

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

United Airlines changes flight, causing a missed connection

By Christopher Elliott
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Q. My family and I booked flights from Berlin to Seattle on Lufthansa using United Airlines miles. Our initial itinerary had us flying from Berlin to Munich to Seattle. Lufthansa canceled the Munich to Seattle flight, rebooking us on a flight from Berlin to Frankfurt, Germany, then to Seattle, with a stopover in Frankfurt of only 1 hour and 25 minutes.

My daughter requires a powered wheelchair and a ventilator. This connection time was not enough time to make our flight. I contacted United, and they rebooked us on a flight from Berlin to Frankfurt, with an overnight stay in Frankfurt to ensure that we had enough time for our connecting flight from Frankfurt to Seattle.

But then United changed the flight, this time booking us with connecting flights from Frankfurt to Washington Dulles to Seattle. This is a much longer flight duration — at least 5 hours longer than the direct flight — and adds an extra connection, which would be very difficult for my daughter.

When I contacted United to complain, an agent who had rebooked our flights had mistakenly canceled the Lufthansa direct flight, and because there were no more award seats available, United rebooked us on the connecting flights. When I asked United to fix the problem, the airline only offered us a \$75 voucher per person, which is unacceptable.

We need United to either book us on the direct Lufthansa flight or provide us with adequate compensation for this mistake.

BRIAN LANDMANN,
Woodinville, Wash.

A. When an airline makes a mistake, the airline must fix it, not you. This was quite a mistake — and an insensitive one at that. I can't even make an international connection in Frankfurt in less than 1.5 hours. (At least I couldn't the last time I tried.) How do they expect someone in a wheelchair to make it?

Your case raises several questions. For example, are you considered a second-class citizen if you are redeeming miles for your flight? You probably felt this way, but actually the opposite should be true. Your airline should be treating you better because of your loyalty. Someone should have ensured that you were booked on flights with reasonable connection times; after all, you're one of United's best customers.

Another question: Should United have gone the extra mile for a passenger with a disability? Clearly, yes. United has a dedicated department for special-needs passengers that should have been able to help. I didn't see any correspondence with this department in your paper trail, but it might have been a shortcut to a solution.

You might have also tried reaching out to one of the United executives. I publish their names, numbers, and email addresses on my consumer advocacy site, Elliott.org. Ultimately, when I look at your itinerary, I might have gone with an Icelandair flight with one stop in Reykjavik, Iceland, which would have gotten you to Seattle in about 12 hours. You could have saved your points for another flight.

I contacted United on your behalf. After reviewing your case, the airline agreed to rebook you on a flight from Berlin to Newark, N.J., with a two-night layover in Newark, followed by a direct flight from Newark to Seattle. This new itinerary allows enough time for your daughter to comfortably transfer between flights. The airline also issued you a \$350 voucher per person as compensation for the inconvenience caused by the changes to your itinerary.

While the new itinerary may not be perfect, it allows your family to travel comfortably and safely.

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

'I never phone it in.'

Bruce Hornsby talks about performing, traveling, and that time he wore contacts for too long

Grammy Award-winning musician Bruce Hornsby is known for his interactive performances, where, for decades, he has engaged audiences by taking song requests during shows. And when the singer-songwriter and pianist performs at the Cape Cod Jazz & Arts Festival (at the Wequasset Resort and Golf Club in Harwich) on July 30, that is just what he will do. "I'm looking forward to the concert," said Hornsby, 70, during a recent phone call. He noted that this is the first time he's performing at the festival. "I love playing solo. It's a good way [for audiences] to hear me, and it's an attempt at deep musicianship. It's also an [opportunity] to showcase songwriting, which I've been doing for many years now," he said. "I never phone it in. I mean it every time I'm playing." Hornsby, who was born in Richmond, Va., and raised in Williamsburg, Va., has a diverse musical repertoire that is influenced by multiple genres, including folk rock, jazz, and bluegrass. He has had several hit songs over the years including "The Way It Is," "Mandolin Rain," and "Every Little Kiss," and continues to play — and do production/session work — with some of the biggest names in the music industry. He was even a touring member of the Grateful Dead from 1990 to 1992, playing more than 100 shows with the band and forming a close friendship with Jerry Garcia, whom he referred to as a "nut — in the best way." Hornsby lives in Williamsburg, Va., with his wife, Kathy, with whom he shares twin adult sons and two grandchildren. We caught up with him to talk about all things travel.

If you could travel anywhere right now, where would you go? If I were required to take a vacation trip, I would go to Scandinavia; maybe mostly Denmark — our family supposedly comes from there by way of Scotland — and Iceland. I've been there once, and it is intoxicatingly exotic to me on many levels.

Do you prefer booking trips through a travel agent or on your own? I prefer booking trips through my first wife, Kathy Hornsby, who is an inveterate traveler and very good at all this.

Thoughts on an "unplugged" vacation? My thoughts go directly to 1963 when our family took an amazing 10-week trip to the Western United States. We packed up our borrowed camper van full of the requisite sleeping bags, metal utensils, tents, and other camping gear, and our dad, Robert Hornsby, proceeded to get behind the wheel and drive straight to The Greenbrier. We only camped four times on that lengthy trip, and I remain my father's son.

What has been your worst vacation experience? The most painfully memorable trip came in 1967 when my mom, Lois Hornsby, knowing we had a family of nearsighted ones, discovered that a company called Texas State Optical was offering contact lenses. We flew to San Antonio and were fitted by the memorably Dr. Del Castillo. There was a strict daily regimen of hours allowed wearing the lenses, and I screwed up and wore them too long one day. For the next three days, I could not open my eyes, and could be seen being led around by my brothers through the Alamo, and getting left fumbling around the San Antonio airport before someone re-



Bruce Hornsby and his granddaughter on Virginia Beach earlier this month.

alized and retrieved me.

What is your favorite childhood travel memory? That 1963 trip. We went to the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, Dodger Stadium to see Sandy Koufax pitch, Wrigley Field, Bryce, Zion, and much more.

Do you vacation to relax, to learn, or for the adventure of it all? Hopefully a little of all three.

What book do you plan on bringing with you to read on your next vacation? I've had this Charles Ives biography sitting in our house for 24 years or so. After reading the great classical pianist Jeremy Denk's recommendation in the New Yorker recently — calling it "one of the great music biographies" — I've started it and am totally captured, so that will be the one. Sometimes you just need a little prod.

If you could travel with one famous person/celebrity, who would it be? Jerry Garcia. What a mind, what a spirit, and what a wit ... and what a nut — in the best way.

What is the best gift to give a traveler? Peace and quiet; their own room.

What is your go-to snack for a flight or a road trip? The trail mix one can buy at the standard airport stores — the ones with lots of M&Ms!

What is the coolest souvenir you've picked up on a vacation? A local man we met in a St. Louis restaurant in 1963 was friendly with the Cardinals, and the next day he brought me a '63 Cardinals yearbook. He had cajoled the entire team into signing it, including Bob Gibson, Lou Brock, Curt Flood, Stan Musial, Julian Javier, and many more, and we still have it.

What is your favorite app/website for travel? I don't have a favorite. I don't use travel apps.

What has travel taught you? Mostly that I don't want to do it anymore!

What is your best travel tip? Keep it short.
JULIET PENNINGTON



HERE

LUXE HOTEL OFFERS SOX FAN PACKAGES

Sox fans have many opportunities to cheer on their team this year including seven Baseball Packages offered at the Hotel Commonwealth, the official hotel of the Boston Red Sox. Located in Kenmore Square, around the corner from the famed Fenway Park, the property's 245 generously sized and amenity-rich guestrooms is the perfect place for pre- and post-game celebrations. For Sox superfans, The Dugout "Brag Man" Package is a grand slam hit. In addition to accommodations for two in one of the hotel's Luxe Fen-

way guest rooms, the package includes two front-row section game tickets in Dugout 79 (Rows 1, 2 or A) along the 3rd base line; privileged access to the Ford Clubhouse for the ultimate pregame including a \$100 dining gift card; VIP pregame tour with access to the warning track and opportunity to view batting practice; a signed baseball from a Red Sox Legend or current player; personalized message on the Red Sox scoreboard during the game; Red Sox inspired welcome basket upon arrival; and valet parking. Rates starting at \$1,099. Additional baseball packages include a variety of these and other amenities. Not interested in baseball? Seasonal rates for standard deluxe rooms from \$299. 617-993-5000, www.hotelcommonwealth.com/offers

THERE

BIG SAVINGS ON ISLAND RESORT GETAWAY
Act fast to take advantage of the Sum-

mer Getaway Package at Tamarind Hills Resort and Villas in Antigua, one of the Leeward Caribbean Islands in the Lesser Antilles. This package offers up to 35 percent savings on a Tamarind Studio, breakfast included. Perched on an oceanfront bluff with stunning sunset views, the studios are more than enough space for two guests — from 1,052 to 1,317 square feet — and feature a four-poster king bed, comfy chair, sofa and chaise lounge, kitchenette and indoor dining area, spacious bathroom with tub and rain shower, and terrace or deck (some with built-in Jacuzzi). Guests can dine at Wild Tamarind, the resort's signature restaurant, as well as The Terrace Bar and smaller venues overlooking the sea and white sand beach. Amenities include a saltwater pool, gym, spa, complimentary yoga, Pilates classes and guided hikes, non-motorized water sports, pickleball, petanque, English croquet, bocce, and indoor golf simulator. Concierge services are available daily, with private chef and butler service upon request. Good for travel between now and Oct. 31, except for Aug. 31 through Oct. 10, when the resort is closed. Starting rates after the discount from \$358-\$455 per night for two guests. Or choose up to 20 percent savings on Tamarind Suites. The property also offers one-bedroom suites and two, three, four- or five-bedroom townhouses and villas. 268-562-7380, https://tamarindhills.com/offers

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Fly Pro 2, a portable gadget that connects your favorite Bluetooth headphones to any device via an audio jack. Simply plug the device into the seatback's screen system jack, pair with your wireless AirPods or headphones, and enjoy your favorite in-flight movies. Dual device connectivity allows two sets of wireless headphones to share audio. An upgraded Qualcomm audio chip delivers noticeably better sound. Provides over 25 hours of listening time on a single charge, and the clear battery indicator lets you know when you need to juice up for your next journey. When you're not traveling, AirFly Pro 2 connects to car stereos, old-school sound systems, gym equipment, and game consoles with Aux-In Mode. Available in three colors: blue, white, and black. The Deluxe kit comes with some extra chargers and a spiffy carrying case. \$59.99/\$69.99. www.twelvesouth.com/products/airfly-pro-2
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