

# The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

## TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER



MOISES CASTILLO/ASSOCIATED PRESS

A stream flows through a protected forest in La Union, Costa Rica.

## Should Overseas Adventure Travel cover fare after cancellation?

By Christopher Elliott  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

**Q.** I booked a trip for two to Costa Rica through Overseas Adventure Travel last year. It included pre-trip and post-trip extensions and round-trip airfare from San Francisco. I also paid for a business class upgrade, which cost \$2,032 per person.

In late December 2022, I received a call from Overseas Adventure Travel advising that it had canceled the pre-trip portion because of a lack of interest. I had to rebook the airline tickets because the departure date would now be different. Because we were only two months from departure, the cost for this rebooking was an additional \$1,056 per person, which the agent advised I would have to pay.

I appealed the decision to the executive contacts on your website, but never got a response.

During the trip, I spoke to some of the travelers who indicated they had inquired last October about the pre-trip. Overseas Adventure Travel told them that the pre-trip had been canceled, but the company waited another two months to advise me of the cancellation. If it had told me immediately, once the decision was made, that the pre-trip was canceled, the airfare would have been much less than it was two months before departure.

JULIE BROWN, *San Ramon, Calif.*

**A.** You're right. Overseas Adventure Travel bears some responsibility for the increase in your costs. If it knew that your pre-trip was canceled, it should have told you immediately. Instead, it appears the company waited several months, and it's no secret that airfares start to rise as you get closer to your departure date.

Overseas Adventure Travel's terms are clear that the "company is not responsible for any losses you may incur" as a result of cancellations.

I'm also troubled by the way the company handled your request for help. You started with a polite phone call and then followed up in writing, first through the customer service department and then to an Overseas Adventure Travel executive (as you note, I list their names and numbers on my consumer advocacy site, Elliott.org).

"When I spoke with several customer service reps at Overseas Adventure Travel, they told me that they never respond to written correspondence and that we needed to call them, not write to them," you told me. "They also refused to let me speak with a supervisor or manager."

I have a problem with that kind of "customer service." A company should always answer its customers, even if it's to politely say "no."

If you're considering a tour with Overseas Adventure Travel, it's helpful to know that they will hold you responsible for their schedule changes, at least when it comes to airfare. Also, they may not respond to your emails.

I contacted Overseas Adventure Travel on your behalf. A representative responded to me.

"Regarding Ms. Brown's experience with customer service, we have expanded our traveler support team and extended our hours of operation to address the high volume of inquiries," the representative told me. "We spoke with Ms. Brown, and she accepted a \$2,100 certificate in compensation for this issue."

*Christopher Elliott is the founder of Elliott Advocacy (elliottadvocacy.org), a nonprofit organization that helps consumers solve their problems. Email him at chris@elliott.org or get help by contacting him at elliottadvocacy.org/help.*

## THE VIP LOUNGE

# Godfrey

on traveling in sweats, getting to Cuba, and being 'an information freak'

**H**e's been in numerous movies, including "Zoolander," "Johnson Family Vacation," and, most recently, "The Perfect Find" (currently on Netflix and starring Gabrielle Union), and has done a great deal of voice work for animation projects. But Godfrey Danchimah, Jr., known professionally as Godfrey, is first and foremost a comedian who has appeared on BET, VH1, and Comedy Central. He is bringing his stand-up routine to the Wilbur Theatre on Aug. 12. He said that audiences can expect "funny, edgy stuff," and that his material is often extemporaneous. "I never know exactly what I'm going to say. It depends ... but my fans like that," said the 54-year-old performer who was born in Lincoln, Neb., and raised in Chicago. "I was at the Wilbur in January 2020, before the pandemic, and the audience was great," he said. "I'm looking forward to a good turnout and a fun evening." And when asked what message he has for fans attending the show? "Show up and shut up," he quipped. "Let me talk." We caught up with Godfrey, who lives in New York City, to talk about all things travel.

**If you could travel anywhere right now, where would you go?**

I would go to Cuba right now because I have always been fascinated with the history and politics of that country. Also the African history that is deeply embedded in Cuba.

**Where was the first place you traveled to after COVID restrictions were lifted?**

Florida. The Southerners didn't give a crap about COVID.

**Do you prefer booking trips through a travel agent or on your own?**

I prefer booking trips on my own.

**Thoughts on an "unplugged" vacation?**

I don't really believe in a totally unplugged vacation. I already travel alone most of the time so I have enough silence around me. I stay partially plugged.

**Do you use all of your vacation time or leave some on the table?**

My vacation time is all the time. I travel to perform 95 percent of the time but in between shows there is a lot of sightseeing and rest time.

**What has been your worst vacation experience?**

When I traveled to Prague and there was an ice



Godfrey at Disneyland in Anaheim, Calif.

storm. We couldn't go anywhere for two days because we had to wait for the ice to melt.

**Do you vacation to relax, to learn, or for the adventure of it all?**

I vacation to relax, of course, but I love learning about stuff while on vacation. I'm an information freak.

**What book do you plan on bringing with you to read on your next vacation?**

I usually bring a book about African American history or a language book. Right now it's Chinese.

**If you could travel with one famous person/celebrity, who would it be?**

Denzel Washington – the greatest actor ever.

**What is the best gift to give a traveler?**

Money.

**What is your go-to snack for a flight or a road trip?**

Chips and grapes.

**What is the coolest souvenir you've picked up on a vacation?**

A Charlie Chaplin mask in Italy.

**What is your favorite app/website for travel?**

Priceline.

**What has travel taught you?**

It has taught me that what makes you happy is not the same for everyone.

**What is your best travel tip?**

Travel in sweatpants and hoodies.

JULIET PENNINGTON



## HERE

### TREEHOUSES AND HOBBIT HOUSES IN MAINE

The phrase "Get Lost!" might now be considered a great suggestion for planning your next vacation. Purposefully Lost, a collection of five luxury tiny homes located on a pristine trout pond in southern Maine, is a secluded nature getaway with out-of-the-ordinary accommodations. Visitors can stay in one of three treehouses (The Cliff House, The Sky-Frame, The Canopy) or two "Hobbit Homes" (The Shire, Fern Hollow), the latter two inspired by imagery in "The Lord of the Rings," including rounded architectural details and natural wood and stone accents. Each waterside unit includes two queen beds, indoor fireplace, and kitchens stocked with cooking and dining essentials. Additional amenities in each include a private hot tub, personal dock, canoe and fishing pole, and barbeque grill. Free Wi-Fi is available, however, surrounded by nature, you might not be tempted to turn your screens on at all. Open year-round, they also provide spa and ice fishing gear for the pond.

The property says it's sustainably built — and they mean it. The cozy solar-powered homes stay warm in winter

and cool in the summer with double walls, thorough insulation, and 400-percent efficiency heat pumps. If you drive an electric vehicle, 50-amp service is available. The 15-acre sanctuary is located in Springvale, nestled minutes from the I-95 corridor, meaning it's a short drive to Maine's beaches, local restaurants, hiking trails, and spots to go apple picking in the fall. Getting lost never felt so good. Rates about \$600 per night for up to four guests. [www.purposelylost.com](http://www.purposelylost.com)

## THERE

### VINTAGE MEETS MODERN IN MONTREAL

Art Deco fans are abuzz about the Honeyrose Hotel, Montreal, a 143-key Tribute Portfolio property by Marriott. Located in the Quartier des spectacles, near Old Montréal, the Palais des Congrès, and the shops of Sainte-Catherine Street, the hotel mixes deco-vintage with all the expected touches usually found in a modern hotel, such as lush bedding, bathrobe and slippers, room service and free Wi-Fi. Additional amenities include a gym, dry sauna, spa, and indoor pool with stunning views from the 15th floor. Three distinct dining venues include a French bistro-style restaurant, a more casual French café, and California-style restaurant (think popcorn shrimp tacos, poke bowls, charcuterie, and vegan and gluten-free choices) with stylish rooftop terrace, DJ nights and tasty cocktail concoctions. Low season rates from \$219; high season rates from \$269. 514-470-7673, [www.marriott.com/en-us/hotels/yultx-honeyrose-hotel-montreal-a-tribute-portfolio-hotel/overview](http://www.marriott.com/en-us/hotels/yultx-honeyrose-hotel-montreal-a-tribute-portfolio-hotel/overview).

To help plan your vacation, the private, nonprofit travel and tourism organization Tourisme Montréal offers a wealth of up-to-date suggestions and links for festivals, places to eat and drink, what's happening in the arts and culture scene, tips from the Tourist Welcome Office staff and more. Vis-

itors can peruse a wide range of upcoming activities, from the Mutek Digital Underground festival of electronic music (Aug. 22-27) to the Montreal International Black Film Festival, North America's only bilingual festival of Black cinema (Sept. 20-25). [www.mtl.org/en](http://www.mtl.org/en)

## EVERYWHERE

### PORTABLE PADDLE GAME

Move over Pickleball. There's a new game for sports enthusiasts that might become your new addiction. And the best thing? It's portable! Touted as a cross between Pickleball and Roundnet, PaddleSmash is a competitive outdoor game for two to four players. You'll need a 15-foot diameter of playable space, and can set up on any flat surface, such as a campground, park, or beach. The easy-to-learn rules involve working with a teammate to bump, set, and smash the ball back into the court. The compact, lightweight, and foldable court takes only a minute to set up, and conveniently carries the other components of the game, four paddles and two balls. The product website provides helpful gifs and videos that illustrate how the game is played. Perfect for upcoming summer and fall travels with your most competitive family and friends. Recommended for ages 12 and up. \$199.99, [paddlesmash.com](http://paddlesmash.com).

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