

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

VIP LOUNGE | KENNETH LIN

From glowing plankton to light packing

Kenneth Lin, cofounder and CEO of San Francisco-based Credit Karma, has fond memories of the 10 years he spent in Boston — four of which were as a student at Boston University. “There are so many traditions, like on Patriots Day, for example, you have a Red Sox game being played, a marathon going on . . . what’s not to love about that?” Lin, 44, said. One thing he doesn’t miss about Boston: the cold weather. Lin is going to be the featured guest on a Sept. 9 BU alumni webinar, “Lessons learned: How Credit Karma’s Ken Lin built a billion-dollar brand.” Born in Guangzhou, China, Lin moved to Las Vegas when he was 4 years old and lived there until he moved to Boston for college. He lives in Oakland, Calif., with his wife, Serrie Singhasiri, and their children, Brandon, 7, and Stella, 4. Lin said the webinar (in which he will be interviewed by John Byers, associate dean of the faculty for mathematical and computational sciences at BU) will cover a variety of issues, including the many career paths one can take with a computer science degree, and how he would like to see more women and minorities in the field. “There are wonderful entrepreneurial aspects to technology these days. Technology is being redefined and that may not be on the radar of many students,” he said, adding that it is imperative that young people follow and focus on their passion. “Your major, your field of study, has to be something you enjoy, because when [life’s] curveballs come, you’re going to give up if it’s not a passion.” We caught up with Lin to talk about all things travel.

Favorite vacation destination?

I have a special affinity for Thailand. My wife is Thai; it was my first international trip . . . and it is ultimately where my wife and I got married. My favorite memory is from Phi-Phi Island. We had our ceremony on Phuket but invited our friends to join us for a few days on Phi-Phi Island. It should be noted that Phi-Phi Island has no roads. You can only travel by long tail boats operated by local gyp-



Boston University alum Kenneth Lin, cofounder and CEO of Credit Karma, with his wife, Serrie Singhasiri, and kids, Brandon, 7, and Stella, 4.

sies. One night after dinner with our friends, we rented two long tail boats to head back to the hotel. It was a calm, warm night, the moon was out, and all you could hear was the hum of the long tail boats. When we put our hands in the water, it glowed from the bioluminescent plankton. Most importantly, we were experiencing this while surrounded by our closest friends and family.

Favorite food or drink while vacationing?

When vacationing, I always do two things. First, I have to try the local beer. Every country in the world seems to have their national beer. I love the fact that beer is so familiar and common — yet it is unique and distinct from every beer that I have had from various regions. It really represents the people of the country. Secondly, I love to see the local culture. A good place to do that is in the local restaurants; I find the culture of a country is always on display at the non-tourist restaurants. We always make it a point to head off the beaten path and eat with the locals. We avoid places with English menus and try to survive on our ability to point at things we like, being polite and respectful, and just enjoying the atmosphere.

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

Lhasa, Tibet, has always been at the top of my list. We almost went before kids, but due to the sheer amount of planes, trains, and automobiles necessary, we couldn't make it work. Now with young kids, it is even more complicated given the potential for alti-

tude sickness. With that said, I'd love to someday experience the culture and the grandeur of being in the shadow of Everest.

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

There isn't anything I must have. My wife and I once did an around-the-world trip with only carry-ons. We like to travel light. We've made a contest of who can bring the least amount of items. You can always spot us on vacation because we are mostly likely wearing the same thing we wore two days ago. We wash clothes in between days.

Aisle or window?

Window. You can only be hit by the beverage cart so many times before you learn.

Favorite childhood travel memory?

I grew up in Las Vegas so I have fond memories of the drive from Las Vegas to Yosemite. It is a quick destination with beautiful scenery all along the way. We used to do it a couple times a year as a family.

Guilty pleasure when traveling?

A points upgrade. There is nothing better than sitting in business class knowing you paid coach fares.

Best travel tip?

When you arrive at a destination and the taxi lines are long at the airport, head up to departures and get in a cab that just dropped someone off. You'll save a ton of time for you and the cab driver.

JULIET PENNINGTON

TROUBLESHOOTER

British Airways says I was a no-show for my flight. But I wasn't.

By Christopher Elliott
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Q. Before the pandemic, I visited Scotland with my family. It was an amazing trip, except for our return flights, which were booked through Orbitz.

The first segment of our outbound flight from Los Angeles to London was delayed. American Airlines rebooked us on another flight from London to Glasgow through its code-share partner, British Airways.

The night before our return flight, I was shocked to learn that our flights had been canceled. Somehow, British Airways thought we had been a no-show for our outbound flights. It automatically canceled our returns. To get home, we had to rebook new tickets with Air France, which cost \$8,500.

I would like this amount refunded, plus maybe something extra for the stress and anguish I went through when I found out my flights had been canceled the night before we were supposed to leave Glasgow. Can you help?

ROSS SMITH, *Simi Valley, Calif.*

A. Your flights to the UK should have been smooth and uneventful — not the chaos you describe. This is easily one of the most complicated cases in recent memory. Let me try to untangle this no-show flight case for you.

American Airlines caused the first problem when it delayed your first flight from Los Angeles to London. It looks like it failed to notify British Airways that you would be on the next flight to Glasgow. Unfortunately for the traveler, airlines automatically cancel the remaining itinerary when you're a “no-show.”

It looks like Orbitz tried its best to fix the problem but couldn't. This case is even more maddening because American Airlines has a code-share agreement with British Airways, which is supposed to mean you're dealing with the same airline. Instead, American and British Airways played a game of ping-pong, bouncing you between their customer service departments as you tried to get this fixed.

I list the names, numbers, and e-mail addresses of American Airlines, British Airways, and Orbitz (owned by Expedia) on my consumer advocacy site, Elliott.org. But I have to be honest: Reaching out to them prob-

ably wouldn't have helped. Everyone was confused about your case.

I can't believe anyone allows airlines to operate a code-sharing agreement like this without some accountability. To think that you might be on the hook for \$8,500 for new plane tickets is just absurd!

After a lengthy investigation, which involved months of back-and-forth between my advocacy team, the airlines, and your travel agency, we got to the bottom of it. It looks like American Airlines erroneously processed changes to your ticket. That sent the wrong message to British Airways — that you'd missed your flight — and it automatically canceled your return tickets.

This case is an important reminder that if you miss a segment of your flight, you can't just continue your itinerary. Your airline will cancel the rest of your flights because it assumes you're a no-show, and it won't tell you about it.

Your case is an important reminder for the rest of us that if you miss a segment of your flight, you can't just continue your itinerary. Your airline will cancel the rest of your flights because it assumes you're a no-show, and it won't tell you about it.

American Airlines offered you four \$100 flight vouchers for the trouble. Orbitz kicked in another \$200 in vouchers. British Airways refunded you for your return tickets and cut you a check for the money you had to pay out of pocket for the Air France tickets.

Christopher Elliott is the chief advocacy officer of Elliott Advocacy, a nonprofit organization that helps consumers resolve their problems. Contact him at elliott.org/help or chris@elliott.org.

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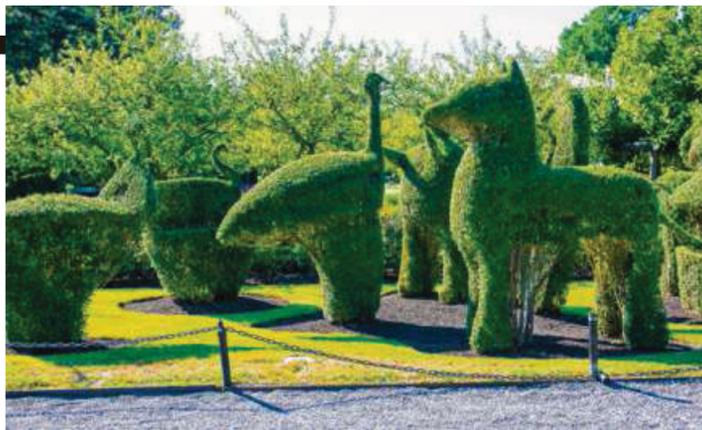
ELEGANT PICNICS IN RHODE ISLAND

Picnic baskets are welcome at a new experience offered by Newport Mansions. The Preservation Society of Newport County's new “Stroll the Gardens and Grounds” gives visitors the opportunity to picnic on the historic landscapes of The Breakers and The Elms in Newport, and the Green Animals Topiary Garden in Portsmouth. Kids may particularly enjoy the massive menagerie of animals at the topiary, including a giant giraffe. This new specialty ticket includes access to all three properties, and costs \$18 for adults and \$8 for youth, ages 6-17. The three properties can be visited on different days. (Does not include interior entry.) Tickets on sale through Oct. 12. 401-847-1000, www.newportmansions.org/plan-a-visit/stroll-the-gardens-grounds

THERE

ALTERNATIVES TO OVERSEAS TRAVEL

Sad that you can't travel overseas right now? Classic Journeys identifies a dozen iconic international destinations and suggests how to swap the experiences travelers get in those bucket-list spots with equally extraordinary places in the United States. For example, sporty travelers missing mountain climbing and white-water rafting can swap the Swiss Alps for Wyoming's mountain ranges and countryside; instead of Japan's cherry blossoms, explore the natural beauty of Vermont's fall foliage; in place of Bordeaux, a California wine trip may quench your



thirst for visiting vineyards; or swap Morocco for New Mexico and explore the culture of Native Americans at the Taos Pueblo, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and explore the Anasazi 900-year-old cliff dwellings in the Banderlier National Monument. 800-200-3887, www.classicjourneys.com/blog/us-alternatives-to-international-destinations/

EVERYWHERE

FROM ITALY WITH LOVE: VIRTUAL COOKING SCHOOL

You may not be able to travel to Italy right now, but you can still learn traditional Romagna home cookery, including how to make fresh, pasta, piadina (the local flat bread) and more, in online cooking classes offered by Casa Artusi. The new virtual classes are the result of COVID-19 shutting down programs in the region of Emilia Romagna that were

designed to honor the 2020 bicentenary of the birth of Pellegrino Artusi. Born in 1820, in the town of Forlimpopoli, Artusi is the author of “Science in the Kitchen” and “The Art of Eating Well,” and is the acknowledged father of Italian domestic cuisine. The cooking school, named after the celebrated writer, offers classes in English for one to 20 participants. Available upon request with advanced reservation; virtual classes with live instructor: \$95 per person. www.casartusi.it/en/cookery-school/



COVID TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS APP

To fly or not to fly is a dilemma for travelers in the age of COVID. App in the Air, the popular app for frequent fliers, has launched new features to help you feel more comfortable and help navigate air travel in the new normal. Complimentary tools for all app users include making it easy to search country to country restrictions (with government restrictions, quarantine, health declarations); airport and airline rules and requirements (including whether a mask is needed, avoiding middle seats, and free cancellations); and key health search filters for those looking to book flights and hotels. AITA has also instituted helpful in-app travel reminders throughout the journey, from the booking process to future flight notifications. covid.aita.travel

GUIDEBOOK TO HISTORIC ARTIST STUDIOS AND HOMES

Take an art-themed road trip from the comfort of your couch with the new “Guide to Historic Artists' Homes & Studios” by Valerie A. Balint. Published by the Princeton Architectural Press and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the book — available virtually and physically — cele-

brates preserved artists' homes and studios across 21 states, representing the legacies of more than 300 artists over three centuries. Weaving the history of the sites' architecture and landscape with the artists' biographies and their work, the guidebook also serves



Andrew Wyeth's studio in Chadds Ford, Pa.; Green Animals Topiary Garden (top); Casa Artusi class.

as a way to plan an itinerary when you are ready to visit these sites in person. It includes many New England locations, such as the Florence Griswold Museum in Old Lyme, Conn.; Winslow Homer's Studio in Scarborough, Maine; and Chesterwood, the summer home and studio of American sculptor Daniel Chester French in Lenox. Farther afield, the book shines a spotlight on artist Donald Judd's multi-story SoHo apartment in Manhattan; conceptual artist David Ireland's home in San Francisco; prolific painter Vance Kirkland's studio in Denver; and more. \$29.95. <https://artistshomes.org/> NECEE REGIS