

# The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

## TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER



LUKE MACGREGOR/BLOOMBERG

What if you paid for an extra seat, and then the airline resold your seat and kept your money?

## When reserving an extra seat on United, don't forget to do this

By Christopher Elliott  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

**Q.** I booked three nonrefundable airline tickets for my wife and me on United Airlines to fly from Orlando to Rome. United resold the middle seat between us on three of the five flights. I asked for a refund, but United is telling me that I can't get my money back, since I purchased nonrefundable tickets.

But how can they resell the seats I paid for? I've sent emails to the executive contacts for United on your website, but United won't even give me a travel credit.

Can you help me get the \$660 back I spent for the extra seat?

LEIGH ROBERTS, Winter Garden, Fla.

**A.** United Airlines should have kept the middle seat (that you paid for) empty. United offers the option of buying an extra seat for the same price as your original ticket if you need more room. This obligates United to keep the seat empty; it can't resell the seat halfway through the flight.

Your case brings up a long-standing grievance among air travelers. When you have a nonrefundable ticket and can't make your flight, your airline can resell the ticket, collecting money for the same seat twice. This strikes many air travelers as unfair. In the past, lawmakers have suggested legislating this unfairness and mandating that an airline should refund a nonrefundable ticket if it can resell the seat. But so far, nothing has passed.

You were smart to escalate this to the executives at United. But I would have kept going. I list multiple executives on the site, and you could have been more persistent. Also, you might have considered a credit card dispute. Under the Fair Credit Billing Act, you can file a chargeback for items that you paid for but didn't receive, such as an airline seat.

So, what went wrong with your ticket? I checked with United, and it said that for some reason, the boarding pass for your extra seat wasn't scanned when you boarded your first flight. You told me that you reached out to United the day before your flight when you had a problem checking in, and the agent instructed you to deselect the extra seat when you checked in.

"The reservation was marked as a no-show by our team in Orlando, who ended up canceling the advance seating assignments," the representative said. "That made the extra seat available for reassignment."

United should have seen the problem when you reached out to the airline, then to its executives. Instead, it kept turning you down. But after the airline reviewed your case, it decided to change its answer:

"We've processed a refund for the extra ticket that was purchased," the representative told me.

Lesson learned: If you buy an extra seat, always scan the boarding pass for the extra seat. All airlines — not just United — will cancel the rest of your reservation if you miss one leg of your flight. In fact, this could have turned out much worse. United could have canceled all of the tickets on your reservation, which might have left you stranded during your stopovers in Rome or Frankfurt, Germany.

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## THE VIP LOUNGE

## Jason Bowen

on playing a prince, finding fun on vacation, and weighing his luggage

**H**e's been on Broadway (in "The Play That Goes Wrong"), off-Broadway, on national tours, and even acted in movies and TV shows, but Roslindale native Jason Bowen said that performing Shakespeare on his home turf is "pretty cool." Bowen, who attended Milton Academy and Skidmore College, is playing the role of Escalus, Prince of Verona, in "Romeo and Juliet" at the American Repertory Theatre through Oct. 6. "It's always nice to come home. I'm biased and will never be a New Yorker or a New Jersey person ... it's always Boston. There's a comfort and familiarity that I have here that will never be replaced," he said. "Family and friends will come to the show and it's nice — especially for them to see me in a role I'm really proud of." He called the prince "the voice of reason" in the play and said that there are some similarities in that regard between him and his character. "I mean, we're obviously very much in different positions in life, and the only person [to whom] I'm a prince is my mother," joked the 42-year-old actor and musician. He said the ART production of "Romeo and Juliet," directed by Diane Paulus, includes an "enhanced" and "amplified" character in Friar Laurence (played by Broadway veteran Terrence Mann). "We also have a very large cast," Bowen said. "My experience is that there might be like seven people taking on 20 different roles. We have 15 actors — the largest number in a Shakespeare production that I have done for sure. This gives cast members an opportunity to dive deeper into their [respective] roles." We caught up with Bowen, who lives in Jersey City, N.J., to talk about all things travel.

**If you could travel anywhere right now, where would you go?**

I would go to Nigeria. I was supposed to go for a wedding a couple years ago, but wound up not being able to make it. Ever since then, I've made a personal vow to get there. Experiencing the culture and the people would be amazing.

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

I've always booked my own trips, so I couldn't compare. It might be nice to have someone else handle it all for a change though.

**Thoughts on an "unplugged" vacation?**

If an "unplugged" vacation means no electricity, then, no thank you. I make a lot of music and I need my laptop for that. That being said, I could definitely see myself at a retreat with no phone/internet. I'd be perfectly OK.

**What has been your worst vacation experience?**

It was definitely with an ex. We got into an argument before we even unpacked our bags. I'll leave it at that.

**What is your favorite childhood travel memory?**

Probably taking road trips with my mother down to Maryland. We'd leave early in the morning, she'd play a bunch of Gospel, or a book on tape, while I laid out in the backseat. Eight hours later, I was playing with my cousins.

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

Honestly, I vacation for all three reasons. I'm definitely going with the intention of relaxing. I refuse



Jason Bowen in Barcelona in December 2022.

to experience any stress on a vacation. I also like to learn about the place that I'm visiting, so I'll usually set up something fun that educates me about the local culture. I'm all for a little adventure as well. I'll usually book an excursion that includes some sense of adventure like zip-lining or riding ATVs in the jungle.

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

I don't do much reading on vacation. But I'll probably bring something related to learning more about the stock market. Can't learn enough about making money.

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

Probably anybody with access to a private plane. Much respect to the parents of young children, but I'm ready to never hear another crying baby on a flight.

**What is the best gift to give a traveler?**

Either a voucher for an airline company, or a really good suitcase.

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

I don't snack too heavy on flights. But, a good bag of dried mangoes goes a long way in my world.

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

I brought back some cacao from the Dominican Republic once after taking a chocolate-making class. It was cool to be able to bring a little taste of DR to my kitchen in New Jersey.

**What is your favorite app/website for travel?**

Google Flights is always a good starting point.

**What has travel taught you?**

It has taught me that the world is vast, but it's a lot smaller than we think.

**What is your best travel tip?**

Keep an open mind, prioritize safety, and weigh your bag before you get to the airport. There are plenty of times that I've been that guy taking clothes out of my suitcase and stuffing them into my backpack.

JULIET PENNINGTON



## HERE

### NEWPORT HOTEL SHINES AGAIN

Rising from the ashes of a tragic fire in 2022, Wayfinder Newport re-debuts after a comprehensive rebuild and renovations to its convivial public spaces and 197 airy guest rooms and suites. A project of the heart created by local chefs, bartenders, artists, and other creatives, the hotel is designed as a departure from traditional accommodations in the city, offering a contemporary take on coastal style with custom furnishings, vintage finds, and more than 1,000 pieces by Rhode Island artists.

On-site dining concepts include the B-Side lobby coffee bar; The Pool Shack cocktail bar, an outdoor pool and party deck; and Nomi Park, a restaurant with classic cocktails — open with restricted hours. Amenities include pet-friendly accommodations, 24-hour gym, complimentary Wi-Fi, free parking with electric car charging stations, green space outdoor party deck with games for all ages, and 3,800 square feet of a flexible indoor and outdoor event space. Curated

guest experiences include live poolside music and movies, night swims, and arcade pop-ups. The first hotel in Dovetail + Co's expanding Wayfinder collection, the renewed hotel rejoins the brand's other locations in Waikiki, Hawaii, and Bishop, Calif., in the High Sierra region. Off-season rates from \$149 (November-March/April); peak season rates from \$399 (late April-October). 401-849-9880, [www.wayfindernewport.com](http://www.wayfindernewport.com)

## THERE

### THE GOOD TIMES ROLL AT NOLA WINE PUB & INN

As if New Orleans couldn't get any more fun to visit, along comes the Copper Vine Wine Pub & Inn, the newest addition to the Crescent City's downtown central business district. The historic three-story, circa-1800s home was once Maylie's, a Creole institution for over a century, and its brick facade, flowering vines and decorative cast-iron balconies are recognizable architectural icons. This lively indoor/outdoor restaurant, open for lunch, dinner, and brunch, is helmed

by chef Amy Mehrtens and draws inspiration from Caribbean, European, and Southern flavors with a casual NOLA twist. (Louisiana crawfish beignets, anyone?), and the wine pub offers 30-plus wines from the tap or cellar. What makes this establishment newsworthy to travelers is the recent debut of its boutique 11-room inn perched above the pub.

The 10 lofty, light-filled, and stylish guest rooms, and the Terrace Suite with sweeping city views, feature handcrafted furniture from New Orleans-based millworkers, plush linens, locally made fabrics and curated artwork, and floor-to-ceiling windows — outfitted with blackout drapes for sleeping off the evening's revelries. The innkeepers ensure a personalized stay from arrival to departure, including room service and complimentary European-style breakfast plate offered each morning in Maylie's Living Room. Additional amenities include contactless check-in/check-out, baggage storage, welcome drink, daily housekeeping, free Wi-Fi, access to the common area living room, refillable water stations, and more. September room rates from \$250. 504-208-9535, [www.coppervine.com](http://www.coppervine.com)

## EVERYWHERE

### INNOVATIVE LAUNDRY-FREE CLOTHES

Packing light as a travel goal is easier preached than practiced, especially when adventure trips mean bringing multiple options for changing out of sweaty clothes. Enter HerClean, a sustainable textile innovation company which recently launched a line of laundry-free clothes, designed for extended use without the need for frequent washing.



By utilizing unique fibers such as copper ion polyester and carbon-infused polyester, the clothing incorporates fibers that kill the bacteria that cause odor, absorbing and eliminating unpleasant smells, meaning the clothes can be worn for extended periods without washing. Not only does this technology reduce the environmental impact associated with frequent laundering (and who can find a laundromat when backpacking?), it also offers the consumer a solution to hauling around an overpacked bag. The company sells a variety of products for men and women, including socks, underwear, long and short-sleeved shirts, and even bedding. Their most popular item, the HerClean Shirt 3.0, is made from a blend of beechwood, copper, spandex, and other materials, and promises to keep you smelling fresh for over 100 days without washing. Available in multiple sizes and colors. \$100. 952-222-7534, <https://herclean.com>

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