

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER



GABBY JONES/WASHINGTON POST

I've been banned by Airbnb, but no one will tell me why

By Christopher Elliott
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Q. I recently received an e-mail from Airbnb stating that it had removed my account from the platform.

“Removal means that your account will no longer be accessible, and you won’t be able to create another one,” it said. “We want to assure you that we reviewed your case thoroughly before reaching this conclusion. As such, we won’t be able to offer you additional support on this matter at this time.”

I don’t understand why I’m banned. I last booked with Airbnb in September for my husband and his friend in Las Vegas. Airbnb canceled the first booking for that trip because the host said she was no longer accepting guests.

Airbnb found me another accommodation at a hotel, and after two days of staying there, they realized that the listing wasn’t legitimate (someone had booked the hotel rooms months before then and posted them on Airbnb as rentals). I don’t see why I would get banned for that.

Airbnb has deactivated my account for no good reason. Can you help?

SOLANGE REYNER,
Kirkland, Wash.

A. You should not get banned for any of this. Your host canceled your booking at the last minute, and another host had an illegitimate listing, neither of which was your fault.

So what’s going on here? Lately, many Airbnb bannings I’ve come across have happened because a background check revealed a criminal record. But you say neither you, nor your husband, nor his friend have any criminal record, so we can cross that off the list.

In its terms of service, Airbnb says it may terminate your account for violating its terms or policies; violating applicable laws; or if “we reasonably believe termination is necessary to protect Airbnb, its members or third parties.” Also, if your account has been inactive for more than two years, Airbnb may pull the plug on your account without even letting you know.

There’s another wrinkle here. You’re a fellow journalist, and you’ve written about Airbnb in the past (nothing very critical). Is it possible that Airbnb didn’t like your articles? I don’t know, but the company could ban you all the same.

The two cancellations were a red flag of something happening during that Las Vegas rental — although I don’t know what.

When you rent a home or apartment through Airbnb, always look for a property with a positive rating and read the reviews carefully. I was just shopping for an Airbnb in Christchurch, New Zealand, and one of the reviews warned that the host had canceled last minute. If you see that in a review, you might want to skip that property. I am certain that the illegal rental you booked in Vegas had no reviews — that’s also a problem.

If things start to go sideways with an Airbnb rental, contact the company right away, and if you’re unsure about the rules, ask. Whatever happened to your husband and friend, it sounds like an innocent mistake on their part. You can always reach out to one of the Airbnb executive contacts I publish on my consumer advocacy site, Elliott.org.

I asked Airbnb about your account termination. In response to my inquiry, the company reactivated your account. I asked the company what you had done to deserve being blacklisted, and a representative said, “For privacy reasons, we are not able to share more than that at this point.”

Airbnb didn’t tell you why you were banned either, but at least you have your account back now.

Christopher Elliott is the founder of Elliott Advocacy (elliottadvocacy.org), a nonprofit organization that helps consumers solve their problems. E-mail him at chris@elliott.org or get help by contacting him at elliottadvocacy.org/help/.

THE VIP LOUNGE

WCVB’s Brittany Johnson

on crunchy peanut butter, coffee mugs, and getting to know Boston

Emma Award-winning broadcast journalist Brittany Johnson said she is enjoying her new gig on WCVB-TV’s investigative team, “5 Investigates,” as well as exploring Boston and the surrounding area. “I went to the North End yesterday with my mom, who is visiting,” Johnson, 34, said in a recent phone interview. “I’m trying to get a lay of the land and learn everything I can about the area in which I am now living.”

The Oceanside, Calif., native said she has a long familiarization to-do list, most of which, she joked, “focuses mainly on food.” Prior to joining WCVB, Johnson was an investigative reporter and primary fill-in anchor at KCRA in Sacramento, Calif. “I really like informing and teaching people ... letting them know what’s really going on in their community,” she said, adding that “everybody has a voice, and it is [our job] to uplift it and share their stories.”

We caught up with Johnson, who lives in a Boston suburb, to talk about all things travel.

If you could travel anywhere right now, and money was no object, where would you go?

Colombia is at the top of my travel list right now. I would love to see the amazing street art and architecture, enjoy the gorgeous beaches, and eat all of the delicious food.

Where was the first place you traveled to after COVID restrictions were lifted?

I haven’t booked an international vacation yet, but I’m hoping to get somewhere for my birthday this year. Please feel free to send all recommendations for someone with a winter birthday. Although I haven’t booked an international trip since COVID restrictions were lifted, I have traveled a lot domestically.

Do you prefer booking trips through a travel agent or on your own?

I book my own trips. That’s definitely part of the adventure for me.

Thoughts on an “unplugged” vacation?

Unplugged vacation? Sign me up. I would love to go glamping and be completely immersed in nature. A luxurious yurt tied in with tranquillity is calling my name.

Do you use all of your vacation time or leave some on the table?

Use your vacation. Don’t leave anything on the table.

What has been your worst vacation experience?

Honestly, I haven’t had a travel nightmare or a bad vacation experience.

Do you vacation to relax, to learn, or for the adventure of it all?

I vacation for a mix of everything; to relax, learn, adventure out on excursions, live my best life at the beach, and eat everything I can possibly eat. I’m a big foodie. When I vacation, or take a quick weekend getaway, I like to indulge in local eateries and find the hidden gems.

What book do you plan on bringing with you to read on your next vacation?

I love to read. I usually cozy up at home in the



Brittany Johnson in Honolulu.

bed, on the balcony, or in a window nook, and do some good reading. With that said, I don’t usually bring a novel with me to read on vacation. I love music. So, I will get a playlist ready for the plane and vibe out, then read a newspaper and relax with whatever coffee is served on the flight. A book that is next on my list to re-read is James Baldwin’s “Go Tell It on the Mountain.”

If you could travel with one famous person/celebrity, who would it be?

Oprah Winfrey. Not only is she inspirational, successful, resilient, innovative, and supportive, but she seems so warm-hearted and fun to be around.

What is the best gift to give a traveler?

I like to travel light: a carry-on bag and a backpack. With that said, the best gift someone can give me is a list of recommendations, from best restaurants to the best hiking trails with breathtaking views.

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

I love to have a few peanut butter and jelly sandwiches — [with] crunchy peanut butter ... don’t judge me — gummy bears, chips, Cheez-It crackers or some

Goldfish, fruit, chocolate, and beef jerky.

What is the coolest souvenir you’ve picked up on a vacation?

I have a thing for coffee mugs. I usually pick up cool coffee mugs as souvenirs.

What is your favorite app/website for travel?

I don’t have a favorite app/website for travel. I end up wherever Google guides me.

What has travel taught you?

Travel often reminds me to slow down, be patient, and adapt. When you are traveling with family and/or friends, everyone has something that they want to do, see, or things they don’t want to do or see. I’m cognizant of that and tend to go with the flow. As my parents always say, “It’s going to be what it’s going to be,” so relax, enjoy the vacation, and go with whichever way the wind blows. I also like to do things by myself. I like to take time away from the group and explore on my own.

What is your best travel tip?

Live in the moment. Don’t sweat the small stuff that doesn’t go as planned. Make memories and enjoy your time.

JULIET PENNINGTON

HERE

CHATHAM INN GETS NAUTICAL MAKEOVER

File this under “everything old is new again.” The Greyfinch Chatham Inn, formerly known as the Chatham Highlander Village Inn, follows the recent trend of taking dated older properties and transforming them into stylish accommodations. Offering a fresh take on what it calls “the quintessential Cape Cod experience” (think nautical décor and modern amenities), the refreshed inn makes its splashy summer debut with 30 guest rooms and property-wide renovations including fenced-in outdoor spaces, year-round outdoor heated pool, fire pits for marshmallow roasts, and relocated check-in point, all just steps away from nearby beaches and coastal activities. Each guest room — decorated with crisp lines, warm woods, and brass elements in a soothing palette of white with nautical blue accents — features custom-designed furniture, updated bathrooms with glass showers and double vanities, Keurig coffee makers, minifridges, smart TVs, and in-room safes. For added convenience, the suites also include a kitchenette. Complimentary bicycles can be used to explore the area and visit Main Street. Although there’s no dining available on-site, the inn offers shuttle service to its sister property, The Chatham Wayside Inn, where The Wild Goose Tavern offers an inventive menu of locally sourced seafood and fresh ingredients for lunch and dinner, and hotel guests receive a 15 percent breakfast discount. July rates from \$439; August rates from \$359. 877-934-7809, www.greyfinchchatham.com.

THERE

JUST SAY AHFFF ALONG COLORADO HOT SPRINGS LOOP

Here’s a new spin on the themed-road



trip vacation: The Colorado Historic Hot Springs Loop, a spectacular 800-mile driving route in the scenic western part of the state, showcases premier hot springs destinations via self-guided itineraries. Explore 23 unique soaking experiences at eight premier Colorado geothermal locations — Steamboat Springs, Glenwood Springs, Carbondale, Ouray, Durango, Pagosa Springs, Saguache County, and Chaffee County. Not only do the Colorado Rocky Mountains offer jaw-dropping vistas, but at the end of your daily journey, you’re rewarded with the relaxing and unique features offered at each facility, such as vapor caves, hot pots, terraced pools, enormous travertine formations, and aquatic centers. The Loop recently expanded, adding three more destination partners: The Durango Hot Springs Resort & Spa (with 41 pools and soaking tubs in a Japanese-inspired garden); The Springs Resort (with new activities such as clay-infused water treatment and wild yoga class in the forest); and Iron Mountain Hot Springs (with new 21+ section and eight riverside pools). More information, map, package deals, and links to each resort can be

found on the website www.cohot-springsloop.com.

DETOUR FROM DENVER

If you’re heading west from Denver to access the hot springs route, it’s worth a pit stop to check out Breckenridge’s newest luxury accommodations at The Carlin. Billing itself as a “restaurant with rooms,” the property blends three businesses together as one top-notch hospitality experience: the top floor offers four deluxe hotel suites; the main floor hosts a chic 80-seat open-kitchen restaurant with wood-burning oven and seafood-focused

menu; and a 45-seat subterranean space, The Tavern Underground, serves up classic American fare in a casual setting. Room rates from \$249 and \$199. 970-771-3795, thecarlinbreckenridge.com.

EVERYWHERE

SELF-FOLDING TRAVEL STROLLER

Baby gear company Nuna aims to make traveling with your little one a breeze with its easy-fold compact stroller TRVL. A must-have accessory for parents on any trip, whether you’re journeying by air or car, simply push a button on the push bar and the Nuna TRVL stroller self-folds into a compact, free-standing package. The ultralightweight stroller (just 13.6 pounds) pairs perfectly with all PIPA series car seats, no adapters needed. When folded, the stroller can be carried by its bar, or stored in the included carry bag. Other features include a self-guiding magnetic buckle that automatically locks into place; removable and rotating arm bar; easy access basket for storing essentials; one-hand multiposition recline; and water repellent UPF 50+ canopy. Suitable for infants and toddlers weighing up to 50 pounds in either stroller or travel system mode. Available in seven colors. \$500. nunababy.com/usa/trvl-easy-fold-compact-stroller

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