

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER



ADOBE

I might be on Alamo's Do Not Rent list. Can you find out?

By Christopher Elliott
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Q. I recently rented a car from Alamo. I made a reservation online, but when I tried to pick up the car at the airport, a representative informed me that I could not rent from Alamo because I was on the Do Not Rent list.

Alamo said I had to resolve this through the corporate office of Enterprise, which owns Alamo. Unfortunately, I have had no success in resolving this issue there either.

Alamo says I owe \$204 from a rental in 2018. I rented the vehicle while my car was being repaired, and there could have been a mix-up involving the insurance company's payment. I called Enterprise and offered to pay the debt, but Enterprise could not locate the amount of the debt or the reason for it. In fact, the agent with whom I spoke could not determine if I was on the Do Not Rent list.

I'm happy to pay whatever I owe. At this point, I'm willing to pay even if this was a mistake. The brands Enterprise owns all are leading, trusted car rental companies and are very competitive on price. I'd like to be able to rent from them again. Can you help me?

NOAH FINKEL, *Glenview, Ill.*

A. I'm sorry you got on Alamo's Do Not Rent list. The company should have helped you get off the list quickly — after all, you wanted to give them more business. But it looks like there was a breakdown in communication between Alamo and Enterprise.

The Do Not Rent list is exactly what it sounds like. It's a list of customers who are no longer allowed to rent from a car rental company. The most common reason for getting on the list is failing to pay for your car. Often, it's a repair bill, but it can also be a rental bill. As you speculate, your insurance company might have agreed to pay for your 2018 rental and then reneged, leaving you responsible.

When something like that happens, a car rental company will try to contact the renter to work something out. It's not clear why that didn't happen.

Most car rental companies will tell you if you're on a Do Not Rent list and will help you get off the list, if possible. When you can't get a straight answer, you need to take your case to someone higher up, preferably in writing. I list the names, numbers, and email addresses of the Enterprise customer service executives on my consumer advocacy site, Elliott.org. A brief, polite email to one of them might have helped you solve this mystery.

I contacted Enterprise on your behalf. "We have investigated this issue, and it has been resolved," a representative responded. "Mr. Finkel should have no further issues."

So, what happened? An Enterprise representative explained to you that your insurance company paid Enterprise, but an employee mistakenly issued two invoices for the rental. Then Enterprise failed to zero out the second invoice, which resulted in an unpaid bill.

I checked with you, and you confirmed that you're no longer on the Do Not Rent list.

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 V.I.P. LOUNGE

Patrick Monahan of Train

talks about his wife, Italy, and crystals from Sedona

As cofounder and lead singer of Train, Patrick Monahan has spent the past nearly 30 years performing around the world. But the Erie, Pa., native said he is always excited to play at Tanglewood in the Berkshires — where he will be with Train on Aug. 24 — because, he said, "not only is it an awesome venue, but I'm such a big James Taylor fan and I know that it's part of his history and what he continues to do. It's just always cool to be kind of in the presence of greatness." Monahan said his band, known for hits including "Hey Soul Sister," "Calling All Angels," and "Drops of Jupiter," will play the popular songs that fans want to hear, as well as some new material at the Tanglewood performance. "We've got some good visuals, too," he said. "It's no Taylor Swift concert, but it's still going to be fun." While he keeps busy touring, writing songs for movie soundtracks, and performing with other musicians, Monahan is also delving into the world of musicals and is working on one right now that he hopes will be performed off-Broadway in 2024. We caught up with Monahan, a father of four who lives in a Seattle suburb with his wife, Amber, and their two children, ages 11 and 14, to talk about all things travel.

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

I would go to Italy with my family. I would bring my friends and extended family, and I would throw a party in a castle in Tuscany — a castle that my wife and two little kids and I visited a few years ago. It is absolutely incredible.

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

Actually, it was Italy. I went to Rome and Tuscany. We went and saw the leaning tower of Pisa and had an incredible time. Oh, and we went to Lake Como, too, and that is exceptionally amazing.

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

Definitely a travel agent. If I had to book things by myself, we would never go anywhere.

Thoughts on an "unplugged" vacation?

I'm not sure what that means. I think it means going on vacation and not having your phone or anything. I love the idea. I try to put my phone down now more than ever, so I'm all about an unplugged anything.

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

I try to use it all. Whether it's even just at home, taking in the great things that where I live has to offer and the people that surround me, to being able to travel the world and see different things. I try to take great advantage of all those things.

What has been your worst vacation experience?

Well, that's hard to say. I mean, I plan ahead so much that there aren't many bad ones. I did travel when I got engaged to my wife. I had to do a writing session for Tina Turner in London. She went with me, and then afterward we went to Italy, to Portofino, and I got engaged there. It was exceptional and beautiful, but the bus ride ... they canceled my flight from Rome to Portofino or something like that. Maybe it was Milan ... Milan to Portofino. I had to take a bus, and that was brutal. That was the only bad part of any vacation that I can think of actually.

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

All of it. You know, I like to vacation and when I



Patrick Monahan and his wife, Amber, on Lake Como in Italy.

go to Hawaii, I learn about the local Hawaiian people and culture. When I go to Italy, I love to learn more about the language and the food and the environment and how it became the way it is. When I go to do some meditation in Sedona, Arizona, I really dig into that whole culture as well.

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

Actually, I have a book right here that I plan on reading, and it is called "Tenth of December" by George Saunders, so I'm going to dig into that pretty soon.

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

My wife. I can't think of a famous celebrity that I would want to travel with other than my wife. However, there are some actors that I love. Ken Jeong is a good friend of mine; I wouldn't mind being out anywhere with him. He is wonderful. And Jason Sudeikis, who plays Ted Lasso ... I think he would be a lot of fun to hang out with.

What is the best gift to give a traveler?

I like the mini-Bose speaker because I can hook it up to an iPad, so my wife and I can catch up on Netflix anywhere. I think it's a great little thing to have in your bag.

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

That's an excellent question. Chomps Turkey

Sticks and gluten-free raspberry fig bars.

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

A crystal in Sedona. I'm big into crystals and Sedona.

What is your favorite app/website for travel?

Well, the one that I go to most is called Flight-View, so I can find out where my gate is, and it keeps track of where my flight is at all times.

What has travel taught you?

I think travel, honestly, has taught me how to have a broader mind about people's cultures and the way the people in each country manage their lives. I learn a lot through it, and it has taught me a great deal about humanity. Travel is a great gift to give someone. If you come from a little place like Erie, Pennsylvania, I think it does nothing but good for you to get out and see how the rest of the world behaves and eats and functions. You can learn a lot and get a lot smarter, I think.

What is your best travel tip?

You know, I guess my best travel tip would be to let the native people of the country you are visiting take care of you. If they want to bring you a cup of tea that you don't normally have or a glass of wine or something to eat, try it. You might learn a lot more about your own palate and also that engages conversation and a potential future relationship.

JULIET PENNINGTON



HERE

HISTORIC HOTEL REVIVED IN MAINE

Embrace the charms of a late 19th-century masterpiece in coastal Maine at The Norumbega, reopening as a luxurious boutique hotel after eight months of redesign and renovations. Eye-catching historical details have been preserved in the property's 11 unique guest rooms, suites, common areas, kitchen, and dining rooms, including original wooden millwork, many detailed fireplaces, distinctive turret, original leaded glass windows, large entry hall featuring coffered oak ceilings, richly wood-paneled walls, inlaid wood flooring, and carved banisters.

Sited on four acres of sloping lawns — with two gazebos, bocce ball court, large trees, and perennial gardens — the historic house sits prominently on Route 1, Maine's mid-coastal highway leading to Acadia National Park. It's a short walk to Camden Harbor and the village filled with restaurants, oyster bars, and shops. The best part? The hotel is now open year-

round, meaning you can enjoy it in any season. Rates in August and September from \$369, includes gourmet breakfast, afternoon treats, and coffee/tea available all day. 207-236-4646; norumbegainn.com

BALLET REIMAGED IN RHODE ISLAND

Tickets are on sale now for the upcoming 2023-2024 season of Ballet RI. Formerly known as Festival Ballet Providence, the company showcases the creativity and talent of its world-class resident artists in a diverse lineup of performances, including a world premiere set to Schubert's "Death and the Maiden" — played live by the Aurea Ensemble — that promises to immerse spectators in a journey of darkness and humanity through music and movement. Later performances include the holiday classic "The Nutcracker," a world premiere of "Cinderella" set to Prokofiev's iconic score, and four additional contemporary works. Performances take place in several intimate-to-grand venues in Providence, and one in Westerly. <https://balletri.org/performances/>

THERE

SAN DIEGO LANDMARK HOTEL TRANSFORMED

Step into San Diego's storied past at the historic LaFayette Hotel & Club, a 2.5-acre colonial-style hotel, circa 1946, that once hosted young Hollywood stars including Ava Gardner, Lana Turner, Frank Sinatra, and Bob Hope. The 139-key property (pictured at left) emerges on the hospitality scene after a \$31 million transformation best described as "irreverent maximalism." Guests encounter a formal entry, gilded with rich plastered crown moldings, tumbled vintage checkered marble floors, crystal chandeliers, and lush plantings. A range of guest rooms, suites, and townhouses are rooted in traditional Victorian, Tudor, and Gothic details, with saturations of color, textures, and patterns, and fanciful design elements such as wallpaper ceilings, fabric-draped canopy beds, and burled bar carts.

The outdoor signature pool — designed to evoke 1980s luxury via the Amalfi Coast — is the focal point of the property, with colorful and scalloped umbrellas shading striped chaise lounges and rattan clamshell chairs. A myriad of dining experiences and beverage outlets are debuting in two phases. Available now: Beginners Diner, evoking a diner from the 1940s with Americana dishes and those that nod to traditional Greek and Jewish food influences; The Lobby Bar, serving classic throwback cocktails under a soaring glass atrium;

Quixote is an Oaxacan-inspired concept and Mezcaleria created from a decommissioned church in Mexico; Pool Bar; and The Gutter, a cocktail bar with two-lane bowling alley, shuffleboard, and pool tables. Coming soon: a luxurious European-style restaurant; a Golden Era jazz and night club; and spa and wellness areas with Russian, Roman, and Turkish baths. Rates from \$299. 619-296-2101, <https://lafayettehotelsd.com/>

EVERYWHERE

PORTABLE MULTI-TOOL

Calling all traveling geeks! The Geeky is a new keychain pocket tool that has everything you might need for quick repairs and other tasks when hiking, biking, camping, and adventuring away from home. The compact, key-shaped multi-tool is a solid chunk of 420 Stainless Steel featuring more than 16 functions for multiple uses, including a bike spoke key, screwdriver, wrench, scoring tip, box cutter, serrated edge, can opener, wire stripper, file, ruler, protractor, bottle opener, multi-head fit driver, and more. This knifeless multitool is TSA-friendly, allowing you to bring it through any airport security. Enjoy your favorite legal indulgence with the smoking pipe function, using the 7/16-inch bowl with mouthpiece exiting the small tip of the tool. Weighing less than one ounce, the lightweight Geeky can easily be cleaned and is dishwasher safe. \$22.99. <https://geeky.com/>

NECEE REGIS