

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER



SHUTTERSTOCK

Airline lost my luggage but won't reimburse my expenses

By Christopher Elliott
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Q. Last fall, my wife and I traveled to Eastern Europe for a river cruise. We missed our connection in London because of a flight delay. Our airline re-routed us to Paris and Prague, with the last leg on CSA Czech Airlines.

Our luggage did not arrive with us. We immediately filed a lost luggage claim at the Prague airport. When the luggage still did not come the next day, and there was no word on when or if it would, we went shopping for clothes and toiletries. The luggage finally arrived late that same night.

After the trip, we filed for expense reimbursement with Czech Airlines, since they were the ones that delayed our luggage. I filed by using their online form. I received an immediate canned response that they would process our claim as soon as possible.

When I heard nothing further for three weeks, I followed up, again using their online form. I received the same canned response. After waiting almost three more weeks with no answer, I sent an email to their call center explaining the situation and asking about the status of my claim. (I got the email address from your website.)

An airline representative said wait times were longer than normal but promised to get back to me as soon as possible. That was four months ago. I would simply like Czech Airlines to adjudicate the claim and decide what, if anything, they are going to reimburse.

DIXK HELMS, *Tucson, Ariz.*

A. CSA Czech Airlines should have promptly processed your claim, as promised. High traffic and call volume is one thing, but the airlines can't use that excuse for months. Your claim just fell between the cracks, and the airline covered its incompetence with form letters.

There was nothing unusual about your claim. You filed it on time, the items you purchased were reasonable, and you gave the airline all the documentation needed to process the claim.

Usually, when a reimbursement claim goes sideways, it's because someone bought something the airline wouldn't cover or filed the claim too late. I could see no evidence of any of that. The only place where I can find fault is where you allowed the drugstore to convert your dollars to korunas. Always let your bank do the conversion; otherwise, you'll get hit with fees and an unfavorable exchange rate.

You did the right thing by appealing to a manager, and I'm happy that you found the executive contacts for CSA Czech Airlines that I list on my consumer advocacy site at www.elliott.org/company-contacts/csa-czech-airlines/. You used those contacts at the right moment, when it became clear that they would not process your claim quickly.

I contacted the airline on your behalf. It "found" your claim and processed a refund of \$414 for the clothing and toiletries.

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

She loves Ireland, vegan food, and taking it all in

Houston native Jennafer Newberry loves Colorado so much that she decided to tie the knot in the Centennial State in 2019. It has, the singer and actress said, "some of the most beautiful sights and vistas I have ever seen." Newberry, who plays Glinda in the national tour of "Wicked," said she is enjoying exploring the country while on tour, but is especially excited about coming to Boston (the Tony Award-winning musical will be at the Opera House through July 24). "I've been to Boston before and just love it. I've never played the Opera House, but it's been on my bucket list," she said. "I'm really excited to go to a Red Sox game and to find all of the good vegan [restaurants] in Boston." Newberry, who was in the show's ensemble before taking over the co-lead role in March, said that even though "Wicked" debuted on Broadway nearly 20 years ago, it is timeless. "It's the most beautiful, rich story and still so relevant," she said. "Themes of love and acceptance and friendship, and not judging others by how they look ... we can still learn from it today." We caught up with Newberry, who lives in New York City with her husband, Zach Peery, a seminary student, and their "perfect" French bulldog, Shiloh, to talk about all things travel.

Favorite vacation destination?

I feel very fortunate to have been able to see so much of the US on our tour, while also having been able to travel a bit internationally with my family. My two favorite places I have been to are Colorado and Ireland. Having lived in big cities my whole life, it is so incredibly refreshing to get away and to be surrounded by nature. For this very reason, my husband and I got married on a mountain in Colorado. I have never seen landscapes like those I experienced in Ireland — the countryside was just something out of a dream and the people are warm and welcoming.

Favorite food or drink while vacationing?

We are vegan and we always try to find the best vegan restaurants. We especially love Thai food [and] we are also lovers of wine. We love supporting local and unique businesses and restaurants while traveling.

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

I have always wanted to travel to Greece and Italy. They both seem like they have so much to offer. I would love to experience the culture, history, sightseeing, and food and wine in each country.

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

My phone for documenting and taking pictures and videos. I love taking pictures and capturing special moments to look back on. My husband and I do this all the time on tour. We love looking back on the places we have stayed, eaten, and enjoyed in each new city.

Aisle or window?

Funny you should ask. ... When traveling alone, I love the window seat. But when I fly with my hus-



Jennafer Newberry and her husband, Zach Peery, in Beaver Creek, Colo., in 2019.

band, I always end up in the middle seat so that he can have the window seat. He doesn't love flying and this stipulation was actually in our wedding vows.

Favorite childhood travel memory?

Growing up, my family went to Colorado a few times. We always drove. Colorado has some of the most beautiful sights and vistas I have ever seen and it will always hold such a special place in my heart. On one trip we tried to "camp" and it was hilarious. My mom and I are not necessarily the "camping type." We didn't have any silverware to eat breakfast, so my dad carved me a little wooden spoon out of a nearby branch. I still have it to this day.

Guilty pleasure when traveling?

Once-in-a-lifetime excursions. I can be frugal with certain aspects of traveling, but my mom always reminds me to go on the adventure if I can. Twenty years from now, you won't remember how much it was to rent that kayak or how tired you were when you woke up at 3 a.m. to see that Hawaiian sunrise. You will only remember the laughter and the joy. Memories are priceless.

Best travel tip?

I am still putting this into practice, but I would say be present and take it all in. Let go of expectations and just have an adventure. Take pictures and post later. Unplug — the best you can — the world and your responsibilities.

JULIET PENNINGTON

HERE

WATERFRONT RESORT MAKES SPLASHY DEBUT

Take advantage of the Grand Opening Package at Salt Cottages, a reimagined Bar Harbor resort opening Fourth of July weekend. Book by June 30 and get 20 percent off the nightly rate at the property's maritime-inspired accommodations including 30 stand-alone cottages (studios plus one- and two-bedroom offerings) and 10 boutique motor lodge rooms. Originally built in the 1940s, on a hillside overlooking Frenchman Bay, the transformed resort is minutes from both the Hulls Cove entrance to Acadia National Park and downtown Bar Harbor restaurants and attractions. Amenities include expansive outdoor pool, two spacious hot tubs, stone firepits, on-site snack bar (think burgers, lobster rolls, and ice cream), game room, playground, and more. Package also includes goodie-stuffed swag bag. Rates from \$399. 207-288-9918, saltcottagesbarharbor.com.

FESTIVAL CELEBRATES YOUNG MUSICIANS

You don't have to be a kid to love Re-surgam, the new inclusive and community-minded music and arts festival designed to spotlight Portland's creativity and youth. The one-day event, organized by the Maine Academy of Modern Music, will be held at waterfront venue, Thompson's Point. Live music will be featured on multiple indoor and outdoor stages by dozens of young musicians and bands with names like Buttery Flaky Crust, Pigeon Suit, Anthem Hypocrisy and Let's Call Grandma! The event also includes food trucks, a "maker's mall" filled with local vendors and Maine artisans, children's parade, and more.



June 12, noon-9 p.m. Free. www.maineacademyofmodernmusic.org/resurgam

THERE

JUNETEENTH FESTIVAL IN NOLA

Those heading to The Big Easy in June won't want to miss the New Orleans Juneteenth Festival, a three-day extravaganza commemorating the abolition of slavery in America (June 18-20). The festival's free entertainment features spoken-word artists, dance artists, musicians, poets, and rappers. Seminars and workshops delve into important community issues such as education, economics, and spirituality. Vendors will offer tasty NoLa cuisine — crawfish, BBQ shrimp and snowballs — and crafts such as specialty soaps, crystals, natural oils, clothing, jewelry, and beadwork. www.neworleans.com/events/holidays-seasonal/juneteenth. Visitors can learn more about the trans-Atlantic slave trade and New Orleans's connection to it at various places in the city that are open year-round, such as the New Orleans African American Museum, All About Dat's Black heritage and jazz tours, the Whitney Plantation, Congo Square, and more. www.neworleans.com.

RAINBOWS AND ROSÉ

Pack your rainbow flag and head to the Big Apple to celebrate NYC Pride at its annual parade, one of the largest Pride marches in the world (June 26). Need a place to stay? A hotel partner for NYC Pride Month, the new voco Times Square South, an IHG Hotel, is offering a monthlong package: Pride & Rosé with voco + Veuve du Vernay. Upon arrival, guests who book the package will receive a complimentary 187 ml bottle of Veuve du Vernay Ice Sparkling Rosé along with a personalized welcome note. Beyond the perk, voco Times Square South is well-located on 36th and 9th streets, close to Fifth Avenue, Hudson Yards, Broadway, and Times Square. Rooms feature Keurig coffee makers, contemporary bathrooms and free Wi-Fi; 24/7 fitness and business centers keep you in shape and connected. Package rates from \$233 per night. 212-524-8990, www.ihg.com/voco/hotels/us/en/new-york.

EVERYWHERE

SAFETY AT SEA

Just in time for summer boating season, Adventure Medical Kits is debuting a new Coast Guard-approved series of marine medical kits. Seven

models are designed to meet the needs of a variety of boaters, from solo kayakers to recreational boaters and even to commercial fishing vessels with a large crew. The mid-priced Marine 600 is ideal for one to six people on an extended trip up to six hours away from professional care. Contents include a wide range of wound, burn, and blister care items, along with medications, fracture and sprain supplies, and an emergency blanket to prevent hypothermia. A waterproof and shockproof case features stainless steel hardware and an o-ring seal to keep supplies dry, even if submerged for 30 minutes in up to three feet of water. A copy of Marine Medicine: A Comprehensive Guide is included to help identify and treat more than 200 injuries and illnesses specifically related to marine medicine. Marine 600: \$199. Other models: \$59.99-\$799.99 www.adventuremedicalkits.com/medical-kits/marine/marine-600.html
DIGITAL PHOTOS ON DISPLAY
Wondering what to do with the hundreds of fabulous photos you took on vacation? The Monster Smart Home Digital Photo Frame might be the perfect solution for storing, exhibiting and showing off your many trip highlights. The user-friendly digital photo frame, with 1280p HD display, has 16GB of internal storage that can hold up to 4,000 photos and videos. Uploads up to 100 photos and videos at a time — even while traveling — using the Monster app. Synchs with voice-controlled devices. Touchscreen interface. Images can be shared with anyone who has a Monster app log in. App includes an additional 6GB of cloud storage. 8-inch \$129.99; 10-inch \$169.99. us.amazon.com/Monster-Digital-Definition-Picture-Frame/dp/B09636WC78

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