIET PENNINGTON



HERE

THEATER SEASON KICKS OFF ON THE CAPE

Theater lovers in the know avidly await the summer roster of plays presented by the Harbor Stage Company. Located in what was once a waterfront fisherman's bar in Wellfleet in the 1970s, the stripped-down, intimate theater (only 88 seats!) believes the level of talent and productions that dazzle audiences each year. It's run by an ensemble of professional theater artists; the four cofounders — Jonathan Fielding, Stacy Fischer, Robert Kropf, Brenda Withers — produce three diverse plays each season, from highly theatrical world premieres to distilled re-imaginings of modern classics. Tickets are on sale now for "The Bohemian," an adaptation of a classic tale by Willa Cather; "Death of a Salesman," Arthur Miller's Pulitzer Prize-winning portrait of identity, ambition, and the devastating costs of doing business; and "Circle Mirror Transformation," a disarming meditation on

small towns, big feelings, and the transformative power of art by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Annie Baker. The company's commitment to offering low-priced tickets, with tiered admissions and Pay-What-You-Can First Fridays, makes it possible for everyone to enjoy first-rate live performances regularly. When not on the Cape in the summer, this talented crew can be found presenting talents in Boston — such as their highly acclaimed staging of "My Dinner with Andre" — or writing and producing new plays and films, including "Dindin," a movie version of their 2021 play directed by Brendan Hughes. The 2025 season runs June 12 through Aug. 31. Tickets from \$25. 508-349-6800, www.harborstage.org

THERE

ART DECO DREAMING IN ROME

Those making a pilgrimage to Rome this Jubilee year (or any year) will want to consider staying at Bettoja Hotels' Hotel Mediterraneo, where simply step-

ping inside transports one to an earlier era of sophisticated hospitality. A masterpiece of Art Deco architecture, designed by architect Mario Loreti for the 1942 Universal Exhibition in Rome, the building's rich history is on display in preserved original furnishings, including chandeliers designed by Gio Ponti, polished wood check-in desk, and colorful mosaics above the lobby elevators. The 242 spacious and bright rooms sport a high-class and retro style, mixing original Art Deco style wood furnishings and marble bathrooms with modern comforts such as plush robes and slippers, air conditioning, minibar, flat screen TV, and soundproof windows. An ideal basecamp for exploring the Eternal City, the hotel is within walking distance from historic landmarks including the Colosseum, Opera House, Forum, Trevi Fountain, and the Spanish Steps. Located steps from Termini rail station, the quickest way to arrive from the airport, means you don't need a cab to reach the hotel. On-site facilities include the Roof Garden Restaurant and Ligea Lounge Bar; a terrace with spectacular views of the capital and its surrounding hills, and Bar 21, serving a variety of fine cocktails and snacks in an elegant Art Deco atmosphere. Ristorante Massimo d'Azeglio, located at nearby sister property Hotel Massimo d'Azeglio, offers a menu mixing Piedmontese culinary tradition with Roman and Italian cuisine; and the Bettoja Cellar, a wine cellar located in Hotel Massimo d'Azeglio's basement, is perfect for private dinners and tastings. Bettoja Hotels' third hotel in the neighborhood, Hotel Atlantico, rounds out

their Rome collection. Classic Deco room rates from \$306, includes breakfast. +39-06-488-4051, www.bettojahotels.it/en/

EVERYWHERE

STYLISH AND RUGGED SHOES FOR CITY AND MOUNTAIN

When a sneaker or walking shoe isn't enough, and trekking boots are too much, there's La Sportiva's Akyra II. The perfect shoe for packing when you're planning trail hikes one day and exploring cities with cobblestone streets the next. Lightweight, rugged and durable, Akyra II features include 3-D Grid exoskeleton and mesh uppers to provide structure and breathability; shock absorbing MEMlex EVA midsole to cushion stride; Trail Rocker2 outsole to promote natural pronation support while hiking; and aggressive lugs combined with FriXion Rubber and Trail Bite Heels for all-terrain traction and maximum grip. Eco-friendly and washable insoles are made from breathable and durable PU foam cells and recycled rubber. Crafted without animal-derived materials. The company's state-of-the-art, 250-person factory is located in Ziano di Fiemme, a mountain village in the heart of the Italian Dolomites, continuing a tradition and heritage of hand-made footwear in this picturesque alpine valley. Available for men and women. The company offers additional footwear geared for climbing, hiking, running, mountaineering, and more. \$149. www.lasportivausa.com/akyra-ii-womens.html

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