

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

Complications stall Ovago refund for canceled airline tickets

By Christopher Elliott
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Q. I booked four airline tickets from Seattle to Lisbon from Ovago, an online travel agency, in December 2019. As our travel date approached last May, I became concerned about our flights, so I contacted our airlines (Air Canada and Lufthansa). A representative told us that our flights had been canceled and that I needed to talk to Ovago about a refund.

I contacted Ovago, and a representative told me they were in the process of determining refunds, and that we would likely receive a refund, less a “processing fee.” An Ovago representative promised to contact us.

No one called or reached out, so I called Ovago. An agent told me they were working on it and that they would get back to me as soon as they heard from the airline. Ovago never called us.

I filed an unsuccessful credit card dispute and an unsuccessful complaint with the Consumer Protection Division of the Washington State Attorney General’s office. While that complaint was in process, however, we received an e-mail from Ovago that said that a full refund is allowed. We have mountains of documentation about our trying to get a refund from Ovago in compliance with their stated policy of “a full refund if the flight is canceled.” Can you help us get our \$4,722 back?

DANIEL QUINN-SHEA, *Seattle*

A. If your airlines canceled your flights, you should get a fast and full refund. I can’t believe your credit card company didn’t see it that way and sided with the online travel agency.

Yours was a complicated case. For starters, Ovago preferred communicating by phone. That means you never received anything in writing to confirm your refund request last year. The only written response appears to be Ovago’s rebuttal to your credit card dispute and a brief acknowledgment that it would process a refund earlier this year. That’s unfortunate.

It looks as if your online agency made some claims about your tickets that you say were untrue. That further clouded the issue, and it may have confused your credit card issuer. Another unfortunate fact: Filing a credit card dispute can further slow a refund. I think that may have happened in your case.

In a perfect world, both your online travel agency and credit card company would be on your side, fighting to ensure you receive a timely refund from an airline.

Remember, under Department of Transportation regulations, if an airline cancels your flight, you’re entitled to a refund within seven business days if you paid by credit card and 20 business days if you paid by cash or check. The airline can’t force you to accept a ticket credit.

I think Ovago just needed a nudge. It had already agreed in writing to give you a full refund. I contacted the company, and you received your \$4,722 back.

Christopher Elliott is the chief advocacy officer of Elliott Advocacy, a nonprofit organization that helps consumers resolve their problems. Elliott’s latest book is “How To Be The World’s Smartest Traveler” (National Geographic). Contact him at elliott.org/help or chris@elliott.org.



ADOBE

THE VIP LOUNGE



Ana Popovic and her family in Cajarc, in the south of France.

Ana Popovic loves going to Italy, getting massages in Bali, and performing in Massachusetts

Living in Manhattan Beach, Calif., is like “being on a permanent vacation” for musician Ana Popovic. “Obviously because of my line of work, I can live anywhere. Manhattan Beach has the best air and temperature, the widest beach, the best schools. ... It’s really the best of Los Angeles but more like a village — and we’re a few blocks from the beach and only 10 minutes from the airport, which is important to me.” Popovic, 45, has been making music — her own style of rock and blues with everything from soul to funk in the mix — and touring around the world for more than two decades. She is arguably best known for adept guitar playing that has garnered attention from some of the music industry’s best-known artists, including Bruce Springsteen, who, several years back, called Popovic “one helluva guitar player.” She will be bringing her unique style (with a five-member band) to the Bay State in early July, for gigs in New Bedford, on Cape Cod, and, on July 10, at The Center for Arts in Natick. “I love performing in Massachusetts. The audiences are great and have an understanding of a broad range of musical genres,” she said. “I can play a jazzy song and I can take it someplace where I don’t necessarily take it every evening and they would follow.” We caught up with the Belgrade, Serbia, native — who lives in California with her husband, Mark Van Meurs, who also works in the music industry, managing and booking bands, their two children, Luuk, 13, and Lenna, 9, and their 1-

year-old puppy, Enzo — to talk about all things travel.

Favorite vacation destination?

Italy is our family’s favorite destination. The kids love it, the food is incredible, and the wine ... it’s the best. Anytime we get a chance, that’s where we go — Tuscany, Puglia, Mediterranean Coast, the lakes. ... However, Mark and I have our own list and that is: Isla Margarita in Venezuela. We took our first vacation together [in Isla Margarita] and it was just incredible. Now you can’t even go there because of [the] political situation, but back when we met in 2003, it was a paradise; Brazil would be second. We lasted three weeks with just our backpacks. Carnival in Rio and Salvador were the highlights. Incredible food and just a magical place; Bali, an incredible place; Route 1 in California, from Los Angeles to San Francisco and all of the stops in between.

Favorite food or drink while vacationing?

Aperol spritz and wine, and pasta allo scoglio in Italy; mojito and caipirinha in Brazil; sushi in Tokyo; Indian food in London or India; and the food in Bahrain was on another level!

Where would you like to travel to but haven’t?

I always dreamed about visiting Fiji and that’s still on my list. I read novels about it and there was something calling me always — also because I visited an island — New Caledonia — practically next door to Fiji

and was simply blown away with the art, the food ... and one of my favorite art galleries was on that island.

One item you can’t leave home without when traveling?

A good book and/or an interior design/architecture magazine.

Aisle or window?

Window. I love to be undisturbed while traveling and try not to disturb people next to me if I don’t have to. And that window comes in handy if you want to lay your head and pillow on it.

Favorite childhood travel memory?

Every year we camped all over Greece and Italy. It was the most wonderful time, and brings back such great memories. And we would go for three weeks — sometimes staying at the same camp, sometimes traveling from place to place. It was just pure joy.

Guilty pleasure when traveling?

Massages. I book massages wherever I go. The best were in — you probably can guess — Bali.

Best travel tip?

Arrive at the airport two hours before your flight so that the vacation can start without that first frustration.

JULIET PENNINGTON

HERE

IDYLIC ISLAND GETAWAY REOPENS IN MAINE

Those looking for an idyllic island getaway may want to consider the Inn at Diamond Cove. Located on Great Diamond Island in Casco Bay, Maine — a 30-minute ferry or water-taxi ride from Portland’s Old Port district — the property offers fun that is free from crowds. Once the site of Fort McKinley, the small car-free private island community (where the primary modes of transportation are golf carts and bicycles) offers secluded beaches, miles of hiking trails, kayaking, paddle boarding and other activities perfect for families and couples looking for a summer escape. The Inn at Diamond Cove’s condominium accommodations include suites with kitchens, heated swimming pool with hot tub and cabana bar, tennis courts, indoor basketball court, and game room with duckpin bowling, pool table, and arcade games. Guests will be picked up at the marina in golf carts upon arrival. Minimum three-night-stay. Rates from \$389. 207-805-9836, www.innatdiamondcove.com

NEW OWNERS ADD ZEST TO CLASSIC INN

Classic Massachusetts oceanfront hotel, The Emerson Inn, opened this season with new owners, a refreshed look, and modern amenities. Situated between Halibut Point and Bearskin Neck in Rockport, the inn’s 34 renovated rooms and suites are anything-but-stuffy with clean lines and contemporary sensibilities. Guests can en-

joy an outdoor oceanview pool; daily breakfast (also open to the public); small bites and craft cocktails in a lounge bar with a European vibe; and monthly moonrise parties. Prix-fixe meals available on weekends in the restaurant by reservation only. Check online for specials, including \$5 ticket discounts at the nearby Gloucester Stage. Rates from \$269. 978-546-6321, www.themersoninn.com

THERE

AMERICANA-INSPIRED HOTEL BRAND DEBUTS

Fans of upmarket luxury hotel brand Lark will be happy to learn the company is launching a collection of contemporary properties this summer inspired by the American tradition of hitting the open road. Aimed at mid-market travelers, from families to adventure-seeking couples and groups of friends, the accessibly-priced Bluebird by Lark accommodations breathe new life into existing vintage motor lodge properties, ski lodges, and surf shacks. The first property to debut, Spa City Motor Lodge in Saratoga Springs, features 42 airy guest rooms and suites surrounding a shared indoor space outfitted with a communal coffee bar. With nine different room types, the hotel can comfortably accommodate groups of any size. The company plans a half-dozen new openings in the coming year, including sea-inspired Parker Beach Lodge in South Yarmouth (opening mid-July); boutique basecamp Tälta Lodge in Stowe; and The Hunter, an alpine-inspired ski lodge in the Catskills. Rates at Spa City Motor Lodge from

\$101. 518-306-4063, www.bluebirdhotels.com/hotels/spa-city

SAFARI-STYLE ACCOMMODATIONS IN UTAH

You won’t need a passport to stay in the safari-style accommodations at Under Canvas Lake Powell-Grand Staircase. Located on a Canyon Rim Plateau (with its own slot canyon), the property is a perfect spot to perch while exploring the wonders of the American Southwest — including towering mesas, Horseshoe Bend, Lone Rock Beach and Lake Powell. The 50-tent glamping retreat features private en suite bathrooms with hot showers, king beds with plush linens, in-tent wood-burning stoves, and sweeping views extending for miles across Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. Amenities include on-site dining, organic bath products, fire pit and s’mores, bedside battery-charging packs, and complimentary activities such as morning yoga, kid games, and more. Tents sleep 2-4 people. Available through Oct. 31, 2022, dates: April 7-Oct. 31. Rates from \$279. 888-496-1148, www.undercanvas.com/camps/lake-powell.

EVERYWHERE

PORTABLE AIR PURIFICATION SYSTEM

We’re traveling again. Yay! Virus variations are still active. Boo! Those with compromised immune systems, or anyone, actually — vaccinated or not — who are concerned about staying safe, may want to consider airKAVE Portable, an antiviral handheld air

sanitizer that can be taken anywhere. Designed to kill harmful airborne pathogens, including SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19), influenza, MRSA, tuberculosis and more, this compact 7-inch tall, 3.3-inch-wide battery-powered device can be taken wherever you go, from the airport gate to your hotel room. (Or take on the road; conveniently fits in car cup holders.) Using filterless technology, airKAVE destroys microorganisms at the molecular level. Air is pulled into an internal Plasmicide reactor, creating a thunderstorm of micro-lightning plasma that sanitizes air within a fraction of a second. \$299 single; \$499 pair. www.airkave.com.

JUMP START YOUR TRAVEL GEAR

Get peace of mind on your next road trip with the newest must-have gadget for your car, the JumpStart 3-in-1 Vehicle Jump Starter, Flashlight & Power Bank by Limitless. Featuring a flashlight (98W, 330 Lumen LED with four power modes: high beam, low beam, SOS and strobe); and power bank (for charging one USB device) packed in a single, high powered unit, the product is also compatible for jump starting eight-cylinder engines up to 5.0 liters, including boats, ATVs, motorcycles, trucks, SUVs and riding mowers. Ergonomic aluminum design stores easily in boot of your car. Available in six colors. \$119. JumpStart 10-in-1 adds features such as USB wall charging adapter, and carrying strap and pouch. \$139. 855-843-4828, limitless-innovations.com/collections/jump-starters.

NECEE REGIS