

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

British Airways cancels flight and then refuses refund

By Christopher Elliott
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Q. British Airways canceled my recent flight from Boston to London. The airline said it canceled the flight because of “operational constraints.” British Airways sent me an e-mail promising to “do everything [they] can to get you where you need to be.”

I asked the airline for a refund, but instead I received another e-mail that accused me of being a “no-show” for my flight and refused a refund. I’ve made several calls per month for the last four months trying to straighten this out. Finally, I received an e-mail from British Airways that said per its fare rules, it could not offer a refund. But British Airways canceled my flight, so doesn’t it owe me a refund?

CARRIE CHRISTENSEN,
Pittsfield

A. It most certainly does. If an airline cancels a flight, it owes you a full and prompt refund under its fare rules and federal regulations. British Airways can’t keep your money under any circumstances.

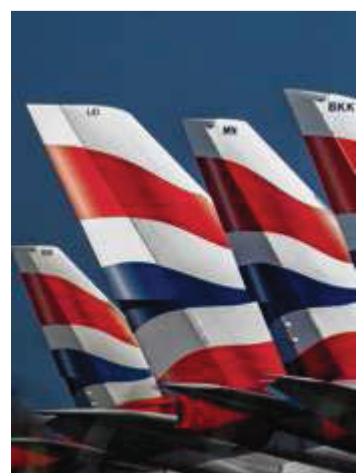
I’m kind of shocked that your refund request dragged on this long. I reviewed the correspondence between you and British Airways. The facts were clear: You received an e-mail from British Airways that said, “We’re sorry your flight has been canceled due to operational constraints.” And you sent that e-mail to the airline when you requested your refund. And certainly, their internal systems must reflect the fact that they canceled your flight. How much more do they need?

You did a terrific job of keeping all of your records with the airline. If only British Airways had paid attention to its records, then you wouldn’t have a complaint at all.

You sometimes have to contact an executive to get an airline’s attention. I list the names, numbers, and e-mail addresses of several British Airways executives on my consumer advocacy site at www.elliott.org/company-contacts/british-airways/. I think a quick, polite message might have gotten this resolved.

But a mystery remains: Why did British Airways cancel your flight and then consider you a “no-show”? To find out, I contacted the airline directly on your behalf. It looks like your flight wasn’t canceled after all. British Airways generated the cancellation notice by mistake. The airline still agreed to issue a full refund.

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.



CHRIS J. RATCLIFFE/WASHINGTON POST
The British Airways livery in London in February.

Nick Lowe on Buenos Aires, the window seat, and drinking like a local

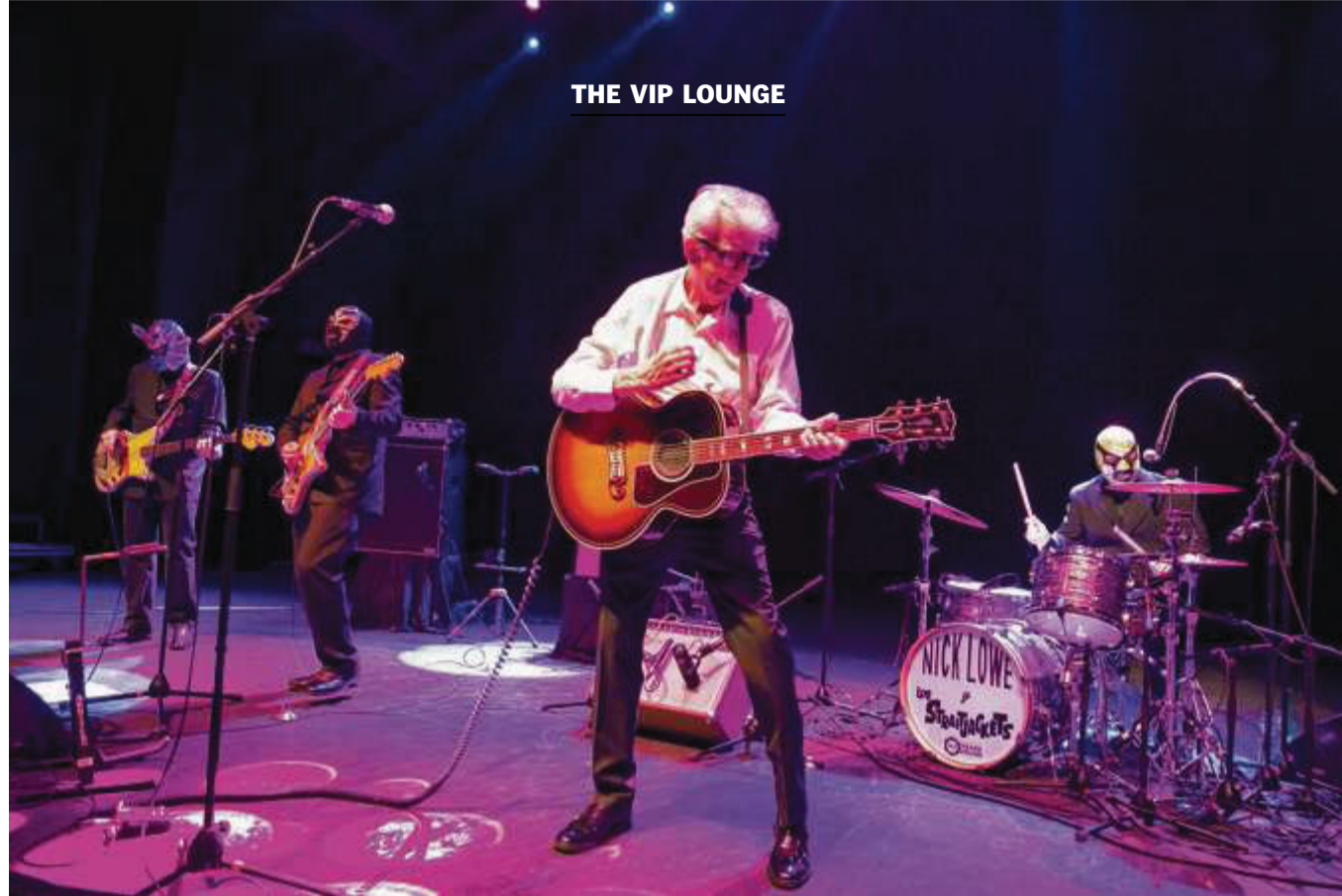
British singer-songwriter, musician, and producer Nick Lowe has been in the music business for more than five decades, but at 73, he isn’t showing any signs of slowing down. The prolific songwriter has penned such hits as “Cruel to Be Kind,” and “(What’s so Funny ‘Bout) Peace, Love, and Understanding,” a 1979 chart-topper for longtime friend and fellow musician Elvis Costello. Lowe and his band Los Straitjackets are opening for Costello and his band, the Imposters, on a tour that stops at Leader Bank Pavilion on Aug. 15. “We’re going to do plenty of tunes that people know — especially fans of Elvis’s — and we’ve also got some pretty good ones we’ve been doing while me and the Straitjackets have been together,” said Lowe, who was born in Walton-on-Thames in Surrey, England, but said he grew up mostly on military bases in Jordan and Cyprus. The former member of the pop/new wave band Rockpile (which included Dave Edmunds), said he hopes to catch a Red Sox game while in Boston. “Eddie Angel, the lead guitarist for [Los] Straitjackets, has been trying to persuade me to go to one with him,” he said in a recent phone call from England. “I really don’t understand baseball. I’m not too familiar with it.” We caught up with Lowe, who lives in Brentford, England, with his wife, Peta Waddington, their 17-year-old son, Roy, a drummer, and their 9-year-old Whippet, Larry, to talk about all things travel.

Favorite vacation destination?

I think it’s Italy. That’s where we go most of the time nowadays. My wife went to Florence with her sister when she was quite young to get a job and learn Italian. The pair of them came back to UK a couple of years later speaking fluent Italian, which makes my job so much easier when going on holiday there. We mostly go to Florence because she’s got lots of friends there and knows her way around. Can’t get away from tourists in Florence cause [it’s a] small city. She knows a few people off tourist track. We also like Punta Ala on the coast [in Tuscany].

Favorite food or drink while vacationing?

My dear old dad, long deceased now, and who was in the Royal Air Force his whole career, gave me one piece of ad-



Nick Lowe and Los Straitjackets at Shepherds Bush Empire.

vice: He said, “Son, whatever you do in life, always drink what the locals drink.” So don’t have a pint of Guinness in Tokyo, and in Italy, you should really drink the wine. Favorite food? Well, I love the baked fish at Da Bruno [in Castiglione della Pescaia]. He’s got a baked fish dish — and it could be any kind of fish, depending what was caught that day — and it’s made in a Tuscan style. It’s generally sea bass.

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

I’d love to go to Buenos Aires. I’ve never been to South America and I think I’d like it quite a lot. Really, I’ve just never been invited. One of the great things about being a musician is that you go to places you never thought about going. Lots of my contemporaries have been, and they all love it.

One item you can’t leave home with when traveling?

My guitar, usually. I’d be in trouble if I

didn’t [bring it]. But I would say a pack of cards. I love playing solitaire. ... it’s almost like meditation. If there’s a delay at the airport or anywhere else, really, I’m [OK] if I have a pack of cards. So a pack of cards is an essential travel accessory. Bicycle and Bee are my favorite [brands]. They have a very distinct design and an astonishingly long life.

Aisle or window?

This is an easy one: Aisle for domestic or short haul, window for long haul. I suppose on long haul, I generally sleep nowadays, and you don’t get sort of joggled by the drink cart so much if you’re by the window. And there’s something about the window seat that is a little bit more secluded.

Favorite childhood travel memory?

My father was a pilot with the Royal Air Force and we were stationed at an RAF base in Amman in Jordan. My dad would load me and my mum into a twin-engine aircraft and I would sit up front

with him while my mom sat in the passenger section of the plane. It was amazing flying across the desert and the Dead Sea. One day my dad, suddenly to my alarm, got out of the pilot seat and went out back to sit with my mum, leaving me alone in the cockpit. I didn’t know at the time that he had put it on automatic pilot. Once I realized it, I went back to join my folks. I remember just sitting there with them, looking out the window while the plane flew itself. It was like a dream.

Guilty pleasure when traveling?

McVities Ginger Nuts biscuits.

Best travel tip?

When calculating when to leave for the airport in order to make your flight, take three opinions of how long the taxi ride will be. Select the longest and add half again. Do the same with time needed to check in and clear security. Add both totals together plus one hour.

JULIET PENNINGTON

HERE

GALA SAILING MARKS 150TH ANNIVERSARY

It’s official: The M/S Mount Washington’s 150th season on Lake Winnepesaukee is underway with a season of celebrations to mark the event, including an Anniversary Gala hosted on Aug. 12. Cruises that day include multiple daytime departures from both Weirs Beach and Wolfeboro, N.H. The official three-hour 150th Anniversary Gala evening cruises, departing from both ports, feature multiple decks of entertainment, hors d’oeuvres, and signature drinks. Commemorative limited-edition souvenirs will be available for sale during the day. In addition, the Lake Winnepesaukee Association is partnering with the M/S Mount Washington and the Town of Wolfeboro to offer daytime family educational programs regarding lake conservation issues, and a silent auction to generate funds for conservation programs. Narrated scenic day cruises \$42. Gala cruises (ages 21+ only) \$70. 603-366-5531, <https://cruisenh.com/products/narrated-scenic-cruise>

BOSTON BOAT RENTAL APP

Yearning to get out on the water? You don’t need to own a boat or pay for an expensive marina membership to have access to fun times in Boston. A new rental platform, GetMyBoat, aims to simplify the rental process and make the joys of boating more accessible. Simply click the weblink or download the app, enter your preferred destination, and browse and book power boats, sailing vessels, tours, fishing trips cocktail tours and more. Narrow your search by price, types and group size. The GetMyBoat Boston Boating Guide offers tips on where to go, what to see, weather and local secrets from the community. The platform also provides boat owners in Boston a way to earn money off their boats when they aren’t using them. Prices vary. www.getmyboat.com

THERE

REMOTE LUXURY SAFARI CAMP DEBUTS

African Bush Camps is debuting Lole-



bezi, the 17th and newest member of its camp family offering authentic safari experiences amid untamed wilderness across Botswana, Zimbabwe, and Zambia. Set along the mighty Zambezi River, Lolebezi combines simple modernist geometries with layers of environmentally conscious designs created locally or across Africa. Eight luxury river suites feature private shaded outdoor area and river-view plunge pool, and custom-made mosquito net pelmet — or “halo” — made using wooden discs, imfablinga beads and copper by South African-based High Thorn Chandeliers. Public spaces including dining pavilion, bar, onsite spa, yoga deck and guest sitting area nestled at the edge of a forest where the river forks to form an inlet. Activities include game drives, walking safaris, river cruises, fishing and more. \$990 per person per night includes all meals, beverages (other than premium imports), laundry and activities. <https://african-bushcamps.com/camps/lolebezi/>

THE FUTURE OF FERRIES

The future of water transport is arriving in Stockholm. The world’s fastest electric ship, the Candela P-12 Shuttle, is an innovative hydrofoiling electric ferry designed to reduce emissions and slash commuting times, making waterborne public transport more attractive than

trains, buses, and cars. The secret to the 30-passenger vessel’s high speed (30 knots) and long range are three carbon fiber wings that extend from under the hull. These active hydrofoils allow the ship to lift itself above the water, thus decreasing drag. Flying silently above the waves, the Candela Flight Controller — a computer which regulates the hydrofoils 100 times per second — ensures a steady, smooth ride over choppy waves that might make those prone to seasickness feel queasy. The innovative vessel will be shuttling between the sprawling Stockholm suburb of Ekerö and the city center in the coming year. Hello, Boston, can we get some of these, please? <https://candela.com/p-12-shuttle/>

EVERYWHERE

RADICALLY CLEAR SUNGLASSES

The new Paraiso sunglasses by independent brand Bajío, inspired by the anglers’ paradise of Ascension Bay, Mexico, are fishermen’s faves. That said, you don’t have to fish to appreciate the Polarized, color-enhancing, high-definition lenses and plant-based frames of these classic specs. While many companies utilize technology to reduce yellow light, Bajío blocks 95-percent of eye-fatiguing blue light, leading to less eye strain and the ability to see the surrounding

landscape (and fish!) more easily. Seven lens colors offer protective scratch-resistant and oleophobic coatings that allow for easy cleaning of salt, sweat, and sunscreen. Frames are available in three colors; 20 additional styles can be found online. In addition, Bajío is linked to a larger family of companies and nonprofits committed to conservation and sustainable practices. Polycarbonate lenses \$199; glass lenses \$249. bajiosunglasses.com/products/paraiso

TRAVEL INSURANCE MADE EASY

Looking for travel insurance but unsure how to find the best plan? The Visitors Coverage Travel Insurance platform allows you to search and sign up for a wide variety of coverage, including more than 50 plans for road trips, including rental car collision insurance; 11 protection plans for trip investment, including the cost of missed connections, potential cancellations, medical reasons, non-refundable flights and lodging; more than 35 medical travel plans, including protection for medical bills in the event of illness, injury, hospitalization and surgery; adventure sports coverage to utilize when embarking on activities such as water skiing, jet skiing or kayaking; mountaineering and hiking insurance; plus cruise, business, ex-pat, group insurances, and more. Simply input your travel plans and use the helpful comparison tool to review quotes and choose the best plan for immediate coverage. www.visitorscoverage.com

NECEE REGIS

