

# The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

## TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER



RODRIGO ABD/AP

An Aerolíneas Argentinas plane taxis to the runway for takeoff at the Jorge Newbery airport in Buenos Aires.

## I tried to cancel my ticket to Argentina. Can you find my refund?

By Christopher Elliott  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

**Q.** I'm having a problem with a flight refund and need your help. I recently booked a round-trip flight on Aerolíneas Argentinas from Miami to Buenos Aires. The flight was supposed to depart at 5:15 p.m. I received an email from the airline two months before my departure, advising me that the flight was now going to depart at 8:05 a.m. the same day. This was not going to work for me because I was flying from my hometown of Atlanta to Miami earlier that day.

I tried calling Aerolíneas Argentinas' toll-free number six times. Each time, there was no answer; the call just dropped. I went on the airline website and completed the cancellation request. I received an automated acknowledgment and a case number, but I have not heard from the airline since then.

I sent two successive emails to the airline. I have also tried communicating with it on WhatsApp, but it has not responded. I would like Aerolíneas Argentinas to cancel the reservation and issue a full refund. Can you help me get my \$571 back?

CHRISTINA SKINNER,  
Lawrenceville, Ga.

**A.** Aerolíneas Argentinas should have sent you a refund within a week. That's not just my opinion; it's a government requirement. If you pay by credit card, the Department of Transportation gives the airline seven days; if it's by cash or check, the airline has 20 days.

Why didn't it give you a refund? Well, no airline wants to refund a ticket, so Aerolíneas Argentinas is hardly alone. I've seen them hem and haw and try to push passengers to take a different flight. But this was a significant schedule change, which means that you can ask for a refund.

The other issue is that your ticket change happened during a turbulent time for Argentina. It was in the middle of an election, and Aerolíneas Argentinas was almost certainly affected, since it is the state-owned flag carrier.

But I don't want to make any excuses for the airline. It should have refunded you promptly. Interestingly, this was a direct booking, so there was no online travel agency involved. You did an excellent job of keeping a paper trail between you and the airline, although it was mostly emails to the airline with no response.

You might have tried escalating this to one of the executives whose names I publish on my consumer advocacy site, Elliott.org. But given all that was going on at the time, I'm not sure if they would have responded.

I contacted Aerolíneas Argentinas on your behalf. A few weeks later, you sent me an update:

"I wanted to provide the happy news that Aerolíneas Argentinas has responded and, as of today, has fully refunded my airfare to my American Express account," you wrote. "Thank you so much for your assistance in contacting them and spurring them into action!"

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

## THE VIP LOUNGE

# Cole Strange

on Dramamine, nacho cheese Doritos, and, most importantly, helping veterans

**N**ew England Patriots offensive lineman Cole Strange has a soft spot in his heart for veterans — so much so that in September 2023 he created a foundation to honor, support, and show appreciation for the sacrifices of military veterans impacted by physical or mental health issues. "I feel like they've done more than other citizens by putting themselves at risk," said Strange, 25, when asked why he chose this cause. "It's common sense to me that they should get help. ... I feel that as a country, we need to do more for those folks." The Knoxville, Tenn., native held a farm-to-table fundraiser last month at Ward's Berry Farm in Sharon and is looking forward to holding other events to raise funds for agencies and organizations that help veterans. Strange also enjoys meeting with veterans and hearing about their experiences. During a recent phone conversation, Strange said he had lunch earlier that day with 70 veterans at Clear Path for Veterans New England in Devens. "It was emotional," he said. The 6-foot-5-inch left guard, who was injured during the Dec. 17, 2023, home game against the Kansas City Chiefs, said he will miss the start of the upcoming season, but will return to the field sometime this fall. We caught up with Strange, who lives in Foxborough with his girlfriend, Mallary Quaderer, a dental student and Patriots cheerleader, and their dog, Otto, a schnauzer-shih tzu mix, to talk about all things travel.

**If you could travel anywhere right now, where would you go?** I want to travel to Copenhagen in Denmark. When the Patriots traveled to Germany for our game [in Frankfurt against the Indianapolis Colts on Nov. 12, 2023], so many of my teammates mentioned that they loved visiting Copenhagen and how clean and nice it was.

**Do you prefer booking trips through a travel agent or on your own?** When it comes to booking travel I am a do-it-yourself guy. I always book my own flights and hotels.

**Thoughts on an "unplugged" vacation?** I am all for unplugged vacations. I love any excuse to unplug from the digital world and try to unplug as much as I can.

**What has been your worst vacation experience?** My family always enjoyed our vacations together, but I remember one vacation when I was in high school where I was miserable for a couple of days. We were on the Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Destin, Fla., and we went deep-sea fishing. I was seasick after the first 30 minutes and had the worst sunburn of my life. I had an awful time. I love to fish, so after that charter trip, I learned my lesson. Now when I go out on the water, I take my Dramamine and bring sunscreen.

**What is your favorite childhood travel memory?** Every year during my childhood, my family drove from Knoxville to the Panama City area to enjoy the Gulf of Mexico. While I enjoyed all of those vacations, the years that my grandmother was alive and able to join us were my favorite vacations. Every year — before her death — she would make the drive with us to Florida and was a great travel buddy for me.

**Do you vacation to relax, to learn, or for the adventure of it all?** It is hard for me to pick just one. I am going to go with a combination. I always make



Cole Strange and his girlfriend, Mallary Quaderer, at Dollywood in Pigeon Forge, Tenn.

time to relax on vacation and can't come home without a little adventure during the trip.

**What book do you plan on bringing with you to read on your next vacation?** Right now, my books-to-read are focused on learning more about finances. I am moving through books with subjects that include general investing, real estate investing, [and] securing my financial future. I want to be able to make wise, educated decisions about my finances, and reading is a great way to become more knowledgeable.

**If you could travel with one famous person/celebrity, who would it be?** My dream vacation buddy would be Ronnie Van Zant, the original lead vocalist of Lynyrd Skynyrd who died in a plane crash [in 1977 at age 29]. It would be great to travel with someone with a huge passion for life and having a good time. I read that he was always up for adventure and exploring, and that is my approach to traveling.

**What is the best gift to give a traveler?** The best gift to give a traveler would be a pair of binoculars.

You can't go wrong for any type of trip. Binoculars are as great on the water as they are in the mountains.

**What is your go-to snack for a flight or a road trip?** I don't have a go-to snack but I am pretty set on lunch or dinner. I am always up for a burger or sandwich with chips. And the chips have to be original nacho cheese Doritos.

**What is the coolest souvenir you've picked up on a vacation?** On one of our beach vacations during my childhood, I bought a [so-called] Megalodon tooth from a beach tourist stand. I know now that it was fake, but I carried that around forever.

**What has travel taught you?** Not to trust the authenticity of the souvenirs I am buying — but to remember whether they are real or not, I should appreciate them just for the memory of the moment and the experience of the travel.

**What is your best travel tip?** If you don't want to spend the money upgrading to first class, always spend the extra to upgrade to the exit row.

JULIET PENNINGTON



## HERE

### SUMMER SCULPTURE TRAILS

Sculpture blooms along hiking trails in Massachusetts every summer, delighting both art and nature lovers. The better-known exhibitions may already be on your radar, including Sculpture at The Mount in Lenox; Contemporary Sculpture at Chesterwood in Stockbridge; TurnPark Art Space in West Stockbridge; and Studios Without Walls in Riverway Park, Brookline.

One outdoor art stroll to add to your itinerary is the Sculpture Trail in Middlefield, a showcase of the abstract and figurative cast bronze work of Andrew DeVries. This summer marks the fifth year of the trail, where 40 large bronze sculptures enliven a meandering path in an unspoiled landscape, including a wildflower meadow and shaded groves that follow the middle branch of the pristine Westfield River. The leisurely 30-minute walk begins and ends at the artist's atelier, River Studios, adjacent to DeVries Fine Art International gallery (formerly in Lenox) featuring indoor sculptures,

paintings, and works on paper that celebrate the artist's 45th career anniversary. The trail and gallery are open through Oct. 27 on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., and by appointment. On Aug. 31 and Oct. 12, DeVries will demonstrate the ancient process of lost wax bronze casting, working from an original clay model through its transformation into a bronze expression of the artist's vision. Tickets are limited to 12 people by reservation. \$25 per person. Walking the trail is free. [andrewdevries.com/sculpture-trail-berkshires](http://andrewdevries.com/sculpture-trail-berkshires)

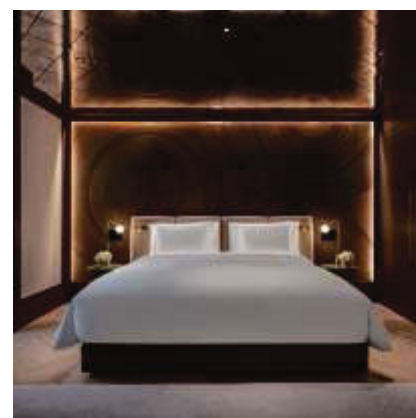
## THERE

### VIENNA DIRECT FLIGHTS AND LUXE HOTEL DEBUT

Looking for an alternative to the usual European destinations for your next vacation? Austria's capital city, Vienna, offers plenty to experience for music, art, architecture, wine, and food lovers alike. This month, Austrian Airlines makes it easier than ever to fly to Vienna with the launch of a new year-round route between Vienna International Airport and Boston Logan In-

ternational Airport. The nine-hour flight is the first-ever direct service between the two cities, providing up to six flights per week, year-round.

[www.austrian.com/us/en/homepage](http://www.austrian.com/us/en/homepage) Vienna's walkable city center is a desirable spot to stay. Overlooking the Stadtpark, the city's first public green space, the Almanac Palais Vienna is a recently-opened boutique property set inside a pair of former palais dating to 1871. Located on the Ringstrasse, the town's most elegant boulevard, the hotel is walking distance to local landmarks including the Vienna State Opera House, St. Stephen's Cathedral, and the Museum of Applied Arts. The property's recent restoration transformed the historic palais into a luxury 80-suite, 31-guestroom stay that is steeped in Viennese heritage. Amenities include a two-floor, marble-clad spa and wellness sanctuary with 15-yard indoor pool with thermal waters; alpine-inspired Donnersmarkt Restaurant serving "plant-forward" cuisine; and Elias Coffee Shop, providing a nod to Vienna's rich café culture. Rates from \$475 per night. [www.almanachotels.com/vienna](http://www.almanachotels.com/vienna)



## EVERYWHERE

### STYLISH AND SECURE TRAVEL BELT

Runners already know the value of FlipBelt, a hands-free way to carry a phone and keys around the waist without chafing and bouncing when on the trail. Now travelers are learning the value of this running belt which can also securely hold a passport, cash, hotel keys and other critical items. The slim and attractive belts, available in a variety of colors and sizes, are preferable to bulky money belts and other uncomfortable anti-pick-pocket products. Can also be used at the gym and on active adventures such as mountain biking and horseback riding. (Useful also for carrying medical devices like insulin pumps and epi pens.) An internal key hook provides added security. Machine washable. \$37. Additional models include FlipBelt Running Light (\$79) and Hydration Belt (\$60) that holds custom curved water bottles (from \$13). [flipbelt.com](http://flipbelt.com)

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