

# The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

## TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER



JIM SKAGGS PHOTOGRAPHY, MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL

Members of the Bonvoy loyalty program can use points and/or cash to pay for their rental, including this chalet in Lake Tahoe.

This rental is uninhabitable! I want my Bonvoy points back.

By Christopher Elliott  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

**Q.** I recently rented a condo in Florida through Homes & Villas by Marriott. I used my Marriott Bonvoy points to make the reservation.

When I arrived, I discovered the unit was uninhabitable. The condo smelled of mold and mildew, and the furniture was threadbare and filthy. I had difficulty breathing.

I left shortly after arriving and had to go to a hotel for the night. I tried to contact the vacation rental company numerous times, before I left and after I checked out. I also asked Marriott for help, but I never heard back from the vacation rental company.

I would like my points refunded. But Marriott is deferring to another company that manages its vacation rentals and will not give me my points. Can you help?

CHRIS SKAGGS, Canton, Mich.

**A.** Marriott's vacation rental site promises its homes are "professionally cleaned and inspected," but it looks like they missed a few spots in your condo. You shouldn't have to stay in a place like that.

Your rights to a refund aren't governed by Marriott's terms of service, but by the rental agreement you signed with that third party. Under most rental contracts, you can get a refund if there's a problem with the health or safety of the unit. Mold and construction definitely qualify, but you need to work that out with the rental company.

You gave the rental company and Homes & Villas by Marriott a chance to resolve this, but it looks like they didn't. I think Marriott was correct to refer you back to the rental company, except when it comes to the refund. Only Marriott can return your Bonvoy points.

I reviewed your paper trail. You didn't mention your rental contract in your discussions with Marriott or with the vacation rental agency. You did, however, provide photos of the threadbare furniture.

When you find yourself in a situation like this — and I hope you never do again — you have to document everything. Keep your contracts and e-mails, and take lots of photos — not just of the threadbare furniture, but of any mold or dangerous conditions that would prove your rental is uninhabitable.

Ultimately, I think Marriott bears some of the responsibility for this rental. After all, it put its name on your rental and allowed you to use your points. The least it could do is give you a straight answer before referring you back to the rental company. I list the names, numbers and e-mails of Marriott's executives on my consumer advocacy site at [www.elliott.org/company-contacts/marriott-contact-details/](http://www.elliott.org/company-contacts/marriott-contact-details/). I think a brief, polite e-mail might have helped to resolve this.

I contacted Marriott on your behalf. It refunded your points without offering any further explanation.

*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](mailto:elliott.org/help) or [chris@elliott.org](mailto:chris@elliott.org).*

## THE VIP LOUNGE

# Tranquillity, good food, and a sense of connection? Boy George'll travel 4 ya.

**W**hile Ibiza may be known for its lively nightlife, English singer-songwriter Boy George said the Spanish island — in the Mediterranean Sea off the eastern coast of the Iberian Peninsula — has plenty of less touristy, quiet areas that provide "absolute tranquillity," making it his go-to vacation spot. The flamboyant frontman of the 1980s hitmakers Culture Club, who will be appearing at the Chevalier Theatre in Medford on Sept. 9, is known for such chart-toppers as "Karma Chameleon" (which in early 1984 spent three weeks at No. 1 on Billboard's Hot 100 list), "I'll Tumble 4 Ya," "Church of the Poisoned Minds," and "Do You Really Want to Hurt Me?" His 1992 single "The Crying Game," which was featured in the film of the same name, was also a hit. Born George O'Dowd to working-class Irish parents in southeast London (he was the third of six children) in 1961, he has branched out as a disc jockey, record producer, mixed media artist, photographer, and fashion designer. He has also been a coach on "The Voice" in the UK and in Australia. We caught up with the 61-year-old entertainer, who lives in northwest London, to talk about all things travel.

### Favorite vacation destination?

I love Ibiza. There are parts of Ibiza that you can really isolate in. It's a party island, but there are spots where you can find absolute tranquillity [and] usually they are local, so you tend to go somewhere where Spanish people go as that's where the food and atmosphere is going to be better.

### Favorite food or drink while vacationing?

Local cuisine is important to search for — especially in the Mediterranean. I love a good mezze in Greece.

### Where would you like to travel to but haven't?

Vietnam and Hawaii. I would like to spend more time in Hawaii. I really love what I do for work [and] I love performing, but I'm more focused on the gig than anything else and when you travel, the thing you remember is people — people's kindness and sense of humor.

### One item you can't leave home without when traveling?

My sense of humor.

### Aisle or window?

Window, so I can see the clouds.

### Favorite childhood travel memory?

We never went away when I was a child. There were six children, so we would go to the coast and to the beach. I only started traveling with Culture Club. I didn't even have a passport until I was 22. The first time I left the country was with Culture Club.

### Guilty pleasure when traveling?

The one problem when I travel is that I think I'm on holiday, [so] I'll eat what I like and then I have to deal with it when I get home.

### Best travel tip?

It's a difficult question for me to answer because I love being places. Traveling is not so interesting to me, but arriving is always beautiful. So focus on arriving and what you're going to do when you get there rather than worrying about the journey itself. Really enjoy the place you're visiting — don't just have a passing experience with it. There are always so many beautiful things to see. If there is anything you can do to ground yourself in that place, it's a really good thing to do.

JULIET PENNINGTON

Boy George



## HERE

### DANCING IN THE STREET

Dig out your dancing shoes and head to Central Square in Cambridge for the Dance Complex's 30th anniversary street party, "Dance Happens Here: 2022." Selected streets will be closed to traffic from 2 to 9 p.m., as movement, music, food, culture and local businesses all celebrate together. A center-point for Greater Boston's dance and movement community, with connections to the New England and international dance field, the Dance Complex's afternoon-into-evening party will include dance lessons by its teaching artists in styles ranging from samba to swing, along with live performances by area dance troupes and percussion groups. Music from a rooftop DJ and food trucks for hungry dancers round out the festivities. Sept. 18. Free. 617-547-9363, [www.dancecomplex.org](http://www.dancecomplex.org).

### SAY CHEESE!

Discover Maine's best cheese products and meet the creators when the annual Maine Cheese Festival returns to Manson Park, located along the Sebasticook River in Pittsfield. The largest gathering of cheese makers in the state, the

festival is an opportunity to learn about the variety of Maine cheeses crafted from cow, goat, water buffalo, and sheep milk. Reserve your tickets in advance (tickets not available at the gate) for two three-hour sessions that highlight a wide array of cheesemakers along with a selection of local, artisanal products. Sponsored by The Maine Cheese Guild, both sessions, starting at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m., will feature live music on the main stage and in the beer and wine garden, vendor booths, food trucks, and education sessions on topics such as homemade ricotta making, pairing cheese with condiments and more. Sept. 11. Tickets from \$27. [www.mainecheesefestival.org](http://www.mainecheesefestival.org)

## THERE

### EXTEND SUMMER WITH BIG BERMUDA SAVINGS

Labor Day may mark the traditional end of summer, but those sad to say goodbye to the season might want to take advantage of Bermuda's Endless Summer Promotion. Non-stop flights from Boston, approximately a two-hour hop, make it easy to enjoy Bermuda's pink-sand beaches, unique cultural experiences, and luxury hotels and re-

sorts. With this special promotion, an affordable sojourn to Bermuda is a breeze to book. Simply make your reservation at one of ten participating partners by October 31 and save up to 50 percent on accommodations at the island's finest hotels. Good for stays from September 6 through March 31. Book each deal, including a range of value-added enticements, via each hotel's link on the tourism website. Prices vary, starting at \$145 per night (Grotto Bay Beach Resort) to from \$980 per night (Rosewood Bermuda). [www.go-bermuda.com/promotion/bermuda-endless-summer-promotion](http://www.go-bermuda.com/promotion/bermuda-endless-summer-promotion)

### CHICAGO STIRS IT UP

Calling all food, wine, and spirits lovers! Chicago Gourmet, a four-day festival of food, cocktails, music, and more will showcase an array of spirited events featuring talent from Chicago and around the world atop the Harris Theater Rooftop at Millennium Park (Sept. 22-25). The scrumptious lineup includes Tacos & Tequila, hosted by Chef Rick Bayless; Somm Sessions with Master Sommeliers; Hamburger Hop, where top chefs battle for "Top Burger" bragging rights; Late Night Gourmet,

the official after-burgers-party with late-night bites, specialty cocktails, music and dancing; and Grand Cru, showcasing exclusive wines, craft spirits, and fine cuisine. A new event this year, Prost! In the Park!, is a gourmet Oktoberfest-style beer and spirits fest (oompah bands, anyone?) with brews, bites, and boozy beverages. All events are 21+ with an ID required. Tickets from \$60. [www.chicagogourmet.org](http://www.chicagogourmet.org)

## EVERYWHERE

### LUGGAGE TRAVEL CUP

Sometimes the simplest hacks can transform your travel experience from stressful to smooth. Consider, for example, the reimot Luggage Travel Cup Caddy. If you've ever juggled hot coffee, snacks, and other airport purchases while waiting for your flight to board, this may be the newest item to add to your travel gadget repertoire. The dual cup holder with elastic pockets attaches between the poles of your roll-on luggage handle and stays in place with a strong Velcro closure. A pocket on the reverse side can hold your boarding pass, phone, glasses, and other small items. When not in use, it folds flat for compact storage. Available in seven colors and designs including leopard and camo. \$14.99. [www.riemot.com/products/riemot-luggage-travel-cup-holder-hands-free-drinks-caddy-perfect-gifts-for-frequent-travelersgrey](http://www.riemot.com/products/riemot-luggage-travel-cup-holder-hands-free-drinks-caddy-perfect-gifts-for-frequent-travelersgrey)

### TWO-IN-ONE ITEM FOR OUTDOOR KITCHEN

Camping dinners and beachside picnics just got easier to prepare onsite with Hydro Flask's new Outdoor Kitchen Cut and Serve Platter. Designed to both prep and serve your outdoor meals, the lightweight and durable cutting board nests inside a pro-grade stainless steel platter for compact transport. Remove the board from the platter with the handy thumb hole. A groove along the cutting board's edge will catch juices as you cut and serve. Available in three colors. Dishwasher safe. \$49.95. [www.hydroflask.com/cut-and-serve-platter?color=olive](http://www.hydroflask.com/cut-and-serve-platter?color=olive)

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