

# The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

## TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

I canceled my river cruise a year ago. Where's my refund?

By Christopher Elliott  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

**Q.** Last year, I made a \$1,641 deposit for myself and a friend on CroisiEurope river cruises to Portugal and Spain for the summer. The deposit represented 25 percent of the cost of the tour.

CroisiEurope's terms stated that if I canceled the reservation 90 days or more before my departure date, they would refund the deposit less a \$100 administrative fee per person.

I notified CroisiEurope via e-mail on April 6, 2020, that we wanted to cancel our reservation. They responded that our money would indeed be refunded (less the fee) back to my credit card. They further stated that "refunds are delayed and are taking four to five weeks."

I never received the refund. I have contacted them several times in the interim to inquire about the refund. Each time, they respond that refunds are delayed.

CroisiEurope is not disputing that they owe me the money. It has been more than a year since I canceled the booking. I would like help in getting this refund.

ELEANOR JOHNSON,  
Maynard

**A.** A year is way too long to wait for a refund. CroisiEurope promised it would return the money within five weeks. They're really testing your patience.

At the same time, the delay is understandable. To call 2020 the worst year ever for the travel industry might even be an understatement. It was a disaster! Some companies barely survived the pandemic, and too many went under. The cruise industry was especially hard hit, as it ground to a halt.

And that's exactly what happened.

"As I am sure you understand, we've faced an extremely difficult year," Michael DaCosta, the general manager for North America at CroisiEurope River Cruises, explained. "Policies have been put in place that all guests affected by the coronavirus pandemic can be accommodated or adequately compensated."

Can you make a refund move faster? Sometimes. Disputing your credit-card charges under the Fair Credit Billing Act might help. You have to notify your bank so that it reaches the creditor within 60 days after the first bill. For a transaction like this one, where you purchase a river cruise months in advance, it's a long shot. Some banks will accept the dispute but most won't.

Travelers in a situation like yours might have gotten a better deal by waiting for the cruise line to cancel the sailing. Typically, cruise lines offer either a full refund or (at least during the pandemic) a 125 percent cruise credit. But you also would risk having the cruise actually sail, which might have been dangerous.

I asked CroisiEurope River Cruises to review your case. It did and issued a prompt refund for the total amount, minus the administrative fee.

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

'EyeOpener' co-anchor loves Vegas, massages, and — for a change — sleeping in on vacation

Even though she's not a big gambler, WCVB Channel 5's Antoinette Antonio can't get enough of Las Vegas — in large part because her parents live there. And while she enjoys spending time with them, she also appreciates the help they provide with her two young sons. The Orange County, Calif., native recently celebrated her eight-year anniversary at WCVB, where she co-anchors the station's "EyeOpener" newscasts with Doug Meehan ("My alarm goes off at 1:15 in the morning," she said), and "NewsCenter 5 at Noon" with Erika Tarantal. Prior to going on the air in Boston, Antonio was a morning anchor and reporter at KOB-TV in Albuquerque for seven years. Antonio, 40, said she enjoys living in Boston, but working the morning shift and being a mom don't afford her much time to partake in all it has to offer — including, she said, trying out its many "amazing" restaurants. We caught up with Antonio — who lives in a suburb south of Boston with her husband, Jeremy Fine (who works in video production), their two sons, Greyson, 4, and Weston, 3, and their rescue greyhound, Lola Bella — to talk about all things travel.

### Favorite vacation destination?

Las Vegas ... and no, I am not a big gambler. My parents live there, so it's great to have free baby-sitting while my husband and I check in to a hotel and have a few nights to ourselves for a change. Of course, also great to see my family, too! So whenever we go — we try to get out there at least once a year — we get both family time and treat ourselves to nice dinners, cocktails at the pool, and honestly just sleeping in.

### Favorite food or drink while vacationing?

Well, that definitely depends on location: In Las Vegas, it's vodka tonic; an island destination, pina colada or Painkiller; and in New Mexico, where my husband is from, it's a margarita ... to name a few. For food, I always like to try local cuisine — especially in other countries. When we were in Thailand, we ate street food everywhere we went.

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

Turks and Caicos, because that's where my 40th birthday celebration was supposed to happen last year. But we had to cancel because of the pandemic. We just recently rescheduled it for the fall and we're just going to call it my 40% birthday! So if anyone has any suggestions, let me know since I have never been.



Antoinette Antonio and her husband, Jeremy Fine, in front of the Paris Hotel in Las Vegas.

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

This is going to sound really mushy, but my husband, Jeremy. He really is the best travel buddy. He is so easygoing and laid-back ... he lets me choose whatever I want to do, and we always genuinely have a good time together. Aside from him, I would have to say my phone. I look back at my younger years and wonder how I traveled around Spain, France, Italy, and Japan before the iPhone days.

### Aisle or window?

Aisle ... because 99 percent of the time we are traveling with our kids and you never know when someone will need to use the potty!

### Favorite childhood travel memory?

Going to the Philippines with my sister and dad when I was 8 years old. I was the first person in my family born in the United States and at that point I hadn't met many of my extended family members. We camped on the beach, went horseback riding, rode in jeepneys and tuk-tuks, got roadside mangos and sodas in plastic bags ... just

really simple stuff that was so much fun at that age. I also remember my dad working a second job for a whole year to pay for that trip because he wanted to make it special for my sister and me.

### Guilty pleasure when traveling?

Getting a massage. OK, multiple massages sometimes. We went to Thailand for our honeymoon and massages cost about 300 baht, which is like \$9 I think? I would get one at least once — maybe even twice — a day while Jeremy walked around looking for something to do.

### Best travel tip?

Don't try to plan the "perfect" trip. There are always going to be hiccups, whether it be a delayed or canceled flight, the hotel isn't what you expected, someone gets sick — which happened to both my husband and me years ago in Jamaica. ... This especially goes for family trips. Vacations are a lot of work with little kids. I read something the other day that said if your kids just want to snack all day and don't want to eat meals ... hey, at least they are fed, right? Best advice I have ever heard.

JULIET PENNINGTON

## HERE

### GET OUT GET HEALTHY FESTIVAL

Celebrate healthy living and outdoor recreation at the White Mountains Outdoor Fest in North Conway, N.H. (July 17-18). Presented by the Mt. Washington Valley Chamber of Commerce and White Mountains Community College, the event includes a fun 5K run/walk and 10K run through North Conway; a Vendor Square in Schouler Park featuring demos, speakers, yoga in the park, music, and food (Saturday only); guided half- and full-day hiking in the White Mountain National Forest; guided tours of the former logging community Livermore; guided bike rides; and SUP yoga and adventure paddle on nearby Conway Lake. Details and registration available on website. Fees vary. [mtwashingtonvalley.org/home/WhiteMountains-Fest.cfm](http://mtwashingtonvalley.org/home/WhiteMountains-Fest.cfm)

### HISTORIC CAPE COD INN MAKEOVER

Making its Cape Cod debut this month, Chapter House (formerly The Compass Rose) is a 21-room boutique inn that has undergone extensive renovations and upgrades to its historic property on Old King's Highway in Yarmouth Port. Comfy accommodations are available in the circa 1716 Victorian main house (with updated bar and four-season porch) as well as 10 guest rooms in the Carriage House. Guests at the inn can enjoy art, music, and theater at nearby top destination attractions, as well as outdoor activities such as hiking, biking, windsurfing, kayaking, or simply lolling on local beaches. Two-night minimum rates from \$578. 508-362-4348, [www.chapterhousecapecod.com](http://www.chapterhousecapecod.com)

## THERE

### LUXURY DIGS DEBUT IN HISTORIC PALAZZO

Fall in love with Tuscany all over again while sojourning in Lucca, a historic city rimmed by intact 16th-century walls. Located at the foot of the Apuan Alps, the old city center is known for its cob-



blestone streets, medieval churches, lively public squares, and restored palaces. It may now also be celebrated for the brand-new Grand Universe Lucca, Auto-graph Collection, the city's first full-service luxury hotel to open inside its majestic city walls. The impeccably restored palazzo (and former glassblower's atelier) recalls an era when composers such as Puccini summered in Lucca. Guests enjoy an onsite restaurant, rooftop bar, lavish lounge, and curated list of activities such as local olive oil, honey, and wine tastings, made even more magical when enjoyed inside the hotel's ancient cellar. Book the Summer in Lucca 2021 package and enjoy accommodations in an Adagio room complete with breakfast, wine tasting, and one-hour bike rental (with snack basket) for two. To claim this deal, click "reserve," then enter dates, number of guests, and promo code ES1. Seasonal rates from \$416 with minimum two-night stay. Valid through Oct. 31. [www.granduniverselucca.com](http://www.granduniverselucca.com)

### THE WORLD IS YOUR UNIVERSITY

Ready for your next learning adventure? Road Scholar, the nation's largest not-for-profit educational travel organization for adults over 50, is hitting the

road again after more than a year of coronavirus-induced hibernation. More than 70 programs are available this summer, covering a wide variety of interests — from geology to photography to history to hiking — in national and international destinations. Programs continue into 2022, including online classes if you're still not ready or able to travel. Educational adventures start at \$700 (for a six-day program); participants must be fully vaccinated to attend. The average cost of programs in the US is \$1,989 and international is \$4,121, including meals, hotel, and transportation on the program. 800-454-5768, [www.road scholar.org](http://www.road scholar.org)

### ALL-INCLUSIVE FUN WITH BIG SAVINGS

Book before July 31 for big savings on a family-friendly vacation in Turks & Caicos. Alexandra Resort's 50 percent-off deal — good for stays through Dec. 22 — aims to entice visitors to its all-inclusive resort on the famed Grace Bay Beach. One-, two-, and four-bedroom accommodations offer flexible options for couples, families, or multigenerational groups. All-inclusive guests enjoy unlimited meals and drinks at any of the resort's several bars and restaurants, as

well as a free dine-around program at its sister properties. (A free shuttle service connects all three resorts.) All-inclusive activities include SUPs kayaks, Hobie Cats, snorkel gear, and kids club. Add-on activities include kiteboarding, windsurfing, and sailing lessons, golf, fishing and mangrove expeditions, and more. Rates from \$700 per couple, per room. Even better? Kids under 12 are always free. 800-284-0699, [www.alexandrare-sort.com/specials-packages](http://www.alexandrare-sort.com/specials-packages)

## EVERYWHERE

### UPDATED CAMERA FOR ADVENTURERS

If you've been hesitant to splurge on a GoPro for your upcoming surfing, spelunking, rappelling, or other outdoor adventures, perhaps the HERO9 Black bundle deal will change your mind. Save \$200 when purchasing a one-year GoPro subscription with the new HERO9 Black model, whose updates include a new sensor that delivers 5K video and 20 megapixel photos, next-generation HyperSmooth 3.0 video stabilization with in-camera horizon leveling, new front-facing display, a larger rear display, 30 percent more battery life, and a Max Lens Mod accessory that brings Max HyperSmooth video stabilization and Max SuperView ultra wide-angle photos and videos. Bundle also includes magnetic swivel clip, spare battery, floating hand grip, 32GB SD card, and camera case. \$349.98. [gopro.com/en/us/shop/cameras/hero9-black/CHDHX-901-master.html](http://gopro.com/en/us/shop/cameras/hero9-black/CHDHX-901-master.html)

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