

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER



WILFREDO LEE/ASSOCIATED PRESS

American Airlines cancels flight and charges an extra \$1,147

By Christopher Elliott
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Q. I have a problem with an American Airlines ticket. I recently flew from San Angelo, Texas, to Washington, D.C. On a stopover in Dallas, American Airlines canceled my connecting flight. The airline rebooked me on a flight later that day, but it also ended up canceling that one.

I received a notice on the American Airlines app saying I could book another flight at no charge. So, I booked another flight. As soon as I did, I noticed the airline had charged me \$1,147.

I called immediately, and a representative assured me she would fix the charges. But when I went to pay my bill for the original ticket, the \$1,147 charge was still on my card. I called American Airlines and my credit card company, and they both said I had to submit a written request for the ticket I had purchased. I submitted that request, but my credit card company denied it because I had a nonrefundable ticket. Can you help?

SANDY BURCHETT,
Appomattox, Va.

A. American Airlines should have rebooked you on the next available flight without charging you.

But the rules are a little different. If an airline cancels your flight, federal regulations require it to offer a full refund or a flight of its choosing — not yours (more information regarding this can be found at www.elliott.org/ultimate-consumer-guides-smart-travelers/what-should-i-do-if-my-flight-has-been-canceled-or-delayed/). American Airlines appears to have gone off-script by offering you a flight of your choosing through its app.

Fortunately, you had that promise in writing. You kept a screenshot of the offer.

I can't overstate how important a reliable paper trail is to resolving a complaint like this. If you don't have it in writing, it's American Airlines' word against yours. And, I think we all know how that will end.

You tried to appeal this through the regular customer service channels. And I should add that your flight experience on American Airlines was less than ideal. It involved numerous delays, a missed day of work, and a night spent on an airport floor. To your credit, you didn't ask the airline for any compensation other than the refund it said it would give you.

You might have tried appealing this to one of the American Airlines executive contacts I publish on my consumer advocacy site at www.elliott.org/company-contacts/american-airlines/. A brief, polite note to one of them including all of your documentation might have fixed this.

I contacted American Airlines on your behalf. A representative called you and apologized for a "system glitch." The credit for your ticket showed up the next day.

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

'Don't over-prepare. You miss everything if you over-prepare.'

Peter Bufano joined the circus at 17. After attending Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Clown College, he toured with the circus for four years, then took a break to study film scoring at Berklee College of Music. The 54-year-old Boston resident — who now teaches film scoring at his alma mater — returned to the circus after college to perform as a keyboardist with the Ringling Bros. band. The composer, music director, and multi-instrumentalist has since written and performed scores for TV, film, and, yes, the circus. He is the composer of a new circus/comedy show, "Mr. Swindle's Traveling Peculiarium," being staged in a boutique big top on the grounds of Boston's Harpoon Brewery from Oct. 12-Nov. 6. "The show is a lot of fun and it's set in an intimate setting so you're right up close in the midst of the show," Bufano said. "And that's a lot different than seeing a Cirque du Soleil show or a Ringling Bros. [circus]." We caught up with the Shelton, Conn., native, who lives with his partner, Camilla Finlay (who produces educational videos for Harvard University and is a dancer), to talk about all things travel.

Favorite vacation destination? It's either Edinburgh or Kyoto. I love the temples in Kyoto; they are so peaceful. And in Edinburgh I love — what else? — the Fringe Festival.

Favorite food or drink while vacationing? Cappuccino. There's no bad cappuccino. In Kyoto, I spent a lot of time in coffee shops because they're quiet, peaceful, and clean. You look out the window and see beautiful streets.

Where would you like to travel to but haven't? Berlin. I had booked a trip, but the pandemic happened. There are many music technology companies there, it turns out. I mean, there's always the allure of artists. Berlin is famous for artists who come from all over the world and stay. There's always that.

One item you can't leave home without when traveling? My Moleskine [notebook]. It's a journal,



Peter Bufano and his partner, Camilla Finlay, in Edinburgh.

it's for information, for thoughts and feelings ... it's a place where I'll write a story if I think I need to tell that story. Or if I get an idea about a piece of music ...

Aisle or window? Aisle. I travel with an accordion, and under FAA regulations, accordions go in the window seat so you don't have to climb over it in an emergency. The accordion I have now is the biggest one I've ever owned. It's 25 pounds, Italian made, and it sounds unbelievable. It's so good, but traveling with it is hard. Your arms hurt from hauling it around.

Favorite childhood travel memory? Summer days, swimming in the Housatonic River where I grew up in Shelton, Conn. My mother would drive [me, along with] my brothers and sister down to the river, unpack us, and that's where we'd be all day.

Guilty pleasure when traveling? Wasting an entire day in a coffee shop reading a newspaper.

Best travel tip? Don't over-prepare. You miss everything if you over-prepare.

JULIET PENNINGTON

HERE

SMART PET PACKAGE IN CAMBRIDGE

Playing off the Kimpton Marlowe Hotel's location in the heart of Cambridge's high-tech and bio-tech centers — near MIT and the Museum of Science — the hotel's new pet-friendly program promises your furry friend will receive the "highest GPA of any hotel in greater Boston." Simply enroll in the hotel's "Dogs with Pedigree" package and enjoy an overnight stay in a recently renovated deluxe guestroom; dog training reward treats and interactive treat puzzle; and doggie diploma. In addition, the hotel has partnered with Link, The Smart Pet Wearable with real-time GPS tracking capability that you can use during your stay; and access to LinkVet, a free symptom analysis tool and televet service. All packages include a \$10 donation to Last Hope K9 Rescue, a nonprofit dedicated to saving abandoned and abused dogs from high-kill shelters. When visiting, enjoy globally-inspired and new American cuisine at the stylish and casual on-site restaurant, Bambara Kitchen and Bar. Rates from \$349/night. 800-825-7140, www.hotelmarlowe.com/boston-hotel-deals/exclusive-experiences/

HALLOWEEN EAST AND WEST

Get spooked with Halloween-themed events on either end of Massachusetts this month. In Salem, the Peabody Essex Museum is launching a series of Eerie Events throughout October, including the new self-guided audio Salem Witch Trials Walk, a 90-minute tour in the galleries and outside the museum designed to give a new perspective on the infamous events of 1692. Other activities include "Hocus Pocus" at Ropes Mansion; pop-up Halloween shop; Horror Film Series; curator talks; Haunted Histories after Dark; and more (www.pem.org/eerie-events). In Pittsfield, an old-timey Halloween parade is a cherished tradition that is returning for the first time since the pandemic (Oct. 28, 7 p.m.). The parade kicks off on Tyler Street with scary-themed floats (think: ghosts, goblins, monsters, and jack-o'-lanterns) designed by participating organizations (www.cityofpittsfield.org/departments/community_development/parks_and_recreation/fall/halloween.php). For more fall fun near Pittsfield, stop by the Ioka Valley Farm for family-friendly activities including pumpkin picking, cider tasting, corn maze, Giant Pumpkin House, Dress-Me-Scarecrows, animal petting area,



and much more. Saturdays and Sundays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. through Oct. 30 (www.iokavalleyfarm.com/fall).

THERE

SAN FRANCISCO HOTEL'S STYLISH DEBUT

Stay in style at LINE San Francisco, a snazzy new-build hotel in the heart of

the city's theater district. Boasting a conceptual design by architectural firm Bjarke Ingels Group and Handel Architects, the 12-story Flat Iron-inspired building is a contemporary interpretation of the area's historic architecture. The 236-room hotel is home to four unique dining experiences, including a landscaped rooftop solarium offering panoramic city views. Rooms

and suites feature large double-pane windows and tasteful amenities. Sharing the block with the historic Warfield Theater, the project also includes a dedicated space for the local nonprofit theater company, Magic Theater, as well as 242 residences. Rates from \$239. 415-475-0000, www.thelinehotel.com/san-francisco/

SUPER-LUXE GALAPAGOS SAIL

Ready to splurge on your next bucket-list vacation? Aqua Expeditions has expanded its fleet with the launch of Aqua Mare, offering guests five-star luxury and personalized service aboard the first superyacht sailing among Ecuador's Galapagos Islands. The seven-suite vessel can accommodate up to 16 guests, and features a one-to-one crew-to-guest ratio. Spread over four decks, the 164-foot ship features a six-person jacuzzi, outdoor barbecue area, workout zone, and shaded and open sun decks. Two rib tenders provide twice-daily expeditions led by two world-class naturalist guides. Aqua Mare is also equipped with double kayaks, paddle boards, and snorkeling gear. Choose from two personalized seven-night itineraries exploring the archipelago's eastern and western regions, as well as two 14-night voyages. Rates from \$9,450 per person for a 7-night itinerary, including all meals and beverages; local transfers to/from recommended flights; all excursions; Galapagos Park entrance fees and IN-GALA transit card; laundry service and Internet. 844-819-7964, www.aquaexpeditions.com/galapagos-cruise/

EVERYWHERE

DUAL CHAMBER CARABINER KEEPS GEAR SECURE

Keep your stuff safe when sightseeing, hiking, or hanging in the airport lounge with the new G-Series Slide-Lock dual chamber carabiner from Nite Ize. Composed of two distinct chambers connected by a spring gate, you can lock down your keys and gear by clipping items into the first chamber, then sliding them through the inner gate to the second chamber. A Slide-Lock mechanism on the outer gate allows it to lock securely. The G-Series holds a weight range of 25 to 35 pounds, accommodating everything from keys to a water bottle to a backpack. Choose size 3 for smaller and lighter items; or size 4 for heavier gear. \$5.49/\$5.99. <https://niteize.com/g-series-slidelock-dual-chamber-carabiner>
NECEE REGIS