

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER



ROSLAN RAHMAN/AFP

A Singapore Airlines plane prepares to land at Changi International airport in Singapore on Aug. 14, 2021.

Where's our promised refund from Singapore Airlines?

By Christopher Elliott
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Q. My family and I canceled our airline tickets last year because of COVID-19. Singapore Airlines promised to refund the tickets but said it would take 16 weeks. I filed a credit card dispute with Citibank.

Citibank issued a temporary credit for the tickets. A month later, Singapore Airlines refunded one of the five tickets. But then, in October, Citibank closed the claim and charged us again for all the tickets.

Our credit card company said Singapore Airlines initiated a chargeback in September, and we lost the claim. Singapore said they “allowed the chargeback back” for the other four tickets in summer and therefore they won’t refund the money again, but the credit card company said it’s Singapore Airlines who we need to deal with. Can you help us?

REBECCA ENGELMANN,
White Plains, N.Y.

A. If Singapore Airlines promised you a refund, you should have received one. But this case looks a little upside-down. Let me explain.

Normally, you would not get a refund for tickets you canceled during the pandemic. Airlines are only required to refund tickets when they cancel. Otherwise, you get an expiring ticket credit.

I don’t agree with that, by the way. I think if the government warns you against traveling, or if there’s no way you can safely or legally travel somewhere, then you should also get a refund. But that’s a discussion for another time, and it’s something legislators and consumer advocates are arguing about at the moment.

Anyway, it looks like you complicated things by filing a credit card dispute. I’m not entirely sure why you tried to claw your money back after Singapore Airlines promised you a refund. A credit card dispute is a nuclear option. Under the Fair Credit Billing Act — the law that protects you from fraudulent purchases — you typically have 90 days to dispute a purchase. After that, your next step would be small claims court.

I’m not sure why Citibank allowed you to file a credit card dispute. Someone from Citi should have advised you to wait for Singapore to make good on its promise. But even so, a written promise to refund the money is like a debit memo. If you show it to your credit card issuer, it’s an almost automatic refund — unless things get as mixed up as they did in this case.

I always recommend contacting the company directly. I list the names, numbers, and e-mail addresses for all the executives at Singapore Airlines on my consumer advocacy site at www.elliott.org/consumer-contacts/singapore-airlines. I also have Citibank executive contacts at www.elliott.org/company-contacts/citigroup/.

This case took some untangling. It turns out the partial refund you received was for an upgrade. Singapore thought Citi had your money. Citi thought Singapore had your money. My team and I spent some time tracking down the refund. Singapore finally refunded all five tickets, as promised.

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 or chris@elliott.org.

THE VIP LOUNGE



Anita Hill

on going somewhere new,

drinking the local wine, and cruising the Nile

Anita Hill recently posed for a portrait in New York to promote her book, “Believing: Our Thirty-Year Journey to End Gender Violence,” released on Sept. 28.

Lawyer, author, and academic scholar Anita Hill said she is not one to visit a vacation destination more than once — even if she really enjoyed it. “We don’t do recurring travel,” she said in a recent phone interview. “We like to find something that we haven’t done before, try to get the most out of it, and move on to something else.” Hill, 65, a professor of social policy, law, and women’s, gender, and sexuality studies at Brandeis University in Waltham, just released her third book, “Believing: Our Thirty-Year Journey to End Gender Violence.” The Yale Law School graduate, who lives in the Greater Boston area with her spouse, Charles Malone Jr., said her latest release “is really about my personal journey, but also about the journey of the country and its relationship to public violence.” Hill came into the public spotlight in 1991 when she accused then Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas of sexual harassment while he was her supervisor at the US Department of Education. Despite Hill’s accusations, Thomas was appointed to the country’s highest judicial body, but her landmark testimony was impactful and led to Congress passing a law extending protections to those who have been the victims of sexual harassment. Hill said that while progress has been made in the 30 years

since she testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee, there is still much work to be done. “How are we going to solve this problem — a problem that we know is enormous and is costly in terms of human losses, but also economically?” she asked. “What can each of us do to make sure that the future is brighter for the next generation so that they don’t have to experience this horrible and really quite widespread problem in this country?” We caught up with Hill, who is from Lone Tree, Okla., to talk about all things travel.

‘What can each of us do to make sure that the future is brighter for the next generation so that they don’t have to experience this horrible and really quite widespread problem in this country?’

Favorite vacation destination? Egypt. Cruising the Nile was magical, like having a part in a rolling travel show. Looking out a hotel room and seeing the Giza pyramids that I’d first seen in photographs in elementary school books was thrilling.

Favorite food or drink while vacationing? Local wine — typically white wine. If possible, for weeks or months after a vacation, I’m still drinking wine from the location I visited.

Where would you like to travel to but haven’t? Mexico City, for the art and the food.

One item you can’t leave home without when traveling? Whether traveling abroad or in the US, I like to carry a book about local language and traditions.

Aisle or window? Window. I like to see where I’m landing.

Favorite childhood travel memory? I grew up on a farm. We didn’t have money to travel and we worked during the summer when school was not in session.

Guilty pleasure when traveling? Local deserts. And local music venues.

Best travel tip? At the very least, learn how to say “thank you” and “please” and ask for water in your host country’s native language. One tip that I regret not following faithfully is to carry a tape recorder while traveling. Great for recording your impressions and the sounds of the place you’re visiting. Pictures are great, but sounds — like those in a marketplace [or] street festival — are hard to hold on to.

JULIET PENNINGTON

HERE

CAPE PACKAGE OFFERS FALL EXPERIENCES

Quick: What do cranberries, all-weather boots, whales, and stylish accommodations all have in common? They’re all elements of A Berry Sperry Fall at Ocean Edge package that brings together Massachusetts-based brands Sperry, Ocean Spray, and the Ocean Edge Resort & Golf Club for a quintessential Cape Cod fall experience. The package includes two-nights at either The Mansion or The Villages at Ocean Edge; a promo code to receive a pair of discounted Sperry boots; a cranberry-themed picnic experience by Ocean Spray; two tickets to a whale watching tour; and \$100 credit toward cranberry spa treatments at The Beach House Spa. For an additional \$15 per person, guests can tour a local organic cranberry farm. Available through Dec. 15. From \$312 per night. 508-896-9000, www.oceanedge.com/specials/a-berry-sperry-fall

GARLIC LOVERS’ SHANGRI-LA

Mark your calendar for the 16th Annual Connecticut Garlic & Harvest Festival taking place at the Bethlehem Fairgrounds on Route 61 in Connecticut (Oct. 9-10). Enjoy garlic cooking demonstrations, learn garlic growing tips, taste free garlic specialty foods offered for sale, including dips, spreads, cheeses and oils. Hungry? The food court will serve all-things-garlic (and more) including deep fried garlic, garlic wood-fired pizzas and garlic ice cream. Take home fresh garlic and other fall offerings from local produce stands to craft your own creations. Not a garlic fan? There’s still plenty to enjoy including live music performances; high quality crafts from pottery to photography, hand-made soaps, bird houses and more; and, for kids, carnival rides, free

pumpkin decorating, face painting and a giant slide. Admission: adults, \$10; seniors, \$8; children under 12, \$1. www.garlicfestct.com

THERE

HALLOWEEN SPOOK-FEST IN PENITENTIARY

Fans of Halloween and all-things-spooky may want to add Philadelphia to their fall travel itinerary. Halloween Nights at Eastern State Penitentiary is a new immersive experience that transforms the 10-acre complex into a sprawling festival comprising 15 attractions inside the cellblocks, including two haunted houses (can be bypassed by those who want a less scary experience); immersive walk-throughs with special effects like laser shows and video projections; interactive performances; and opportunities to explore the penitentiary’s history, including an exclusive narration by actor Steve Buscemi. Four themed bars and lounges serve food and drinks, including scary offerings at The Bloodline Lounge. Recommended for kids 12 and older; ages 7

and under are not permitted. Advance tickets sold online by half-hour entry times. From \$34. Operating through Nov. 13. easternstate.1org/halloween

LA DOLCE FELLINI

Calling all Fellini film aficionados! The Federico Fellini International Museum has debuted in the seaside city of Rimini, the hometown of the master Italian film director and screenwriter. Located in the northern Italian region of Emilia Romagna, the museum — touted as the world’s largest museum devoted to the artist’s life, work and poetic heritage — occupies Rimini’s Renaissance Sismondo Castle (a 15th-century fortress), the upper floors of the city’s art-nouveau Cinema Fulgor, and the Square of Dreams, where video installations, augmented reality and pop-up exhibits can be seen. Highlights include a replica of La Dolce Vita movie set with advanced digital technologies; displays of original scripts, costumes, letters, documents and videos; and a “cinemino” (a little movie

hall) screening Fellini movies all day. www.fellinimuseum.it/en/

SKY HIGH THRILLS IN NYC

Thrill seekers visiting Manhattan won’t want to miss the newly opened SUMMIT One Vanderbilt, a 65,000-square-foot, four-level immersive and sensory urban entertainment space. Each level — Transcendence, Air, Levitation, and Apres — offer different experiences including sky boxes that allow guests to stand on transparent glass 1,063 feet above Madison Avenue; an all-glass elevator with a transparent glass floor; an immersive environment with integrated art, sound and lighting that creates the illusion of boundless, faceted space; a summit terrace with expansive views for up to 80 miles; and more. Hungry? Danny Meyer’s Union Square Events provide both indoor and outdoor bars, all-day lounge and cafe, and spots to grab elevated snacks. Entrance located on the Main Concourse of Grand Central Terminal. Tickets from \$39 (adult); \$33 (ages 6-12); 5 and under visit free. summitov.com

EVERYWHERE

LIGHT MY FIRE

Fall camping season is here and outdoorsy, bonfire-loving fans know the importance of a reliable way to start and maintain a fire for grilling, making s’mores, or simply warming chilly hands and feet. Put away those damp matches and glitchy lighters and reach for Pull Start Fire, an innovative product that gets a toasty fire going in a few seconds by the pull of a string. Starts a beautiful fire in any weather condition — rain, snow, wet — with no kindling. It even lights wet wood. It’s food safe, and burns a full 30 minutes. Multiple pack sizes available, from 3-pack (\$19.99) to 30-pack (\$129.99). <https://pullstartfire.com/> NECEE REGIS

