

# The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

## TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

### Renter gets billed \$515 for missing head restraint and hat shelf

By Christopher Elliott  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

**Q.** Enterprise Rental Car in Munich has charged me for damage to the car I rented last year, but I returned the car exactly as I rented it. Enterprise sent me a letter with a claim more than a month after I returned the car. I wasn't expecting this email and didn't read it. A month later, Enterprise charged my credit card \$515. Not knowing what the charge was for, I called Chase to dispute it. I then reached out to Enterprise, and a representative informed me that there was a claim for my last rental.

Enterprise claims that I took a head restraint and a hat shelf from the car. This is entirely untrue and must be a mistake. The company sent photos of a car with a missing head restraint, but there wasn't any identifying information, like a license plate or even the date that would prove it was the car we rented. Also, I returned the car at the end of July, and the claim is dated for September, which is more than a month after we returned the car.

How can I defend myself against this false claim?

JOSEPHINE DONATELLI, *Scotch Plains, N.J.*

**A.** If you removed a head restraint and hat shelf from your rental vehicle, then you should have to pay for it. But was it your rental car?

Here's the right way to handle a claim: First, Enterprise should have contacted you to let you know that some items were missing from your car and given you the opportunity to return them. If you didn't, it should have sent you a bill — not charged your credit card. And the claim should have contained pictures of the car, the license plate, and an invoice for replacing the head restraint and hat shelf.

### What would you do with a head restraint and a hat shelf?

Instead, Enterprise charged you, then sent a claim with insufficient information to substantiate it. I think if you get an email from Enterprise or any other company, you should consider reading it. You might have had time to fight this claim if you had responded to the first message.

I would like to think that this was one of those "lost in translation" issues — just a big misunderstanding as a result of translating your claim from German into English.

I think your credit card dispute might have gone your way. Enterprise charged your card without permission, and it sent you insufficient evidence. But more importantly, the claim is implausible. What would you do with a head restraint and a hat shelf? Were you going to carry those on a plane with you and take them back to New Jersey?

I'm not taking sides here. If Enterprise could prove that the items disappeared while you rented the car, then you are responsible. But based on the documentation it provided you, it couldn't.

What an odd case. You could have appealed this to one of the Enterprise executives whose contact information I publish on my customer advocacy site, Elliott.org. A brief, polite email might have encouraged the company to revisit your case and either furnish you with the information you needed or drop the case entirely.

I contacted Enterprise on your behalf. A representative called you and apologized for the erroneous bill. "He said they are returning my money, and [it] should be back to my bank within three to five business days," you reported. "He told me to reach out to him when I want to rent from Enterprise again, and he will make sure I get credit for my trouble."

Enterprise returned your \$515, as promised.

*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 V.I.P. LOUNGE

### He's traveled the world for music and has a soft spot for Boston

**W**hen Handel and Haydn Society artistic director Jonathan Cohen travels, it is often for work.

But the 46-year-old Manchester, England, native said that even if his travels were not tied to work obligations, music would be a big part of his journeys. "Music is a universal language that transcends the different places that I visit," Cohen said in a recent phone call. "I love finding out how music is an expression of people's cultures and who we are. It's kind of life-affirming, in a way." The esteemed conductor, who is also a cellist and keyboardist, is returning in September for his second season as artistic director of the Handel and Haydn Society, which has been performing Baroque and classical music for 209 consecutive seasons — the most of any performing arts organization in the country. Cohen will open Handel and Haydn's 210th season with Mozart's Requiem paired with Michael Haydn's Requiem at Symphony Hall on Sept. 27 and 29, and has other concerts lined up in Boston through the end of the year and into 2025. In addition to his local position, Cohen is the founder and artistic director of the UK-based group Arcangelo, music director of Quebec City's chamber orchestra Les Violons du Roy, and artistic director of the Tetbury Music Festival in England. Additional conducting engagements take him to Budapest, Basel, and Frankfurt. And with all of his travels, Cohen said he has a soft spot for Boston. "People are very enthusiastic for art and culture here," he said. "And there's a real vibrancy to the city ... a lot of energy, and I love that." We caught up with Cohen, who lives in London with his 13-year-old son, Joshua, to talk about all things travel.

**If you could travel anywhere right now, where would you go?** I grew up in Manchester in the northwest area of the UK, and quite regularly my family would go up to the Lake District in Cumbria for hikes in the hills there. The landscape of the lake district is quite unique: little gurgling streams, wobbly stone walls, and noisy sheep. I have happy memories of hikes there, coming down off the fells invigorated and tired at the same time. I always enjoy going back when I can.

**Do you prefer booking trips through a travel agent or on your own?** I always try to investigate on my own, but finally I succumb to the expert advice of those at my music agency who help me with all my travel. It always works out better that way.



Jonathan Cohen and his son, Joshua, at Haystacks in England's Lake District in the Buttermere Valley.

**Thoughts on an "unplugged" vacation?** I never had an unplugged vacation, actually. I have too many useful apps on my phone, like the Times of London online puzzles, my maps and bookings, etc. I don't rely on my electronics for work, though, because classical music is, of course, totally unplugged, so I don't feel the need to detox myself when I'm not working. I enjoy getting out on a sailboat or into the mountains on a vacation, phones not necessary — but I'd be stuck without occasionally glancing at my Navionics or Komoot apps.

**What has been your worst vacation experience?** I once played for a few days on a cruise ship as a pianist when I was younger. The weather was so bad and all the passengers were vomiting the whole time. At dinner, everything fell off the tables. That was a pretty bad couple of days. My dad likes cruises — he teaches bridge sometimes on a particular one — but those giant ships, they're not for me.

**What is your favorite childhood travel memory?** I remember being taken to Salzburg in Austria by my family when I was 7 or 8. I had a school holiday assignment to make a scrapbook diary of my vacation. I've still got it actually, including little cable car tickets I carefully stuck into the scrapbook and postcard pictures of Mozart's home. My grandma, who

passed away at 101, played the violin and was enthusiastic about string quartets. She came with us on that trip so it holds special memories.

**Do you vacation to relax, to learn, or for the adventure of it all?** I don't vacation that often since I'm traveling a huge amount for concerts and tours, so being at home in London can also be like a vacation for me. But when I am traveling without making music, I like to start off doing very little and then after a while I get itchy for some adventure and start exploring. Recently, I took my son to Istanbul on vacation for a few days because I thought it would be a great educational experience for us both to find out about the fascinating history of this ancient city. I also like Turkish food a lot and I had never been to Istanbul. I hugely recommend getting a guided tour of any new place. I remember the first thing I did in Boston was take the Duck Tour, which I really enjoyed. Also, in many cities they have those open-top buses with the headphones. It's a good way to get your bearings and find out where you are.

**What book do you plan on bringing with you to read on your next vacation?** "Claudio Monteverdi: Orfeo," by John Whenham. I'm conducting this great piece in the coming seasons and I find the complexity and history surrounding this "fable in music" fascinating.

## HERE

### ALL-SEASON RETREAT GETS LUXE MAKEOVER

Be among the first to enjoy the recently completed, multimillion-dollar renovations at the Mountain View Grand Resort & Spa, a family-friendly getaway recognized on the National Register of Historic Places. Set amid the peaks of New Hampshire's White Mountains in Whitefield, N.H., the 141-key grand hotel, dating back to the late 19th century, offers a luxurious four-season escape within 1,700 acres of a pristine landscape. Enhanced guest rooms and suites sport sumptuous fabrics and modern amenities, such as a butler pantry, mini-refrigerator, and curated minibar offerings including artisan snacks, locally brewed beers, and top-shelf spirits. Hungry? Savor signature seed-to-table experiences at Harvest Tavern; intimate wine and food pairings at 1865 Wine Cellar; and casual fare (pizza, burgers, wraps) at Veranda. The resort also offers a wide range of outdoor activities such as hiking, mountain biking, and tennis on clay courts. Additional amenities include fitness and wellness experiences at the Tower Spa, a nine-hole golf course, indoor and outdoor pools, disc golf, cheesemaking, gardening classes, falconry, and — in winter months — ice skating, cross-country skiing, tubing, sleigh rides, sledding, snowmobiling, and more. A game room with pool, foosball, and ping pong, and movie theater with more than 500 film choices are available for indoor entertainment. Summer rates from \$159. 855-837-2100, www.mountain-viewgrand.com/



## THERE

### PLAN AHEAD: SOLAR ECLIPSE CRUISE

If you missed the spectacular full solar eclipse last April, you can experience the wonders of the next one while at sea aboard the Zuiderdam, a Holland America Line cruise ship. Departing from and returning to Boston, the 35-day tour Voyage of the Vikings: Solar Eclipse will be in the path of totality just before arriving at Grundarfjörður off the western coast of Iceland. Before that, it traverses the northeast coast from Boston with calls at charming and historic locations such as Portland, Maine; Sydney, Corner Brook, Red Bay, St. Anthony, St. John's, and Halifax, Canada. On the other side of

the Atlantic, multiple ports of call will be in various breathtaking sites in Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Netherlands, Ireland, and Northern Ireland, including overnight stays in Reykjavik and Rotterdam.

The 964-foot vessel hosts 1,964 guests, with seven categories of staterooms and suites at varied price points to fit different budgets. Numerous entertainment activities keep guests occupied on longer cruising segments, including casino action, lounge with live music, pickleball lessons and tournaments, shopping, fitness center, and a kids club for younger sailors. Dining options include steakhouse fare, authentic Italian cuisine, poolside grill, seafood pop-up, and more. Early booking and premium package deals offer

**If you could travel with one famous person/celebrity, who would it be?** Buddha would handle airport security queues with perspective. I could learn a lot from him.

**What is the best gift to give a traveler?** A really great suitcase. Or a foldable steamer that works in the USA and Europe. Usually, they work either in the USA or Europe. Also, I'm really happy with my new adapter plug, as I can run my laptop directly off its USB port. That's pretty nerdy, but not having a ton of cables getting knotted up in your bag is a good thing.

**What is your go-to snack for a flight or a road trip?** Salted almonds. Love those.

**What is the coolest souvenir you've picked up on a vacation?** For a while I collected chili sauces. Hungarians have a fantastic paprika paste called Eros Pista, which is easy to find in supermarkets. In Hong Kong, my friend there gave me a jar of his mum's homemade Beijing-style chili pickles, which was brutally aggressive. An Italian opera singer I worked with gifted me a jar of what Italians call La Bomba Calabrese. Last year I toured South America and can highly recommend the leche de tigre of the Peruvians.

**What is your favorite app/website for travel?** I use Google Maps fairly extensively. If in Italy, I recommend the app Osterie d'Italia, which shows you the award-winning, best home cooking-style restaurants in every region. I think I mentioned Komoot already for finding good hikes near wherever you are.

**What has travel taught you?** To me, the diversity of human culture is a wondrous thing and to have the chance to travel often is to have the opportunity to open the mind to different perspectives, tastes, [and] new experiences. I think back to the smells and noises of so many extraordinary places and I feel glad for the chance to have traveled widely. As a musician, I'm always curious about music traditions. Music is a universal language, and I learned that it's something everyone on the planet has in common. How they dance the tango in the squares of Buenos Aires or play folk music after hours in the country pubs of Ireland ... that's life-affirming.

**What is your best travel tip?** I try to learn a few words in the language of the place I'm traveling to — at least "thank you" and "hello." Oh, and I have one of those multi-currency cards so you can pay without getting charged huge currency conversion rates everywhere. Very practical.

JULIET PENNINGTON

savings, perks, and amenities. Two additional ships in the fleet will be positioned under the path of totality (Aug. 12, 2026) for cruises originating in Europe: Oosterdam will sail the Mediterranean to witness the eclipse off the eastern coast of Spain; Nieuw Statendam will explore Northern Europe and the western coast of Iceland. The Zuiderdam departs Boston July 18, 2026. From \$7,908 per person. 877-724-5425, www.hollandamerica.com/en/us/find-a-cruise/e6t35a/u659

## EVERYWHERE

### PICKLEBALL ON-THE-GO

Fans of pickleball will be thrilled to learn they can play their favorite game anywhere they go with Dink Buddy, a collapsible, portable net that turns any space into an instant court. Measuring 6 feet long at regulation height, the sturdy, collapsible frame is made with hard anodized aircraft grade 6061 aluminum framing. Easy to set up and take down, the net collapses into a carrying case weighing only 3 pounds, and folds down small enough to stash in your backpack or pickleball bag. The dividing net is made from mesh technology specifically designed for the Dink Buddy, and is available in black, white, indigo, red, orange, or pink. Need a larger court? Two nets can be joined together for doubles play. The Budding Pro net, smaller in height and length, is perfect for younger family members who want to learn the sport. It's assembled in the United States, and the company provides free shipping and returns. \$79.95-\$175.95. mydinkbuddy.com

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