

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

THE VIP LOUNGE

Fortune Feimster on Thailand, her love of ice cream, and fresh laundry

As an in-demand actor, writer, and stand-up comic, Fortune Feimster doesn't have much free time for anything else. But when she can get away, it's Thailand that calls her name. On the phone from the Los Angeles set of the NBC comedy "Kenen," on which she is a recurring guest star, Feimster, 41, said she is looking forward to performing in Boston at the end of the month and sharing new material she said "picks up where 'Sweet & Salty' [her 2020 Netflix comedy special] left off." While she will perform all new material in her Sept. 24 and 25 shows at the Wilbur Theatre, Feimster teased that she "just might throw in a swim team or Hooter's story just for fun," referencing two of her more popular comedy routines. The popular performer started off as a writer and panelist on E!'s "Chelsea Lately" and then appeared as a regular on "The Mindy Project" on Hulu, and "Champions" on NBC. In addition to guest appearances on many TV shows, she has had recurring roles on Showtime's "The L Word: Generation Q" and CBS's "Life in Pieces." The Belmont, N.C., native can also be heard mornings on Sirius XM's "NetfliX Is a Joke" (channel 93) with Tom Papa, and she hosts a weekly podcast "Sincerely Fortune" with her wife, Jacqueline "Jax" Smith. We caught up with Feimster, who lives in Los Angeles with Smith and their two rescue dogs, Biggie and Maddy, to talk about all things travel.

Favorite vacation destination? One of my favorite places I've ever been to is Thailand. The people were so nice, the food was amazing, and there are just so many beautiful places there. It was truly one of my most memorable vacations, and I can't wait to go back. And of course Italy will always be a favorite for both my wife and I because we eat pasta "Lady and the Tramp" style.

Favorite food or drink while vacationing? If I'm traveling abroad, I always like to try the local cuisine, so I usually start



Fortune Feimster (right) with her wife, Jacqueline "Jax" Smith, in Thailand.

by ordering whatever food is popular in that country. Same with drinks. But my go-to food when I'm traveling in the States is usually a hamburger. I also love to try local coffee shops. And if I'm at a bar, I get an old fashioned.

Where would you like to travel to but haven't? I've been lucky to have traveled all over the country because of stand-up. I also lived in Spain for a year right after college, so I went all over Europe — but there were a few places I missed like Denmark, Ireland, and Croatia. I'd love to go back and visit some of those spots.

One item you can't leave home without when traveling? I love my Bose noise-canceling headphones. They make a big difference on the plane when you want some peace and quiet or if you're watching a movie.

Aisle or window? I usually prefer the window because I like to sleep on the plane, but my wife, Jax, also likes the window and I've been told "happy wife, happy life," so I get the window seat. Kidding!

Favorite childhood travel memory? My family didn't take fancy vacations when I was young because we couldn't afford it, but my parents would save all year so we could take a little trip to Holden Beach in North Carolina in the summer. There were five of us in this tiny house, but we didn't care. We loved being at the beach and had so many great memories there.

Guilty pleasure when traveling? Probably ice cream. I had to cut it out at home because obviously you can't just eat ice cream all the time. So I save it for when I'm on the road. I'll go try a local ice cream shop that people have recommended. And every now and then it makes me dance.

Best travel tip? Take a little roll-up bag for your dirty laundry. You can find ones that are reusable that zip up. You don't want your stinky clothes mixed in with your clean clothes. You'll thank me later.

JULIET PENNINGTON

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

Why is this refund for BritRail tickets taking so long?

By Christopher Elliott
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Q. Last year, I bought a BritRail eight-day pass through ACP Rail. I couldn't use the tickets because of the COVID-19 outbreak. I asked for an extension, and a representative told me to return the paper tickets. I did so last summer. Since then, I've inquired several times about the status of my extension. They say they are working on it.

It's been more than a year. Could you please help me get either an extension or a refund for my BritRail tickets?

BRENT NORGAARD,
Minneapolis

A. If ACP Rail offered an extension for your BritRail tickets, it should have processed the extension quickly. ACP is a distributor of rail products. It has an exclusive arrangement to sell BritRail tickets, so it should have been able to fix your ticket quickly.

What happened? The pandemic. ACP was working on thousands of ticket requests like yours. And what should have been a routine extension turned into a one-year wait.

"Given the fact that we have been off-premises for almost four months and due to the backlog of work, we do expect some delays," a representative told you. "We are doing our utmost to ensure all cases are actioned as quickly as possible but ask for your kind patience as we diligently work through the backlog."

It looks as if ACP intended to refund your tickets rather than try to extend them. You can read its refund rules on the ACP site at [www.acprail.com/terms-and-](http://www.acprail.com/terms-and-conditions)

[conditions](http://www.acprail.com/terms-and-conditions)/. Generally, rail tickets are more flexible than airline tickets, and you were better off just taking the refund and buying new tickets when you needed them.

Under the terms of your purchase at www.britrail.com/britrail-passes/britrail-pass/, you should be able to get a full refund. BritRail notes that it will refund your purchase if "the unvalidated Pass or original exchange coupon or voucher is returned to the office from which it was purchased within 11 months from the date of issue (unless a different time period is specified by your travel agent). Passes or tickets must bear no evidence of having been tampered with in any way."

Curiously, there's no promised timeline for a refund. But I think you've been more than patient with ACP Rail and BritRail. It's time for action, regardless of the pandemic.

You could have appealed this first to the agency and then to BritRail. We list the names, numbers, and e-mail addresses of the BritRail customer service executives on my consumer advocacy site at www.elliott.org/company-contacts/britrail/.

I contacted ACP Rail on your behalf, and it issued a full refund, as promised.

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.

HERE

GO AWOL IN MAINE

Massachusetts-based boutique hotel company Lark Hotels has added another property to its unique portfolio of 20 (and growing) offerings. The newly-opened AWOL Kennebunkport, formerly the Maine Stay Inn, offers a relaxed modern approach to Maine accommodations. Located at 34 Maine St., a short walk from Kennebunkport's village green and vibrant Dock Square, the retreat features the historic Captain Walker house with six main building suites and 11 newly-built cabin suites designed to accentuate the Maine woods' natural beauty with a color palette of sandy neutrals, grassy earth tones, and white and gray accents. Amenities include complimentary breakfast, bicycles and beach chairs for guest use, king beds with plush bedding and fine linens, and more. Rates from \$319. 207-967-2117, www.larkhotels.com/hotel/awol-kennebunkport

EXUBERANT SCULPTURES ON DISPLAY

Need a little color and whimsy in your life? The Cahoon Museum of American Art in Cotuit is presenting "Floating Imagery," a series of six vibrant sculptures located on the museum grounds and inside its atrium. Created by Sui Park, a New York-based artist born in Seoul, the brightly colored suspended biomorphic forms — inspired by the natural world and the human experience — were made by weaving and connecting hand-dyed industrial cable ties. The resulting forms, both simple and complex, can be enjoyed by art lovers of all ages. While visiting the museum, make sure to visit its galleries, featuring fine art, folk art, and American art from the 1800s through the present. Through Nov. 7. 508-428-7581, cahoonmuseum.org



THERE

HIGH LIFE AT LOW PRICES IN THE CARIBBEAN

Luxury villa living is affordable in the Caribbean this fall via Dutch St. Maarten's unique collection of high-end rental homes that are participating in the island's SXM Villa Vibes campaign. Bringing together a collection of stunning accommodations offered by independent companies, the campaign aims to provide families and couples with rates-within-reach and enticing perks, including pay-per-bedroom options, free nights, and concierge services. Rates can be as low as \$83 per guest per night, depending on number of bedrooms rented. Add-on services vary by property and include options such as boat charters, private chef services, car rentals, and private transfers, or beachside massages. Dates and rates are noted on the website, with most deals valid through mid-December. www.sxmvil-lavibes.com



SNAZZY DIGS DEBUT IN JAZZY TOWN

The Big Easy just got easier (and more comfortable) at the new Virgin Hotels New Orleans, the lifestyle hotel brand by Virgin Group founder Sir Richard Branson. Old-world ambience meets modern luxury in the 238 chambers and suites at the hotel, located in the city's artsy Warehouse District. French doors separate the sleep and relaxation lounge from the dressing area in every room — and the stunning 1,097-square-foot Richard's Penthouse Flat with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooks NOLA's eclectic downtown. The property features multiple dining and drinking outlets, including Dreamboat, the 13th-floor cocktail lounge; the Pool Club, a rooftop pool, restaurant, and bar; Commons Club, the brand's flagship restaurant, bar, and lounge; and Funny Library Coffee Shop, a meeting spot, lounge, and game room for your caffeinated needs. Rates from \$229. 833-859-0044, virginhotels.com/new-orleans

LUXE LANDMARK HOTEL CELEBRATES WOMEN

The newly opened Guild House Hotel pays homage to women of the past — and connects with women today — in Philadelphia's historic and vibrant Washington Square West neighborhood. The hotel is located in a meticulously refurbished 1855 Victorian-era rowhouse that once served as home to the New Century Guild, a leading women's empowerment organization (now the Gender Justice Fund). The boutique property honors its historic roots in female empowerment and the women's rights movement in its 12 rooms and suites inspired by the iconic leaders of the Guild, and by offering luxury amenities crafted by women- and minority-owned businesses. Key design features include leaded-glass windows, ornate fireplaces, wood paneling, and antique light fixtures along with modern amenities and comforts. Rates from \$250. 855-GUILDED, guildhousehotel.com

EVERYWHERE

STURDY OUTDOOR CHAIR WITH RECYCLED FABRIC

Your newest favorite camping/picnic/sports gear may be Kijaro's new Dual Lock Chair. The lock design keeps the chair closed while carrying and open while sitting for a more comfortable seating experience. Eco-minded consumers will be happy to learn the chair is now available in 100 percent recycled REPVEVE fabric, created from recycled plastic bottles processed into fiber. (Each chair is said to save 19 plastic bottles from landfills.) Your chair stores and transports easily in the included bag. The built-in carry strap can be used without the bag. Includes two mesh cup holders. Weight capacity 300 pounds. \$60. www.kijaro.com

NECEE REGIS