

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER



GABBY JONES/WASHINGTON POST

Expedia promised a refund last October, but where is it?

By Christopher Elliott
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Q. I booked a KLM flight through Expedia last year. KLM canceled the flight because of COVID in October.

Expedia told me to wait 12 weeks for a refund. When no refund arrived, I contacted Expedia. Expedia claims KLM refunded me, even though I paid Expedia. KLM claims they refunded Expedia, which then should have refunded me.

After some back and forth, Expedia told me to contact my bank. I contacted Chase, my credit card company, to dispute the charges, but it was too late.

Expedia has stopped responding to my requests for a refund. I have proof of all communications. I want Expedia to refund me for the amount of the flight. I am out of options since Expedia, KLM, and Chase said they can't do anything. Can you help me get my \$427 back?

ERIC AIRD, *Zurich*

A. You should have received a prompt refund. Department of Transportation regulations govern your ticket if you used Expedia in the United States. The rules require the airline to issue a refund within seven business days if you paid by credit card, and 20 days if you paid by cash or check. Europe has similar rules.

I've reviewed the paper trail between you and the various parties — Expedia, Chase, and KLM. What a tangled web. You're right, they're blaming each other.

So, who is ultimately responsible for your refund? Your online travel agency, Expedia. It took your money and agreed to act as your agent in purchasing the flight. After KLM canceled your flight, Expedia should have ensured that you had a lightning-fast refund. It shouldn't have passed you off to KLM.

I've reviewed the paper trail between you and the various parties — Expedia, Chase, and KLM. What a tangled web.

And, what about your credit card? A Chase representative told you that too much time had passed between your purchase and your charge-back request. That's nonsense. Credit card companies can help their customers if they want, but they choose to cut off all requests after 60 days. They claim that the Fair Credit Billing Act, the law that protects credit card customers, won't allow them to dispute claims more than two months old. But the law doesn't prevent banks from handling older disputes.

A brief, polite e-mail to Expedia might have done the trick for you. I would have forwarded all of your correspondence along with a polite cover letter to one of the Expedia executive contacts I list on my consumer advocacy site: www.elliott.org/company-contacts/expedia-customer-service-contacts/. If that didn't work, you could have reached out to KLM. I publish their executive contacts at www.elliott.org/company-contacts/klm-airlines/.

I contacted Expedia on your behalf. "My agents confirmed the refund has now been processed, and the customer has been notified," an Expedia representative told me. "It sounds like the delay was due to an agent error, so we've apologized to the customer and added a \$100 voucher to the traveler's Expedia account for the inconvenience."

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

Judy Collins arrives early and has a soft spot for airport shops

Grammy Award-winning singer-songwriter Judy Collins has traveled the world, but when she comes to Massachusetts to perform at Tanglewood, her go-to spot is the Red Lion Inn in Lenox. "I just love it there. It's so historic ... and the whole area is great," she said in a recent phone call from Raleigh, N.C., where she was performing. "And Main Street in Lenox is great for shopping." Collins, 83, is looking forward to enjoying the town while she's there to perform (with Richard Thompson) at Tanglewood on Sept. 3. When asked if she has a message for her fans attending the concert, Collins — ever the social activist — said, "Yes: Vote for gun control and get women's rights assured in any way you know how. ... We have to do all we can to save the country." Collins hinted that concertgoers can expect "some surprises" at the Tanglewood performance, and said it is "close to 100 percent" certain that she will sing some fan favorites, including "Send in the Clowns," "Amazing Grace," and "Both Sides Now," the Joni Mitchell song that appeared on Collins's "1967 album "Wildflowers" and which catapulted the soprano to international prominence. Her newest album, "Spellbound," was released earlier this year. Born in Seattle and raised in Denver, Collins — the oldest of five children — has called the Upper West Side of Manhattan home for more than 50 years. She lives there with her husband, designer Louis Nelson, and their three Persian cats. We caught up with the great-grandmother ("It's amazing," she said of her newest role) to talk about all things travel.

Favorite vacation destination? I like to go either to Colorado, because it's magnificent and the mountains are my go-to place, or St. John island. I always went to Caneel Bay Resort before the hurricanes [Iрма and Maria — both Category 5 storms — in September 2017] destroyed it. That was a sad moment in our lives. I love to snorkel and go on sailboat rides there.

Favorite food or drink while vacationing? I pretty much do the same thing on vacation as working and



Judy Collins and her husband, Louis Nelson, on a trip to St. John.

day-to-day living. I am very careful not to eat sugar. I eat protein, vegetables, salad, and fruit — but no alcohol and no fancy non-alcoholic drinks made with fruit juice because of the sugar. I have been sober for more than 40 years.

Where would you like to travel to but haven't? I'd like to go back to Japan, which I went to in 1966. But I haven't returned, so that's certainly on my wish list. I also think I'd very much like to go to Venice and it looks like it's coming up on my tour schedule on the horizon.

One item you can't leave home without when traveling? My vitamins, which I sometimes forget. But I have to have them with me. And my passport isn't a bad idea.

Aisle or window? Always a window so that I can look out and see where I'm going and where I've been.

Favorite childhood travel memory? Driving to Seattle from Denver up through Oregon and past Mount Shasta and Mount Hood. Those car rides with the family were lots of fun.

Guilty pleasure when traveling? Looking around the shops in the airport and coming home with T-shirts and stuffed animals and paperbacks of thrillers.

Best travel tip? Get there early — very, very early. And leave extra time during every part of your journey.

JULIET PENNINGTON



HERE

TEXTILE MILL TRANSFORMS INTO LUXE DIGS

Be one of the first guests to stay at The Lincoln Hotel, a 33-room boutique hotel opening Sept. 1 in Biddeford, Maine, a coastal town north of Kennebunk and south of Portland. Set in a former textile mill, the hotel's luxury accommodations weave together historic architectural details (exposed brick walls and original wooden ceiling beams) with vibrant modern interiors. Amenities include rooftop pool, state-of-the-art fitness center, library and lounge area, lobby bar, grab-and-go coffee shop and bakery, and lower-level shopping with pop-up galleries and artisan spaces. You don't have to leave the building to dine at Batson River Brewing and Distilling, the newest location in Maine for this craft brewery and full-service restaurant. Book by Sept. 30 to take advantage of the opening 20-percent discount: search online for your dates, choose from the room availability list, and choose "Grand Opening Package" option. Valid for two-night minimum stays through Dec. 31; includes two specialty Lincoln Hotel glasses and Batson River cocktail kit. From \$299. 877-762-0278, lincolnhotelmaine.com.

SEASIDE SERVICE AT CAPE RESORT

Families heading to the Cape for a late-summer vacation might want to consider the Red Jacket Beach Resort's 160 guest rooms and suites in South Yarmouth. Recently purchased by EOS Hospitality, along with four additional nearby properties, upgrades have begun with a focus on elevating onsite programming such as Sea Service — a full food and beverage experience

available while relaxing on your seaside lounge chair on a private beach. Kid-friendly activities (through Sept. 3) include free Kids Club; fishing derbies on the jetty (fishing poles and bait provided); kite making and flying; sea life discovery; bingo by the beach; magic shows; pirate shows and scavenger hunts; movies under the stars; and more. A red tricycle affixed with a red vintage cooler sells Cape Cod Creamery ice cream, including the exclusive flavor Red Jacket Raspberry. Peak season rates from \$499 for rooms with double queen beds can accommodate parents and two kids. 800-237-8887, redjacket-resorts.com/resorts/red-jacket-beach-resort

THERE

YOUTH TRAVEL COLLECTION DEBUTS

Attention travelers ages 18 to 35: G Adventures and Hostelworld have joined forces to create Roamies, a collection of 38 tours in 15 countries that combine the affordable and social aspects of hostels with small group adventure travel specifically geared toward younger travelers. World tours, between 5- and 34-days duration, offer maximum freedom and flexibility while enjoying the support of an expert chief experience officer every step of the way. Roamies tours are priced from \$209 for a three-day trip, and countries visited across the entire current collection include Albania, Austria, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Italy, Mexico, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Peru, Thailand, and Vietnam. Book by Aug. 21 for a 20 percent discount. Roamies tours are sold by both G Adventures and Hostelworld, as well as via travel agents. 888-800-4100, www.gadventures.com/travel-styles/roamies/



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COZY CONESTOGA CAMPING

Old Americana is alive and well in the Sullivan Catskills at the Roscoe Campsite Park. Set along private river frontage on the Beaverkill River, three miles downstream from the park, the new seven-acre Conestoga Wagon Outpost boasts five authentic wagon camping accommodations outfitted with a king-size bed, bunk beds, air-conditioning, heat, small refrigerator, television, and microwave. Live your best "Little House on the Prairie" fantasies while enjoying nearby opportunities for hiking, fly fishing, kayaking, canoeing, tubing, and golfing. Bird watchers can spy on American bald eagles, ospreys, blue herons and red-tailed hawks. Wagon rates (up to four guests): \$260/night weekends (two-night minimum); \$200/night weekdays; \$1,580 per week. 607-498-5264, roscoecampsite.com/accommodations/covered-wagon/

EVERYWHERE

STAY COOL AND CARRY ON

The newest addition to your adventure travel wardrobe might be the Gila Airmesh Boonie, a lightweight and breathable hat with structured brim for maximum sun protection. The airmesh stretch fabric and comfortable headband minimize sweat buildup while stain-block technology prevents staining on cap's crown. Additional features include sealed seams; adjustable headband cord; welded eyelets; adjustable and removable chin strap; packable foam brim; and water-resistant treatment for fast dry time. Available in four colors and two sizes. \$49. www.kuiu.com/products/gila-airmesh-boonie-khaki?variant=41115668840606



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APP FINDS DAYTIME HOTELS

It's been a turbulent summer for air travel, with flight delays and cancellations derailing vacation plans. Hotels-ByDay hopes to alleviate the pain of being stranded at crowded airports for half a day — camping out in the food court or trying to nap in uncomfortable seats — by offering a way to quickly locate a local hotel with rooms available to book in blocks of 3 to 12-plus hours. Rather than paying for an entire night's stay, travelers can book a relaxing (short-term) room through the app, which also allows access to hotel amenities such as pool and gym. Day-room bookings are also popular for daycares and work-away-from-home spaces. Currently available in multiple US cities and in countries around the world. www.hotelsbyday.com/en

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