

# The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

## TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

### ITA Airways lost my luggage. Why won't it cover my expenses?

By Christopher Elliott  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

**Q.** I recently flew from Rome to Palermo, Italy, on ITA Airways. Unfortunately, my luggage did not. I filed a claim immediately at Palermo Airport. I didn't receive my luggage until the end of my trip a week later.

Since my luggage was missing the entire trip, I had to make purchases, including luggage. My coat was in my suitcase. Thank God another woman on my tour lent me her coat. The weather was cold with heavy rain.

So many things that I needed were difficult to purchase because we returned from tours late in the day. I think I did a good job of keeping my cost of purchases to a minimum, but I still spent \$992. I have copies of my receipts.

ITA Airways wants to reimburse me \$733. I'd like to be fully reimbursed. Can you help me?

JACQUELINE BARTOLINI,  
Bradenton, Fla.

**A.** ITA Airways is liable for the entire \$992. Under the Montreal Convention, if an airline loses, damages or delays your checked luggage, you're entitled to compensation up to an amount of about \$1,400 (unless there's damage caused by an "inherent" defect in the baggage).

Bottom line: If you can prove that you purchased these items while you were waiting for your luggage, ITA Airways should cover them.

Unfortunately, airlines don't always pay what they're supposed to. They may scrutinize your list of items and say, "We don't think you really needed that." Looking at your list, I can see a few items that might have raised eyebrows, including \$85 in cosmetics, a \$6 mirror and a pair of shoes for \$172. However, you were careful to document each purchase and noted the reasons for buying each item.

### I know very experienced travelers who never check their luggage.

I think ITA Airways needed to tell you why it wouldn't cover certain items, but I don't see it justifying its decision not to reimburse you anywhere in your correspondence with the airline.

You might have avoided these problems by traveling light and carrying your luggage on the plane. I know this sounds unreasonable, but take it from someone who lives out of his luggage — it's doable.

I know very experienced travelers who never check their luggage. They buy any toiletries they need at their destination if it exceeds 3.4 ounces, like a large tube of toothpaste or a bottle of shampoo. (I have all my liquids in 3.4-ounce, airplane-safe containers.)

You could have appealed this to an executive at ITA Airways. I publish the names, numbers and email addresses of the ITA Airways executives on my consumer advocacy site, Elliott.org.

Given that ITA Airways didn't really explain why it shorted you \$259, I thought it was worth asking. So I did. After you reached out to my consumer advocacy team, we checked with ITA Airways. At first, the airline said it couldn't refund you because it didn't have documentation for some items. But it did have them, and you showed them the receipts again.

Finally, 10 months after you lost your luggage, ITA Airways sent us the following statement: "ITA Airways apologizes for the disruption and confirms that the customer will receive a refund for the expenses related to the purchase of items which occurred due to this inconvenience."

Then it sent you a check for \$733. I contacted ITA again and asked it to cover the rest of your expenses, as agreed. It finally did.

Christopher Elliott is the founder of Elliott Advocacy ([elliottadvocacy.org](http://elliottadvocacy.org)), a nonprofit that helps consumers solve their problems. Email him at [chris@elliott.org](mailto:chris@elliott.org) or by contacting him at [elliottadvocacy.org/help](http://elliottadvocacy.org/help).

## THE VIP LOUNGE

### Brandon Lee Harris on his role in 'MJ: The Musical' and the beauty of road trips

**W**hen he was in middle school, Brandon Lee Harris was cast as the scarecrow in his school's production of "The Wiz." It was the same role played in the movie by Michael Jackson, Harris's childhood idol. Fast forward nearly a decade and the actor, singer, and dancer was cast in the Tony Award-winning show "MJ: The Musical" on Broadway. Now, the 24-year-old Berklee College of Music graduate is performing in the national tour of the musical, coming to Citizens Bank Opera House June 18 through July 7. Centered around the making of the 1992 Dangerous World Tour, the musical features three actors playing Jackson at different stages in his career. Harris plays "middle Michael" (from the Victory tour era) in the show. "This is a very full-circle experience for me and I am super, super grateful for this opportunity," Harris said in a recent phone interview. "My entire family ... we're all big Michael Jackson fans — and he and I even share a birthday [Aug. 29]." He called "MJ: The Musical" a "beautiful show" that conveys Jackson's "artistry and how he strives for perfection. If folks want to be inspired and moved by something, this is the show to do it to." Harris, who splits his time between Boston and Chicago when he is not on tour, said he is looking forward to performing in Boston and visiting his alma mater, from which he graduated in 2021 with a bachelor of arts degree in professional musical. We caught up with Harris to talk about all things travel.

**If you could travel anywhere right now, where would you go?** Jamaica for a couple days on a beach, enjoying the weather and the food.

**Do you prefer booking trips through a travel agent or on your own?** On my own. I'm way too controlling.

**Thoughts on an "unplugged" vacation?** I think it can be a little nerve-racking to really surrender to it, but it's super relaxing and re-centering when you can.

**What has been your worst vacation experience?** I honestly don't think that I've had one. Fingers crossed it stays that way.

**What is your favorite childhood travel memory?** Road trips in our van to visit my grandmother in Oklahoma. My other four siblings would fall asleep, but I always stayed awake and watched my dad drive through the middle of the night. I think it's part of why I love road trips — especially when it's really late or really early.

**Do you vacation to relax, to learn, or for the adventure of it all?** All of the above.

**What book do you plan to bring with you to read on your next vacation?** "Clarity and Connection" by Yung Pueblo.



Brandon Lee Harris.

**If you could travel with one famous person/celebrity, who would it be?** Beyoncé — anywhere, any day.

**What is the best gift to give a traveler?** I love picking up shot glasses when I'm traveling to give to people as gifts. I actually got that idea from my older sister. She loves shot glasses from different places, so I started picking them up now, too.

**What is your go-to snack for a flight or a road trip?** I love sweets, so I'd say Life Saver gummies or Sour Patch Kids — unless I need something savory, in which case I'll do chips.

**What is the coolest souvenir you've picked up on a vacation?** I got a medal for climbing the Great

Wall of China, which was pretty cool. In college, I was in an a cappella group, "Upper Structure," and sophomore year we got to go to Beijing and Hong Kong — two different trips a month apart. We performed at an a cappella festival and even got to perform on the wall.

**What is your favorite app/website for travel?** I'm fairly loyal to Expedia.

**What has travel taught you?** Just how much of a beautiful world there is to see. I want to experience it all.

**What is your best travel tip?** Embrace the different cultures around you and try it all.

JULIET PENNINGTON



## HERE

### HYDRANGEA CELEBRATION BLOOMS ON CAPE COD

Summer is finally here, and with it comes the brilliant floral blossoms at the Cape Cod Hydrangea Festival (July 5-14). This Cape-wide 10-day annual event showcases all things flowers and plants at private garden tours, workshops, and lectures by international horticulturalists, classes, and promotions at participating home centers and nurseries, and art exhibits and painting demonstrations of (what else!) flowers. With so many events, be sure to check the website for a calendar of daily offerings, especially the home garden tours. Beginning July 5, stroll the grounds at the Heritage Museum & Gardens in Sandwich to discover eight species of hydrangeas and more than 170 cultivars; take a walking tour of historic homes and gardens, greeted by costumed docents, with the Sandwich Arts Alliance (July 10); or attend the Hydrangea Art Soiree at the Cape Cod Art Center, Barnstable, a cocktail party with music, painting demo, art auction, and sales (July 13). Prices vary by event. Private garden tours are \$5 per person per garden and support local nonprofits.

[www.capecodchamber.org/events/featured-events/cape-cod-hydrangea-fest](http://www.capecodchamber.org/events/featured-events/cape-cod-hydrangea-fest)

### CAPE RESORTS' BEACHY UPGRADES

Looking for a place to stay during the Hydrangea Festival? Red Jacket Resorts, a collection of five properties on the Yarmouth shores, makes its summer 2024 debut with a new look thanks to a comprehensive \$40 million renovation, including at three of the collection's five properties (Red Jacket Beach Resort, Riviera Beach Resort, and Blue Water Resort) all located within a 1-mile stretch of beach on the Atlantic. Upgrades include a collective 397 newly designed guest rooms, cottages, and family suites, lobby spaces, food and beverage outlets, as well as refreshed pool experi-



ences and beachfront amenities. During the festival, the Red Jacket Beach Resort will host a reception for New England cookbook author Julia Dzafic to celebrate the launch of her new book, "Garden Grown" (July 7). In addition, The Blue Bash, a curated Pop & Shop, features classic coastal and hydrangea art by local artisans (July 10, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.). Rates vary per property. Red Jacket Beach summer rates from \$385; Blue Water from \$327; Riviera Beach from \$335. [www.redjacketresorts.com](http://www.redjacketresorts.com)

## THERE

### FUN TIMES IN FUNDY ISLES

Those looking for an island-hopping trip close to New England need look no further than Fundy Isles in New Brunswick. Located at the mouth of the Bay of Fundy — famous for its extremely high and low tides — three of the 25-plus islands are inhabited, and reachable by car or ferry. From Lubec, Maine, drive across the Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial Bridge to reach Campobello Island, best known as the summer residence (a 34-room "cottage") of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt. Guided house tours and daily tea and cookies are only part of the island experience, as one won't want to miss the extensive hiking trails and stunning views from coastal headlands. This summer, the Roosevelt Campobello International Park, jointly administered by Canada and the United States, celebrates its 60th anniversary with a season-long series of events and programs, including a 10-day extravaganza with music, entertainers, historic tours, lectures,

and other celebratory activities. (July 22-31). [www.rooseveltcampobello.org](http://www.rooseveltcampobello.org) The other two islands are accessible by seasonal ferries. Visit Deer Island, known for its fishing villages and large tidal whirlpool, via ferry from Campobello Island or L'Etete, New Brunswick. A 90-minute ferry to Grand Manan departs from Blacks Harbour, New Brunswick. Often called a "nature lover's paradise," the island boasts great birdwatching, hiking and biking trails, canoe and kayaking opportunities, and more. [www.bayoffundy.com/communities/new-brunswick/fundy-isles](http://www.bayoffundy.com/communities/new-brunswick/fundy-isles)

## EVERYWHERE



### LIGHTWEIGHT BEACH ACCESSORIES

Packing for a beach vacation? Check out the new innovative beach towels and lounge chair bands by Lay & Stay. The double-sided, compact, and lightweight towels, available in a wide selection of decorative and colorful designs, are easy to pack in their mesh drawstring bags. But what makes these towels extra special are the corner rings for four securing stakes. Simply press the stakes through the rings and into the sand to keep the towel from needing constant readjustment, or from flying away on a windy day. \$45. If you're more of a beach chair person, Lay & Stay's new lounge chair bands are for you. Available in five bright colors, the bands will keep your towel from slipping down or flapping in the wind. Perfect for beach days, poolside, or even on a cruise ship deck — where your neighboring sunbathers will be jealous. \$15. [www.layandstaybeachtowels.com/shop.html#/](http://www.layandstaybeachtowels.com/shop.html#/)

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