

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER



MUHAMMAD FAROOQ/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

The Majestic Princess cruise ship

Princess cancels cruise, then charges a \$3,718 cancellation fee

By Christopher Elliott
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Q. I booked an 11-day coastal cruise on the Majestic Princess from Seattle to San Diego. I made the reservation online and gave Princess my credit card information for the fare and travel insurance.

Princess confirmed my booking, charging my card for the fare but not the insurance. The next day, I received a “shortfall notice” that the travel insurance charge must be paid by the end of the day. Since it was 10 p.m., I called the provided number but only reached their voicemail without an option to leave a message.

At 12:24 a.m. the next morning, I received a “cancellation notification.” When I called Princess, a representative said the reservation was canceled and couldn’t be reinstated. Princess also charged me a \$3,718 cancellation fee.

I disputed the fare charge with my credit card company, but Princess contested the chargeback. Can you help me get this fee removed?

DOUGLAS BERRY, *Summer, Wash.*

A. Princess Cruises shouldn’t have canceled your reservation and charged you a cancellation fee. You did everything right by providing your credit card information for both the fare and insurance. It seems their system failed to process the insurance payment. This is not your fault.

You followed the instructions in the shortfall notice but were unable to reach anyone because the cruise line’s office was closed. It’s unacceptable for the cruise line to cancel your reservation just a few hours later without giving you the chance to rectify the situation.

When you disputed the charge with your credit card company, Princess unfairly contested the reversal, claiming you had canceled the reservation. How absurd!

What went wrong? It looks like Princess was trying to process your card but couldn’t. Credit cards use sophisticated but fallible fraud detection algorithms to pick up any problematic charges. It’s possible that your credit card allowed the first Princess charge but blocked the second one, believing it was fraudulent. You can ensure this doesn’t happen by calling your bank to let them know you’re about to make a big purchase that could potentially get flagged.

You could have appealed to a manager at Princess. I have a list of contacts for Princess Cruise executives on my website, Elliott.org. I contacted Princess Cruises on your behalf, and it agreed to waive the cancellation fees and refund your money.

So, what happened? Although the cruise line wouldn’t tell me, you heard from a representative who offered you a few details. “When they finally looked at what happened with our reservation, it was obvious the problem was their automated reservation system,” you told me.

It’s a shame that it took my intervention to get Princess Cruises to do the right thing. If this ever happens to you, don’t accept a cancellation fee. Escalate your case to a supervisor or executive and stay with it until they return your money.

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

Zan Berube,

star of ‘Back to the Future,’ on patches as souvenirs, junk journaling, and ‘theater magic’

It’s fortunate for Methuen native Zan Berube that she loves to travel. Her role as the female lead in the national tour of “Back to the Future” has taken her across the country and will land at Citizens Opera House in Boston July 8-20. “I’ve been able to visit so many cities I otherwise wouldn’t have gotten to see,” said Berube, 27, whose performance as Lorraine Baines (played by Lea Thompson in the “Back to the Future” film trilogy) comes on the heels of her role as Anne Boleyn in the national tour of “Six.” She was not in the tour of “Six” that came through Boston, so Berube said she is “so excited” to perform at Citizens Opera House, where she attended many theater productions in her youth. “Little Zan is beaming with so much pride and excitement. I remember being in the audience, looking up on stage and thinking: Could that be me one day?,” she recalled. “My parents had a [theater series] subscription ... and so this feels like a full-circle moment.” Berube, who attended Walnut Hill School for the Arts in Natick for high school and then the University of Michigan, said she is looking forward to performing and “giving back” to friends and family “who inspired me and impacted me for most of my life.” She called the show “so much fun,” and said even those who are not familiar with the movie series on which the musical is based will enjoy this production. “There are scenes about love, there are car chases, there’s plutonium ... truly theater magic to the fullest extent,” she said. We caught up with Berube, who lives in New York City (when she’s not on tour), to talk about all things travel.

If you could travel anywhere right now, where would you go? Oh gosh, this is a tough one. I have the travel bug, so I guess it’s a good thing that part of my job is to travel to a new city almost every week. But, if I’m traveling just for the fun of it, my best friends and I have a trip scheduled for somewhere in the beautiful islands of Greece.

Do you prefer booking trips through a travel agent or on your own? Why not a combo of both? I will take any and all suggestions from people who have experience traveling to a place. But I also love the challenge of doing the research and coming up with an itinerary that suits me and makes me excited for the trip. And part of the excitement of the trip is the anticipation of the trip itself, so planning it in advance would make it all worth it.

Thoughts on an “unplugged” vacation? Absolutely, 100 percent. That sounds like a dream. It is not often that I truly get to be unplugged from the world, detach from social media, and, most importantly, my email. If I could leave technology at home and not refresh my email every few hours, I think I’d be a pretty happy gal. And if I am going on my ideal vacation, it will surely be unplugged and relaxing and involve plopping down on the beach — lathered in sunscreen, of course — with a refreshing drink in hand.

What has been your worst vacation experience? Unfortunately, on my last family vacation, the one thing you do not want to happen on a vacation came true. I got food poisoning. I could not leave my hotel room for almost two full days. All 25 of my family members were on the beach and I was looking down from my room. Not ideal.

What is your favorite childhood travel memory? I remember traveling to St. Kitts and taking a day trip



Zan Berube in California’s Napa Valley.

to the island of Nevis with my parents and my brother when he and I were in middle school. I remember it being the clearest water I had ever experienced. The beaches were gorgeous and my mom and I went diving to the ocean floor to look for sand dollars.

Do you vacation to relax, to learn, or for the adventure of it all? All of the above. It depends on the time and location as well. I think a good healthy dose of each makes the vacation worthwhile. I am mainly going to relax — especially if I am taking a vacation and coming right from a long contract. So, I will say 50 percent to relax, 30 percent to learn, and 20 percent to adventure.

What book do you plan on bringing with you to read on your next vacation? Oh, I love a good Emily Henry book. And her new book, “Great Big Beautiful Life,” is on my reading list; I can finish that in a few days.

If you could travel with one famous person/celebrity, who would it be? You know, I don’t follow the travels of many famous people and celebrities. But, if they enjoy a delicious meal, an adventure that involves a boat and blue, sunny skies, and traveling in style, I am so there. Count me in. I’d love to see what traveling looks like through their eyes.

What is the best gift to give a traveler? Depends on the kind of traveler, but to me, hand sanitizer and a powerful — yet compact — portable charger.

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

trip? Cheez-Its.

What is the coolest souvenir you’ve picked up on a vacation? I love vintage postcards or patches. I’ve been picking up patches or pins in every city I go to, to add them to a jean jacket at the end of the tour to show all my travels on this tour.

What is your favorite app/website for travel? Google Maps. I couldn’t live without it. And the Bell app for tracking restaurants I’ve been to and how the experience was.

What has travel taught you? So many things ... and it keeps on teaching me things to this day: time management, being able to adapt to any and all circumstances, not to be preoccupied about the little things, gratitude, and to call my family and friends as much as possible.

What is your best travel tip? Take a journal. Document your favorite moments and memories. I love junk journaling, and looking back on past adventures and experiences always puts a smile on my face. It’s like a personal scrapbook. And just to throw a logistical tip in there: TSA Pre-Check and Clear are the best money spent when it comes to traveling. Since I am in an airport at least once or sometimes twice a week, making that check-in process as quick as humanly possible is all I could ask for. And if you travel frequently, pick an airline and stick with it if possible. Rack up those frequent traveler miles.

JULIET PENNINGTON



HERE

JAPANESE ART ALIGHTS IN CAPE ESTATE

If you’re not traveling to Japan this summer, you can still immerse yourself in its imagery and culture at the “Contemporary Japanese Print Show” at Highfield Hall & Gardens in Falmouth. Showcasing the work of the College Women’s Association of Japan, the exhibit displays original work by 137 acclaimed Japanese printmakers. In addition, the show celebrates CWAJ’s 75th anniversary by spotlighting five pioneering women artists — Shinoda Toko, Yoshida Chizuko, Iwami Reika, Yanagisawa Noriko, and Tatsuno Toeko — whose innovations shaped contemporary Japanese printmaking. Visitors can view a wide range of printing techniques, from traditional woodblock and lithography to cutting-edge digital processes, created by artists working in representational and non-representational imagery. The show originated in Tokyo with a jury of experts from Ja-

pan’s top art institutions, and aims to bring global attention to contemporary prints as well as CWAJ’s mission to support women’s education through the arts. Sight-impaired visitors can experience a special hands-on art component. In addition, activities and programs associated with this exhibit will take place throughout the season. *June 21-Oct. 26. 508-495-1878, <https://highfieldhallandgardens.org/art/upcoming-art-exhibitions>*

THERE

FRANCE + WINE = BLISS

The aptly named Wine Lover tour offered by SLL Perigord Travel will surely make oenophiles jump with joy. The seven-day tour kicks off in Bordeaux with a walking tour of the historic center, sampling regional wines at a local bar and group dinner. Brush up on your French pronunciations the following three days as you tour area vineyards, starting at the Cité du Vin museum (for an immersive wine experi-

ence); Château Les Carmes Haut Brion and Château Pape Clement, both Graves, on the outskirts of Bordeaux; Château Haut Breton Larigaudière and Château de Kirwan in Margaux; and Château Tour Saint Christophe, a Saint-Émilion grand cru classé. After lunch in Saint-Émilion, the tour continues to the Perigord region where a Renaissance-style château with classic French gardens awaits. The castle, in the family of the founder of the travel company since 1764, will host the evening’s dinner. The following days focus on exceptional sites in the Perigord region: visit the prehistoric painted cave of Font-de-Gaume; stroll in the town where the first Cro-Magnon remains were discovered; take a private tour of the National Prehistory Museum; tour a liqueur distillery that has been in the same family for 180 years, and taste their esteemed walnut liqueur; ride a riverboat through caverns 110 yards below the surface in France’s first underground natural heritage site; and explore the village of Rocamadour, a pilgrimage site since the 12th century, perched on the side of a limestone cliff. Tours run mid-May through the end of September.



Tours sell out quickly, so book sooner rather than later for the 2025 August and September trips. *Single occupancy \$6,300. Double occupancy per person \$5,500, includes accommodations, van transportation, entrance fees and guides; breakfast and lunch each day, and two special dinners. 1-786-659-6901 (WhatsApp), www.sllperigordtravel.com/itinerary-wine-lover/*

EVERYWHERE

LOLLING WITH EARTH LOUNGER

Chill out in comfort and style with the Earth Lounger from outdoor living brand Avkara. Whether you’re heading to the beach, lake, pool, or a picnic in the park, you’ll want to include this in your travel gear essentials. The lounge’s water-resistant, oversize mat and large, inflatable and deflatable backrest allow you to relax on sand or grass without needing to pack and carry a chair. In addition to offering ergonomic support, the backrest sports two large side pockets for stashing your phone, keys, and other personal items. Made of soft, durable material, the mat and lounge are easy to clean. Additional features include four large corner pockets and loops with ground stakes for weighing the mat down on windy days; a removable air bladder for convenient maintenance; and a drawstring storage bag. The backrest inflates quickly using any pump with a large attachment. When you’re ready to head home, unplug the wide valve, release the air completely, and fold to place in the travel bag. Tiny Pump and Foot Pump sold separately or in bundles. \$119. <https://avkaralounger.com>

NECEE REGIS