

# The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

## TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER



ADOBE

## Where's the refund from her canceled Canadian rail tour?

By Christopher Elliott  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

**Q.** I need your help getting a refund of \$6,339 for a Canadian rail tour from Rocky Mountaineer. Our package included airport, train, and hotel transfers, with nights in Calgary, Banff, and Vancouver.

The trip, which we booked in February 2020 and was scheduled for May 2020, was canceled by the tour operator because of COVID-19. Rocky Mountaineer offered a 110 percent nonrefundable credit to use against a new booking that can be applied to the 2021 season and would have had to have been used by the end of November.

I would have preferred a full refund rather than credit for a trip we may not ever take. Rocky Mountaineer has refused our direct request for a refund. I filed a chargeback through my credit card, but Visa sided with the tour operator. Is there anything you can do?

KAY NELSON, Chapel Hill, N.C.

**A.** Rocky Mountaineer should have offered you the choice of either a full refund or a credit. That's the standard for a COVID-19 cancellation. Many companies tried to keep their customers' money anyway, with predictable results.

The tour operator's cancellation policies on its site are one-sided when it comes to refunds. They tell you under what circumstances you can cancel and receive a partial refund, but they don't address a cancellation by Rocky Mountaineer.

You have to dig deep into the company's terms and conditions — and know a little French — to figure out your rights when it cancels a tour.

Section 12 says, "Other than as a result of force majeure, Rocky Mountaineer will repay the deposit or charges for the itinerary or, where appropriate, a reasonable pro-rata share thereof." A force majeure is an unforeseen circumstance like a pandemic. In other words, if it's an event beyond the control of your tour operator, and if it has to cancel, it gets to keep your money — and, presumably, will offer a credit.

It's hard to argue with a contract you've already signed. But you could have reached out to someone higher up at the tour operator to plead your case. I publish the names, numbers, and e-mail addresses of the customer service contacts at Rocky Mountaineer on my consumer advocacy site at [www.elliott.org/company-contacts/rocky-mountaineer/](http://www.elliott.org/company-contacts/rocky-mountaineer/).

But I'm not sure that would have worked. Technically, you agreed to this contract, even though it may have conflicted with some state laws. And that's why I recommended that you reach out to your attorney general to find out if the agreement with Rocky Mountaineer might have run afoul of any North Carolina consumer protections.

You filed a complaint with your attorney general. In response, you heard from a lawyer representing Rocky Mountaineer. The representative offered you a \$1,900 refund for the portion of your trip that included some of your hotel stays. That's less than you wanted, but you accepted the refund and will use the rest of the credit for a rail tour next summer.

*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

# Jenna Rubaii seeks out parks and the unexpected

**W**hen Jenna Rubaii was 6 or 7 years old, her Tampa-based song-and-dance group was selected to perform in the chorus of the national tour of "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat." The Clearwater native was quickly hooked on theater. She went on to perform in a number of national and international tours and on Broadway (where she originated the role of "Joelle" in "Groundhog Day"). Now, roughly 25 years later after "Joseph," she finds herself performing again in an Andrew Lloyd Webber musical. This time, it's "Jesus Christ Superstar," in which she plays Mary Magdalene and gets to sing what she referred to as "one of the most iconic ballads of all time" ("I Don't Know How to Love Him"). The rock opera based on the Gospels is coming to the Emerson Colonial Theatre Jan. 4-16. "Our current production stems from the 2017 version that was performed at Regent's Park Open Air Theatre. It won an Olivier [Award] for best revival and is a completely new and fresh take on the story," Rubaii, 32, said in a phone call from Toronto, where "Jesus Christ Superstar," which debuted on Broadway in 1971, was being performed. "It's much more of a rock show meets dance concert meets theater piece meets passion play. It's very raw and it's very authentic ... and I think it lends itself to much more interpretation from the audience's point of view. It's not super literal." We caught up with the New York City-based actress, who loves to hike and is a yoga enthusiast, to talk about all things travel.

**Favorite vacation destination?** This is such a difficult question to answer. Every city, every state, every country brings its own flair and vibrance. I love the mountains so I usually look for destinations with great places to hike. But if we're getting specific, Japan was an absolute highlight. I had the opportunity to tour there with Green Day's "American Idiot," and Tokyo is, hands down, one of the most unique cities I've explored. Japanese culture and hospitality are unmatched, and don't even get me started on the sushi. ... I'm still dreaming about it.

**Favorite food or drink while vacationing?** Anything unique to the culture. I want an authentic experience, so I often seek out suggestions from the locals, if possible. Most memorable dining experiences include: hibachi in Japan — it's an artform — and the most simple, fresh-from-the garden salads from Bali Eco Stay in Bali and Sonya's Garden in Tagaytay in the Philippines. Oh, and if I'm in Southeast Asia, you can always find me sipping from a coconut.

**Where would you like to travel to but haven't?** I've always wanted to visit Spain and Morocco. I started learning Arabic over the pandemic from a teacher in Morocco, so now I'm even more excited to plan that trip.

**One item you can't leave home without when**



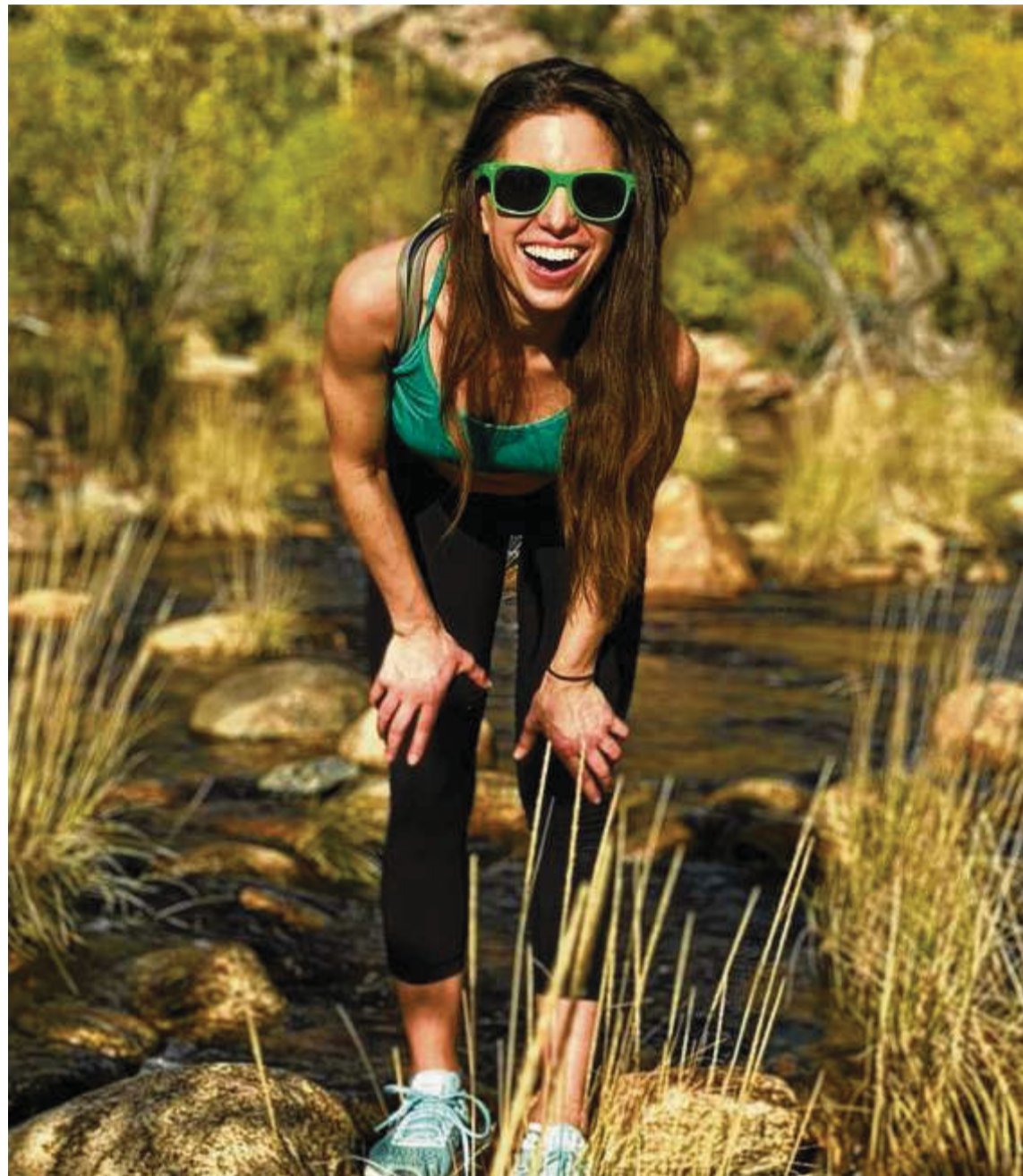
## HERE

### NEW YEAR'S EVE FOR KIDS

Ring in the new year with the kiddos at the Mystic Seaport Museum. At this family-friendly event, attendees can check out the museum's newest exhibits, make their own party hats, go on a scavenger hunt, and enjoy live music with Steve Elci & Friends, performers who interact with their audiences through original songs, educational messages and fun creative dance steps. The best part for parents with little kids? There's no need to wait until midnight to shout "Happy New Year!" The museum's celebration starts at 3 p.m. with noisemakers, sparklers, a countdown and confetti cannons. All activities included with admission. Open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Adults \$25.95; Youth (13-17) \$21.95; child (4-12) \$18.95; and senior (65+) \$23.95. 860-572-0711, [www.mysticseaport.org](http://www.mysticseaport.org)

### SLIDE INTO CURLING SEASON

Chilly winter days just got a whole lot more fun at Boston's The Liberty Hotel where locals and overnight guests can enjoy another season of winter curling. Bundle up and head to The Yard, the hotel's private outdoor courtyard, for 45-minute sessions of independent curling on a synthetic rink. Available every Saturday and Sunday,



Jenna Rubaii at Saguaro National Park in Arizona in 2019.

**traveling?** My passport. And most recently, a white noise machine. It makes all the difference when you're trying to sleep in a new place.

**Aisle or window?** Aisle. I like being able to stretch my legs without bothering people to get up.

**Favorite childhood travel memory?** I was so lucky to have a family that introduced me to the importance of travel at such a young age. My most vivid childhood travel memories are those of the gorgeous national parks throughout our country. Carlsbad Caverns, Great White Sands, and Arches stick out as top favorites from our family vacations. Now I

make a point to find any national or state park while I'm on tour throughout the US. It completely rejuvenates me.

**Guilty pleasure when traveling?** Eating my way through every city!

**Best travel tip?** Be willing to adventure. I think the best travel experiences are the most unexpected. Have an outline of what you want to do, but be open to spontaneity. Oh, and TSA pre-check. Not even a question. It makes all travel days less stressful.

JULIET PENNINGTON

Public areas include a restaurant, secret garden accessed from a concealed entry point, plush guest lounge, library, and rooftop bar with striking views. Rates from \$259. 646-692-8012, [www.civilianhotel.com](http://www.civilianhotel.com)

### ADIRONDACK WINTER GETAWAY

Winter sports fans will want to take advantage of the Cross Country Ski and Snowshoe package at High Peaks Resort in Lake Placid, N.Y. Stay at one of three unique hotels — the main resort overlooking Mirror Lake, the mid-century modern Lake House, and the Waterfront Collection — and enjoy 20 kilometers of groomed cross-country ski trails at the Cascade Ski Center. The two-night package includes breakfast each morning at Dancing Bears Restaurant and one-day admission to Cascade Ski Center, along with amenities offered to all hotel guests, including complimentary snowshoe rental at guest services desk; welcome beverage on arrival; access to 24-hour fitness center; access to two indoor pools; and more. Rates from \$203 per night through March 31. 518-523-4411, [www.highpeaksresort.com/packages/cross-country-ski-snowshoe](http://www.highpeaksresort.com/packages/cross-country-ski-snowshoe)

### NEW HOTEL SOARS IN MILE HIGH CITY

Planning a trip to Denver for work or play? Launch your winter vacation at the new Hyatt Centric Downtown Denver, located in the heart of downtown near the city's top destinations, including the Colorado Convention Center, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Union Station, Larimer Square, as well as artisanal shops and upscale restaurants. The property's 264-rooms feature modern urban décor, BeeKind bath amenities and Keurig coffee makers. Top floor offerings include panoramic rooftop terrace, penthouse Presidential Suite and workout center. A new seasonally-inspired restaurant, Apple Blossom, is

located in the lobby. Want to ski? The hotel is situated midway between Denver International Airport and Colorado's renowned mountain towns. Rates from \$199. 303-529-2340, [www.hyatt.com/en-US/hotel/colorado/hyatt-centric-downtown-denver/dent](http://www.hyatt.com/en-US/hotel/colorado/hyatt-centric-downtown-denver/dent)

## EVERYWHERE

### A TEST LAB IN THE PALM OF YOUR HAND

New international travel restrictions for US citizens now require accurate COVID-19 tests. Tech company Cue Health recently launched an at-home COVID-19 test that delivers 97.8-percent accurate results, including detection of the Omicron variant, as verified in an independent study conducted by the Mayo Clinic. (The test has previously been in use by organizations such as Google, NBA, and MLB.) Combining the speed of rapid antigen tests with lab-quality accuracy of PCR tests, it is the first of its kind to be authorized by the FDA to test both symptomatic and asymptomatic adults and children ages 2 and up using a lower nasal swab. Simply insert your swab in the Cue Reader (\$249), a reusable and compact device that processes each test and connects wirelessly with your mobile device, and receive results in 20 minutes via the Cue Health App (available for both iOS and Android). In addition, two Cue+ membership levels enable you to share test results and discuss health issues with a doctor on-demand; the highest membership tier includes proctored testing, meaning you can get approved for international travel from home or on the road. Test cartridge 3-pack \$225. Products can be bundled for discounts with membership packages. <https://cuehealth.com/products/>

NECEE REGIS